



YOUR PEOPLE PLAN NOTES 1

Planning Workshop for Cultivating Connections

Session 1

the **PATH** to Your People Plan

*Through this process I'm leading you through, you will ...

- ✓ Identify the people you most need to reach out to, follow up with, and stay in touch with.
- ✓ Assign authoritative locations for safekeeping of contact information.
- ✓ Commit to personalizing your relationships and make room in your system for doing so.
- ✓ Designate a day of the week as your People Day.
- ✓ Understand the steps to follow on your People Day.

The real value, of course, in being here is the accountability and guidance that comes through being present for the process. The work we do this week is foundational for your entire career.

Today our intention is to get clarity about who your most valuable connections are. I will also ask you to assign authoritative locations for their information.

Tomorrow you'll make your people plan.

I will also tell you about a seasonal program that is starting next week, ESSENTIALS: Cultivate Connections (and Collectors), which can help you fill in Your People Plan and provide support as you make networking and strengthening your relationships a priority.

On Thursday, I will hold open **office hours** where you can drop in and ask me anything related to this content or your people plan.

Your prep work (posted) was to read my Your Artist Mailing List special report and assessment. What I wanted you to glean most from that is that there is potential. Don't beat yourself up over what you haven't been doing. Focus on the possibilities.

my (short) STORY

I will keep this short because I know many of you have heard it, but it's important that you understand that I came to emphasize business relationships honestly.

During a time in between undergrad and grad school for my art history degrees, I was an **administrative assistant to a US Senator**. I wouldn't know until much later how priceless that experience was.

(I even landed on the front page of the New York Times. Yep, that's me barely visible behind Robert Gates as he is being sworn in at a Senate Intelligence Committee hearing.)

This experience taught me the importance of a mailing list.

I quickly recognized that my boss's donor list and the Rolodex on top of my desk (yes, it was that long ago) were the most cherished assets in our office. They were the source of campaign donations, community support, and wise counsel.

These were conscious connections the Senator created and maintained. Yes, he was often asking them for help, but he was a relationship guy through and through. He understood the value of friendships and would often write 10 or more handwritten correspondence cards in a day—front and back. I know this because his outbox was right in front of my desk.

These might have been thank-you notes, but they were often letters of sympathy, recognition, or milestones, such as birthdays or anniversaries.

Later, **as a museum curator and educator**, I saw how much our institutions relied on our members and donors for financial support. It was critical to keep them in the fold of the museum's activities. We were art-centric, but heavily dependent on patron and community engagement.

These two experiences are probably why creating a database of names was the first thing I did when I started my business in 2001-02. And the first people I reached out to at the time were leaders of artist organizations that I found online.

I didn't ask them for their lists or names or anything else. What I did was forward the content of my weekly email newsletter. This was a new concept at the time and artists were hungry for the information. It wouldn't work today as nobody wants more email. Also, there are many more art business coaches around than there were 22 years ago. It's no longer a novelty.

I said something like: "If you think there is something in here that your members might value, please forward it as appropriate."

I did this over and over.

I didn't have Facebook or Instagram ads to blanket the online art communities. I reached out to one person at a time.

Though I didn't yet have a name for it, I was making **conscious connections**.

A DEFINITION

 Page 1 in your workbook.

Conscious connections are intentional relationships with an individual or organization that can help you achieve specific goals. They go beyond casual acquaintances and require a deeper and more personal level of engagement and commitment.

Conscious connections are not transactional relationships where partners *expect* something in return.

Conscious connections are not about getting, although they are often mutually beneficial.

Examples of conscious connections include:

- A collector who raves about your art (but maybe hasn't heard from you in a long time).
- A realtor who commissions you to make gifts for their new home-buying clients.
- A property manager who needs art to make their buildings more appealing.
- An owner of a winery or brewery that wants local art on their labels.
- A podcaster who is always on the lookout for interesting stories from artists to interview for their podcast. (*Ahem!*)
- A young curator who is building a resume and open to writing about your art.
- The director of a nonprofit who wants to organize an auction of your art to raise funds (while paying you properly, of course).
- Another artist who is well connected in the community and can help make introductions.

You want more of these people.

But ... Why?

THE ROLE OF Conscious Connections

The examples I just gave are pretty clear about why it might be valuable to make more conscious connections. Plenty of people want your art or have a need for your art. But let's put an ! on why they're important. Conscious connections might lead to:

- **Resources.** Conscious connections might help you access funding, expertise, technology, materials, new audiences, studio spaces, and exhibition venues.
- **Opportunities.** Through conscious connections, you might (and often do) learn about new opportunities before they become known to the larger public.
- **Shortcuts.** While I don't want to insinuate that there is such a thing as a career shortcut, you can do more with a network of conscious connections than you can do on your own. If there is such a thing as a shortcut, a strong focus on networking would be it.
- **Knowledge.** Conscious connections might give you valuable insights about the art world, your art community, or what is available to you in your geographical region.
- **Collaboration.** Conscious connections can lead to collaborations with other artists, individuals, or organizations, which can result in multiplying your audience and additional conscious connections. If you don't yet understand how important it is to collaborate for art business success, I encourage you to watch almost any episode of Art21 < <https://art21.org> > and to listen to these episodes of The Art Biz.
 - [Detour \(ep. 128\)](#)
 - [Willie Cole \(ep. 126\)](#)
 - [Laurence de Valmy \(ep. 108\)](#)
 - [Michael Gadlin \(ep. 93\)](#)
 - [Heather Beardsley \(ep. 160\)](#)
 - [Lori Sokoluk and Susan Purney Mark \(who met in my programs, ep. 183\)](#)

We don't have time to go over specific examples from the art world about making conscious connections, but I'll quote Michael Gadlin here.

You cannot be a one-person band and succeed in your art business.

If you have no idea who Michael Gadlin is and whether or not you can trust him, first you should meet him. He's just such a great guy.

Barring that, how about trusting Pulitzer Prize winning critic Jerry Saltz? This is one of his tweets from January 21, 2023.



Jerry Saltz
@jerrysaltz



Three career tips for artists:

1. About 80% of making good art is regularly showing up in your studio.
2. About 80% of having a career is regularly showing up at art things out there.
3. About 80% of what you know & share comes from regularly staying up late with other artists.

11:43 AM · Jan 21, 2023 · 20.6K Views

1. About 80% of making good art is regularly showing up in your studio. Um, yeah. Good art doesn't just happen. It is the result of a sustained practice and probably a lot of failures and bad art. It's also why you must have an art practice in place before you can begin full-blown marketing.

💡 The structure provided by Your People Plan is something you can do even without a body of work. It will be here for you when you're ready.

2. About 80% of your career is regularly showing up at art things out there. Art openings receptions, artist talks ... you know ... art things. You need to be seen and meet more people along the way.
3. About 80% of what you know & share comes from regularly staying up late with other artists. You can't help but absorb and learn things when you're talking with other artists. You learn about your medium, tools, techniques, technology, events, and get inside scoop on opportunities. You also discover what people are talking about. You become part of and contribute to the conversation.

If you don't stay up late or aren't in a metropolitan area with those opportunities, find community in other ways. IRL is always preferable, but face-to-face Zoom counts, too.

I emphasize his third point because I hear from so many artists who are annoyed that "only" artists are following them. Be grateful for every artist who follows you and connects with you. You just never know what knowledge or opportunities could come from that association.

The bottom line is that **you need people to succeed, and that includes artists.** We all need people in order to be successful—however we define success. If you don't do it for your career, do it for your health.

We need strong social connections to live a healthy and meaningful life.

About this time last year, the Surgeon General of the U.S., Vivek H. Murthy, issued a warning about the effects of loneliness. Being socially disconnected gives you greater risk of depression, anxiety, heart disease, stroke, and dementia. His remarks are based on decades of study and grounded in science.

THE BARRIER to Cultivating Conscious Connections

If it's true that we need people and that we'll do better in our businesses and have a more meaningful and healthier life when we keep up with our relationships, then why don't we make it a top priority? I have some ideas as to why.

- You have other things to do.
- It's uncomfortable to ask.
- You fear rejection.
- You don't want to bother people.
- You think you don't know where to find new people.
- It's easier to post to social media.
- You don't understand the technology.
- Your business is disorganized.
- The world is noisy.
- Geography could be a problem.
- There might be a cultural barrier.
- The bigger your impact, the more people there are to keep up with.

To overcome these challenges, I encourage you to **focus on other people and that meaningful life** you want.

Understand, to the very core of your being, **that the longer you put off your people work, the longer you delay any potential positive results.** Don't wait.

Let's take a look at the categories of people you're making these conscious connections with.

Identify WHO

I would love it if I could wave a magic wand and identify the best collectors—by name and complete with contact info—for your art. But that isn't going to happen.

First, I don't know all of the collectors in the world.

Second, it's more interesting to stay connected to many different types of people who can make a big difference in your art career.

Looking for collectors isn't constructive for most artists. The better alternative is to nurture relationships with the people who are already in your life and to reach out to influencers.

These are people who have the potential to introduce you to many more people—people who might buy from you or who might know of opportunities for showing and selling your art.

Here's a list of 31 categories of people that should be on your radar for making and cultivating connections. Ready? Let's start with the most obvious.

YOUR SUPPORTERS

Most of your biggest supporters are ready and willing to tell others about your work. These include:

1. Customers, Buyers, and Collectors
2. Followers on Social Media
3. Students
4. Friends
5. Family

The people who have already purchased from you once are more likely to purchase from you again. They are also likely to already be on your mailing list.

Likewise, your students, devotees, friends, and family are going to be your biggest cheerleaders. They are likely to brag on your talents and share your work with others. And they won't be happy if they're the last to know about your goings-on.

About that second category of social media followers: They're there—following you and waiting to make a deeper connection. They matter.

I did say above that looking for collectors isn't constructive, but in the Q&A of the live session, I shared how you can find names of collectors in your community.

Collectors are almost always involved in their local museums. To find their names, look in these places:

- *Wall labels that have donors' names: Gift of ...*
- *Museum membership groups, especially ones that are called Young Collectors, Collectors' Circle, etc. Museum groups that have a higher annual fee are more likely to have collectors.*
- *Museums often offer tours to collectors' homes. Pay attention.*
- *See the list of names under exhibition sponsors.*
- *What parts of the museum building are named for people? They're probably collectors! Museums will name everything they can: education spaces,*

hallways, galleries, lecture halls, lecture series, curatorial positions (e.g. "The Smith Family Curator of Contemporary Art") and additions to the building.

SELLERS & VENUES

These people might buy art for clients, exhibit art, purchase art for their spaces, or help artists meet buyers. Consider the following.

6. Gallerists
7. Directors of Nonprofit Spaces
8. Curators
9. Directors of Public Art Programs
10. Licensing Agents
11. Interior Designers and Decorators
12. Property Managers
13. Restaurant and Alternative-Space Owners
14. Retailers
15. Architects
16. Landscape Architects and Landscapers
17. Realtors
18. Art Consultants and Advisors
19. Portrait Brokers

A little more about two of the categories ...

Art Consultants and Advisors

Art consultants are hired by businesses to find art for their spaces. Think building lobbies, hotels, and hospitals.

Art advisors are hired by individuals (and probably some corporations) to shape a collection. They're not buying to decorate. They're buying to strengthen the collector's vision—purchasing work at international art fairs, top-tier galleries, and auctions. 99.9% of artists will never work with an art advisor, but you need to know they exist.

Portrait Brokers

I haven't done a lot of research on these lately, but it used to be that portrait artists were among the few groups of artists who could actually search for an agent—aka a portrait broker. If there are any portrait artists here and you know

more about how brokers operate these days, please share what you know in a comment or, better yet, post it inside our community,

Recommended

If you want to know how the international art world works, I recommend *Get The Picture* by Bianca Bosker (2024). Nothing in it is surprising, but what is surprising is that someone has penetrated such an opaque culture as the upper tier of the art world. It's a highly entertaining read.

INFLUENCERS

I kinda hate to use the word Influencer since it's become tarnished by social media "stars" who are overpaid to promote things. However, it seems to apply here.

This is a wide-ranging list, but they have something in common: Other people listen to them, follow them, or read about them.

20. Members of the media

- Writers
- Bloggers
- Reviewers
- Critics
- Editors
- Publishers

21. Politicians

22. Members of the Clergy

23. CEOs and Leaders of Companies and Non-Art Nonprofits

24. Members of Boards of Directors for Nonprofit Organizations

25. Local Business Owners

26. Community Leaders

There's no denying that these people have the power to influence decisions. They may or may not buy art, but they are good people to know because they are connected to many other people. Why not make a point of meeting more of them?

PERIPHERAL POTENTIAL

In addition to the obvious friends, family, art types, and influencers, there are people that you bump up against in your daily life.

These people are right under your nose, a stone's throw away, a hop, skip, and a jump to a handshake.

I'm referring to them as Peripheral Potential, and I'm here to remind you that they may not be your closest friends, but they are connections that shouldn't be discounted.

- 27. Parents at Your Kids' School
- 28. Members of Your Church Congregation or Other Organization
- 29. Coworkers at Your Day Job
- 30. Anyone Associated with Your Niche Market
- 31. Consequential Strangers

A word about that last category. Karen Fingerman coined the term Consequential Strangers and then co-wrote a book with Melinda Blau of the same title. In short, consequential strangers (a term I love!) are supporting players in your life: your hairdresser, favorite barista, mechanic, grocery clerk.

You see them often. Trust them. Like them. Know them. But you don't know know them—not like you might know a member of your congregation or a parent at your kids' school.

What's important for our purposes is that consequential strangers hang out with different people than you do, so they bring a different perspective and potential for new audiences.



Page 1 in your workbook. **Which 1-3 categories of people will you focus on for the next 3-6 months?** (Without neglecting your email list and VIPs, is there anyone else?)

With all of these potential new connections, you are going to have to keep their names, contact info, and personal notes organized.



SAFEKEEPING

There is no such thing as a single location for keeping every contact's name and information. Every artist and every entrepreneur has multiple locations for this information, and it's perfectly fine.

I'm going to encourage you to have **authoritative locations**, which are designated places for specific types of people.



Page 2 in your workbook.

Let's start with an easy one.

You probably have **email marketing software** such as MailChimp, Constant Contact, or ConvertKit. This is where you have people who have opted in to receive your bulk emails. They might also be collectors or prospects, but your email marketing software is the authoritative location for your email opt-ins.

If you use **Artwork Archive** (or if there is anything as robust as AA that I'm not aware of), I encourage you to designate it as the authoritative location for your collectors. Because they are in the same database as your artwork, you can associate your work with the people who own it.

Now it gets a little murkier because you need a place for **prospects**. These are people that you want to stay in touch with. Maybe they're collectors but they don't have any of your art. Maybe they're art consultants, gallerists, curators, or interior designers.

You might already be in touch with them and have them in your phone contacts, but they need to be in a place that you will visit, see other names, organize, and use.

The most common places for safekeeping prospect information would be:

- Spreadsheet (Excel, Google Sheets, Apple Numbers)
- Notion database
- Evernote or OneNote

Your preferred platform for storing prospects needs to be digital for quick searching, easy updating, and for the ability to view in multiple ways.

Consider adding these contact info fields to your database.

- Name
- Email
- Phone
- Instagram
- Website
- Mailing address
- Birthday
- Spouse or partner's name
- Mutual connection(s)
- How you met
- Date of first meeting
- Your art that they own or have expressed interest in
- Details to personalize the relationship (hobbies, favorite things, collections, travel, kids' names, pets)
- Date of last contact
- Date for next follow up

🔑 Important: Don't try to keep a database of your social media followers. You don't have time for that. But a follower might turn into a prospect that needs to be added to your system.

I know it is difficult to keep up with everyone when you have hundreds or thousands of names. As much as I want to pay close attention to everyone on email list, I simply can't. I have to prioritize my current clients.

You must prioritize those who should get the most attention from you.

The problem, of course, is that it's incredibly **easy to forget about all of these names** you have stored for safekeeping.

You have to put steps and triggers in place so you'll remember to follow up and nurture. Otherwise, they will become unconscious connections.

And that's what we'll do tomorrow! We'll make your people plan—a system for all of this.

In the meantime, you have homework in your workbook.

👉 **HOMEWORK is on page 3 of your workbook.**