

Selling Art – A Marketing Strategy

Provide a selection. Start with a good mix of designs and sizes. At least 3 different designs in 3 different sizes. The more variety you have, the more you will sell.

Set the lowest price you can tolerate. This is essential to attract initial interest.

Don't consign, but instead offer an *"Unconditional return option"*. Grant full credit exchange for anything returned undamaged. That removes the risk the retailer will be stuck with unsold stuff.

Offer a "30 day trial offer". Agree on a sufficient size order to put up a good display of your work on net 30 days terms. At the end of 30 days, the retailer either pays for the entire order and you now have a steady relationship or they pay just for what they sold and return the rest.

Grant exclusivity. Give each outlet exclusive rights to your work within a specified territory. It's a big country. There's no reason to have several outlets near each other competing to sell your work. If the retailer has exclusivity, they will work harder selling your work.

Select outlets. Instead of looking only at outlets that now sell work like yours, examine the possibility of selling through outlets that don't now have anything like your work, but might be interested in adding yours to their product mix. Don't just pick outlets that you think are prestigious. Pick ones you think are most likely to be able to sell your work. Many of those prestigious outlets have owners that run the business as a hobby and sell very little stuff. That's why they want everything on consignment.

Be courageous. Don't be afraid to walk into a shop with a portfolio and an armful of samples wearing a big smile and greet the owner with, *"If you can spare a moment, I have something I'd like to show you"*. Some will be difficult - a few even snotty - but most will thank you for coming. Retailers thrive or die on whether or not they have something fresh and innovative for their customers. For anyone that feels nervous about such cold call sales, practice with friends. Have someone play act the part of a hesitant/reticent buyer. They can use different reasons for not buying while you practice possible responses. Some reasons for declining to buy:

- *We're already overstocked*
- *Sales are slow and we're not buying anything.*
- *We've never done well selling work like yours.*
- *We've never sold the kind of product.*
- *We sell only "known" artists.*
- *We only buy at the shows.*

Sales can be fun. Don't approach it as a distasteful task. Embrace it as an adventure.

Adopt a good attitude. If you think it's unfair that you buy all the materials and do all the work while the retailer does nothing but sell it and still get as much as you do, then stay away from wholesale sales. If you think retailing is a great gig, open a store and learn the reality of the relentless overhead. When you sell to a shop, you form a partnership in which you each have a separate job. You make it - they sell it. Approach the retailer with that co-operative attitude and you will form a mutually profitable partnership.