

September Challenge: Instagram Influencers with Jessica Marie

Cory: Hello everybody, good morning! If you can hear me, type hello. Hello to all of you from all different parts of the world. Bonjour! Gutentag! Hola! There we go. There's a few that I don't know yet. Okay. Great. So this is Jessica right here next to me. So Jessica is, as many of you read, is here to talk to us today about how to find Instagram influencers. So before Jessica dives in to her own experiences and some of her insights, I want to talk a little bit about what's going on, cause some of you are brand new to The Abundant Artist Association, and you may be unfamiliar with how we run the challenges or any other things that we've got going on. So today's call is sort of a supplemental element of our coaching calls and our monthly challenges. Each month we do a challenge where, if you've already gone through all the course materials and you're like "what do I do next in my marketing?" we will challenge you to try taking this step. They're usually a little bit more advanced than the course, but a lot of you have finished this stuff a long time ago. So let's talk a little bit about what we're going to do today. I posted earlier in the Association a link to a bunch of information. Basically what we want to do in September is we want to help you figure out who your ideal Instagram influencers are.

And I'm super excited to talk about this, because about a year ago, maybe a year and a half ago, we had some artists who took some of the classes and everything and started down this path of figuring out who their influencers are. Actually if we go back even further, let's jump back two years with Jessica. But we've had multiple artists have experiences where they have figured out who their influencers are, leveraged that experience into not only supporting themselves from their art, but also creating these amazing displays, like Anita Nowinska just did the UK Flower Show, like a hundred thousand people, and she was the solo artist displaying her work at the flower show. So the kind of stuff that we're talking about today really works, but you need to be in a position where you can really take advantage of it. You need to have some basic things, like you need to know how to talk about your story, you need to know who you are as an artist, all that kind of stuff.

So that said, here's the challenge for the month of September. The beginner level challenge, and again, I should call it something else besides beginner level. The intermediate-level challenge- find 5-10 people who might be relevant influencers for you on Instagram. Use the How to Sell Your Art Online 301 material as framework for researching your influencers, follow them, learn about them, research them and begin building relationships with them. And by the end of September or within 30 days, you should at least have one person that you're having back and forth discussion or dialogue with. If you are like "I've already done that, I know how to do that, that's not hard," then the next thing that we would push into is reach out to five influencers that you already know, or that you feel like you have begun a relationship with, and ask them to help you generate buzz for your next series or work of art that you're about to put out. So we'll talk a little bit more about how other artists have done that. Jessica Marie is here with us, that's where she comes in. If you need additional tools or research ideas beyond what we talk about today, the Abundant Artist How to Sell Your Art Online 301 class is the materials that you want to go back and refer to. And again, that's on theabundantartist.com/courses and then just click on the How to Sell Your Art Online course, and scroll down to the 301 course.

Okay, Jessica, thank you very much for joining us, all the way from Australia, it's 5:00 in the morning.

Jessica: Pretty early here, but thank you everyone for jumping on, and thank you Cory for having me. It's a pleasure.

Cory: Yeah, absolutely. I'm excited that you're here. So Jessica, why don't you give us a brief overview of where you're at with your art business. If you didn't read the [case study](#) that we did with Jessica a couple of months ago, just give us a brief idea of what you do as an artist and where your art business is at.

Jessica: I'm a pet portrait commission artist, so I paint people's pets from all around the world in my pop art style. You can see some of it behind me here. I leverage a lot of social media and word of mouth to get my art spread around, so that's mainly my source of where commission artwork comes from. I work in digital art, acrylic paint, and watercolors. I get to spread color and joy around the world.

Cory: Awesome. And one thing that I'm super proud of you for is you're booked out on new commissions all the way through the end of this year, and how far into next year?

Jessica: I'm currently booking for March in 2019.

Cory: That's awesome. Alright. So Jessica, let's talk a little bit about the idea of an influencer. What is an influencer? Nowt today we're talking about Instagram specifically, but what does an influencer mean in general to you?

Jessica: So I've been working with influencers all this year, particularly on Instagram, because I find that the best platform to be able to connect with influencers. They're people with an audience that you're able to leverage in order to share your artworks and get more engagement, more eyeballs on your art, so they're actually very powerful relationships to form, especially on Instagram which is a very visual platform. I think as artists we have a lot of power in this space because when it comes to collaborations with these influencers, they're looking for really new and exciting ways to share content to their following, because that's how their page remains relevant and fresh. And as artists we have really unique content that influencers are looking for, so with the right match between our art and their following, you can really have a powerful relationship and get lots of followers and lots of engagement back across to you while also providing a lot of value for the influencer. So it's a two way relationship, but a very good one if you find the right people.

Cory: Excellent. Yeah. Okay, so that's what an influencer does. One of the things that I see a lot of artists doing on Instagram is they're like commenting on people's Instagrams, and then following them with the hope that those people will follow them back. Do you play that game? Or do you feel like it's a waste of time?

Jessica: The way I approach finding people who might want to share my work and collaborate with me is more like finding a friend on Instagram. So for starters, your profile has to look its best, and I know you have heaps in your course about the first impression of your account, but you're also using that to get noticed as well. So commenting, yes, absolutely, if you've got someone to

target, comment, like their post, just a follow probably isn't enough. You need to start cultivating that relationship with them and getting your name noticed. They've got a lot of followers, so you've got to do something to try and stand out from the crowd and if your name pops up regularly in their feed, in their comments, in their likes, you know, direct messages to their stories, you're more likely to get that engagement when you do go to make contact initially. So follow, yes, but definitely engage with their content too.

Cory: Excellent. Okay, and so how do you, as you're thinking about finding a friend on Instagram, how do you find a friend if you don't know these people?

Jessica: Instagram is a really nice platform to be able to just start commenting on someone's account. So you can use hashtags to look up relevant people, like if you've got a niche in mind that you want to target, you can use hashtags, follow people that you like, and then look at their recommendations. In the little drop down when you go to follow someone it will show you like accounts, so it's worth just spending a bit of time on Instagram and exploring through to see the kind of people that you've got to check out their account as well, and like the first impression that they're giving, to make sure you think you'll be a right fit, and then follow and start commenting and start the engagement that way. A way that I got into some collaborations on Instagram was using a group collaboration, so they're the kind of ones you see that have posts and vendors. They usually give away contests or something, but these groups of people are all more likely to share others' content, it's kind of an easy way in, as well, just to find the organizers of these groups and you can usually follow the others in the group to lead you on to other groups, so it's a little bit of that working through and just following the trail through Instagram and finding those people that are like you, you're attracted to, and you think they might like your artwork and also that are willing to share other's work, so are more likely to share your work too.

Cory: Yeah. When it comes to- it sounds like, this sounds like a lot of work. This sounds like a lot of effort. So about how much time are you putting in to your Instagram networking?

Jessica: I catch the train every day, so I usually use my train time to be on Instagram, about an hour a day, like I'll be scrolling through. It's very addictive once you start. But it's the relationships you start to make and that, the small things that you do really start to pay off in the end when you want to reach out and you have the groundwork done for somebody that might want to help you with your next art project.

Cory: Nice, I love it. So basically you're using downtime for networking purposes. Yeah. So for example, if, maybe you don't have a commute, maybe your studio's in your backyard or something, for other people it might be while they're standing on line at the grocery store, it might be while you're waiting for your kid to get out of class, it might be you know, whatever downtime you might have. I also find using downtime for networking purposes can be really powerful too.

Jessica: Absolutely.

Cory: So a few questions that people have- so Joe says "I've been doing some research on a possible collector who's on Instagram who might enjoy collecting my work. She says in interviews that

she only collects from artists she already has a connection with. Do you have suggestions on how to establish a connection with her?"

Jessica: Yeah, so if you've already followed her on Instagram and kind of start to reach out you know, comment on some of her posts and engage in her content, direct messages are a really powerful way in Instagram to reach out to people you want to strike up a conversation with, and if you've already done that groundwork and they kind of know who you are, you can start a conversation in direct messages. That's where I've negotiated all of my collaborations with influencers. They're pretty much start out with a "hey how are you, you know, I love your photos," really try to make it about them more than it is about you initially, because this is you're taking a conversation off the liking and comment of photos and it becomes a little bit more one on one personal kind of connection. And then DMs are really great because they're just like in your messenger you can find things you have in common, and all of a sudden you will be an artist that she knows and be in that group that she might consider commissioning an artwork from you.

Cory: Right.

Jessica: So I think use the conversation through DM and take it from there.

Cory: Yep. Goja asks a great question- "I've had a problem with coming up with how do I provide value to that person instead of just asking them for something?"

Jessica: Yeah. So I find in my experience, cause I'm a pet portrait artist, I target a lot of people with dogs, obviously. The way I provide value in my collaborations is to do a digital artwork of their dog, something really special that the influencer is going to really take to heart and love. I run competitions with my influencer collaborations, so if you're just looking for, you know, some content sharing, I'd try to find links between your art and what they're posting up, so the flower show Cory mentioned is fantastic, because you can say, what flowers do they like? Do you paint those sort of flowers? You find the influencer is sharing and relate that back to you, because the value you can provide in your art and that unique perspective that you've got with providing them content is something they're gonna be likely to share.

Cory: So are you then like giving the influencer like a free portrait or something, in return for promoting your other work? Or do you ever do anything like that?

Jessica: Yeah. Yeah. So it all depends on what you want to get out of the collaboration. So my work is very easily sharable to people within the dog community, so I find influencers that have a dog account, paint, do a digital portrait of their dog, so I'm looking at you know, very quick and an entry-level version of my artwork, so nothing that's gonna take too much time and effort. Not to say that you can't go that next level, but for something on Instagram, think of what is small and valuable. Save your commissions for people who want to pay you for the artwork. And this is more about getting those followers up, getting more eyeballs on your art, and getting the shareability of your art. So definitely if you can offer them a bespoke piece of artwork and you're comfortable doing that, go for it. Otherwise, there might be something in your collection that you can share, you know. You can be a bit creative about it as well and just find something that you know, you guys both like. And they'll be happy to share on their page as well as promote you.

Cory: Yep. So Sam says “Can you give us some specific examples on who your influencers are and what they do?” And I think you mentioned like, dog specific Instagram accounts. So is this like pet shops? Or just like dog enthusiasts? Or what?

Jessica: These are normal everyday people with very famous dogs on Instagram.

Cory: Awesome. Okay. So they have dogs that are like well-known actors that are in films, or things like that?

Jessica: Instagram’s crazy, because an everyday pet can be an actual superstar. So I’m seeking out people whose dog have anywhere between 10,000-30,000 Instagram followers, just their photos of their dog, which is a very big niche in Instagram at the moment.

Cory: So you said 10-30, but you’re not looking for people that have like a hundred thousand or a million?

Jessica: No. I find I get a lot of traction with people that are in that 10,000-30,000 followers. You can definitely try for more, my account at the moment has about 4,700 followers, so I think relative to your size, you just be looking to get the, sort of the next level up. The higher you go and the amount of followers that they have, the harder it is to kind of get their attention. And also, you might get a bit lost in their feed. I met a lady whose dog has 80,000 Instagram followers, so off Instagram, but yeah. She said her DM messages are pretty insane. So if you don’t have that kind of weight behind your following, micro influencers are a really great you know, portion of Instagram communities to try and find. Because they’re more willing to work with you, and it’s likely that their account has a lot more engagement as well, so it’s really that engagement of their followers and their posts that you’re looking for. So pay close attention when you’re actually searching for these people. What are their posts getting liked, what’s their ratio of followers versus following, if something looks a bit odd there, like they’ve done 10 posts and have 10,000 followers, so you use a bit of detective work in the comments to see if maybe their strategies are right in Instagram. And have a look and see that people relative to what their following is are engaging in their posts, cause then you can have a pretty good idea that if you want to partner with them and share some of your work through their Instagram that you’ll get a good engagement back, even if they have 10,000 followers and not 100,000, you might find you get a better result with them than a larger account.

Cory: That’s good stuff. So one of the things that I will often tell artists, cause I think one of the main challenges in doing this kind of work is a lot of artists will feel overwhelmed just by the amount of work that it is. Or maybe they’ve never done something like this before, so they just don’t really know how to engage people. So I will often say don’t go in like, don’t think that you’re gonna find an influencer who’s gonna make your career tomorrow. Right? Instead, spend the next month just observing and watching, and like finding people who are interesting to you who are relevant to what you’re doing. And just learn how to use Instagram and how to have fun with it and how to like, learn to understand why people like Instagram for whatever that specific niche topic is, right? Like get really good at knowing who’s who in that world, and before you start asking people. Do you have any thoughts there?

Jessica: Yeah, that's perfect. Instagram is really fun when you get into it, it might be daunting to just start like anything is, but once you get in the flow of figuring out how to find people, how to follow the hashtags and you kind of can get quite deep into the platform just looking. It's a wonderfully visual platform, so very very good for artists and like I said on the train, you sort of get lost and follow the trails, and you discover a lot of different people as you are. So definitely do that work. It might seem like it's taking a long time, but it really does pay off in the long run, and once you start the conversations with people, you never know where they're gonna lead. So once if you end up doing a collaboration or you end up reaching out, just making a friend on Instagram, even if something doesn't come to be right now, you're in their minds, and they might think of something a few months down the track that would go really perfectly with your artwork. So never, don't discount the work you're doing now, just because it doesn't go anywhere immediately. That's why I aim to make friends rather than-

Cory: Right, it's not like a five reachouts to one share ratio. Right? Like there's no certain amount of time before someone shares your work, it's just when the relationship feels good.

Jessica: Yeah, absolutely, and the timing is well both on your end and their end, they could have a lot going on, so you never know when's the best time to reach them, so you may as well do the groundwork, give it a go. And then even if it doesn't go anywhere initially, end the conversation in a really positive place, that you have plenty of ideas and things to reach out when you need, if you need anything, keep those people in mind. And yeah, then just see where it goes, sort of it's great if you get something right off the bat, but sometimes it takes a bit more work just to get the relationship first.

Cory: Right, yeah. Absolutely! I love it. Let's see, couple more questions. Do you have, are you personally using an Instagram personal account? Or have you switched over to a business account for all the analytics and stuff?

Jessica: I'm on a business account, definitely. Yeah, the analytics are pretty insightful on what's doing really well, so going back to having your profile looking the best it possibly can, finding the posts that, you know, get that engagement. I would recommend a business account.

Cory: Yeah. Christine says "how much content should I have before reaching out to influencers?" I always tell people, you should have a series of work that's ready to go before you start trying to market yourself. Yeah.

Jessica: Yeah, I think that comes back to the first impressions on your account too, and also targeting influencers with followers in kind of ratio to what you've got. So if you're really just starting on Instagram and you have maybe a couple hundred followers, look for that 3,000-4,000 follower mark of influencers. And incrementally grow from there. In my progression of working with influencers, I did start out working with people 2,000, 3,000 followers. My last month's influencer had 30,000 followers for their dog. This month's one has just over 15,000. So work up from what you feel comfortable with, and if they're a smaller micro influencer and you're a smaller account, it's going to be more likely that you guys are going to be able to do a collaboration. Whereas getting through to someone with a larger following can tend to be hard if you don't have that following yourself or something relatively close to.

Cory: Yep, absolutely. Okay. So then Taylor says “When you’re reaching out to influencers are you trying to target individuals or organizations?” It’s both, right?

Jessica: Yeah! I’ve done some, I have some work in progress actually with some dog rescues. So yeah, individuals or organizations, I find that a lot of the larger influencers I work with are the everyday people with the really famous Instagram dog. So yeah, I’m open to working with organizations. If you start to try and contact organizations, just be aware there might be contracts and things that come into play, like a more formalized process. The people I reach out to usually it’s more just a conversation on the direct messages, we work out what we want to do, the photo of the dog I’m going to do a portrait of, keep it really light and friendly. But businesses there might be a social media person behind their Instagram account so it could be a bit more formal. I’m finding rescue groups are sort of in the category of the individual just being able to have someone looking after the account. And when you do DM conversations, just be aware that whatever you type and whatever you agree to kind of acts as a contract as well. So in negotiations feel comfortable with what you’re putting forward to the influencer. I’d hate to think anybody would get taken advantage of, but unfortunately those sort of people are out there on Instagram too. So just make sure with what you’re offering to the influencer you’re comfortable that you can give that away to them to share and for sort of a payment of the followers and the engagement rather than monetary.

Cory: Excellent. Yeah. So I know we’ve only got a couple minutes left, I want just one or two more questions. Sam says “I’ve noticed that my clients are mostly on Facebook and LinkedIn, I wonder if Instagram’s good for me. My audience is 35 years old or older and work long hours.” I think Sam, that the answer to your question is gonna be you know your audience better than anybody else is going to. Instagram is definitely growing really fast, but obviously Facebook is much larger. It’s a matter of where your audience is gonna be ready to buy. So if you’re getting a good reaction from Facebook and LinkedIn, keep doing that and you can experiment with Instagram, but you don’t have to use Instagram. You have any additional thoughts there, Jessica?

Jessica: Yeah, I totally agree that yeah, you know your audience better than us. So on Facebook, if that’s where they’re engaging, go for it. That’s where you need to be.

Cory: Yep. I will say Instagram’s great, but there’s still a lot of artists who are having great success with Facebook. So I don’t want to see people just dropping Facebook and moving to Instagram. There’s no reason for that. If it’s working, keep doing what’s working. Okay, last question. So Daisy says, “I feel like pets is such a niche. It’s a bit harder with something like beach art.” So she feels like beach art is more broad than pets. I don’t necessarily think so, but that’s a discussion for another time. So do you have any thoughts on how Daisy might be able to narrow down her niche beyond beach art?

Jessica: Yeah. Keep diving in to the people. I suppose you want to put your art in front of the buyers. Are they surfers? Are they travelers? Do they, is it more Fiji, like island beaches, or is it you know, more your California beaches? There’s plenty of surfers with accounts, plenty of fashion influencers, like bikinis or whatever. Like, sorry, I’m doing this on the fly. I don’t really know the niche. But more, I guess with in my experience, it’s if people have a dog that’s sort of who I go for, people with pets, but think about the people who go to the beaches that you paint and purchase your art and see if you can find some influencers.

Cory: I'm totally with you.

Jessica: There would definitely be somebody that vibes with your art. And yeah, definitely.

Cory: Okay. Excellent. Well thank you so much everybody for coming by, Jessica thank you so much for spending the time. We're gonna let you go so you can go back to bed or whatever at 5:30 in the morning. So thanks again, and again I would love to see as you are partaking in the challenge and figuring out who your influencers are, please feel free to post over in the Association. Let us know what results you're finding, what's working for you, what's not working, and what questions you might have as we dive in to this. Thanks so much everybody, and we'll talk to you soon!