

Marketing success found in tools that connect buyers with artists

What is the most effective way to promote art quilts?

The *SAQA Journal* asked members what marketing tools have brought them the most success. Answers ranged from email newsletters and Facebook to open studio tours and even one lucrative doctor's visit. The common thread was a personal touch that made the artist visible and approachable.

Get 'out there'

Several responding artists parlayed exhibition opportunities and attendance at events such as exhibition openings into everything from sales to teaching opportunities.

Maggie Dillon of Sarasota, Florida, says her key marketing components are exhibiting her work and attending openings and artist receptions. One exhibition she was part of led to her getting a solo show at an art museum, while others led to trunk shows that in turn led to booking workshops.

Terry Grant of Beaverton, Oregon, had similar results when she became a part of her local open studios tour. "My main goals are sales and name recognition. For me, my blog and participating in the local open studios tour have been the most successful tools to bring both sales and recognition.

"For a basically introverted person, it isn't always comfortable to put my work and myself out there in those ways, but I have come to believe that buyers respond as much to the artist as they do the art. A personal connection adds a layer of meaning to an artwork. To my surprise, I found that I actually enjoy both blogging and welcoming people into my studio, and both feel like natural and genuine ways to meet new friends who are also often buyers. In addition, both my blogging and open studio [participation] have given me opportunities for TV appearances, invitations to participate in shows, and valuable connections," Grant says.

Email efficiency

Another way to achieve meaningful contact with your fans and collectors is an email newsletter, a straightforward marketing staple.

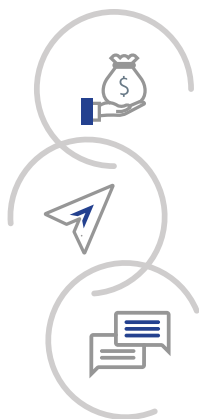
Cindy Grisdela of Reston, Virginia, reports that her email newsletter is her most successful marketing tool. "I collect emails from people who visit my booth at shows, take my classes, or attend my lectures. I also have a signup widget on my website and a link at the bottom of every email I send," she says. "I send out an email newsletter about once a month, and it works well because these are people who are interested in my work and they have given me permission to contact them. I use MailChimp, but there are other providers out there — Constant Contact is another popular one. The newsletter doesn't have to be long, and it usually refers to a show I have coming up, new work, a TV appearance, or a new blog post that I want to feature as a call to action."

Ellen Lindner of Melbourne, Florida, uses her email newsletter to promote her classes. She also sends her newsletter out monthly, always with new work, and usually with a helpful teaching tip.

Custom messages

Lindner also targets venues. "I wanted to have a solo show in the local art museum. I bought a book about preparing presentations, and put everything together very professionally. I sent it to the museum and followed up 10 days later. Amazingly, I was invited to come show my portfolio to the curator and she offered me a solo show!"

Lindner says she had traditional marketing materials already in place when she made overtures to the museum. "My portfolio was already in professional shape and up-to-date, thanks to articles I read in the *SAQA Journal* about being prepared." In addition, she had done a free art quilt presentation for a sorority alumni group as a favor to a friend. "One of the women who loved my work turned



out to be a mover and shaker among the museum volunteers and she lobbied for my show," Lindner says. "Everything works together."

Online presence

Bridget O'Flaherty of Perth, Ontario, Canada, says her social media campaign is her marketing foundation. Her long-term goals are to travel and teach. "I came back to my art last July after a 10-year diversion. I decided to target gaining an audience before working on sales. I gave myself a year. I'm targeting 5,000 followers across all platforms. To date, I'm at about 35 percent of my goal," she says. "I have been working on platforms that are somewhat integrated: my blog, Facebook, and Instagram, which all lead to my email list." She also has a presence on YouTube, Twitter, Pinterest, and LinkedIn.

O'Flaherty's efforts are paying off. She was recently contacted by a textile magazine based in the United Kingdom after they found her work online. She was also invited to teach to a collective of quilters on the East Coast.

Her approach to social media is systematic. "I use an editorial calendar to map out my posts, though if I'm being honest I've let that slide and have just been posting multiple times per week," she says. "I prefer the calendar, as it forces me to plan. I think about what I'm saying with purpose. I then post on my page and sometimes share that post in groups. I feel that slow and steady growth is a good way to go. I'm hoping I will get exponential growth for the last half of my target year." Another sign of her success is the fact that she has few unsubscribe requests.

Social media messages don't just roll off the keyboard, however. "It's been a long development of figuring out what to say, what my message should be. So many iterations of a mission, vision, core values, a bio, artist statement, and CV," says O'Flaherty. "I was just listening to a podcast that talked about having a media kit at the ready. That's my next project, to put all of these things into a slick package with visuals, so when media comes looking, I'm ready!"

She already has many marketing tools at the ready. O'Flaherty booked one gig because she responded immediately and sent a prepared sheet with workshops, lectures, and terms and

conditions. "It makes it really easy for them to decide what they want and what the budget will need to be," she says. "It's a challenge to stay organized though. These things need to be constantly updated!"

Elena Stokes of Clinton, New Jersey, says one thing that has had an enormous impact on her marketing efforts is her website. "It is important to have a visually impactful, well-designed website. I use Wordpress and a theme that is very dynamic, versatile, and has good SEO [search engine optimization]. I have been contacted through my website many times with invitations to exhibit my work, write about my work and process in magazines, and most recently by a commercial interior designer whose client is interested in several pieces for a new hospital. She said she found me through a Google search."

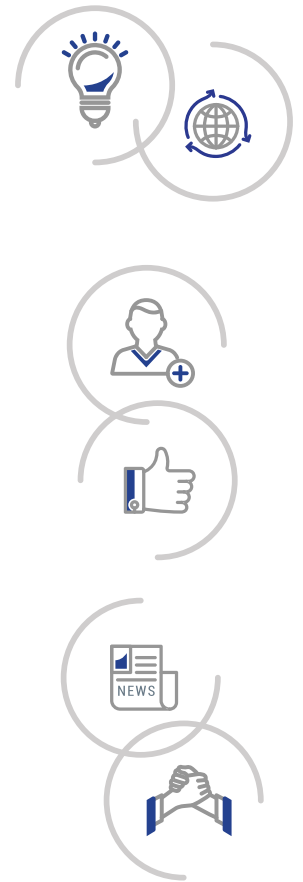
Networking success

Stokes also feels belonging to a group like SAQA is important. "I joined SAQA in 2011 with the intention of pursuing exhibitions. I was fortunate enough to be accepted into [the SAQA Global Exhibitions] *Seasonal Palette* and then *Celebrating Silver*. From those two exhibitions, so many things have happened. My work has appeared in magazines and contemporary quilt art books. I've sold work through a SAQA exhibition and got a commission as well. I am connected with and inspired by my fellow artists to stretch artistically, dig deep, find my voice, and elevate my work. As a result, I've been juried into the top quilt art competitions and won awards."

Valerie Wilson of Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, had an initial goal to be in more exhibitions. "To attain that end, I joined a group called the Fibre Art Network and was able to exhibit with them. The camaraderie and sharing of expertise have been a valuable aspect of this group as well," Wilson says. "I have been able to acquire solo exhibitions by applying to public galleries and venues. Some of these opportunities have come about through networking with other artists."

While FAN is for artists living in Western Canada, Wilson formed a local fiber art group that has created its first successful exhibition. By reaching out

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Marketing

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to small galleries, that exhibition is now traveling throughout Manitoba.

Combining elements

Ann Brauer of Shelburne Falls, Massachusetts, has a comprehensive marketing plan which involves being part of a number of select fine craft shows, selling online, and selling from her retail studio. "To accomplish this I rely on frequent social media updates, written materials, word of mouth, and paid advertisements. Most people need to become acquainted with my work before they then choose to purchase. I try to vary where I concentrate my efforts each year by reminding my existing base that I am making new work, and I also work to introduce my quilts to new audiences."

Brauer found it particularly effective last year to post 36 quilts one at a time on her blog to celebrate 36 years of supporting herself through quilt-making. "This was a lot of work, but it also got me two articles," she says.

Surprising serendipity

Never let it be said that serendipity doesn't lend a hand in success, too.

"My greatest success happened at a doctor visit," says Regina Dunn of DeLand, Florida. "I was a new patient and the doctor asked what I did for a living. I gave him my elevator speech and he was interested in the concept of an art quilt. So, on my next visit, I brought him three of my pieces to show him with the purpose of education in mind. He bought one of them and wrote me a check for \$700 on the spot. Best doctor visit ever!" ▼

This article was compiled by Diane Howell, editor of the SAQA Journal. She resides in Chandler, Arizona.

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A brand new you

Build an online brand that lets you shine

by Clara Nartey

We live in the age of Google. If your name or artwork comes up for discussion, chances are a Google search is part and parcel to the dialogue. Online access creates an exciting opportunity by giving you direct access to an audience. But how do you stand out from so many websites?

Your online brand is made up of two components. The first part is the written story you tell about yourself: artist statement, bio, and blog posts. The second part is your visual identity: logo, web design, profile photo, and images on social media posts.

Your online brand needs to:

- Create awareness
- Make you likeable
- Make people trust you
- Encourage people to work with you

I approach online branding by crafting a compelling story that communicates how I want to be perceived. Your story should answer what kind of art you create, why you make it, and who you make it for. An example is:

Art feeds my spirit and I want to help people find fulfillment in creative self-expression.

Tailor your branding to effectively communicate your story on your platform assets, which should include:

- A professional website/blog
- A professional email address

- Social media accounts (such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, etc.)
- A newsletter

Build a cohesive identity by maintaining consistency on all platforms in terms of your name, design standards, logo, and profile picture. I chose to use my given name as my brand name. This allows people to search my name and to find me on all platforms.

Design

If you would prefer not to develop branding on your own, there are design services to create a unified design for your brand. If you use a professional designer for your website, discuss up front the colors, fonts, and mood you want to represent you. Remember, everything has to relate to the story of who you are and how you want your clients and followers to perceive you.

If you do your own design, two things you can use to tie your design together are consistency in color and fonts. Not only does this make you recognizable, but it allows you to have a template for everything from a website page to a Pinterest header.

Building your online brand means building your visual identity. A logo

and tagline are effective tools to identify you, although you can work without them. A great profile picture is another key to personal branding. Use the same professional photo across all of your online platforms. This puts a face on your brand and connects people to the person behind the artwork. My online profile photo matches my color theme as well.

Artist website

Your online identity centers around your website or blog. The places you socialize online should direct people back to whichever of these is your primary online presence.

To make your website your online brand central, follow these tips:

- Create a domain name or web address that is consistent with your brand name.
- Include an About page where you share your brand story.
- Curate your art portfolio to match the story on your About page.
- Update your website frequently with recent news about exhibitions, new work, sales, classes, etc. Give visitors a reason to come back to your website
- Plan for change. As you grow as an artist, your brand can and will evolve. ▼

Clara Nartey is a SAQA member who resides in West Haven, Connecticut. She is an artist who creates video lessons and writes about the practice and science of creativity. Learn more about her at www.claranartey.com.





Tips to grow your brand

by Clara Nartey

Pro Tip #1

To easily remember and get the right color each time, find and save the number code for the colors of your design. This way, when you want to create something new such as an image for a blogpost, a newsletter, or an announcement, you don't have to visually guess which colors to use.

Pro Tip #2

Email plays an important part in your online brand. Let your email reflect your brand name. For example, when you receive an email from me, it will be from me@ClaraNartey.com.

Use an email signature in your emails to reinforce your brand and direct people back to your website. You can also provide links to your social media accounts.

Pro Tip #3

Use templates to create consistency. Create one template with your brand's colors and fonts. The text or image will change when you need to create a new post, but the overall look will be the same.

Pro Tip #4

Choose your brand colors wisely to evoke the emotions or mood you wish to convey.

Pro Tip #5

Each social media platform has specific image sizes. Check to make sure you use the right image sizes in your headers and posts; otherwise, your images could be cut off or display oddly.

Pro Tip #6

I use Canva.com to design my blog images and social media posts. You can use Photoshop or other graphics software. PicMonkey.com and Snappa.com are other online graphic design tools you can try. These online tools have templates that allow you to plug in information. You could also hire a graphic designer.

What makes a website zip along?

by Diane Howell

Your website powers your online brand. Make sure it tells your story and is easy to use.

What key features make websites efficient? These answers from SAQA members give insight into how art and information is best presented for viewers.

"I like to see websites that clearly categorize an artist's work by medium and/or dates. I always go directly to 'new work' then work my way back. Vague series titles don't really help," says Sharon McCartney.

While searching for art online for exhibitions, Kevan Lunney found the need for clarity. "Most websites were particularly frustrating to comb through the images. Paging through images one by one, looking at thumbnails that were too small, or at a run-on list of work that wasn't categorized just takes too much time," she says.

Lunney turned her experience into a positive, though. Her personal website [kevanart.com]

presents art images the way a buyer or curator thinks, with categories for abstract, representational, and three dimensional. She says other helpful groupings would be landscape, still life, nudes, buildings, or sports.

Closely related to this topic is image navigation. Terry Howard Grant says she loves galleries of work where a viewer can easily navigate from one image to the next without going back to the main page after each one. Images should also be a decent size, she says.

Other members focused on teaching information. Bern Johnson says: "I like to see clearly where artists give classes, particularly online classes." She also wants easy-to-find instructions to subscribe to a newsletter. "I find that I follow an artist more when they send out an email newsletter or blog post."

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Time-saving tips to tame the social media beast

by Abby Glassenberg

Social media could take over your life if you let it. Taking pictures and editing them to the correct size for each platform, writing captions, finding interesting links, hashtagging, responding to comments—altogether, it feels like a full-time job. And that's on top of the job you already have—making art.

Although at times it may feel like managing your social media account is completely overwhelming, it's possible to build your business on social media each day in a way that is both enjoyable and sustainable. The key to success is twofold: develop a strategy for using each platform well, and stick to a set of boundaries so you are sure to quickly find your way back to your studio.

Each social media platform is unique in the audience it attracts, the type of posts that perform best, and the kind of interaction it requires. There is certainly no requirement that artists spend time developing a following on every single one. It's best to spend your energies focused on the two or three platforms that allow you to connect most deeply with your target audience. For visual artists, those platforms include Facebook, Instagram, and Pinterest.

Here are strategies to help you use each of these social media tools efficiently and effectively. Once you have developed the habit of sharing updates with your community, you will begin to reap the rewards of interaction, and you will find yourself looking forward to spending time online each day.

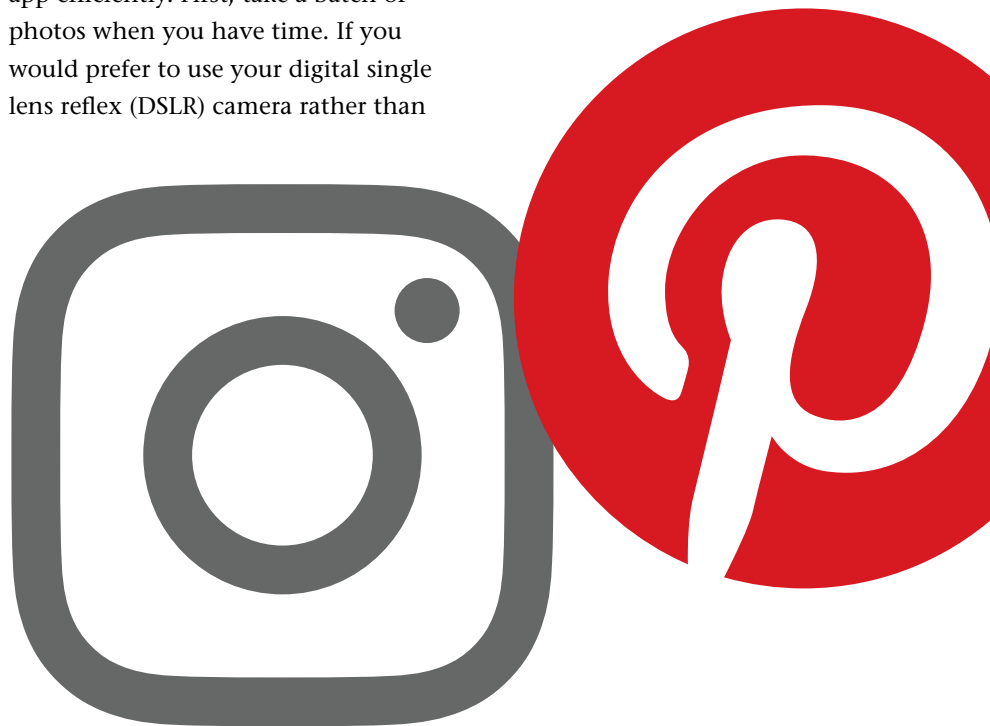
Instagram

Instagram is a crucial social media platform for artists today. If you're not there already, take some time to set up an account and get started. Fill out your profile completely so that new visitors to your feed will know right away what you are all about. You only get one link on Instagram and it's in your profile, so be sure to use it to point to your website or online shop. Begin following other artists and quilters you admire so that you will see lots of beautiful new photos each time you open the app.

Instagram is a mobile app that truly forces you to be in the moment. Although you can access Instagram from your desktop computer, you can only upload photos from your phone, and you can't preschedule them. That said, there are still ways to use the app efficiently. First, take a batch of photos when you have time. If you would prefer to use your digital single lens reflex (DSLR) camera rather than

your phone, you can do that. Edit your photos on your computer, then email them to yourself or put them in Dropbox and access them via the Dropbox app. Once you have the batch of photos in your camera roll, you can post one or two a day for the coming week.

Hashtags are the search tool for Instagram. If you want to build your following, you will need to tag your images so that other users can discover your feed. Instead of typing relevant hashtags for each image, create a note in the Notes app on your phone with all of the hashtags you typically use (such as #artquilt #fiberart #textileartist #threadpainting #slowstitching). Then simply copy the hashtags from your note and paste them into the caption, adding any extras as needed.



Spend about 15 minutes on Instagram each day. Upload one or two new photos and captions and, if need be, change the link in your profile so that it points directly to a relevant page on your website. Respond to any comments left on your photos. Scroll through your feed liking and commenting on a few photos to develop community. If you don't already, over time you will come to really enjoy the visual stimulation and inspiration happening on Instagram.

Pinterest

Rather than thinking of Pinterest as a social media platform, think of it as a search and discovery tool much like Google. Commenting on pins and responding to comments is not a productive use of your time on this platform. Instead, focus on creating strong images for your website or blog that you can pin. Also pin other people's images you know your audience would appreciate. Set up 40-80

boards with themes that match your brand and aesthetic. Be sure to have a board for your own business, too. Pin your own images to that board, then repin them to other boards that are relevant.

Pinterest rewards active boards by promoting them higher in a search, so spending up to just 10 minutes each day pinning and repinning on Pinterest will help grow your following, thereby driving traffic to your blog, website, and online shop. The Pinterest mobile app is easy to use and allows you to pin in small pockets of time; you can even do this while waiting in line at the coffee shop. Periodically sharing some of your Pinterest boards on Facebook will bring over some new followers who might enjoy seeing the content curation you do on Pinterest.

Facebook

Facebook has the largest reach of any social media platform. Given that so many people use Facebook every day, it makes sense for most businesses to cultivate a community there. Facebook has an algorithm that determines what your fans see, so you don't need to worry that you are posting on Facebook too often. The more the better.

When you find a relevant article or tutorial that your community would enjoy, share it on your feed, adding your own commentary so that your

followers get your perspective. Share images of your work in progress or use the Facebook Live feature to demonstrate a technique or simply talk to your audience. Facebook groups can be a terrific way to network with colleagues and, if you start one of your own, to build community.

For many of us, Facebook can quickly become a major distraction. Once we open the app we find ourselves watching cat videos, and all of a sudden an hour has gone by. If this happens to you (as it does to me!) use the Facebook scheduling tool to schedule updates to your page throughout the week. Then only log onto Facebook once a day to respond to comments.

Social media is an important part of having an art business today, but the tasks of keeping up accounts on multiple platforms can, at times, feel all-consuming. Instead of allowing the activity to make you feel resentful of lost time, try viewing your social media accounts as a giant sandbox. A sandbox is a place to play, to experiment with materials, and to make new friends. So hop in and get your hands dirty. Just remember you can't stay at the playground all day.

Abby Glassenberg blogs at whilshenaps.com. She designs sewing patterns, creates podcasts, and writes newsletters about the sewing industry. She recently co-founded the Craft Industry Alliance (craftindustryalliance.org).



Pinterest: See what this visual search engine can do for you

by Abby Glassenberg

For those of us that have small, creative businesses, Pinterest is an incredible marketing tool and one that shouldn't be ignored.

In today's online environment, Pinterest holds a place next to Google as a powerful and widely used search engine, with the difference being that Pinterest searches are visual.

Pinterest is a visual bookmarking tool for discovering and saving creative ideas. It launched in 2010 and quickly became one of the most popular social networks. Engage with and understand how Pinterest works and your work will be found online

much more often, thereby expanding your sales opportunities.

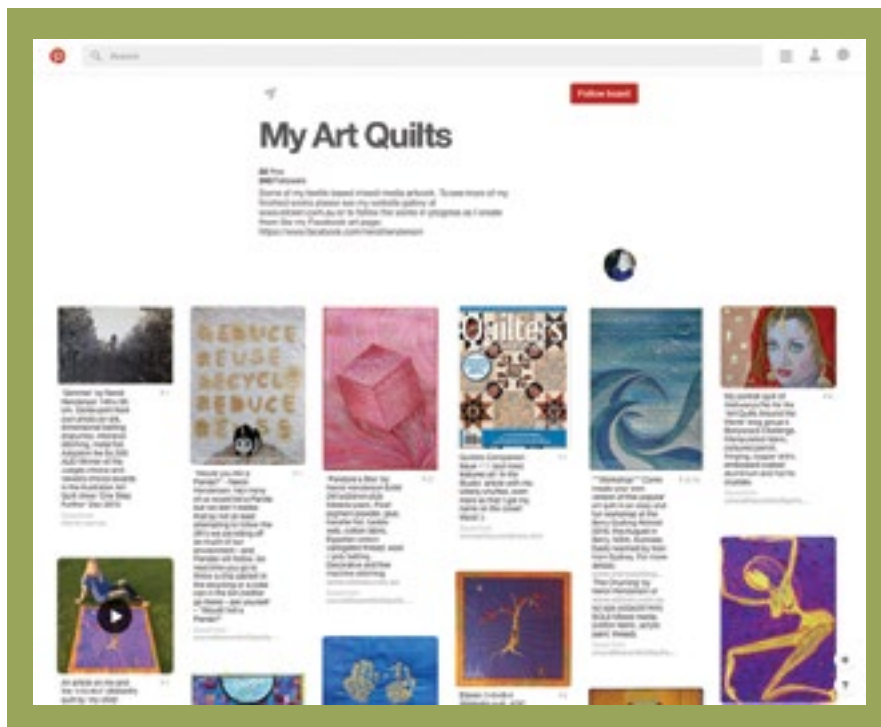
It is free to set up an account and begin using Pinterest. The site works like a visual archive where you "pin" images, meaning you save them to a particular "board" you have set up. The pins on each board are typically tied together by a common theme. Any image on the web is available to pin. Users can also upload an image from their computer or "repin"

within Pinterest, which means to save an image they find on another user's board.

People use Pinterest in a variety of different ways. They might set up a board to help plan a future life event, such as a wedding, by saving images of flower arrangements, dresses, or tablescape. Many people use Pinterest to find and save recipes, searching by a particular ingredient or style of food. Others use Pinterest to get inspiration for craft and DIY projects. Pinterest is a visual smorgasbord of aspiration and inspiration. As such it has become hugely popular in the way that lifestyle magazines once were. Today Pinterest has more than 100 million active users, the vast majority of whom are women.

When images from your site get pinned, either by you or by someone else, Pinterest users searching for information on a particular technique or just browsing Pinterest will discover the image, click on it, and be taken to your site where the image originated. Many sewing and quilting bloggers, myself included, report that Pinterest is consistently their No. 1 source of web traffic.

Beyond driving traffic to your website, Pinterest also gives you the opportunity to show off your aesthetic in a way that is visual and easy to digest. Looking at your boards,



Neroli Henderson's Art Quilts board



The Churning
Neroli Henderson

fans will get a sense of your taste, find particular techniques that you've chosen to highlight, and be inspired by your collection of pins.

One concern many artists express is the fear that using Pinterest will encourage people to steal their images or copy their work without proper attribution. Of course, this does happen. There are pins on Pinterest that don't link back to the original website where they came from and there are copycats and thieves out there, but it's important to realize that any image online can be stolen. People can take a screenshot of your site or scrape its contents at any time.

When you put an image of your work online, you are accepting the risk that your image may be used without your permission.

At the same time, though, you are allowing yourself to connect with a

Pinterest is a visual
smorgasbord of
aspiration and
inspiration.

global community of potential fans and customers who may buy your work, take your classes, and attend your shows. For most artists today, the potential for audience growth far outweighs the risk of piracy. Remember, the majority of Pinterest users are not interested in stealing from you. Instead they are excited to discover your work for the first time.

If you're just getting started on Pinterest, or if you've been using the site in a personal way and now would like to use it as a marketing tool, the first step is to fill out your profile. Upload a profile photo, use the 200 character "about" paragraph to describe what you do, add your website URL, and connect your other social media channels such as Facebook and Twitter. It's also a good idea to officially convert your profile from a personal account to a business account. A business account on Pinterest allows you to see analytics so you can monitor how your pins and boards perform.

Next, you will want to create boards relevant to your business as an art quilter. Roxane Lessa is an active Pinterest user with many different boards that are relevant to her work. "I do enjoy Pinterest. I have boards for my work, other's work, techniques, inspiration, nature, and anything I love, like jewelry. I have found a lot of wonderful art quilters on there that were unknown to me," she says.

If you have existing Pinterest boards that are irrelevant to your business, mark them as "secret" so

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Pinterest from page 23

you can still access them, but they'll be hidden from your followers.

Choose titles for your boards that are specific to their content such as "bird quilts," "paper piecing," or "landscapes." As you continue to build out your Pinterest presence, it's recommended that you have somewhere where between 30 and 60 boards altogether. Don't be afraid to toot your own horn! Be sure you set up a board for your own work and also pin your own images onto your other boards when relevant. Remember that the goal is to both inspire your followers and drive traffic to your website.

When you pin an image, you have the opportunity to write a description of that image in a text box below it. Take a few seconds to write a short

description of the subject matter and include the artist's name. The words in this description contribute to Pinterest's search algorithm and will help the image be more discoverable.

The best way to begin building a Pinterest following is to actively and consistently pin. If you have a smartphone, get the free Pinterest mobile app. Consider installing the Pinterest extension on your desktop computer's web browser so that you can easily pin images from any website whenever you are online. Spend a short period of time pinning each day, perhaps 10-15 minutes. You'll find that using Pinterest to discover and save beautiful images is rather enjoyable. Rearrange your boards periodically. If you have boards that are themed to specific holidays or

seasons, move those to the top at the appropriate time of year so that they'll get more attention.

Take steps to make it easy for your blog readers and website visitors to pin your images. Add a "pin it" social sharing button to your site and to the footer of each blog post. Beautiful, well-lit images will be shared more often. Vertical images do better than horizontal ones because users see them for a longer period of time as they scroll. Try to incorporate at least one vertical image in each of your blog posts and consider making your portfolio images vertically oriented.

Neroli Henderson has found customers and media coverage through Pinterest. "I've made a few sales via Pinterest, and it's been great for me as a name-awareness tool," she says.

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"I had one piece, *The Churning*, get over 20,000 views in one recent month alone and made three sales from people who have found me after finding that work. It sold long ago, but they want something else. I've also been approached by magazines because of it."

Millions of people are using Pinterest to discover and save creative ideas. The online landscape moves quickly and it can sometimes be hard to figure out where to spend your time. Learning to use Pinterest is well worth it. ▼

Abby Glassenberg blogs at whilshenaps.com. She designs sewing patterns, creates podcasts, and writes newsletters about the sewing industry. She recently co-founded the Craft Industry Alliance (craftindustryalliance.org).



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“Of course it’s important to support SAQA in the present, but it is equally important to help invest in its future. I am gratified to know that as a Legacy Member, I will be contributing to the long-term success of an organization that has given me so much personally and professionally. Remembering SAQA in your will is something everyone can do. I am just one member of a larger team that is ensuring SAQA’s future.”

—Judith Content



Is SAQA in YOUR will?

Picture this!

Instagram for art quilters

by Abby Glassenberg

When I want a hit of color or instant inspiration, I go to Instagram,” says art quilter Laura Wasilowski. “It’s a thrill to discover a new artist in Japan or see how an embroiderer from Wales finishes her work by following a hashtag.”

Among the social media channels available to us now, Instagram is the most visual. Put simply, Instagram allows us to get to know one another through photos we take and share with each other. For artists in particular, Instagram can be a powerful tool for building community, finding inspiration, and growing an audience for your work.

The process of posting a photo to Instagram is easy and quick. Wasilowski posts images to her Instagram account several times a week. “I don’t have a set time for posting,” she says, “but it’s a fast, easy process so I can do it while at lunch, waiting in a car, watching TV, or anywhere,” she says. “The interface for the app is fairly easy to learn, unlike Facebook, which baffles me! I learned about Instagram from a quilting friend. She gave me a quick lesson, I signed up, and I’ve been enjoying it ever since.”

If you’ve never tried Instagram, or if you have a dormant account, why not commit to exploring it. Like Wasilowski and so many other artists, you just might find that you like it!

Instagram basics

Instagram is a social network designed to be used with smartphones. If you don’t have a smartphone, Instagram may not be the right social media channel for you. If you do, you

can easily dive into Instagram and get started in just a few minutes.

First, install the free app and create an account. It’s best to use the same handle as the one you’re already using elsewhere, such as on Facebook, for consistency. It’s also a good idea to use a photo of yourself as your profile photo. A big part of connecting online is forming a relationship of trust, and you are more likely to gain trust if people can see your face. Fill in the rest of your profile by explaining briefly what you do. Instagram only allows you to provide one link in your profile, so choose the URL that is the hub of your online activity, such as your website or blog.

Once your account is set up, you are ready to begin using Instagram. With the camera on your smartphone, take a picture of something that might be of interest to the people who like your work.

Open the Instagram app and upload the photo. You will have the opportunity to edit it and add a filter before posting it. Instagram photos are in a square format so the photo will be cropped to make it fit. Write a caption explaining something about the image and then post it. Now you’re on your way!

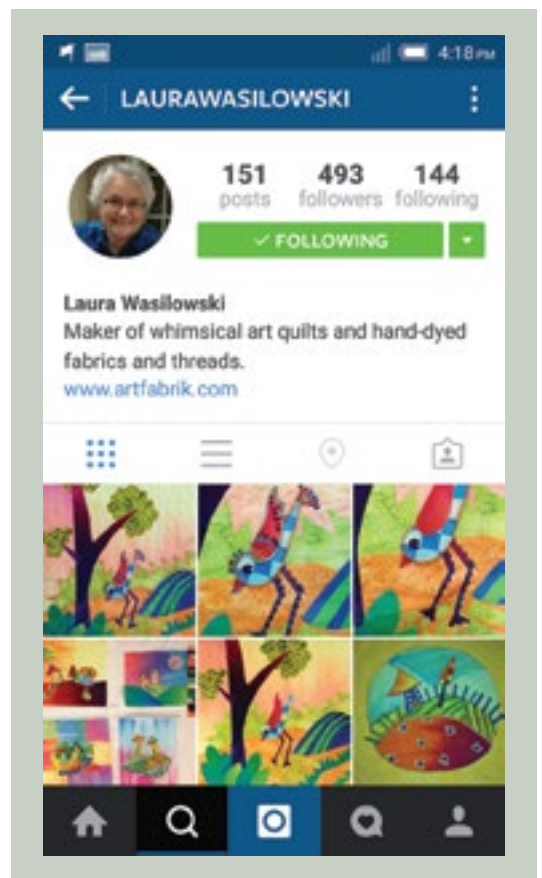
Nobody cares what I had for breakfast

Often people who don’t use Instagram feel that it might be a waste of time. They’ll say: “Why would anyone want to see a picture of what I ate

for breakfast today?” You know what? They’re right. Your bowl of cereal is pretty boring. But if you stop to think a bit, there are actually plenty of beautiful and interesting things in your immediate surroundings that would be terrific subjects of Instagram photos.

Here are a few ideas to get your creative juices flowing:

- Do you have a daily practice? Perhaps you keep a sketchbook or do a warm-up activity each day before beginning to make art. Take a photo of some of the pages or consider posting a photo of a new page each day.
- Most artists and quilters have a select few tools that are their favorites. Post a picture of one of them and explain in the caption how you use it and why you like it so much.
- Get right up close to a piece you are currently working on and take a photo of the stitching. Instagram





A few Instagram accounts to get you started

SAQA: @saqaart

art quilter Laura Wasilowski: @laurawasilowski

article author Abby Glassenberg: @abbyglassenberg

is such a visual medium that these textural photos are very appealing.

- Instagram allows you to create and post 15-second videos with sound. Try using your smartphone camera to shoot a little footage of your studio setup, your embroidery floss stash, or your newly finished quilt.
- Show some behind-the-scenes glimpses of your work in progress. Use your Instagram photos to help your audience better understand the work involved in creating one of your quilts.
- When you go on a morning walk, take a photo of something from nature that you find inspiring.
- Take a photo of your pet, a vignette in your home, or your children. Instagram is a great place to show the human side of what you do and give people a glimpse into your artistic life.

Socialize and make connections

Instagram is more than just a place to post your own photos. It's also a social network where you can make friends and interact with people. Follow other art quilters and artists you respect. The more people you follow, the more interesting your experience on Instagram will be.

"I like it because I can follow the work and lives of other artists I admire," Wasilowski explains. "It's also a way to keep in touch with friends who are distant from me." When you open Instagram on your phone, you'll see all the images recently posted by your followers. You can comment on their work and ask questions, or just hit "like." When someone comments on your photo, be sure to respond and use the @ sign to tag them so that they'll be notified that you've done so.

Once you get started on Instagram, you'll want to get some followers. A follower is someone who has liked your account and will therefore now see all your images in their feed when they open Instagram on their phone.

How do people find you on Instagram? The first step toward building an Instagram following is to post consistently. You certainly don't have to be on Instagram every day, but aim to post a new image at least three or four times a week. The more you post, the more likely someone is to stumble upon your photos, like what they see, and follow you.

A good way to begin finding followers is to search Instagram for people you already interact with on other social platforms or whom you have met in person and follow them. Once they see that you are now on Instagram and are posting some lovely photos on a regular basis, they're likely to follow you, too.

Another way to be found is to use hashtags. Hashtags enable Instagram users to search the site for particular words or phrases. When people are looking for photos about a topic, they type a hashtag into the search bar, and all photos with that hashtag will show up. Hashtags are a good way to lead new people to your photos. It is entirely acceptable on Instagram to use five or more hashtags on each photo. Some popular hashtags for art quilters are: #artquilt, #artquilting, #textilepainting, and #finecraft. You can search Instagram for more. If you are hoping to connect with a local audience, use the name of your town or city as a hashtag.

When you attend a conference or workshop, take a few photos for Instagram and see if there's a designated hashtag for the event. Many people use Instagram like a visual newsfeed for different events by searching the event hashtag, and when they do, your images will come up.

Finally, don't hesitate to spread the word that you are now on Instagram. Put an Instagram icon on your website or blog. Announce it in your newsletter. You may also want to connect your Instagram account to your Facebook page (you can do this within Instagram's settings on your phone) so that you have the option of sharing your Instagram photos on your Facebook page. Let your Facebook fans know you're on Instagram, too.

Instagram is a terrific way to get instant feedback on your work from fellow artists and potential customers, to form new relationships with like-minded people, and to draw daily visual inspiration. Over time it can also lead to new opportunities to publish and show your work, teach, or collaborate with other artists. You never know who's out there looking at what you are posting.

Instagram is a place to tell the story of your artwork through photos. Wasilowski says, "Instagram has given me new respect for the power of the photo. So much more can be said through an image than through words." ▼

Abby Glassenberg designs sewing patterns and writes about the sewing industry. Her books include Stuffed Animals and The Artful Bird. She is based in Massachusetts.

Harness the power of online video

by Abby Glassenberg

SAQA member Clara Nartey challenged herself to explore how to use stitching more extensively in her work this year. Instead of doing it alone in her studio, or sharing progress photos on her blog, Nartey decided to document her process in a weekly video series. “I film myself creating stitched drawings: pencil-like drawings using thread and fabric,” she says. “I post a video each week on YouTube.”

Nartey’s videos have helped other artists learn her technique, and they have also helped Nartey build a larger audience for her own work. Of the

very first video in her series, one commenter wrote, “What a great video and your sparkling personality really shows through!”

“I’ve got a good response so far,” Nartey notes. “I have people watching and learning how to create stitched drawings from all over the world. The other day someone from the United Kingdom emailed me a photo of a piece she’d created by watching my videos.”

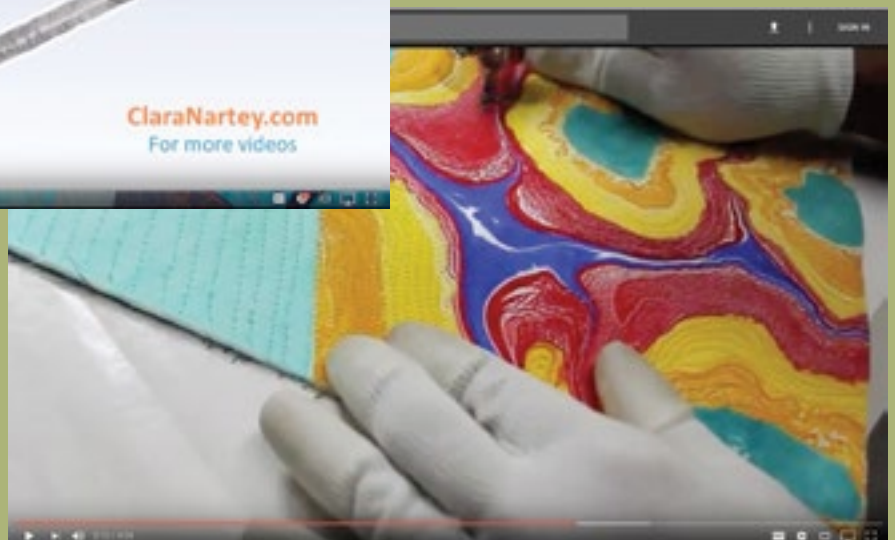
As Nartey has discovered, video is a highly effective way to reach an online audience. A video grabs the viewer’s attention and has the power

to instantly convey emotion and personality, making a lasting impression in people’s minds. This is why many social media experts are predicting that video will become increasingly important for building a business in the years to come.

“We’re entering this new golden age of video,” Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg recently told BuzzFeed News. “I wouldn’t be surprised if you fast-forward five years and most of the content that people see on Facebook and are sharing on a day-to-day basis is video.”



SAQA member Clara Nartey’s video series opens with a graphic animation that complements her website and creates memorable branding and identity.



Creating a quality instructional video was once a daunting task requiring expensive photography and lighting equipment and multiple trained technicians to film and edit the final footage. Although that kind of financial and time investment may still be required to create videos with very high production values, today it is easy and inexpensive to film, edit, and publish a high-quality video right in your own studio with no special equipment beyond a smartphone.

If you do want to invest in some low-cost equipment to make producing videos easier, consider getting a tripod that fits around your phone (Photojojo offers a very affordable mount that connects your phone to any tripod), as well as one with an extendable arm that will allow you to easily film overhead videos (EasyAcc offers a gooseneck mount for smartphones and tablets for under \$30). Shoot video during the daytime in natural light or set up some studio lights before you begin. If you are filming yourself, face the window rather than having your back toward it so that you don't end up silhouetted and backlit.

Before you begin, take time to clear the space that will be in the frame so that there is nothing extraneous that could serve as a distraction for the viewer. Having filmed several dozen quilting technique videos for her YouTube channel, artist Cheryl Sleboda created a dedicated set in her studio where she can film on a regular basis. "My first videos were using a blank

Today it is easy and inexpensive to film, edit, and publish a high-quality video right in your own studio with no special equipment beyond a smartphone.

white wall and my ironing board as a table," Sleboda recalls. "Later I moved to my sewing table and did most of my videos from there. Video is so important to my business that this year I built a permanent set. My

tripod and lights no longer need to be crammed into my sewing studio to record a quick video for any platform," she says. Make simple edits to your video with iMovie, a free program that comes preinstalled on Macs, or Windows Movie Maker for PCs.

YouTube is the most familiar online platform for video and it is also the second most powerful online search engine with more than 3 billion searches conducted each month. There are many other platforms for video right now, though, so it is worth thinking through what your goal is for your video so that you can determine how long it should be and where it might do best.

Try creating a video for Instagram. An Instagram video can be anywhere from 3-60 seconds and can only be

see "Online video" on page 30



Cheryl Sleboda's YouTube Channel

www.equilter.com

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Online video from page 13

uploaded from a mobile device. You can shoot a video using the camera app on your phone and then add a filter and review the video in Instagram before sharing it. (Sadly, the Twitter-owned Vine app, which allowed users to upload 6-second videos, is being shut down.)

Or try a free app like Hyperlapse to shoot a stop-motion movie of your work in progress. Videos tend to get a higher level of engagement than photos on Instagram, a factor that is even more important now that Instagram has an algorithmic feed that favors quality posts with a high number of likes and comments. You will be able to see the view count below the videos you post giving you immediate feedback from your audience.

Live video is an exciting new frontier to delve into, as well. The expectations for perfection are much lower when you are shooting live and, in fact, the raw element is a big draw for viewers who enjoy seeing snippets of people's real lives. Social media strategist Meighan O'Toole explains, "What's great about live video is people really only care about the content you offer. They are forgiving in the sense that you don't need to be super produced or coifed." The spontaneous interaction that live video promises holds tremendous power for true connection.

Try Periscope, a live video app owned by Twitter, or try Facebook Live if your audience prefers to congregate on Facebook instead. For either of these platforms, it is best to announce in advance when you'll go live and what you'll be discussing so that people can show up at the appointed time to ask questions and interact with you.

Recently Instagram introduced Stories, a short-form video feature similar to Snapchat: record what you're doing, overlay text, and post. The whole process takes just a minute or two. Stories appear in a slideshow format above your feed, rather than in it, and they disappear within 24 hours. Think of your gorgeous Instagram photo as the "beauty shot" and your Story as the "making of."

And, of course, you can reuse videos between platforms. Once you have put in the effort to create a compelling video be sure to use it in multiple ways. Try uploading a Facebook Live video to YouTube for example, or an Instagram Story to your Facebook page. Sleboda uses her YouTube videos in a multitude of ways. "I can embed those videos in my blog or other social media posts, even to Pinterest, she says. "I have taken my YouTube videos and uploaded them to Facebook, and even cross-promoted little snippets onto Instagram."

No matter where you choose to post videos, the key is to get started and experiment. Accept that even if your video isn't perfect, it can still be an effective tool for building a following and a customer base for your work. "I'm hardly an expert at videos," says artist Susie Monday, "but I found that once I got over my fear and just jumped in, the process was pretty simple and repeatable." ▼

Abby Glassenberg blogs at whileshenaps.com. She designs sewing patterns, creates podcasts, and writes newsletters about the sewing industry. She recently co-founded the Craft Industry Alliance (craftindustryalliance.org).

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Turn on the podcasts, turn up your productivity!

by Abby Glassenberg

Give a listen to just one podcast. Then try another. Perhaps just one more. You will soon be enjoying a growing entertainment trend filled with shows that cater to your interests on your schedule.

What is a podcast? It is an independently produced radio show aired digitally. The word comes from the combination of iPod and broadcast. Podcasts are available to everyone to download for free, on demand, from iTunes and other listening apps for smartphones like Stitcher for Android products. By sidestepping the traditional gatekeepers of mainstream radio, podcasters are able to produce shows on niche topics that appeal to enthusiasts of all sorts, and to distribute those shows to a global audience at the click of a button.

“Podcasts for me are magazines with ears,” says quilter Jen Frost. “The flexibility of flipping through a magazine is brought to you in auditory format. Because you’re able to be up and about when listening, they’re perfect for the gym, in the car, or even folding laundry.” Frost also listens while sewing in her studio, enjoying the company of quilters in conversation while she works.

Frost is not alone in her excitement about podcast listening. Over the last few years the number of podcasts available for download and the number of podcast listeners has increased exponentially. The Pew Research Center reports the percentage of Americans who have listened to a podcast sometime in the last month has almost doubled from 2008, from 9 to

17 percent by January 2015. According to an Edison Research report, 33 percent of Americans 12 years or older say they have listened to at least one podcast.

There are now shows on nearly every topic and every style imaginable including many shows made especially for people who sew and quilt. Most quilting podcasts are interview style, focusing on a particular quilter’s creative journey or on a particular technique or experience, although some sewing-focused shows take on a different format such as a regular conversation between co-hosts.

Learn and connect

Ivete Tecedor, co-owner of the fabric shop Gotham Quilts in New York, has become an avid podcast listener this year. “I like to listen to podcasts because for me they’re like reading non-fiction. I love learning new things and I read a bunch of non-fiction, but podcasts let me learn while doing something else that requires my vision,” she explains. “I like feeling productive, and podcasts help me feel extra-super productive!”

SAQA member Linda Colsh agrees that podcasts help her learn new things and be more productive. “When I’m listening to art podcasts, I have to have a pencil close at hand because I find there’s always a reference or two that I want to chase down later by Googling, same when reading the newspapers or magazines.”

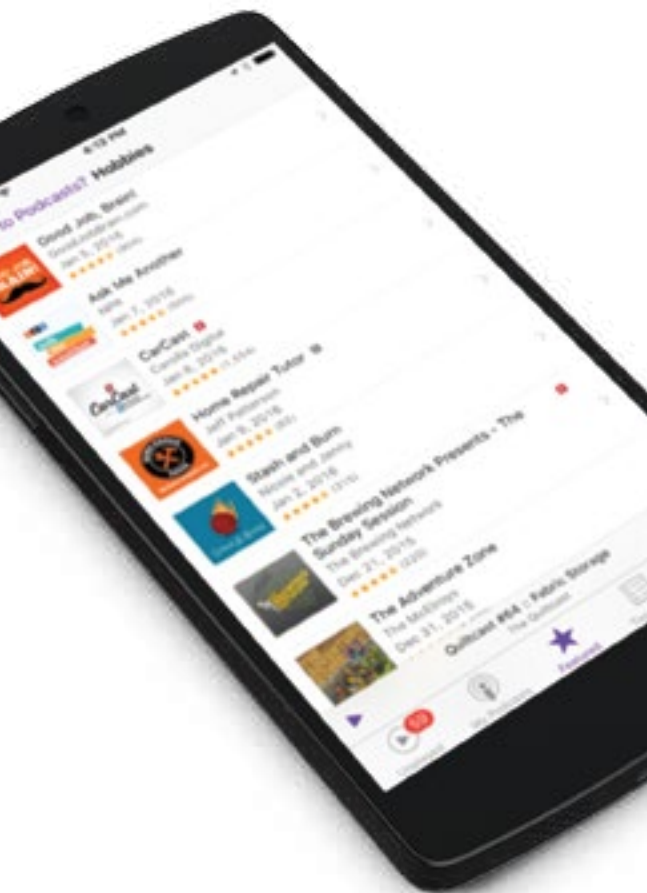
Unlike traditional radio, podcasts are available on demand, which

means you can tune in to your favorite shows when you’d like to listen most. Frost especially loves the ability to stop and start a show whenever she needs to, so that she doesn’t miss anything. “If something comes up while you’re listening, you can pause the podcast—almost like putting a magazine down—and come back to it when you’re ready,” she says. Tecedor also loves podcasts for their portability. “Being able to always have them on my phone makes it easy to pop one on while I’m waiting in line at the post office or wherever.”

The beginning

Many people were introduced to podcasts for the first time in the Fall 2014 when an National Public Radio (NPR) spinoff show called *Serial* became the medium’s first breakout hit. The show traced a riveting investigation of an unsolved murder of a Baltimore-area teen, and 1.5 million people downloaded each episode. Quilter Angie Wilson was one of them. “*Serial* was my gateway drug to podcasts, but now I’m fully addicted and it’s been great across the board for getting inspiration and motivation from a variety of places,” she says. She’s branched out to listening to a variety of different shows. “I like to listen to the stories of people and what makes them do what they do—I find it encouraging and inspiring for living a life less ordinary.”

Quilter Alyce Blythe was not sure that she’d like podcasts before listening to *Serial*. “I’ve never been the kind of person to be able to focus on



Podcasts to explore

Podcasts are a way to hear about new techniques and opportunities, to stay inspired, and to feel connected to a larger community of artists and makers. If you've never listened to a podcast, or if you're interested in finding some new shows to try, here are 10 podcasts you might want to start with. Enter the title into the iTunes search bar, or try the Stitcher app if you have an Android phone. Enjoy!

Modern Sewciety

American Patchwork & Quilting Podcast with Pat Sloan

The Quiltcast

Quilter on Fire*

The Slightly Mad Quilt Lady

While She Naps (produced by Abby Glassenberg)

Hip to Be a Square

Thread Cult

Quilting ... for the Rest of Us

*Be sure to catch episode #10 with Martha Sielman, SAQA's executive director.

just aural input so I was rather skeptical about listening to podcasts," she recalls, but after friends raved to her about *Serial* she decided to give podcast listening a try. Now, listening to podcasts is part of her studio routine.

Easy startup

Serial and other NPR spinoff shows are professionally produced in high-tech recording studios, but most podcasters create their shows in a more humble environment. Podcasters can record right from their own homes using relatively inexpensive audio equipment. A microphone, a set of headphones and basic software for recording and editing audio is all you need to create your own show. Publish the recording to iTunes and the show is instantly distributed to listeners all over the world.

Producing a podcast is a terrific way to grow an online community and connect and learn from experts in your field. When listeners hear your voice they get to know you in a new

and intimate way. Many podcasters find that this special connection with guests and listeners leads to terrific new opportunities and new professional relationships.

Brandy Maslowski makes a popular interview show for quilters called *Quilter on Fire*, formerly called *Canadian Quilt Talk*. She enjoys the process of making a podcast. "People love to be featured especially if they have a new product, book, or class to promote. We always have a blast recording the audio and I have made some wonderful new friends," she says. "The new connections with incredible people in the industry are invaluable, too."

SAQA member Charlotte Scott produces a podcast called *The Slightly Mad Quilt Lady* and has reaped similar rewards from the experience. "I've been amazing by what I get out of producing a podcast. It's opened doors for me that wouldn't have happened otherwise. I've recently had two public speaking invitations

because of it, I've got to meet very well-known quilters who I probably wouldn't have had the courage to approach otherwise, and suddenly I'm the well-known one at local meet and greets. It's done wonders for my profile," she says.

Sewing and quilting are typically solo experiences. Through podcasts we can lessen the isolation we sometimes feel working in the studio. As Blyth says, "Listening to a podcast is similar to watching something while sewing, but without the need to keep looking at the screen and getting distracted. And it's amazing to be able to listen and learn more about and from your favorite quilters and designers without needing to travel or pay for classes." ▼

Abby Glassenberg designs sewing patterns and writes about the sewing industry. Her books include Stuffed Animals and The Artful Bird. She is based in Massachusetts.

Need a website?

Build a great online presence one step at a time

by Deidre Adams

Do you need to create a website to showcase your work? Or do you think it's time for a site overhaul?

Today, we have many options to make ourselves and our work visible online. But where to start? Figuring out the best course of action can feel like a daunting task. Here are three areas of consideration to help direct your decisions:

Are you really ready for a website? If you're still at an early stage in your career, do you have enough content to warrant a standalone website? A consistent, cohesive body of work with a strong, unified voice will make a much better web presentation than a random collection of workshop pieces or experiments that have little in common.

What do you want to achieve with your site? Do you want to sell your work directly from your site, or are you interested in creating an online portfolio for people who ask about your work? Do you want to actively drive traffic to your site? Are you looking to make new connections with people who share your interests?

How much work are you prepared to do yourself? Do you like learning new things on your own? Do you have the time and motivation to learn a new software interface as well as prepare and upload your images? Or would you prefer to stay in your studio and hand off these tasks?

Content

Once you decide to go ahead, think about what you want on your site. There are no hard and fast rules for what to include, but the No. 1 consideration is a clear, easy-to-navigate portfolio. Good-quality photographs are a must, and bigger is better (see "Image optimization" below). Each image should include a caption or credit line with the title of the work, the medium, and the size. If you want to sell the work on the site, be sure to include the price. The price itself can link to purchasing information on another page.

If you have a lot of work, it may be best to divide it into categories rather than loading it all on one page. These will vary by artist, but possibilities include sorting by medium, theme, or chronology.

Other pages

There are no set rules about what pages you should include. You may need more or less depending on your situation. Some possibilities are:

Artist info. Your biography, artist statement, and other information about you and your work. Your viewers want to meet you through your story.

Resume/CV. At minimum, include a listing of your previous exhibitions. If the list is very long, you can label it "Selected Exhibitions" and list the most prestigious. You can also add a listing of collections you are in,

articles by and about you, and any art-related experience you have.

Where to see your work. Current exhibitions, galleries, and other places to see your artwork in person.

Store. If you want to sell from your site, you can either do this from the gallery page or create a separate page just for the available items.

Contact info. Make it easy for people to get in touch with you. Because of the probability of spammers, many people prefer to use a fill-in-the-blank contact form that forwards to their email account, rather than offering an actual email address or phone number. (Wordpress has plug-ins that make this easy.)

Design

The most important consideration for design is the user experience. Think about your audience—this includes everyone from your friends, potential collectors, gallerists, curators, and other artists to complete strangers who land on your site by accident and become interested in your offerings. Can users see immediately





what your site is about, and can they find your work easily? Going with a minimalist look or a flashy animation as your home page might be trendy, but if users don't see menus or an obvious navigation system, they may leave without trying to find your artwork.

Once they do get to your content, is the text readable? Many viewers complain that white type on black is difficult to read. As we age, small or light-colored type becomes increasingly difficult to read. Always keep the viewer in mind and make it easy for them.

Make your portfolio easy to navigate from one image to the next. If each image requires multiple clicks, chances are good that viewers will become bored after looking at just a couple of them.

Your site should showcase your artwork, not compete with it. A busy, cluttered site with lots of elements or multiple fonts might appear dated. The current trend in web design is a clean, pared-down look, often with a single large image, called a "hero

image," that grabs attention. A side note to this is that you can't expect to present one design that will look current forever. Web trends and technology are constantly changing. You should be prepared to at least tweak, if not completely overhaul, your site at least every couple of years.

The possibilities for site design are nearly infinite. If you don't have ideas for look and function, a good way to get started is to look at other artists' sites to get a feel for what appeals to you.

Choice of platform

Social media. At one end of the spectrum are the social media platforms: Facebook, Instagram, Tumblr, and others. You can definitely show and promote your artwork with nothing more than one of these. Advantages to this method include no cost and built-in social media promotion capabilities, as long as you're willing to put in a bit of work. That work includes posting interesting content on a regular basis and interacting with others. The drawbacks are there can be little to no customization of your galleries, and some people may see the lack of a dedicated website as less than professional.

Group artist sites. Group, or bulk, sites may sound good, promising great exposure on a pre-existing platform where all you do is upload your work and wait for the buyers to appear. They may charge a nominal fee or be completely free. However, again, you'll have no opportunity

to customize the look of your pages. In addition, you may be competing with hundreds or thousands of other artists or possibly showing your artwork alongside advertising. This is definitely not showing your work to advantage.

Website builders. In the last few years, a number of sites offering templated, "drag & drop" website creation have sprung to the rescue of those who know little about design or coding. These include Wix, Squarespace, Weebly, GoDaddy, and others. Some offer the ability to create a free site, but will include their branding and an unwieldy domain/URL unless you upgrade.

All of the major website builders offer some support, whether by phone, email, live chat, or community forums. You can make a wide range of customizations to colors, fonts, and layouts. These features allow you to generate a distinct look even though you start with a choice of basic templates offered by the service. Time will be involved to learn and understand the interface, but most provide good written and video documentation.

Prices vary depending on selected features, but range around \$8-\$36 per month, with savings available for paying on an annual basis. These prices include web hosting. Online store or shopping cart features are available at some price points.

Wordpress. Defined as both an open-source content management system (CMS) and as a state-of-the-art

personal publishing platform, Wordpress originated as a blogging platform. At one time it had strong competition, but it has developed such a wide following of loyal users, supporters, and developers, it's now the platform of choice for more than 16 million websites, from huge global corporations down to small individuals like myself.

A full discussion of creating a Wordpress website is beyond the scope of this article. Pared down to basics, the process involves acquiring a hosting service, downloading and installing the free Wordpress software, choosing a template from either the thousands of free ones or the more feature-rich commercial options, and setting up your pages, menus, content, and plug-ins—add-ons that extend the features of the out-of-the-box Wordpress installation.

Further reading

Do's and Don'ts for Building Art & Artist Websites

www.artbusiness.com/weberrors.html

Artist Websites: How to Increase Your Online Traffic and Keep Everyone on Your Site Longer

bit.ly/IncTrafficKeepVisitors

Comparison of website builders

bit.ly/BuildersCompared

SEO tips

bit.ly/EmptyEaselSEO

Alyson Stanfield's Art Biz blog

www.artbizblog.com

Lots of great tips and information for creating or improving your website

Wordpress documentation

https://codex.wordpress.org/Main_Page

With time and patience, you can build a great Wordpress site on your own. Books, online tutorials, and documentation are widely available. However, some of the screens and options can be difficult to understand. Another possibility is to hire someone to build the site for you and then do maintenance and updates yourself.

Custom site. This will almost certainly be the most expensive option—unless you have some really good friends in the web-design community. Be sure to ask potential designers whether you can do edits and updates yourself. Otherwise, you'll be paying for every addition or change. You'll also have to wait until your designer has time to accommodate you.

Additional considerations

Domain name. It's considered good practice to use your own name as your domain name. This has several advantages, including making it easy for people to search for you. It also allows you to use your own name for your email address—serious@seriousartist.com communicates professionalism and permanence. If someone else already has your name, you'll need an alternate strategy. Possibilities are using a different extension (seriousartist.net, seriousartist.org, etc.), hyphenating your name (serious-artist.com), or adding another word (seriousartistquilts.com). The last option is probably the most straightforward.

A domain name is often included with web-hosting services or site-builder platforms, but if you want to register one independently,

you can find many providers with a web search on “domain name registration.”

Web hosting. If you're building your own site, you'll need a web-hosting service to store uploads and make your website available to users. Bluehost.com seems to be the most consistently recommended hosting service. However, there are many competitors out there, and it's always a good idea to do research before making a final decision.¹ Most hosts offer different tiers of service depending on how much space, bandwidth, and other features you need.

Search engine optimization (SEO). This is the art of making your website more visible to Google, Yahoo, and other search engines. There are various techniques for doing this, including using a good description and keywords in your site's metadata. If you hire someone else to build your site, be sure they can take care of this for you. Otherwise, plan to research how to do it yourself.

Image optimization. As mentioned earlier, having nice big images is important for drawing attention. Viewers really want to see the detail in your work. However, there's nothing more tedious on the web than watching a photo slowly draw down the screen one line at a time. Image optimization is an art of balance—you want to reduce the file size of your image to minimize download time, but still maintain quality and detail. If you have Adobe Photoshop or Photoshop Elements, use the “Save for Web” feature and adjust the quality downward while keeping an eye on how the image quality changes as

see “Website” on page 40

¹Beware of results returned from a web search on “independent review web hosting companies.” Many of these will be fake affiliate review sites paid by the hosting companies and will show results based not on actual quality but on who pays them the most.

Website from page 40

you adjust. Use the 2-Up view to see before and after at the same time. You can also find many free image optimizing services out on the Internet.

Responsive web design. At one time, most people used personal computers to browse the internet. Now, your site is just as likely to be viewed on a smartphone or tablet. It's very much to your advantage to be sure that your site looks good on any size screen. When choosing a WordPress template or site-builder software, look for solutions that are *responsive*. This means that the layout, images, and other elements will be resized or otherwise adjusted to fit the size of the screen they're being viewed on. Take a look at your site on these devices, or use a web-based mobile emulator like mobilephoneemulator.com or ipadpeek.com.

Blogging. Whether you might ever want to blog is something you should consider when deciding how to build your site. Blogging is, of course, a built-in feature of every Wordpress website and is available on most web-builder sites.

These days, it's nearly impossible to further your art career without some kind of web presence. Start now by building a useful, compelling, and navigable site. You'll be on your way to sharing who you are and what you do. ▼

Deidre Adams is the graphic designer of your SAQA Journal and many of SAQA's exhibition catalogs. She is also a textile artist and painter with a studio in Denver, Colorado. See her work at deidreadams.com.



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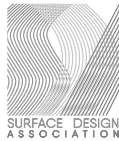
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Website

from page 11

Catherine McDonald's comments expand on teaching information. McDonald likes to see workshop menus that provide good descriptions of the classes. She also wants to read what teachers request from workshop organizers, not necessarily pricing, but other requirements to run the workshop.

Ellen Lindner's main focus is to add dates to her teaching calendar. "Therefore, I try to sell me, speaking in first person and including a casual

No matter the focus, keeping the site updated with new work, events, or a link to an active blog is beneficial.

headshot on every page. I have a very large 'Learn with Ellen' section [on adventurequilter.com], which includes not only class offerings, but lots of how-to articles and information. I [want to] come across as personable, knowledgeable, and willing to share."

No matter the focus, keeping the site updated with new work, events, or a link to an active blog is beneficial. Susan Lenz says: "I regularly update [susanlenz.com]. Keeping the information current is important. Who really likes clicking on a bio with 2014 or 2015 listed as the latest date? Plus, I've been told that changing content on a regular basis helps a site's Google ranking," she says.

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“Linking to an active blog helps too.” Lindner says her blog does generate visits to other areas of her website.

Elena Stokes says her website [elenastokes.com] stands out because of user-friendly navigation, well-chosen color scheme, and large full-screen images available as a slide show on her home page. “I purchased a theme from Imagely that is extremely flexible, allowing me to change the design and look of my website at a whim. One of the design options of the theme is the header placement, either across the top or down the left side. I like the left side header as it allows the viewer to always have access to the menu for easy navigation. No more having to scroll all the way back up to click to another page. It also has my name and color scheme so the viewer knows where they are and whose website it is.”

Stokes makes a good point about image use. “I want a website that can display full screen images of my artwork. Anybody can create a website that looks and functions like mine if they want to, but nobody else has my artwork. That’s mine and mine alone. And I want it big and beautiful so viewers can feel like they’re right up close to the work. I only use the full screen on my home page with a slide show, but I hope that first impression makes an impact on my audience.”

Linda Colsh’s consistency makes her website easily recognizable, even though it has undergone updates. “When I had my website redesigned in the last year to improve appearance and full use of screen real estate on cell phones and tablets, I kept the basic look of my previous website as I wanted to transition while maintaining the look I established for presenting my artwork on line.” ▼

Diane Howell is editor of the SAQA Journal.

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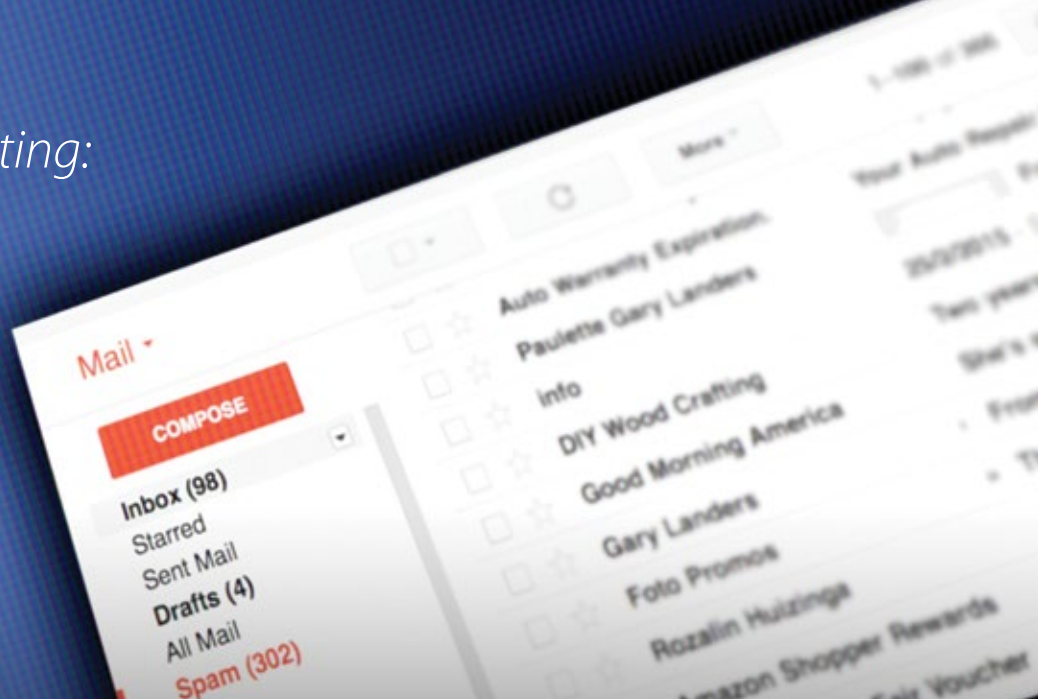
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LYNN HOLLARD

Email newsletter marketing:

The power of the inbox

by Abby Glassenberg



Since the beginning of her art quilting career, Hollis Chatelain has been building a mailing list. In the early days, 18 years ago, she would send out cards alerting her fans of upcoming shows and classes. It was an effective, if expensive, way to keep in touch. Then one day a few years ago, she typed all of those names into email software and started communicating with her customers and students electronically instead.

“My art sells because of my newsletter,” explains Hollis. “The hits on my website spike when I send it out, and my classes seem to fill right up.”

When you open Hollis’s email, you can’t help but be struck by how beautiful and personable it is. It’s like a little treat in your inbox.

“I have a section about my art and one about teaching,” she says. “I also have a personal section about my garden and house and about my studio and family. The last part is about what I am selling in my website store.”

Hollis is still collecting names from her students and from people attending her exhibitions, and now she has a newsletter sign-up form on her Facebook page and on her website as

well. She has experienced firsthand the power of email newsletters, one of the best marketing tools an artist can employ.

The benefits of email communication

Email is the oldest and most long-lasting way to communicate online, and it’s certainly the most familiar. Almost everyone has an email address no matter their age or level of familiarity with the Internet. Most people check their email first thing in the morning and then multiple times throughout the day, especially if they have a smartphone. Unlike social media, email feels private. When you check your email, you’re opening your personal inbox, and if you choose to respond nobody sees your response but the recipient. All of this means that if you choose to use email to communicate with your customers and fans, you have the opportunity to reach out to all of them personally in a way they’re sure not to miss.

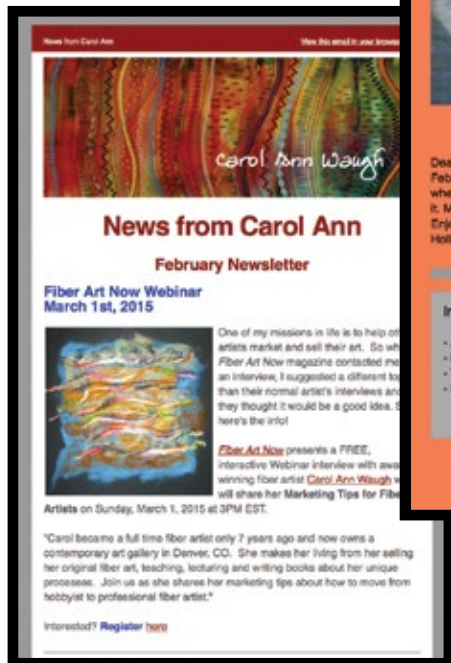
Once you begin building an email list, you’ll come to see it as one of your art business’s most valuable assets, because that’s what it is. Although it’s nice to build an

audience on Facebook or Instagram, when you depend on those platforms, you’re ultimately putting access to your fan base in the hands of another company. If Facebook changes its algorithm so that your friends no longer see all of your posts, or if Instagram were to shut down, you’re stuck. Artists like Hollis who build their own mailing lists own those lists wholly and forever.

Getting started

Getting started with an email newsletter is easier than you might think. If you haven’t been collecting email addresses, start now. Bring a clipboard to your guild meetings, workshops, and exhibitions and invite people to add their first and last name and email address. When you get home, don’t let those names just sit there. Lists go stale after a while, and you don’t want people to forget about you. Instead, sit down and spend a few hours setting up an email newsletter.

The first step is to choose newsletter software. There are several good options available, including Mad Mimi, Constant Contact, and MailChimp, and many of them



Email newsletter examples from Hollis Chatelain (above) and Carol Ann Waugh (left)

are free until you hit a subscriber threshold (MailChimp, for example, is free until you have 2,000 subscribers). Using software is a smart way to manage an email newsletter for several reasons. First, anti-spam laws prohibit you from adding people to your mailing list without their permission. Email software helps you create a “double opt-in” form so that your new online subscribers have to enter their email addresses to sign up and are then sent a confirmation. It also makes it easy for you to create a nice-looking email without having to do any coding or formatting on your own. You choose a template and then just drag and drop images and type in your text. And finally, email software gives your subscribers the option of unsubscribing at any time, which is courteous.

Deciding on content and a schedule

The next task is to figure out what you want to include in your newsletter. A good way to think about a

newsletter is as an exchange of ideas. Write as if you’re talking to a friend you haven’t seen in a few weeks. Talk about your work, but also give them something interesting to think about. Invite them to join you in your creative explorations and recommend things you’ve come across recently like new books, techniques, or websites. And remember that it’s okay to experiment with your newsletter, especially at the beginning. After a few issues, you’ll begin to realize what belongs there.

One of the best ways to gather ideas for your newsletter is to take a look at what other art quilters are doing. Subscribe to the email lists of five artists you admire and see what appeals to you in their newsletters. Jot down some ideas to get you started. Here are a few SAQA members with excellent email newsletters: Meg Cox – Quilt Journalist Tells All (megcox.com), Hollis Chatelain (www.hollisart.com), Lenore Crawford (lenorecrawford.com), Carol Ann Waugh (www.carolannwaugh.com),

and Ami Simms (www.amisimms.com).

You might be worrying that sending out an email newsletter will annoy your customers, rather than please them. Everyone’s inbox is overflowing already, right? This concern keeps many artists from sending out a newsletter often enough or from sending one at all. Remember that everyone on your mailing list is there because they want to be. Newsletter software allows them to easily unsubscribe whenever they’d like. Choose a regular schedule for your newsletter (once a week, once every two weeks, or once a month are all good choices) and then stick to sending out interesting emails on that schedule. Your subscribers will start looking forward to hearing from you.

Quilter Ami Simms really enjoys the interaction her newsletter creates. “I get between 25 and 150 emails from readers after a newsletter goes out,” she explains. “I love that! It’s so nice to know somebody’s out there reading what I write. And, when they email, it gives me a chance to get to know them better and to continue the dialogue.” One other benefit of newsletter software is that it allows you to see analytics for each issue you send including which links were clicked the most. You can use this information to make subsequent issues more interesting to your readership.

Building your email list

Like anything in business, it helps to have a thick skin when authoring a newsletter. Every single time you send one out a certain number of people will unsubscribe. Don’t worry! Keep working to build your list. The people who open, read, and respond to your

newsletter are your devoted fans and they are truly golden.

You'll want to continually grow your list in an organic way so that the people who sign up really want to read your newsletter. There are some concrete steps you can take to increase awareness of your newsletter and entice people to subscribe.

- Put the opt-in form in a prominent place on your website—up high near your profile photo is a great spot. The sign-up box should speak directly and confidently. Instead of saying, "Why not sign up for my newsletter?" say, "Enter your email and get started today." Authority makes us feel secure in our decision to hand over our email addresses.
- Include a link to the sign-up form in your email signature.

- If you sell patterns or originals online, email your customers after they make a purchase and invite them to sign up.
- When your work is featured in a magazine or on a blog, include a link to your sign-up form in your bio.
- When you teach a class or display your work in a show, be sure to have a clipboard available so people can sign up for your newsletter.
- Describe your newsletter subscribers as a community. Everyone wants to be a member of a special group. Meg Cox has this effective tagline on her newsletter opt-in form: "Subscribe and become a quilt industry insider overnight."
- Offer an incentive. Some email software allows you to set up an auto responder that will give new

subscribers something for free immediately, like an ebook, a pattern, or a coupon.

As an artist with a business, it's worth your time to build your community through an email newsletter. When you do it well, your customers, admirers, and students feel that they are part of something larger that you're building. The curtain is pulled back and they are right there, on the inside with you. They're rooting for you, they're buying from you, and you are all on the same team. ▼

Abby Glassenberg is a sewing pattern designer, craft book author, and teacher. She writes about creative entrepreneurship and the sewing industry on her blog, whilesheknaps.com. Sign up for Abby's newsletter at whilesheknaps.com to get the best in sewing, blogging, and small business from around the web each week delivered right to your inbox.

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Getting your story covered

by Amanda Carestio

You've spent countless hours creating a body of work for exhibition or writing a book or planning a special event. Now it's time to spread the word. That doesn't come easy for many people: we'd much rather be in the studio than spend time tooting our own horns. But you should try to make a little time for it; otherwise, how will anyone know about the great work you're doing?

No matter how much time you've allotted yourself for publicity and outreach, it's a good idea to prioritize your efforts and make the most of the time you do have to spend. What follows is a list of steps to take and considerations to keep in mind as you reach out to traditional and online media. You likely won't have time to do all of these things, and that's okay.

Pick and choose what makes the most sense for you and the news you're sharing.

Reaching out

First, make sure what you want to share is a story or, rather, that it is news. A recap of your services or website updates probably won't make for compelling news. A new gallery opening, a special exhibition, a new class offering, a book or new pattern release, a special event: these are all reasons to contact local media, websites and blogs to ask for coverage.

Do your research. Consider all the angles and markets that might be interested in your story. That list should include general newspapers and local media outlets as well as quilting magazines, freelance writers

who cover quilting, and quilting sites, of course. Make sure the outlet you're contacting covers stories like yours: the better the fit, the better your chances for coverage are.

Next, gather contact information for the outlets you're targeting. That's usually pretty easy to do via websites and online contact forms.

Crafting your message

Create an official press release (see the sidebar below) or a simple information page on your site with downloadable print-worthy imagery. Don't try to tell the whole story in a single email.

Tailor your message when you're doing your outreach. If you're contacting a general newspaper, consider focusing on the big-picture,

Writing a press release

When reaching out to journalists or traditional media outlets, keep your message short: journalists get countless pitches each week. Don't feel the need to communicate everything about you and your work. Stick very closely to the facts (the specific story or event you're pitching) and keep your press release to a single page if possible.

For general interest media outlets, consider adding stats and information that convey the size of the quilting population...and thus the potential audience for an article about quilting. If you live in a place with lots of artists and activities, be sure to explain why your event or thing is different and stands out.

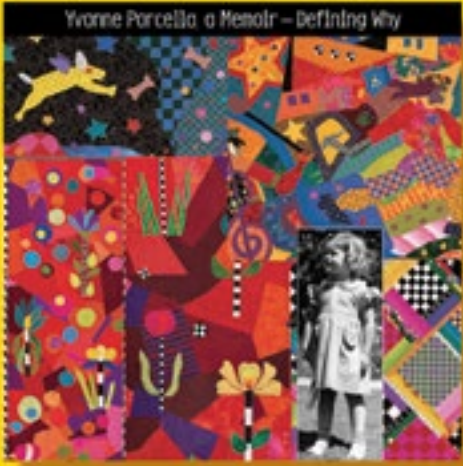
Build your press release using this sample outline:

1. Contact information
2. **Headline:** Make sure you've got a good one. The closer this resembles an actual news-worthy headline, the easier it will be for a journalist or editor to envision it becoming an actual article.
3. **Subheading:** A short sentence or two that conveys all the basic information about the event fleshed out from the headline.
4. **Three or four paragraphs of body copy:** Provide the background for the event or story, a quote or two from people in the know (besides yourself) explaining why the story is important, context (and factual data) regarding the size and reach of the story, and any other pertinent details.
5. A paragraph about you or your company: Basic information only here, including clear instructions for follow-up and for retrieving high-resolution images (either via email or directly from your site).

Don't be afraid to experiment mid-outreach. If you're not getting the response you want, try a different headline or subheading or another angle altogether. There's probably no perfect press release, but the more you keep the journalist, editor, or blogger and their audience in mind, the better your chances for success.

See *press release examples* at www.saq.com/about.php?cat=47


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general-interest aspects of your story, and spare the details that will take specific craft knowledge or quilting expertise to understand and appreciate. Essentially, tell your outlet why your event will be interesting to their readers.

Edit yourself. When you're contacting members of the media or bloggers you don't know, don't overwhelm them with information, even if it's tempting. Shape your information based on the outlet you're contacting, get to your point quickly (with three or four bullet points), and provide links for more information, either to your press release or to your website.

For that matter, avoid sending attachments at all. Attachments can cause your message to land in spam boxes or they can be a red flag for members of traditional print media. When you email your contacts, send them a shorter version of your press release with links to the full press release on your site.

Ask for what you want. Provide a clear call to action. Ask the recipient to consider covering the event, interviewing you in advance of the event, sharing the news with their networks through social media, or featuring you and your event in some way.

Following up... and next time

Follow up once if you don't hear anything, but don't push too hard. And don't take rejection personally. Especially when you're dealing with general media outlets, know that reporters and editors receive hundreds of pitches each week. Don't lose heart if you don't hear anything. Keep those same folks on your list and try them again next time. You'll learn a lot through this process. Take notes (journalists who were interested but too busy this time around, outlets that might not be worth the time and effort, particular kinds of outlets

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that were more or less interested than you thought they'd be, etc.) and put them to use when you build your next outreach strategy.

Speaking of the online environment specifically, the absolute best way to guarantee blog and online coverage is reciprocity! If you have a blog or site and someone contacts you asking for similar help, say yes as often as you can.

If this sounds like a lot of work, you're right: it is. These are all best-case scenario steps to take, and you'll need to decide what you have time for. Keep the big picture in mind. This work is as much about getting coverage for your event as it is building relationships and a network of contacts that you can put to good use next time. ▼

Amanda Carestio is the SAQA Journal editor, a freelance editor, a content writer for JB Media Group, and a former craft book editor living in Asheville, North Carolina.



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Portfolio options abound to spotlight your work in style

by Allison Reker

A good portfolio is an important part of any artist's marketing strategy. After all, it's a visual narrative that goes well beyond simply gathering and documenting a specific body of work. It represents you as an artist: your passions, goals, voice, ability, and level of professionalism. It is a way for you to showcase the best of who you are — and it might be your only chance to make a positive and lasting impression.

In the past, portfolio options were limited. You could make a presentation with photographs, or more likely, you carried a large sleeve or carrying case with actual artwork inside. Only so many people could see it, and your reach was constrained by accessibility or geography. With the Internet and other advancements in technology, today there are more portfolio options available than ever before, allowing flexibility, continual visual presence, and the potential to reach a much wider audience.

To sort through different options and know what's right for you, start by defining the purpose of your portfolio. Who is the intended audience? Are you trying to compete with other artists for coveted museum or gallery space? Is your target academia, whether as an entering student or a career educator? Perhaps your primary goal is the direct sale of your work to individual collectors. You could simply be looking for a way to manage your growing body of work or for feedback from art enthusiasts.

Maybe you have multiple purposes in mind, which means you might need more than one portfolio to address each one.

Physical portfolios

There are still advantages to having a traditional portfolio if your artwork is small, sturdy, and portable. Nothing beats getting to see the real thing, up close and personal. Even excellent, professional photography doesn't always capture the subtleties in your artwork, and it doesn't replace the profoundness of a full sensory experience. Some galleries and other institutions considering your work may require that you bring in actual samples for consideration.

Art and fabric stores sell basic carrying sleeves and other storage containers made to protect and transport your artwork. For something more high end and professional, companies like Archival Methods manufacture top quality portfolio storage and carrying cases in a variety of sizes.

Photographic/paper portfolios

Professional photographs, whether printed or saved on a CD, can be used to create a comprehensive portfolio. They can also be used to supplement a physical portfolio, presenting a more expansive collection of artwork. Use a quality binder and include other relevant information such as an artist statement, biography, resume, cover letter, your contact information, and a list of works for sale along

with their prices. Your binder should be well-organized, easy to search through, and visually compelling.

Not every portfolio is meant to be shared. SAQA artist Patricia Kennedy-Zafred enters mostly juried shows, which do not require her to present a physical portfolio for consideration. To supplement her website portfolio and other printed materials, she has devised her own system with paper forms to help her organize her growing body of work. In a small leather-bound book, she catalogs each quilt as it is completed with the date, size, title, and price, when applicable.

"The most critical issue for me is keeping track of exhibition entries. I created a form which has all the potential entries listed in date order, along with other information so that I can see potential overlap issues. These forms are kept in a folder with the prospectus in date order. I check off entries, notification, when pieces are shipped, etc. Once the first page or so gets filled and checked and finished, I redo the pages, adding new opportunities. Since I enter a lot of exhibitions, this is my most critical issue."

Printed portfolios

An additional portfolio possibility is a high-quality printed book. There are a number of companies who offer on-demand printing or allow you to purchase books in larger quantities at a discount. Blurb is one such option. You can upload a print-ready pdf, use



A physical portfolio can take many forms. Printed photos in a binder or a hardcover book are good portable options.

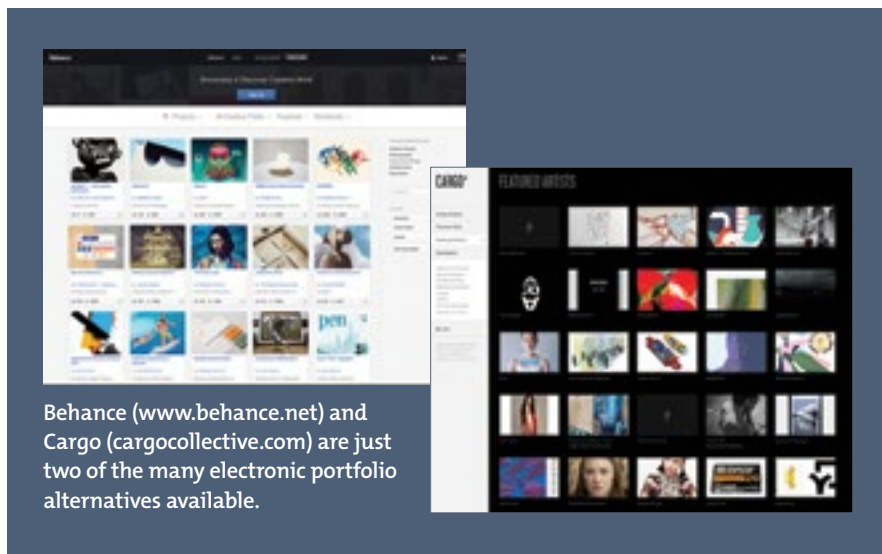
their design builder to create your portfolio book, or take advantage of their Adobe InDesign plugin. It also offers sales and distribution channels through which you can sell your book if desired.

SAQA artist Kristin La Flamme takes full advantage of this portfolio option in addition to her website gallery. She also has a gallery of photo images saved on her iPhone. Her printed

book is small enough to carry and inexpensive enough to be given away to potential galleries or buyers.

“I have been using the Project feature in iPhoto to create small books using photos of my artwork, and sometimes my inspiration. The nice thing about these books is that I can create one for each series or type of work I do. Currently I have two for pattern design, two art quilt series,

one book for bed quilts, and one for a business/book idea I’m contemplating. I show only the pertinent book(s) to whatever audience I have. When I had a solo show at my local art center, I used one of these books as an exhibit catalog to sell. It worked well for my small numbers. I use iPhoto because it’s convenient, but places like Snapfish and Shutterfly would work just as well.”



Behance (www.behance.net) and Cargo (cargocollective.com) are just two of the many electronic portfolio alternatives available.

Electronic portfolios

This is where new technologies can really help you take your portfolio to a new level. Websites and blogs are the most economical way to put together an artist portfolio. A website can be formal and static, with only occasional updates needed to add new artwork or calendar entries if you have works on exhibition. A blog allows for more interaction, inviting people to follow your artistic journey, make comments, or ask questions.

see “Portfolio” on page 35

Portfolio from page 25

Not only can you document specific pieces as they're completed, you can share the daily creative process. Your followers will be alerted to any new posts you make, thus drawing constant attention to you as an artist.

Fortunately, there are a variety of free and low-cost tools available that don't require extensive web design skills to use. To name just a few, Artspring, Behance, Cargo, Dropr, Cabonmade, PortfolioBox, Shown'd, FolioHD, and Weebly are some of the best of these low cost tools, allowing you to build a basic portfolio website or blog with easy-to-use templates. If you want something a bit more comprehensive, there are more powerful, fully customizable tools to choose from. With Format.com, you can build a portfolio-specific site that's fully integrated into social media, allows full-resolution photos, offers an image-management system with cloud-based storage and backup, and displays well on hand-held devices like phones and iPads. Adobe Portfolio is another such tool with its own set of perks, including the ability to create and sync projects back and forth with Behance.

Digital video clips can be added to websites as another way to showcase artwork or document its creation or installation. Upload videos to YouTube or Vimeo, then link them to your site, or upload them directly if your web design software allows it.

When trying to decide where to build your electronic portfolio, consider the differences between the variety of tools available in light of what functionality you need most. Some are more generic website/blog builders that happen to offer

portfolio-style templates, while others are more robust, geared specifically to artists. They might automatically connect you to a large community of artists where you can network and share ideas, or have professional databanks for those seeking careers in the art world. Integration with various forms of social media is pretty standard, though some online portfolio tools take this a step further and include CRM functionality, allowing artists to build up a customer base and reach out to them through their websites with regular newsletters or other information.

Conclusion

What kind of portfolio are you using, and what does it say about you as an

artist? About your artistic direction and your level of professionalism? Is your portfolio more traditional, or are you taking advantage of all the latest technologies to gain more exposure for your artwork? Do you only have one portfolio, or are you maintaining several, each with a different purpose in mind?

There is no one right answer to these questions, but they are important to consider as you evaluate what you currently use against the varied and creative possibilities now open to all artists. ▼

Allison Reker is the SAQA Membership Secretary and editor of our weekly eBlast publication Art Quilt News. She resides in Beavercreek, Ohio.

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LYNN POLLARD

Shine a light on your career: Create your personal brand as an artist

by Joe Ray

What do people say about your art when you're not around?

You want your work to be known for its signature style, visceral quality, and concrete statement. These individual elements claim a distinctive spot in your field and create your brand. Even though you may not consider yourself a brand, perhaps it is time that you think of yourself and your work as just that.

You are now a brand. Why now?

Let's say you want to move forward with your career, and you've found your own voice and/or style as a fiber artist. It's time for you to plant your flag in the ground around you. It's your voice and what you bring to the world. Claim it. Own it.

Getting started

Beyond a specific trademarked product, a brand is the experience that you provide to others. It is the impression that the world gleans about you and what others say about you when you're not in the room. A brand experience applies to a business, a product, or a service.

For the sake of this article, we will focus on your personal brand, which is based upon the experience and impressions that others have acquired about you and your work. As a marketing/branding practitioner, I ask clients to answer these questions to help position themselves in their market(s):

- What is the name of your business, i.e., your brand name?
- Who is your audience?
- What makes you unique?
- What are you known for?
- Would you hire yourself?
- Why should your clients care?
- What do you do, and why?
- How do others see you and your work?
- What does the look of your art, your marketing materials, website, and messaging communicate about you?
- What is the first impression you want people to have when they come in contact with you or any touchpoint of your brand?
- Is it clear, consistent, and credible? I refer to these as the 3 Cs of branding.

'It may be easy to say you are a fiber artist, but you need to make that term your own.'

It may be easy to say you are a fiber artist, but you need to make that term your own. A great example of a value statement is found in the promotional video on the SAQA website, *Stitching Together a Global Community*. In that video, I really appreciate Maria Shell's statement. She explains what she does and why she enjoys her art and being part of SAQA. She positions herself with a clear, concise, and approachable statement.

To hammer out your definition, ask yourself these questions:

Brand benefits

One obvious benefit to branding is that you will have your work recognized for a certain style. This goes back to the experience that you provide and the story you tell. The late Andy Warhol and the late Keith Haring were bigger-than-life brands, and their legacies live on through the Andy Warhol Museum and the Keith Haring Foundation.

Theirs is branding on an outsized level. Most of us are working artists who will benefit from using the lessons learned by these two artists about focusing on a directional style, building a mystique around the work and themselves, promotion, and finding solutions and outlets that fit with their brands.

Some of the artists I admire for their overall talent and their personal brands include Kathy Cano-Murillo

and her Crafty Chica brand, Lisa Congdon, Gustavo Rimada, and author Luis Alberto Urrea. Here are traits they have in common:

- They offer a defining introduction as to who they are and what they do.
- They give an overall sense that they are passionate about and enjoy their journeys.
- They present a sense of welcome to their websites.
- They engage with their audiences through workshops, social media, and teaching about what they do. Through this engagement, you get to know them.

Know your brand

Another way to carry your brand message is to be consciously consistent at every touchpoint. Do you have a logo? This could be something as simple as your signature, but it should appear on all of your correspondence.

If you don't have a logo, just make sure your message and the experience you provide is consistent, and what you want to portray.

What kind of experience do you

'Another way to carry your brand message is to be consciously consistent at every touchpoint.'

provide? Is it approachable (think Crafty Chica and Lisa Congdon), and do you have a friendly aura about you? Or are you more cerebral and perhaps intensely focused on social

issues and have a more serious nature? Whatever your style, be genuine.

How do you respond to the world around you? What is your personality at an event where your work is on display? This is part of your brand and something that you control.

Another aspect of your brand is your cultural heritage. Does it come through in your work? If not, then this is something that you should consider incorporating into your personal brand. If it's in your DNA, it'll show up in your work.

Brand essentials

You don't have to go to great lengths and expense in order to establish your brand. But one basic must-have is a solid digital presence. In this digital presence, you have to include:

- Website: What are you about? Show some work, tell us about you. We want to like you, especially if

see "Branding" on page 30

Tips to create your visual identity

As an artist developing your personal brand, think of how you are going to establish your visual identity. Remember, a logo is not your brand. YOU are your brand.

This is my signature. It is also my logo. It has evolved over 20 years by simplifying it to allow it to be more flexible within different formats, including horizontal and vertical. This particular color is used when reversed out of black, as on my website.

I use the full image for presentations and exhibition submissions. I no longer use a particular icon as my logomark, but I sometimes utilize certain elements as secondary icons. Those elements are representative of the work I do and include hearts, mermaids, and angels.

Terms of the trade

Logo - A logo also is referred to as a logomark or a brandmark in marketing

and speak. The logo can be a pictorial mark that is representative of something (a heart, angel, etc.), or an abstract mark that conveys an idea. It can also be letterforms, such as IBM.

Is your logo representative of your work? Is it textural? Does it represent a weave or a shape?

Wordmark - My logo is an example of a wordmark. One of the best known wordmarks is Google.

If you pursue this direction, do you go neutral as I did? Or do you want to design something that has more flair and personality?

Logotype - This is the name or set of words for a brand's identity. It's consistently displayed in a determined manner and designed with specific font usage. When designing logotype, ensure that it is readable in different sizes and mediums.

Signature Logo



Presentation Logo





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Branding

from page 11

we like your work. Tell us. We want you to enlighten us.

- **Social Media:** The more visual, the better, so think Instagram and Facebook. Share your work, lead us to a photo album, lead us to your website, tell us about your involvement in exhibitions, community involvement, and social causes, etc.

Ensure you maintain a consistent voice and style between these platforms.

Your work

I'm amazed how many artists don't show their work, or claim that they don't have any work to show. You have a talent and an ability to do something that others envy. Celebrate it. Share it. Below are a few of the ways your work can help build your brand.

- Inspire others by mentoring younger artists, leading and teaching workshops and demonstrations, or participating in philanthropic and socially conscious events.
- Donate to causes you support. By associating your work and your brand with an event in a positive manner, you become a part of it. Although this doesn't mean always donating your work to every cause that comes your way, by associating your work and your brand with the event in a positive manner, you become a part of it. Be known for the good you do, and don't feel bad for drawing attention to yourself. This establishes you as a good human being as well as a good artist.
- Collaborate with other artists, especially from different disciplines.
- Maintain a consistent look in all of your paperwork, whether it's a

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The advertisement features a central graphic of a rainbow with a spool of yellow thread and a needle. Below the graphic is a grid of six images: a brown horse running, a fluffy dog, a person on a horse, a mermaid, a unicorn, and a figure in a space suit.

proposal or an invoice. You're a professional — show it and you will be treated as such.

Remember the 3 Cs involved in establishing and maintaining your brand. They are:

- **Consistency:** Be consistent with your message. You don't have to box yourself into immovable parts, but be consistent with your story and what you are dedicated to. You are in charge of your story, your art, and your career.
- **Clarity:** Be clear on what you do and what you stand for and why. It's important to know how you want to position yourself and how you want to be perceived in the marketplace.
- **Credibility:** You're a professional artist. You're confident in what you do. Go do it.

People have a tendency to buy goods and services from people they like. Not everybody is going to like you or your work. You can't be all things to all people. However, those who do like you and your brand will purchase your work. Some will become collectors.

As an artist, it's important to establish and take control of your personal brand. Otherwise, your brand can become like a rumor, something that changes with everybody else's interpretation of it. You should be in charge of that interpretation by defining who you are and what your brand is. ▼

Joe Ray is the president and creative director of Maximo Branding in Arizona. In addition to serving clients in the pharmaceutical, food and beverage, and luxury resort industries, he is an artist and a writer and speaker on marketing and branding topics. You can see his work at www.joeray.com.

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LYNN HOLLARD



I gotta be **ME!**

Create a logo for your personal brand



by Cheryl Sleboda

For many businesses, a logo is necessary for identity online and in advertising. How do you go about creating a great logo for your personal brand?

First, think about how the public “sees” you. Are you the face of your studio, or is your artwork the focus? Many artists are their businesses. Facial recognition connects them with their marketplace whether they teach, sell work, or write about art. For other artists, their artwork is more iconic. This distinction is an important consideration in logo design.

Another factor is whether you plan to sell items other than artwork. If you plan to publish patterns, books, or tools, it is probably a good idea to create a logo up front to save yourself the possible need to rebrand later. You also need to consider the name of your brand; whether you market yourself under your own name or a studio brand affects your logo’s look as well.

Photo vs. artwork

For many artists, a quality headshot is an acceptable way to represent your brand. Getting a headshot taken does indeed cost money, but it’s worth it. Selfies are not what you want on your marketing materials or submission forms. It’s important to keep your headshot updated as well. You do not want to be the speaker who sent a headshot from fifteen years ago, only to have organizers not recognize you

when you arrive! This also means that if you change your appearance drastically, you need to update your headshot. Alternatively, you can use a drawing or caricature of yourself if you have an iconic look.

If you have a particular, recognizable style, your own artwork is an option for your logo. You will need to decide if you want an entire artwork or just a detail shot to be used. Keep in mind that as you advertise your business, you will reproduce that artwork in many forms, and it needs to have the flexibility to do that. You can include text over the artwork so that people can find your website or studio name.

Graphic logos

If you want to market your personal brand in more ways, or find your brand growing quickly into many branches of products and services, then a graphic logo may be for you. If your appearance or artwork changes often, this may be the way to establish your brand identity.

The choices for using a graphic or text are so wide open, it can be paralyzing. There are unlimited possibilities in colors and fonts to choose from. When designing, it’s probably a good idea to include relatable items to make it clear what you do. For example, if you use paint in making your quilts, perhaps including a paintbrush will help solidify what you do. Another option is to include

a motif you frequently return to. If your quilts are mostly about chairs, a chair should appear in your logo. If you wrote *the* book on a particular style, that style should be part of your logo. A good case study is the late Thomas Kinkade. He trademarked the phrase Painter of Light™. His logo included his studio’s name, Thomas Kinkade Studios, and a lit lantern. Often this graphic would be overlaid on a painting, allowing the artwork to be part of the logo.

DIY or not?

As creatives, we sometimes think that we can save a few dollars and design our own logos. There are a few pitfalls to avoid here. A logo can easily be overdesigned to the point of being unreadable. Also, a good logo needs to work in either color or black and white; you never know how another company may use it to advertise you or your work.

If you want to design your own logo, there are many online and free logo design services that allow you to do some graphic design. One thing to be sure of is that you are using copyright- and royalty-free materials in your designs. You do not want to be on the other end of a lawsuit because the free logo designer you used did not have permission for a design element. A service such as Canva [canva.com] can help you design a basic logo. The company’s site has many examples and a wide array of clip



SAQA members' logos feature varied design options

art elements or licensable designs to incorporate in your design.

A professional graphic designer may be the best option, however. A good designer will take the elements of your brand, color choices, and artwork and create design options for you to review. A really good graphic artist will be able to surprise you with insight about your business and the addition of an element you never expected. We are often too close to our own work to see what it really is.

Off and running

Once you have developed your brand's logo, it's time to use that identity in your marketing. Your logo should appear on your social media accounts as the profile image. This placement lets your customers know they are on your company's official pages.

Your logo should be included on your merchandise, letterhead, and even as part of your email signature.

Your logo helps establish your identity in the market, so develop a good one! ▼

Cheryl Sleboda is an award-winning fiber artist, costumer, and quilter who owns Muppin.com and SewMuchCosplay.com. Cheryl travels and teaches sewing and quilting nationally. She also teaches business management and more to entrepreneurs in the fiber arts industry, including the online course, Building up your Branding. She has been featured in many magazines and has a DVD titled Heirloom Sewing Techniques for Today's Quilter.

Iconic style

Lyric Montgomery Kinard's logomark brings her recognizable style to life. Her caricature is one she drew herself.



In character

Paula Kovarik has a couple of different approaches to branding. One is a detail shot of her piece *Round and Round It Goes*. The other is a character—a very clever bird—who turns a thread into a representation of her quilting style. While not a true logo, the little bird has the honor of making the occasional appearance on her quilts, so he's earned his place on her business cards.



Graphic tales

Linda Colsh, B. J. Adams, and Louise Hall opted for a strong graphic element for their personal logos. All incorporate their name, although that element is not always included in use.



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Word pictures

Sandi Colwell, Lisa Reber, Karol Kusmaul, and Sarah J. Aubry took an illustrative approach to their logos. Colwell's logo is very much in keeping with the style of her pattern designs. Reber's Dippy Dyes logo was designed by Brian Boehm. Kusmaul carved the stamp for her logomark. Its design includes stitching and her initial to form the word OK; it also reflects the fact that she likes to wear overalls. Aubry's Cloud Hill Studio logo is a stylized version of the view from her studio windows.



Name ID

Maggie Dillon and Jayne Bentley Gaskins use artistic signatures to mark their brands.



Defining elements

Barb Gardner, Mel Beach, and Nanette S. Zeller combine name recognition with illustrations for their logos. Zeller's uses artistic tools to emphasize what she does. Beach's emphasizes her straightforward style. Gardner's plays off her name.

