

Action Plan for Shows & Sales

Starting Point for the ESSENTIALS for Shows & Sales Season

Welcome to Your Action Plan for Shows & Sales!

As a result of being here and putting your plan into action, I hope that you ...

1. **Elevate the quality of exhibitions and shows you participate in.** If you're not seeing results from the same venues or groups, it's time to reassess. Keep looking ahead and strategizing your next move—one that brings you closer to your vision and goals.
2. **Increase your art income,** if that aligns with your goals. While financial success isn't every artist's primary focus, we all appreciate the validation that comes from a sale. For some, income is secondary, but for others, it's a key part of their journey. Either way, I hope this process helps you increase opportunities for financial growth if it's important to you.
3. **Experience more joy in your practice and business.** There's immense satisfaction in working with intention toward a meaningful goal. Improving your exhibitions and increasing your sales can lead to greater fulfillment and, ultimately, more happiness in your work.

Throughout the process, we're seeking as much clarity as possible about your direction—recognizing there are no guarantees—while also uncovering the personal meaning within that journey. It's your daily experiences, with all their challenges, that are more significant than simply reaching a goal.

*This planning workshop is part of ESSENTIALS for Artist Success—a comprehensive training and art marketing program that, if you're not familiar, you will be soon.

We do this 3 times a year—September, January, and May—starting with a little reflection and intention in the planning workshops before diving into the focus of what I refer to as the "season," which coincides with the way the calendar of the larger art world naturally breaks up.

This season, as you might have guessed, our focus is ESSENTIALS for Shows & Sales. Hey, Essentials members, can you please add a smiley emoji to a comment right now so we can "see" you?

These workshops are also a benefit of my Art Biz Accelerator coaching group, which includes artists who have graduated from Essentials or have reached a similar point in their businesses. Hey, Accelerator members, can you please add a smiley emoji with hearts to a comment right now so we can "see" you?

I selected a doozy of a topic for this workshop! While shows and sales are almost always part of any artist's seasonal planning, I thought you might benefit from focusing intently on the opportunities you have coming up and planning to improve those in 2025.

Let's get this straight at the outset: The only wrong way to plan is to *not* plan.

There really are so many ways we can go about planning for shows and sales, and I've tried to dramatically simplify it for planning purposes.

I'll provide a framework and suggest options, but you have to make it fit for you.

It's not about following an ideal planning structure. Or using the latest productivity app. It's about identifying your goals, breaking them down, working one task at a time, and reviewing progress and options regularly. In the end, all that matters is that you make progress.

So ...

Congratulations on making it here! Scheduling the time for showing up and being here in this space is the first step to making and implementing a successful plan. This type of work is difficult to schedule and make yourself do on your own. It helps that you are here with other students and members who are going through the same process.

We have plenty to do in these 2 days together.

Agenda

Today: Learn my planning principles ... Discuss prep work ... Identify shows and sales projects ... Review strategies and tactics for elevating shows and increasing sales

Tomorrow: Outline tasks ... Analyze and elevate your venues ... Conduct opportunity reviews ... Peek at Essentials for Shows & Sales season.

Next Tuesday: Bonus office hours for Essentials and Accelerator members

We're focusing on the plan itself, not the detailed how-to information that is needed for executing your plan. That comes in the lessons that are part of the season of Essentials for Shows & Sales and the support you receive in our community and live gatherings.

I want you to see that you have a large amount of control over how your work is shown and sold. And it's all wrapped up in ...

Alyson's Planning Principles

1. Planning requires structure and commitment, not just good ideas.

You can't do it all in your head. It takes time and effort to give your ideas form. The best part of being here is that you've made time to give this process the attention it deserves.

When you keep everything in your head, you're using precious brain cells that have a much better use for your creative endeavors.

2. Planning gives you a roadmap, but flexibility is key.

It provides direction, yet you need to remain open to detours. If you're tuned in, you'll know when to pivot and embrace a new opportunity that better aligns with where you are now.

Always remember that the journey you're on is more important than successfully reaching a goal. 🏆

3. You can't control what happens in the world.

While the world around you may be unpredictable, how you choose to respond is entirely within your control. That's where your real power lies.

4. Prioritization is essential to progress.

There will always be more ideas and opportunities than you have time for. The key is learning to prioritize with confidence. Get radically good at decision-making, and stand by your choices.

The beauty of everything we're going to do is that you'll make progress as long as you're taking action.

And, this is important, you will be able to return to your notes and this process whenever you need a boost. This isn't one and done. I'm going to give you tools you can reuse at any point in your art career.

Some of the decisions you'll have to make are going to be difficult. At certain points during these live sessions, I'll take your questions and get to as many of them as possible.

I ask that you make note of those questions and be ready to type them into Chat at those times. If you time them too early, I may miss them.

You can also ask them in our community if you are a member, and we have invited all planners here to join us on a trial basis for just \$1.

The Time Truth

There are 113 days (16 weeks, 2712 hours) until December 31.

Conservatively, you have 1100 waking hours to get *everything* done during this time: your art, business, exercise, meals, meditation, family time, travel. (This is a number I've worked at for four years, and I don't want to spend our precious time with the details of how the math works.)

If my math is correct, that's 69 hours per week *or* 11.5 hours per day if you work 6 days a week and 13.8 hours per day if you work just 5 days a week.

You probably don't want to work between 11.5 and 13.8 hours per day—especially 6 days a week.

My point: You have plenty of time to get done what is most important, but no time to spend on what isn't a priority for you.

Suggestion: Schedule a maximum of 5-6 hours for tasks and appointments 5 days a week. I further suggest at least one weekday set aside for no appointments.

So what I'm saying is it's preferable that you only schedule 4 days a week.

You need to build space in your calendar because you can't control what goes on around you. A blizzard shuts off your internet for 2 days. Family gets sick. You get sick.... Stuff happens!

Trust me: Guard some space in your calendar.

You can't do it all. There is always going to be more that you want to do than you have time for, so you must get crazy good at prioritizing what is most important. Building a little space in your calendar leaves room for newer and better options to present themselves.

Prep Work

You had some prep work. Tip #2 was to review your numbers. —>

I didn't give you this homework to you to keep you busy. I know you're busy enough. I gave it to you because it doesn't make sense to add or remove obligations on your calendar until you know what's been working and what hasn't been working.

If you didn't sign up early enough to get to this prep work, that's okay. And, I suggest you do it tonight—before you finalize a plan.

You will benefit from an honest accounting of the work you have been putting into shows and sales, which helps discern what is working that you can build on and what needs changing or thrown out completely.

I'd like to know: What did you learn from this prep work?

Now back to to the future,

1) Any shows you have had. For each:

- Where was it?
- How did you or the venue promote it?
- What worked and what didn't (however you want to define that)?
- What results did you receive? (Think: new followers and subscribers, sales, potential opportunities)

2) Your income.

- What are your income categories?
- What have your gross sales been in those categories for the years you are analyzing?
- What have you learned by looking at those numbers?

Your Shows & Sales Projects



Workbook, page 3, Question #1 only

What do you already have scheduled in 2024 that gives you opportunities for sales?

These are PROJECTS. **A PROJECT** is a goal or an event that contributes to your vision and takes place in a defined period of time. It consists of multiple steps (tasks) that must be completed in order to be successful.

Examples of Shows & Sales Projects

- Organize an open studio weekend
- Make the most of your holiday show with other artists
- Add e-commerce to your website
- Release a new collection of work to your list
- Review all of the homework in Essentials for Shows & Sales and attend live Labs

It's vital that you always have something to look forward to. Without this, you lack motivation and get sucked into a routine that probably doesn't serve you. You need a reason to get to work.

A deadline, whether it is self-imposed or handed to you by someone else, is, ultimately a form of accountability.

When building a reputation or wanting to make sales, it's also vital that you show your art in public. We'll talk more about that as we go along.

I'd love to see you commit to at least 3-4 key activities each year that offer strong opportunities for sales and recognition. While you may participate in more, the focus should be on events that push you forward and deliver increasingly better results—whether that's more income, followers, students, or professional connections. These are the kinds of opportunities I want you to fully invest in and prioritize.

Along the way, you may need to reconsider your strategies and adopt new tactics. These are fundamental to your success, so we need to spend some time on them.

Strategies and Tactics for Elevating Shows and Increasing Sales

Continuously improving your practice and expanding your reach requires both strategic thinking and deliberate action. Whether you're looking to elevate the quality of your exhibitions or increase sales, it's paramount to approach your career with a proactive mindset.

By refining your work and offerings, and leveraging the right marketing tools, you'll position yourself for greater success and recognition,

The items on the following list are designed to help you enhance the way you present your art, engage with your audience, and tap into new opportunities. Commit to the strategies and tactics that resonate with you. Available learning modules are noted with each tactic.

1. Refine the Quality and Presentation of Your Art

Consider these options when the work isn't selling at the rate you'd like it to.

- **Elevate both your artwork and its presentation.** Continuously refine your skills to ensure you're confident in the quality before offering it for sale. Just as important is how your art is displayed—whether in a gallery, online, or elsewhere—as a strong presentation can boost its perceived value, while poor presentation may lead others to question the price you're asking.
- Invest in high-quality **photography that truly captures the detail and quality** of your art. This is one of the best investments you can make—especially when selling higher-priced pieces or submitting images to galleries, shows, or other professional opportunities. Quality images will reflect the professionalism and value of your work, helping you stand out.
- **Upgrade your booth, tent, installation, or displays.** [I'm going to use "show" to refer to all of these.] You are competing for eyeballs and want your show to say "This one can't be missed!"
Example from Essentials member: [Karen Wallace post](#) about her booth shot

evolution.

After you've upgraded ...

- Invest in **high-quality photos of your show**. Excellent photography of your installed art not only enhances your chances of being accepted into higher-end shows but also serves as a powerful tool to promote your current and future exhibitions. Your future self will thank you for having this documentation.
- **Create and publish a catalog** that showcases a body of work in a cohesive, visually compelling format. A well-designed catalog not only provides a comprehensive overview of your art (as inclusive as you want it to be), but also serves as a powerful marketing tool that enhances your credibility, helps you connect with galleries, collectors, and curators, and solidifies your brand as an artist. There are lots of details about catalogs in [this post](#).

2. Augment or Change Your Offerings

I want all artists to make what they want to make when they want to make it. But the reality is that when you need or want to make money, you have other considerations to factor into the equation.

- **Make bigger art for a sophisticated audience.** I insist that it takes just as much time to promote larger works as it does to promote smaller ones. Larger works sell for more money and increase your income a lot faster. If you know that you can sell large works, consider expanding your inventory of those sizes. Make a bold statement and cultivate a dedicated fan base who values such works. Alternatively ...
- **Make more accessible, smaller pieces to appeal to a broader audience.** This is important to many artists who are more comfortable selling at lower price points. If this is you, go for it! Or ... Add this line of smaller works to the larger ones you already have.
Examples from Essentials member: [Lindsey Kiser](#)
- Diversify your offerings by **creating merchandise** that features your art, reaching different consumer bases. These might be scarves, pillows, aprons, shower curtains, or any host of other options. Your best bet is to go with a company that can produce these for you and fulfill the orders. Just keep in mind that mostly utilitarian consumer products are marketed differently than original art. It's like having a whole other business alongside your business of original art.
Example from Essentials member: [Lea K. Tawd](#)
See also: [Robin Maria Pedrero](#)

3. Upgrade and Expand Exhibition Venues and Opportunities

- **Identify and explore new spaces and markets** where your art could be shown. As I say in the Alternative Venues learning module, the possibilities are limited only by your imagination and perhaps your ego. We'll discuss this more tomorrow when we focus on elevating shows.
- Actively propose your work for various exhibitions to increase visibility. It might be appropriate in some situations for you to submit a full-on **exhibition proposal**, which is bound to impress the venue. Our module Writing Exhibition Proposals takes the mystery out of what might be a daunting process if you're new to it.

- Update your website to prominently **feature your current available work**. Often, websites present all pieces with equal weight, but there are ways to ensure that the work you most want people to see stands out. If your goal is to impress gallerists, curators, and collectors, make sure the pieces you want to highlight are the ones catching their attention.

4. Leverage Online Platforms and E-Commerce

- If you haven't already done so, **integrate e-commerce functionality** into your website to enable direct online sales. By offering a seamless purchasing experience on your site, you make it easier for collectors to buy your work, expanding your reach and increasing opportunities for sales.
- **Display clear pricing** on your website to eliminate barriers for potential buyers. Transparent pricing helps build trust, reduces hesitation, and encourages more inquiries and purchases from visitors. Interestingly, many people will not know your work is for sale without a price attached to it. [For a contrary view on works priced over \$5,000, listen to my interview with Iris Scott on episode 103 of The Art Biz—to be published September 12, 2024.]
- Perform a comprehensive **audit of your website and e-commerce capabilities** to ensure everything functions as smoothly as you expect. Regularly reviewing your site's performance, user experience, and transaction processes will help you identify any potential issues, optimize efficiency, and ensure a seamless experience for your visitors. [Module: Audit Your Online Presence] .
- Consider online **collection releases or "drops"** that build anticipation and create a sense of scarcity. You've undoubtedly seen how this works with other artists you follow. Maybe it's time to try it for yourself. There will be a new module on this topic in the learning center for October 2024.
- Experiment with **targeted advertising** on platforms like Facebook and Instagram to reach a specific audience. Many people wiser than I are saying that you need to pay Meta these days in order to get any traction on their sites.
- Make and share **more videos** that showcase your art and processes. Videos attract more eyeballs and the algorithm loves them. Yes, use Instagram reels, but think beyond to YouTube shorts and TikTok. Consider growing your YouTube channel, especially if you teach.

5. Optimize Pricing and Sales Strategies

- **Raise your prices** to better reflect the value, quality, and unique/handmade nature of your work. By aligning your pricing with the true worth of your art, you communicate confidence and professionalism, which can enhance its perceived value in the eyes of your audience
- Consider **lowering your prices** to make your art more accessible to a broader segment of the market. By offering a range of price points, you can attract new collectors, increase sales volume, and create opportunities to reach a wider audience without compromising the value of your work.
Example: Adele Sypesteyn did this when she removed her art from galleries. Listen to the interview on [The Art Biz](#).

- **Have a sale.** Temporarily reduce prices on certain earlier work to stimulate demand and clear inventory. Conducting a proper sale that produces results requires a lot of planning and organizing and is often done in conjunction with a holiday. That's why we'll have a full new module to help you with sale promotions coming to the learning center.

6. Strengthen Marketing and Communication

- **Use your email list** more consistently and frequently. The people who have signed up for your emails or have purchased from you in the past are your best prospects for future opportunities and sales, but you have to stay in touch and show them that you care about an ongoing relationship with them. [Module: Newsletters + CTA Emails]
- Speaking of your best prospects, embrace the power of private communication between you and your VIPs. [There are numerous lessons in the learning center that stress 1-on-1 communication. See: Your People Plan, VIP & Patron Care]
- Implement a **postcard and direct mail strategy** to complement your digital efforts. While it's convenient to remain entirely online these days, integrating tangible, physical marketing materials can add significant power to your outreach. Sending something that people can hold in their hands creates a lasting impression, helps you stand out from the digital noise, and taps into a sense of personal connection that can enhance your overall marketing impact. [Module: Real Mail]
- Commit to a **regular social media schedule** and ensure that all of your posts center around your art. By maintaining a consistent and authentic presence, you can steadily build and sustain interest in your work. Additionally, take advantage of the direct messaging feature to create more personalized interactions with your followers, fostering deeper connections and increasing engagement beyond the typical public posts. Our focus in May-August 2025 will be Essentials for Online Marketing. ♦
- Consider incorporating **print advertising** into your marketing strategy. Exploring traditional advertising methods, such as magazine ads, allows you to reach diverse demographics that may not be as active online. While the financial commitment can be significant, especially since print ads typically require multiple runs, they offer the potential to tap into new audiences, build a more well-rounded presence, and reinforce your message in a tangible, lasting way.
- **Set aside dedicated time on your calendar each week to review your progress and ensure you're staying on top of your plan.** Consistent check-ins help you stay accountable, make adjustments as needed, and ensure that the strategies you've committed to are being executed effectively. Members: Use our Friday progress reports for that added level of accountability and support.

 **Workbook, page 3, Questions #2 and 3.**

Homework !!

See page 5 of your workbook. It's okay if you don't get to it all before Wednesday.