

Seminar 11: How to build and maintain relationships with your clients

Transcript

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Good evening everybody, hope you're doing well. I would love to welcome you all again to our seminars presented to you by Victory Art. I'm Viktoria Pikovska, I'm the founder and today we're going to talk about a very, very important thing that many artists don't properly acknowledge.

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Let me introduce us a little bit first. So, Victory Art is all about breaking stereotypes and building new perceptions. I would love to ask you all to be mindful of others when they're speaking.

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I would love you to keep the microphones off. If you have any questions or you would like to add something, please add it in the comments, or you can wait till the end. And, I would love you to enjoy it. These seminars are actually done in cooperation with Norway Grants so definitely check them out. They're working on great things in the Art Industry as well as the environment, so have a look at their amazing projects.

[01:05]

My name is Viktoria and I'm the founder, and today we're going to have this session together again. I used to be a professional photographer, now I'm an entrepreneur, and my goal is to really help people from Central and Eastern Europe show the world how talented they are.

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Today we're going to discuss an amazing topic which is focused on how to build and maintain relationships with your clients. This is something that many artists don't really understand or properly focus on and it's pretty sad because this is one of the main things you should do as an artist.

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So today we will start with an introduction to building relationships with clients, tricks to maintain good relationships with your clients, and as well the 2 skills you need to develop to get the most out of your clients in a positive way of course. So, partnerships how to really build and maintain relationships with their clients? Well, we already discussed many development tips and tricks.

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However, the relationship with your clients is the most important thing you have because you have a really close relationship and you build a proper relationship, then you are able to benefit from it for months, even years, or maybe even decades. So, the main thing is to really develop a mutually beneficial relationship with your client, which relates to success not only for you, but for them as well.

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So, one of the things you should consider is how to really appreciate the relationship with your clients. The key to a sale is to really have initiation with your clients. So, in sense that you don't just wait around, or hope for it, but you're really proactively approach your potential clients.

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It's mainly about convincing people about your vision as an artist. You can be an amazing artist, but if you don't talk to your clients or find the right clients, then you will not make any sales. That's how it is. Many galleries, museums, collectors, dealers really appreciate if someone is very proactive.

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So, when you're an artist and you really want to be proactive, that's the important thing. It takes time and effort to create and maintain a list of people you should stay in touch with. It's not easy. It's going to take a lot, but it's definitely worth it.

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We all have a tendency to prefer a specific person, and maybe you have some clients who are pursuing you actively or constantly buying your products. It's good to really still be equal towards your clients you know.

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In a sense, treat them equally. Instead of the fact that someone did not buy yet or are interested in buying. Help them out. Help them really understand how they should work with you. Be sure to give everyone a certain attention. For example, I was sitting in one hotel and I had a meeting in this particular hotel. I needed help. The service passed by me, like five times. At first, I was not sure if it was really service, but after like 10 minutes of waiting there and a girl was looking at me, I found out that that was the girl who working the service desk but I was standing by the services desk.

[05:13]

She did not even come to me. Do you think I will ever go back to that hotel unless I really have to? No, I will never suggest anybody because I did not get treated properly as a client who came there. So if people will feel the same way around you, why they should buy from me you know?

[05:31]

I went there for a meeting and I would not suggest people go to spend hundreds of euros for a night there. Why should they spend a few thousand euros for your painting if you don't give them attention? It's always good to make the first move. Clients don't just show up, you have to be open about your art, your style. It's great to have an amazing reputation because if you're an artist who has a reputation of not being very friendly to clients, that's not going to help you build your career or pursue it further.

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Just go talk to them, ask what they're looking forward, why they should buy a certain painting. Be open to them. As mentioned before, it has to be a mutually beneficial relationship, so make sure that you and they are aware of the outcome of the collaboration. Maybe they want to do creative projects.

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We have amazing artists who are really doing creative projects. However, if clients don't really see productivity from them or there is another particular like a level of a conversation between clients and them, that's making the whole process so much more complicated. People then sometimes back off from collaboration with those people because they do not really see how they can work with them.

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So think about it as well. Very important thing. I know there's the trend social media platforms, online eagles, but go and talk to people in person. That was a little bit tougher with the coronavirus and the lockdowns. But even if you have a chance to maybe have a small visit in a cafe or if you can go to an Art

fair and talk to a few people, go do that because people right now are really missing social interaction and you are one of those people who can provide them with this kind of cooperation or this kind of interaction that will make them feel very good.

[07:56]

Always have your business card with you. I personally don't have any more business cards. I have everybody on LinkedIn because I had thousands of business cards. I went to so many networking events. I get completely lost. Now I have everybody on LinkedIn. If I need to talk to someone I can search there, it's kind of like my telephone list or book so I can call or email or message anybody. But if you are still working with business cards or your profile is not as strong, make sure that you have a business card ready to give to them.

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What's an even better thing for you to do is to ask clients to give you the business card because then you have their information, and you can actively pursue them.

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All relationships have to start somewhere, you know, in the beginning. So, make sure that you don't rush it, and you don't bombard people because if they feel like this artist really wants to just sell me something, then they won't feel like they really want to work with you because they will feel literally pushed into buying something.

[09:13]

That's what no one wants to do, so develop your relationships slowly. The best way is to do it face to face, like a physical interaction. Of course, now that's a complicated thing. But yes, we have to work with what we have currently and in terms of like where to really get to know people, for you it can be Art Fairs. It can be different kinds of Art events, it can be a gallery opening, can even be business networking event.

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I was in many events where I met people. It was usually like some training association and even artists were there, and it's amazing because they were really thinking about businesspeople and that's what you want. You want to think as a businessperson.

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So, if you are building your connections, don't forget about the previous ones, but make sure that you are memorable to those people. In the beginning, we said that there are two skills you need to develop to get the most out of your clients. As an artist, you're your own boss. You take control of your business; you have 100% accountability. Whether you delivery or not, you have accountability for everything. Whatever goes good, what goes wrong.

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So, make sure that you don't let your clients decide everything for you. Definitely adjust, but make sure that you have your boundaries, because now you're an artpreneur. So, if you don't have your boundaries, then you will be going from one side to the other. No one will understand you, you will that it will literally lose yourself as a person. So set the boundaries and be your own boss.

[11:09]

One of the toughest things for a beginner is to choose the right client. Managing clients can be challenging. Some clients are amazing and easy to work with, give you praise for your views. But there

is another group of clients who are not like that. Clients can be very picky and complain a lot. The relationship might be demanding in general. The whole collaboration will be extremely exhausting, so make sure that you are able to let go of some clients if the sale is not worth the money.

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Clients should show appreciation for you and your work in a certain level, in a professional manner. If it's not happening like this be aware of those things. If they're concerned about price or they want something unrealistically fast or they ignore you or they're not consistent, then you can already sense that probably the sale will not happen. Or if it happens, there will be some kind of like, very shady thing connected.

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So do not ignore those kinds of red flags, you know, find the right clients for yourself. The second thing is, don't give people false hopes. If you know that you cannot deliver in a week, then don't promise that. If you know that you cannot make an artwork which is huge because you don't have space or skills or something, tell them. Maybe you can make for smaller ones and then create square, but don't overdeliver.

[13:01]

Like, I mean, overpromise and then under-deliver. Always overdeliver but don't overpromise and under-deliver because this will really damage your reputation. Everything you do as an artist affects the way you're perceived as a client and really think how you want to be perceived. Do you want to be perceived as a professional, or do you want to be perceived as an amateur who does not keep up with his/her words?

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Something I learnt very soon in the business is that if you agree with someone on something send a follow up email or a message or letter after the meeting. So, there's black and white, if they have some notes, they can react to it or they think that there was something else and they can react to it.

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But there is already something that's written down and they cannot come back to you. So, make sure you have that kind of thing if you're doing custom artwork or you're doing creative projects or selling artwork, make sure it's written you have a contract, you as an artist, you have to be protected with contracts, otherwise you will have to pay back to clients for your artwork and you may not get it back. So really, think about it from this perspective.

[14:30]

I know that usually people, and especially artists, are very nice people and don't think this kind of stuff can happen, but that's the reality. Those things really happen. Also, highlight the most important things. Verbally repeat and communicate the most important things. Sometimes it happens that clients don't really listen to what you're telling the first time, but if you keep repeating it, then they are much more able to understand you clearly, and they feel much more safe as well in the sale.

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So make sure those things are there as well. If clients are asking questions, please answer in as much detail as possible. I don't think you have to write a two page long letter of just answering one question, but provide them with details. In this market, clients want as many details as possible before they purchase something, and you as an artpreneur, you're supposed to give them the information. So, make sure they have all the information in order to make the sale.

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And this was mentioned already before, but I'm going to repeat it. Keep the expectation realistic. If you're not able to deliver, don't promise to deliver something. It's not fair to clients and it's not fair to you. Also, always keep them updated. Keep them really updated about your changes. Especially if you're doing a customized project, it's very important to really keep clients up to date with your progress. People will love it if you update them, especially when they paid for something and they're waiting for delivery.

[16:35]

Afterwards make sure that there is a phone call/email/newsletter you're sharing with them, so they're kept with you along the way. Do not hesitate to go the extra mile, you know, to remind them, or even send them a present ceremony with clients of yours to really make them feel appreciated. In general, it's great to sometimes organize an event for the people you used to work with or purchase. Maybe if you have a new exhibition or opening up a gallery, or maybe you're participating in Art fairs. You can always send a free ticket to the best client and they'll probably come show up.

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So, think about all those things. What makes artists the most unique is when they overdeliver. Give you client a personalized note, a certificate of authenticity, or if they're purchasing a really expensive artwork give them something sketched on paper. That can make them really feel appreciated and feel unique. So, try to think about those options. Well, we're at the end of our lecture today.

[17:54]

This one was a little bit quicker than the previous ones, mainly because we already discussed many of these things before. So guys, if you have any questions, don't hesitate to ask right now or email us at curator@victoryart.eu. Next week, we're going to have an amazing guest speaker from Norway, from our partners at NOPA, and they are going to talk about career and experiences, mistakes to avoid and how to deal with negative feedback.

[18:29]

So, if you have any question you can ask right now and do not forget to sign up for our free consultancy sessions, which will be starting from 1st January onwards. I would love to say thank you to all of you for joining us and do not hesitate to follow Victory Art on our social media.

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Have a great evening!