I'D RATHER BE IN THE Studio

THE ARTIST'S no-excuse GUIDE TO SELF-PROMOTION

ALYSON B. STANFIELD
To all of the artists over the years who have used this book to make bold moves toward your dreams. Thank you for your trust and inspirational work.
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When I started my weekly email newsletter in 2002 there were no other weekly newsletters to help artists with their businesses. There may have been some that appeared less frequently, but I don’t believe they lasted. That’s when we were known as Art Biz Coach. In 2018 we became Art Biz Success, which better reflects the aspirations we have for our clients.

There was no Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, or Pinterest in 2002 and no podcasts, webinars, or Facebook Live.

When my first blog post was published on November 30, 2004, there were no other blogs that I know of specifically for helping artists with their businesses. I remember spelling b-l-o-g for my workshop attendees before explaining this very foreign concept to them. I explained that the word was short for “weblog,” a reference we no longer need to cite.

Little did I realize when I began this journey that I would have to be equal parts consultant and tech support for my artist-clients. I recall describing to my students in painstaking detail how to listen to a teleseminar by simply dialing on their phones. Yes, you just dial your phone and listen in. It’s magic! You would have thought I was giving them directions to Mars. Now, it’s simply “Click here to join me on the webinar.”

Is any of this bringing back memories?

The world is noisier today, and you are more tech savvy than you ever thought you’d have to be (or ever wanted to be). You have loads of information at your fingertips, which presents a different problem. With so much knowledge available, it’s difficult to discern what’s critical from what is a distraction that will throw you off your path. What you need instead of more emails, for example, are routines that
help you (1) make sense of all the information you’re consuming and
(2) run your art business with confidence—so you can spend more
time in the studio.

That’s why we at Art Biz Success devote most of our energy to
creating plans and systems for you, the artist, while providing support
and accountability to help implement them. The need for new systems
and support also explains why, after 10 years, I have updated I'd
Rather Be in the Studio, which we affectionately call IRBITS.

Much remains the same throughout all of the editions, starting
with the first (2008). There are still 8 big excuses that artists give for
not promoting their art—excuses that delineate the sections of this
book. One by one, I counter those excuses with step-by-step actions
you can take to move beyond them. At the same time, there is a set of
guiding principles for self-promotion. The original 6 principles have
been updated and expanded to 8 in this fourth edition.

I continue to emphasize nurturing personal relationships because
this is the most valuable thing you can do to improve your art career
and business. It feels better than adopting the latest technology hack,
and it also lasts a lot longer.

Speaking of nurturing relationships, you’d think that sending a
newsletter wouldn’t be that much different than it was 10 years ago,
but in both of the first two editions I suggested sending a newsletter
in the mail might be a good idea. Can you imagine? I’m not against
this practice, but it’s impractical for most people. I have been adamant
about the need to create and send a regular newsletter (or whatever
you want to call it) to subscribers. In this new edition, you’ll find that
my definition of a newsletter has evolved. I wanted to make it less
scary for some artists and to reflect the reality that so much of what
we put in a newsletter is also posted on social media first. It’s an
opportunity to leverage all of those social posts.

This fourth edition is most similar to the third edition, which was
published in e-book format only in 2015. The biggest difference
between these two editions is, of course, that this one is in print.
Message received! You like paper. I do, too. My hope is that by seeing
this book nearby, you use it more than you did the electronic version.

The first edition of IRBITS had a single mention of Facebook. In
contrast, the second edition (2011) was heavy on social media, with
an entire chapter on how to begin using social media. This fourth edition assumes that you already have social media accounts and know how to use them. Reminders to use social media are sprinkled throughout the relevant sections of the book. It’s critical to integrate social media throughout your marketing rather than view it as separate. Everything needs to work together.

By far the biggest change in this edition is the way the book is organized. To improve the flow, text and chapters were eliminated, condensed and moved from the second edition. Every attempt has been made to eliminate extraneous information that you probably already know or is no longer relevant. The goal is to help you focus on what is most important without sending you on a chase for the sake of gathering information. I’m a big fan of simplifying—of removing unnecessary passages and getting to the point, which is why I believe this book has resonated with so many artists over the years.

As with all previous editions, this edition is intended to be a reference for you. I hope it continues to serve and inspire. Thank you for your continued trust.
As an artist, you relish your freedom to paint, draw, sculpt, sew, cut, glue, throw, blow, or carve all day, every day. After all, that’s why you became an artist. You love having the freedom to create whenever you want and as much as you want. You can’t imagine a day in your life without art.

You may be one of the many, many artists who are happy to simply make art for yourself. But if you want to sell your work consistently and to an ever-widening audience, you must distinguish yourself from the crowd.

Artists are a dime a dozen. Everyone knows an artist or is related to one, although the truly remarkable artist is rare. However, if you are an artist trying to sell your work, you are no longer only an artist. You’re a businessperson as well. The stakes are high when you have to make a living from your art and the pressure mounts to become one of the truly remarkable artists who stand out. You can’t do that with a suitcase full of excuses.
I’ve listened to more excuses from artists than I care to recall. In the spirit of full disclosure, I’ve made up plenty of my own. However, my excuse-making days necessarily ended when I started my business and realized I had control over my destiny. I was now the boss. I had an even more frightening thought: *There’s no one to blame but me*. If I had not accepted 100% responsibility for my actions, I would have continued making excuses, complaining about circumstances, and not learning from missteps. The same holds true for you. You must accept the responsibilities that go along with being a professional artist.

If you want recognition and compensation for your work, you need to stick your neck out and start telling people about your art. You have to put yourself out there! Stop making excuses and start cultivating collectors for your art.

You first share your work with friends and family, then with other artists, then with strangers at arts festivals and galleries, and finally with critics and curators. At each stage of your career you need to take a leap of faith and answer difficult questions.

*Are you more afraid of failure or success? If you fail, what does that mean? That you can’t try again? If you succeed, will the demand for your art be more than you can handle?*

*What is the worst thing that might happen if you get out of the studio and share your art with more people? Can you live with that result and learn from it?*

*What is the best possible outcome of telling more people about your art? What impact will that have on your life and career?*

*Given the possible consequences, is it worth taking the risks?*

If you decide it’s worth the risk for more people to see your art, you are ready to get out of the studio and dive into self-promotion. Note that I used the prefix *self* in the previous sentence. The practice of selling art through intermediaries is rapidly disappearing. Today artists are able to sell directly to patrons. Witness the phenomenal growth of the eBay auction rooms, daily painting sites, and Facebook pages through which artists reach buyers and collectors in record numbers.

The same is true for the plethora of outdoor arts festivals, online galleries, and offline co-op and pop-up spaces. The possibilities can’t
be ignored. Even artists who sell directly through these relatively new markets should be creating good old-fashioned buzz, which is the thrust of this book.

The focus of *I’d Rather Be in the Studio* is on sharing your work with patrons, curators, critics, gallery dealers, and the general public. This book can’t make you into an art superstar. It can, however, help you make changes in how you approach promoting yourself and your art. When used consistently and with integrity, and when backed up with strong work, the ideas and practices within these pages can have an enormous positive impact on your career by helping you start or maintain the buzz. You want people to be talking about you and your art, but they can’t talk about you if they don’t know you exist. You should always be around the next corner to remind them of your art.

**PROMOTING YOURSELF SUCCESSFULLY**

In order to promote yourself successfully as an artist, you need to possess certain qualities. Self-confidence, the first requirement, is the hardest to attain. Because your art is personal and comes from deep within you, you have to get beyond self-doubts and be prepared to accept criticism and rejection. The other qualities on the list are likely to be easier to come by.

- Loads of self-confidence
- Passion for your work, for sharing it with others, and for art in general
- Emotional support from friends, family, or other artists
- Money—enough to get you through the slow times
- Good language skills
- Initiative, ambition, and determination
- Persistence
- A recognizable style and the talent to make it remarkable
- Good habits, routines, and rituals
- Integrity, reliability, and dependability

The first step in self-promotion is to accept and “own” eight principles. These principles—revised since the first edition of this
book—have become the foundation for my classes, writings, and workshops.

THE New PRINCIPLES OF NO-EXCUSE SELF-PROMOTION

1. **You are in charge of your career.** You have control over words, prices, artwork, and your image. People will take as much from you as you give them, so guard this power to remain in charge of your destiny. Accept 100% responsibility for your actions and make no excuses.

2. **Connections are critical to your success.** To succeed, you must make an effort to meet new people and to maintain relationships.

3. **There are no shortcuts.** Building a successful career and business is hard work, so you have to be all in. Life isn’t fair, the art world isn’t fair, and no one owes you anything.

4. **Anything goes!** There is no rulebook for promoting your art. Be as creative with your promotions as you are with your art.

5. **Technology is only a tool.** It serves no good purpose without the artwork and commitment to your career to back it up.

6. **Your artwork can’t speak for itself,** and the right language can help you sell your art.

7. **No one can promote your work better than you.** No one believes in it more than you do. No one wants you to succeed more than you do. Motivation and ambition must start within you.

8. **Every little step counts.** When you feel overwhelmed, write down all of your ideas and create a plan. Take the smallest action so you feel progress.
Once you accept and own these principles, you are on your way to no-excuse self-promotion. If you need to be reminded of them, pick up your copy on our support site [IdRatherBeInTheStudio.com]. Now it will be a cinch for you to tackle the 14 no-excuse actions that form the heart of this book.

PUTTING THIS BOOK TO WORK FOR YOUR ART CAREER

The book is to be used, not worshipped. To get the most from these pages, break the spine and write in the margins. (Okay, so if you have the e-book version, you can’t really break the spine. You get the idea.) Underline, highlight, flag, and annotate. Then send me a photo of your well-worn copy so I can see the book being put to good use. (I promise to ask permission before sharing it with anyone else.)

Read the Actions as needed, freely skipping from one topic to the next. This book is not intended to be read cover to cover, all at once, although many artists have done so. For example, it might make more sense to you read Action 12 and get organized before looking at anything else. Whatever you do, though, do not skip Actions 1, 2, 11, and 13. These should be reviewed at least once a year and even more frequently if things are changing rapidly for you.

Use the bonus material available to you on our support site at IdRatherBeInTheStudio.com and receive ongoing support from like-minded ambitious artists and me in my online classes and live programs found at ArtBizSuccess.com.

I hope this book will give you the tools and routines that make your time out of the studio more enjoyable. Pick and choose the techniques that work for you at this moment in your career—saving the rest for your next step. Above all, I encourage you to let go of the excuses and begin enjoying the process of sharing your art with the world.

Are you ready to start?