

## AMP 008: AOV and the "Shoot First Ask Questions Later" Technique



### Show Notes

- See the Multi-Panel Wall Art feature in action [in this post](#)
- [Amazon's favorite method](#) of increasing AOV
- Take a listen to [AMP Episode 001](#) to hear how artist Kim Vergil increased her AOV with a smooth online/offline tactic
- [Rate and Review](#) the Art Marketing Podcast on iTunes

## Transcribe

Greetings and welcome. You're listening to the Art Marketing Podcast, and I have a question for you. There are essentially only three ways to increase the online sales in your business, and I'm curious if you know what those three ways are, and which of the three that you're working on? So I want to answer that question today. Before I do, this whole thing started with an email. We released a new feature this week at ASF. For those of you who don't know, new to the podcast. It's brought to you by Art Store Fronts. And we make website software for artists, art galleries, and print studios.

We released a new feature, and I had to write the email to introduce it. And I started thinking about how best to present this feature. The why, why did we build it. That led to a back and forth email chain with the customer, which led to some shower thoughts, which led to this podcast. First, I want to answer, I want to get to the question that I started with. Then I want to get into this new feature situation. And then I want to get into a technique I like to call the, "Shoot first and ask questions later," technique.

So back to my question. What are the only three ways that you can increase both your online and offline sales? Number one is you can increase the number of customers you have. This is everything that you would think it is, and you're all doing it. Doing art fairs, having gallery shows, buying Facebook traffic, word of mouth, SEO, email marketing, et cetera. While it's always the first step to get your business started, it's also the most expensive part of increasing sales. Number one, increasing the number of customers.

Number two is you can increase the average order value, or AOV. Everybody in marketing and e-commerce cites the Mickey D's example. You don't think, when you get up there and you order your burger, do you want fries with that? So, that immediately puts it into context, right? It's increasing that order of value by adding more to it. If you want to think about who's the best at this in e-commerce, think of none other than our buddies at Amazon.

And when you're shopping and you look down below, whatever it is you're about to buy, customers who looked at this, also bought this. You know, you've got that widget of all the similar products. Or once you've completed the checkout process, add this to your cart to save on shipping, or whatever that shenanigans they play. Or the customers that bought this, bundled with this. Like, not only are you gonna get the magic clock radio, you're also going to buy it with the four AA batteries.

So all of those are AOV plays. Essentially, a customer that was coming to your website and was probably only gonna spend a hundred bucks, you figured out a way of, through one of those creative methods, to get them to spend 150 bucks. That's in also increasing your sales.

The number third way, is you can increase the number of repeat purchases. Think discounts to existing customers, special deals for just them, emailing them, getting them to come back to your site and purchase. So those are literally, the only three ways that you can increase online sales, or offline sales for your business, for that matter. And so I find that most people, it's like where are you on those three ways?

And let's just keep the number three rolling. Most people, when you bring that up, fall into three groups. Group number one, it's the first you've heard of it. Awesome! The great takeaway for you is hopefully it will get you thinking a bit differently about those three different levels. That's a huge win for you.

The second group is, you were sort of aware of this concept, but more accidentally, right? Like, you were trying to upsell. Even perhaps, offline. I think back to the first episode of this podcast. It was with an artist named Kim Vergil. And in that podcast, she tells a story about how she showed up at her client's house to deliver the piece of art that they'd purchased. She'd brought four or five other pieces of art with her and made some additional sales. So whether or not Kim knew about these three things, you know had them articulated and written down on a 3 1/2 x 11 postcard on the wall, she was working on number two. Like, she worked on increasing AOV. Or potentially, you're sending deals to your existing customers, or you're naturally working on number two or number three without knowing it. Right, without formally having it articulated. So, I find that a lot of people fall into that group.

Or, potentially, you're in group three, where you are totally aware of number one, two and three and you're actively working on number two and number three and designing campaigns to get your existing customers back and to increase the AOV and you're doing it extremely intentionally. And I think the biggest tendency that you see with most, not just art sellers and artists, like yes, artists, but with most e-commerce merchants in general even I would say, is the majority of people focus 100% of their attention on increasing the number of customers, or the vast majority of their attention on increasing the number of customers and very little on number two or three, the AOV or increasing the number of repeat purchases.

So, I think stating them, laying them out, articulating them, is a great step, no matter where you are in your journey. And if you're just getting started, obviously there's a chicken and egg situation. You can't work on number two or number three, AOV or repeat purchases if you don't have some customers to begin with. So yes, you need to focus on number one and you need to get some customers. But let me tell you, you could start working on number two and number three after you get just a couple of sales. Not a hundred customers, just a couple. You can work on increasing AOV and you can work on trying to get those customers back.

So I think that's a great way to articulate it, a great thing to be thinking about and something that I'd love to go into more detail on in future episodes. But let's get to this new feature that I mentioned earlier and specifically today, the AOV. So we released this new featured art storefront and it has the ability to sell multi-panel art, otherwise known as polyptych, triptych and diptych art. In layman's terms- I don't even know if I pronounced that correctly. In layman's terms, it's where you take your image, you chop it up into multiple different pieces and you hang those pieces on the wall and it makes up the one big image, right? So, let's just say it was a canvas of a palm tree. You cut that big canvas of a palm tree into four or five or three different pieces and then you hang them up all on the wall and it still makes the image of a palm tree, but there's like some spacing.

Hopefully you know what that is and you're with me. If not, you can go to [artmarketingpodcast.com](http://artmarketingpodcast.com). I'll include an image of one of these in the show notes. So anyway, we released this feature and for the email, I was attempting to articulate the why, why do we build this one? And I think, this is one of the cool things about ASF now, is that we have like a really good customer base that is selling a high volume of art. So we have really good data, you know, a strong data set on things like AOV. We understand the averages, and perhaps more importantly, most importantly, when something is above average. So we noticed a few customers that hacked our system, so to speak, which was not technically designed to properly sell or display these multi-wall art pieces. So, they figured out a way to shoehorn it in there and they started listing and they started selling these things and guess what? We noticed that their AOV, their average order value, is way, way up. Way above average.

So it turns out that offering these products made a great impact on AOV. They were increasing these customer sales. And it makes sense, right? Like instead of selling one big, piece of canvas art or metal or whatever, acrylic, whatever it is. You're selling anywhere- or if it's an original, you're selling anywhere from two to five individual pieces that make up that one piece. So it stands to reason that the price tag is gonna go up and hence an increase in AOV and you're gonna be making more money from your art. So, you're getting more money out of your customers as the result of offering this product. And the data was so compelling, in fact, that we went ahead and built it into our platform in a really slick way, so that customers can now offer the product in various different sizes and media types and we have this wall preview tool so they can see it in various different walls. It's all really cool.

I mention this not as a sales pitch for the software, but just to say this multi-panel triptych, diptych stuff, it works. It's working very well and if you have the opportunity to use it for your work, I think it's worth a shot. It's absolutely, appears to be really, really, really good in our early testing for increasing AOV and increasing your business.

So, anyway, I finished off that new feature email, sent it off and by the way, if your interested in seeing the feature I'll put a post in the show notes too. It's artmarketingpodcast.com. But anyway, sent the email. A customer emailed me back with a dilemma. So we started going back and forth on this issue. And it was at that point, during this email back and forth, where I started recommending what I thought they should do, and I thought of the wisdom, and I really do believe wisdom, and what I like to call the "shoot first and ask questions later" method. So, let me explain this, and let me channel some Frost here and say two roads diverged into a wood, right? The path to the left, path A, is gonna be the path that I'm gonna take and this is what I recommended to this customer.

And basically, I want to test this multi-panel thing. I don't have everything figured out. I don't know who's going to print it for me, I don't know how much it's going to cost, who's going to ship it for me. I have a vague idea of cost. So what I did was I went into my store, I listed the thing, set it live, and sat back and see if I got any orders. So all in, I spent, let's say an hour, two hours tops. And these items are now live in my store. OK, so that's the path to the left, path A that I took.

Path B, the one this customer was on, was you know, they thought about selling this multi-panel art. They were really excited about it. But their problem was that their particular printer that they were using didn't offer it as a service. And they lived in a geographic area such that printers weren't close, so they couldn't just drive to their local ones.

But anyway, let's just play this scenario out, right? So, you emailed your printer. He said he couldn't do it. You're like, "Oh, man. I need to find another printer." You start emailing other printers. You get some replies. You do some back and forths. Potentially, you do some site visits. You end up deciding on the one printer that you like. You go to that printer and you say, "Hey, I want to order a couple of these things so I have them and I can understand what they look like and play with them." So you order a couple of them. So now you're a couple hundred, thousand bucks into them testing whatever they may cost. You sort out your shipping options. You're going back and forth. You're getting it all ready to go. Then, finally, you get it added and it's in your store, right?

So you're now a day's worth of time, and more importantly, let's be honest here. All of that shenanigans back and forth probably took you at least a month, month and a half, depending on how busy you are, right? So you've got two different paths there. I just went for it. Didn't worry about any of that stuff. Didn't worry about setting up any of it. Put it in my store, took it live, took me a couple hours and that was that. You spent the month and a half worth of time, the energy, the effort and now we're both live, right?

So one of two things is going to happen here. And let's just outline them. It's going to be scenario one or scenario two. It's scenario one. And let me start out being negative Nancy here. Let's just say nothing happens. No sales. No emails. No interest. Crickets. Crickets. So for me, I wasted a few hours. I got back to working on my business and what I know works. A few months later I realized that these things are not working for me, so I pulled them from my store and I got back to work. You on the other hand, that took the other path, you wasted days worth of time and actual months worth of time to gather the feedback let alone how much extra time that is because you didn't get live in the time that I was live. Let alone the brainspace for just all of that and working it out, thinking it through and everything else. To then also take it out of your store and keep going, but you're now months behind where you would have been, right?

So that's scenario one, maybe that would happen. Or let's just play it out, scenario two. Let's say we're both actually getting orders and we have to ship it to the customer. OK well this is great for you. You've got it all ready to go. So you ship it to the customer. Oh, yeah. Nice work. Well done. Well played. You've got your validation and these things will continue to sell. Me on the other hand, what do I do? Oh no, oh no, oh no, oh no. The world is ending. I don't know how to make this thing or ship it. The sky is falling. Or is it? I now have one thing. Well. Two things, if I'm being honest, naturally.

One is the validation that this product works. You've got that too. The other is a customer's money. And I'm now keen to keep both of them. So what do I do? I realize that this person that just ordered likes me, just pulled a credit card out and gave me money and is a human being. I call them, or email them, come clean on what I was doing, ask them how they would like to proceed. Likely, they'll want to work with you and you scramble to get the product made and shipped and they're part of the process. And that's all awesome. Or, worst case, God forbid, you refund the customer and then you go on with the process of sorting out how you're going to get it all done and working. But you're doing so now, with the validation you're going to be selling these things and that it's an effective item for you to ask, right?

So, you understand the "shoot first and ask questions later." It's one of the things that I just love, love, love about marketing and e-commerce in today's day and age. Like how quickly you can run these types of tests and save yourself so much time, energy, effort and headache. And it became profound to me as I was writing the emails back and forth. I was like, this is such a great lesson. And it's so effective. I mean the method, just works. Perhaps, as your listening to this, the multi-panel wall art example, it does not work for you. Fine. Let me give you some other examples.

This one I get all the time. I get this like, we run these webinars once every two weeks and I always get this question. It's like, "I can't get my website live. Patrick I can't get my website live." Why can't you get your website live? "I've got to get my artwork professionally photographed. It won't look as good as it does in person. The texture won't come through. There's no way it'll ever sell. I just can't get it live without getting it professionally photographed. How do I do that?" To which I reply, yes you can. Shoot it with your iPhone and put it online. You can get that done in a day. If you're not happy with how it looks after it's live, you can go and hire a professional photographer from there. You might find out that the iPhone photography is enough to get the job done. In many case, it is. I've seen it. But you can still get the professional photographer down the line but get going, start making the sale.

Another one that I get where this method works. "I hand sign all my prints. I actually live in Taos, New Mexico, and my printer's in San Diego. So how will I be able to hand sign my prints? I need to get this figured out before I can start selling prints." No, you don't. Start selling. Put that product in the store. List it and see if it sells. A hand signature might not be a deal breaker. If it is, guess what? On that first sale, you're due for a trip to San Diego anyway. You're worth it. So get on a plane and go, but then realize you've got a bigger problem and you do need to hand sign everything, or offer it as an option or not. The point is, well, not the point is.

Perhaps, just to give a few more quick examples. Perhaps it's offering a new media type, like metal or it's selling calendars or perhaps it's selling an entire series of prints and grouping them all together in one giant price tag. You get the point. The point is, shoot first and ask questions later. Get that thing into your store, take it live and see if you get sales. You will be amazed at the amount of time that you save yourself. Stop with the excuses. Stop with the- and I'm not pointing a cannon at anyone in particular. I could look at the mirror and point the cannon 'cause I fall victim to this all the time. Internally, what we do at our storefront, it's so easy to fall into this trap. And you've gotta just stop with the excuses. Stop with the creating problems before they exist, thinking you know what the customer wants, or you're smarter than the customer. Let them decide. Let them tell you. And you know, start shooting and ask questions later.

So let me sum things up. Two takeaways, obviously. In terms of the AOV, the average order value, think about your store and average order value, and how you might be able to increase it. And I actually think this would be an amazing podcast episode in and of itself, and if you think so too, come to the [artmarketingpodcast.com](http://artmarketingpodcast.com). We've got a little chat widget and chat me up, say "Do that episode, do that episode." Cause I'd love to do that episode. But there's a number of different creative ways that you can do this. To give you some examples: Sure, absolutely, it could be adding multi-panel wall art. We've got the data on that. Or it could be adding calendars, or it can be upselling greeting cards or offering them another [inaudible 00:17:00] to the discount.

And it could be after the fact too. If somebody orders from your store, call them up or email them and say "Thank you so much for that order. You're amazing. As a way of saying thank you I wanted to give you a 40% off coupon to the entire store but the deal expires in one week." Something along those lines, right. Like that's an AOV play. And you could automate that email for Pete's sake and just have it sending out. What do you care. You might get some extra sales and you might increase your AOV. So I think that's an incredible thing to be thinking about for your business.

The other takeaway on the shoot first thing is stop overthinking things and just give it a shot. If you're thinking about selling something, then just list it. Get it online, get some feedback and then worry about things to start solving the problems. And I think that's a fantastic challenge. I think everybody out there could come up with something like that that they were potentially thinking about doing, potentially thinking of getting into. Just list it. See if it sells. If it does, go create it. Go create it after the fact, because that's a really good problem to have and you get validation.

So, that's it for today. Hope you enjoyed the episode. If you are enjoying it, love, love, love if you left us a review on iTunes. It is the fuel that keeps this podcast running. Thank you and have an absolutely fantastic day.