

## AMP 011: Artists Are Start-Ups + Instagram Direct Messaging



### Show Notes

- Paul Graham's "[Do Things that Don't Scale](#)"
- [An infographic](#) with examples of things that don't scale.
- VIDEO: [How to Install and Use NoxPlayer](#)
- VIDEO: [How to Send a Direct Message in Instagram](#)
- [004: Pivoting to Find Your Niche with Artist William K. Stidham](#)
- [Rate and Review](#) the Art Marketing Podcast on iTunes

## Transcribe

Welcome, welcome, welcome to another edition of the Art Marketing Podcast. Today, we're going to start out by talking about feedback and being close to our customers, and it's a major theme of how we actually do marketing at our storefronts. I think one of the ways that manifests itself is actually talking to customers. Imagine that, right?

We try to do this in every way possible, and it's in-person when possible, on the phone with customers regularly, it's via email virtually all the time, via chat windows on the podcast site, and even in the Facebook and Instagram comments, in which case a lot of times those aren't customers, right? I don't farm that part out either. The interactions and the learnings that you can get from those conversations are just way too important. The vast majority of the time it's actually me in there responding to Facebook comments, sometimes to my own detriment when I get into it with the trolls, but that's neither here nor there.

The question becomes: Why? Why am I doing that? I believe that it's a marketer's job to understand the needs and wants of their customers and then how to meet those needs. I think, in today's digital world, it's just so easy to hide behind a website and push out social media updates, and it's easy to forget on the other end of that Instagram follower is actually a human being.

It's a relationship. Like all relationships, you're going to get out what you put into them. I think one of the great benefits of listening to one's customers and followers is it challenges you to how are you going to answer those

questions? How are you going to best help those folks out? By engaging and going through that exercise and practicing at it, you get better at it, right?

I found a great way to do that is with this concept that I use, and it's most artists are startups. What do I mean? Most artists are startups, right? Yep. It's an incredibly effective catch-all for answering a lot of the questions that come from a variety of different angles that I get on like a regular different basis, almost a daily basis. Let me explain what I mean by giving you a few examples.

Let's say somebody is just getting started. They've sold some art offline, they launch a website, they start the basics of marketing, they have been at it for a few months, and they just have not sold anything yet, nothing at all. They come, they write me an email, they call me up: "Patrick, I'm really bummed. I'm at this for 3 months. What's going wrong? What's wrong?" I said, "Guess what? You're a startup!" It's going to take years of grinding first of all, so don't think after 3 months of marketing you're going to be selling \$10,000 a month and eating a steak dinner every night. You're just getting started. You're a startup. Put your head down, get after it for a few years, and then see what's what. Nothing good comes easy.

Or another example. Let's say you've been at it for a few years, and you've actually sold only a piece or 2. Guess what? You're a startup. Startups take their products to market all the time, and a whole bunch of them fail, assuming you actually did some marketing work and you got your name out there. If you failed, you took your product to market and it failed, the market's

the market. You can BS it or fake it. It tells you the truth. The sad fact of the reality is your product may not be up to snuff; your art, it might not be resonating with people; you might have picked the wrong niche; or, perhaps, it's just crappy art, period.

Now, take it easy. No one is saying you're a crappy artist, it just might be time to pivot for you. It likely is time to pivot for you. Listen to the Bill [Stinum 03:24] podcast. I'll link to it. Bill pivoted, was about to quit, and it changed everything. No one said, "You're a crappy artist. You don't know what you're doing. You don't have your craft," but the product that he was bringing to market was not resonating. It wasn't working. He switched, he pivoted, and, as many startups have done and become incredible successes, i.e. Facebook, they pivoted. Don't take that situation personally, just know you might need to switch it up. You're a startup. You need to think like one.

Or there's even another example, it's an email I think I just got yesterday or 2 days ago, this dude is a mega-accomplished assignment photographer. He's been sent all over the world on assignment taking photos of everything. Multiple awards, crazy experienced, and some body of work, and he doesn't want to be an assignment photog anymore. He wants to start selling some fine art online and diversifying, right? Guess what? Yep. He's also a startup. This is a really hard one to swallow.

You're telling me that, after a 20 year career, all of these accomplishments, I'm a startup? Yep. In the email back, I actually wrote, "Yeah, that's great that you have accomplished all that and it's under your belt, but, let me tell you, the

internet does not give a starts with s and ends with t. They just don't." Audiences online are not like light switches. You don't just flip them on. It takes time and hard work to get a huge email list, social media following, and, yes, obviously, buyer. He's a startup.

Let's say you're tracking with me and bought in, "Yeah, okay. Great, Patrick. All right, fine. I'll acknowledge. I get it. I'm a startup. Sweet. Another buzzword I have to deal with. What now? What now?" I would answer, "Oh, yeah. What now?" You do what the smart startups do: do things that don't scale.

It's actually the title of an essay from a guy/legend named Paul Graham. He's a computer science guy, venture capitalist, and he writes a bunch of essays. I mean he's just legend [proved 05:15]. He wrote this essay, "Do Things That Don't Scale," which I'll include in the show notes. I really would love all of you guys to read it. It's amazing, amazing episode, but let me paraphrase it quickly.

It's, once you realize you're a startup, you have to realize that you need to be doing the things that don't scale, the things that are manual, the things you do by yourself, by hand, the scrappy, hard work, early stage things one does to get into the business and get it up and running, things that you could just simply not do if you were a bigger business, hence they wouldn't scale. Again, let's go over some examples.

Let's say, if you were a barbershop and you were just getting started, you might put a free haircut sign outside. Cut people's hair for free the first time.

You'll likely get some long, lifelong customers that are going to share your shop, bring friends. That's the catalyst you need to get that barbershop up and running at which point in time, after a little while, you're not going to do the free haircuts anymore because that would never scale.

Or let's talk about the AirBNB example. Pretty much everyone knows what AirBNB is, it's how you can rent people's houses instead of hotels all over the world. Early on, those guys realized that the photos of the rentals was the difference maker. If they didn't have the photos, these things just weren't getting rented. Not all of their listing customers had cameras, so what did they do? You got in the car and started driving to all of the listings themselves and paying photographers to go to all of the listings themselves and photograph these things. Again, that's not something they ever could have if they had thousands and thousands of listings, but that was the catalyst that got that business fired up and rolling, and, of course, that never would have scaled.

It goes on. Let's say you're starting a dog boarding business. You're a dog boarding startup. To get the business rolling and to get started, you're going to do something that doesn't scale, which is you're going to offer free pickup and delivery to every single solitary dog that gets boarded. You're not even going to charge for it because you just want to get some customers in the door and get them fired up and get them rolling.

You endured all that rant. Let me leave you with some hardcore tactical, something that you can get going on today, and something that does not scale. It's another Instagram technique. Again, why Instagram? Instagram is

now roughly at about 700,000,000 monthly users, 400,000,000 daily users, and 200,000,000 daily stories users. I love those Insta stories, but you can also do this on Facebook, but, for today's purposes, we're just going to be talking about the Instagram. This is essentially an Instagram DM technique, which is direct messages.

You're smart, good looking, and, best of all, you're marketing on Instagram. You're posting content regularly, and you're picking up new followers. Let me ask you: How many of these new followers are you sending a direct message to? All of them, right? Of course you are. It's time to do something that does not scale. What if you started sending every single new follower you got a direct message? Don't worry, if you've never sent a direct message, you don't know what this looks like, I've got a detailed screencast that we've recorded, and I'm going to include it in the show notes, [artmarketingpodcast.com](http://artmarketingpodcast.com). Start sending everyone that follows you a direct message. Ask a question. Start a relationship. Realize it's a human being behind that profile.

Let's get tactical and really break this down. Here's how it would work. You get a new follower. You click through to their profile. You learn a bit about who they are by looking at their photos. Sometimes, they're private. You can't see their photos. You just see their face. How about you send them a direct message? Let's say that Bob just followed you. You say, "Hi, Bob. I just wanted to say I really appreciate you following me. It means a lot to me. Can I just ask you one quick question? What was it about my art that convinced you to follow me? Thanks so much. Patrick."

You do this every day for every follower. You can even go backwards and ask old followers. Now, sure, plenty of folks will ignore you, but who gives a crap? Honestly, who gives a crap? You're not selling art to plenty of those. You're selling art to Bob who lives in Tallahassee, Florida, has a wife, 2 dogs, and likes bone fishing in the Keys in the weekends. Guess what? Bob just responded to your direct message. A relationship has been started. You have a back and forth as a result of your direct message. As the months go by, he starts to comment and post, and you comment back. The relationship blossoms and flourishes. The end of the year comes around, and Bob needs a Christmas present for his wife. Bob sends you another DM. That's the game, right?

It takes work, and it does not scale. It's a perfect example: Responding to every single solitary follower you get on Instagram with a direct, handwritten message is a epitome of a technique that does not scale. Let's go even deeper on the tactic. First of all, that's where you get started. I highly recommend you do that, but let's get even deeper on the tactic. Let's be true marketers.

You know your acronyms, and you especially love ABT. You've heard of ABC, [inaudible 00:10:01]. This is ABT. This is the marketer version. "Always Be Testing." How would this work?

You're going to get a spreadsheet going or whatever way you like to keep track of things. For every other follower, you're going to change up the message. For the first follower, you stick with the, "What convinced you to



follow me?" line that we used earlier. For the next follower, you're going to use a completely different message. Be you, and use a line that fits your art and style, craft at something witty and funny. "Hey, Bob, thanks for the follow. There's only 2 kinds of people out there, and it's they like steak medium rare or well done. Which one are you?" Right? Some sort of creative question like that.

The point is to get the relationship started. You ask one follower one question, the next follower the other question. Rinse and repeat. Alternate it up, and, in the AB test, you track those results. You see which one gets more responses. You drop the loser, and then you write another new question, and you keep that going on. That's a pretty simple system, and then you've got direct messages going to all of your followers, and you have different messages, so you're testing 2 things. That's kind of some advanced marketing, but it's easy to do and insanely effective and powerful.

Let me stop you right now and, while I'm at it, get even further tactical. This is exactly how I can see it on Twitter. I'm going to get the direct messages myself. "Patrick, I get 15 new followers a day. Okay? How am I supposed to type all of those messages on my phone with my thumbs? I can barely type with this thing in the first place. No way I could do that." Well, technically, you could copy and paste on the iPhone too, but I've got you covered.

You don't have to do it that way. You can install what's called an emulator. It's basically a digital version of an Android phone that runs on your computer. You install it, you have Instagram on your computer where you can use your keyboard. It makes executing this technique really actually a breeze. There are

many emulators out there. There's one at our storefronts that we like. It's called the Knox Player. Again, I got a video on how you install this thing and use this thing. You can watch it. You can be up and running in 10 minutes of viewing this, and you could be sending direct messages to 100 percent of your Instagram followers tonight, today, so I'll include that also in the show notes.

Now, go give it a shot. Do something that doesn't scale. Do it for months, and I mean months. Give it time and energy and effort, and you're going to see how powerful it can be to do the things that do not scale. Remember, you're likely a startup, so act like one. Right?

Thanks for listening. For all the resources, [artmarketingpodcast.com](http://artmarketingpodcast.com). If you're the podcast, we would love if you would share it with a friend. "Hey, Bob, check out this awesome Art Marketing Podcast. It's amazing." Anyway, also, if you want to see how we do this at our storefronts, practice what we preach, we're running this technique ourselves right now, then give us a follow on Instagram. You might just get a DM, huh? We are [art\\_storefronts](https://www.instagram.com/art_storefronts) on Instagram.

On that note, thanks, and have a great day.