

AMP 005: Building Your Email List with the Fishbowl Technique



Show Notes

- More on the differences between cold, warm, and hot traffic in [Episode 003](#).
- Check out artist Randy Hufford [using the fishbowl technique](#) at an art fair.
- [Rate and Review](#) the Art Marketing Podcast on iTunes

Transcribe

Welcome to the Art Marketing Podcast. This is Patrick, your host, and if you are an artist that has ever exhibited at craft shows, at art fairs, at a gallery show or exhibited or shown your art in any capacity there to the public, this episode is for

you. Now, let's start talking about some new technology.

One of the things that we've been doing on this show is really trying to get listener feedback, and one of the ways that we've gone about that recently is with this new piece of technology where you can actually pop a chat window on the site. This is radio, it's not visual, so I might as well explain it. If you come to the podcast website, there's a little bubble on the right hand corner. If you've been on the site for any amount of time, it will pop up, show my ugly face and I'll ask you a question. The question's been, what's the one topic you would want to see covered on this podcast?

It's been really fun over the last couple of days or so to be able to get all the responses and many times, I've actually been there live to respond, and I'm responding to all of them, so if you do come to the site, depending on when you listen to this, it's the artmarketingpodcast.com, you might see the chat bubble pop up, but anyway, I've been answering those questions and getting into some of the live back and forth, and one of the questions that's been popping up repeatedly is, how do I get started growing my email list?

I think this is a really important one, and I think, given the last episode, and for those that didn't listen to that one, we brought on artist Bill Stidham, who put 220,000 miles on the van, driving around the United States going to art shows and gathering email addresses. Fast forward 10 years later, he's one of the most successful artists that we have on the platform. He did the work, but he did it smart.

I thought this was a perfect time to answer that question, so let's get into it, right? How is an email list built? It's built one email at a time. It's like making deposits in a bank account. If you have the right strategies in place and compound interest and time, you're going to be in a great place. I mentioned some of the artists on our platform, and I've talked to so many of them, literally have been exhibiting at these art shows or crafts fairs or festivals for 10 plus years, and I get into these conversations.

I'm like, "Well, what size is your email list? Were you not gathering emails those

entire 10 years?" Many times I'm like, I hear, "No, I wasn't." It's like, "What? You weren't getting emails? Do you know where you'd be today?" Granted, 10 years ago email wasn't perhaps quite as prevalent, but it still was, right? It's one of these things that you really need to be doing, and I don't think it's something that should be taken for granted or just assume that everybody's doing it.

I want to get into this technique today, and it's the fishbowl technique. Pretty much everybody alive has probably seen this. It's a big bowl asking you to leave a business card for a free whatever. I think probably most commonly you see it in restaurants where you walk into a restaurant and on, like a Subway sandwich shop or something. On the side of a table, it's like, "Leave your business card for a free sandwich, giveaway, drawing," whatever the case may be. Put your business card in there, the idea is that after some period of time, the restaurant will contact you and say you won, or in my case, you didn't win, because I never win anything.

That's how the technique works, and despite the fact that it's a fishbowl and business card, it's really, really effective. It just really, really works and it pretty much works 100% of the time it's tried. If you're not doing this, you're going to be missing 100% of the shots that you don't take, so take this shot. The broad strokes of how this technique works are the how and the what. I want to cover those and then I think, for those that are like, "Patrick, I thought I was going to learn something today. This is totally lame. I already know the fishbowl technique, thanks," don't worry. I've got some hacks for you that'll let you level up, take your game to the next level.

Let's talk about the how and the what. The how you're going to go about doing this is how are you going to gather the email addresses, and despite the fact it's traditionally thought of as the fishbowl technique, there are multiple ways that you can go about this. You can do the fishbowl, put it out in front, put it on a table or a seat or a chair, whatever, and gather business cards that way, but today's day and age, not everybody has business cards, so maybe you don't want to do the fishbowl.

For those that do, I've got a buddy who's a photographer. He's on the platform, Randy Hufford out in Maui, and he actually did this entire setup quite effectively actually, and he sent me some photos which are really cool, and he's in a parking

lot somewhere in Maui, in Kula I think. He took some pictures of his booth and the art that was in there, and then even the sign that he printed out and the giant bowl, which in his case, was a champaign bucket, I think, and a chair. I'll include all of those notes in the show notes, artmarketingpodcast.com, so you can see an actual physical example.

Pro tip, if you're going to go with the tried and true fishbowl method, do not start the day with an empty fishbowl. Put a couple of BS business cards in there or that you have from wherever, and get the party started, so to speak. People will be more liable to put them in. If that doesn't work, you want to try something a little bit different, you can go with the good old tried and true clipboard and paper. Dollar clipboard from Office Depot. Put some paper in there, put first name, email address and some lines. Have people fill it out that way. This one can be incredibly effective, too. Sometimes the simpler is just better and easier.

Sometimes you can do it in conjunction with the fishbowl and the clipboard. "Oh, I don't have a business card." "Really? Try my super sweet clipboard," so you can do those two. A third way to do it is you can even use an iPod that's on a stand. Now, if it's WiFi or 3G connected, some people really like this, to use the technology. If you're an Art Storefronts customer, you put your lead capture on there, and they just, boom, they put their email address right in. It goes directly into your system. That's a cool way to do it.

Your mileage might vary. Use what works best for you, what works best for the situation. Art fair, busy, lot of foot traffic, whatever the case may be. Just test. I think that's a great thing to do, so that's the how you go about doing it. The what is, what are you going to give away? There's lots of room for creativity here. It can be just about anything. You can try different things, come up with different things. On Randy's, and I took a closeup picture of his sign, like I said, it says, "Fine Art Canvas Giveaway." No more detail than that. He doesn't talk about the size, he doesn't talk about anything else. The sign is just out there saying that.

I think, do what, pick whatever works best for you, and experiment with it, whether it's a print or a calendar or a coaster or something giant, whatever you do, right? You adjust it to taste on how big of a gift it is, or how big of a prize it is, depending on the size of the art fair you're at. You're going to want something a little bit

better if you've got a much bigger show than smaller. Figure it out. Don't overthink it. Walk around an art show, somebody else is going to be doing it. Walk around an art show the next time you're at an art show or an art fair and see what techniques other people are using. Don't need to overthink it, you just need to do it.

Give it a shot, do it, see how you go. You'll learn from it each and every time you do it, and you'll get better, and I really do believe you do this every time it warrants it, that there's going to be enough opportunity to get email addresses there and build your list. Very simple, sounds very simple, so few artists are doing it. It's very rare that I see anybody do it, and it just works. Really encourage you guys to do that every time.

Now then, at the end result of this, you're like, "Okay, great. I've gathered some email addresses. Sweet, I'm rolling. Now what?" This is the point in time where everybody that completes step one usually does not complete step two, and step two is really the best part of this entire fishbowl technique, operation tactic, as I see it and like they outline it, because you can't exactly go down to the ATM machine, put in your card, enter the PIN and withdraw those email addresses and spend them on a Saturday night, right? That's not going to work.

What do you got to do? You've got to email these folks. Let me tell you, what a fantastic way to get a great open rate when you email these folks saying whether or not they won the contest. That's an email people are going to open. More on that in a second. To keep the math simple, let's just say you did your art fair, your craft show, whatever it was, and 100 business cards ended up in your bowl, right? Awesome. You're going to take, out of that 100, you're going to pick one winner.

The next step is you're going to email that person that won and congratulate them. Let's just say it was Tina. She's from Carson City, Nevada. "Hey, Tina, congratulations! You won the contest! Awesome," and then figure out whatever it is that you're going to give Tina, whether you're letting them pick a piece of art, whether it's a pre-established one, whatever the case may be.

The next step, and this is the gold, you email the other 99 folks and you thank

them so much for entering the contest. You can even include the image, "Hey, congratulations to Tina, our winner from Carson City. Here's what she won," and da da da da, but then you let those other 99 know, "You know what, I am so bummed you guys didn't win, and I want to thank you so much for taking the time to enter the contest that I want to just do something for you, and I wanted to give you a one time discount," let's just say, "store wide, to pick up a piece of my art. It expires in 24, 48, 72 hours." I'm normally, I like the 48 hour sweet spot, but you can experiment. The key is some sort of discount and make sure that there's a time sensitivity to it and it expires.

Let's just reiterate what went on there and unpack it. You have this group of people that's shown interest in your art. Admittedly you're going to have a few people in there that are just, I enter every contest possible to win, but you get those three or four people out there, and in our example, you're going to have 95 people that have shown some interest in your art, that are waiting for an email because they want to see whether or not they won the contest. Everybody's going to open that thing. What a great opportunity to give them a discount to pick up some of your art.

Now, discount, charged word. Some people find it very easy to do, see a great level of success doing it and are happy to do it. Other people write emails to me all the time or use that chat thing that I was talking about earlier, like, "These people that are discounting all the time, you're devaluing my art. You're ruining everything. I'm never going to charge full price," it's clearly a charged subject. We plan on getting into it in future podcast episodes. For the time being, come up with some sort of discount that is comfortable for you. I don't, it doesn't matter what it is. It needs to be some sort of incentive for these other 99 people.

You'll find that that is a really, really rich fishing ground, because in so many cases, you've got, and as a precursor, I would say, I recorded an episode a little bit earlier, I think it was episode three, Not All Traffic Is Created Equal. If you haven't listened to that, I encourage you to, because I define three levels of traffic which, in this case, is cold, warm, and hot. The concept being, cold doesn't have any idea who you are, doesn't know you. Warm, just getting to know you. Hot, ready to make, almost ready to make a purchase but didn't.

That's what you're left with, this group of people that you're emailing is anywhere from warm to hot traffic. On the warm side, they've come by your booth and they saw you or saw your art, got to know you, met you, put a business card in a fishbowl, all the way up to, it might have been some hot traffic, like, "I was walking by. I saw this amazing piece of art. I was about to buy it. The next thing you know, I saw Bob from the beach. He was talking about how good the waves are. I got turned around, I went and bought a Slurpee, and I left. I got distracted, but my credit card was almost out of my wallet. I was ready to pull the trigger."

What a fantastic opportunity it is to send an email to this warm and hot traffic and potentially get another sale. Especially, especially with, you're in the booth, you're talking to somebody, you're engaging some conversation. I come walking by, I see your stuff, I really like it. I don't want to bother you. I'm busy, somebody's babysitting my dog at home, or kids, or whatever, so I just fill out the list really quick and I leave. There's so many of those scenarios where you've got this great person to start a relationship with, or potentially, even get a sale out of.

It's a fantastic technique. It's totally effective, and very, very few people do step two after the step one, so I think the two of them used in conjunction, and especially rinse and repeat often, is and can be just absolutely crazy, crazy effective, and there's even one more step to this that I love, which is an even bigger pro tip, I'd say. I hate that word, pro tip. I don't even know why I use it, but okay.

You had a contest, everybody entered, somebody won. What now? You're not done yet. You've got one more step. What's going to happen, and for this example, let's just say you're shipping your piece of art to whoever won, which is probably the most likely, but maybe if you're local, they'll come by your gallery or you'll deliver it, whatever. You can still use the technique, but for our example, let's just say, somebody won the contest. You're shipping them the art.

One of two things is going to happen after you ship the art. Either A, the minute it arrives, Tina is going to be so stoked she's going to say, "Patrick, I just wanted to write this email. I love the art. It looks so great on my wall. Thank you so much," or, "I love that whatever, thank you so much," or step two, they're not going to write you an email, in which case, get the tracking information and wait a couple

of days until after it's arrived, and then follow up with your own email.

Either way, at the end of that, when this person has potentially received your art, is so stoked, that's when you come with the ask. "Hey, Tina. Patrick. So stoked you like the art. Wondering if I could ask a favor." Great opportunity for the ask. This works almost every time. "Would you mind taking a picture of yourself holding the art that I could potentially share for my social media following? It really helps me out and people on my page love seeing this stuff."

Alternatively, the best that you can hope for, my experience, my opinion, the person holding the piece of art with that smile. You can't fake that picture. You almost want it on cell phone more than you want it on a professional camera, because it's just real and it's awesome and it's the finished product, or if they're not comfortable being behind the camera, then get them to take a couple of cell phone pictures of the art hanging on their wall. "I'd just love to see where it ended up in your house. If it's hung up, could you take a few photos of it and share it with me?"

Definitely do that ask as well, because the next thing you know, you just got a brilliant piece of content that you can reference on your Facebook, your Instagram, your email, hopefully all three in conjunction, and it's just good content. It's just good content, and it gives you some romance content there that you can use going forward.

One more step, one more little bonus that you can get out of the entire thing, and I really do believe this is one of these techniques that you just got to bite the bullet. Make the 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, \$70, \$100 investment, whatever it is, in you, in your business, and give it a shot. See how effective you can be at it, and by all means, come back to the site and chat me up. Let me know how it worked.

Hope you enjoyed that technique, and we'll see you on a future episode. For all the show notes, links, anything else that was mentioned, of course you can go to the artmarketingpodcast.com, and if you're enjoying what you're hearing so far, love love love if you subscribe on iTunes or leave us a review on iTunes. That's how new people find the show. We'd be super thankful if you did, but thanks for

listening, and I'll talk to you guys soon.