

## How to Kick Off the New Year Effectively

Cory: Hey there everybody, how's it going? I see tons of people introducing themselves over on the- in the chat, looks like our Portland people are here, Elise, Cynthia, glad you're here. Yeah. Jan's here, ready for this, Jan says "ready for this sitting in my narrow boat somewhere in the UK." Apparently with Wi-Fi in a boat somewhere in the UK with Wi-Fi! That's great. Lou from Palm Bay Florida, hey Mary Ann, from Utah. Glad everybody's here. I'm excited. Today's gonna be a good day. I had a very peaceful, quiet Christmas, my wife and I slept in very late and we didn't open presents until like noon, we had waffles for breakfast. And then we basically sat on the couch, watched movies, and ate desserts for the rest of the day. It was a wonderful Christmas.

We did have a lot of fun on Christmas Eve with some good friends, got to hang out with a six year old who sang and showed us her note to Santa. Hey everybody from all over the place. Newfoundland, Canada, hi Irene, Alena from Vancouver, Canada. Oh I love Vancouver, Alena. I was on Vancouver Island two weeks ago.

Sam, or, sorry, Daniella says it's 5 a.m. in Newcastle, Australia. Hoo, 5 a.m. Sara O'Connor, Virginia. Sara, I'm very curious to know how things went at the show in Florida. Sarah in Seattle, Betty says Merry Christmas from Santa Fe. Hey there! Alright.

Everybody's getting kicked off or getting in and online, I want to kind of let you know what's gonna happen, what we're gonna do for the next hour. We may go a little bit long, I got overexcited in preparing stuff for today's session. We may go up to an hour and twenty minutes or so, just depending on how long we go, how long I talk and how many questions everybody has. Alison says "from Chapman, Virginia, excited to attend my first live coaching call!" Awesome, glad you're here Alison. So in the, at the bottom a little call to action button that says session notes. If you want to follow along in what I'm teaching today and have, I made a copy of the notes, my notes for today's session into a Google document. If you open that link it should open up to a copy that you can see and you can actually make your own notes and add to it if you want, or you can just follow along. Let's have, my notes for what I'm gonna say today as well as links to tons of additional information. So if you are the kind of person who, if you really struggle with productivity and how to stay on task, that's what we're covering today- how to make sure that 2018, you hit your goals, but not just hit your goals, that you are setting goals that are good goals, that are achievable goals, that make you feel like you can actually do what you're setting out to do. I'm working under the assumption that a lot of you are striving to make a living from your art. So if you are not, then you know, some of this may not apply to you. But my assumption is that you're here because you're trying to make a living from your art. So a couple things to think about in today's presentation. Over the last year, I've been traveling around the world, U.S., Canada, the UK, leading in-person workshops, talking about art sales. And one of the things that come up over and over again sort of in the freeform section of our workshops where I just do Q&As with people, a lot of people ask how do I accomplish all of this? What, you know, how do I structure my day? And I found that just giving productivity experts are saying, a lot of artists either are not familiar with that material, or you know haven't implemented it into their day to day life. So what I did is over the last, over the month of December I interviewed about twenty artists from the Association, say what are you really

struggling with? What is your primary problem with productivity? And then how are you thinking about what you're gonna do this next year? And then in contrast, I looked at the artists that I know who are very successful. They're making six figures or more from their art and kind of living the life that a lot of artists want to be living. How do they approach their day to day productivity? How do they approach planning and goal setting? What's the difference?

And then the other thing is that, so this, what I'm gonna talk about today is a distillation of that feedback from what artists are struggling with and what successful artists are doing, as well as integrating some of the science of productivity as well as what productivity experts have to say around this topic. As I mentioned, there's a set of notes down at the bottom of the Crowdcast, there's a big green button that kind of gleams. If you click on the section notes button there you will see a link to all of my notes. It's not everything I know about productivity, but it's everything that I think I can share over the next hour. And then we're gonna take some time at the end of this hour to set some goals and talk about how you can realistically achieve those goals, and I might invite some of you, maybe two or three of you on to talk through the process after we've talked about it all so that you can share what you are working on and get some feedback on how to actually make it happen. Okay.

And because we opened this call up to members, people outside of The Abundant Artist Association, I just want to take a second to introduce myself so that you know who I am and why I'm doing this. So I'm Cory Huff, and a company called The Abundant Artist, and we have a membership program called The Association. And The Abundant Artist is all about helping artists learn how to sell their art and make a living from their art. So I've been doing this for, I started The Abundant Artist in 2009, so eight years, and I have more than ten years of experience in online marketing. So I have been helping, I got started helping my friends sell their stuff and get out to their shows and that turned into people asking me to teach courses, and this has been my primary focus for the last 4 ½ years or so. Before that it was a side project. So I have a real passion for helping artists succeed, helping artists make money from their work and have a business and a life that is more fulfilling than what they had before. If you are looking for more information about the Association, you can head over to [TheAbundantArtist.com/association](http://TheAbundantArtist.com/association), and if you want to join The Association that's great, that's not what this call is about, but if you want more information there it is.

Okay. So beyond that, so what are artists struggling with? And I'm sure that many of you already know what you're struggling with, you don't need me to tell you. But there's some nuggets that I wanted to pull out and one, because I want you to know that whatever you're struggling with, you're probably not alone. And it's not just you, and lots of people, whether they're artists or not, struggle with productivity and with how to achieve their goals and there is actually a lot of research in this area, a lot of science, that tells us what are the common struggles that people have with productivity and how you can overcome them.

Okay. So number one. Number one bit of feedback that everybody gave me was how do I work more, how do I find time, find more time to do whatever it is I want to do, how do I have fewer distractions, like how do I actually work more when I'm just so overloaded and I just don't have time to do more? Okay. So, and this often shows up in things like people buy a whole bunch of courses and then they don't take the time to go through all of them, because they feel like they

don't have the time. Or they have so many different ideas that they're not sure which one to pursue so they try to pursue a whole bunch of them, and then they end up not making a lot of progress in any one of them. So that's a pretty common one. And the real solutions there are to, if you buy a whole bunch of courses, one, don't buy a whole bunch of courses. If you see a course that is exciting to you or a workshop or whatever, and it's not helping you on your immediate goal, like whatever the next step is in your art journey, in your art business journey, don't sign up for the course. There will be another one at some point, regardless of how many marketers are saying if you don't buy it now you'll never get it. If it doesn't help you right now or in your immediate defined goals, don't do it. That will free up a lot of mental energy. Now if you are somebody who, you have access to a whole bunch of courses, the thing to do from there is look at which of those courses that you have access to is gonna be the one that answers the question that you have right now. My friend Jason Van Orden who has been an internet entrepreneur for 13 years says, he calls that just in time learning. So you're learning about whatever it is you need to learn about just in time to solve the next problem that you're dealing with. There's a lot of value in learning in general, there's a lot of value, it makes us feel good to take courses and learn things. The problem with learning all the time and taking in lots of information is it takes up mental space that you may or may not have. If you are working a day job and trying to start an art business and managing a family, and and and, you only have so much bandwidth. Willpower is a finite resource and you use it up with every decision that you make and every bit of information that you take in, so actually narrowing down what you learn and what you do with your time will end up providing more freedom.

Okay. So the next thing that a lot of people struggle with, and by the way as I go through these struggles I'm gonna talk about some of the struggles and some of the common solutions, and I'm gonna talk about some of what productivity experts do and what successful artists do, and that'll be for the next 20 or 30 minutes or so, and then the last half of this hour we are going to discuss specifically how to set goals and how to structure your time to take advantage of this, of these things that the experts say. Okay. So next thing is a lot of artists specifically told me is I don't know what to sell or what to make. I don't know whether I should sell a painting, I don't know whether I should sell a sculpture, I don't know, you know I'm capable of doing all these different things in lots of different styles and lots of different media, what do I actually do?

There was one artist that I spoke to, he previously had a successful Kickstarter campaign in one medium. It was an illustrated book, and he raised like around \$20,000 dollars to do that. And he, you know, he delivered all those books and then he was like okay, what do I do now? And he's like people obviously like this style of work, but do I deliver it in another book? Do I do canvas? Do I do, you know, prints, like what do I do? And the one, the number one thing I'll say is make what excites you. You know, if you're like oh, you know, I, maybe I should do prints, but you don't really feel like doing prints, don't do prints. You don't have to do what you think will sell. You can do what excites you, and there's a couple of things about that. If you make what excites you, you're gonna do better work. You're gonna spend more time on it, you're gonna fuss over the details a little more, you're gonna make better art. And two, you're gonna do better marketing if you make something that you care about. Okay? And then the other thing that I'll say, is it's okay to listen to your audience and get feedback from them and have them tell you hey we really like this work and I'd like to buy some prints. And if you feel okay with that, do it. If

you don't feel okay with that, don't do it. It's totally okay. It's totally okay to do whatever you want. Being excited and emotional about whatever it is you're working on actually improves your productivity because it propels you forward. And we'll talk more about that and goal setting in a little bit.

Okay, so another productivity challenge that a lot of artists told me they struggle with is, I'm quoting somebody here, it says I'm beyond coffee shops. So one artist we were talking in a coaching call about where she could sell her work, where she could show her work, and I said "well what about coffee shops, restaurants, warehouses, you know, any place with blank walls?" And she said "well I'm beyond coffee shops." She was an experienced artist, she had been painting for something like 15, 20 years, you know, she had taken courses from lots of different masters and everybody had kept telling her your work is so great, I can't believe it's not selling. And people had, you know, some experienced artists had told her you should not show in coffee shops cause your work is too good for coffee shops. And this is a quote that I think reflects a general problem in the fine art industry, which is elitism. Right? So the art media is full of stories about artists selling pieces for hundreds of thousands of dollars, but what they don't really talk about is the engine and the structure that underlines these pieces of art that are selling for hundreds of thousands of dollars. There is a marketing machine that tells people that they need to buy very expensive art because it's better or because it's, or because it has better branding. And the reality is that you and I know that a lot of that work that sells for hundreds of thousands of dollars is not necessarily better than what you know, your friends make, what you and your friends make. As this massive marketing machine behind it to make it look better, to make the branding appear better. Yeah. And so what happens is a lot of artists who are in the beginning stages of their sales get stuck because they want to have the branding of these very expensive pieces of art, but they don't have the marketing machine underneath it. They don't have a high end blue chip gallery spending hundreds, thousands or tens of thousands of dollars promoting that artist. So if you have a massive brand and a massive ad spend behind your, behind your business and your gallery, of course you're not gonna show your work in a coffee shop because you're gonna put it in these big galleries that are spending hundreds of thousands of dollars to promote their business. But it is actually one hundred percent okay to promote your work in whatever manner you deem necessary. If you go back and listen to all the interviews we've done with successful artists in our podcast over the years, you'll notice a few things. All of these artists got started doing coffee shops, warehouse spaces. Jesse Reno, who we had on a few weeks ago which is I think one of my favorite interviews we've ever done, Jesse Reno, when he was getting started, he had a job as a mailman. And he would make a goal to contact ten people every week about showing his art somewhere. And he was totally indiscriminate about where he would show his work. He would show it at coffee shops, at warehouses, in old factories that were closed on the weekend, and he would show his work, he would put it up, invite everybody out to see it, and then take it down over two days. You know, whatever it took so that he could get people out to see his work, that's what he would do. And now of course he has sold literally thousands of pieces, and his work starting now goes in the ten thousand dollar range or higher for his large pieces. So he's obviously grown a lot, he's an extremely in-demand teacher. There's a lot of success that is built on the small, almost invisible steps that a lot of artists feel like they can't do, and Daniella says "Did Jesse also need to pay to show while he was doing this?" He did pay for spaces, but it's that he was renting space, he was not paying a vanity gallery for the

privilege of showing in their gallery. It was all on him, so he paid for some spaces, but he was renting the space so that he could then invite people in and he was getting his own people out to the show. And one of my favorite examples is if you go visit the [unintelligible] in Paris, which is a very old bar, Picasso, there's some art on display there and it's Picasso's sketches, and he paid for, you know, he paid for drinks and food there with sketches. And you know, that was before he was necessarily super famous. And I always think it's really interesting to see like, to look at the early careers of artists and see the ways that they had to beg and cajole and plead and take those tiny, tiny steps in order to get where they wanted to be eventually. So never think that your art is too good for something unless you have, you know, some massive marketing machine behind it. Never think that you're above taking certain steps.

Okay. Another one that is similar is I see a lot of artists saying "I already know this." And this happens a lot with sometimes artists will come to our coaching calls or they'll come to take one of our courses and they'll say well I already know all of this. And then I'll say okay, well, you know, what have you done, like have you implemented what you know? Because if you don't have the sales to reflect, if you already know something and you say it's not valuable but you don't have the sales, you're not getting results out of what you know, then my question is do you really know it? Are you implementing it, if you're not implementing it, why? And adopting that learner mindset is really really powerful. I hang out with a lot of other entrepreneurs. In November I went to a retreat in Austin, Texas with six other entrepreneurs, and we, all of them are more successful than me in their businesses. Larger businesses, and one of the things that I noticed about all of them is very rarely, very very rarely do any of them say "I already know this." You know? If they sign up for a course or if they you know, go into a workshop or something and they, they're learning, they say okay, well I've learned this before but I haven't necessarily implemented it, so how can I learn in a different way or how can I implement in a different way? And a lot of very successful people will pay thousands of dollars for coaching or consulting to unlock just one little thing in an area that they've already studied and have been implementing for a long time. So allow yourself to be open to the idea that maybe you don't know something, or maybe there's something to learn in an area where, in a course or something that you are working on.

Okay. Oh, and then from my notes I mention stop fixating on the results of, or rather stop fixating on the accumulation of knowledge. It's not about whether or not you learned something new. It's about how valuable it was or what the value you got out of implementing it was.

Okay. Last thing that I want to talk about with struggles that artists have is wasting massive amounts of time on things that don't move you forward. So there's a lot of things you can do in your art business that feel good that actually don't move your sales forward. One great example of this is I spoke to an artist who, you know, we got on the phone and he showed me this really actually pretty cool website, and the website was custom coded, he built it himself, it had taken him, you know, maybe a hundred hours to build the whole site up the way that he wanted it done. But he had zero sales. And it kind of blew my mind that somebody would spend you know, a hundred hours and it may not have been a hundred hours but it was at least forty hours of work, and I said you know, well why didn't you just go with a theme, like a pre generated template? And he said well, I really wanted something that reflected my brand and who I am, and what I do. And I said well why didn't you hire somebody? And he said I didn't have a budget.

And I said okay, well in business you have to make some compromises. You, when you're getting started, if you don't have a budget to do everything you want to do, then you have to start making some compromises. And it is 100% okay to find, to figure out what is the minimum viable version of whatever it is I want to do? So if I need a website for my business, what's the minimum viable version? Can I find a template website that already exists and just throw my work up there so that I can focus my time on talking to people, and just FYI, like the most valuable thing you can do with your time is talk to more people about your art. Show more people your art. You know, working on websites, working on your marketing materials, practicing your speech, all that kind of stuff, like all of that is fine, but that's all done outside of talking to people about your work. So find the minimum viable version of whatever tool or process or whatever it is that you need, and go from there.

Alright. So contrast that, I asked, to contrast those struggles with what successful artists are doing, I asked a handful of artists to send me a couple of sentences on how do you plan your new year, and how do you, you know, how do you make sure that you stay productive? And I want to read you a couple of quotes from some artists that responded back to me. One is from Matt LeBlanc, the painter, not the actor, and he said, he sent me more than two sentences. He said "I decide how much revenue I want to bring in every month per revenue stream, and how I will do it." That's really powerful. He decides how much revenue he wants to bring in. "I make small lists of action items, if it's too long it's not useful. I update my sales spreadsheet for the next year," meaning he just updates the dates and kind of gets ready to do projections. He outlines a plan of attack for his sponsorship needs, for fusion, which is his, he does an annual show where he live paints in front of a large group of people in a theatre and so he is always looks for sponsors for this show because he gets you know 5-800 people into a theater so he looks for sponsors who want to support the show, and then he starts working on that production. So basically, the beginning of the year Matt decides how much revenue he wants to make from each thing, and then he works backwards to say okay, if I want to make this amount of money from original sales, then I know that I need to do x, y, z, in order to make those sales. Then he says "from a productivity standpoint I always like to give my office and my studio a good major cleaning. I typically try to do this during the holidays. When I'm back I feel like it's a brand new year." Which it is.

Okay, the next artist is Crystal Moody. Crystal Moody runs a website called A Year of Creative Habits. And what she did is a few years ago, Crystal decided that she was gonna make a new piece of art every day for a year. And she usually did it during breakfast, she had a day job, so she would sketch something new during breakfast while she was getting her kids ready, like in between that time she figured she could find fifteen minutes to make a new piece of art every day and post it on her blog. And in the years, I think it's been three or four years since she started doing that, Crystal has sort of become a productivity expert for creative people. And Crystal shares tons of really useful, interesting information. You can see a link to her website if you download the notes by clicking on the session notes down at the bottom.

Alright. So Crystal says "this is my favorite time of the year because everything about next year is perfect, nothing has gone wrong yet. Right now I have a running plan in my head for next year, but in the next week or so I'll write it down and be very specific about my goals for each, for the New Year. I'll schedule deadlines for each one and decide how I'll hold myself

accountable for each. I'll set daily tasks for myself that will help me reach my weekly goals. Usually one piece from my current series that then lead to yearly goals such as 50 pieces in that series. This year I'm trying to think about things in terms of seasons, not just winter and summer, but the seasons of creativity, where an idea goes from seed, grows, blooms, and then often there is a time of rest before the next planting. I'm a very driven worker so I'm trying to better plan breaks and rest into my year so that I can have more fruitful seasons." And she says "if that makes any sense at all." Makes a lot of sense to me. So a couple things I take away from Crystal's quote there- she sets deadlines for her work. Deadlines are super, super powerful. We'll talk more about that in a second. She also has specific goals. So you know, it might be I want to make a hundred thousand dollars from my art this year. So then she works backwards. If I want to make a hundred thousand dollars from my art this year, how many sales do I need on a per-month basis, based on the average price of one of her original pieces? And if I need, if I know I need that many sales on a monthly basis, how many sales do I need on a weekly basis? Well where am I gonna get those sales? And you can start to see how that level of productivity and planning, where that level of productivity and planning comes from.

Alright. So for the next couple minutes I want to talk about my good friend Charlie Gilkey, he's also another Portland-based entrepreneur, and he has been writing about productivity for creative people for a very long time. For eight or nine years. And, that's not a very long time. It's a long time. In internet world, anything over 5 years is a very long time. So Charlie has a website called Productive Flourishing, and I have a link to this blog post that I'm about to share with you in the notes. And it says what makes strategic planning hard for creative people is that when you do it right, it comes with some sadness, frustration, and regret. Given the real constraints of time, energy and intention, some projects will lose out when they're in a project cage match, meaning, which means when you're trying to decide do I do this project or this project? But we're often not ready to accept that we can't do them. So couple of bullet points- you need to be able to say no to things. You, we get emotional satisfaction from making progress on things, meaning that the beginning stages of every project bring us lot of – excuse me, I have a dry throat today, I'm trying to keep my voice hydrated while I talk. Okay. So the beginning stages of projects can be really gratifying and exciting, because if you do a little bit of this and a little bit of that, that feels like you're doing a lot. But ultimately your productivity is better if you focus on one project and finish it, and then you actually got something done and you have the payoff of having that thing done, and that's really a big difference between people who start things and people who finish things.

Some projects don't work out, and that's okay. Some projects, you get started, and you realize they're too big, they're too hard, they're not possible right now. That's okay. Thanks Maria. If your big picture planning doesn't make you emotional, then you're not done planning. So Gwenn Seemel, one of the things Gwenn Seemel said when I asked her how she plans her year is you should set big goals. Yeah. And some goals are very easy. Some goals are like, you know, you can check them off in a week- those aren't goals. Goals are things that make you feel excited and emotional. For some of you, that might be your goal is to quit your job. And if that gets you excited and makes you feel a little scared, then that's a goal that you should consider setting for yourself. If your goal is I want to go from just barely getting by in my art business to I want to make a hundred thousand dollars or whatever the large amount of money is, and that

feels exciting, go for it. If there's a different kind of art that you want to be making and making a living from, and the idea of making that scares you, I would strongly encourage you to do that because every time I've seen an artist make a piece of art that scares them, it's almost always something really really cool. Alright.

And in this area is, we all need to develop mindset. So not all marketing works. There's a famous quote from an advertiser that says you know, the problem with advertising is that half of it, or like, half of all advertising works, the problem is that I don't know which half. A lot of advertising, a lot of marketing that we try to do doesn't work. So the reality is you can learn everything there is to know about marketing, you can learn all of the tips and tricks and hacks and all that stuff, but you won't know if it works for your business until you actually try it. So what you have to do is you have to learn how to go into something, give it a try, see whether or not it works, give it enough of a try to know whether or not you've given it enough effort, and then if it doesn't work, let it go and move on or try the next thing. That's really hard in the beginning of your art business, because you, don't have any experience. You don't know what works and what doesn't work. So you have to develop a mindset of saying okay, well, that didn't work, so move onto the next thing. And that takes developing some thick skin and being willing to try things that make you uncomfortable. Okay.

So all of that said, all that information about productivity and about mindset and thinking about how we implement, or how we think about goals, how do we actually make things happen? So one of my favorite books on this topic is called *The Twelve Week Year*, and I'm actually, yep, it's right here. And I've got a link to it on Amazon, *The Twelve Week Year*. This is my favorite book on productivity. And it's really straightforward, it's really thin, you can see I've got some notes in there and some post-its and things. This is a super useful book. And one of the things that's most useful is a set of questions, and again I'm gonna read the questions off, but you can download the notes or get a copy of the notes by clicking on the session notes at the bottom. But these questions are something that I ask myself every Monday morning. What's the biggest thing, good or bad, that happened this week? Why did it happen, and if you were to do it over, what would you do differently? What did you accomplish toward your strategic priorities this week? What's standing in your way from making better progress next week? And what are you going to do about it? And are you tracking ahead or behind your targets this month? Yeah. Dan Cleary says "I've been using *The Twelve Week Year* for 6 months." Awesome. So when you start asking yourself these questions it puts everything into perspective. If you say what was the biggest thing that happened last week, well the biggest thing that happened last week was, you know, a family member got sick and that meant that I couldn't do xyz in my business. Well, if a family member was sick, then that, well that suddenly gives you a lot of information about why you're not making progress in your business, right? If the biggest thing that happened last week was that you made a single sale, you know, well what information does that give you? Why did that sale happen? Can you reproduce it? If you were to do it again, what would you change? Giving yourself the time and space to reflect is one of the key things that will make you more productive. And I think that far too many of us don't give ourselves the time and space to reflect on these things. Now for myself, based on Brian's suggestion, I have strategy time set aside, a three hour strategic block every Monday morning, 8-11:00 I sit down and I review what happened the week before, and I make my plans for the coming week, which we'll talk more



about in a second, and I write in my journal about how I feel about all of this. And then I have a weekly check in with an accountability group. I have three other entrepreneurs that I work with in this accountability group, and I reached out to three other entrepreneurs and I said “hey, I like you, I think what you’re doing is awesome, do you want to implement The Twelve Week Year with me and be my accountability partner?” And we have a shared chat app, we use Slack, but you can use Facebook messenger or whatever works for you. And every Monday morning after our reflection time, we all share with each other what worked, what didn’t work, the answer to those five questions. We say you know, here’s what happened, and here’s how I’m changing it, and here’s what I’m doing this coming week. And just that simple action of being accountable to somebody else, to share my thoughts about what is or isn’t working was a massive shift in my art business this year over the previous year. Of spending more time thinking about what I’m doing and less time trying to run around with my hair on fire trying to make stuff up as I go along. So giving yourself time and space to be deliberate about what you’re doing is really really powerful. From my notes you’ll also see a link to a blog post that I wrote on 13 more ways, 13 ways to be a more productive artist. And from the interviews that I did with different artists on how they’re productive and successful, I asked them to share what they do, and a few other tips, things you can do to be more productive. So making art every day is a great way to keep yourself productive, because if you are an artist, it’s very likely that you became an artist because you really love making art. And when we get caught up in the day job and marketing the business and all that stuff, it’s easy to get caught up in not making art for ourselves, but instead you know, chasing the next commission, chasing the next sale, and not connecting with our own ideas and passions. So Melissa Dinwiddie has this great set of rules called Ten Rules for the Creative Sandbox. And she says one of the rules for the ten rules in the creative sandbox is to spend 15 minutes every day making art, and just making art for yourself. And Sarah says “my art practice transformed when I decided to take thirty minutes every day to make art.” Yeah, absolutely. So I think it’s important, whether it’s just a sketchbook or something more elaborate, giving yourself space every single day to make art, I like to take one day off every week of whatever I’m doing just to, yeah a Sabbath day each Sunday, but giving yourself daily practice is really powerful. Mike Brennan is an artist that I admire so much, he’s making art every day for four years. He’s made a new piece of art every day for four years. That’s incredible. You know, and there’s no shame if you miss a day, whatever. Start over. But making every day allows you to continue reconnecting with who you are and what you do as an artist.

Time blocking. So time blocking is one of the key tactical tools for productivity. So Savannah Newton says just making myself work work work for long periods. I have days that I set aside as art nights when I’m not allowed to go out with friends or watch TV, I say do not disturb and I lock myself in the studio for hours. It doesn’t make me work faster, necessarily, but I do complete pieces faster. The only time I actually work fast is when I work emotionally. So having a daily practice with specific times blocked out will not necessarily make you produce art faster. But by giving yourself a regular habit with time blocked out where you don’t do anything else, no Facebook, no whatever, you will complete more pieces than you would if you just you know, made art whenever, whenever you have time or whenever the muse strikes you. And there’s a few different time blocks that I want to explain. The first time block comes from Charlie Gilkey at Productive Flourishing again, and he calls it the two hour rule, and it’s very difficult to concentrate on a creative task where you’re being highly, where you’re generating a lot of ideas

and being very creative, for more than two hours at a time. Susan says she has to go, yes, this will be recorded, they're always recorded.

So two hours, two hour creative blocks. So scheduling two hours at a time in the studio with a break in between. And your break can be twenty minutes, it doesn't have to be super long. But giving yourself time to stand up, stretch, walk away. Sara says sometimes staring at a work in the studio for thirty minutes counts. It's not always when the brush is on the canvas. Yeah, absolutely. Like any time you're just thinking about the work or staring at it or conceptualizing, that counts too. But just blocking out, literally blocking out in your calendar two hours for creative projects is super powerful. Next, the next one is strategy time. I mentioned that every Monday morning for three hours I have strategy time. And in strategy time I do the review and I ask myself the answers to those five questions, but I also spend time in that strategy time learning, so I think okay, what are my major challenges right now, and what do I need to know in order to meet those challenges and then I will look for books or other information, books courses, other information, on how to solve those challenges, and I try to study that during that three hour period.

Okay. Admin time. Don't mix admin time with strategy or other things. When I say admin time I mean things like answering emails, doing your taxes or doing accounting, anything that is sort of boring repetitive work that you don't like doing. You know, schedule admin time in hour-long increments rather than two hours. Brian Moran in his book recommends that you do one hour of admin time each day, so that you don't have to spend an entire day doing crappy admin stuff. And it might only be half an hour. Whatever works for you. So what I do is at the end of every day, from 4:00 to 5:00 I answer emails, I do other admin work, all that kind of stuff.

Alright. So other ways to be more productive, some more tactical stuff that we're gonna fly through real quick. Get buy in from your family. You know, if you have a day job or you live with family, talk to your spouse, talk to your partner, talk to your kids and say hey, this art business is really important to me. I want to accomplish XYZ this year, so in order for me to do that I need you to be excited about it and I need you to support me in XYZ ways, right? And that might mean take the kids every Tuesday night and every Saturday morning, take the kids, go do something with them so that I can work on my art business. Whatever it is that you need to do, whatever support you need, having dedicated space. If you don't have a dedicated studio building, then having just a space in your house or in your apartment somewhere where you can leave all your stuff and leave your art out so that it's there and uncompleted and you can walk up and do a little bit for your fifteen or thirty minutes a day.

Deadlines. Crystal Moody talked about deadlines. Setting deadlines for shows, for submissions, deadlines, giving yourself deadlines. Telling your audience hey, I'm gonna have this new series done by XYZ time. By day, by January 31 I'm gonna have this new series completed. Giving yourself deadlines to trick yourself into getting some work done and being publicly accountable will push that even further.

Get rid of distractions. Jim Murphy says this in Twyla Tharp who's a famous choreographer, the whole theme of her book was about this. Getting rid of distractions. So you go to the studio at a set time just like punching a time clock. Stay there, leave the phone, computer, and TV off, just show up and start working. Art is a vocation, not a hobby. So if you are a professional, if you

really want to become a professional artist, build those regular habits where you get rid of distractions, you make art. Get rid of distractions, focus on selling, etcetera. Find ways to clear your mind. Have fun, relax. Give yourself time away from it is just as important as spending time in the business so that you can relax and recharge, cause you won't have good ideas if you're too tired.

Urgent versus important. Every time you think you drop what you're doing to do something else, ask yourself- is this urgent, or important? If it's urgent and important, then obviously you gotta do it. But urgent is things like the kids ask for more juice. You know, can you ask somebody else or can you tell them to wait? Urgent is a friend who says "hey, oh my gosh, this great thing is happening, we want you to come down and hang out." Say no. Because it's urgent, it's happening right now, but it's not important.

If you have a day job, a couple of other thoughts. Jessica Abel gave me this great quote when I asked how do you plan productivity? Jessica Abel says "my code word for 2018 is margin. I've been living at the edge of what's sustainable for so long that I can now barely remember what it's like to slow down." So for those of you who don't know Jessica, she is an illustrator and an artist, she wrote a book about podcasting, she's the head of illustration at a school, and she also has courses on productivity for artists. She does tons of stuff. And she says "but more and more I realize that my best creative work comes when I'm steadily engaged in a project and allow myself some space to think. To protect that time I have to recognize that reflection time is an essential part of the process, not an indulgence." Yeah. So planning is important if you have a day job. If you can't take strategy time Monday morning cause you have a day job, do it Sunday night, cut it from three hours down to an hour, whatever you have to do, but you absolutely need time to think and reflect on what's happening.

Dedicated times, I mentioned, Tuesday night, Saturday morning, self-care is important, and get a job that you don't take home with you. I mentioned earlier that Jesse Reno was a mail delivery person. So he would take out the letters and deliver those every day, and then he'd be done for the day. If you're a mail person, like, there's nothing to take home. You don't like, take the letters home. You drop off your bag and you drop off your supplies at the post office and you go home and you have the rest of the evening free. That is a great example of a job that allows you to make art outside of your work and not be mentally burdened by other responsibilities. Some artists come to me and they're like well I'm an executive at this company and I work 60-80 hours a week and I'd like to quit my job and become an artist. And quite often the conversation that we have is okay well how can you quit your job? How can you cut back on your responsibilities and quit your job? Because making a career transition is a big step and it takes mental space.

Alright. So let's, I'm gonna skip over all these quotes that I have, and you can read those in the notes. So I want to take some time, get out your notebook or however you're, whatever you're doing to take notes, if you want to make a copy of our notes and type on those, you can click on the session notes down at the bottom and you can click on you know, file, and then make my own copy. I want you to write down what are your goals? What would you like to have happen in 2018? And I'm gonna give you a couple minutes to think about that.

Okay. So what I'd like to do is I'd like to take the next ten minutes and I'd like to workshop some of these goals with some of you. If you would like to come on screen and have me work through

with you how to implement all of this stuff in your business and you have, you are either on the mobile app or you have Google Chrome or Safari, because those are the browsers that are compatible for coming online, if you would like to do that, please volunteer and say I'd like to share my goals and we can walk through how to do that.

Okay, so Sara, let's get you on. Sara, you're always a reliable volunteer, it's funny. Let's invite you onscreen. Okay. Hey Sara,

Sara: Hey guys.

Cory: Hey. Okay, so here are my goals. Get into a museum that has more than a minimal prestige. I already did the less prestigious kids museum. Okay. Make 70k in sales, create twenty large scale works, 4 foot y 4 foot or bigger, get a corporate commission for more than one work, and book another solo exhibition. Okay, great! So you can't do all of those in the next three months, right? So my question would be which one of these goals would you want to focus on for the next quarter?

Sara: Well, I'm supposed to apply to the Virginia Contemporary Museum of Art by I think January 1<sup>st</sup>, so that one's got to get prioritized, but my goal number two, it's a little bit lofty, but if I made it less I wouldn't feel as spunky about it, so I definitely need to create a plan to execute that and frankly I volunteered as tribute because after Spectrum I felt a little, I don't know, lackadaisical so hopefully this will get me pumped up to actually get going January first.

Cory: Okay, so where have all your sales come from so far?

Sara: Pretty much the bulk of them are at the outdoor art shows, I do get some things from Instagram but it's not consistent yet and for better or worse I really don't get much from the website. I've tried a few different things, but Instagram and live shows are the best. Facebook is nothing and I almost want to just scrap Facebook so that I can focus on other things and not have to be half in one door half in another kind of thing with Facebook because I just don't spend time with it.

Cory: Right. Jan says I can't hear Sara. Jan, if you can't hear Sara go ahead and refresh the page and it should work. If not you may need to exit and come back. Okay, so live shows. Are they- so all the live shows- and you're in the Midwest where winter is brutal.

Sara: Well I'm Virginia now, when we started together we were Pittsburgh.

Cory: That's right. So you're in Virginia so it's less brutal. Are there any outdoor shows in the next quarter?

Sara: No, April is really when the season picks up, so you know another part of it is I'm feeling a little bit glum but need to remember what season we're in and that this is perfect planning season, so calm down spunky and like do something that can bear fruit.

Cory: Yeah, yeah. Okay. So I say if you know that you know, most of your sales come from these outdoor shows which are happening, what, between April and August, April and September?

Sara: You know, now it goes- I would, that's probably fair, although I'm getting a few in October and November just because it is warmer in these states where up north it's just not worth it.

Cory: Right. So what percent- like I think you said eighty percent of your sales come from the shows?

Sara: Yeah.

Cory: So eighty percent of 70 grand is whatever that is, 7,000 times 8 is 56,000, so 56,000 is gonna have to come from that April to late summer timeframe, right?

Sara: Yeah.

Cory: Which leaves you 14,000 from other sources, right? And that's probably gonna come from a combination of commissions and online sales.

Sara: Yeah.

Cory: Right? So can you make that full \$14,000 between now and March? Or quarter one and the last quarter?

Sara: Over the year I can make \$14,000 from other sources I think. It's gonna be a- it depends partially based on where I book kind of non-outdoor art shows, what gallery I'm at, that actually bore some more fruit, that'd be fantastic.

Cory: What do you think is a realistic sales goal for the first quarter?

Sara: For the first quarter in my slow time, maybe \$1,000 to be honest?

Cory: Maybe \$1,000, okay. So I would say let's have a good, better, best goal for Q1.

Sara: Yeah, yeah. And til what, March?

Cory: Yeah, January, February, March. So you think \$1,000 is achievable or like really hard?

Sara: I think, just because of how Instagram's been, it's gonna be a little bit hard, but not impossible. I don't know, I'd say maybe sixty percent likely.

Cory: Okay. So maybe your goal looks like a good scenario's \$800, a great scenario's \$1,000 and you know, \$2,000 would be like oh I totally blew it out of the water!

Sara: Yeah, \$2,000, I'd be really freaking out.

Cory: Okay, alright. So if you know that, if you feel pretty comfortable that you could get \$800 in sales in this quarter from Instagram and commissions, what do you need to do in order make that happen?

Sara: I need to start- I need to take a step back and revisit my smaller works and maybe offer them for a little bit less, you know, I had started focusing on larger works and started trying to reach a new client base, but I do like the bread and butter and so those pieces that are like 8x10" to 12x12", I maybe just need to be willing to take \$10, \$20 less on a piece and sell 2 or 3 more pieces because realistically all I'd need to sell is 8 pieces to reach \$800.

Cory: Okay. Based on your current pricing, you would only need to sell 8.

Sara: Really I would only have to sell 6. But I think that I have to backpedal it a little bit on pricing.

Cory: It's easier to sell 6 pieces than 8 pieces at a lower price. I don't want to see you lower your prices. And lowering your prices by \$10 or \$20 is, I mean that's- I wouldn't do that.

Sara: Okay.

Cory: Okay. But Sarah Guthrie says don't lower your prices, do smaller sizes. And I think that's in general good advice, instead of lowering your prices offer a smaller size. So if you know that you need to sell 8 pieces, 6-8 pieces, let's call it 6-15 if we're going for that big goal, right?

Sara: Yeah, and I'm not counting Bitty Bites at all, for those of you who follow my work you're like 8 Bitty Bites? That's nothing.

Cory: So selling 8 pieces over the next three months. What would you need to do to sell 8 pieces over the next 3 months?

Sara: I think I need to create 8 new pieces as well- well, probably actually more like 16 to be safe, because I also want to start building stock, and it's been long enough that I can show some photos of some of my older works that didn't sell at the outdoor shows, you know, obviously not brand them as my new series, but they've been sitting there not selling and I'm not displaying them at a coffee shop right now, so.

Cory: Okay, a couple of essentials in there. You're assuming that you have to make new work which isn't necessarily true. But that's the only assumption, you're assuming that you have to make new work. Assuming that you don't have to make new work, what do you need to do to sell 8 pieces?

Sara: Create quality Instagram photos and post them in a captivating way. Because I've got more than 8 small works that are ready to be sold.

Cory: Okay, great. And what else can you do besides posting on Instagram?

Sara: I've been thinking about trying to work with the gallery that I'm at, they often have teachers come in or live painting sessions or whatnot, and I have yet to do a live painting event, or that sort of thing, and so I've thought that that might be a good dead use of space especially since I just won first place for something there, so it'd be nice to kind of ride that for the little bit of remaining time that's left on that little award.

Cory: Great. And so since you already know that you can sell through Instagram, like livestreaming your painting session, obviously is a good idea, and doing Instagram stories is a great idea, and you're gonna be making new work anyway as you're getting ready for the summer season. So doing some work in progress stories as you're going through all of that, and then the other thing that I would look at is how can you grow your Instagram following?

Sara: That's been so frustrating. It's been so frustrating just because for better or worse there's a lot of follow for follow going on out there, and you know, no offense to any of you guys who are talented artists who I might not follow, but I'm of the mindset that like if I'm not likely going to buy your work or if there's not something that I can learn from you, like you don't need to just follow me to follow me. Like I'm not- that's not my client base. I'm not doing that. And that's what a lot of people who aren't you seem to actually be inadvertently teaching or inadvertently

collecting as students and that's really freaking frustrating. Ad you know I've tried to do some collaborative stuff with people because collabs and mutual shout outs are one of the best ways, and so far that's just pretty much fallen flat. You know, even when I do book those sort of things. I've still never paid for an ad. Haven't done that yet. Just because there's a lot of things to attack.

Cory: Okay. So you know that collaborations are a potential thing even though you haven't had a lot of good experiences with them yet, you know that advertising's a potential thing. One thing that I want to point out that you have had a lot of success with is getting media attention.

Sara: Yeah.

Cory: And you know, so I would look there and say is there a way that you can leverage your existing media attention to get more media attention, specifically for your Instagram account?

Sara: Yeah, I'm waiting for my law school alumni magazine to come out because they actually did a feature on me because obviously that's what lawyers do after graduating law school, so that, once that arrives in my mailbox, you know, I had for those of you guys who have received media publications before, normally I just do a link to it or a screenshot, but it can be really hard for people to read, and I've had a lot of success with some of my live video stuff even if it's just me saying hey this show's coming up, which always makes me feel like a puppet, you know, an excited puppet, but what I'm thinking about changing up for this time is actually reading the magazine publication for people, you know maybe doing it in a story in case people want to ask me additional follow up questions or whatnot. But Instagram seems to really be focusing on the videos, so for numerous different reasons, not just that my fans seem to like it but also because Instagram likes it, I'm gonna try this new approach. So maybe that'll work. We'll see.

Cory: Okay. So with all of this stuff, do you keep a calendar?

Sara: What do you think?

Cory: Oh, you don't!

Sara: I'm not- I, I am like a basset hound when it comes to a rabbit and I will calendar things loosely but I'm not diligent enough. Not diligent at all. Enough.

Cory: Okay, so here's what I'm gonna do. I'm going to screen share, I'm gonna keep you on but I'm gonna screen share and make my screen the focus screen for right now, and I'm gonna show you how I calendar my day. Or rather how I calendar my week. So this is a look into my personal calendar here. So what- this is what I have, I haven't done, because Monday was Christmas I actually didn't do my strategic planning for the week, but let's go to next week so this is what I have-

Sara: I can't see it well but maybe it's because I'm on the screen. I can't see it that well.

Cory: Maybe, can everybody else see it? Can you see my screen?

Sara: Yeah, it's on the side for me too. On the left hand side.

Cory: Okay, there we go. There we go. Now you should be able to see my screen. Yes?

Sara: I now see an inception. Now I do! Yes. Okay.

Cory: Okay, great. Perfect. So this is what my calendar looks like. And I schedule everything in my life. So you'll see I have church over here on Sunday, but then Monday morning I've got my strategic block, and during my strategic block, at the end of my strategic block is when I actually put everything else into my calendar, right? So during that time, so let's say that I was you and I'm like okay, I need to, what's the word I'm looking for, schedule Instagram time, right? And you can break it up, you can say well I'm gonna plan, I'm gonna schedule some time to plan all my Instagram stuff, and then 'I'm gonna schedule some time to regularly post to Instagram, right? So that might be something where every day at 9:00 a.m. I, you know, post to Instagram and then I, whoops, gonna edit this and now say this repeats daily and ends on you know, whatever day.

Sara: Yeah I have like a list of goals that I would just push if I didn't get it done and if it wasn't an emergency, and so I think having stricter timeframes will work better for me.

Cory: Yeah. And then you know, you put in here 2 hours for making new art. Right? And then I say, well and then there's some conflict here with two different meetings that I have so I'm gonna move this one around so it's not a conflict, cause I'm not trying to do two things at once, and here I'm gonna schedule time for PR outreach. Cause I'm you and I'm trying to get more PR. Right? So what I'm doing is I'm filling my calendar up with the most important, the things that I've identified as the most important things, so that I'm not spinning my wheels doing stuff that I shouldn't, that are less important, right? And then the way that I've got these set up is you can, with Google Calendar at least, and most calendar apps, I've got reminders set up so I get a notification ten minutes before the event, you know, and then I'll add in whatever notes or whatever for my calendar. But that's sort of how I do it. Now obviously there's little variations on how everybody does it. You don't have to do exactly what I do, but the point is, I'm gonna stop my screen share here, that's the point. The point is to schedule time. And making time to schedule time. It will make you more productive.

Sara: Sure. It's not that hard.

Cory: Alright, so that's how I implement what we're talking about here, and you know, there's a couple comments popping up from other people, Sarah says she uses a Panda planner, which is a daily weekly monthly breakout, and there's lots of different ways to do it. Nicola says she uses Jessica Abel's tips to review the week to see where your calendar's at and keep reviewing and keep working. At the beginning of this process it doesn't work. Right? At the beginning of the process you'll forget about stuff, you'll plan the wrong thing, you'll you know, you'll not use your calendar, whatever. But as you put that weekly strategy time in place to review what worked before and what you need to do the next week, it will get better. And one of the things that we're gonna be working on in the association in the first quarter is actually accountability and mastermind groups.

Sara: Jackpot!



Cory: So we're gonna be encouraging people to find people who they can partner with whether they're in the Association or out, to actually be accountable to each other for this kind of activity, for this kind of goal-setting and good stuff. We're also gonna be focusing on in-person meetups, so we'll talk more about that later.

Alright, thank you Sara.

Sara: Thanks.

Cory: Alright. So we're gonna wrap up here, but I wanted to remind everybody again if you want all the notes on this session you can click on session notes down on the bottom. I really appreciate all of you taking the time to be here today, I hope that you will plan your next year and to that end, within the notes at the very top there is a discussion link for the 2018 goals. So if you are a member of the Association and you want to share your goals and find somebody to be a partner with, you can click on that link and that will take you over to the Association discussion group. If you are not a member of the Association, you'll want to head over to [theabundantartist.com/association](http://theabundantartist.com/association) and that will give you all the information that you need. Matt says will the notes be available elsewhere, Matt, you can get on a computer later and come back to this session and there will be a link to those notes. So I will send a follow up email to everybody who attends with a link to the notes as well. If you're not a member of the association we'd love to have you on board. It's not just a discussion group. If you're a member of the association you have access to our course which includes How to Sell Your Art Online 101, 201, and 301 and have helped a lot of the artists get to where they are now, we have our online community, we also have group discounts on things like health insurance and other stuff, and we are striving to be an organization that pushes people who buy art, not just individual collectors but also corporations and other people to treat artists like the professionals that they really are and encouraging artists themselves to raise the game and act more professionally. So I am excited to be a part of it, to be a part of the Association, it's a wonderful group that all of you contribute to. And hopefully we will see you over there. Again, if you're not a member, [theabundantartist.com/association](http://theabundantartist.com/association), and we will see you later. Thanks everybody.