Become a 3D Art Professional®

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ABOUT THIS BOOK

Building a successful career as a professional 3D artist isn’t easy, but it is simple. In fact, you need only focus on five main concepts to be on your way. Using any one of these concepts can help your 3D art business greatly. Using all five concepts can catapult you into the elite 4% of businesses that are making a sizable profit after 5 years.

This book is designed for anyone who is thinking about becoming a professional 3D artist and those who already have a thriving 3D art career. This book contains the fundamentals of growing your business exponentially. Just one idea can dramatically affect your business.

The practices you’ll see in these pages were learned during many years in the 3D art industry, computer gaming, and content creation. I have run businesses from one-person shops to helping lead 3D application and content provision companies such as DAZ Productions and Zygote. I have extensive experience starting successful companies on shoestrings. One company I started grew to 80 people and was sold to a publicly traded company. My partner, our employees, and I were richly rewarded.

You’ll find proven strategies that you can use to create a long-term structure for your business that will get you more exposure, loyal fans, and money, as well more tactical material that you can start using immediately. We have tested these techniques in a variety of businesses including software consulting, game development, IT consulting, network engineering, online and offline sales, and of course graphics and 3D art.

I don’t claim to be an artist. However, when I first started writing computer games in the late 1980s, it was common for one person to do everything- coding, graphics, sound effects, music, game design, and more. I did the graphics for the first several games I created. My first exposure to computerized 3D art came in 1982 while pursuing a dual degree in mathematics and physics. Back then, I used a 1MHz Commodore 64 with 64KB of memory. How times have changed...

For the most part, our strategies work for any type of small business. This book identifies general principles that are specifically aimed at helping you market your 3D art effectively and consistently. This will help you make your 3D art a profitable career that can support you and your family.

I realize that art is your first love. I know full well that, in a perfect world, many of you could create beautiful art without a care about money, let alone running a business. This book shows you how to earn a comfortable living doing what you love. By focusing most of your energy on your art and following the simple strategies and tactics in this book, you can gain clients, deliver art that delights them, and build a sustainable business- a very happy medium.
HOW THIS BOOK IS ORGANIZED

The book begins by describing the mindset of the successful 3D art professional followed by five sections containing the practical advice you’ll need to grow your business. Based on your experience, business knowledge, and stage of business, you can approach the material in this book differently depending on your situation. I designed this book to be readable from start to finish while also making it a highly effective reference book where you can quickly access information on a particular topic. I’ve purposely used extended margins for note taking, lots of subsections and diagrams where possible.

THE SUCCESSFUL ARTIST’S MINDSET

The Successful Artist’s Mindset chapter gives you an overview of the book and outlines the areas of concentration you must have in order to build a thriving 3D art business.

Yes, I used the dreaded “b” word. Yes, I know you’re an artist. Yes, I know that many artists see art and business as polar opposites that can never mix, like oil and water. If you fall into this category, I have good news for you: The same skills and passions that make you a great 3D artist can also make you a professional 3D artist earning a great living from your art- if you let them.

I assume that your art skills are solid. Building a business with those skills, however, requires you to adjust your focus to achieving the successful and thriving business of selling your art. Your mindset shifts from being an expert with the various 3D modeling, animation, and rendering tools of the trade to being- take a deep breath- a business owner.

Creating a successful business requires you to build a success plan that concentrates on 5 key areas at once: management, marketing, sales, relationships and growth (marketing and sales are two different activities). Starting a 3D art business becomes a synergy that gives you the chance to earn a good income completing projects for clients while doing what you’re passionate about. Most artists (indeed most business owners) run their businesses in constant “catch-up” mode instead of playing the “get ahead and stay ahead” game. The key to business success lies in understanding the process and putting systems in place that takes care of the many things you must do as an owner.

MANAGING YOUR THRIVING 3D ART BUSINESS

Running a profitable business requires creating a plan and managing that plan. This section covers the key planning and management components for you and your art business; your business plan and the critical balance between your life, time, projects, and any people working for or with you. Balancing each component and making it work with the others may present a huge challenge. So did learning the 3D applications that led to you picking up this book. You’ve
mastered the 3D applications, so you have everything it takes to learn how to effectively manage your 3D art business. Management may seem difficult at first but will soon become second nature.

**Marketing Your 3D Art**

Marketing- another word that strikes fear in many artists. Fear not! Marketing is all about sending messages to your prospective and existing clients. Well, as an artist, you are already in the message business. The whole purpose and process of art is to send messages in the form of images, feelings, and ideas that in turn create emotions. Marketing means what you do (the messages you send) to get a customer's attention to get the attention of prospective customers prior to selling them your 3D art. In other words, marketing is an art form just like your 3D art. As an artist, you're a step ahead of people who approach marketing from a purely business angle!

Marketing is what you do to sell 3D art and earn the money you need to create more 3D art and frivolities like food, shelter, and vacations to faraway tropical islands. This section teaches you the basics of how to successfully market your 3D art business. Your marketing effort begins when you calculate the lifetime value of your clients and use the result as a guide to determine what you can spend to acquire a new client. The new clients chapter covers the tools you need to market to these new clients. Then, the existing client chapter shows you how to market to your existing clients. Why would you do that? Three reasons: to ensure their satisfaction with their work, to preserve and extend your business relationship so as to sell more to them and obtain referrals to other potential clients, and because every person is the center of a network of like-minded people.

Let’s say you charge $100 for a 3D rendering and that your client buys 3 such renderings each year for 20 years. Further, each client refers 3 other clients with the same purchasing patterns. If you focus exclusively on new clients, you’ll earn $100. What if you focus on keeping your existing clients? That $100 becomes $24,000 ($100 x 3 purchases/year = $300/year, x 20 years = $6,000, x 4 clients (1 existing, 3 new) = $24,000. Would you prefer $100 or $24,000?

I thought so!

**Selling Your 3D Art**

Despite their artistic and technical talent, few artists have the skills necessary to convert a prospect to a client. There is a science to selling, and this section provides you with the most important skills you need in order to become a competent salesperson. You’ll learn how to influence the decision makers to say “yes.” You’ll learn the key factors to successful proposals. And you’ll receive a simple ten-step sales process that has been proven to close sales.

In all honesty, this is the chapter that strays furthest from anything resembling art and is therefore the chapter you’ll probably have the toughest time with. Not coincidentally, this is also the chapter that will
probably benefit you the most. This is why I’m giving you a simple 10-step recipe. All you have to do is follow this recipe to the letter and you’ll get all the business you deserve and probably a good bit more as well.

**Lifelong Relationships**

Relationships are the foundation of any successful business. This section covers the critical elements of maintaining quality relationships with your employees, vendors, and clients. I also cover networking, communication, and customer service.

A fair number of artists are introverts by nature. Building and maintaining relationships requires a fair dose of extroversion. This may seem like a conflict, however think of this: Unless you are one of the very few 3D artists who relies exclusively on a single software package to create your works, you’ve already had to master multiple applications- each of which approaches the same subjects from completely different angles and mindsets. Even if you only use one 3D application, you’ve still mastered something that didn’t even exist not so long ago. What does this mean? You’ve proven that you are adaptable, intelligent, and able to leverage your creativity.

Further, the extroversion of forging and building relationships provides a much-needed balance to the introversion of creating 3D art in front of your computer. As in art, the dynamic harmony of competing forces (art vs. business, solitude vs. socializing, creating vs. selling) spells success. You already strive for dynamic harmonies in your art. This extends that same artistic drive, proving once again that art and business are much more closely related than most people realize.

**Exponential Growth**

This section is the heart of the book. Once you understand the basics of management, sales, marketing, and relationships, it’s time to grow your 3D art business- and to grow it exponentially. This section has six “out of the box” chapters on growing your 3D art business: gaining new clients, reducing attrition of current clients, increasing your product and service offerings, increasing the size of each purchase, increasing the length of time-based purchases, and increasing the overall profitability of each client. These chapters contain cutting-edge techniques distilled from years of experience, many derived from completely low-tech industries. Why? Because there is no need to reinvent the wheel.

Some artists feel that charging for their work means putting a price on their creative souls. Others feel that the drive to increase sales must involve some loss of integrity that results in exploiting clients and getting them to buy more than they need. Unfortunately, there are many businesses in all industries who do nothing to belie that myth and who even encourage it by their actions.

You will learn how to build an ethical and profitable career. Many people in many industries do the same thing. Your clients will turn to
you for your insight, knowledge, experience, and ability to do the 3D art that they can’t do. They will be happy to pay you to lift this burden from their shoulders, and they should. You do what they want done faster and better than they could do themselves. This is a good thing because everyone needs an adequate income to live well and to take ample time to rest, recuperate, relax, and recharge the creative batteries. Energy lost trying to make rent is energy lost for you and (more importantly) for your client.

The basic idea is this: No matter how you slice it, the business of selling your 3D art involves exchanging an irreplaceable resource (your time) for an abundantly replaceable resource (your client’s money). Think about this: Every second that passes while you read this book is one second that is gone forever, never to be lived again. The finite nature of your time means that you deserve to be well compensated for each such investment you make. I’ve worked to do that for you just like you’ll work to do that for your clients.

Is there a conflict between growing your business exponentially using all of the methods we outlined above and giving your clients your best? No! If you forget everything else you read in these pages, remember this one all-important fact: Your business success ultimately rests on your honesty and integrity and satisfying your needs by placing your customers first no matter what. Combine the highest standards of ethics and quality with the tools in this book and you’ll achieve lifelong success in your 3D art business or any career you choose. Use the tools in this book without those high standards and you’ll achieve spectacular short-term success at the expense of a very painful payback when your customers start seeing through you. And they will.

This book gives you the tools and mindset you need to start and build a successful 3D art business. The Web site does everything that this book can’t do. The rest is up to you. I wish you every success.

Good luck!

Bryan Brandenburg (2005)
Words of Wisdom

“The master in the art of living makes little distinction between his work and his play, his labor and his leisure, his mind and his body, his information and his recreation, his love and his religion. He hardly knows which is which. He simply pursues his vision of excellence at whatever he does, leaving others to decide whether he is working or playing. To him he is always doing both.”

– James Michener
In order to become a professional 3D artist, you must master your mind and focus. This section contains the strategies you need to accelerate your success and the security of your future. Read, think, and dream.
There were times in my life when I kept my entire net worth between my ears. When I invested that intellectual capital into enterprises that I nurtured with massive action, passion, great people, integrity, persistence, and common sense, I was handsomely rewarded with forms of capital more suitable for mortgage payments, children’s education, and trips to exotic places around the world.

All of these companies began with an idea. Some of the ideas were not even that good in the beginning, yet I became so obsessed with possibility that I took thousands of actions, one after another, until something special was created. And while I’ve done things that just plain didn’t work, I didn’t give up because my mind and heart knew that something would work. So I kept at it.

**Figure 1: The Ingredients for Success**

![Diagram of the Ingredients for Success](image-url)
MANAGING YOUR 3D ART BUSINESS

I was fortunate in the beginning because I came up with an idea that I was excited about, took lots of action, and became successful. That said, as I got older and the markets became more competitive, I did make some mistakes; I hadn’t managed capital properly, hadn’t researched my competition, and didn’t have an adequate management structure. These mistakes were costly, sometimes even disastrous. You’re either comfortable or learning something and I was learning volumes about the benefits of planning. You have the choice of learning comfortably in advance or learning painfully later on.

I started learning everything I could about business planning. I may have been talented, but I didn’t know much about balance sheets, competitive analyses, or policies and procedures. I soon discovered that planning was just as useful in a business as it was in software development- or 3D art- or any business, for that matter. I found that I could save a lot of time and money making my mistakes on paper, rather than expending a great effort towards a particular goal only to realize that I’d wasted weeks or months.

Project management became more critical than ever when my project budgets started going over a million dollars. There was no room for error on these fixed-cost projects with deliverable dates that couldn’t move. I needed both business planning to be confident that I knew where I would be three years from now and project planning to know where I would be each day.

Time management became more important as the size of my companies grew. Ask any business owner and they’ll tell you that there are so many things happening at once that it’s far too easy to get caught in things that aren’t important. I therefore needed a system that kept me focused on the things that did matter and that allowed me to easily juggle changing priorities. I also needed this system to keep the other people involved informed.

People management can make or break your chances for success. I learned the fundamentals of finding quality people, motivating them, and keeping them for the long-term.

If you think that project management skills are only important for large projects, consider this: A million dollars is a lot of money and projects of that size always have at least a little financial cushion. As an artist starting out, your budget and margin for error are far lower. Miscalculate the amount of time for a particular project and your earnings will suffer because of the other projects you must put on hold as a result. Underbid for a project and the same will happen. Overbid and you won’t get much business. Disrupt your earnings and all of those extras you enjoy like housing, electricity, etc. might be jeopardized. Effective and efficient project management is vital no matter how big or small your business might be.

What about people management? Here again, the smaller your margins for error and the bigger the possible consequences of any error, the more essential it is that you successfully manage everyone you work with- your contractors or employees, representatives,
vendors, creditors, suppliers—everyone. Remember that your biggest expense will be people. Learn to maximize the return on this most critical of investments.

MARKETING YOUR ART

As my industry matured, I found that even the best ideas and plans for products and services weren’t enough. There was more noise in the marketplace, more competition, and more big players moving in trying to capture markets. The customers I wanted to sell things to had choices, sometimes lots of them. I needed to develop more and more sophisticated ways to get a customer’s attention.

Despite great ideas, execution, capital, and people, I needed a great plan to seek out the companies or individuals who would buy my company’s products or services. I needed to get their attention and keep it through the purchasing process and far beyond. That took more than great technology. I had to learn the art of marketing.

There are a lot of confusing things about marketing, things like brand, image, and mind share. There is a lot of psychology to marketing and I found most of it difficult (if not impossible) to measure, or so it seemed. I finally grasped the idea that marketing is what one does to get the chance to sell and things suddenly got a whole lot easier.

I still didn’t understand all the esoteric functions of marketing. Thankfully, that didn’t stop me from applying common sense to my marketing strategies. As time went on, I found the percentage of people saying yes becoming larger and larger.

You and I might be in different businesses, or in different areas of the same general business of 3D art. As the CEO of Zygote, I manage teams that create 3D content for use by artists like you, and also produce custom 3D art for clients ranging from movie studios to medical companies. And yet everything I’m saying in this book applies just as well to you as it does to me or to anyone in business.

Why? Because the key word in this entire discussion is “business”. Are the subtle differences between industries and between businesses at different ends of the same industry spectrum? Certainly. But the similarities are what matter.

How do I know? I’ve worked at almost every level from programmer/artist to CEO. I’ve seen the proof that these principles will work for you if you learn and apply them.

SELLING YOUR ART

Once I figured out how to open the door to the customer’s heart and mind with the marketing efforts, I had to guide them to a decision that would result in revenues and profits for my company. The sales process became more involved as the clients grew from small businesses to multi-million dollar companies and on to multi-billion dollar conglomerates. When dealing with the largest companies, the sales cycles could take as long as 6-12 months.
The techniques that I had used to win $50,000 projects were conceptually the same but completely inadequate for companies like Disney and IBM. I needed more sophistication, more time, and a bigger budget. Since those days, I’ve landed many million-dollar-plus contracts. Having this knowledge and experience back then would have made a huge difference to my employees, family, and myself.

The sales principles in this book give you the right balance of traditional sales techniques and the specialized strategies needed to sell a unique idea (such as your 3D art and animation) for a very attractive price. How attractive? Much of that depends on which industry or industries you want to work in. Storyboards for a small comic book might not pay nearly as much as a contract to illustrate a medical textbook. Your choice of industry depends on your skills and interests. The techniques presented in this book, however, will work for all of those industries. They are the same ones I’ve used to close many seven-figure deals.

**BUILDING LIFELONG RELATIONSHIPS**

I’d be misleading you if I told you that I was the most important contributor to building valuable companies. The fact is that the more I partnered with other talented and committed individuals, the more I succeeded. Some were partners. Others were employees, advisors, mentors, coaches, and (last but in no way least) clients and customers. One plus one equaled three, three plus three equaled twenty, and so on.

**Lifelong Relationships** is all about how to make things work with employees, clients, partners, and all of the people that you need around you to succeed. I can’t think of one successful person in history who didn’t have some help along the way. Trust me when I say that financial success is impossible without the cooperation of other people. Even writers, singers, painters, and 3D artists need customers and partners if not employees. What we can’t do alone, we can accomplish together. The real bonus is that using these techniques will help you cultivate friendships that may last a lifetime.

This section covers networking, understanding clients, communications, and customer service. Master these and you will sell your 3D art at an increasing profit. Fail in even one and your success will not come as quickly as you or I want.

**EXPOENTIAL GROWTH**

This is probably my favorite part of the book. Something that has driven me my entire life is the question, “How do I make things better?” **Exponential Growth** is about taking something that works and growing it. The strategies in this section will help you’ll grow your business at a considerable rate and do so profitably. I’ll show you six ways to grow your business, only one of them involves getting new business- great for people who don’t like meeting people!

The rest of the strategies focus on taking what you already have and making it work a lot better. Regain inactive clients, expand your
product and service offerings, and enhance your profitability. These same things continue to accelerate my success. I’m confident they can work for you.

Why the focus on profit? Because profit is the primary benchmark of business success. Yes, you want to enjoy your work and feel fulfilled. Profit is the engine that helps you achieve those goals. Lots of companies try to impress people by touting mind-boggling revenue. Next time you see one of these huge figures, ask yourself “Yes, but how much are they keeping?” The answer will often astound you for its small size relative to the revenues.

There you have it. By combining the best mindset, management, marketing, sales, relationship and growth strategies, you’ll have the potential to be a Become a 3D Art Professional. The only things you’ll need to turn this potential into reality are the skills you already have and a lot of action.
Words of Wisdom
"The art of choosing men is not nearly so difficult as the art of enabling those one has chosen to attain their full worth."
– Napoleon Bonaparte
In order to become a 3D Art Professional, you must learn effective management - management of your life, time, company, projects, and people. Each topic could fill a complete book in itself, but I’ll do my best to cover the high points that have guided my success and that could dramatically affect yours.
Figure 2: Managing the Successful Business

Merriam-Webster’s dictionary defines the word “manage” as the ability to handle or direct with a degree of skill. Still, most business books only cover a few of the basics like managing your business or time. This section goes beyond that by including the big picture of management, especially that of a professional 3D artist.

In order to be truly successful with your business and life you need to make all aspects of your personal and professional lives work- and work together.

This section covers the five areas of management for a successful 3D art professional:

- Business Plan management
- Life management
- Time management
- Project management
- People management

It’s difficult to lead a balanced life while you’re trying to rise above the pack in a fiercely competitive environment, but it is both possible and essential. Whether you’re planning for the year or for the day, the most important thing to realize is that you must consider all of the areas of your life that are important, including those outside of your 3D art business. Balance is the key word here.

This section may seem overwhelming at first, but don’t be intimidated. I only ask that you commit to taking small steps. Do that and you’ll have a solid planning and management infrastructure in place almost before you know it. A business plan can be a tremendous amount of work, but doing just one section per weekend or even a paragraph per day will eventually produce a completed plan.

Project management is important for managing projects for your clients and is also a valuable tool for managing the construction of your business plan, marketing campaigns, or any other internal project.

Break big projects up into small pieces and find enough reasons why each piece is important, and you’ll be amazed how quickly you can get something- anything- done.
Many businesspeople, especially those in art-related industries like 3D, believe that a business plan is only useful if you need to raise capital. If you want external funding, sophisticated investors will demand a business plan to convince them of the viability of your business and the safety of their investment. But don’t you deserve that same certainty as you invest your time and money into your own 3D art company?

Goals are dreams with a deadline. Plans articulate how you’ll accomplish your goals as quickly and painlessly as possible. Make your dreams of having a successful 3D art business a reality by starting with a plan. Even if you only want to find work as an individual freelance artist, you’ll succeed sooner and more often when armed with a solid plan.

Planning your business will save you a tremendous amount of time, energy, and precious capital. A plan that is well thought out and continuously revised in light of experience serves as a framework that guides almost every decision you make.

Learning the following aspects of a business plan gives you a clear vision of your company’s future and a sense of certainty that your efforts carry a high probability of success with them.

The executive summary summarizes your complete plan in one to three pages. This summary is both a necessary component of a formal business plan presented to investors and a primary focal point for you and your company. Summarize each section of your plan in one to two paragraphs that contain the most important elements, being sure to include the high-level financial figures.
COMPANY STRUCTURE

You must be able to articulate the structure of your business so as to communicate it to others and to understand your professional mission to the core of your being. The company description of your plan should include your company mission, milestones achieved to date, future objectives, legal status, ownership, and the products and services your company offers. Your milestones and objectives should cover both tangibles (such as sales volume per quarter) and intangibles (such as landing a prestigious client).

OPERATIONS

The operations section of your plan deals with those aspects of your 3D art business that are critical to your success, provide an edge over your competition, or are required to solve typical problems in your particular 3D art niche (such as greeting card images).

Having your own 3D art business requires expertise in one or more 3D applications and proficiency at running a business. Believe it or not, your 3D art, while central to your business, is only a minor part of everything your business encompasses.

Your operations plan describes how you’re going to run your business efficiently and profitably. Efficiency saves time. Since time is life, efficiency saves parts of your life for other pursuits - perhaps even including leisure.

FINANCIAL CONTROLS

Profitability is the final arbiter of your business’s success. Would you rather have a $150,000 business with $100,000 in profit, or a $1,000,000 business with $50,000 in profit? The latter sounds impressive but the reality isn’t terribly glamorous and will be a lot more stressful.

If you have all the business you can handle, you may not think you need financial controls. Most artists I’ve talked to (including 3D artists) think they can solve any problem by increasing sales. They couldn’t be more wrong!

If you have a low-margin business, say 5% (where you keep 5 cents in profit for every dollar you bring in), you can either decrease your costs by 5% (cut 5 cents from your expenditures) or double your sales (get $2 in sales for every $1 you do now) to double your profits. Which do you think is easier? This is why revenue is such a poor indicator of a company’s viability.

Getting some help from competent financial advisors will help you with this part of the plan. At the very least, you should take into consideration invoicing, delinquent accounts, how accounts payable are handled, and the reporting tools you need to give you accurate insights into every aspect of your finances.
The Golden Rule of finances reads as follows: Whoever has the gold (your customer) makes the rules. He who gives his customers platinum treatment gets the gold, and he who manages his gold the best wins. It’s that simple.

**Production and Capacity Issues**

This part of the plan is where you evaluate key components of your production and capacity. You need to have a handle on equipment, productivity, labor costs, and issues like quality assurance. In many creative businesses (indeed in most businesses) labor forms the biggest area of expense. Understanding how to optimize this largest of expenses can make the life-and-death difference between a profit and a loss.

What does this mean for you as a freelance 3D artist just setting out to build your business? Each 3D image requires an investment of time to create, including modeling, rigging, sketching, storyboarding, texturing, rendering, etc. In addition, you must spend time managing your business, following up with existing clients, and seeking new clients. A few simple calculations will reveal the average amount of total time you spend per project. How many projects can you complete each week? How about each month? Per year?

These questions drive your financial planning. How much do artists typically earn per project in your particular niche? Multiply this average by your total production capacity. Figure in the fact that you must cover all of your business and personal expenses from this amount. Well? Is the final figure enough to support you in your current or desired lifestyle? If so, great! But if not, how can you lower the time spent on each project, increase your profits per project, or both?

Let’s use an example: Say you spend an average of 20 hours on each project. In addition, you spend 50 hours per month managing and marketing your business and work with 5 clients per month. You spend 10 hours per client marketing and managing your business. Add in the 20 hours spent actually working on the project, and your total time per project is 30 hours. Assuming a 40-hour workweek (remember those?), you can take on 5 clients per month and have a few hours left over. If the average billable cost/project (what the client pays you) is $1,000, then you are grossing $5,000 per month or $60,000 per year (less if you take those periodic absences some of us call vacations).

Is this amount enough to sustain your desired lifestyle with some left over for the rainy days that almost invariably occur? If so, go for it! But if not, then you need to rethink things...

**Inventory Control and Management**

If you resell any products (such as selling 3D applications or content manufactured by others), managing your inventory can be an important consideration. Do you keep inventory on hand to quickly service your clients, or do you operate “just in time” to minimize inventory levels?

You must anticipate and plan how to handle and track inventory so that you don’t lose shipments or in any other way jeopardize timely
delivery to clients. Most small businesses don’t need large-scale software solutions for managing and controlling inventory, just something that works. Many times, off the shelf databases with efficient process will be all you need. You do need a system that can quickly produce answers to questions and that won’t let anything slip through the cracks.

If your 3D art business has employees or artists beyond yourself, you owe it to everyone to have written procedures detailing how to process inventory. This makes it easier to train new people and provides a predictable method of handling items. Don’t think you need one? Airline pilots make thousands of takeoffs and landings per year. They know their aircraft inside and out blindfolded and have every imaginable procedure committed to memory. And you know what? They break out the written checklist, go through it, and double-check it every single time. Look up next time you hear an airplane and ask yourself if you would have it any other way.

Why hold your business to a lesser standard, especially when you’re relying on others to handle critical functions?

**Research and Development**

Staying competitive in today’s rapidly evolving hardware, software, and business climate requires a structured approach to research and development. This includes upgrading computers, buying additional software, attending trade shows, purchasing classes, reading books and art journals, staying familiar with the newest 3D software technologies and applications, etc. If you’re lucky enough to have several people working with you, you might want to designate one or more of them to do ongoing research and development.

Are you’re a busy 3D artist? You might think we’re crazy, that you’re too far behind already, that R&D is the least of your worries if you can just finish the client’s final rendering by Saturday. That may be true between now and next Saturday, but the simple fact is that the world is not sitting still waiting for you to catch up. Don’t let the relentless pace of change catch you by surprise. Be pragmatic about keeping your eye on the future as you deal with the day to day responsibilities of running your business. Make forethought and anticipation a priority in your overall business plan.

This is the section that also deals with creating products once and selling them over and over again. Success often depends on that delicate balance between taking custom work to pay the bills and investing in creating products that provide long-term income. Many online stores will sell your 3D products and give you a check every month, long after your work is completed.

**Customer Service**

Boil your business’s survival down to a single thing and you’ll find customers. The old cliché about your customers being your reason for being in business? Guess what: It’s true. Your number one job as a self-employed 3D artist (and even as an employee) is to seek ways to take your customers to a state of sheer bliss with your attentiveness,
timeliness, expertise, and finished result that exceeds their expectations.

Do you know the best definition of marketing? Marketing is all contact between you or anyone in your company with anyone not in your company. It’s what you do to sell your stuff. What is customer service? It’s the most potent way to market any business.

Customer service includes orders, follow-up, quality assurance, tech support, and more. Customer service comprises whatever parts of your business you utilize to service your clients- and since your clients really are the sole reason you’re in business, that means that a solid customer service ethic must govern all you do. This requires you to closely manage every single touch-point you have with your prospective, current, and past clients in order to ensure their 100% satisfaction, including your Web site, email, phone, fax, mail, and other forms of correspondence. Remember- all contact. Yes, this includes your vendors and contractors.

Evaluate and document each step of every process that involves a client, from initial contact as a prospect through the quality control questionnaires after you complete each job. Thorough documentation makes sure that everything gets done and that every client receives the maximum care for the minimum internal costs. We use flowcharts to see each process and decision point. We also use checklists to make sure that everything gets handled.

Quality-of-service expectations are constantly rising. Our experience is that any extra effort invested in this area dramatically boosts our referral business. We rarely get recommended by a client for our price, locality, or other attributes of our business. Most of the referrals are for our customer service combined with quality products and services.

In fact, only 14% of people rate price as their chief buying criterion. The top four buying criteria are confidence (#1), quality, service, and selection. Examine your entire business from your artistic skills to your voicemail greeting and find ways to deliver on these top four criteria and you’ll find that you can easily raise your prices. Remember the previous example of 5 cents profit for every dollar earned? Build superb customer confidence by exhibiting solid artistic and technical skills, back that up with high-quality products and services, bend over backward to serve your customers, and offer a wide range of services. You might then be able to raise your prices by 5%, 10%, or even more.

If you bring in 5 more cents without spending any more money (charge $1.05 while still spending 95 cents), your profit- the only true yardstick for measuring your success- will go from 5 cents to 10. Can you handle an overnight doubling of your profits? Raise your price 10% and you triple your profit. Doing this is easy: Convince your customers that you’re worth the higher cost. How? By following these instructions.

How effective can you be? At Zygote, we doubled our custom service rates within a few months by elevating customer service to the next level. Those price gains went directly to our bottom line.
How important is customer service to your 3D art business? The math speaks for itself.

**Supply and Distribution Channels**

Your supply and distribution channels can control your ability to deliver on-time and cost-effectively. Creating relationships that are both dependable and understanding of your needs will be imperative. If your business is time sensitive (and what business isn’t?), you need suppliers who can deliver predictably and who will still be in business when you need them.

Online 3D content distribution, from models to art and animation, presents significant opportunities. Making sure you understand how to get the most out of these distribution channels will earn you more income for less work. Find out everything you can about the channels that will work best for your 3D content. This modest investment will provide returns long into the future.

While you put this together, focus on the critical aspects of your particular operation. Pay close attention to cost and time efficiencies and address problem areas that need attention. Don’t get too dependent on one or two suppliers (like complementary freelance artists). You need backup strategies in place to protect your business and keep your productivity stable. Customer service, remember?

**Contingency Planning**

Business planning often focuses on what must be done to make things work, to grow the business, and to seize opportunities. That’s all well and good, but the best business planning in the world is incomplete without a hard look at worst-case scenarios.

You need to protect your 3D art businesses with insurance, backup suppliers, and multiple revenue streams. Continually evaluate existing and new risks to your business and use those evaluations to create backup plans. You never know when you’ll be very glad for it. An ounce of prevention goes a long, long way. You do wear your seat belt while driving, don’t you?

**Industry**

You can never ignore your industry niche. The technology industry has many tides that raise and lower all ships. 3D art seems somewhat less prone to swings in the market since there are many audiences with very diverse needs. That said, all businesses in all industries experience booms and busts. As a 3D artist, your particular niche or niches might be more or less vulnerable to these fluctuations. Also, 3D software and the computers that run this software are continually evolving and opening new doors for you.

You must factor all this into your 3D art business planning to avoid inviting disaster whether your niche is experiencing rapid growth or decline. When the dot.com bubble burst, the waves rocked the entire technology industry and drowned many good companies because they weren’t prepared. Those companies that reacted early and prepared...
for the downturn survived. Those that foresaw the downturn and planned for it thrived. And those who neither planned nor predicted it? Gone.

Which crowd do you want to be in the next time your particular business climate changes?

**Barriers to Entry**

Barriers to entry make it difficult for you to start your 3D art business, let alone make it successful. Some typical barriers for 3D art companies are:

- Mature supplier channel limiting choice and margin. The current online model banks control the distribution channels and can put pressure on the pricing for your work.
- Significant competition in mature sectors. The current online model banks are fairly mature, meaning that you must produce unique products to achieve success as opposed to commodity products where there is too much competition.
- Capital constraints for entering or competing in market. Because the market is mature, your art solutions must be the result of months of work to produce financial results rather than days. As a freelance contractor, you must have the financial stability to accept 30- and 60-day net payment terms requiring you to essentially finance the work for a client.
- Costly equipment, training, and labor costs. Solo artists are competing with full-service firms, so you must either specialize in a emerging solution or be versed in a wide variety of applications.

**Economic Indicators**

Be sure to research the key macro economic indicators, both past and future, for the technology industry. They include:

- Revenue
- Employment
- Growth rate
- GDP growth rate
- Total units sold
- Industry vs. GDP

During the Internet boom, money flowed freely and everybody was earning a premium for their work. When the Internet crashed, many people lost jobs and freelance work dried up. You need to understand the current economic outlet in order to determine your risks and opportunities.

**Maturity Levels**

You should do some analysis on the maturity level of your chosen industry and niche, particularly in the area of 3D art and graphics in general in all formats. It’s much easier to grow your business in new sectors of an industry than mature ones where your competition is large, well-funded, and entrenched.

There are typically four levels of maturity in any industry:
New and expanding industries are the best cycles to start a business. Do your analysis to give yourself the best odds of success. If you produce 3D models, remember that there are hundreds of thousands of models already available. Don’t build “me too” products. Research and find ones that haven’t been done that people are asking for. If you use your skills for Web design, high school students are designing simple FrontPage websites for a few hundred dollars. Becoming an expert in Flash and Shockwave will bring you higher-paying work.

Economic Conditions

Very few industries are completely independent of overall economic conditions; these are national and international conditions that affect every business and, by extension, 3D art. Having a good grasp of these macro economic factors gives you critical information and understanding for planning your business. Ask the tough questions on how each of these factors will affect your business:

- Unemployment
- General business climate
- Interest rates
- Inflation
- Dollar strength
- Stock market strength

Technological Advances

You must understand technological changes beyond your particular 3D software and hardware. Why? Because you know the types of materials your clients need both now and in the future. This knowledge gives you insight into how to expand your business by understanding and leveraging key trends that will impact your clients. You’ll also want to look beyond your clients’ businesses towards their vendors and customers. Examples include:

- **Advertising** - What technology platforms are using 3D art? For example, there is strong demand for 3D Flash and Shockwave banner advertisements. 3D is even being used to create print ads that were extremely difficult using traditional illustration techniques.

- **Customer trends** - What are your clients’ customers doing and what are their needs? If you produce models for distribution online, your customers will demand complete solutions. For example, a complete product will consist of models, texture maps, rigging, poses and even animation sequences.

- **Competing industries** - You have an established niche, but is that niche subject to competition from different niches, even different industries? If you made a living producing Web sites, there are now online template libraries where one can purchase pre-designed Web sites very economically, thus lowering the prices for your services.
Data mining - Information is power. He who amasses, processes, understands, and acts on the most information wins. Use tools like the Overture Inventory tool (http://inventory.overture.com) to determine where the demand in the marketplace is.

Identify the areas of rapid change and position your 3D art business in these high-growth / high-demand areas while remaining true to your skills, experience, and interests. Do this and you’ll be in the enviable position of having both less competition and more profitability. There may be some investment required but it should be rewarding in the long run. Remember that many technological advances exist to commoditize solutions. Be sensitive to the effects these advances have on your current business strategy.

Financial Patterns

The financial characteristics of your industry will ultimately shape your professional 3D art career.

You need conditions that allow you to make a profit. Prices for online model sales continue trending downward. Model banks such as Renderosity and Turbo Squid offer dozens of similar models for sale with very little differentiation. At Zygote, we’re focusing on creating unique products in marketplaces with emerging demand to maintain profitable margins. Additionally artists commissions are getting squeezed making it more difficult to breakeven. Consider the following financial patterns in your business arena:

- Distributor margins
- Retail margins
- Sales commission structure
- Credit terms
- Shipping and handling
- Labor costs

Ask yourself how each of these items influences your clients’ customers, your clients, and yourself! A problem in one or more of these areas might force a client to suspend projects with you, delay or even forgo payment to you, etc.

When driving, you keep an eye on the brake lights of the cars in front of you. This simple practice gives you as much advance warning as possible of a sudden stop, sometimes even allowing you to begin slowing down before the person in front of you reacts. That can make the difference between an accident and a safe stop. Keeping an eye on what’s directly ahead (and on what’s ahead of that) lets you run proactively instead of reactively.

Supply/Distribution Channels

You can’t ignore the channels that affect your clients and their customers and clients. In online model sales, individual artists compete with the same company that distributes their product. Sometimes these distributors end up being your biggest competitors. If you carefully monitor and manage these relationships, then you won’t be surprised and put out of business. What does this mean for
MANAGING YOUR 3D ART BUSINESS

you as a 3D artist? What if a 3D software company decides to offer artistic services, training, or other products and services? What if you design a unique shader for a 3D application only to find it included in the next version of the software?

MARKET SEGMENTATION

Part of planning your 3D art business is determining your target market(s). The more narrowly targeted your market(s), the more cost-effectively you can reach them and the more successful you’ll be. Don’t be tempted to target a large broad market. You’ll get better results by dominating a small market instead of being an insignificant part of a large one. Most businesses that survive for the long-term systematically target niche markets first, dominate them, and then expand their target market. Psychologically, buyers want to go with the market leader. Narrow down your target market and you have a much better chance of taking the lead.

Market segmentation is about identifying product and service opportunities that are large enough for you to generate profitable revenue yet are underserved and the demand is high. For example, the broad market of 3D model development contains millions of possible models that you could build. However, many of the possibilities won’t make money because they lie in high-demand market segments already served. Or, the niche might be so small that there is no demand. Carefully select your market segment so that it’s both high demand and underserved.

How can you narrow down and segment your target market?

Defining Your Market

Taking the time to clearly define your target market requires a lot of work but will be very rewarding if you do a thorough job. After all, it doesn’t make sense to run Super Bowl ads if you really only service businesses in Seattle. Getting clear about who your best (or ideal) client is helps you make better decisions in every aspect of your sales and marketing efforts.

Take a five step approach to define a market:

1. Review the broad market for your business. For the 3D artist, that means reviewing your interests and skills and seeing which industries need the kind of 3D art you provide. This can be anything from anthropology to zoology with lots of possibilities in between from forensics to science fiction, comic books, textiles, medical illustrations, and much more.
2. Look for growing and/or under-serviced markets accessible to you that provide the best opportunities for penetration. In other words, look for 3D art that you will have the easiest time creating and selling. Ideally, you can find art that you can improve on and have fun doing.
3. Research your target segment. What do they do and why? What exact type(s) of art do they need? Who else provides 3D
art and what competitive benefits or advantages do you offer?
Who makes the buying decisions?
5. Create a sales and marketing strategy to reach your target segment. Focus on building relationships, not on the quick sale. I’ll talk more about this in later sections.

**Broad Market Analysis**

Evaluate the overall market for your specific type(s) of 3D art. Review the market from both your prospect’s perspective as well as looking at various competitive factors (such as competing artists and your prospect’s competitors). Analyze the complete channel, from your computer to your client and on to their suppliers and customers. Try and get a sense of what’s working and what is working marginally in terms of what kind of 3D art is selling and how you can compete with other artists. This will provide clues for the next step. Anything working marginally might signal an opportunity.

If you have more than one area of interest or specialty, perform this analysis for every one of the industries and niches you are considering entering. We call the combination of industry and niche your segment.

**Selecting Your Target Segment**

When selecting your target segment, you should assess the broad market through the filter of your competitive advantages. Do you have (or can you give yourself) an edge with location, skills, industry experience, proprietary content, vendor partnerships, referral networks, and core competencies of you and/or your employees and contractors?

To find out, get a sheet of paper and list every benefit you can think of for people who do business with you. Be absolutely shameless- this is your time to brag. Just keep it honest. As you do this, make sure you know the difference between features and benefits and list benefits only. “Texture-mapped” is a feature. “Instantly create photorealistic results” is a benefit.

After compiling your benefits list, research your competition and find out what benefits they offer. Cross off every benefit they offer that you offer as well. When your research is complete, what’s left are your competitive advantages. If you have none (or if none of yours are compelling reasons why clients should select you), then you need to explore a different segment for your 3D art.

You’ll want to choose target segments where you can make significant headway within one year. This time frame varies depending on your capital base (finances). If you’re bootstrapping, you obviously need to make progress faster. In any case, you’ll generally do better if you target a smaller segment so that you can reach profitability within that segment sooner. That gives you a solid foundation for expanding your markets.
Speaking of expansion, growth is good. This whole book is about growing your business. Just remember not to lose your focus. Here’s a real-world example: A large soft-drink manufacturer decided that their name meant beverages and they sank millions into a winery. When that venture failed, they realized that their name means soft drinks. Do you want to excel in one segment or be mediocre in several?

**Researching the Target Segment**

Once you have a target segment that seems reachable, sizeable, and meaningful to your business, you need to research the market to validate your assumptions. Use the Internet, contact non-competitive companies and 3D artists in other markets, and interview both potential clients and other parties that are part of your target segment. How do you do this? Ask!

Most people are flattered when someone asks their opinions and advice and treats them like the expert. If you go into a meeting seeking knowledge and without trying to pitch yourself, you’ll get a lot of extremely valuable information and a lot of respect. This won’t work all the time and that’s OK. The people who refuse to talk with you are doing you a favor by not wasting your time, your most precious resource. And the ones who do talk? They know you’re an aspiring 3D artist. They know that telling you about their needs could have you coming back to ask for their business. But if you keep your fact-finding mission to just that and if you questions are all about them and their needs and their expertise, you’ll gain a lot of credibility and rapport that could come in very handy later- even if your interviewee does not wind up using your services, it’s a good bet s/he knows someone who will.

Leverage your industry research as you continue homing in on your specific market. Pay attention to trends, both at a macro and micro level. Collect articles, research reports, and interview materials, and you’ll begin to form a conclusion. And don’t forget about the Overture Inventory tool (http://inventory.overture.com).

**Profiling Your Target Segment**

Once you feel comfortable with your target segment, you need to summarize your findings in written documentation. This important step will drive the majority of your sales and marketing decisions. It doesn’t have to be a 100-page research report; rather, this is an internal tool to help you understand your target market and how to reach it. Where do you get this information? Your research.

If you have done a thorough job of research, then you already have all of the information you need for your profile. If you find yourself coming up short, go back and do more research.
Sales & Marketing Strategy

With your research effort still fresh, outline how you will reach your market and obtain clients. Put yourself in your prospect’s shoes as you construct this plan. How do they feel? Purchases are always motivated by emotional drives. Use what you’ve learned through your research on the prospect and their purchasing behavior. Determine the periodicals they read, the associations they belong to, and other organizations they already have a relationship with. This will help you construct a plan that will produce results.

Think in terms of a relationship with the sale as the consummation. Everything you do from the first contact to the sale is the courtship, the sale is the consummation, and everything else is where the casual fling becomes a committed relationship.

How do you build a relationship? With many small easy steps that build rapport and establish trust with no pressure to rush into the sale. This means that you give and give and give with no seeming thought to yourself until the customer says yes. Here’s one example:

There is a very exclusive summer camp in upstate New York. They advertise using classified ads in magazines read by their target audience (affluent parents) and booths at trade shows. Do these ads try to sell a camping trip? No. All they ask is that people send for a free video tape. The tape arrives packed full of gorgeous vistas, trained counselors, great equipment, fantastic activities, and happy campers. Does this tape sell a camping trip? Nope. All it does is ask people to schedule a free in-home consultation. Then and only then do they ask for the sale. And afterward? Right after the child has come home from their great vacation and told all their friends (and given their parents a much-needed break), the campsite asks for referrals of other parents who might like to send their kids to camp with Billy next year.

Does this series of soft steps work? Oh yeah. Does all of the follow-up work? Count on it.

What soft steps can you provide? Perhaps some articles or news of interest to your clients. You could write information for a newsletter so long as this information has value for your clients. Offer art samples for free use. Give free consultations. Establish your credibility and your professionalism and give away as much value as possible and people will respond. Not instantly (remember the apple tree) but they will respond.

Traditional marketing tries to reach as many people as possible. Think about the last car commercial you saw on TV. That commercial reached millions of people. How many of them wanted a car at that exact moment? How many wanted that type of car by that manufacturer? How many people wound up buying a completely different car? This very costly broadcast reached a very tiny percentage of all the prospective customers who saw it.

What are you, the small-business 3D artist to do? Nanocast! What is nanocasting? Reaching the smallest possible audience that has the
highest proportion of people who want what you have to offer. Send a mailing to every business in your town advertising your 3D art and you’re broadcasting. Restrict the mailing to those businesses in industries you specialize in and you’re narrowcasting. Restrict the mailing even further those businesses in your industries of interest who already use 3D art (or who don’t), and you’re nanocasting. Result? You’ve just saved lots of money on printing and postage while not bothering people with no interest in your offering and will get a much higher rate of return to boot.

In general, the more qualifiers you use when defining your target market, the better your nanocasting will be. “Aircraft” is an overly broad market. “British civilian airliners of the 1950s” is a perfect example of nanocasting. Few buyers will want those exact models, but those who do will pay a nice premium for those specialized products.

This example might, however, be a little too restrictive. Segment your market!

**Your Target Customers**

Understand your target customers, because they affect almost every aspect of your 3D art business. Learn how and where to market and sell to them, what specific types of art they need (line drawings, renderings, special effects, level of detail and accuracy, etc.), and how to shift your business as your customers’ business needs change and evolve- which they will.

**Geographics**

If you’re just starting out in freelance 3D art, focusing on your local market is probably your best bet unless you have a compelling reason for doing otherwise. There are plenty of good reasons for staying local until you create some critical mass. Need to close business face-to-face? Start local. Why? It’s very easy- too easy- to underestimate all of the costs of doing business outside of your local area: phone calls, airfare, lodging, food, rental car, etc.

You can sometimes find and meet prospects on the Internet and can even close the sale with a phone call or electronically. In these cases, you’ll have a better chance of success by going outside your local area. As you become more familiar with your prospects and how they do business through research and conversations, you’ll get a better feel for what will work for your 3D art business. Start locally even if you know that you can market your product or service completely over the Internet. There’s just no substitute for talking with your clients face to face.

**Demographics**

Your target market’s demographics are highly valuable for crafting your sales and marketing strategies. Demographics are a quantifiable description of your target market. Some of the demographic parameters for 3D artists are:

- Types of business (manufacturing, distributor, retail, business to business, service, etc.)
Label your target prospects with as many tangible parameters as possible. The more clarity you have, the more targeted your marketing campaigns will be.

Many 3D artists start their business focused on a narrow market like medical illustration, forensics, or construction.

Remember that you want to nanocast, not broadcast. The more you distill your target market(s) by refining your description, the more poor prospects you screen out, the fewer people you reach, and the more you can focus on the most likely prospects. This gives you the greatest profit with the smallest expenditures of time, energy, and money.

Business Characteristics

A lot of 3D artists (and businesspeople in general) miss this step when defining their market. As a 3D artist seeking to build your business, however, this is one of your most important steps. If a certain type of client business resists technological innovation or the latest trends, you’ll have a tougher time achieving any success. On the other hand, if a market traditionally uses the latest technology or trend, you can make the sale more easily but may have more competition.

Some of the things you’ll want to look for are:

- Leader in their markets
- Technological innovative
- Growing industry
- Growing revenues and profits (The more growth in a business, the more they’ll innovate)
- High revenue per employee
- Good management practices
- Profit oriented (as opposed to revenue oriented)
- Utilize visual communications in their sales & marketing and/or product development

As you examine your market’s business characteristics, try and understand the business problems those decision makers face. Put yourself in their shoes and determine how your 3D art can help them. If they are slow to adopt visualization techniques such as 3D art, can you prove that 3D art is the best possible choice for them? More specifically, can you make your 3D art their only choice?

How do you go about doing this? As specifically as possible. Use hard numbers as much as possible. “Adding 3D art to your marketing brochures will increase sales” says nothing. “Businesses who include 3D art in their brochure report an average of 14% more sales”. Which argument is more compelling?
The more numbers, the more hard evidence you can cite in making your case, the better. Remember that list of benefits and competitive advantages you worked on before? What do those advantages translate into in terms of tangible benefits for your client?

How can you find this out? Easy. What organizations and publications cater to your chosen industry? Subscribe to them. Read them cover to cover. You’ll find lots of extremely valuable information there as well as links to even more information. Remember: Information is power. Just don’t fall into analysis paralysis.

**Purchasing Behavior**

Successfully selling your 3D art services to prospects requires that you understand how they buy. Every type of business has a purchasing process. Small companies usually have one decision maker who renders verdicts quickly— in fact, they pride themselves on that ability. Larger companies usually have formal processes in place for purchases, approved budgets, Request for Proposal (RFP), and so on. Make sure you understand the system you’re working with so that you can tailor your sales process to each client. Some things to look for include:

- Time for decision process from contact to closing the deal
- Payment terms
- Decision making process
- Budgets for visualization and the flexibility of those budgets
- Vendor selection process
- Business specific needs
- Frequency of purchases
- Competition with external and internal providers
- Sensitivity to price, quality, convenience, etc.

**Usage Patterns**

If you’re selling 3D art, you need to have a thorough understanding of your prospects and clients. How do you gain and keep this understanding? Ask! Do surveys, talk to prospects, and read business-specific publications. The more you understand how your target businesses use 3D art, the better you’ll understand how to meet their needs with your services. The good news is that much of this is visible from a target company’s Web site. Use this as a cost-effective research tool.

**Market Size**

If you’ve done your research up to this point, you probably have a pretty good feel for businesses that could fit your 3D art business. Next, estimate the size of the market that you’ve determined from the previous steps. You want a target market size that suits your business, a market where you can achieve your desired lifestyle as soon as possible, definitely within 1-3 years.

You can obtain this information from U.S. Census data, association surveys, phone book listings, and other tools applicable to your target market. Thinking of raising venture capital to fund your startup? You’ll
need a market large enough to sustain your type of business for the long-term.

**Market Trends**

Looking at specific market trends is the last assessment necessary for ensuring your long-term success. Are the businesses you are targeting growing or shrinking? Is their adoption of 3D art emerging, flat, or declining? Look for government regulation of the industry and any changes that could provide additional opportunities. Look for changes in the supplier, distribution, or customer channels that may you’re your 3D art services.

Change brings opportunity. Trends are predictable changes that you can take full advantage of.

**Strategy & Risk**

**Strategic Advantage**

Great businesses are built and wars are won by exploiting strategic advantages over competitors. By understanding your strategic advantages in the marketplace and having a plan to use, strengthen, and exploit them, you can make rapid progress in dominating your market.

What do we mean by strategic advantages? Remember that list of competitive advantages you created a little while ago? Add them up and you have your strategic advantage.

**Market Readiness**

A market that is ready and willing to buy your 3D art combined with your ability to provide a unique offering (in terms of quality, detail, turnaround time, cost, etc.) is a tremendous advantage. This strategy usually works best in new and emerging markets and is based on serving a pent-up demand for a product or service.

When terrorists attacked the United States on September 11th, the business, government and investment community had a heightened concern for security of every kind and purchased all manner of security devices, services, and technology despite the already-declining economy. Today, more and more law enforcement agencies, attorneys, and investigators are tapping into the power of 3D still and animated art to reconstruct crime scenes, accidents, and more. This makes forensics a ready market for 3D art.

**First to Market**

The "first to market" strategy gives you two important advantages. Businesses, like people in general, want to go with market leaders. Your being the first provider in your market means that your competition is small or non-existent. Amazon.com, Microsoft, Dell, Intel, and Ebay benefited from being the first (or perceived first) in their markets.
As a 3D artist, you probably won’t find a situation where you can make yourself first in any general market. You have an excellent chance, however, of being first in individual local markets.

Suppose you land a project with Local Law Firm A to create an animation reconstructing a car accident. Local Law Firm B may have never used 3D art, but a solid presentation and demo reel may well convince them to hire you. You now have your niche: 3D reconstructions of car accidents for litigation. You can expand from there. In this example, anyone from a car dealership to a toy store might want to hire you for a commercial. A film studio might want to use you to work in special effects. The list goes on...

As your demo reel of stills and/or animation grows, getting more and more business becomes easier and easier. Why? Because prospects want a track record. Your portfolio of successful projects does a good bit of the selling for you. It takes momentum to build momentum. Think of it like push-starting a car. At first, this process requires lots of effort for very little noticeable return- until the engine starts up.

How can you take advantage of being first in your market? You already have. Nobody has the killer portfolio. Remember, you’ve found a market that nobody has served– yet.

Start finding your target market(s) and businesses within those markets and approach them. You often will find that you are the first to market on an individual business level because 3D art is still very much in its infancy- but it won’t be forever. All those companies listed at the beginning of this section had an idea. Probably none of them had “their” idea first. They were first to consistently deliver the results the market demanded. So what are you waiting for?

**Proprietary Technologies or Skills**

No matter what kind of business you have, avoid getting into a commodity type market. You must distinguish your offering- and not by lowering your prices.

The Internet market burst because there were thousands of competitors offering the same product with low prices being the only way to get attention. Thousands of companies went broke trying to compete in this marketplace of diminishing returns. “Let’s lose money on each sale and make it up on volume” was the phrase coined to describe the problem. And they weren’t kidding...

As you evaluate your 3D skills and how to offer your products and services, take a hard look at what unique offerings you might have, whether it’s your style, level of detail, speed, industry knowledge, contacts, education, or anything that sets you apart from the competition (keeping in mind that your competition includes other 3D artists but may also include 2D graphic artists, videographers, photographers, painters, draftspersons, and more.) As you look at this, look for areas where you can maintain a competitive edge long enough to create some momentum.

Zygote Media Group developed the 3D Human Anatomy model collection. This gives us both a significant revenue stream and a strong
competitive advantage in high end medical illustrations and animation. This service work often expands components of the anatomy and biology libraries, complementing our product strategy. We used this approach to gain new business, build relationships, and generate a range of work with clients needing custom solutions around our core library. We are the market leader in this market segment.

**Market Share**

If you already dominate a market (or can be first to market and quickly capture a substantial market share) you can leverage this to expand your 3D art business. For example, if you already have relationships with the majority of businesses in a particular market, you can introduce additional products and services to these existing clients and gain (or maintain) a significant edge over competitors. If you’re already a trusted vendor, chances are good that your client will want to expand your relationship, rather than taking a chance with a new artist or vendor.

How would this work for you? If you’re selling 3D models, add compatible software to your product line. If you’re designing Web sites, add ecommerce to your product offerings. If you do animations for video and film, find a partner who does post production.

**Operational Advantages**

If you are very efficient at what you do (more so than others in your particular niche), you may be able to compete on speed and quality of service. For example, a 2D artist who creates an image must literally start over when the client requests a change of angle, lighting, color, etc. As a 3D artist, you know that all of these changes and more are usually as simple as a few mouse clicks and/or keystrokes.

Adding sophisticated project management and customer service as outlined in this book can definitely increase your operational advantages. Having a process for change orders and customer signoff can save you a significant amount of time and work that doesn’t move you towards a finished product.

As you examine your target market(s) and your current competitors, think about the innovations that can make you more efficient. As a 3D artist, you should be extremely cognizant of the benefits 3D offers over 2D (both photography and illustration). You should also know the advantages of your particular applications and workflow over others inside and out. This may require you to invest time and money but could be well worth it if you can offer a better service or product. For example, Dell uses their operational advantages as a huge competitive advantage in the PC hardware market.
Strategic Channels

Channels are the ways in which products and services get from manufacturers to distributors to customers. Having a huge oil field does you no good without a pipeline to haul it out. Preferred relationships with channel partners could be a significant advantage. What is a channel partner? Any company that already delivers products and services to your target market and that helps you do the same thing. These could be distributors, Web and ecommerce consultants, film production companies, publishers, 3D application vendors, other artists, manufacturers, and/or professional advisors. Most 3D product distribution channels are now on the Internet; we cover them later in this book.

Having a channel partner can dramatically reduce or even eliminate your sales and marketing costs if your partner lets you sell your products and services into their existing client base. You can also explore fusion marketing opportunities where you market each others’ services to your own markets. Just make sure that each of your marketing partners shares your high standards of service and quality. You don’t want to tarnish your reputation by association!

Strategic Relationships

Strategic relationships are companies and individuals that complement your business, particularly those that share common customers yet are non-competitive. Once you understand the concept, you can recognize channel partnerships as one type of strategic relationship among many. Keep track of the strategic relationships available to you, that you already have, and that you want.

If you’re a preferred provider for an association such as a school district or chamber of commerce that caters to your target market, you can leverage this status to access your market much more effectively than your competitors. You can also offer to exchange market penetration with vendors who do not compete with you. Prove your value, maintain your quality, and you can forge long-term relationships with clients who will call on you at need.

Brand Recognition

If you’ve achieved brand recognition with your 3D art, then you’re light years ahead of the game. Let’s be honest, most independent 3D artists don’t have brand recognition in their marketing arsenal, at least not directly. If you resell products and services from companies with big brands, you can use this to help create prominence in the market. For example, if you’re the Artist of the Month, Annual 3D art winner, have had your art published in well known books and publications or on the high-end model banks, you can use the company and product logos as well the awards on your Web site and other marketing collateral. It’s like having the “Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval” for your particular market.

For 3D art, you can join well-known organizations like the association of Medical Illustrators and perhaps enter into reseller or other
arrangements with content and application providers. You can also look to form relationships with other 3D artists with different specialties so you can refer clients back and forth, thus co-branding each other in the process.

**Risks**

The best laid plans of mice and men often go awry. Do what the captain of the Titanic didn't do: expect the best but prepare for the worst.

The difference between this planning and the rest of your plan is that this is where you play “devil’s advocate”. Set your confidence and enthusiasm aside. Look at worst-case scenarios. This is not an exercise to convince you not to go into or continue business. On the contrary, it’s about providing you with the information you need to hedge against these risks. Keep in mind that you should plan for both real and hypothetical risks, because potential risks sometimes become real. Remember, the only constant is change.

What kind of risks can a 3D artist face? Competition, non-payment of invoices, flat-bid clients who milk out-of-scope work from you without renegotiating your fee. You must pay close attention to any possible trend of any of your product or service offerings becoming commoditized. Unless you dominate the market and have significant competitive advantages when this happens, you’ll need to look for new emerging markets.

Properly planned for, a major disaster may become a minor inconvenience, and vice versa. Turning the Titanic might have caused an awkward embarrassment; plowing onward brought deaths. Be prepared for scenarios that can cause failure, and you may never have to experience it.

**Competition**

Competition can come from anywhere in your channel: manufacturers, distributors, other vendors, and even inside your client’s company. That lawyer client could hire an in-house 3D artist, thus creating instant internal competition.

Other competitive threats come from outside your industry. Suppose clip art and stock image repositories started offering 3D images at very competitive prices? That could pose a huge competitive threat to anyone making custom images. If someone like Microsoft ever comes out with mass-market software that offers the same functionality as your custom solution, chances are you’re in serious trouble.

You must be sensitive to real and potential competitors. Talk to other 3D artists in non-competitive markets: artists doing what you do in demographically similar cities and other states, artists in your city who do work that doesn't compete with yours, other people who sell to your clients, etc. Discover and keep tabs on your competition, both real and potential, and constantly explore ways to beat or evade them.
**Funding & Capital**

Most businesses that fail do so because of lack of capital or (even more commonly) misspending their capital, resulting in lack of capital. Think of all the bankrupt Internet businesses, living off funding instead of profits, and grasping for investments that never came. In any business environment, if you’re not currently profitable, you must start living off your capital and are running a very real risk. You can lose more than your business.

If you’re thinking about expanding and don’t have adequate capital, you’re at risk. If your receivables are growing or there are chances of bad debt, you’re at risk. If your credit was jeopardized and you depend on it to meet your cash flow requirements, you’re at risk.

How do you beat this? Embrace the idea of doing more for less. Why pay for business cards and other marketing when the same computer and graphics skills that pay your bills can also save you that money? Why spend money on postage when email works just as well if not better? Why mail out copies of a demo CD to prospects when you can post animated demo trailers, videos, galleries, and downloads on a Web page? Why spend lots of time answering repeat questions when you can point people to a FAQ?

Spend less to get more and you’ll find your limited resources taking you further than you ever dreamed possible. You’ll also find your profits growing faster and larger than you imagined. A financial expert views cash management as an art and has all the creativity that you have when approaching your own work. Learn to see capital management as an art form and watch your business soar.

**Economic**

Many of the Internet’s most promising companies vanished without a trace when the dot-com bubble finally burst. The steady stream of venture capital evaporated. There may be times when you have everything going for you until a drastic turn in the economy dries up your business.

How can you tell when the economy turns the corner? Key indicators include stock averages, interest rates, and unemployment numbers. Pay them constant attention and you’ll have an early warning system. Here are a few good places to start:

- [http://www.census.gov/cgi-bin/briefroom/BriefRm](http://www.census.gov/cgi-bin/briefroom/BriefRm)

Obviously, if you could predict the economy in detail, you could make a fortune in the stock market, retire, and create 3D art to your heart’s content. Predicting individual stocks and commodities requires specific education and painstaking research. The good news is that anyone can spot general trends.

How? You can do two things. Look for other areas of work, and look for early warnings. Keep looking for recession-proof areas in your
industry. These usually offer low profit and zero glamour, but do offer reliable work. Learn and pay attention to basic economic indicators. When you see indications of economic decline, you can evaluate, plan, and take appropriate action such as shifting your business, building up savings, restructuring debt, etc.

Watching interest rates is one of the easiest ways to predict the economic markets because rising and falling interest rates are central to predicting the economic future. The crash of the Internet economy followed by the September 11th terrorist attacks brought drastic interest rate cuts to stimulate the world economy. With the economy turning the corner, interest rates are rising again. This tide raises all boats and must be watched. Couple this analysis with specific indicators in your market segment or market niche to help determine the health of your particular economy.

**Product or Service**

A number of forces are constantly working to make your 3D art skills obsolete. Newer versions of 3D software with expanded capabilities are constantly being released. There is increasing competition from China, Russia, India, and other foreign countries whose workers can compete on price. Your applications may fall out of favor in your industry. You will need to regularly upgrade your computer to handle the newer software and more demanding renders. Production work that used to command premium payments can be rendered obsolete with new functionality in a 3D application that produces the same result with fewer mouse clicks.

How do you avoid falling into this trap? Keep your skills up, your hardware and software up to date, and constantly research emerging trends.

**Management**

Your business management infrastructure and methods can become a risk if you’re facing major change such as expansion, contraction, large competitors, or shifts in the market. Scrutinize your management, no matter how small your 3D art business is. The less structure and process in your business, the more susceptible you are. The more employees and overhead you have, the greater your risk. If your business has grown too fast for your management skills or structures, you’re definitely at risk.

**Competition**

Every business has competition. Many of these companies fail early on because they think their product, service, or market niche has no competitors. Other businesses compete for your prospect’s dollars, even if they have nothing to do with 3D art. From a narrow view, 3D artists have lots of competitors because there are many artists out there- and that number is starting to grow faster than the demand for 3D art.
Aggressively examining your competition will help you direct resources towards markets that have the highest chance for success. You may also determine that you will fail after doing a thorough competitive analysis. The competitor is like your enemy in war. You won’t prevail in battle by ignoring your enemies. However, as Sun Tzu states in “The Art of War”, you can win the war without ever going into battle. Educate yourself and have a continually evolving strategy to win.

**Position**

Evaluate your competitive position. Your 3D art may enthrall your target market(s) and clients, but if another artist offering a similar product comes along, your market could embrace the newcomer and take business away from you. Remember that competition goes way beyond the relative value of your 3D art. Many factors determine a company’s success in the marketplace. As a general rule, you’ll want to place yourself in the number 1 or 2 position in your particular niche and keep investing in proprietary techniques, processes, and assets to maintain that position.

External success factors include price, brand, and more effective distribution channels. We all know that buyers often purchase inferior products or services from companies they’re already comfortable with, compared to an unknown. Evaluate your potential competitors for:

- Product and/or service comparisons. Are their skills or tools inferior to, the same as, or better than yours?
- Existing client base. Are these artists established? Remember that you are also competing with 2D artists.
- Brand awareness. Does your target market seem to work with one or more established artists?
- Channels & distribution. How do your competitors make themselves known?
- Location. Where are your competitors located relative to your customers?
- Customer service. Do your competitors give better customer service?
- Quality perceptions. Quality and value are what the customer perceives them to be. How do your customers perceive your value compared to other 3D artists in your industry?
- Price consideration. Are your prices lower, the same, or higher than your competition? You don’t want to compete on price, but on value.

Internal factors also contribute to making your 3D art company more or less competitive in the marketplace. Some of the important things to consider when performing an internal competitive assessment include:

- Distribution and supply channels. How do you get your art to your clients?
- Financial and intellectual capital. How good are your 3D skills and do you have enough money to start or run your business?
- Operational effectiveness. How efficient is your business and how rapidly do you turn art assignments around?
Key employees. Do you have any critical people working for you? This could be a programmer, Web master, texture artist, housekeeper, babysitter, etc. Anyone who contributes directly or indirectly to your business activities, including sub-contractors.

Internet infrastructure. Do you have a Web page? Does this page show off you and your work in the best possible light?

Proprietary technology and process. Do you have any special or custom applications or methods that no one else uses? Do these applications or methods add value in your customers’ eyes?

Sales infrastructure. Do you have a set sales process in place that emphasizes building relationships with your customers?

Partnerships and alliances. Do you have (or can you build) any fusion marketing partners, relationships with other 3D artists, etc?

Technological capabilities. Is your hardware and software up to date? Do you have the resources on board to work in the expanding Internet arena?

Compare yourself and your potential competitors using these external and internal factors. Honestly rate yourself against your competitors. Take special note of any additional factors pertinent to your particular 3D art niche and include them in your analysis.

The simplest way to build a competitive advantage list is to first list every conceivable benefit you can think of to doing business with you using the above categories and anything else you can think of. Then examine your competitors and cross off any of your benefits that they also offer. What’s left once you’re done are your competitive advantages. Are these advantages compelling for your customers? If not, how can you alter your offering to fix that?

Market Share

Your market share is the proportion of the total sales in your market that you have secured for yourself. Market share becomes more important if you’re in a niche or industry with lots of other 3D artists. If a few companies and artists dominate most of a market, you will have considerably more difficulty penetrating it. You can more easily penetrate markets with many customers and few firmly established artists because these markets give you the best chance to define the initial niche of your choice.

Market share leaders substantially influence perception factors in the market including standards, quality, brand, and price. Because they are the leaders (and therefore get most of the business), they have considerable resources to use in defense of their turf. Make yourself the market leader and you’ll need to keep checking your vulnerabilities and taking corrective action. If you seek to keep a niche in the backyard of a major 3D artist, make sure that you can sustain your competitive advantages for an extended period of time.
Future Competition

Future competitors are any other 3D artists or companies who are poised to enter your market. For example Getty Images is the largest online bank of stock images. They would be tough to beat if they decided to move into the 3D content business with their resources and market position. Identify the barriers to entry for these potential threats just as you did for your own 3D art business. Do any patents, proprietary process, resources, channels, and expertise give you and your company an advantage? How can you increase a competitor’s barriers to entry?

Sales & Marketing

Other sections in this book cover sales and marketing strategies in detail. Decide which approaches will work best for your 3D art business. Determine the process for managing them and including them in your overall business plan. You need marketing plans to reach your target market and sales strategies to capture clients in that market.

Use the Marketing and Sales section of this book to create a plan. The key components of your sales & marketing section of the business plan are:

- Marketing message
- Marketing vehicles and budget
- Sales forecasts
- Sales process and metrics

Marketing Message

Can you meet a prospect on an elevator and tell her why she wants to buy from you before the doors open? The marketing message is your company’s elevator pitch.

Your Unique Sales Proposition (USP) is the core of your elevator pitch and all your marketing. Your USP consists of your combined competitive advantages. Design your USP by focusing on the uniqueness of your 3D art work that the market does and will demand. Distill a statement from the overlap of market needs, your competitive advantages, and anything more you can offer to join them into a compelling whole. That’s the message you want to communicate to the market: your clients, partners, investors, and employees. Use the “Four P’s” of marketing to hone your message:

- Price
- Product
- Place
- Promotion

Make sure to evaluate your company in terms of the seven F’s that determine why the customer buys:

- Function
- Form
Fear
Freedom
Finances
Feelings
Future

If you market to consumers, add three more F’s.

Family
Fantasy
Fun

Evaluate and distinguish your 3D art products and services through each of these factors. The more your company meets your target customers’ needs, the more success you can have.

**Marketing Vehicles**

A marketing vehicle is the means of reaching your target market. Examples include:

- Website
- Brochures
- Print Media
- Television
- Radio
- Affiliate Programs
- Internet Banner Ads
- Newsletters
- Phone listings
- Direct mail
- Trade shows
- Billboards
- Public relations
- Co-marketing
- and many more...

**Marketing Budget**

The section on marketing has numerous vehicles that you can use. You must outline which marketing vehicles you will use and create an overall marketing budget and schedule. This is normally done for a calendar year and is expressed as a percentage of your gross receipts. The average business invested 4% of gross receipts into marketing in 2002 and this number is not changing much. As a small business owner who knows that the true definition of marketing is all contact between your company and anyone not in your company, you will be looking to invest a much higher percentage: 10%, even 20%. This might seem exorbitant until you realize that you would be spending money on most of these items anyway, such as a phone line, Internet access, etc. The most important aspect of treating each one of your means of contacting the outside world as a marketing vehicle is to keep you on your toes and looking and presenting your best at all times.

We’ll use your marketing budget later when we prepare the overall financial section of your business plan.
Sales Process and Metrics

Without sales, you don’t have a 3D art business- or any business. Remember that marketing is what you do to get the prospect’s awareness or attention so you can sell them something. That’s when the sales process begins. The larger the sales price, the longer the sales cycle usually is. Setting up a written plan and strategy for generating sales for your business is crucial.

Your sales process should answer the following questions:

- What is the structure of your sales force? If you are a small 3D art business, this could be you alone.
- How are your salespeople compensated: commission, salary or a combination of both? If you are a solo artist, your pay is based on the projects you bring in and will either be hourly or by the project. Do you have complementary vendors that you pay a commission when they refer work?
- How are the sales goals articulated? In other words, how do you present your services and desired outcome (being hired) to your prospective customers?
- What are the scripts used for telemarketing? The best way to increase the effectiveness of your phone presentations (such as when going through the Yellow Pages) is to develop and refine a script so you can be sure to be consistent.
- What training is required for sales personnel? If you’re a one-person show, what training do you need?
- How will your sales force contact the prospect? What marketing vehicles will they use? If you’re a solo artist, how will you contact your prospective clients?
- What are the policies and procedures for your sales personnel? They must treat all prospects with the same knowledge, respect, and courtesy.
- What are the minimum sales performance targets? If you’re a one-person 3D art business, what is the minimum amount of sales you need each month to stay in business?
- How are orders processed? What do you do when a customer says “Yes”? Here is where a standard process of interviews, sketches, etc. really comes in handy. Checklists ensure that you are always giving great service and covering all of the details. Never overlook this step, no matter how familiar you are with the client’s needs!
- How are sales leads handled? In other words, how do you handle referrals or people who express interest in your 3D art?
- Are there territories? This will probably not be a consideration for most 3D artists except that you must decide where you want to market your services (online, offline, or both).
- How is the sales team involved in quality control? Remember that quality begins with the first contact with a prospect and never ends. Infuse quality into each step of the process from this initial contact to final product and post-sale follow-up and you’ll be way ahead of the game.
- What flexibility does the sales team have on price, delivery dates and other factors when negotiating the contract? Again, this is
not a consideration for more 3D artists except that you must decide what you want and what you are willing to accept. If your prices and conditions are in line with the value you provide and the norms for your industry and locale, then don’t flex too much. There is a fine line between satisfying customer needs and sacrificing your company. Know where the line is and when to say no.

How does the rest of the company support the sales process? Since your marketing is all contact between anyone associated with you and anyone not, the rest of your 3D art company could be a spouse. Everyone who contacts (or who could contact) customers, vendors, etc. must be trained what to do if they ever come in contact with a prospective or established customer.

What are the stages of communication that the sales person has with the prospect from initial contact, through the sale, at project completion or delivery, to after the sale? Think relationship built on soft steps with fervent follow-up post-sale.

**Sales Forecast**

Your sales forecast is the foundation for the remainder of your budget. At a minimum, your sales revenues need to support your fixed costs and provide a reasonable breakeven point. You should also have target revenue levels that are high enough to justify your marketing budget. Your sales forecasts should project the following for each product line you have:

- Gross sales (total money paid to you by clients)
- Unit volume (how many projects you want to work on)
- Unit price (average price per project)
- Returns (how to handle customers who are not satisfied with your work)
- Allowances (how much room you have for discounts, bad debt, etc.)
- Net sales (Gross sales – operating profit)

You’ll also want to include variable expenses that form your cost of sales:

- Materials (should be minimal here except for any paperwork you have)
- Direct labor (your time)
- Other direct cost of sales (phone, internet, gas for your car, etc.)

**Technology Plan**

Just because you’re cozy with some of the latest computer technology doesn’t eliminate the need to plan and document the use of technology within your 3D art company. This alone can spell the difference between failure and success in a competitive market- and if you’re looking for capital, expect your investors to scrutinize this part of your plan.
More and more business expenses beyond wages go toward technology. The more thought and planning you put into this, the better. I’ve seen 3D trapped by the tendency to want to adopt technology much faster than non-technology oriented businesses. The problem is that they often exercise less scrutiny to determine if the technology is a sound investment or if it’s just “cutting edge”. Is it leading or bleeding edge? Assuming that it really works outside the demo, does it really deliver results that can build your bottom line? Don’t rush out to buy every new tool and upgrade that comes along. Evaluate each new development against your 3D art company’s needs and profitability.

Make a solid business case for every technology and product investment and you can invest more of your profits where they’ll do you the most good. Evaluate each piece of technology you have or want to have in all areas of your business, including:

- Accounting and financial controls (such as spreadsheets)
- Customer service (assistants, Web site, etc.)
- Communications (phone, fax)
- Internet infrastructure (web page, email, FTP, etc.)
- Employee productivity (how much you can get done in a give period of time)
- Production (how long you can keep going at a stretch)
- Other key operations (such as marketing, research, education, etc.)

Your technology plan should include your standards for hardware, software, telecommunications and network infrastructure. The last thing you want to do is give free rein to anyone working with or for you to use whatever applications they want as this will dramatically affect the cost of installation, maintenance, training, and documentation.

Do a build vs. use vs. buy analysis on questionable technology solutions such as your computer and any tools you use (light board, 3D sculpting tools, scanner, 3D content, etc.). You must have a cost savings in order to justify large expenditures for automation.

**Management**

Even if you’re a solo 3D artist, you need advisors and other consultants as part of your team. As your company grows, you’ll likely use attorneys and accountants to deal with legal and financial issues. If you’re like most solo businesspeople, you’ll be more successful aligning yourself with other people who complement what you do because rarely can one person manage all aspects of a business. In most cases they shouldn’t. If you’re a talented 3D artist, you’ll be money ahead by focusing on your craft rather than trying to learn tax codes and Generally Accepted Accounting Principles.

If you have ambitions to grow your 3D art company, you must carefully consider the management structure of your future larger company to make sure you can handle the growth and manage your
biggest expense (your people). Note that if you’re a solo business, your largest expense is probably going to be in technology.

To secure an investment, your management team needs proven capacity to handle the growth you project in your business plan. Investors won’t take you seriously unless you have a management team with the experience and potential to grow your business as projected.

Management Team

The most valuable asset in any business is its people, and your 3D art business is no exception, particularly if you’re running a one-person show. You (and/or your management team, if you have one) determine your strategy, products and services, operations, and your ultimate success. Be thorough in your decisions to bring on employees, especially managers, as their performance impacts your organization as well as everyone that reports to them. Your hiring decisions have a compounding effect in your organization; a good hire’s behavior permeates through the direct reports as do bad ones.

Evaluate managers based on experience, education, people skills, strengths, and weaknesses. Make sure they are leaders of people and have a track record of success. Have as many of your key partners or employees interview the candidate before making a decision to bring an executive on board. Then review each other’s notes and go with your guts.

Key Employees

Because you’re reading this book, chances are good that you’re a key employee: an owner, founder, or other top manager. You should evaluate yourself and your team both individually and as a group. Many small companies tend to lose balance when it comes to overall operational strength. These management teams are usually weighted in technology experience and lacking in other areas like operations, sales and marketing, and human resources.

Michael Gerber cites three components of running a successful business in his E-Myth series: The visionary looks to the future. This is the idea person, always wondering what comes next. The technician lives in the present and flies by the seat of her or his pants. Something happens, they respond, seeing every occurrence as causing something they must do. Technicians are all about action. Managers look to the past and seek to create processes, policies, procedures, structures, etc.—just what the visionary can’t stand and what the technician doesn’t want.

Most of us are technicians. Maybe we’re texture map artists, modelers, or animators. We jump into business because we can see the products and services that result from our actions.

Well, most businesses fail. Coincidence? No. They fail because they never achieve a harmonious balance of forward-looking vision, present-day doing, and backward-looking management.
Which are you? As you start expanding, make sure you hire people who fill in the lacking areas. Get a good mix of visionaries, technicians, and managers. If you’re a solo outfit, give yourself an honest assessment of your tendencies and work to develop your other instincts. If you think vision, doing, and management are competing forces, you’re right. But they are each critical ingredients in the well-balanced dish we call a successful business.

Why? Because ideas without action are simply daydreams. Action without vision is random. Either of the above sans structure and the organization is like water without a glass— it will dissipate into a formless mess. The truth is that the product or service (be it pies, 3D images, etc.) is actually a very minor part of what happens in any business, as you might guess from reading this book so far.

Think balance, both in yourself and in anyone and everyone you hire. Scrutinize each key player you hire to make sure they have the necessary skills to do the job they’re doing and to ensure you maintain the right mix of vision, technicians, and managers. Many small companies hand out titles like candy with little regard to the recipient’s ability and experience to actually do the job. Instead, assess compensation and incentives individually and as a whole to make sure they still make sense and remain balanced and consistent.

**Board of Directors**

If you’re ambitions, you’ll want to grow your business from a sole proprietorship to the point where you incorporate. In fact, you want to consider doing this no matter how many people are in your company, even if only yourself. All corporations require a Board of Directors. Many corporations treat their boards like a necessary legal formality and ignore it. In so doing, they lose a valuable asset. The board sets the direction and goals for the corporation and the CEO executes these initiatives. If you founded the company, you may remain the director or even become the chairman. But as your company grows, the board becomes increasingly important. The board is the ultimate authority in a corporation and has a legal responsibility for its decisions.

Consult with an attorney and an accountant to discuss the merits of incorporating versus remaining a sole proprietor or Limited Liability Company (LLC).

**Advisors**

A formal or informal advisory committee can be a great benefit to your consulting company. An advisor usually has expertise that you don’t, such as legal, financial, manufacturing, marketing, or some key technology. You might want to complement your key employees with advisors in areas that are weak within your management organization. If you’re not incorporated, an advisory committee can function in a similar role as a Board of Directors.
Consultants

We talk extensively about consultant partners in the marketing section of this book. From a management perspective, you can consider some of these consulting partners as an extension of your internal team. Remember that marketing is all contact between anyone in your organization with everyone outside it. While they act on your behalf, consultants and contractors and temps are part of your organization and thus part of your marketing. If you’re expanding, you might want to consider hiring a business and/personal coach/consultant. Consultants and advisors can really balance out your team and don’t require the commitment and capital that a full-time manager or employee does.

To Be Added

After you’ve evaluated your current management team, you may still have to bring some new faces with resources as you execute your plan. Identify the skills, expertise, experience, specialty, and how you want to use them in your company. When this is included in your plan, you and others be clear about the type of people you’re looking for.

Management Structure

Your management structure goes beyond an organizational chart. It’s really about how things get done at your company, including operational decisions, planning and other critical communications. Almost every company of two or more people has both formal and informal lines of authority. Be sure to recognize and document both. The larger the company, the more important this becomes.

A policies and procedures manual records and teaches your management structure. If you have more than a few employees, you really should have this document in place. It protects your company from exposure and helps to quickly indoctrinate new and current employees into the process of how things get done.

Your plan should include why and how you motivate employees. In most companies, your most valuable assets walk out the door every night. They’re called employees. You should have a structure in place that articulates your company’s culture and mission. The more your organization is a place where people feel valuable, important, and rewarded, the more successful you will be. It’s that simple.

You should also address how communication occurs between management and employees. How do suggestions get made? How do employees get recognized? How are HR issues handled? The more documentation and practice available you to and your employees, the more smoothly the people side of things will go.
DEVELOPMENT MILESTONES & EXIT STRATEGY

This section of the plan deals with summarizing the goals you have as a company and defining an exit strategy (how you’ll leave the company) if one exists. If you are using investment capital, your investors will use this section as a key part of their decision whether or not to put money into your company. This section shows the goals and objectives that will be sought once the capital is secured.

Goals

You’ll have a much better chance of reaching your goals if you know what they are, and that means specifics. Goals like dominating a market, making lots of money, are vague and meaningless targets without some way of measuring them. These goals should extend out one, two or even up to five years.

This section of the plan is for precise and quantifiable goals with the milestones along the way. Define goals in terms of revenue, profits, products and services offered, leadership in a niche or geographical location, or even relevant awards.

Milestones

Break each goal into major milestones, just like in any well-managed project. This allows you to evaluate your course and schedule and to track your accomplishments on your way to your goals.

If you’ve gained some success in the 3D art business, you should also include milestones that you’ve already achieved: client wins, revenue targets, office expansions, and market share. Success isn’t an isolated event. It’s the result of steady progress towards specific milestones and goals. Evaluate your past successes and document future milestones that will help you reach the goals within your plan.

Exit Plan

The exit strategy shows the investor (who could be you!) what event will liquidate their investment, either with marketable securities or cash. Typically this is done with an IPO or by being acquired by a larger company for cash and/or stock. Your exit strategy depends on what’s important to you. If you want to maintain control of your company, this could limit your ability to raise capital through traditional investors. If you are willing to take a smaller role in return for greater financial rewards, than investment capital may be of interest.

You may not have an exit strategy, wanting only to grow the business through reinvesting part of your profits. Even in this case, a solid exit strategy makes you more attractive to investors. Beyond investors, you can make your company more effective by setting goals with measurable intermediate milestones as if you planned to build your company independently of yourself. These milestones will help you formulate the plans to achieve them and give you and your company a focus- even if your profits are continually increasing.
You’re create 3D art because you love it. You’re in the 3D art business to make a profit. Your financial plan gives you precise and meaningful feedback on how you’ve done and where you’re going. Your financial statements provide the most tangible measure of how well your business is doing. It goes beyond exciting progress like more customers or new products and services to provide metrics that mean something.

Financial statements go way beyond your checkbook. You should get comfortable with reading your Income Statements, Balance Sheets, and Cash-Flow Statements at least monthly. You should understand your breakeven point and the key ratios in your business.

Income Statement

An income or operating statement is simply a statement of sales vs. expenses. You start out with a sales row, with every other line below it listing an expense. In the end, the statement either shows a profit or a loss. The income statement does not reflect assets or liabilities so it does not indicate your company’s value. It shows you the profit or loss per month, quarter, or year. And since profit is the yardstick you measure your business by...

Expenses break down into fixed and variable expenses. Fixed expenses are associated as overhead and are comprised of administrative and distribution expenses (otherwise known as rent, utilities, Internet access, car payments if you drive to clients, etc.). Variable expenses are directly proportional to sales and are sometimes denoted as “Cost of Sales or Goods”. They include both labor and material directly related to sales.

Fixed expenses occur no matter what as long as you are in business. Have a slow month? Pay. Have a super-great month? Pay. They remain relatively constant from month to month. Variable expenses are what you spend on each project. Lots of projects means high variable expenses. No projects means zero variable expenses. Allocate 5-10% of your gross revenue to profit and make that the first line of expense. Pay it into a separate account and make it a priority.

Dividing your expenses and desired profit by your available monthly output gives the rough price per project. For example, if your fixed expenses are $1,000 per month, you want $5,000 per month to live on, you spend $500 per project, and can do 10 projects per month, then you need to be making $11,000 per month ($5,000+$1,000+($500x10)). Divide this by the 10 projects you can do per month and you need to charge at least $1,100 per project to meet your goals. Tack on a little extra so you can build up cash reserves to float you through the lean times.

Does the number you come up with match what you can reasonably expect with your costs, skills, experience, and target market(s)? If so, great! If not, then you need to go back to your drawing board. You have two options: Cut your expenses, or justify your higher price. Do
the first whenever possible, however the latter is the way to go if you can make compelling arguments.

**Balance Sheet**

The balance sheet is a snapshot of your company's value at a moment in time. It lists the assets and subtracts liabilities to show your business's net worth. Most new business owners ignore the balance sheet as they manage their cash flow. Bankers and other investors do the opposite: They scrutinize balance sheets.

As the name implies, the balance sheet must always “balance”. Your Assets must equal your liabilities (debt and expenses) + equity.

If you want to create a company that has both value and a regular salary for yourself (and why wouldn’t you?), then you need to understand the balance sheet and how to increase your equity. Equity is the value of assets exceeding liabilities. Assets include inventory, receivables, models, images, animations, securities, real property, depreciation allowances, and prepaid expenses. Liabilities include debts (payables as well as accruals).

Humans have devoted millennia to inventing ways of managing and manipulating money. Consult with an accountant for more information. You may also want to find a good financial planner.

**Cash Flow Projections**

Most small businesspeople know something about cash flow analysis. Cash flow is about your bank account and your ability to pay your bills. It has nothing to do with the value of your company nor your profits or losses at any time.

Many startup entrepreneurs spend a great deal of time managing cash flow, usually because they don’t budget. They end up managing cash flow weekly or even daily, constantly trying to keep their checking account in the black while meeting their obligations. Don’t laugh: Most 3D artists fall into this category as well.

You can avoid this needless pain by starting proper budgeting and strict cost control policies now. Write conservative budgets and make your profit the first line of expense. In other words, always pay yourself first right off the top, no matter what your other bills are. This keeps you from suffering personally, which in turn keeps you from acting out of desperation. Second, as an honest person, you strive to meet your obligations; this gives you the clarity you need to accomplish that. Third (and this may sound far more mystical than it really is) whatever you focus on grows. Focus on your debt and it becomes your prime motivator. Focus on profit, and your debt will fade away. This gives you the breathing room you need to make your 3D art business work.

In the first few years of your business, cash flow outweighs anything else. Still, never neglect the fundamentals of making your business more valuable lest you mire yourself in living “paycheck to paycheck”. Pay yourself first and build equity in your company. Competing priorities? Yes. Remember what I said about vision, doing, and
management? You need a harmonious balances across all areas of your company. It’s a bit like riding a bicycle: it seems next to impossible at first, then becomes easier and easier as your skills grow. Provided, of course, that you have the will and commitment to making that growth happen. If not, you’ll just keep repeating the same old patterns and wondering why nothing ever changes.

**Startup Costs or Use of Funds**

If you’re just starting your 3D art business, you’ll need to determine your startup costs. Most new businesses don’t do a very good job of this and end up running out of money before the reach profitability. If you’ve already been in business for a while, you need to project where the money is going to grow your business. Either way, you need to budget capital expenditures and working capital needs.

Here’s how it works: You invest in a computer, your software, training, etc., and hang out your shingle. Congratulations, you’re a professional 3D artist. But then you need money for marketing, fixed costs, and paying yourself while you grow your business. Eventually, you will reach the point called cash-flow breakeven where your monthly income is enough to cover your “nut” or fixed and variable expenses plus profit. But this milestone does not begin to pay back the initial investment— it just means no more investment need be made.

The next step is to continue growing until the company has paid off every dime originally invested and hopefully quite a bit more. This is done by paying off debt (if that is how you started your business) and by building equity in your company, the value of which can be recovered when you sell your business.

**Breakeven Analysis**

Breakeven analysis is useful for internal financial planning. Your business breaks even at the point when your profits are zero or the point that sales for the year exceed your expenses to date. Conceptually, you open the doors on January 1 and have costs that begin accumulating before the first sale is made. These fixed costs accumulate steadily with time as opposed to sales that accumulate at a variable rate.

If your 3D art business has a very small profit margin, say 5%, your business works for 346 days before it starts getting paid a profit. What this means is that your low-margin business is vulnerable to a loss if a large, unexpected expense occurs. Use this analysis to cut both your fixed and variable expenses in order to increase your margin and accelerate your break even point.

**Financial Assumptions**

It’s important that you and anybody who reads your plan to understand the assumptions you made when coming up with your projections. List these in a straightforward fashion rather than making the reader extract them from the spreadsheet. Include items like:

- Sales assumptions
- Growth projections as a percent
Hiring plans with dates and salaries
Office expansions
Marketing expansion
Financing assumptions and details
Any other non-linear expenses

LIFE MANAGEMENT

If all you’re interested in is how to make your business more successful, then maybe you can skip this section. If you want to learn how to be successful and happy, maybe you should read further.

A BALANCED LIFE

Your 3D art business is just one aspect of your life, so it makes sense to approach management from a top-down view. It’s vital to understand the importance of balance when you approach your business. Less is actually more when the other aspects of your life replenish the energy available for your business.

I’ve devoted 100% of my focus to building businesses and I’ve taken a more structured and balanced approach. It seems like more time devoted to the business equals more success but that’s not necessarily true. By balancing the portions of your time devoted to work, finances, health, recreation, family, friends, and community, you recharge your ability to be at peak effectiveness in your business.

If having a fulfilling life is as important to you as having a successful 3D art business, then I would suggest putting together a life plan. My life plan beyond business looks something like this:

Health

My health has top importance in my life. I’ve learned over the years that when my body is in a strong condition, every other area of my life benefits. I focus on some basics that increase the energy in my body with the following strategies:

- Drink plenty of water.
- Exercise regularly.
- Minimize or eliminate the acidic toxins I put in my body such as alcohol, sugar, bad fats, tobacco, and drugs.
- Eat lots of live foods, particularly high-alkaline vegetables to maintain a healthy pH balance.
- Get plenty of oxygen through exercise and proper breathing.
- Get regular and adequate sleep.
- Maintain my weight so I don’t put additional stress on my body.
- Use supplements to ensure that my body gets all the vitamins and minerals it needs.

These simple steps can give you tremendous power and energy to take your 3D art business and the rest of your life to the next level. Health doesn’t have to be complicated- in fact, it’s actually quite simple. My most interesting discovery is that I don’t have time NOT to exercise. When I exercise at least 30 minutes a day, I need 1-2 hours less sleep.
per night. It’s my investment in getting more time and energy to do the things I need to do.

**Family**

My family is one of the most important things in my life. My career ambitions have largely been driven by being able to provide my loved ones a quality life. Providing security for my family keeps me motivated and drives me to make sound financial decisions.

A family can be a great source of joy and happiness. After a tough week at the office, there is nothing quite like a family to make all the trouble and worries seem insignificant. I can’t imagine how it would feel to have a big success or challenge at the office and be unable to come home and share it with my family. I can’t imagine how it would be not to plan trips with my family that I will treasure long into the future.

Most of the successful business people I know have a terrific family. It creates purpose. I don’t think I would be nearly as committed to long-term prosperity if I didn’t know I had a family to provide for. It’s not a burden but a privilege and an opportunity.

**Community**

I enjoy making regular contributions to my community for a variety of reasons. I really enjoy the kind of people I meet who share my commitment to giving. I feel gratitude and humility helping some of the groups that I have. It makes everything I have in my life such a tremendous gift.

I believe in the cosmic law of giving: “What you give to others will come back tenfold.” It’s truly been my experience. I don’t go around handing out $100 bills, but I do give of myself. The rewards are difficult to describe. My contributions to my community have rewarded me in my business, if nothing but meeting other business people involved with community work. In actuality it goes far beyond that but it’s something you really need to experience. Make sure you do.

**Personal Finance**

Life is not about money but many things in life do depend on it. In my early days, I thought that just investing everything back into my business was all I needed to do to create wealth. Sometimes it worked and sometimes it didn’t. Once I learned that my personal and professional finances depended on each other and that I couldn’t be disciplined with one and not the other, things got a whole lot smoother. Here is my short list of how I run my personal finances in a way that complements my businesses:

- Save a portion of everything I earn.
- Control my expenses.
- Invest my savings to put my money to work while I sleep.
- Invest my money wisely. Don’t try to generate unreasonable rates of returns on investments through high-risk ventures. Don’t lose money.
- Protect my family and assets with insurance.
Make my home an investment.
Prepare for a secure financial future for my family and my retirement.
Invest in myself to ensure my future marketability.
Take consistent and regular action towards earning money.
Be committed to wealth.

**Spirituality**

Spirituality is a deeply personal topic and every person on the planet should make their own decision, if they decide at all. Some people join a church, some commune with nature, and others are agnostic or atheist.

Having a focus on something bigger than me puts everything in perspective. Caring about other people makes my life better. Trying to give more than I get is hugely rewarding. Trying to be the best person I can be and deal with everyone with honesty and integrity has been the best personal and business strategy I employ.

I incorporate regular connection to this power greater than myself on a daily and weekly basis. By making this connection a priority in my schedule, I make better decisions, treat people more fairly and have peace of mind even in the most stressful times.

**Friendships**

I have made investments in friendships for the majority of my adult life. Although some people have come and gone, I have a core group of friends that have enriched my life for years and will for even more years to come. I make time in my week, month, and life to be with friends.

Not only do friends make a difference in my own happiness, my business life has been enriched as well, whether by a referral or advice in a crucial moment.

**Fun**

Fun really encompasses everything I do: family, business, friends, or finances. I learned a long time ago that I could accomplish endless work effortlessly while having fun. I procrastinated on things that I thought were hard or painful.

I changed my attitude and life got more enjoyable. When prioritizing my schedule, I make time for fun. My definition of fun is enjoying the outdoors. I recreate all year round: camping and fly-fishing in the summer, and skiing and snowshoeing in the winter. My mantra is “If you want to think outside of the box, you need to think outside of the box.” I recreate in the outdoors to relieve stress and gain clarity.

Whatever you find to be great fun, make time for it. It will recharge your batteries and make life worth living. I have known too many business people that waited years or even their entire life to start having fun. What a waste. Don’t do it. Your 3D art business exists to create freedom for you and those closest to you, not the other way around.
Personal Growth

I make personal growth a priority. For me, it’s about a commitment to lifelong learning about health, business, personal relationships, or anything else I’ve committed to for the long-term. I read books, go to seminars and watch educational shows, always seeking to make myself a little better, everyday, for the rest of my life.

The Power of Purpose

There is nothing as powerful in one’s life is a sense of purpose. Almost everyone is familiar with Bill Gates’s drive to put a computer on every desktop. His vision, backed by massive action and a little luck, made him the richest man in the world.

Not everyone needs to have such a broad reaching purpose, but having a sense of mission for yourself and for your 3D art business makes a significant difference. Maybe you want to have the most successful 3D art business in your metropolitan area. Maybe you want to be a leader in a particular area of 3D art, or maybe your vision is to be the best 3D artist in your region.

When setting your vision, there are two things that are important: clarity and ambition. Don’t be afraid to have big dreams, but make sure you clearly define the destination and are willing to take steady steps towards your destination over the long-term.

My purpose these days is to be a pioneer in scientific visualization. Zygote Media Group and I have created a new community on the world wide web at www.3DScience.com. If you have any interest in science, come on over and see what we’re up to.
TIME MANAGEMENT

We all have the same amount of time—unless you happen to be traveling at or near the speed of light. It’s what we do with this time that matters. Effective time management can be one of the greatest catalysts towards your prosperity.

Focus

A plan creates a focus for your 3D art business. Even the largest companies can’t do everything; neither should you. As you’re planning how to spend your time in your business, it’s useful to look at each activity within the framework of the following three questions:

Power of What

The power of what is about having a clear and concise understanding of what you must accomplish. When working for a client, it’s your job to articulate exactly what you will deliver. This creates a mutual understanding with your client and allows you to maintain profitability by avoiding scope creep. It allows you to accomplish the task more quickly because you spend all your time doing things that contribute to the end goal.

When approaching internal projects, it’s important to use the same techniques for your own business as you do for our clients, and for the same reasons. Clearly documenting what you will accomplish in your business will allow you to make the best use of your time and enhance your profitability.

Power of Why

You need to be as clear about why you’re doing something as you are what you’re doing. There’s a huge difference between working on a task or project because it’s important and critical to your business or because it’s on your task list. Within the framework of your plan and mission, ask yourself the importance of the project relative to your long-term plans. Why will you invest your time and money?

Power of How

Once you understand the “What” and “Why” of a project, it’s time to strategize and document the “How”. Brainstorm the project, write down the tasks, and determine what is necessary to complete the project. To expedite project completion, never lose sight of what you committed to accomplish. That clear vision often lets you totally eliminate steps that originally seemed necessary, thus accelerating the project’s completion. Focus on the outcome. If a task becomes obsolete, check it off with those that you’ve done. Also notice if you need to do something unexpected like deliver in a different format or size.
Many times we get so wrapped up in the details that we lose track of the big picture. As you’re planning your days and weeks, you can use the following filter to assess your tasks. Here’s how it works:

**Important but not Urgent**

The goal as you move towards getting your time under control is to spend at least 50% of your time on Important but not Urgent tasks. When you are acting instead of reacting, your productivity will shoot up- and so will your profits. Shifting your mindset to take a more proactive approach to your life requires discipline and practice. Not only will the value of importance rise, but your stress level will fall.

**Urgent and Important**

The Urgent and Important areas of time management are plagued with demand and stress. Life always contains this area of work but the more you minimize it, the more enjoyable and productive your life will be. And that’s the whole point, isn’t it?

When I initially took over as CEO of our businesses in the past, many of the activities going on were of this nature. It created unnecessary stress. We started an analysis to determine the “recurring emergencies” and then developed process to deal with the emergencies in advance. The result was more time for important matters and increased profitability. The biggest beneficiaries were our clients and our customers. Not bad, considering that the customer is the focus of every single business, including yours.

**Urgent and Not Important**

You’d be surprised how many professionals spend a good portion of their time in the Urgent and Not Important category. These are things that feel like they have to be dealt with, but a month or year from now made no difference in your business. These are the tasks that create useless stress in your life.

The best way to find these productivity sinks is to track your time in 15-minute increments for 30 days. Too extreme? Buy a watch that lets you set it to beep every hour. Notice how often it helps you to catch yourself wasting time. You’ll be surprised at how much time is wasted, especially in this particular category. Be ruthless at eliminating these time sinks from your life. You’ll be tremendously more fulfilled and you’ll have more time for things that really matter.

**Not Urgent and Not Important**

Not Urgent and Not Important is where we go when we’re stressed or when we aren’t in touch with our true purpose. These activities are designed as distractions that offer some relief from the stress, pain, boredom, or whatever is troubling us in the moment. We rearrange our desks, we watch inane movies for the nth time, we read mindless literature, and we surf the Internet. And for the moment, we escape-only to return to the same situation older and not wiser.
Where to Spend Your Time

Start tracking your time on paper, with a spreadsheet, or with a time management program like Outlook. Thirty days gives you excellent insight into where the time goes. If you haven’t used this formal process before, chances are high that you can get 10-20% of your time back, time that goes right to your bottom line.

Take a hard look at recurring activities that you can eliminate or reduce through process, automation, or delegation. Do regular reviews of your activities and, if you have employees, do the same analysis for them. Almost all people can benefit from enhancing their time management skills. Making this small investment in analysis and change will pay you back over the rest of your life.

Your Long-Term Plans

Managing daily and weekly tasks lacks value unless you do it within the structure of a long-term plan.

1 Year Plan

The last two to four weeks of December are a good time for planning your 3D art company’s future. You should update your business plan at least once a year, with a focus on your sales and profit goals. Identify training, new clients you want to bring on, new product lines to expand to, and set some deadlines. It’s amazing what you can do when you have worthwhile goals to pursue.

Quarterly Plan

Public companies use quarters as milestones to evaluate their success for the three-month period. A one-year plan is useful, but you can be more adaptive to the market by breaking your plan into smaller pieces. You can also deal with seasonality issues and conform to the quarterly nature of most of your clients.

Power Planning

Results vs. Tasks

One of the most effective time optimization strategies I use is focusing on results rather than tasks. Many people that use task lists feel bound and determined to complete all of their scheduled tasks regardless of productivity. Learn to get satisfaction from producing results by doing the minimum number of tasks. Think success with ease…

For example, when putting together a proposal or strategizing the steps needed to convert a prospect into a client, put together all the tasks and projects that you might require. Next, identify and group results that you want to create and the tasks that seem required to create them. This gets you focused on results vs. tasks. Then closely monitor your project plan and brainstorm ways of getting your results faster and with fewer steps.
Weekly Planning

I recommend doing your weekly planning on Sunday night so that you can be productive first thing Monday morning. Some weeks need more planning than others. Having the time to organize your week in the evening means you can get started the same time every Monday.

Make it a habit of capturing most things that come up so you don’t spend a lot of time putting in tasks. Although you can prioritize tasks, you should designate your “top three”. These are three projects that you commit to accomplishing every week. Then determine three tasks that will get done every day. The daily three are designed to take about 4 hours to complete in total, and you should get them done no matter what interruptions and distractions present themselves.

This is one of the most productive habits you can develop in the area of time management. You’ll get better at estimating time because you’ll have made it a habit. It will give you incredible satisfaction every day and every week because you know you have accomplished something that you have committed to accomplishing.

Daily Planning

You should do your daily planning at a regular time every day, either first thing in the morning or at the end of the day. Double-check your daily plan from your weekly planning session, evaluate relative priorities, and recommit. Stick to the four-hour allocation because this gives you time for other tasks, emergencies, phone calls, and any miscellaneous matters that arise.

The four-hour commitment to the “top three” brings some predictability to your day, dramatically reduces your stress, and gives you a feeling of accomplishment every single day. Sometimes the three tasks are all on the same project, sometimes not. If you have something that at first glance seems like one four- to five-hour task, find a way to break it into three chunks.

The exhilaration of accomplishment is energizing and you’ll continue to be more productive and be more confident in your time management skills.
MANAGING YOUR 3D ART BUSINESS

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Whether you’re a solo 3D artist or the head of mid-sized 3D art company, you need a firm grasp of project management. Managing a project benefits both you and the client because it gives you a framework for bringing a project from initial idea through its successful completion.

Lots of solo artists like to “wing it” because they’re bright and pride themselves on their ability to keep track of all issues in their heads. This may work if you’re not very busy and your projects are small. But your problems will start compounding as you take on more and larger projects that involve more people.

Project management gives you an established system to get the project done on time and on schedule while producing the specific results expected by you and your clients. Also, project management is not just for client projects. You should use it for any internal project of any noteworthy size. Remember that stress comes from having to react rather than act. The more you operate within a predictable environment, the less stress you’ll experience. Less stress equals more creativity, which equals better art, which equals happier clients, which equals more profits— for you.

The following discussion focuses on teams of people working on any given project, however the same concepts apply equally whether you are working alone or with a team of any size. Remember that one of the best ways to grow your business is to think and act big. Put in solid project management systems while you’re flying solo and you’ll have a great infrastructure in place when the time comes to bring on additional help. Bonus: Putting such a system in place gives you a much more professional appearance when dealing with clients.

This speeds up your company’s growth tremendously because everyone likes avoiding risks and dealing with professionals. If project management is the only difference between you and your closest competitor, you will win out every time. You’ll also be a much strong contender when there are more variables.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT DEFINED

Project management is the process of planning, organizing, and controlling a project from beginning to end.

Planning

Planning is the first stage of the project management process. There are three primary factors to plan in every project:

- Results
- Resources
- Schedules
Organizing

The second stage of project management is organizing. Once you have planned the results you want to achieve and the resources and schedules to achieve the results, you are ready to organize the project. There are two major components of organization:

- Roles
- Responsibilities

As the project manager, you must organize resources in terms of their roles and responsibilities to complete the desired results in the scheduled time.

Controlling

After the project is planned and organized, you must control it. Controlling a project consists of three primary processes:

- Monitor
- Correct
- Communicate

As project manager, you need to know more about the plan and its organization than any other team member. Once the project is under way, you are responsible for monitoring the results, resources, and schedules, and for making any required corrections and communications.

Six Phases of Project Management

We’ve described the three operations that define project management and the components of each operation. A well-managed project has the following six phases:

Figure 3: Six Phases of Project Management
Conception

This is the project’s idea stage. You are solving an important problem for your client and/or for your own company. Many projects never get past this stage- and for good reason. The conceptual stage of a project requires more business and financial scrutiny then any other phase. Your project must be:

- Cost-effective, profitable, and/or strategically important
- Possible. You must have the required resources and experience to complete the project.

If your project doesn’t meet these criteria, then there is no reason to continue.

Definition

If you decide to proceed, the next step is to clearly define the project in writing. If the project is for the client, this step usually occurs after you sign the contract. The definition phase boils down to the what, how, why, who, when and how much of a project:

- **What** – a clear, written, and agreed to description of the project’s final result
- **How** – written strategy of the intermediate steps you and your team will take and the resources needed in order to complete the project
- **Why** – written summary of why you’re doing the project. It is determined during the conceptual phase and expanded in the definition phase. The more great reasons you have for completing the project, the more motivated you and your team will be to complete it.
- **Who** – comprehensive list of the key people involved with the project, including clients, resources, and management.
- **When** – describes when the project will be completed and includes a complete schedule of intermediate milestones.
- **How much** – Determining the what, how, why, who, and when, gives you have all the information you need to determine the budget. Use this to confirm your estimates from the conception phase of the project management process. Make the decision to recommit to the project once you have the more detailed and accurate budgeting.

Initiation

Definition is in place, the next phase is where you and your team go from planning to doing. To get the project moving reliably, you need to coordinate and document the following:

- Confirm resource assignments.
- Confirm and coordinate schedules against other projects.
- Establish and initiate tracking systems.
- Establish and initiate communication systems. Determine how information will be disseminated to each team member and announce the project.
Define a project execution framework that addresses how decisions get made during the project and how problems get solved.

This is also the project phase where you demonstrate your leadership and motivation capabilities. As the project manager, you must rally your team around the project’s importance as well as the emotional commitment to complete it in the scheduled time. If you don’t have your team emotionally on board when you kickoff the project, it will remain a constant challenge through the execution phase of the project.

**Execution**

Now the work begins. You and your resources start performing the carefully planned work. This is where the tactical aspect of project management becomes important. You must control the project and its outcome. You must solve problems as they arise. You must immediately communicate results, changes, and other key information to your team members.

In the technology and creative industries, this phase of project management has changed significantly during the last two decades. Twenty years ago, large technology companies like IBM deemed it necessary to plan a project’s every detail and contingency. As the market became more competitive and dynamic, these methods didn’t work because some of the change that was occurring was almost impossible to predict more than 6-12 months out.

Modern project management in the technology industry (especially for lengthy projects) uses an incremental and iterative approach that evaluates additional data and revises the project plan accordingly throughout the project’s execution. You must establish and maintain the following balance for your particular practice:

- You have done enough up-front planning to have a predictable schedule and budget.
- You have enough flexibility to react to events in a way that makes the project more valuable without slipping the schedule and/or going over budget.

Control over the plan and resources is critical in the execution phase. You maintain control by monitoring, correcting, and communicating. You must demonstrate your leadership skills to solve problems and keep your team motivated and on schedule.

**Completion**

The completion phase should focus on success. If you’ve done the project for a client, you want to satisfy them with the project results. Never forget that “satisfaction” always means that you’ve delivered more than they client expected. Satisfying your client in the completion phase simply means getting them to acknowledge that you’ve delivered everything you’ve promised, plus some that you didn’t promise that they find valuable.
Completion with your client is the most important step in this phase. If your project used cost accounting, you now close accounts and prepare final billing for the client. If the project costs more than a few thousand dollars, you should meet the client or client’s team face to face if possible. Everybody likes completing a worthwhile project (including your client). This is the time to emphasize the great job you’ve done and to begin exploring any future work.

Celebrate with your team. Celebration emphasizes the positive association with the successful project completion. Flying solo? Celebrate doubly. There’s nothing worse than getting to the end of an extended project and moving right on to the next without endorsing your success. Each culture should have consistent ways to celebrate, the key being to positively reinforce completion.

**Evaluation**

In this phase you distribute, complete, and record your client satisfaction survey. Evaluate the project from both an internal and an external perspective. Review the client survey with the internal team members. This often provides them with feedback that can improve the process for the next project and/or client.

You become a successful artist by committing to constant improvement. This also applies in business. You can steadily improve your project management skills and (if applicable) your team’s capabilities by systematically reviewing each project. From the communications during the project, you should have documented major variations to the original plan, any problems that arose, and the tactical solutions.

In the evaluation phase, you and your team grade the project and examine what worked and what didn’t work. Together, determine and deploy systems to permanently solve the problems for the benefit of future projects.

**Definition and Planning**

**Statement of Work**

You must clearly describe the projected result of your 3D art project in writing. You can call this the Statement of Work, Project Charter, Product Requirements Document, or any number of other names. This document contains the parameters that bind the project including:

- Purpose
- Assumptions
- Conditions
- Deadlines
- Budget Constraints
- Objectives
- Strategic Importance
- Project Boundaries
- Related Project Relevance
- Stakeholders
Your particular 3D art business may not need each parameter defined above. Internal documentation requires different information than external documentation. From this list, you can choose and/or add the appropriate items based on your individual needs.

**Purpose**

The project’s purpose defines the business or strategic case for why you are doing the project.

**Figure 4: Project Purpose**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PURPOSE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Medical College project came from analyzing existing textbooks covering fibromyalgia. Analysis revealed that these textbooks lack description of the most recent diagnostic and treatment advances discovered since their introduction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Medical College determined that replacing the existing textbooks with new ones is the best way to present this information to medical students and interns. Surveys reveal that the students and interns would feel much more confident if working from a textbook instead of relying on their handwritten notes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Medical College has retained My 3D Graphics, Inc. to create a library of illustrations for the new book.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My 3D Graphics Inc. will work with the Medical College to finalize the artwork needed for the textbook and to agree on specifications regarding image size, detail, accuracy, and suitability for printing via offset processes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Assumptions**

The project’s initiators, whether in your company or outside (partners or clients) always have assumptions that influence the project. Research and document them as they may impact future decisions.
Figure 5: Project Assumptions

ASSUMPTIONS

The Medical College has based their decision using the following assumptions:
- Current textbooks do not cover the latest diagnostic and treatment tools for fibromyalgia.
- My 3D Graphics, Inc. can complete the artwork on time and under the allotted $20,000 budget.
- The Medical College can provide all textual input by 5/5.

Conditions

These are any required guidelines that must be adhered to in order to meet the initiators’ expectations.

Figure 6: Project Conditions

CONDITIONS

The Medical College has determined that the textbook project will adhere to the following conditions:
- The project will not proceed if it jeopardizes the scheduled release of the new textbooks.
- My 3D Graphics, Inc. must be 95% sure of the delivery date for this project to proceed with this company as the art provider.
Deadlines

The project must meet certain deadlines in order to be successful. When the statement of work contains predetermined deadlines, you must still be realistic during the project’s scheduling phase. Many times you must meet strategic dates, even at the possible expense of functionality and features.

Figure 7: Project Deadlines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEADLINES</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Project Checkpoint – Go / No Go</td>
<td>1/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scope of Work finalized</td>
<td>1/21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draft renderings</td>
<td>3/15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final Renderings</td>
<td>4/25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Budget Constraints

If the project budget is a bounding element, this fact must be documented. As the project is planned, features may be dropped and/or the schedule extended to contain costs.

Figure 8: Project Budget Constraints

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BUDGET CONSTRAINTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The total project cost cannot exceed $40,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Objectives

The objectives are probably the most critical component of the Statement of Work. They describe the results, parameters, and target values to be achieved.

Figure 9: Project Objectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OBJECTIONE DEFINITION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Result</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create a new medical instruction textbook that includes the latest diagnostic and treatment methods for fibromyalgia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Strategic Importance**

You may sometimes have strategic reasons for doing a project or that support the decision to do a project. These can vary from winning a key client, supporting your own company’s mission, keeping a key client satisfied, and so on.

**Figure 10: Project Strategic Importance**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The project is consistent with the overall My3D Company mission and strategic initiatives including:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Supports mission to become a marketing leader in scientific visualization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Supports mission to expand library through selected biomedical service work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Supports mission to work with world-class medical companies and institutions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Project Boundaries**

Project boundaries limit the project to whatever dimensions make sense given fees, goals, and resources. This means defining a start and finish, a scope limit, and other important parameters including what the project will not do. This helps set clear expectations in advance and provides the initial protection from “scope creep.”

**Figure 11: Project Boundaries**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROJECT BOUNDARIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Medical College has identified the following project boundaries:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The textbook will not cover any pathology beyond updated diagnosis and treatment of fibromyalgia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The artwork will be sufficient to illustrate the written material without providing any extra data not supported by the text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The Medical College will provide three resources for peer review.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Related Project Relevance

Most projects are related to other part, present, and future projects in the client’s company. To enhance communication and ensure satisfaction, identify any of these projects and why they might be relevant to your current project.

**Figure 12: Related Project Relevance**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RELATED PROJECT RELEVANCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Project</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress effects on adrenaline production and bloodstream levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Update Endocrinology 101 textbook</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Stakeholders

The project stakeholders are the people involved with the 3D art project. These include authors, editors, managers, customers, champions, supporters, and functional team members. Identify the stakeholders up front in order to have the big picture for resources, decision processes, and communications.

As you construct your stakeholders list, create a matrix chart for use throughout the project. We use something like this:

**Figure 13: Project Stakeholders**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STAKEHOLDERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internal</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Decision Maker</th>
<th>Contact Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tom S.</td>
<td>Clinical Researcher</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>999.555.1234x100 <a href="mailto:toms@ourcompany.com">toms@ourcompany.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kelly M.</td>
<td>Professor of Endocrinology</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>999.555.1234x101 <a href="mailto:toms@ourcompany.com">toms@ourcompany.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John D.</td>
<td>Dean of Instruction</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>999.555.1234x102 <a href="mailto:toms@ourcompany.com">toms@ourcompany.com</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Work Breakdown Structure**

Once you have a detailed description of the results that need to be accomplished, you need to break down all the results and objectives into the work required to produce those results. In other words, you should break the project down into major steps, then continue breaking each of those steps down and so on until you have everything in “bite-size” pieces.

Breaking down activities in a way that you can track requires a branching hierarchy that contains increasing levels of project detail as you examine each branch.

**Project Hierarchy Levels**

Begin by identifying the major elements required for successfully completing the project. Do this before delving into the project details. You will use these sections when reporting your progress to your client. This means that you must define each section so that you and your client agree on how you understand it and how to measure progress. You also need to describe completion in measurable terms, so that both parties absolutely agree on what the finished 3D art project will look like.

Before you start breaking down each major activity, review the top hierarchy components with key stakeholders. Make sure they agree that the modules you have defined indeed constitute the major project sections and confirm this with each party involved with the project.
Task Details

There are a number of elements to define as you create your 3D art project’s detailed activities. Some of the important identifiers are:

- Description
- Inputs
- Outputs
- Roles
- Responsibilities
- Duration
- Resources required
- Immediate predecessors
- Immediate successors
- Unknowns

How much detail is enough? Every 3D art project and client is different when it comes to how far to break down a project. Here are some general guidelines to use for your project management reports:

- Is the activity clearly defined enough to be understood by a third party?
- Can you accurately estimate resources for each activity?
- Can you accurately estimate span times for each activity?
- Will the activity take a person week or less to complete?

Risk Identification

Risks are directly related to the project’s unknowns and variables. Keep your eye out for these kinds of risks and determine a strategy for making the unknowns known and the variables more predictable. Document these risk assessments and do your best to determine scenarios associated with each risk.

For 3D art, you may have to depend on items such as other content (text, Web site, products, etc.) still in development. The risks here include your not getting final information in time to finish the artwork and/or creating artwork based on draft information or other input that must later be corrected or updated.

Checkpoint

It may make sense to review your work breakdown structure with key members of your audience before moving to the next step. This helps flesh out any ambiguities and misunderstandings with activity descriptions, anticipated durations, and required resources before you start the scheduling process.
The Project Schedule

Now that you have a breakdown of the work, it’s time to schedule the project. By now, you should have comprehensive descriptions for each of the detailed activities. You know the inputs and outputs as well as your team’s roles and responsibilities regarding the project.

When developing a project schedule, you must consider the following parameters:

- Activity duration
- Activity sequence
- Project milestones or events
- Activity span time
- Activity predecessors
- External activities and events
- Critical paths

Steps to Building a Schedule

Project management software makes building a schedule straightforward:

1. Establish and describe the scheduling assumptions.
   a. Determine if there is an inflexible delivery date.
   b. Determine the resources available and the associated variability (Overtime, weekends, or 40 hour weeks).
   c. Will training be needed?
   d. Will additional resources need to be hired?
   e. Identify all task issues external to your project that put your project at risk (such as other content providers).
   f. Are there scheduling risks such as permits, approvals, etc?
2. Determine project objectives and constraints.
3. Input all tasks into the project management program.
4. Identify activity predecessors and critical paths.
5. Determine calendar dates for intermediate and final milestones.
6. Assign resources.
7. Adjust resource allocations to normalize workloads and to optimize the schedule. In other words, is everyone on this project doing their fair share? Will reallocating project tasks speed up the project’s completion date?

Resource Issues

When building a schedule, carefully evaluate the parameters associated with your resources because these are the biggest variables in any project schedule. Carefully consider the following aspects of your resources:

- Skills inventory
- Productivity levels
- Efficiency levels
- Other project commitments (such as one of the artists on your team working on more than one project at once)
- Priority of other project commitments
Past historical performance (can you count on each particular team member?)
Any scheduled or potential unscheduled leave of absence (maternity, vacation, and so on)

Make sure you have all of the pertinent facts in front of you before you start assigning responsibilities to resources. Talk with functional managers (if any) to make sure you have all the resources you need.

**Estimating Time**

Accurate time estimates are more art than science. Your accuracy largely depends on your experience with the specific people and tasks at hand.

In 1958, the US military devised PERT (Program Evaluation and Review Technique) to coordinate the activities of 11,000 contractors involved with the Polaris missile program. Use this method when you need accuracy (which should be all the time). Assign each task three durations:

A = an optimistic estimate
B = a typical and likely estimate
C = an pessimistic estimate

Then estimate completion time (ET) as follows:

\[
ET = \frac{(A + 4B + C)}{6}
\]

Scheduling programs like Microsoft Project allow simple entry of optimistic, typical, and pessimistic estimates and let you vary the weighting parameters. Experiment with this until you get a system that reliably predicts your schedules.
Visual Representation of the Project

**Network Diagrams**

Network diagrams are the project roadmap. Most project management applications automatically generate them. Here is an example.

**Figure 14: Network Diagram Example**
Gantt Charts

Modern project management recognizes Gantt charts as the most useful and common charting device. The Gantt chart shows each task’s beginning, duration, and ending as well as visually describing the interdependent relationships between each of the tasks. You can view this chart for different levels of detail including daily, weekly, and monthly. This example is not for the 3D art industry, however a Gantt chart is a Gantt chart.

Figure 15: Gantt Chart Example
Resource Requirements

Look at all resource requirements, human and not. If not properly scheduled, equipment, supplies, and technology can knock a project off track. Make sure that all of your non-human resources are planned and accounted for with budget allocations and compliance to the schedule.

Figure 16: Resource Requirements Worksheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Required Resources</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Cost</th>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>Responsible</th>
<th>Done?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equipment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials &amp; Supplies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Web site Architecture</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Organizational Structure

The most profound change that has occurred in modern day business is the advent of matrix management. For 3D artists whose businesses depend on successfully managing a steady stream of concurrent projects, matrix management provides the most optimal method of managing projects.

Figure 17: Matrix Management Chart

There are management structures that are both project-centric and department-centric. Team members may report to more than one manager, yet the functional managers have the primary supervisory responsibilities. This gives project managers a great deal of authority over the team members, yet still allows line managers to guide and grow their functional organizations.

Matrix management gives you these advantages:

- Quick deployment infrastructure for new projects
- More authority for project managers than in traditional functional management infrastructures
Project management environment complemented by strong functional departments
Specialized resources can contribute to multiple projects
Balanced approach with line managers negotiating and planning with project managers
Heightened staff development opportunities through exposure to multiple projects and co-workers
More ownership of individual projects than functional management environment
More flexible staffing as the functional areas operate in the resource leveled project manager environment

The disadvantages are:

There is a minimum of two managers per team member
There are challenges managing the time demands of team members
Difficult to terminate weak team members because of the variable structure
More difficult to promote strong team members because of the multiple focus and management infrastructure

Selecting the Team

When selecting the team for your 3D art projects, make or update an up-to-date skills inventory for the superset of team members available for project assignments. This allows you to evaluate both the skill set and resources available for your project as well as the interest level of potential team members. Sometimes you can negotiate for a resource who, while not an expert in a needed area, does have a high interest and who will go the extra mile to extend their skills.
Skills Inventory

A skills inventory helps you determine the best team members for the job in terms of both their skills and interests. You’ll usually have better results when people are enthusiastic about the task at hand. Keep your skills inventory current for all employees and contractors who participate in your projects. This allows you to move quickly in planning and allocating resources for any 3D art project.

Figure 18: Project Skills Inventory

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SKILLS INVENTORY</th>
<th>Tom</th>
<th>Kelly</th>
<th>John</th>
<th>Jill</th>
<th>Ronnie</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Character rigging</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texture mapping</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modeling</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animation</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-production</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*S = Skills, I = Interest (Rated 1-5)*
Roles & Responsibilities

Figure 19: Project Roles & Responsibilities

Getting the project to flow smoothly requires clearly defining your team members’ roles and responsibilities (or your own, relative to the client, if you’re a one-person shop). Each team member’s role should be defined in terms of authority, responsibility, and accountability. Responsibility without authority will fail. Accountability without responsibility will fail. Each team member must understand the parameters that dictate their involvement.

Final Plan Approval

The final plan approval is a formal step that confirms that the major stakeholders are in agreement before moving forward. There is nothing worse than gathering your team, getting them excited about being involved and kicking off the project, only to have a misunderstanding that stalls the project before it even starts. This is especially true of “soft” projects such as 3D art where measures such as quality and suitability can be very subjective.

Plan Review

The plan review is a major milestone for the project manager and the team. This is the time when you double check schedules, resource allocations, deliverable dates, and virtually every aspect of the project. Make sure that all major items are accurate before you present to the stakeholders group to get the green light to proceed. The last thing you want is to make a presentation to a client only to discover that you’ve misjudged an important part of the project or have missed a critical project assumption. Some things you’ll want to review include:

- Budget totals
- Resource requirements, availability, and levels
- Milestone accuracy and achievability
- Critical paths. Are they optimized and logical?
- Project risks addressed and minimized
- Stakeholder commitment to the project
Stakeholders Presentation

Send the project plan and schedules to the key decision makers before you schedule an approval meeting. Give them adequate time to review the plan before you meet to formally approve the project. Encourage them to contact you immediately with any questions, mistakes, or anything else that could delay getting your project approved.

Approval almost always requires a formal presentation of the plan, even for internal projects. This means a slideshow presentation with written support documentation. The plan binder should have tabs and the documentation should be professionally formatted. For 3D art, include relevant samples so you can discuss style, colors, level of detail, etc.

You’ll want to cover project assumptions, key milestones, deliverables, and the statement of work all at a high (executive summary) level. Be sure to review the presentation with internal team members (if any) before delivering documentation and the presentation. It could save you some costly embarrassment- or worse. Whether presenting to a client or for an internal team, you need to be prepared to justify and defend your plan.

If your project is not approved, you’ll need to go back and rework the plan. If there is more than a 10% revision, you’ll want to perform the plan review process with the same diligence as the first time through. If your project disapproval was because of inadequate or faulty planning, you don’t want to chance any problems the second time you present. With a client, this almost certainly guarantees losing the project.

If this is a client presentation and you’ve provided plan documentation prior to the meeting, be prepared to get written authorization to proceed. This protects you from liabilities and formally begins the execution phase of the project. As a 3D artist in business, you should have a contract ready. You should also have standard contracts for use with your clients.

Now the Work Begins

Congratulations. Your project has been approved and you’re ready to begin creating some great 3D art for your client that has every chance of being profitable. Your confidence should be high if you’ve planned properly and (if applicable) have the right team in place. The execution phase of the project should run like a train on tracks. It is moving forward and can’t turn on a dime.

There execution phase has three stages: launch, monitor, and control and communication. Getting the team onboard, excited, and clear about the responsibilities for the project makes your launch go more smoothly and creates a burst of momentum that carries you through to completion. Once the team is working on tasks, the monitor and control phase is just that. You need to work closely with your team, always looking ahead like a river guide down a series of rapids.
The third aspect of the project is communication. Communication is critical for every aspect of the project but becomes more crucial during the execution phase. This is when you have the most resources involved and there are deadlines that have been committed to. If the project gets off track during this phase, the problems and costs will be greatly magnified.

**Project Launch**

You’ve reviewed all the project parameters prior to your project approval and should be clear about the project details by now. Now your job is to bring your team together and communicate the project plan to them so that they are equally clear about their responsibilities.

**Establishing Leadership**

Your leadership (or lack thereof) determines the success or failure of the project. If great leaders can compel their troops to risk their lives in battle, they can certainly inspire teams to take on a 3D art project. Contrary to popular belief, leaders are not born. They are made. You can develop yourself into a great leader by displaying the characteristics of leadership:

- Courage
- Self-control
- Balancing clear project vision with mastery of detail
- A great listener
- Be accessible and available
- Fairness
- Able to make good decisions quickly
- Able to know when other stakeholders should make the decisions
- Know how to delegate and empower
- Be the hardest working member of the team
- Have a personality that inspires and creates trust
- Have a spirit of cooperation
- Know one’s limitations
- Be willing to assume full responsibility
- Be able to articulate the plan and inspire the teams commitment to successful completion of the plan

It might help to regularly visualize yourself leading your team with these characteristics. A great leader can motivate a team to produce extraordinary results. This means fulfilled employees who deliver projects ahead of time and under budget.

**Team Development**

A team is a group of people gathered together to perform work or an activity. A high-performance team is a group of people that:

- Have comfortable and empowering relationships with their fellow team members and a feeling of harmony as a group.
- Know why they were selected to be part of the team.
- Clearly understand the goals of the work or activity they are performing and value those goals.
Believe that the group can accomplish much more than the sum of its parts.
Believe they benefit as individuals, as a team, and as a company from the successful completion of the project.
Know their roles, responsibilities, and authority, and how they will contribute to accomplishing the goals.
Are clear on how they will function individually and collectively to accomplish the goals.
Appreciate regular and clear communication in order to maximize the efficiency of the team.

Use these guidelines to create your high-performance team and the associated spirit and more. Your team benefits by sensing that successfully completing the project will benefit the company, the team, and each individual member. Show them the new skills and valuable experience they will gain as a result of participating in the project.

**Developing Project Process**

Your team will be much more effective if they understand the process that guides the project. Make sure each team member and stakeholder understands the following aspects of the project process:

- How communication occurs with all stakeholders
- How decisions are made
- What administrative tools are utilized
- When reports are issued
- How conflicts are resolved
- How success is measured
- Who receives reports and communications
- Format(s) of communications
- Performance expectations
- When and how meetings will occur

**Establish Communication Standards**

The launch phase establishes the communications standards and protocols. This includes the kinds of reports that will be generated and distributed, how problems will be reported, how to get assistance, how to keep stakeholders informed of project status, and how to communicate to the client.

The more you document these communications processes in writing and evolve them over numerous projects at your company, the more effective they will become. We use flowcharts to describe the communication channels utilized during a project. You’ll surely develop your own system but the key is to develop a system.

**Tracking Systems**

Tracking systems work in concert with the communication process. They are like the gauges on an automobile that allow you to track things like budgets, resource utilization, and task/milestone completion. The most effective tracking systems are based on measurable quantities rather than vague metrics. This may be difficult...
to accomplish when dealing with 3D art, but you should do your best to establish as many firm metrics as possible.

**Project Kickoff**

The project kickoff should be a celebration if you’ve done the work of developing your team. It’s invaluable to create a feeling of excitement and passion at these kickoff meetings, especially for long-term projects. This is the time to present the project vision and how it benefits everyone involved.

Every company is different. You’ll establish your own cultural standard for this event. Whether you serve pastries and coffee or pizza and beer, it’s important that this be more party than meeting. Make it fun. Remember, enthusiasm is contagious.

**Your First Team Meeting**

First project team meetings, like any first meeting, set the tone for future working relationships. First impressions are significant (if not everything). Set the tone in this meeting as the team members will be especially sensitive to form and function- especially if you have new team members that have not worked with you before.

Pay close attention to establishing meeting standards such as:

- Agendas delivered to team members before the meeting
- Starting and ending on time
- A forum of open communication
- Generally one person speaking at a time
- Staying on topic and agenda
- Utilization of a time keeper
- Notes taken and distributed to the team
- Action items recorded and monitored

The first team meeting is a great opportunity to establish your leadership. Set an example, take charge, and exude confidence.

**Monitor and Control**

An airplane traveling from New York to London is off course most of the time. Fortunately, there are monitors and controls in place that constantly make the corrections that enable the airplane to consistently reach its destination instead of landing off the coast of Ireland.

The same principle holds true with project management during the execution phase. If you’ve done the proper planning- and if you follow the plan- you will be heading in approximately the right direction at approximately the right speed. The human factor will always get you off course or behind schedule. Your job as project manager is to carefully monitor and control your project regularly (if not every day). The more immediate the corrective action, the less resources squandered.
Your Dashboard

As project manager, you should constantly monitor the status of your project’s key metrics. These metrics are like gauges on a dashboard. By closely monitoring the following elements, you can catch issues before they become major problems:

- The attitude and level of cooperation of your team.
- The current expenditures relative to budgeted expenditures.
- The current schedule relative to projected schedule.
- The quality of the work being performed relative to expected standards.
- The quantity of work performed relative to the projected performance.
- The confidence level of the team and stakeholders.
- The continued support of stakeholders for the project.

Take this pulse daily, especially for bigger projects.

Figure 20: Project Management Monitor and Control Gauges
Monitoring the Budget

The most critical factor in a managed project is usually the financial budget. Cost overruns can cause panic and over reactions not to mention tarnish the project manager’s (read: your) reputation. Setting up control parameters in the beginning allows you to spot problems early and correct them quickly.

You’ll do best by setting up cost control procedures that your team members can understand. Some general guidelines are:

- Keep a project expenditures file that includes copies of any contracts, invoices, or purchase orders used in your project.
- Keep a current total of all expenses to compare to projected expenditures.
- Make sure that you approve any expenditure for your project so that you can confirm the necessary budget for the expense.
- Include a section in the status report for all project expenditures.
- Ensure that each team member is clear on projected hours for their assigned tasks.
- Create a required approval process for any hours that exceed these estimates.
- Use budget tracking charts to continually monitor actual vs. budgeted expenses.
- Set appropriate signing limits for team members and managers that control their purchase limits for project approved expenditures.
- Establish control processes with your purchasing department or controller to reject expenditures that exceed budgets.

On project closure, reward team members or groups for not exceeding their budgets. Create a positive association that will motivate them on the next project.

Remember that every cent you spend above your allotted budget eats into your profits. And since you measure your 3D art business’s success by its profits...

Monitoring the Schedule

Not only do you want to deliver on or under budget, you also want to meet your schedule. Schedule variations need immediate attention both to get back on track and to determine the underlying problem(s) causing the overrun. Scheduling delays stem from deeper problems with the project, problems that you discover and correct quickly.

Use these guidelines to help you monitor schedules and keep them on track:

- Start and end dates for all assigned tasks.
- Timesheets for each team member’s status of activities and events.
Work effort expended relative to scheduled.
The timely reporting of data from team members. Provide positive reinforcement to those team members that deliver timesheet data on time.
Team member ideas and suggestions to expedite schedule or save money.
Problematic activities based on historical performance.
Critical path activities. These have a greater effect on the schedule if delayed.
Any outside vendor activities. Monitor these more closely than internal activities and make corrections more swiftly.
High-risk activities.

Remember that every moment you spend beyond the allotted schedule eats into time that you spend working on other projects, marketing, etc. This eats away your profits. And since you measure your success by profits...

**Project Status Reports**

Status reports are the primary written communication of your project’s status and are the primary monitoring tool for the organization. A good status report should communicate:

- The progress that has happened since the last report.
- The problems that have occurred.
- Submitted and approved change orders.
- The corrective actions and responses taken.
- Any outstanding achievements by team members.
- Project risks and resolutions
- Focus of the project team for the next period.

You need a systematic approach of who receives status reports when. Provide reports to those stakeholders that show a want and need for a report as well as those whom you believe need one.

Remember that not knowing your project’s status at all times means that problems might escalate before you detect them and thus require more corrective action that can impact time and/or budget. Since both consequences eat into your profits and since you measure your success by profits...

**Project Review Meetings**

Meetings are a critical control vehicle for project management. They serve as both an essential communication device to keep team members and stakeholders informed of the state of the project and as a motivation platform to keep people enthusiastic about the project vision.

Maximize project review meetings by using the following guidelines:

- Get input from team members to determine agenda.
Distribute agendas and progress reports prior to the meeting.
Resolve risks or assign to another meeting.
Review schedule and budget adherence.
Review any change orders.
Start and end on time.
A forum of open communication.
Generally one person speaking at a time.
Staying on topic and agenda.
Utilization of a time keeper.
Notes taken and distributed to the team.
Action items recorded and monitored.

How you manage your meeting sets an example for how your team conducts themselves during the project. The better your team conducts itself, the more likely it is that your project will finish on time and on budget. You already know the importance of profits.

**Corrective Response**

When a project goes over budget, behind schedule, or below quality, you must take quick corrective action to get the project back on track. Here is a list of strategies to apply when a project fails to meet performance targets:

- Add more people.
- Work overtime.
- Eliminate features.
- Increase productivity.
- Use outside resources.
- Eliminate scope creep.
- Improve your communications with your team and stakeholders.
- Reevaluate the schedule.
- Energize and recommit team and stakeholders.

The sooner you spot and respond to problems, the less your profits will erode.

**Change Orders and Control**

Properly handling change orders is critical to your schedule, budget, and profitability. Your must clearly communicate the change order process to the client before the project to avoid any surprises. You should have a formal process in place that requires written approvals on both sides. This prevents misunderstandings, budget overruns, schedule slips, and potential litigation. This flowchart describes a typical change order process:
Figure 21: Project Change Order Flowchart

Use these guidelines for handling change orders:

- Clearly document the change order and review with requestor.
- Evaluate impact on baseline, schedule, and budget.
- Brainstorm alternatives and present them to clients, team members, and stakeholders.
- Determine other aspects of the project that the change order will affect. Measure and document the impact.
- Use good judgment when balancing flexibility with adherence to the original project plan.
- Involve key stakeholders in changes to the project plan.
- Recognize the total cost associated with the change.
- Handle requests from internal team members with the same formal process as a client. Both types of requests affect the schedule, budget, and ultimately profits.
Risk Management

Risk management is a complex yet vital part of successful project management. You should be aware of the common risks of projects, identify potential risks in your projects, and then determine risk management strategies that reduce your risk and exposure.

Common Risks

There are common risks associated with all projects. Review each category for your project and monitor the associated risks. Assign probabilities and evaluate the relative consequences.

- Budgets
- Schedules
- People
- Clients could prove unpredictable
- Key assumption changes
- Project size could exceed team’s ability
- Project teams are fragmented across too many projects.
- Project could lose support by key stakeholders.
- External resources
- Inadequate or hurried planning
- Technology unknowns
- Acts of God

Identifying Risks

You must continually evaluate your project through the common risk filters outlined above when you are monitoring the project. Consider your experience and historical performance of your company and team members. Stay sensitive to little red flags and quickly assess potential risks as they arise.

Risk Management Strategies

Think of risk management as the tactical planning side of project management. This is important in both the planning and execution stages. Risk management is a real-time task that is constantly changing in the middle of executing the project. You’ll want to pragmatically review the project and:

- Identify the risks.
- Determine the probability of each risk occurring.
- Determine the consequences should an identified risk occur.
- Develop a contingency plan.
- Minimize the risks (such as with insurance, avoiding, monitoring, and rewarding additional effort).
Project End Game

Project Closure

Closing out a project entails many details. You may feel tempted to rush this phase once the project is complete. Big mistake. Closure consists of completing a myriad of details. Follow this simple flowchart through the eight steps of project closure:

![Figure 22: Project Closure Flowchart]

Develop and Complete a Final Checklist

Create a written checklist and make sure it’s complete before you proceed. You must gain final approval from stakeholders and especially clients before you give your team any indication that the project is complete. False endings can do more harm than false starts. Here are some items that you’ll want to think about as you construct your final checklist:

- Obtain final approvals both from team members and stakeholders.
- Finalize contracts with external vendors.
- Acknowledge team members.
- Document team member performance and submit to functional managers.
- Prepare final project documentation.
- Finalize inventory of equipment and materials used in project.
- Conduct final meeting.
- Finalize accounting issues and close out project accounts.
- Celebrate project completion.
- Assist staff transition to new assignments.
- Prepare final reports.
Get Final Approvals from Stakeholders

Assuming you’ve done your job in the planning stage, project completion should be very tangible and measurable. A formal presentation is required when you are delivering to clients or other stakeholders. Your presentation should walk them step-by-step through each measurable objective demonstrating its completeness and adherence to the Statement of Work. Be sure to get all approvals from stakeholders in writing. This is critical for successfully closing out any project. Skipping this step could have drastic repercussions.

For example, what if you create a piece of 3D art and turn it in only to have your client tell you they want changes that weren’t part of the original project? Having final approval in writing gives you the leverage you need to prove that you finished the last project and that the latest changes are a whole new project. Without that piece of paper, you could be stuck making changes to something you thought was finished, and losing profits in the meantime. You know how critical profits are to your 3D art business—don’t you?

Conclude External Issues

If you’ve used external resources for personnel, equipment, or materials, have the final invoices prepared and final approvals signed. Coordinate with the accounting department to ensure completion and accounting for all external expenses.

Reassign Staff

You should be planning redeployment of team members in advance. You should consciously decide how to transition your team members so that you don’t squander this valuable resource.

Be sure and acknowledge every team member’s efforts and articulate their contribution to the project. Outline the importance of the project and how its success has contributed to your company accomplishing its goals. There’s an important psychological boost that comes from being tired for something worthy.

If you’re at the end of a long and difficult project, planning time off that is not disruptive to your organization can reenergize your team in a way that doesn’t affect subsequent projects. You should coordinate leaves and long weekends in advance so that the next project can start on time and benefit from a rested team.

Administrative Issues

Depending on the size of your organization, you need to finalize some administration issues. Some things to consider are:

- Document team members’ performance and submit to functional managers.
- Prepare final project documentation.
- Finalize inventory of equipment and materials used in project.
- Finalize accounting issues and close out project accounts.
Prepare final reports.

Prepare Closure Report

The final project report is probably the most important document of the entire process but is often ignored. If the project is for a client, this is a tremendous tool for enhancing the project’s perceived and actual value. Here are some guidelines for the final report. You decide which will be used internally and which for external use:

- Executive summary of project
- Major objectives completed
- Over-delivery issues such as time, budget, features, etc. (Exceeding client’s expectations)
- Final accounting (budgeted vs. actual analysis)
- Final objective analysis (projected vs. achieved)
- Team evaluation and identification of outstanding performance
- Any outstanding or deferred issues
- Identification of retained intellectual property (reusable art and creative assets, methods, patents, etc.)
- Recommendations for future project (If the project is part of a sequence of projects)
- Organization recommendations (If problems occurred as a result of problems with the organizationally)
- Recommendations for additional projects, extensions, and other client based opportunities (internal component)

Hold Final Meeting

The final meeting should include team members and stakeholders and may span more than one meeting. Present the final report findings, answer any questions, and bring closure to the project.

Celebrate Project Completion

Celebrating the project’s completion is both mandatory and separate from the final product meeting. This is an essential step and is very symbolic. Whether it’s a “beer and pizza” party or a trip to Hawaii, it’s important to acknowledge the great work done by your team members and to create a positive association with the successful completion of the project and the relationships built during the process. Have fun.

Post-Project Analysis

Post-Mortem Analysis

Always strive to improve yourself and your company. Therefore, you should always strive to benefit from the lessons learned from each project, both what worked and what didn’t. Use these lessons when planning subsequent projects to reduce risk, make the project schedules and budgets more predictable, and even reduce the overall stress of the new project.

As project manager, you should do the first round of analysis. Much of this is already in your final report. Go beyond that and do some soul-
searching. This is not about criticizing yourself; it’s about your commitment for constant improvement. Spend as much time identifying the aspects of the project that really worked, such as team members, new methods, and processes.

Identify at least one achievement and one area of improvement for each team member and external resource. Use these to create a tension with these resources for the next project between what they’ll avoid and what they’ll strive to do more of. Done correctly, this motivates and directs future performance; team members will perceive and rise to the challenge. Done badly, this will backfire and cause all kinds of problems. Make sure you do this in a positive way with all suggestions for improvement made in a spirit of respect, admiration, thanks for valuable contributions, and a challenge to outdo already excellent work.

Meet with your team and present your findings and conclusions. Get feedback from the group and acknowledge everyone for their efforts and the opportunity to work with them as the project manager.

**Client Satisfaction Survey**

For external project, get an evaluation from your client. Use the client satisfaction survey in the marketing section of this book. If the scope of the project dictates, have a post-mortem meeting with your client as you present the final report. Ask for candid feedback and what could have been done better. Handling this phase properly and being prepared to discuss additional projects and extensions to the current project could result immediately in more work.

Don’t be afraid to ask for more work and/or for referrals! You have just delivered some great 3D art and gotten the client’s signoff. You displayed exemplary project management, solved problems, sought constructive tips for improvement, and delivered more than the client wanted. This makes you an extremely rare breed of 3D artist, one who truly takes their business seriously. You have proven that you are a professional, an expert, someone to be reckoned with. If all of the above is true (and only if it’s true), then your client will be ecstatic to work with you again and to refer more business to you. If not, well, back to the drawing board- literally.

Why does this work so well? Because most people and businesses are all about themselves. If you read and follow all of the advice in this book, you will be focusing on your customers and on delivering the absolute best 3D art you know how to produce. That places you in a class almost by yourself compared to businesses in general and virtually alone compared to other 3D artists.
PEOPLE MANAGEMENT

The average employee in small- to mid-sized businesses performs their job at less than 60% of capacity. Given margins are 5-10%, you can either increase sales by 100% or increase your employee’s productivity by 10-15% to reach the same level of profitability. Which task is easier? The one with the smaller number.

Just like project management, you need a firm grasp of people management. Solo 3D artist? Leading a graphics company with several employees/contractors? Effective people management begins with managing yourself effectively.

As before, this chapter focuses on teams of people, however the same concepts apply equally well whether you work alone or with others. Keep in mind that one of the best ways to grow your business is to think and act big. Put in solid people management systems while you’re flying solo and you’ll have a great infrastructure in place when the time comes to bring on additional help. Here again, putting an effective people management system in place gives you a much more professional appearance when dealing with clients. Again, this can speed up your company’s growth tremendously because everyone likes dealing with professionals. If effective people management is the only difference between you and your closest competitor, you will win out every time. You’ll also be a much stronger contender when more variables come into play (such as project management, which we discussed in the previous chapter).

WHAT A MANAGER DOES

When attempting to accomplish a goal, you normally set the goal, plan how you will accomplish it, take the necessary actions, evaluate what’s working and what’s not, and continually adjust your course until you’ve accomplished the goal. Managing people is accomplishing goals with others (starting with yourself) and follows the same pattern.

Establish Goals

Establishing goals is the first step in managing people. These goals are usually driven by the company’s mission, objectives, and goals. The employee goals should be components of the larger goals and should directly contribute to accomplishing those overall goals. Written goals are many times more effective than verbal goals.

Plan

Successfully completing any goal requires a realistic plan. Your people may or may not participate in the planning but they must believe in the plan. This belief provides the motivation to accomplish the objectives described in the plan. Written plans are many times more effective than verbal plans.
Organize
Once you have worthwhile goals backed up with a realistic plan, you need to organize your people to execute the plan. Your job is to coordinate the resources and timelines in order to accomplish the plan.

Lead
You must be a leader in order for your people to follow you. The key to leadership is to lead. The project management section of this book discusses many aspects of leadership. The most important ones are to lead by example and be a powerful, positive force.

Evaluate
While your people are executing the plan, you must evaluate, observe, and follow-up. You are the glue that holds your team together. You must be the focal point for accountability, responsibility, and authority.

Control
You must exert control when your team wanders off course. A powerful manager’s control is not perceived as control at all. It’s a delicate balance between letting your people make mistakes and being the seasoned coach who is looking ahead for the pitfalls.

Achieving Results
Fun
This is first for a reason. You will achieve dramatically better results if your company is a fun place to work. How can you make your 3D art company fun to work in?

- **Celebrate** – Celebrate accomplishment of tasks, goals, Fridays, birthdays, and holidays. Celebrate a new client win or a project completion.
- **Enthusiasm** – Enthusiasm is contagious. Be the most enthusiastic person you know. Your people will follow your lead and you will help create a fun environment.
- **Company Outings** – Try and schedule an event at least once a quarter, but an afternoon event once a month will do wonders. Schedule a fun event for Friday around 3:00PM. You don’t lose much time because it’s the end of the week, but it goes a long ways to building teams and energizing your people.
- **Work Environment** – Make the place a fun environment from what you put on the walls to the individuality around the desks and cubicles.
Power

Power is defined as the ability to influence others in an effort to achieve a goal. Managers derive their power from their position. Leaders derive their power from their followers. There are a number of power factors in the work environment that you can use to achieve results, including:

- **Power of position** – As a manager, you have unstated power of authority because of your job title or position. You have employees that have power based on the critical nature of their positions, that is, key employees. Leverage this power in a positive way to get things done.

- **Power of relationship** – The power of relationship can work in many ways: the power of your advisors, management team, project teams, and so on. Determine what gives you access to the power of these groups and exploit it for the good of the organization.

- **Power of knowledge** – Knowledge is only potential power. By combining knowledge with action, you become a powerful and respected leader. By constantly expanding the knowledge of your employees, your organization increases its power.

- **Power of self** – You and your employees should constantly expand the use of personal power. This is the ability to produce consistent action towards a goal. Make yourself an example of this power and encourage it with your people.

- **Power of reward** – Reward can be a powerful tool for achieving results. See the section below.

Delegation

Delegation is an essential part of managing people. Here are the ten steps to effective delegation:

1. Clearly define the task or project.
2. Communicate deadlines.
3. Provide context and relevancy for the task or project.
4. Give guidelines but don’t micromanage.
5. Provide measurable and attainable standards.
6. Grant responsibility, authority and accountability.
7. Provide necessary resources and support.
8. Get commitment from the employee.
9. Provide feedback during the process.
10. Reward and recognize accomplishment.

Triad of Power

The triad of power is how managers get things done. You empower your employees by delegating responsibility, accountability, and authority to accomplish a task.

- **Responsibility** – There’s no room for blaming success or failure on someone else. Your employees need clear responsibility for their assigned tasks.
Accountability – Employees need to understand that they are accountable for their assigned tasks. Their achievements will be monitored, measured, and sometimes recorded.

Authority – You have delegated your authority to the employee. They are empowered and have the authority to complete the assigned task.

S.M.A.R.T. Goals

Use S.M.A.R.T. goals in your organization to make things happen:

- Specific - Your goals should be specific in terms of who, what, when, how, and why.
- Measurable and Meaningful – Make your goals measurable and meaningful. Writing the goals down substantially increases their measurability. Goals should be meaningful in that they contribute to the company’s mission, other goals, and success.
- Appropriate – Set goals that are appropriate for the individual relative to their experience, responsibilities, and potential.
- Realistic – The goals need to be realistic. All resources that are required to accomplish the goal must be available (sufficient abilities, time, equipment, budget, and so on).
- Time-Oriented – A goal without a deadline is a dream. Don’t be a dreamer.
EMPLOYEE HUMAN NEEDS

As a leader and manager of people, you must also pay attention to how you and the company are taking care of people from the perspective of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs. Almost all resistance and motivation issues stem from your employees not getting their needs met. Pay attention to these five driving factors and you can retain employees who are satisfied and fulfilled. If you can consistently meet all five needs of your employees, you will have an organization that is capable of accomplishing anything.

Figure 23: Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

Physiological

These needs are the essentials of life. Surprisingly enough, as an employer, you have a great deal to do with an employee’s basic human needs:

- **Food** - You need to provide them time to eat and make sure they can easily access quality food.
- **Oxygen** - Make sure there that there is enough air circulation in the air to provide oxygen for their brains. You’d be surprised how many “sweat shops” neglect this basic element and can’t figure out why their employees are groggy by two in the afternoon.
- **Water** - Make sure that you have filtered or distilled water. Tap water usually isn’t adequate.
Shelter - Make sure you pay your employees predictably on time. If you ever pay late, watch the problems start. If you habitually pay haphazardly, you’ll force people to take jobs where there is a more secure environment.

Sleep - Sometimes you’re forced to work late or even once in a great while, work all night. Don’t make it a habit. Unless you can finish a major project, leave it until the next day. People won’t be able to function the next day, thus losing any gains.

Relatively constant body temperature - Make sure to keep the working environment cool enough in the summer and warm enough in the winter.

Safety & Security

After meeting physiological needs, a person’s needs for security become active. You meet the safety and security needs of your employees by:

- Maintaining a stable company.
- Ensuring that your company is a safe place to work.
- Locating your office in a safe place.
- Making sure your employees do not have to take unnecessary risks to perform their job.

Social Connection

When the needs for safety, security, and physiological well-being are satisfied, the need for social connection will emerge. You can satisfy your employee’s connection needs by:

- Encouraging team spirit and working together.
- Emphasizing the value of the company culture and a feeling of belonging to something.
- Encouraging outside activities with employees.
- Developing a culture that emphasizes the value of each individual as a contribution to the group.

Esteem

When the first three needs are met, the esteem needs become active. These esteem needs consist of both self-esteem (the esteem one provides themselves) and esteem from others based on positive feedback and encouragement. The ways you can enhance the esteem of your employees are:

- Facilitate employee recognition programs.
- Catch employees doing things right and verbalizing this to the employee.
- Provide work that is both challenging and satisfying.
- Create a culture that builds people up instead of tearing them down. Make it a culture based on respect.
- Use performance reviews as tools for predictably evaluating employees work.
Self-Actualization

When the previous needs are consistently met, then your employee is in a position to be self-actualized. Maslow describes this need as the person’s need to be and do what that person was “born to do.” A writer must write, a musician must make music and a 3D artist must create 3D art. As you get to know your employees and strive to have your company meet the four earlier needs, find out who they are and what drives them. Then when you’ve created a company and a culture that consistently meets their four base needs, you can help propel them to do what they were “born to do” in your company. Accomplish this, and you will achieve an unparalleled level of performance and employee satisfaction.

As a 3D artist, you know that you get the biggest return by investing in the best possible tools and training. Same with your people. Many managers resort to force and oppression to drive performance, fearing that any support will be misinterpreted as weakness and that employees will walk all over them. The reverse is true. Show your employees that you value them and their contributions and they will work harder and better.

Rewarding Employees

Rewarding employees for doing a job well is the simplest and most cost-effective ways to manage and motivate employees. It’s much easier than you might think. Dr. Gerald Graham, a professor of management at Wichita State University conducted a study of 1,500 employees to determine the five top motivators. The results were surprising:

1. Personal congratulations from one’s manager.
2. A personal thank you note from one’s manager.
3. Promotion for outstanding performance
5. Group recognition meetings and events.

You get what you reward.
Performance Reviews

Performance reviews are an effective tool for encouraging the best in an employee. Having effective expectations followed up with reviews can substantially increase an employee’s performance. These should be done at least annually for salary reviews and quarterly for reviewing objectives and goals.

S.M.A.R.T. Goals

Good performance reviews begin with S.M.A.R.T. Goals. This gives the employee focus on the tangible so they have clarity on what they’re expected to achieve.

Written Performance Expectations

There is no substitution for written performance expectations. These should include quality standards, S.M.A.R.T. Goals, training expectations, skills to be acquired, and other job-specific requirements.

Criteria

When conducting a performance review, you should use the same criteria each time for every employee. The performance expectations provide the primary criteria to be considered in the performance review. Objectives should be measured both by quantity and quality. Additional factors include cooperation with others, overall attitude, and unique outstanding achievement.

Ratings

You should use a rating system for each of the criteria and a standard wage increase for use during a salary review:

1. Outstanding .................................................+10%
2. More than Satisfactory ..............................7-10%
3. Satisfactory ...............................................3-6%
4. Less than Satisfactory ..............................1-2%
5. Poor .........................................................0%

Process

You should review your employees systematically and consistently. You should document the process and rankings before the meeting and never try and do this during the review. Below is a sample process for a review meeting. Revise this to fit your needs, then make it your standard:

1. Establish rapport – Greet the employee and make them feel comfortable.
2. Discuss areas for improvement.
3. Discuss areas of outstanding achievement.
4. Summarize the rankings and overall performance.
5. Discuss the review and answer any questions.
6. Announce new salary amount and start date.
7. Thank the employee for contributing unless they haven’t performed satisfactorily.
8. Close the review.

**Performance Review Summary**

Performance reviews are an important management feedback tool. Setting clear performance expectations with your employees who contribute to the company’s mission and plan sets an organizational focus. By using regular performance reviews that directly affect salaries and promotions, you continue to strengthen the effectiveness of the process.

**TAX MANAGEMENT**

This section is meant as a very general guide to some of the things you should consider when planning your business tax strategies. It is not intended as tax advice because laws vary from state to state and even locality to locality and the Federal tax code almost always changes from year to year. Even more importantly, each business is unique. This combination of factors makes it impossible to provide you with actual advice in this book beyond the general tips outline below.

Always consult a qualified tax professional when planning your business and any time you have questions about your business and personal taxes.

**BUSINESS vs. PERSONAL TAXES**

If you’ve worked as an employee at a company, your taxes are pretty straightforward. Taxes are withheld from your paychecks and you reconcile your income, deductions, and withholdings at the end of each year.

Going into business for yourself changes all that. Now you have business taxes and fees in addition to your personal income taxes. These additional expenditures can include:

- **Business licenses.** Most cities or local jurisdictions require businesses to have business licenses, even if you’re operating out of your spare bedroom and clients never visit you.
- **Incorporation fees.** If you decide to incorporate or form a Limited Liability Company, your locality and/or state may charge you a one-time or annual incorporation fee. This can range from a few dollars to many hundreds of dollars.
- **Sales tax.** If you sell 3D content or other products, you may be subject to state and/or local sales taxes, which are paid as a percentage of the product’s price. For example, if sales tax is 5% and you sell a product for $100, the total price will be $105.
- **Payroll tax.** If you hire employees, you must withhold income and other taxes from their paychecks and forward those to the appropriate taxing agencies. You can circumvent payroll taxes by hiring independent artists or contractors who are responsible for paying their own taxes. Be aware, though, that there are laws designed to prevent businesses from labeling employees as
contractors simply to avoid withholding payroll taxes. The Internal Revenue Service lists guidelines for determining whether the people working for you qualify as employees or independent contractors.

- **Self-employment tax.** Self employed? Here’s a special tax just for you: The self-employment tax pays your Social Security taxes. As an employee, the social security tax withheld from your paychecks is matched by your employer. As a self-employed person, you pay both the employee and employer halves of this tax. This is offset by your ability to deduct half of this tax.

- **Other business taxes.** From general business taxes to use taxes, property taxes, and more, you may be subject to any number of taxes imposed by your city, county, state, and Federal governments.

**THE BRIGHT SIDE OF BUSINESS TAXES**

We’ve just listed some special taxes that only apply to businesses. Since you’re in business as a professional 3D artist, these taxes apply to you. There is a bright side, though: As a businessperson, you can deduct legitimate business expenditures, thereby reducing your bottom line. Some taxes and fees are due no matter what, such as state incorporation fees, business licenses, and the like. Other taxes such as the self-employment tax depend on your company’s net profit.

**Revenue vs. Profit**

Let’s say you sign 3D art projects worth $100,000 in a year. That is your revenue. However, remember that we are measuring your business success in terms of profits. Fortunately, the government tends to do the same thing. Some taxes are based on revenue (such as sales taxes), however these are generally offset by adding the cost of these taxes onto the cost of the product as anyone who has ever purchased an item with sales tax knows. Some taxes are not tied to revenue or profit such as incorporation fees and business licenses.

The vast majority of your taxes, however, do depend on your profits. How do you arrive at your profits? By deducting your legitimate business expenses from your revenue. For example, if you earned $100,000 and spent $50,000, then your taxes will be based on the $50,000 remainder. What if you earned $100,000 and spent $125,000? You may be able to reduce your personal taxes.

For example, say you earned $50,000 as an employee while moonlighting at your own 3D art company. If you spent $25,000 more on your business than you earned, you may be able to deduct that $25,000 from your wages since the loss had to be made up somewhere. This leaves you paying personal income tax on $25,000 instead of $50,000. This can happen very easily if you are starting up your business and/or if you are taking certain kinds of deductions such as depreciation.

Be warned, though, that the IRS and other taxing agencies have rules about business losses. It is your responsibility to know and comply with all applicable tax laws.
Business Deductions

As a professional 3D artist, your new mantra has just become “save the receipts!” Why? Because you can deduct legitimate business expenses from your revenue to lower your tax burden.

Some of the expenses you can write off may include:

- Computer hardware
- Computer software
- 3D content
- Web site hosting
- Internet access
- Printing costs for business cards, stationery, brochures, etc.
- Mileage
- Travel (airfare, hotel, rental car, etc.)
- Meals and entertainment (subject to certain special rules)
- Depreciation (for example, you can deduct the value that your car or office loses every year if you use it for business purposes)
- Office rent
- Utilities
- Office expenses
- Losses/theft
- Bad debts (subject to certain rules)
- Training (courses, education, books, etc. Yes, this book counts)
- Association dues (such as professional associations, chamber of commerce, etc.)
- etc.

In our previous example, if you earned $100,000 and all of the above-listed expenses add up to $50,000, your business will only have to pay profit-based taxes on $50,000.

Again, this list and all of the information in this section are designed as very general guides only. Consult with a qualified professional tax advisor.

The Downside of Deductions

Taking lots of deductions? Business hardly scraping by or even losing money on paper? Believe it or not, it is legally possible to live a very comfortable life while hardly showing any taxable revenue. In fact, that is a major goal of every business.

There is a down side, however, and that is when you are applying for business or personal credit. For example, if you are refinancing your house and your business shows a paltry income, you may not be able to prove that you can repay your obligations.

Here again, professional consultation is of paramount importance. Consult a qualified accountant for assistance.
Words of Wisdom

"Thoughts and ideas are the source of all wealth, success, material gain, all great discoveries, inventions, and achievements."

– Mark Victor Hansen
In order to become a thriving 3D artist, you must learn to market yourself and your company. Marketing is what you do to get a chance to sell. Begin by determining the value of each client, then establish marketing strategies for both new and existing clients.
Marketing is what you do to get a chance to sell your 3D art. Realizing this fundamental idea greatly narrows your strategies as you throw out anything that won’t eventually lead to a sale. Writing an article for a national publication may bring you national recognition but probably won’t bring you much business if your target market is local.

THE VALUE OF A CLIENT

You need to determine what the value of a client is to your 3D art company. How? Answer the following questions:

How much will the average client spend with you per year?
A = _____________

If you provide quality service and products, how many years can you expect to keep a client?
B = _____________

What is your gross profit, as a percentage of revenues?
C = _____________

The value (V) of a client is:

\[ V = A \times B \times C \]

I learned with my network consulting company that the average life of a client was about 2 ½ years and the average yearly expenditure was around $10,000. With a gross margin of 35%, each client was worth $8,750 to the company.

\[ $10,000 \times 2.5 \times 0.35 = $8,750 \]

This simple formula before can totally change how you view client acquisition, retention, and customer service. Plan to spend about 10% of current or projected revenues on client acquisition. Use this formula to accurately project what a client is worth to you over their client life cycle.

One of the most valuable marketing strategies you can employ begins when most people think the marketing job is done. Go to great lengths to keep a good client. The simplest and least intensive marketing efforts are those that you do for existing clients. Stay in contact and educate them on both the excellent services you have provided them and on the value proposition that you continue to offer.

CLOSE RATIOS

The next important parameter is to calculate your close ratio. In other words, how many clients do you get for every prospect you talk to? My company had a close ratio of around 25%. With the above example, assuming a marketing budget of 10% of gross revenues per client, we had $1,500 to work with. With a 25% close ratio, we could spend on average $375 for every prospect we talked to ($1500*.25=$375).

This is a very useful tool for making decisions about how much time to spend on proposals, contact, lunches, advertising, and so forth.
MARKETING YOUR 3D ART

REACHING NEW CLIENTS

Getting new clients is like courting a mate. The first date is critical for making a good impression. It leads to more dates, meeting the family, engagement, and marriage. The whole effort could head south with no hope of recovery if there isn’t a fit at any point of the way. And just like marriage, if you think the work stops after the honeymoon, you will be in for a very rude shock because that’s where the real work begins.

When looking for potential clients, look for qualities that will endure for the long-term. Just like a marriage, you need to be compatible, you need a relationship based on honesty, and you both want the other to benefit from the relationship. I’m not implying that you should scrutinize client at the same level as a potential spouse. However, by consciously identifying terrific clients that are honest and who want you to win, you’ll make more profitable, enjoyable, and enduring relationships.

There is no one big secret to signing a new client but there are a lot of small things. Every 3D artist is different and excels in different aspects of the client acquisition process. In this chapter, I’ve tried to identify the superset of things to do to win that new client. Some of these techniques won’t apply to the solo 3D artist and some don’t apply for more sophisticated art companies. You decide the best mix for your operation.

BRANDING

A brand is not a logo. A brand is a feeling that a customer has about a product, service, or company. The goal of a brand is to create something that the customer can’t live without and for which they won’t accept a substitute for without great resistance. Great brands convert customers into evangelists. In the 3D art business, that means referrals. Some of the great brands are Starbucks, Apple, Microsoft, Southwest Airlines, and the United States of America. All of these entities have created a product or service that has very loyal customers (or citizens).

USP (Unique Selling Proposition)

Your USP is the first thing you need to determine before establishing a branding strategy. The USP is the fundamental driver of not only your branding strategy but almost everything your 3D art company does. The USP articulates in a concise statement or phrase what your business is and why you’re different than other companies with similar services.

The USP is both an internal and an external focus point. Internally, the USP drives decisions on what software and equipment to buy, which training and skill sets to invest in, which partners to acquire, and so on. Externally, the USP communicates who you are why you’re unique to prospects, clients, vendors, potential employees, and contractors.
The USP also helps keep the company from getting distracted. Sure you can have a larger market and potentially increase revenues by offering more services. By focusing, you can maximize the value you give to clients because of your expertise. You can also enhance your profitability by offering value-based fees. Additionally, if you research your market thoroughly and find a growing and un-served niche to make your USP, you’ll experience less competition and increase your profit margins. What is the best measure of your business success? That’s right: profit.

Identity

The thing to remember about identity is that it is not one thing but one hundred little things. Why focus on identity over image? Identity is how others perceive your company while image is how you portray your company. Identity is the steak while image is the sizzle. Sizzle never fed anyone, so forget about it. Don’t worry about creating a fancy image. Focus on creating a solid identity based on service, value, and excellence.

Writing

You’re a 3D artist, right? So why am I talking about writing? As a 3D artist in the business of selling your 3D art, you need to write and write well. From articles for marketing efforts to press releases and proposals, many of your first and sometimes only impressions of you and your company will come from your written material. Learn to write well. This comes from study and practice.

Never send out copy with grammatical or spelling errors. Don’t relent just because your work passed the spelling and grammar checker in your word processor. Carefully read every document out loud. Find a writing mentor or partner to review your materials before you release them.

Collateral

If you can’t design, get a designer. There’s nothing worse than stationary that was obviously designed by an amateur. If you absolutely can’t afford it, find some professional materials that have a simple professional look and feel and learn from these guidelines. Don’t think cool; think simple. Remember, it’s all about identity, not image.

While designing collateral, think in terms of memes, not logos. Think about some well-known logos. How did they get so well known? Lots of money, right? You don’t have that kind of money- and even if you did, making that kind of investment would be a colossal waste. Memes, by contrast, are basic units of information, the lowest common denominator of any idea. Some common memes include international traffic signals. The most recognized modern verbal meme? Click here. You get the idea. Create and use visual and verbal memes that instantly communicate who your company is and what you do.
**Voice**

Many artists can do a tremendous amount of work on the phone. I highly recommend getting an inexpensive recording device to record your phone calls. It’s important to hear how you come across to your prospects and clients. Your voice should be strong and confident. Many artists suffer from monotone voices- a big turn off to mainstream decision makers.

**Publishing**

Publishing is a process, not an event. The best approach is to start with small steps to gain experience and confidence. The nice thing about writing and 3D art is that you get better and faster with practice.

Build up with small steps towards an online gallery and some hard-copy samples. Want to end up with a published book? Decide how the articles, illustrations, or tutorials you produce can be used in the end product. A realistic plan might go something like this:

1. Your company or local group newsletters.
2. Local newspapers and business magazines.
3. Trade or association newsletters.
4. Regional newspapers or magazines.
5. National trade magazines or business publications.
6. Regular column or illustrations.
7. Published book.

For example, this book is the seventh one that I’ve published and the second that I’ve written. It keeps getting easier and it’s been very rewarding beyond just finances.

**Articles**

Writing your own articles or providing illustrations for other authors’ articles can accomplish a number of marketing objectives. Initially a number of potential clients will read them, which can help you establish your brand. You can reprint and include them in your press kits, marketing materials, or even attach them to your proposals to further establish your credibility with prospects and clients. These can quickly become much more powerful than the fanciest promotional brochures.

To get your article printed, you must convince the editor that you have a clear idea of what your article will be, the approach you’ll take, and why their readers will be interested. You must also convince her or him that you have the expertise and credibility to write a factual article. A query letter is the most common approach. Do your research before starting your query letter. Find a publication that meets your requirements for content and readers. Think your article through carefully. Select a headline that is captivating and intriguing and that will pique the reader’s interest.
It’s important to give your article a clear focus or angle. This is often determined simply by narrowing down the subject. If the topic is popular and has been written about before, you need a fresh approach. Sometimes just taking an opposite slant will give you a unique angle that gets the editor’s attention.

Research your topic to discover some interesting yet little known information. Editors love facts and statistics to back claims made in an article. Don’t tell them that hiring 2D artists instead of 3D artists loses millions of dollars each year; tell them how many millions and why.

It’s important to target a publication that your target audience(s) read with an article within your area of expertise. Many local newspapers (even the weeklies) have a business or technology section. Webzines are even hungrier for content and you can provide links to your website in your articles.

Once you’ve determined your topic, key facts and market, you’re ready to write your query.

Always remember that your query must make a dramatic impact on the editor if it is to stand out from the pack. Start out strong and get stronger. Immediately cover the journalist basics of who, what, where, when, and why. Good queries should include three main sections: a strong lead paragraph, a summary, and your bio. Make an impact and demonstrate your writing abilities.

Mail the query with a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) or send by email, which is the preferred method these days. Give the editor at least six weeks before following up by phone or by mail. If your idea interests one editor, other editors or writers may review it. When you hear from them, you’ll get the details on length, deadline, rights, and payment (if any).

When writing, pay close attention to the following key elements of a terrific article:

✔ Grab their attention with a strong title.
✔ Have a great beginning. The first sentence or paragraph has to entice the reader to proceed further.
✔ Have a focus. Remember that an article is not a book. Write about a small segment of a general subject. Not 3D art, but how 3D art can be used to reenact car accidents during insurance investigations.
✔ Support the first sentence of each paragraph with the remainder of that paragraph.
✔ Use quotes correctly and always credit your sources.
✔ Use examples, samples, analogies, and anecdotes.
✔ Present useful information. What will the reader know after reading your article?
✔ Your grammar, spelling, and punctuation must be perfect.
✔ Be concise and succinct in your writing. Edit several times with the goal of reducing the number of words in your article.
✔ Use humor.
✔ If possible, relate your article to a current event that has staying power.
Give your article a strong ending.
Consider syndicating the article to Web sites like www.articlecity.com, www.ideamarketers.com, or www.goarticles.com

**Books**

Writing a book is an excellent way to make yourself an authority. More and more people are getting published thanks to the advantages of self-publishing and publishing-on-demand (POD), but authorship is still a big differentiating factor between you and your competitors.

Designing your book as a series of articles or images is a great way to leverage your existing content. Use these articles to get published in magazines or in your newsletters.

Writing a book and getting published are beyond the scope of this book, but there are some specific guidelines that you should adhere to:

- Produce a book about something that won’t quickly get outdated. The last thing you want to do is be a fulltime writer. Well OK, maybe you do. But if so, you’re reading the wrong book.
- Align the books topics with prospect and client needs. Your customers are looking for experts in key areas. These subjects are candidates for your book, i.e. 3D art and its practical applications in specific industries.
- Don’t worry about writing *War and Peace*. If you’re primary goal is to establish authority and expertise, anything over 50 pages will get you listed in *Books in Print*, while anything over 100 will help justify a reasonable price and qualify by weight.
- Write about something you currently are or want to become an expert in. Make sure it’s a subject you love or you’ll soon abandon the project because it’s an incredible amount of work.

There are many excellent resources to help you with your book project.

**Web Site**

As a 3D artist, your Web site helps reinforce that you’re real, technically proficient, and talented. Your Web site needs the following pages:

- A professional Home page that succinctly articulates what your specialty is.
- An About section that talks about your expertise as an individual or company.
- A Products and/or Services section that explains what you’re offering. For 3D artists, this means a gallery of your best and most pertinent work.
- A Contact page so people can reach you.

If you want a more professional image or if you have a larger company, you might want to include some or all of the following sections:
Your Web site serves as a central hub for your marketing activities. Newsletters, relationship-building by email, promotional materials, and press kits should all focus on driving prospects to your site, which in turn drives them to your business. Setting up areas of your site that require registration for premium content and services can teach you a great deal about what your prospects and clients really want.

Your Web site is also a cost-effective way of educating your clients. For example, it's much cheaper for them to download a PDF brochure than to print and mail one. Electronic newsletters that link to your site not only save paper and postage, but you can actually tell pages and content the recipients are visiting and reading.

Last but not least, a Web site can actually produce clients. By getting Internet Yellow Page listings, search engine placement, and buying the right advertising on sites like Overture.com or Google.com, you can actually acquire business solely from the Internet. Don’t rely on this, however.

Most Web sites work best as secondary marketing tools, meaning that they provide information, products, etc. to prospects who arrive there because of the other marketing you do. The days of "if you build it, they will come" are long over for Web sites. See the section on Marketing Your 3D Art Online, below, for more information about Web sites and online marketing.

**Newsletters**

Newsletters are another simple yet powerful way to establish credibility. They provide a vehicle for regular communication to your prospects and clients. Remember that your marketing goal is to build relationships, and a newsletter is one of the best ways to do this. The key to effective newsletters is to regularly produce content that is informative, timely, and useful to your target audience.

What it should not be is promotional. Your readers are not interested in reading advertising materials on a weekly or monthly basis. You need to provide them with news they can use. If you make your business a source of useful information, you’ll increasingly be accepted as a source for products and services.

The more you give, the more people see your value and are tempted to purchase from you. Remember that you are building relationships by gaining your prospects’ consent to keep marketing to them. This ongoing consent forms a series of soft steps that eases the hard step of actually parting with money.

You can subtly promote your accomplishments with newsworthy items about your company. If you have a speaking engagement, were
recently published in a magazine, had one of your 3D illustrations published, landed a prestigious client, simply highlight this in a small sidebar in the newsletter. Just be careful to not appear self-promoting. Always frame what you do in terms of providing value to your current and prospective clients.

**Tips for a Great Newsletter**

- Be informative. Cover topics that interest your readers.
- Be succinct. Newsletters are not a medium for long, tedious articles. Long articles belong in newspapers and magazines.
- Be consistent. Publish your newsletter on a regular schedule to become habit-forming. It’s wise to have at least two whole newsletters written in advance.
- Be solution oriented. As a 3D artist, you are offering solutions. Include helpful tips and techniques that the reader can use immediately.
- Be focused. Your newsletter should have a consistent voice and theme, i.e. 3D art, practical applications in your chosen industry, industry developments, case studies, etc.
- Be professional. Your newsletter should look professional and must be well-written. Get some help if you need it. Thoroughly proofread every issue.
- Be interactive. Encourage readers to send you questions and feedback and include relevant items in future newsletters.
- Be accessible. Include contact information in the same place at the end of every newsletter.
- Be reader-centric. This newsletter is not about you, it’s about them.

Although most 3D artists resist this strategy, give something away in each issue. Provide the readers with solutions to the common yet trivial problems you are encountering at their sites. Give them information they can use and you’ll create respect, credibility, and a long-term relationship. Profits are the measure of your business success and the road to that success is paved with relationships. Providing free images, models, or animations is a great way to build relationships with your clients. They’ll look forward to every new offering.

**Expand Your Network through Your Newsletter**

You can use your newsletter as a tool for opening formidable doors. Include an interview in each issue with somebody that you want to have a relationship with: a prospect, a chamber president, or an association leader. Don’t pitch your company; rather, explain why you’re interviewing them and the type of readers that receive your newsletter.

The same power players that have been difficult to reach in the past are now quite approachable. Almost everyone likes to see their name or their company’s name in print. Carefully prepare your questions, professionally conduct the interview, draft a quality article, and send a copy for their review and approval. When the newsletter comes out, make sure you have postal or email address information depending on
the newsletter you publish, and send your interviewees a number of
print copies with the offer to supply more on request.

Not only will you have the attention of somebody that you are
interested in knowing, you will probably be introduced to their inner
circle as they mention the article. You must, in all respects, perform as
a journalist from your interaction to the quality of writing and
especially the ethical handling of the future relationship.

**Newsletter as a Survey Vehicle**

Once the newsletter has gained a reputation, readership, and a wide
enough circulation, it becomes an excellent channel for your survey. If
you’ve done your job, you have readers that look forward to your
content and want to participate.

**Where to Send Your Newsletter**

Your newsletter is an asset that you’ve carefully
prepared. How can you leverage it as much as
possible? Building your target database
consistently and thoroughly allows you to
maximize its potential. By sending your newsletter
as an email, you have even more potential to reach
many influencers for nominal costs. Use common
sense on who should receive your newsletter and,
if it is delivered by email, make opting out quick
and painless. Here are some guidelines on where
to send your newsletter:

- Current clients
- Family and friends
- Vendors and professional advisors; attorneys, accountants,
  bankers, etc.
- Prospects, including anyone who gives you their business card
- News media. Yes, you can send your newsletter to the press.
  They often keep interesting information around for story ideas or
  for potential expert sources.

**Host Your Own Radio or Television Show**

If your target market consists of a local or regional market, hosting
your own show may be a highly effective way to reach your audience
and create a killer brand. Give this option careful consideration before
you jump in as it’s a big commitment in both time and money. Can
you perform on cue time after time?

**Write a Blog**

Do you enjoy regularly expressing yourself in writing? Consider
starting a blog. Blogs are fast becoming one of the most important
communication mediums on the planet. Where Web sites for small
companies are static in nature, blogs are like a newspaper or even a
diary; they’re always fresh and instantaneous. If your audience is
national or international, this could be a very effective way of reaching them.

**Speaking**

Public speaking is an excellent way to demonstrate your expertise and abilities in front of potential clients. It allows many prospects to meet and start getting to know and build a relationship with you at one time. You have their attention and it’s up to you to captivate them and provide them with the information that moves them to extend the relationship.

The goal of any speaking engagement is to get in front of your target audience. For a regional business, a speaking engagement at a national conference is probably a waste of time. Select local groups and associations such as the chamber of commerce, Rotary, Elks, Shriners, associations of office managers, technology associations, and other civic clubs or service organizations. These groups are always seeking speakers for their luncheons or dinners who provide valuable information to their members. Trade and professional organizations are particularly attractive as they focus on educating their members. To find organizations in your area, go to the American Society of Association Executives at [www.asaenet.org](http://www.asaenet.org) and use their search tool.

The benefits are significant since it takes only a couple of hours of your time once you perfect your pitch. Making this investment accomplishes the following:

- You have the opportunity to be promoted as an expert to qualified decision makers who may need your services.
- You have the opportunity to talk to interested prospects and exchange business cards after the speaking engagement.
- You can sign up prospects to your newsletter from the email address on their business cards.
- You and your company name will be promoted in literature prior to the engagement. You can include this in your marketing materials and use it to solicit subsequent speaking engagements.
- You will be able to demonstrate your professionalism in a personal way.
- You have the opportunity to pass out your press kit and marketing materials.
- You could leverage the speaking engagement into an article or column for the organization.
- You can offer to send a link or article based on a need that came up in discussion. Give something to encourage a subsequent conversation.
- You can demonstrate your ability to think on your feet by ending the speech with a Q&A session.
- You can become proficient at speaking and eventually command a fee for your services.

Preparation is essential for delivering a speech that enhances your image. Use software like Microsoft PowerPoint to outline your speech and to prepare your notes. Practice, Practice, Practice! If possible, you should video tape your presentation so you can self-critique. You want
to rehearse to the point where you don’t need notes. A well-designed outline will facilitate a solid presentation.

After your speech, open up to questions. This helps you in a number of ways: You’ll be able to gauge the audience’s interest, it’s an opportunity to talk individually later with someone that expressed interest, and it will further demonstrate your abilities and intelligence. Be courteous, humble, and never speak down to the audience. You can demonstrate your expertise without being condescending.

Be approachable after you finish. Professionally pass out your cards, answer questions, and pay attention to people that look interested in talking with you. Be careful when you’re talking with someone not to be distracted with the crowd. If there are a number of people who want to talk further, exchange cards and request permission to contact them or send them some information relating to their question or problem. Send them an email no later than the next day, then follow-up as outlined in the section on Networking.

Need to hone your speaking skills and get over your fear of public speaking? Visit www.toastmasters.org for the location of the club nearest you. Toastmasters is a worldwide organization dedicated to helping members improve their speaking skills.

**Seminars**

Done correctly, seminars can be one of your most productive marketing tactics. They create awareness for your company and potentially create a revenue stream for your 3D art business. By carefully selecting topics that match the market’s interest in the products and services you provide, you automatically qualify your prospects. This is a great way to recruit a high number of clients per marketing dollar.

The size of the seminar is important to your success. Ballroom-sized seminars have impact but seldom generate a worthwhile return on investment (ROI). Twenty to twenty-five participants are about the right number of people. If possible, bring one of your employees or partners for every five to ten participants. The more one-on-one time you have with prospects, the better.

Your seminars should initially last one and a half to two hours long with one third of your time set aside for audience participation. Always use handouts that include your press kit and contact information. Make sure they look and feel professional, include the outline for the presentation, and have plenty of space for notes. Including the note section on the handout materials increases the likelihood that attendees will keep them.
Almost every businessperson has been to a seminar, but hosting one yourself is entirely different. Here are some guidelines to make sure yours comes off without a hitch:

- **Where to host.** If your office space looks professional and has the necessary capacity, by all means have it here. If you’re a certified partner for a larger company, they may have available space for your seminars. For smaller 3D art companies with a budget, hotels, motels, or conference centers are the next choice. Finally, your local university or library may offer excellent low-cost facilities.

- **Contact Information.** You must ensure that your materials contain all the important contact information about your company. Even more important, you must obtain as much information about the attendees as possible. Secure as much information as possible, including physical and email address, phone, title, 3D art decisions contemplating, why they’re attending, and so on. Registration should capture all basic contact information and should also include a survey to acquire even more detailed data.

- **Staffing.** Having sufficient and adequately trained staff increases your chance of success. As the speaker, you don’t want to deal with registration, audio-visual equipment, or emergencies.

- **Scheduling.** Depending on the topics and your materials, the seminar should last anywhere from two hours to a day. Remember to start small and expand as you get more confidence. Check local event and conference schedules to eliminate as many conflicts as possible.

- **Web site.** A simple single-page explanation should appear on your Web site. Prospects needing more information should call in another opportunity to collect contact information. This way, even if they don’t attend, you can still email them about future events or send them your newsletter.

Explore the possibility of using established seminar channels such as Learning Annex, Microsoft Partner Program, and others. This allows you to co-market with a name and have these suppliers handle many details such as advertising and space.

In the beginning, it’s a good idea to pick a topic that is core to your 3D art business and stick with it. Come up with a marketing plan that can get you in front of your selected target market(s) on a regular basis. This allows you to leverage contacts who may not attend but who you can market to for the next event or other offering. You’ll improve with each seminar. Before you know it, you’ll be a pro.

**Seminar Promotion**

All the planning in the world won’t help you if nobody shows up. It’s important that you have a well-crafted marketing plan that improves over time. Potential targets for promotion are:

- Current clients
- Your database of prospects
- Chamber of commerce
Partner programs
Print, Television, Radio and Internet (advertising and editorial coverage)
Rotary
Professional Associations
Word of Mouth (from previous seminars)
Established seminar channels
Direct Mail
Telemarketing
Fax broadcasting (for opt-in fax numbers)
Public relations
Local business publication readers
Clubs
Social organizations
Your newsletter list
3D art/industry associations
Local conferences
Mass audience with a press release
Web forums and blogs

**Seminar Marketing Tools**

Once you have a clear idea of the market you want to reach and the marketing channels at your disposal, determine the collateral you’ll use to reach the target prospect. It’s important to have a consistent branding and USP in order to deliver a focused message. Here are just a few of the many possible marketing tools for promoting your seminar and 3D art company:

- Press releases
- Posters
- Handouts and flyers
- Direct mail
- Your newsletter
- Brochures
- Advertisements
- Invitations
- Calendar listings

Persuading people to act requires a compelling message. Here are some guidelines:

- Make a big promise. Articulate the benefits.
- Use photographs and graphs. A picture really is worth a thousand words- but you know that, because you’re a 3D artist.
- Use testimonials, especially from experts and authorities.
- Highlight your credentials.
- Use color. Make it attractive and professional.
- Conclude with a strong call to action. Tell people how to register, call, where to find more information online, etc.

**Letters to the Editor**

A letter to the editor in the right publication is a simple yet effective way to get in front of your target market. Find an article that pertains
to your business, reaches your audience, and for which you have something important to say. Write a letter that demonstrates your expertise and intelligence. State your opinion strongly in a way that will attract clients. Show confidence but not arrogance. Include your name, company, and address.

You can increase the odds of a prospect contacting you by including a call to action. This takes the form of offering something that supports your position. Offer something directly related to the article in question that is useful to your clients.

**Conduct Surveys**

A survey is a powerful tool for separating you from the pack. You need not survey thousands of individuals or companies. A database that lets you poll at least several hundred names by email can be adequate for smaller 3D art companies.

The key is to produce statistics that are timely and important. Your survey should target 3D art issues as they relate to your clients and prospects. Focus on important problems being considered by these decision makers where the answers are not clear.

Distribute the results to the press, through your newsletter, and on your Web site. You will eventually find yourself being sought after for your opinions on related subjects and your branding with this audience will be strengthened.

**Media Interviews**

If you work with leading edge technologies that surface in the news (and 3D art certainly fits this criterion), getting interviewed can expand your market presence. Your name in print, on the Web, and/or on television or radio has many times the power of any possible advertisement. When the news promotes you as an expert, people pay attention.

To get in front of the right media people, get in front of the right media people. Volunteer yourself as an expert and send press releases and your bio. Send them copies of any articles or books you’ve published. Stay in front of them and it will eventually pay off. A common theme to all media is a steady stream of press releases, articles, your bio, and backgrounder. It will take a lot of persistence but will be worth it.

**Print Publications**

With print publications, you want to identify columnists who specialize in your area of expertise or who write to your target market. If your market is local, start with small local newspapers- and you might find yourself talking directly to the editor.
**World Wide Web**

The best place to target on the Web (besides a traditional media company’s website) is newsletters. You can get their attention more easily because they have a much greater need for cost-effective content. Many traditional media websites are now offering web-exclusive content. Find a good fit and keep in front of them.

**Radio**

Many large metropolitan areas have technology radio shows. Contact the producers and give them some great reasons why you should be on their shows. Make sure you’re familiar with the audience and format before you contact them. I’ve been interviewed many times. It’s just a matter of convincing the host you have something to say that the audience wants to hear.

**Television**

Getting an interview on television is difficult but not impossible. You have to understand what makes good television and you need to groom your contacts. Television is a visual medium, so your story must either fit the paradigm or be something very newsworthy. The technology, art, and creative fields have lots of opportunities because new products are always coming out for both consumers and businesses and are visual in nature. If you can build a story around a hot new product and your company and get this in front of the right people, you just may end up on TV. This holds true for 3D art because 3D art is cutting edge and knowing your target market will help you tie your 3D art to the latest news and technologies in your industry or industries of specialty.

**Press Releases**

Send press releases to all the media for both your target market and industry niche. Make and use templates for press releases. Do your homework and keep improving your strategy. Great PR takes ingenuity as well as persistence.

The key to getting your press release in the news is to make it newsworthy. Make your story compelling and timely. Ensure that your press release is concise, well written, and keeps your self-promotion to a minimum. An advertisement disguised as a press release is a sure way to reach the circular file. Editors receive thousands of press releases. Put yourself in their shoes and figure out how to intrigue them with something special.

Here are some suggestions for news that will get attention:

- Creating a strategic partnership with major company.
- Landing a contract with major company, especially local.
- Performing volunteer services for non-profit organizations.
MARKETING YOUR 3D ART

- Securing a board position for a noteworthy organization (such as the Chamber of Commerce or a non-profit).
- Receiving an award from a technical organization or nonprofit.
- Announcing an event like a seminar, conference, or party.
- Announcing a partnership or contract with an important company.
- Changed location or office expansion.
- Announcing a Web site that addresses a hot topic. (Remember JibJab.com)
- Visualization of a new science.
- Releasing a new product.
- Announcing a new service that is unique.

The components of a good press release are:

- It should typically be no more than 600 words. 250 words (one double-spaced page) is the norm.
- It should have a strong, eye-catching headline that accurately summarizes the story.
- It should be written in third person.
- Every paragraph, sentence, and word should move the story along.
- It should cover who, what, where, when, and why in the first two paragraphs.
- Paragraph 2 should expand on the reason of the release.
- Paragraph 3 should contain your quote or testimonials.
- Paragraph 4 should contain additional information on the reason for the release.
- It should have the date of the release and include whether it is for immediate release or for release at a later date.
- It should include at least one contact and telephone number in case the media need more information or clarification.
- It should include “end” or “30” at the end of the last page.

**Next Steps**

Your public relations effort only begins with the press release. Successful press releases rely on additional strategies including:

- Follow-up with a phone call. Ask the editor if they require any more information.
- Call your local papers and make sure the press release is sent to the right section editors.
- Keep a database of all your media contacts. Keep adding details to this database and use it for future mailings.

Send out press releases on a regular basis. Continue following-up and creating positive relationships with your selected editors. Be persistent and you will eventually receive the reward of an occasional news blurb that expands your branding and enhances your credibility. We have stressed the need for fervent follow-up earlier in this book and will keep doing that.
Proprietary Content

Establishing credibility and authority is one key element of an overall branding strategy. By developing tutorials, unique animations and images, proprietary research, and other educational materials, you enforce the idea in your prospect’s mind that you (and only you) can perform the 3D artwork they need. At Zygote, we use self-running galleries of our biomedical images along with animations with great results.

White papers or tutorials can differentiate you from your competitors. Some of the most successful client generators are “How To” articles on rendering, animation, rigging, and other pertinent topics. The reason seminars are so successful is because attendees want to become educated enough on the subject to make a decision— or to hire the right company.

Proprietary research provides content for your seminars, articles, speeches, and Web site. Coordinate your sound bites and message across each medium you offer. This is an excellent way to leverage your efforts and produce multiple results.

Remember that one goal of any good marketing effort is to demonstrate that you have a unique product. Creating proprietary research is a seldom-used but powerful tool to accomplish this as well as provide a foundation for your other marketing strategies.

Mass Market Approaches

For 3D artists, the traditional methods of mass market advertising really don’t work unless you have a mass market—a rarity for 3D artists unless you specialize in mass-market art. Make sure that the majority of your readers, viewers, or listeners have a need or want for your 3D products and services before taking out the advertisement.

Direct Mail

Most business books will tell you that direct mail doesn’t work, and I tend to agree. My experience is that it’s tough but that the right list, budget, campaign, and offer can make it work well. I once sent out 1,000 brightly colored postcards to a highly targeted list with a simple offer: "Contact us for a free analysis of your corporate network". A real cost of about $1,500 generated around $20,000 in business.

Handling the call is critical. Have a script of questions to qualify each caller. You must gain their interest quickly and give them a big reason to continue the relationship. Make sure that your campaign speaks to buyers with an immediate need or it likely won’t work.

Don’t forget to test, test, and test. I ran three tests of 100 units to come up with the final copy and script. You must understand that a slight change in copy can produce a 500% improvement on response. Continue to test and try different approaches. Even when something works, continue improving it—without losing the parts that are working.
CREATIVE MARKETING APPROACHES

You can almost always use creative marketing approaches to reap big rewards. Here are a few of the many non-traditional approaches you can use when marketing your company.

Creative Flash Sites

Most of you remember the flash sites mocking Osama Bin Laden and Sadam Hussein. Remember JibJab.com during the Kerry-Bush Presidential race? These were powerful publicity tools that went viral. If you have the talent for this, it can be a very cost-effective marketing strategy that could produce greater results than anything else you do.

Art Calendars

If you have a strong gallery of images and a reasonable marketing budget, creating calendars with your art and sending them to current and future clients can be effective. If they’re good enough, you can even sell them. This is a risky business strategy, however, because calendars have limited useful life spans.

Provide Testimonials & Endorsement Letters

This may seem unorthodox, but connecting your 3D art company’s name with another reputable enterprise can bring your company free recognition. Carefully describing your company and what it does while relating to the company you’re endorsing gets your name in front of potential clients in a very positive way.

If you’ve had a good experience with somebody’s product, company, or service, write them on your company’s letterhead. This small investment of your time may get you included in their press kit, Web site, or newsletter. Got a favorite business show or newspaper columnist? Write a testimonial. It could be read on the air or printed in the paper.

Greeting Cards

Almost everyone loves to receive a thoughtful greeting card on their birthday, Christmas, and other holidays. My company captures the birthdays of all of our prospects and key people within a client organization. We send out cards twelve times a year to our best prospects and clients. It keeps our name in front of them in a fun and unique way. As a 3D artist, your message will come through twice as loud.

Hosting Charitable Events

Hosting a charitable event for your favorite organization is an excellent way to get your name out there. The media almost always covers these organizations and, if you have a great story, you’ll have tremendous success. This is also a wonderful way to make a
contribution to your community. Why not put on an art event for local schoolchildren and teach them about 3D?

**Bowls of Business Cards**

I know a network consultant on the east coast that has an innovative way of getting warm bodies. She has set up a network of businesses and restaurants that partner with her on collecting a database of names. Each week she picks up a bowl full of business cards and has them entered into a database for her and her partners.

She then contacts the prospects as a referral source from the partner and tells them about her services and offers them her newsletter. She has been very successful with this strategy.

This may not be applicable to you if you’re a solo 3D artist. Or isn’t it? If you come across people who might want to know about your clients (and vice-versa), offering to trade introductions might be a valuable service, one both parties will thank you for— and remember.

**Donate Services to Charity**

You can donate your services to charity for double impact. You get to feel great about helping an organization that you feel strongly about, and you can get promotional value as well. How about an enlargement of a particularly fine piece of rendered 3D art? Perhaps an animation or related public service announcement that can play at some point during the event? Brochures? The only limits are your capabilities, imagination, and the charity’s needs/wants.

Donating your art and/or artistic services to silent auctions puts your name in front of wealthy individuals and decision makers. The whole room is focused on your company for 3-10 minutes, and you also get listed in the banquet program. It’s highly effective.

**Give Free Art**

Want lots of exposure quickly? Post images of your 3D art on your Web site for people to use on their own sites provided they include a link to your site. Put your art up on image sites such as www.webshots.com.

**Lots of Freebies**

Do you create certain types of 3D content such as props? If so, consider giving away free content that complements your main offerings. This could include a variety of texture maps, different backgrounds, etc. These freebies should not work unless people buy your main product. This is a great way to build the perceived value of the item you’re offering for sale and to boost your profits.

**Slideshow Galleries**

Create slideshow galleries using scripts that will automatically cycle through the available images without having to click between each one. Make it easy for people to enjoy your 3D art.
Current Events

Take advantage of the news. If a major event happens, create 3D art around that event and send it to your media contacts. Be opportunistic. It’s a great way to get lots of free exposure and reach potential clients. Whether it’s science or politics, hitting the right chord can produce surprising results. If you specialize in some niche like science, politics, or celebrities, sign up for Google News Alerts on these subjects so you can painlessly track trends and news in these subjects. You’ll be better prepared to seize the opportunity when it comes along.

Contests

Enter as many contests as possible and announce every one you win. If your clients have a choice about working with an ordinary 3D artist or an “award-winning” artist, who do you think they’re more likely to choose?

Give Training

From adult education centers to summer camps, after school programs, rehabilitation programs, university extensions, 3D art sites, and much more, training is a great way to keep your skills up and expand your credibility and authority.
Press kits and business Web sites contain much of the same type of information. They’re often your first contact with prospective clients. First impressions last. Make sure it’s a favorable one. Consistently promote your brand and USP in your materials. Use this table as the guideline to determine the type of content you use when constructing your Web site.

Today’s color printer technology and printing/copy shops let you assemble a very effective and professional presentation for your 3D art company without ever having to go to a commercial printer. Proper formatting and high-quality paper can give you a press kit that looks like you spent thousands. Don’t be shy about looking at your competitors’ offerings or at those of other companies that have invested heavily in their brochures. You’ll find that the design rules of thumb are simplicity and clean layout.

In many cases, your Web site content will substitute for a press kit. If you have permission to email a prospect, this will often be just as effective without the cost of mailing physical materials.

**Personalized Cover Letter**

Include a personalized cover letter whenever you send out a press kit. Also do this when introducing a new prospect to your Web site. You want your prospect to know that you personally sent your material to them and that it isn’t just another mass-mailed marketing brochure or spam. You should already have conversed with the prospect, researched their Web site, and gotten some specific information from a referral source. This is plenty for you to properly personalize your letter.

The letter should also include a statement of what your company has to offer the prospect that applies to them. Have a generic letter but fine-tune and personalize it each time you send it out. The more you
can present your product and service as the only solution for a prospect, the more effective your marketing efforts will be. Remember, marketing is all about your clients and the value you offer them.

**Company Products & Services**

Your products and services sheet should be a professionally-printed four-color slick that summarizes your company’s offerings and includes samples of great 3D art. Use brochures from your last trade show as guidelines. If you have a decent meme and have minimal copywriting skills, you should be able to put together a professional-looking slick using your word processor. Same for this part of your Web site.

Strive to create timeless brochures and slicks. “In business for 10 years” will be out of date next year. “Founded in 1995” is timeless because your starting date will never change. Pictures of employees are also inadvisable because people come and go. Do all you can to create a set of printed promotional materials that will last you for years.

**Company Backgrounder**

The company backgrounder summarizes your company’s identity. It describes your 3D art company in a way that leaves the reader with a sense of who your company is, where it’s been, the culture, and what it’s trying to achieve. A company backgrounder should include:

- History
- Founder’s background
- Important milestones
- Vision
- Mission statement
- When the company was founded
- Strategic partnerships
- Financing
- Product & Services summary
- Key customers
- Executive management team
- Board of Directors
- Location(s)
- Trademarks and patents

**White Papers/Art Samples**

White papers demonstrate your technical expertise in your selected industry. Prospects tend to view these as educational rather than promotional, which makes white papers great for growing your relationships with your prospects and clients. Developing white papers and including those relevant to the prospect’s problem can quickly establish you as an expert in the area that they need.

As a 3D art company, you must have plenty of relevant samples on hand. Include these with your press kits or on your Web site.
Press Releases
Include recent and appropriate press releases in your press kit or Web site. Press releases lie somewhere between advertising and news and do create some credibility. The more your press release relates to your prospect’s problems, the more impact it has.

References & Testimonials
This section really depends on the size and type of 3D art business that you have. If you’re just starting out, testimonial letters may make a big impression. You could have a sheet with quotes or testimonial excerpts presented in a professionally formatted document.

References and testimonials prove that you have satisfied other companies with your services. When physicians see that other physicians use your services, they become more interested. When a business owner states that your 3D art solutions saved them money, other business owners become intrigued, especially if they have similar needs. You get attention when your 3D art is featured in a major production, a bestselling book, etc.

Case Studies
Case studies are a more formal way of creating a meaningful connection between the services you offer, the companies you’ve worked with, and the prospects you’re trying to influence. Design your study to speak to your target market. Show similarities with the company in the case study and your target market. Create a bridge so the prospect says, “They’ve already solved my problem for somebody else successfully.”

Professional Affiliations & Certifications
When your prospect sees you as part of a professional community and that you have certifications, it increases both your credibility and your attractiveness as a vendor. Acquire and use your credentials strategically. If your 3D art practice specializes in medical illustration, a membership in the Association of Medical Illustrators could be a competitive advantage. If you specialize in promotional pieces, you could benefit from belonging to the Guerrilla Marketing Association.

Some prospects have more interest in your certifications than your degrees. They normally know that a formal institution has performed a level of due diligence on you, the vendor. The certification demonstrates that you have a standard knowledge base in the area and that you passed a more sophisticated evaluation than your prospects could normally subject you to.

Client List
A client list can be a very persuasive component of your marketing package, especially if the prospect knows and respects some of the companies you list. The list shows that you’ve had some clients and that you’ve performed so well that they let you proudly list them in
your promotional materials. It’s as close to a referral as you can get without one party knowing the other.

**Published Articles**

Be sure and include any published articles in your press kit or website. If you wrote the article, this will accomplish two objectives. First, it shows that you have enough expertise to write about the subject. Second, you were validated by an industry journal because it was published.

Articles about your company contain a strong message. Most business people understand that media attention doesn’t come easily. Since you got that attention, you must have something special going for you.

**Honors or Awards**

Honors or awards look good, especially if they are significant (artist of the year, community service award, outstanding achievement awards, etc.). These are yet another form of validation from outside sources that carry weight with the prospect.

**Business Card**

Always include your business card with every piece of mail that goes out your door. It must go with your press kit and any brochure you mail. Many business people still use Rolodexes and they need your card for their file.

Don’t worry about sending your card repeatedly. No one minds getting more than one business card from you. They might give the extra one to somebody that needs your services.

**How to Distribute**

You’ll want a thoughtful plan for distributing your press kit because of the significant cost of producing each one.

**Targeted Mailing**

You don’t want to send your press kit in a mass mailing, but you can send it to a targeted list. Start with a small list of prospects where you can reach a decision maker. You might want to send a mailing to one or two hundred fellow chamber of commerce or rotary members. You could send them to other offices in your building as you announce an open house. Again, keep the list small and ensure that the chances are very high that you’ll get a contract. Press kits are not branding vehicles. The assumption is that there is a strong belief that the prospect is more than a suspect.

**Conference & Meeting Planners**

If you’re pursuing speaking engagements, send your press kit to a targeted list of conference and meeting planners that are appropriate to your speech and/or 3D art business. Be sure to customize the cover.
letter for each recipient (at least for name and address). If you don’t know who to send it to, find out. You won’t be taken seriously if it’s perceived as a mass mailing.

**Follow-up**

You should always follow-up within a few days to see if the recipient has had a chance to review the press kit. Ask them if they have any questions (another good reason for not doing mass mailings). Often a busy prospect will set your package in their not-so-urgent pile. Your call prompts them to at least get conscious about the package and look into it further. It gives you the opportunity to make a connection and impression, so make the best of it.

**STATIONARY AND OTHER IMAGE PRODUCTS**

You might want to get some professional assistance in designing your stationary, especially your meme. Your meme is one of the most important pieces of your suite of image products because it will begin to set the overall impression of your 3D art company in the client’s mind. Make sure there is consistency with each piece of stationary and other image products including:

- Letterhead
- Envelopes
- Mailing Labels
- Invoices
- Proposals
- Email signatures

**Business Cards**

Business cards are a standard method of communicating your name, meme, USP, identity, and content information to a prospect or client. A business card is an opportunity to stand out from the pack, pun intended. It should be on professional paper and include all of the required information: meme, company name, title, address, phone, fax, website, email, and USP (unique selling proposition or competitive advantages).

If it’s appropriate for your particular 3D art business, include a coupon on the back for a free consultation, a discount, or one hour of consulting. This makes your card valuable and helps persuade the prospect to keep it. It also decreases the initial resistance to buy from you. You can leave the card blank and hand write a selling offer addressing a particular prospect’s need. You should also consider putting testimonials on the back.

Don’t be shy about passing out your cards. It is one of the least expensive ways of circulating your company’s name, and there are lots of creative ways to distribute them. Make it a game to pass out as many cards as possible in places that have

When I’m at a business function thick with prospects, I’ll pay the valet for two or more cars and give him my business cards and say, “I would like to pay for the next X cars out, please give the drivers my card.” It has resulted in several new clients.
potential for business. You never know when your card will land in front of the right person at the right time. Here are some ways to get your card out:

- With every bill, article clipping, or correspondence you send to clients.
- With every piece of mail that goes to prospects.
- Attached to your newsletters.
- Every time you pay a bill, especially to strategically important vendors.
- To employee candidates. Our standard letter acknowledging the receipt of a resume includes a business card.
- A friend of mine throws stacks of cards at LA Lakers games when there is an exciting score.
- As a part of a referral letter with your partners. Have them put their name on the back and compensate them for the referral.
- To waiters at business dining establishments.
- Distribute at every networking function.
- Pass out at your seminars and speaking engagements.
- Technology trade shows, even if you know you’ll get sales calls.
- Hand out your card to every person you meet at a prospect’s business.

**NETWORKING**

**Networking with Other 3D Artists**

My experience with this kind of networking runs from the worst to the most rewarding investment of time. The worst investments occurred early in my career when a group of synergistic colleagues would band together with dreams of 1+1+1 = 20. We verbally agreed that we were non-competitive and would send work each others way for mutual benefit. A written agreement wasn’t necessary- or so we thought.

I learned that written agreements are necessary to clearly articulate not only how we would operate as a partnership but what the added value of the relationship entailed. See the section on *Relationships* for more complete information on networking.

**PRO BONO WORK**

Pro bono means providing a project or service for a client with the intention of not charging for it in advance. There are some strong reasons for working for free. If you’re just starting out, pro bono work can provide you references and referrals as you build your client base.

Unless you have an absolutely compelling reason, never do pro bono work for any organization except a non-profit. If your client is getting paid, so should you. The last thing you want is to be labeled as a 3D artist who works for free.

The advantages of providing free services to a non-profit are:
You can issue press releases and get publicity about your support of this very newsworthy class of organization. You can list them on your company materials as a client. You are getting experience in an environment that is much more accepting of mistakes than a paying client. You may gain promotion to sponsors who are legitimate prospects for your 3D art company. You feel good about yourself for contributing to a worthy cause.

Look for pro bono opportunities that maximize your potential to acquire paying clients from your services.

**ADVERTISEMENT**

Advertisement is crucial for some businesses but only works for 3D art in specialized cases. If your market is reachable through a particular medium that is highly targeted, then consider advertising as a supplement.

**Traditional Phonebooks, Listings, and Resources**

For some types of 3D art such as logos, brochures, posters, etc. that have a broad market appeal and a low price tag, phone books may work. No one will contract a major art project from someone out of the yellow pages. Use common sense here.

**Online Vehicles**

The Internet can work for your advertising because you can reach narrow markets through search engines and vertical market-oriented websites. You can definitely produce results on pay-per-click systems like Overture and Google where you buy keywords and only pay for a click. This can work to your advantage if your 3D art specialty is very narrow and you’re seeking clients nationally or internationally. This may be the only way your prospects can find you.

**Community Sites**

If your product or service is directly targeted at one of the online communities, by all means consider advertising on that site. You can do this in one of two ways: a straight fee for a given number of impressions, or via an affiliate program that pays on performance.

**Search Engines**

You can also buy search listings on Yahoo!, Google, and others. You can get on most of the major portals for under $1000. These systems are change constantly. You should research and determine the latest strategies and methodologies.
Internet Yellow Pages

If your 3D art business makes sense for traditional phonebooks, then it also makes sense to use Internet phone listings. My network consulting business is now getting more calls from the Internet side than phone books. We have increased our marketing efforts in these areas.

Quick-Result Strategies

If you’re just getting started or if you’re in a down period, you may need some strategies that get results now. These aren’t tactics that will consistently bring in business, but they can work quickly if you work hard and follow-up.

Former Employers

3D artists overlook the good will they’ve created with former employers. Even if your supervisor never wants to talk to you again, there are probably other people in the organization you had a solid relationship with who you can contact.

Make a list of all the people that would view you favorably. Contact them with a personal letter or email letting them know what you are doing and that you’re actively seeking clients. Tell them about the services you offer and, when appropriate, let them know that you pay a finder’s fee.

Existing Database

Go through your database and identify every contact that has potential for business. Use the Internet to help identify something unique. Have they published an article, changed jobs, received a promotion, or given a speech? You can find volumes of information about people on the Internet. Do a little research.

Send them a personal letter, email, or a call letting them know that you saw their name, wanted to congratulate them, stay in touch, and let them know what you do. Be sincere and warm and don’t come off as selling. Update your database and follow-up where appropriate.

Brokers

Although this is always near the bottom of my list, brokers can sometimes fill a need. If you just need cash flow and have time on your hands, a 3D art broker such as DAZ 3D (www.daz3d.com), Renderosity (www.renderosity.com), or TurboSquid (www.turbosquid.com) may solve some problems. Be careful not to over-commit; you need time to market yourself for more lucrative assignments.

Specialize or Offer Small Projects

One way to bring in some business is find a small need and fill it like no one else. Align and focus your marketing on this very specialized
need. Companies always have projects for which they could use some 3D art. New brochures, memes, logos, flyers, demo reels - the list is virtually endless. Analyze your skill set against these specialized needs to find a niche to fill.

Once you identify the need, determine the portion of your market that needs your 3D art. Come up with a cost-effective way to reach this market and to communicate your specialty and quality in this segment.

If you have an existing database of current or inactive clients, you can systematically contact them to promote your service. Phone calls produce the fastest results and give you a chance to probe for other opportunities. Script out your message, be enthusiastic, and make the call.

**Cold Calling**

For every client who is satisfied with their current graphic art solution, there is another one who isn't. If you have time on your hands and a tough skin, cold calling can work. For details on maximizing your success, see the section on telephone marketing. For best results, have your Web site ready to show them and provide an easy-to-communicate URL. A picture says a thousand words; this can be very effective when communicating to somebody who knows nothing about your company.

**MARKETING TO EXISTING CLIENTS**

Marketing to existing clients is even more important than marketing to prospects. Why? Because the marketing dollars you spend here will generate a much greater return on your investment than with prospects in almost every case. You will spend less time and money with existing clients because you already have a relationship that’s moved beyond the first (and hardest) buy step. Despite this, most 3D artists overlook existing clients out of the mistaken belief that simply providing quality art is enough to keep a client. And it is - until the next 3D artist comes along and pitches them.

**Delight Your Clients**

I have heard many theories about how to ensure client satisfaction ranging from quality work, cost-effectiveness, attitude and likeability, communication, to many other supposed “silver bullets”. I certainly believe that all of those things do contribute to a satisfied client. There is, however, a much simpler way to consistently delight your clients.

Exceed their expectations. The key to making a profit AND having satisfied clients is to carefully manage expectations by under-promising and over-delivering. I have watched many talented 3D artists deliver solutions whose value far exceeded their compensation but without satisfying their clients. These artists promised more than they delivered in scope, quantity, quality, or time frame. They over-promised.
Many of these problems occur at the beginning of the relationship. Most people feel that over-promising is part of the selling process. Don’t do it. The best way to secure clients and under-promise is to start promising little things long before the prospect is a client. Promise a follow-up letter by the end of the week and deliver it early. Promise to send one link that will be helpful to the client and send several with a thoughtful executive summary. Roughly estimate a job at $20,000 and bring your proposal in at $15,000. Each time you exceed the prospect’s expectations, you satisfy and delight them. Under-promising and over-delivering is a sure way to turn prospects into clients.

**Ask What Their Expectations Are**

Develop and use a standard questionnaire whenever you first meet with a prospect. Some questions you’ll want to ask include:

- How have other 3D artists failed to meet your expectations in the past?
- What do you expect from your 3D artists?
- What do I need to do to meet or exceed your expectations?

What I have found interesting is that the answers are mostly the same:

- Do what you say you’re going to do.
- Be on time.
- Communicate with me about any key issue that arises during the course of our relationship.

This becomes your roadmap to a satisfied client. Carefully manage expectations at every step and you will be successful.

**Managing Expectations**

The key to managing expectations is to make sure the prospect or client clearly understands and agrees on just what those expectations are. The most effective way to clarify expectations is in writing. Follow-up in writing and document any commitments. Use either a letter or email, and be explicit about any expectation or promise that was made.

"John, it was nice talking to you this afternoon. We agreed that I would send you a proposal by Tuesday of next week. The proposal will address problem a, b, and c and will include our cost estimates. I will contact you after sending the proposal to discuss further."

Before making any commitment, you should know that you can easily deliver earlier than promised. You should consistently deliver early or when committed. Never be late.
Dependability

Clients want dependable vendors and you have a big say in what constitutes dependability. If a prospect asks for something tomorrow and you know you can’t deliver, say so. The worst thing you can do is delude yourself into thinking that you can work all night to deliver. Clients will respect you when you tell them up front about realistic time frames. Be willing to discuss alternatives but don’t risk agreeing to do something if there is a chance of failing.

If a prospect still demands that you meet the deadline, it’s a sign of things to come. My experience is that these are the clients you will rarely please. They habitually have unrealistic expectations and you will rarely meet their expectations, let alone exceed them. Proceed with caution, if at all.

Time

Time is paramount for managing and exceeding client expectations. I cover time in detail in the Time Management section. Remember that you control your time, not the other way around. Be thoughtful about time commitments and get in the habit of being on time for your appointments, phone calls, correspondence, and project schedules.

The rule of tripling my estimates that I learned as a software developer has proven useful time and time again. You must plan for contingencies. If something can go wrong, it often will, especially when you have multiple clients and responsibilities. Always give yourself plenty of time for appointments and scheduled deliverables. As a professional 3D artist, being late is unacceptable. Mathematically speaking:

\[
\text{Having an Excuse + Being Late} \neq \text{Being on Time}
\]

Quality

Quality starts with thoroughly understanding what constitutes value according to the client. You can deliver the most professional 3D art or animation on earth, but if it doesn’t meet the client’s expectations and doesn’t provide more value to their organization than they’re paying you, they will not perceive your deliverable as quality.

Clearly establish the client’s expectations and the benefits associated with solving the problems in writing. This is an interactive process with the prospect or client. For example, you may encounter situations where missing a specified launch window because of missing deliverables might waste lots of marketing or other dollars. In such a situation, offering fancy features that extend the deadline won’t increase the quality of your services but will make you look irresponsible.

Perception is everything. Delivering quality products and services comes in two categories: the tangible, which is what you’ve contractually agreed to do in writing, and the intangible, which is your going the extra mile by over-delivering.
**The Tangible**

Summarize your agreement in a concise list of deliverables. Make it the key focus throughout the project. Get signoff on this list and acknowledgement that you are fulfilling the quality of services expected by the agreement.

**The Intangible**

The intangible is about managing perception. This means you must stand out from the crowd with virtually every level of correspondence, reports, response time, returning phone calls, and any touch point between you and the client. Spend time creating proposal, letter, and other communication systems so that every time the prospect or client hears from you, it leaves an impression that creates the perception of quality.

**Cost**

Money measures the exchange of value between two parties. In order for a client to be satisfied with the cost of your services, you need to deliver more than you’re paid for, as defined by the client.

If you find yourself continually bidding against competitors on price, you need to change your strategy. Building systems that not only make you the best solution, but the only solution is the path to profitability and satisfied clients.

One last thing about cost: if the client asks you to reduce your price, ask them what benefits they want removed. You’ll be surprised how often they end up finding additional budget to implement the project as proposed. If you don’t, they’ll almost certainly feel like you padded the project and will treat you accordingly on the next bid.

**Communication**

Communication is critical to creating satisfied clients. You’ll never have a client tell you that you communicated too often. Develop a communication style that is welcome, easily understood, and that clearly articulates the status, response, or query.

Less is more. If you send a status update by mail, try to keep it to one paragraph. Use bullets and be concise. If you’re not sure, let somebody review you correspondence before you send it and ask them what they think you communicated. Make sure that you’re not making assumptions, but don’t hide the facts in long explanation.

Outline an outcome for each communication before you write or call. Ask yourself what the key message you need to communicate is. Write this down to provide focus during the call or while writing the correspondence.

**Client Visits**

Depending on the type of 3D art services you offer, client visits can play a big role in your client communication program. Visiting the client site, talking with the people internally involved with your project,
getting feedback on how you’re doing, etc. all contribute to creating client satisfaction.

Don’t want for your final deliverable to do this. By then, you won’t have time to react and correct a problem if it exists. Get in the habit of asking pointed questions around deliverables and expectations. Use this as an opportunity to reinforce the good work you’ve done and the commitments you’ve delivered on. Listen. Use the 80/20 rule where you listen 80% of the time and talk 20% of the time.

**Debriefings**

Conduct a project debriefing with the client and team that you’ve worked with at the end of every project. The client will appreciate your professional conduct and it gives you a perfect opportunity to reinforce the relationship prior to subsequent work.

Focus the meeting on what worked, what didn’t work as well as planned, and how the process can work more effectively in the future. If you’ve started discussing a future project already, use it as an example of how to improve things next time. It makes the project more real and provides you a roadmap on how to increase your client’s satisfaction.

When discussing what worked, rephrase the client’s assessment in your own words and try to tie it to a benefit. Show the value of your work without being too self-promoting.

Discussing what problems didn’t get resolved is often an opportunity to identify additional work. If the problems were not within the current project scope, tactfully communicate that and set the stage for the next project. If there are problems that did not get resolved that were within the scope of the project, you should quickly resolve these.

Always finish on a positive note, reiterating the points the client made on what they feel satisfied with. Ask directly if they are satisfied with your work. If you have led the meeting properly and performed the work, the client should not hesitate to state their satisfaction.

**Client Feedback Questionnaire**

It’s important to conclude every project of any importance with a client feedback questionnaire. This complements the debriefing and provides valuable feedback that not only allows you to improve the satisfaction with the client answering the questionnaire, but provides a tool for increasing the satisfaction of all your clients.

It sends a clear message that their satisfaction is important and that you are willing to change your approach if necessary in order that they be satisfied. Encourage them to be candid and then take proactive steps to correct any problem.
Conduct

Your personal conduct and attitude have a dramatic effect on your client’s perception of quality. Use positive words, phrases, tone, and questions. This approach dramatically impacts client satisfaction. I’m not suggesting that you sugarcoat every communication. I do suggest communicating in a positive, confident, and upbeat fashion.

Be ethical and professional. You want your clients to welcome you into their inner circle and to enjoy their confidence. This means that you need to operate from a place of integrity and professional competence in everything you do. This starts with little things like not drinking or smoking in front of the client or fraternizing with the client’s employees. Your behavior must always be beyond reproach.

OVER DELIVER

After getting a solid handle on managing your client’s expectations, your next step is to simplify the process of delivering more than they expect. Create manuals, reports, guide books, and other printed matter that you can build once, but which each client will welcome time and time again. Make it easy for the client to use these documents internally. Write well and succinctly and format your documents to the client’s internal templates where possible. Even offer to make presentations to other key people in the client’s organization.

Make meetings more productive. Use agendas, send information in advance, carefully document, and deliver minutes whenever possible. Keep meetings on time and maximize their value.

Differentiate yourself from your many competitors in this manner. Put yourself in the client’s position. Find out what they need related to the project that they might not even know they need, then deliver it.

BE PART OF THE INTERNAL TEAM

When a client begins to view you as part of the team and not just an outside artist, you’re on your way to a long-term relationship. Do your best to let each of their internal team members view you as a valuable contributor. It will take some political juggling on your part as some people may view you as a threat.

The first step to building your place on the team is helping educate them that the project is worthwhile and will benefit the company. When everyone feels like they are making a tangible difference, they are motivated to contribute. Try to identify the value to both the client company and to each member of the team.

Next, provide a framework for the project, especially if that is your responsibility. If you’re the expert, provide insight into the process, the time frame, and the actions required. People want predictability and feedback that their participation is moving the project forward.

Use the meetings and your interactions with team members as a vehicle for acknowledging accomplishment, both yours and theirs.
You’ll become comrades in a worthwhile goal. Celebrate your completion.

Many projects in organizations are less than successful. In fact, many are complete failures. By helping manage the project through to successful completion, the team members will naturally promote subsequent projects with you. Everybody wants to be on the winning team.

**START SELLING BEFORE YOU’RE DONE**

Frequent communication with key contacts in the client organization and training yourself to find worthwhile problems to solve should help identify follow-on projects before you complete any current work. Make it a habit to understand the client’s business, industry, and how your 3D art solutions solve problems in those arenas.

Start educating the key client contacts on the problems and their costs. Starting this process early may give you the green light for a subsequent project before you complete the first one. Include these issues as part of your reports. Gently condition your clients without beating them over the head. Remember, at this point, you’re a paid and respected advisor, so they’re looking to you for advice. See the section on *Up Sell* for more strategies.

**EDUCATE**

As an advisor and expert, you perform services beyond a company or department’s scope of knowledge or experience. Many businesspeople, 3D artists certainly included, want to keep their clients in the dark and appear as a magician. The reality, however, is that nobody wants to pay for things they don’t understand - at least not for long.

By proactively educating your client, you become a trusted advisor like an attorney or accountant. Your client will feel more comfortable making buying decisions when they understand your solutions and why some options are better choices than others.

When a client questions you at any time during the process, do your best to answer these questions to their satisfaction. You’re the expert. You should have the answers. You can create a tremendous amount of good will by educating your client in the following areas.

**Your 3D Art Solutions**

The education process regarding your 3D art solutions should start with your marketing materials, form an integral part of your proposals, and should continue through your post-project report. Educate your client on why your 3D art solutions are the most optimal and cost-effective (but not necessarily cheapest) way to solve their problem.
Your Client’s Business

Understanding your client’s business enhances the value you bring to the table. By expanding your knowledge beyond the technical application of your 3D application and then educating your client, you increase the perceived value of your services. Articulate the basics of how your solutions work and integrate into your client’s business. Identifying how similar businesses have solved their problems using the 3D art solutions you offer makes you far more likely to receive additional work that is valuable to your client- and to you.

Your Client’s Industry

Pay attention to your client’s industry. Read trade journals and technical articles that pertain to the industry, then educate your client as part of your communication process.

CLIENT COMPLAINTS

Manage complaints well and you will keep more clients. You must have a quality service program in place and avoid giving your clients a reason to complain. But things can and do happen. If it happens to you, proactively resolving the complaint will allow you to retain most clients. A recent customer service survey revealed the following interesting facts:

- On average (regardless of industry) 50% of consumers complain about a problem to a front-line person. For business-to-business customers, this figure is 75%.
- Complaint rates vary by type of problem. Cases involving monetary loss are complained about 50-75% of the time while mistreatment, quality, and incompetence result in complaints only 5-30% of the time.
- On average, twice as many people hear about bad experiences than good ones. The following chart exposes the impact of problem solving on customer loyalty:
Figure 25: Customer Complaints and Customer Loyalty

How Many Of Your Customers With Problems Will Buy From You Again?

Resolution on the first contact achieved 10% higher customer satisfaction than by multiple contacts.

Getting a new client costs 5 to 20 times as much as resolving a problem for a current client.

Dissatisfied customers result from employee actions 20% of the time, corporate products and services that have an inherent unpleasant surprise for the customer 40% of the time, and customer mistakes and incorrect expectations 40% of the time.

Last but not least, the survey determined that customers who complain and are then satisfied are up to 8% more loyal than customers that never had a problem!

**The Next Project**

The best time to sell the next project is during the current project. You already have the decision-maker’s confidence. As a competent 3D art professional, you should be expanding your influence in the organization. Being methodical and conscientious will make you highly successful at securing additional work. Here are some important elements to orchestrate in order to secure that next project:
Interview Key Team Members

Identifying additional client needs is the first step to getting that next contract. The best place to begin is with your internal team members on your current project(s). Leverage your relationship with them to understand the business as completely as possible. Using the current project as a base, identify all the systems, processes, and touch points associated with your project. Identify external departments, customers, and vendors who will be affected by your project and look for problems that need solutions.

Team members have a great deal of insight into that process; that’s why they have been assigned to the team. Probe with questions to determine overall system and process structure associated with your project. Discover what the big picture is because your project is a small piece of a big puzzle in many cases. The team members can appreciate your concern for your project’s success. They’ll help provide a roadmap into the additional work you seek.

Educate Client on Need

You’ve done your homework and identified additional work. Now, put yourself in your client’s shoes and do a thorough “client view” analysis. Pretend you’re the decision maker and ask the tough questions:

- What is the return on investment (ROI)?
- What are the real costs to implement this next phase? (Internal resources, downtime, etc.)
- What are the tangible benefits?
- How long will it take?

Treat this as the sales process it is, identify as many potential client objections as possible, and determine how you will overcome them. Once you’ve identified the project that has a high ROI and have documented the benefits, potential objections, and how you will answer these, you must begin to educate the client on the need.

Come up with some one-sentence phrases or “sound bites” to communicate to the client. These are high-impact phrases that communicate the whole problem, benefit, ROI or solution. Examples are:

- Switching from 2D to 3D art will save your company $XX,000 per year because you can reuse existing scenes without having to start over every time you want a change.
- Adding 3D images eliminates XX pages of descriptive text, thus saving $XX,000 in printing costs.
- Building a live set to obtain this image in a normal photo shoot costs $XX,000. We can reduce this by YY% if we do this in 3D.
- Creating a 3D animation reduces training time by X hours, which saves a total of Y hours per year, or $XX,000 at $YY per hour.

Use your sound bites whenever you discuss projects with decision makers and team members. Repetition is important. So is backup, because you never know when someone will challenge or inquire about your claim.
Start assembling an executive summary describing the project and send it to team members and decision makers as a memo. It’s your job as a professional advisor (and a 3D artist is certainly an advisor) to do this. Best of all, they won’t regard it a sales proposal, thus making it even more powerful.

**Groom Your Internal Champion**

If you don’t already have an internal champion (somebody who promotes, supports, and markets your services within the company), then get one. A champion is not a substitute for strong relationship with a decision maker but can be very effective in having a consistent voice in the company when you’re not onsite.

Provide this champion with reports, memos, and other project documents in a form they can easily communicate to other team members. Be a valuable asset to this champion and they will pave the road to a long-term relationship.

**Testimonials**

Testimonials are written endorsements of your 3D art company. At a minimum, you should have a formal process to solicit testimonials on successful completion of a project. Include these in PowerPoint presentations, press kits, websites, and even in press releases and product literature. Clients who step up and put their names on the line are incredibly valuable marketing tools. You might have to write the endorsement and you shouldn’t hesitate to do so. Summarize the work you’ve done for the client and the key benefits that you delivered in the client’s voice.

**Referrals**

A substantial part of your business can and should come from referrals (remember what we said about growing your 3D art business geometrically?). Provide extraordinary customer service and educate your clients and influencers about this fact. You must actively cultivate referrals instead of leaving them to chance. Remember, everything you do around marketing must be done intentionally.

**Referrals Start with Great Customer Service**

Great customer service is the foundation of great referrals, which in turn can and should generate a large part of your business. Invest in your business and your client’s satisfaction by doing excellent work.
Characteristics of a Referral Source

Understanding the characteristics of a strong referral source allows you to spend your time with the most qualified prospects. The optimum referral source must:

- have a relationship with your target client
- understand your target client profile
- be educated on what you do
- respect you and your company
- be respected by your target client
- be motivated to refer clients to you

Existing Clients

You should regularly ask for referrals, and you should have a formal referral program with your existing client base. My company simply sends a letter out regularly to our clients explaining that we would rather spend our money enhancing our services than marketing for business. We ask for referrals. We send coupons, business cards, and newsletters that they can distribute. We’re not pushy; we’re just make it very easy for satisfied customers to refer us.

Complementary Vendors

You will need a more formal referral arrangement with some vendors. The promise of mutual reciprocation rarely works. Immediate gratification does. If you’re clear about the value of the client calculated earlier in this section, then be generous with your fellow vendors when they bring in a client. If you’re going to make a profit of $10,000 over the life of the client, writing a check for $1000 to the referring party shouldn’t be painful. Do you want $9,000 or $0?

You may have friendships with some of these vendors. They are also business people and should be aiming to improve their bottom line. When you propose a solid cause and effect financial arrangement, you’ll get significantly better results.

Evaluate all of the non-competitive businesses that work with your target client. Examples of these are:

- Business coaches
- Web masters
- PR Firms
- SEO consultants
- Ad Agencies
- Book publishers
- Marketing consultants
- Instructional designers
- Technical writers
- 2D graphic artists (hey, you never know)

Make it worth their while and put your offer in writing. It could be a major source of new leads for you.
Seminar Participants

Your providing great value at your seminars could lead to a lucrative referral pipeline. But, like anything else, you must consciously cultivate the referrals. Include extra business cards or coupons in the seminar package and on your evaluation questionnaire. Specifically ask participants if they know anybody who could use your services or who should receive a discount coupon for your next seminar. Ask and you shall receive. You’d be absolutely amazed at what you can get just by asking for it.

Professional Services

Some of the best referral sources you have are the vendors who provide your company with professional services. You’re their client, so they’re naturally inclined to provide extra value. They also have a great deal of insight into the work you do and your success. Examples are:

- Bankers
- Leasing agents
- Real estate agents
- Recruiters
- Accountants
- Attorneys

Secondary sources that could surprise you are:

- Regular delivery people
- Vendor contacts (office supplies, hardware, etc.)
- Cleaning services (contact the managers or owners)

Cultivate and groom these sources of referrals. Behave professionally in all of your interactions. Keep them informed about new clients, products and services, press, and so on. Supply them with business cards and actively ask for referrals.

Other Referral Sources

Other referral sources may have already generated business for you without you having a formal referral system in place:

- Friends
- Members of your church
- Neighbors
- Employees
- Prospects – If they don’t buy, ask for a referral
- Members of other organizations you’re associated with – school, political, etc.
When to Ask for Referrals

Ask for referrals whenever you deliver a quality product or service. Sometimes you’ll get better results than others. Here are some guidelines on when to ask for referrals:

- After signing a contract.
- Periodically with a letter (say once a quarter)
- When successfully completing a project and your client signs the final approval.
- When a prospect turns you down. Guilt is a beautiful thing.
- When you’re doing a client satisfaction survey.
- When you’re calling an inactive client.
- When you’re calling an active client.

If you’re unclear about how to ask for a referral, here are some variations you can try:

"It was a real pleasure working with you and I look forward to our next project together. In the meantime, if you know somebody that needs quality 3D art services, I hope that you pass on what a good experience you had with our company and have them give us a call."

"I’m glad things are going well for you. Do you have any acquaintances that might need my 3D art services?"

Keep Them Informed

You should keep the referral source informed during the early part of the new relationship. You’ll get a sense of how much, but at least make a call to thank the source for the referral. Inform them that you’ve met, started a contract, and then ask if they want to stay informed on their referral.

You should almost always send a letter thanking the referral source. It’s polite and prudent. If it makes sense, you can send them a credit for your services, a dinner for two, or tickets to a ball game. Show your appreciation. It need not be extravagant but must always be sincere.

Motivating Referral Sources

Motivating the referral source depends on the kind of relationship you have with them. For an existing client, you may simply provide stellar service and request the referral. For vendors and professional relationships, setting up a mutually attractive commission structure is more effective.

Don’t forget to give referrals yourself. If you can comfortably recommend a company, you’ll build reciprocation credits and it doesn’t take a lot of effort on your part. Only refer businesses that can really deliver, then make sure you follow-up with the vendor to see how the relationship is going.
MARKETING YOUR 3D ART ONLINE

In today’s virtual world, you may well find your clients located around your state, nation, even the world. The Internet is the great equalizer that lets any business anywhere on the planet market to the entire planet. Small businesses can now compete on the same terms as the big market players. It’s a good bet that many Web sites are being run by individuals who might not even have an office beyond their spare bedroom or corner of their residence. A professional Web site and effective marketing eliminates all of the image problems that used to exist for small businesses.

With that said, there are a few things you need to know about marketing yourself in this brave new online world.

**Ten Commandments of Online Marketing**

If you plan to market online (and you must market online if you want the greatest possible success for your business), then you must learn and live by what I call the 10 commandments of online marketing. Live by nine of these and your success will be smaller and longer in coming. Live by only eight, and- you get the idea.

**Learn Offline Marketing**

A pilot must learn to fly small planes before getting behind the controls of a jumbo jet. Same with marketing. Offline marketing has been around since the dawn of humanity and will continue as long as there are humans. You must therefore learn how to market your business offline before learning how to use the Internet to its fullest advantage.

Why? Because everyone on the planet is jumping online. Google lists more Web pages than there are humans on the planet. The days of being able to slap up a Web site and expect lots of traffic are long gone. Today, one of the best uses of online marketing is to complement your offline marketing. Which brings me right back to the first commandment: If you want to succeed with your online marketing, first learn how to market yourself offline.

**Know Your Online Marketing Tools**

There are a number of ways to market your 3D art business online. These possibilities include but are not limited to:

- **Newsgroups.** If you have just about any interest from prim to prurient, there exists a newsgroup that caters to this interest. Find and subscribe to 3D art newsgroups as well as newsgroups that cater to your industry or industries of interest. Subscribing to newsgroups is a great way to keep abreast of the latest trends and fads and learn ways in which you can leverage them. Also, by posting information of value to newsgroups, you can position yourself as an expert in the eyes of potential clients.
Email. Email marketing is huge. You can choose to do direct email or to use newsletters, etc. to reach prospects and clients. Make sure you never spam anyone as this will quickly earn you a bad reputation among the people you are relying on to make your living. Opt-in methods are great because people have to give their permission to receive emails from you. And what is marketing all about? Gaining consent to receive more marketing. If you do use newsletters, give away information of value without ever coming off as selling yourself. If you are sending marketing emails, be sure to phrase them in terms of the benefits your clients will reap by doing business with you.

Forum boards. Like newsgroups, forum boards are a great way to meet and interact with others. The same rules apply here as for newsgroups. DAZ and Zygote both found many contractual resources from the online 3D art communities.

Classified Ads. Many Web sites have space where people such as you can post small classified ads for free or very low cost. Depending on your 3D art specialties, this may bring clients your way.

Search Engines. You can design your Web site to appeal to search engines, thus making your site easier to find by interested parties. I’ll go into more detail a little later.

Linking to Sites. The real beauty of most online media is that you can insert links to just about any other piece of online media from Web sites to video, text files, audio, applications, and more. Swapping links with clients and partners is a great way to increase your exposure for free. Just make sure you understand research how this system works in order to get the most from it.

Web Site. You need a Web site. Period. Why? Because your Web site is an online extension of yourself and your 3D art company. Your Web site can show off your portfolio, testimonials from past clients, your biography, art you might have for sale, links to pertinent sites, and more.

Hosting. If you have the equipment and bandwidth to do it, consider offering content or other hosting services to other artists, clients, etc. This increases your exposure to the world and to paying prospects.

Research. Want to find out just about anything on just about any subject, person, or company? The Internet makes research fast and easy.

Ecommerce. Imagine making money in your sleep. Through ecommerce, you can literally sell your 3D art 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. However, don’t be fooled into thinking that your Web site is a direct revenue tool. In other words, don’t rely on ecommerce. Some of the most effective Webs ties don’t sell a thing- they simply showcase products and services and invite clients to contact the company for more information. In other words, a Web site can be just one more of the many soft steps you offer to make the hard step of buying from you that much easier.

Pay Per Click. Pay Per Click (PPC) is very highly targeted advertising on the Internet. Go to Overture.com or Google Adwords for a full description.
Online Galleries. Posting your images in online galleries from the 3D communities to Webshots.com is a very effective tool for getting your name out there. The results, however, will only be as good as your art. Make fewer but higher quality images your priority for maximum impact.

How many online marketing tools can you use?

Manage Your Online Marketing

Like all marketing, online marketing is an ongoing process. Follow these steps when designing your online marketing campaign:

- **Planning.** Carefully plan your online marketing strategy. How will you design your Web site? What online marketing tools will you use? How does each of them contribute to your desired result? How will you create a series of soft steps that build prospects’ confidence in your and your 3D art business? Do you want to sell online or just provide information? All of these questions and many more go into planning your online marketing campaign. Think of it like designing a house (style, size, shape, number of rooms, where you’ll locate each door and window, etc.)

- **Content.** What content (art, video, audio, text) can you use to carry out your plan? Is this content customer-centric or me-centric? Does it clearly communicate your competitive advantages and give prospects lots of value and clear compelling reasons to do business with you?

- **Design.** What should your online marketing look like? What colors, images, fonts, layout, etc. will you use? Does each design element add to or detract from your company image? Do you look professional? Is your design easy to read and navigate and does it guide visitors in your intended directions?

- **Involvement.** To market online (or offline, for that matter), you must involve yourself with the vision, implementation, and management of this campaign. You can’t simply hand everything off to a Web designer or other party who has their best interests in mind instead of yours. It’s your 3D art company; you must run it. Your Web site is the best place to showcase your work.

- **Production.** You’ve laid your plans, assembled your content, and approved the design. Now it’s time to put your plans into action.

- **Follow-up.** Remember that fervent follow-up is one of the biggest drivers of your business success. Once your online marketing is in place, you’ve got to keep following up to make sure it meets your specifications and to track its performance.

- **Promotion.** Remember what I said about there being more Web pages than people on Earth? Building a Web site is not enough. You need to drive traffic to the site in the form of interested and qualified prospects. How do you do this? Through your other online marketing tools and through your offline marketing tools as well. Do you want clients calling you out of the blue and asking you the same old questions over and over again or do you want them to visit a Web site where they can learn about you and then call if they are really interested in your services?
Maintenance. Do you keep reading the same books or watching the same episodes of your favorite show over and over? Of course not. People tire of the same old thing and need something new and fresh to return to. Same with your Web site. Maintain it by adding new content and you will keep people coming back for more- and isn’t that the whole point of your marketing?

Capture Leads. You may only have one shot at a visitor to your Web site. Make sure you give them a big reason to subscribe to your newsletter and stay in touch. This is one of the most important lead capturing systems you can have.

Get The Most From Your Online Marketing

There are five ways to maximize your online marketing efforts and reap the most rewards from them:

- **Email list.** Prospects and clients on your opt-in email list are like gold. Grow your email list by offering great free value such as free 3D art, newsletters, etc. Get people to subscribe to your list and you’ll be able to do this without spamming anyone- a very good thing.

- **Great content.** The best way to convince people of your quality is to show it off. Display your art samples in a way that really shows them in their best light. Make sure that your text is free of typos, grammatical mistakes, etc. Your newsletters and other content should be of real interest and value to your target market(s).

- **High speed.** The Internet and other technology are connecting us in ways that let us instantly communicate with virtually anyone anywhere at any time. It is also vastly increasing the pace of life. People need answers and they need them now. You should therefore respond to inquiries and other communications within one day, preferably much faster. You can do this manually or via auto-responders.

- **Regular change.** We’ve covered the need for regularly changing your content above and include it here for emphasis. Keep your content fresh.

- **Personalization.** Remember how I’ve been telling you that the best way to market your 3D art services is to narrow down your target market as tightly as possible? This practice will have you marketing to relatively few people, however these people will be far more likely to buy, meaning that you will spend less and get far more for your efforts. Take the time and effort to make your online marketing as personal as possible. If you have the means to do so, find and use their names and other details of importance to your visitors, prospects, and clients.
Balance Your Efforts

Running a successful business requires that you balance the competing forces of forward-looking visionary, present-day technician, and past-looking manager. Online marketing requires its own balance of ingredients in order to succeed:

- **Development.** You can’t market online without having something to show such as a Web site, etc. Everyone gets this far. The next two ingredients are where most people have trouble.
- **Promotion.** Remember, if you build it, they will not come- unless you guide them there.
- **Maintenance.** I’ve mentioned this before and am reiterating it again because this is where most online marketers really drop the ball. Forget to regularly update your content and your online marketing campaign will fade into oblivion. Not the way to grow a thriving 3D art business.

Start An Epidemic

Marketers use the term “viral marketing” to describe marketing that involves you giving away content that people can use for free on their own Web sites provided they include a link back to your site. People viewing your content on the other person’s Web site will come to your site for more information and may even decide to use your content on their Web sites as well.

This practice is called viral marketing because it works just like a virus. One person with a cold comes in contact with someone else who catches that cold, who then passes it on to others. It’s an accurate, if unfortunate way to describe this particular kind of marketing- except that the "virus" you are spreading is valuable content that people will benefit from receiving.

If You Build It They Won’t Come

Simply building a Web site is not enough. That said, a Web site can help you market your 3D art business in many ways, including:

- Answering frequently asked questions.
- Showing off your 3D art.
- Establishing credibility with testimonials and links to past clients.
- Selling (in some cases).
- Building interest.
- Gathering subscribers for your email list.
- Offering content for viral marketing.
- Providing a place where you can exchange data with clients (if you have a secure server, for example).
- and much more.

Web sites and online marketing in general will rarely do the entire job of getting you paying clients- but it sure is a huge help.
Take Another Soft Step

All along, I’ve talked about marketing in terms of gaining consent and building relationships with prospects and clients using a series of very soft steps that take the sting out of the buying decision. Well, your Web site adds one or more new soft steps.

For example, your offline marketing can ask people to visit your Web site, which asks people to sign up for the 3D image of the week which you email to them. This in turn asks people to visit your Web site to download tutorials about how you build your images. The tutorial asks people to visit your Web site to see your resume, which leads to your client list, to testimonials, then to your phone number where people can call you to discuss projects.

Set up a series of soft steps and you’ll find that prospects who call you are already knowledgeable about you and your work and see the value you can offer to them. They are already excited by the idea of doing business with you.

In other words, your Web site has helped you close a deal in far less time and with far less effort than otherwise possible and it may not even offer a single thing for sale. Don’t be fooled into thinking that you need to sell something from your Web site. Remember that you are your product because your product would be impossible without you. Sell yourself and leave the product and service selling for the excited prospects who might just start contacting you- if you consistently use your online marketing campaign to its fullest potential.

Keep Marketing Offline

The best online marketing campaign in the world won’t substitute for offline marketing. In fact, you may find that your offline marketing is the prime driver of traffic to your online marketing, especially as your 3D art company grows and expands and you start spending more and more time fielding inquiries from prospects.

Think of your online marketing as one component of- but not a replacement for- your overall marketing efforts.

Tap The Power Of Affiliate Marketing

Affiliate marketing is fast-becoming the norm online and even offline. What is affiliate marketing? You find partners who will help you spread your message in exchange for a share of your revenue. If you provide 3D content, you can use one or more online content providers who will sell your content for a percentage of the total cost. This is just one example of how affiliate marketing can help your 3D art business.

Potential affiliates for 3D artists include:

- 3D Content providers
- Online art galleries
- 3D communities
- Industry associations
- Ecommerce vendors
- Marketing firms
MARKETING YOUR 3D ART

- Graphic design firms
- Other 3D artists
- and many, many more.

MAXIMIZING YOUR WEB SITE TRAFFIC

After your Web site is up, there are many ways to increase the traffic to that site. I’ve discussed some of these above. In this section, I’m going to talk about two specific tools that will help you manage your online marketing campaign.

Alexa

What if you could access your competitor’s web statistics? What if you could see how much traffic they have, the average number of page views, what other sites their visitors went to? What if you could tell how successful a campaign was or if their recent press release had any impact? Would that be a strategic advantage for you? I certainly think so.

Alexa.com (named for the Library of Alexandria) began in 1996. It gives people information about Web sites that they can’t get as easily or as quickly anywhere else. Amazon.com purchased the company in 1999 for a quarter billion dollars in Amazon stock.

The Alexa Toolbar

The Alexa Toolbar is an incredible marketing research tool available from Alexa.com. Think of Alexa as the Nielsen Ratings for the Internet. Installing the Alexa Toolbar lets you see a ranking of every major Web site on the Internet. It’s a relative ranking that, while biased towards the US, still provides incredibly useful information. A traffic ranking of 10,000 means that there are 9,999 Web more popular sites, with every other Web site on the Internet being less popular. Is your competitor claiming that they are the most popular Web site of their kind on the Internet? Alexa lets you judge for yourself. No Data means that the Web site may have some visitors but that none of them use the toolbar or that the site in question is not significant enough to measure.

As a consumer, you can see how popular a Web site is and whether it’s genuine. Alexa shows historical trends graphically for the top 100,000 websites on the Internet so you can see if a Web site is getting more or less popular. You can also do graphical comparisons between two Web sites (such as you and your competitor). The site also displays reach per million surfers and average number of page views per visitor in both graph and table form.

Alexa also has a variety of other useful statistics about Web sites. It lists the number of important links to that site, a factor when it comes to Search Engine Optimization (SEO). This excludes most “link farms” and relatively less important Web site links and also shows where the visitors are spending their time on a Web site and what other Web sites those visitors are surfing.
They also show Web site and top category listings for a number of vertical markets. Want to find out the top sports, business, or even photography sites? It's all there. This is really useful when you're looking for the dominant players in your market and trying to emulate the best in your category.

Anyone can get the great information on Alexa just by going to the Web site. However, as a businessperson, you should install the toolbar for real-time analysis of every Web site you visit. It will tell you the relative ranking of every Web site you visit and will instantly show related Web sites that may aid in finding whatever you're looking for.

You can download the toolbar now from www.alex.com.

**Overture**

Ever wonder how people search for things on the Internet? What if you knew exactly what words they typed when using a search engine? As a professional 3D artist, you need to know the most popular search terms relating to your specific niche.

Overture is a Yahoo! company that supplies the Pay Per Click infrastructure for Yahoo! and other Web sites. Do a search on Yahoo! and you'll see anywhere from 1-3 paid promotions at the top of the search page with the others at the end. These paid advertiser listings come from Overture.

**The Overture Search Tool**

Overture supplies a keyword tool that lets their customers know the most popular keywords relating to their product or service. This allows Overture customers to select the most popular and/or pertinent keywords for their product or service. This generates more revenue for Overture and more clicks for advertisers. Fortunately, you need not be an Overture customer to use the search tool. Simply visit http://inventory.overture.com.

The best way to get started is by typing in a major word associated with your particular business. Here are the top five search terms and their search count for the keyword "3D art" for the month of January, 2005:

- 3D art (133,245)
- digital art 3D (6,311)
- 3D fantasy art (838)
- 3D computer art (542)
- 3D art gallery (471)

This search count number represents about 20% of the Internet, so multiply it by 5 to get an approximate number of searches for the entire Web. In this case, the total searches for “3D art” come to 133,245*5=666,225 searches across the Internet for 3D art during the listed month.

**Using Overture Data**
The value of this search tool goes far beyond finding popular search terms. Here's a few ways to use the tool for your market research:

- Type in your state or city to find out the most popular searches.
- Compare the number of searches for your product compared to those of your competitors.
- Use the most popular search terms relating to your business for your Web site domain names to increase their visibility in search engines.
- Use it to brainstorm new products or services, especially if something is being searched for but is not widely available.
- Consider a celebrity endorsement or joint venture partner for your next Internet promotion, compare the various candidates, and make an informed decision.
- Use it for determining market size or segmentation information for your business plan.
- Use it to drive all your Web content, from web page titles to meta tag keywords and descriptions.
- Use it to determine which categories to list your business in, from Internet to Yellow Page listings.
- Use it to determine important searches relative to your business in foreign cultures and countries that you are unfamiliar with.

The Overture search tool removes the guesswork from many of your marketing decisions. Use it to choose Pay Per Click keywords or to decide the next market your 3D art company should pursue. The wealth of available information will amaze you. You can try the search tool now at the Overture Web site.

**Tips For Optimizing Your Web Site For Search Engines**

The vast majority of people who surf the Internet (including your prospects) use search engines and directories to find Web sites. Search engines are like online versions of the phone book except that search engines have all kinds of analysis tools (such as Alexa and Overture) that no phone book will ever have.

The great number of people using search engines can make your site's position in their searches critical for the success of your 3D art business. You want to make sure that your prospects can find you. The process of ensuring that search engines put your information where you want it is called search engine optimization (SEO). Be warned that this can be a time consuming process that can require many specialized skills and resources. You might want to engage the services of a dedicated SEO company to do this for you.

Here are some general tips that will help you optimize your site or select a service to do this for you. Note that these tips are generic. Each search engine has its own specific rules about how it ranks sites.

**Have Great Content**

This is the single largest factor behind a great search engine ranking. Load your content full of value that keeps people coming back for
more, and phrase it using the keywords and phrases you researched using Alexa and Overture.

**Keep It Simple**
Design your Web site to be easily navigable. Include information and other features such as meta titles and descriptions that search engines can use when analyzing your site. In other words, design your site with the search engines in mind.

**Use Popular Keywords**
Use Alexa and Overture to help you pick out the best keywords for your Web site in terms of relevance and popularity. The above example shows you how even a small variation can have a huge impact on your search engine rankings.

**Show It All**
Avoid using invisible text and other programming tricks to spoof the search engines. It might work for a little while but could severely hurt you in the long run through reduced rankings and even blacklisting.

**Don’t Hog The Internet**
Unscrupulous businesspeople are fond of setting up dozens of Web sites, hundreds, or sometimes even more. Each Web site caters to different keywords without the content truly reflecting those selected words. Spamming used to be reserved for email but has come of age with Web sites designed to spam search engines. Don’t do this. If you need multiple sites, create them- but make sure each of them has a unique business purpose complete with unique content that relates to your selected key words.

**Once is Enough**
Another favorite trick of less-than-savory online marketers is repeating the same keywords over and over in an attempt to fool search engines into boosting their rankings. Here again, this can result in blacklisting.

**Avoid Frames**
Frames make it difficult or even impossible for search engines to fully analyze your site. If the search engine cannot see the relevance between your keywords and your content, you will be the one paying the price. Avoid frames.

**Minimize Distractions**
Extras such as Flash animations and heavy JavaScript can reduce a search engine’s ability to scan your site and rank it properly. Pure Flash sites rarely achieve high ranking in the search engines; be careful.
The Truth About Redirects

Redirects do have their place, however some online marketers use them to try to trick search engines into thinking the site is about Topic A while redirecting visitors to another site about Topic B. Most search engines can see right through this ruse, avoid pages with redirects, and instead search the target page. Redirects neither help nor hurt.

Alt Tags

Alt tags are meant to provide textual information when a user hovers the mouse cursor above an image. Some online marketers try to pack these tags full of keywords. Don’t.

Comment Tags

Comment Tags embed invisible design notes for the Web designer/programmer’s reference and convenience. Stuffing comment tags with keywords is a definite no-no.

Meta Tags

The term “meta Tag” describes special tags that appear in the heading section of most Web pages. They provide search engines with keywords and phrases that help set the site’s indexing and relevance. Meta tags used to play a key role in search engine optimization but this is no longer the case thanks to hordes of Web designers who misused them. Your visible text is of far greater importance. This is why overly graphical Web sites and those with varying forms of hidden text are such a bad idea, penalties and possible blacklisting aside.

Automatic Search Engine Submission

Lots of software out there will submit a Web page to lots of search engines, sometimes repeatedly. These methods are far less effective than careful manual optimization and can result in penalties and blacklisting. Completely avoid automated search engine submission tools. Submit your site to the important search engines and every other search engine that matters will find you automatically.

Get Professional Help

If you are serious about SEO for your Web site, you’re best off hiring a reputable firm to handle this for you or using a program like Web Position Gold. Search engines are continually evolving and what works today might not work tomorrow. Further, each search engine is unique and what works for one search engine might not work for all of them.

Summary

Search engines, especially Google, MSN and Yahoo! will evolving to produce better and more relevant content at the top of all searches. The best long-term strategy is to make each Web page the best content page for your particular keyword, then tweak for SEO. Then your page will rise to the top.
Words of Wisdom

"When one door closes, another opens; but we often look so regretfully upon the closed door that we do not see the one that has opened for us."

– Alexander Graham Bell
In order to grow your 3D art business, you must become a salesman. You must master the tools of influence, proposals, and selling to maintain and grow your successful 3D art business.
COMMITMENT TO SELLING YOUR 3D ART

You cannot become a profitable 3D artist unless you are absolutely committed to doing so. Obvious, right? In talking with numerous 3D artists, I discovered there is a strong correlation between those who have the passionate energy they need to create a great business and those who don’t. By combining your enthusiastic desire to build a successful business with a plan that can succeed, you have created a force that is larger than you individually and will propel you towards success.

In his book, “Think and Grow Rich”, author Napoleon Hill detailed the results of his painstaking research on what created wealth. I highly recommend this book to anyone that truly desires to become a successful entrepreneur, especially in any artistic or creative field such as 3D art. Dr. Hill talks throughout his book about having a burning desire to be rich. Everyone who earns a significant amount of money feels enthusiastic about doing so. They are emotionally driven. This is what propels them past the inevitable obstacles that confront them.

DEVELOP REASONS FOR SUCCESS

If you want to be tremendously success with your 3D art business, you need strong reasons to go out and get that success. I’ve watched many 3D artists come and go because they just weren’t committed or were doing 3D art in between their “day” jobs. They didn’t succeed because they didn’t have enough reasons to succeed.

I’ve always favored the “Burn your ships strategy.” Cortez sailed his army to Mexico to conquer the Aztecs. When his soldiers landed, he ordered the ships to be burned. He told his men, “We will win or we will perish” and they won. Why? They had a compelling reason to succeed. Make success a must. If you have enough compelling reasons to succeed, you will. It’s that simple.

PUT IT IN WRITING

The more you can articulate the future of your business, the better chances you have of reaching your goals. Clarity brings power. When your goals for your 3D art business are in writing, you have a focus against which you can compare everything you do to decide if it will get you closer or further away from your goal.

I’ve written business plans for every business venture I’ve engaged in. This habit always forced me to decide what I really wanted to do. My intention always seemed clear in my mind, but writing it out allowed me to discard things that wouldn’t work and refine the things that would.
If you’re not up for the challenge of writing a full-blown business plan, at least write down on one page what your 3D art business will look like in a year including revenues, number and type of clients, your focus, the expertise you’ll have by then, and so on. Taking this one step could dramatically affect your ability to succeed because you’ll know where you’re going. Look at it often through the trials and tribulations of your company. In just a single year, you’ll be amazed at your progress.

THE TOOLS OF INFLUENCE

When you’re in the sales process with a prospect, you must create enough influence to make the prospect a client. Here are the tools of influence that should permeate your discussions, marketing materials, proposals, and presentations. These tools are subtle yet powerful.

CONFIDENCE

You must have confidence in your skills and services to venture out as a professional 3D artist, but you’ll have a difficult time closing the sale if you don’t convey this to the prospect with absolute certainty. You display confidence in your voice, posture, mannerisms. As a 3D artist, you also display confidence with your technical, creative, and industry knowledge.

Build confidence before going into a sales call by preparing yourself. You must understand your business and your client’s business at a deeper level than your competitors. Research the client and their competitors through their Web site, trade journals, the press, and other publicly available resources. Did your client surface in the news recently? You should know that before going into the meeting.

Understanding your client’s industry is critical. Your understanding of industry problems solved by 3D art solutions puts you ahead of the game. You don’t have to be an expert in your client’s business; just having a working knowledge will go a long way.
EXPERTISE & AUTHORITY

Our entire culture is based on a system of experts and authorities. Authorities are made up of parents, politicians, military officers, CEOs, physicians, law enforcement officers, and church leaders. As a civilized society, we are programmed to follow people we view as authorities.

The same is true for experts such as PhDs, Medical Doctors, Certified Engineers, Scientists, published authors, experts quoted in the press, and so on.

As a 3D artist, you have numerous ways of communicating expertise or authority, including but not limited to:

- Published works (articles, books, images, animations, etc.)
- Online or offline art gallery/portfolio
- Certifications and training
- College degrees
- Your title (Owner, CEO, President)
- Associations that you belong to
- Your attire
- Your marketing collateral
- Any awards or recognition you earned
- Past client lists
- Testimonials/references
- CV/résumé
- Web site
- Press kit

Don’t get me wrong: I’m not suggesting that clients will follow your every command when they accept you as an authority and expert. That said, clients tend to listen to somebody they see as an expert over someone they believe is not.

CONNECTION

People like people like themselves. It’s one of the profound truths of humanity. Your prospect must connect with you on a personal level to make the whole process a lot easier on both of you. Spend some time in every meeting getting to know your prospect or client a little better. Some times are more appropriate than others.

Don’t just do this to close the sale. I’ve worked the majority of my waking life. When I’ve spent most of that time with people I liked, my work was tremendously more enjoyable. I’ve worked with people I didn’t like, and it just wasn’t fulfilling. In fact, in several cases, I ended very lucrative relationships.

I’ve practiced that philosophy my whole career. Now, not only do I have a network of associates that I’ve known and stayed in touch with for decades, some of my closest friends started out as working relationships.
**Storytelling**

Storytelling is one of the most powerful persuasion techniques I know. Before television, storytelling was the main form of cultural entertainment. People listen to stories much more attentively than a series of product features. People relate and connect emotionally to stories.

One day, I was in a presentation. I started telling a story about a client who had a similar problem as my prospect when the prospect’s wife walked in and sat down. The prospect indicated that he would be with her in about ten minutes, then asked me to continue. I finished my story and made a personal connection because both the client in my story and the prospect were fly fishermen. I quickly closed the presentation and indicated that I would contact the prospect the following day after he had reviewed my proposal.

The next day, he gave me the go ahead and indicated that his wife had enjoyed my little story. Tell a story!

**Likeability**

As a professional 3D artist, you are in the consulting business, and the consultant business is a people business. A prospect chooses you over others for a variety of logical and pragmatic reasons. In the end, however, all buying decisions are emotional. One of the biggest factors in almost every decision is whether or not the prospect likes you.

A word of warning here: Proceed with extreme caution if you get a contract where likeability is not a factor and where the decision comes down to something hard and cold like price. In my experience, these relationships are usually not as emotionally or financially rewarding than those that blend professional and personal attraction.

Likeability has to do with your personality, positive nature, and attitude. Do you respond quickly? Do you go the extra mile? All of this constitutes likeability. Don’t limit your charm and team attitude for just the prospect. You should convey it to every person you meet at the prospect’s company: employees, other vendors, or their own customers. You never know who has the prospect’s ear, so act as if everyone does.

**The Only Solution**

I used to think that having the best 3D software or content solution would consistently win me contracts. I eventually learned that my focus on being the best almost forced my prospect to do a thorough comparison between my competitors and me.

A mentor of mine told me that I had it all wrong, that it isn’t about being the best solution, but being the only solution. Changing my focus and attitude from “best” to “only” changed how I presented my proposals to my prospects and made a dramatic difference on my bottom line.
You should make this a part of your presentation planning process. Make sure you have five or six key reasons of why no one else can offer what you offer. Some items on your list change from client to client depending on their particular problem, but some of these reasons will become part of the your 3D art company’s core values.

**Testimonials & Press**

Being competent and professional and reflecting that in everything that touches the prospect opens them to the possibility that you will be competent and professional when working on larger projects. They’re convinced when current and past clients or the press also present you as competent and professional.

This is the power of social proof. Getting someone else to write a letter of recommendation or testimonial helps you build credibility. Someone has taken time without compensation to say that your services exceeded their expectations. In other words, you satisfied them. This is a key tool of influence and, when supported by others, helps you close contracts.

**Reciprocity**

There have been numerous studies around reciprocity and persuasion. When somebody gives you something, you feel obligated to reciprocate. They bought lunch last time, you’ll buy this time. They sent you a Christmas card, you’d better send them one. It’s all about give and take.

Giving to a prospect or client throughout the relationship can create a lot of goodwill. Giving means providing them with your white papers, newsletters, or other beneficial information they can use in their business.

At Zygote Media Group, we’re giving away our human figures in return for permission to send a regular newsletter to the recipient. We give away beautiful medical illustrations of the human heart. We invest in some standard “gifts” that we use to differentiate ourselves from our competition and provide real value for our clients. They show their gratitude with additional business and permission to continue the conversation.

**The Proposal Process**

The proposal is an essential and critical part of closing every new project for every vendor in every industry, including 3D art. Some proposals can be a letter agreement while others are complex documents with schedules and size/resolution/scale specifications. The written proposal is an essential sales tool that formalizes the verbal discussions and conceptual agreements previously arrived at.

Don’t send proposals to decision makers who aren’t willing to meet you and discuss the project parameters. You’re most likely supplying a hammer to beat down the preferred vendor’s price. Be careful.
Don’t get caught in the trap of rushing into a proposal because the client seems ready to make a decision. If you don’t have rapport and a verbal understanding of the project, scope, price, and other parameters of the relationship, you could jeopardize the contract.

Regardless of what kind of proposals you need for your 3D art business, the process has the same basic components. Here is a flowchart of a general proposal process:

**Figure 27: Proposal Process Flowchart**

- **Initial interview with decision maker(s)**
- **Gather information: understand problem**
- **Research problem: prepare questions for second meeting**
- **Survey stakeholders & decision maker**
- **Compile research & survey findings**
- **Create summary & review with decision maker(s)**
- **Present proposal**
  - **Client acceptance?**
    - Yes: **Project initiation process**
    - No: **Revise & present again?**
      - Yes: **Client communication process**
      - No: **Finalize client needs & priorities**
- **Determine problems & cost of the problems**
- **Determine range of solutions & costs**
- **Create proposal**
  - Revise & present again?
You must be prepared before conducting your initial client meeting. Contrary to popular belief, there is such a thing as asking “dumb questions.” You should use an initial phone questionnaire to gather enough information to prepare you for the first meeting. Preparation is required at each step before the proposal is even started because this is an excellent opportunity to make a good first impression.

You will be significantly more successful if you focus on creating a relationship with the client in this first stage. If the client doesn’t like or trust you, it matters little if you have the best or least expensive 3D art solution.

Interview Client

Your first meeting is about getting to know your client, their problems, and establishing a relationship. You need to need to pay attention to their personality and modify your approach to suit. This is called creating rapport and is essential to creating a long-term sustainable relationship. It’s not about being phony. It is about creating a relationship environment that your client is comfortable with.

You should have a standard questionnaire to which you add client-specific questions. This way, you’ll leave the meeting with the information you need to proceed with your proposal. Ask the following types of questions:

- What problem or need must be solved?
- Can you describe the problem or need in more detail?
- What is this problem or need costing you in time, productivity, and money?
- Have you tried to solve this problem prior to getting me involved?
- How do you think we should approach the project?
- Who in your organization would be involved in the decision, planning, and execution?
- What specific things must be accomplished for the project to succeed?
- Is there a Web site you really like? Why?
- When would you like the project completed?
- When would you like to get started?
- Are there any urgent issues with making this decision?
- Are there any images you can show me that reflect your vision and ideas?
- Do you have any budget parameters on this project?
- Is your company committed to making this project successful?
- Are there any other decision makers that need to be involved?
- What is your estimate of the benefits that will be realized when this project is completed?
- Is there anybody else I should talk to before putting a proposal together?
Research

You should begin your research after meeting with your client. This means researching the company, the company’s problems, and solutions to those problems, as well as the company’s industry relative to those problems and solutions. Create a system for your research that allows you to efficiently and consistently produce the results that you need to win the proposal. Some guiding parameters include:

- What solutions have you used before to fill the need?
- What new solutions could be used?
- How is this need similar to other needs you have filled for other clients?
- Is this a common need in the client’s industry?
- What solutions have worked for these industry companies?
- What unique capabilities do you have that can bring additional value to the client?

Survey Client & Stakeholders

Once you’ve done the research, create a framework of final questions and probing to make sure that you gain a sufficient understanding of the client’s needs relative to their problem adequately enough to prepare the proposal. Meet with the client and other stakeholders and probe for hidden needs and other aspects of the problem.

Summarize & Review

Finalize any additional research and compile your findings in a summary. Use this summary with the client prior to preparing the proposal. This ensures that the proposal directly addresses the problem and solution that the client needs. Accuracy is important. You don’t want to have to submit multiple proposals because the first failed to adequately address the client’s needs.

This is normally the last conversation you’ll have with the client prior to discussing the proposal after they’ve reviewed it. Commit to a date and time when you will deliver the proposal, and immediately negotiate an appointment for following up and answering any questions. You should initiate the call or visit the client’s office. Failing to schedule a time to discuss the proposal before delivering the document could greatly impact your chance of closing the deal.
Proposal Creation

For large proposal projects, use the project management process to deliver the final result quickly and cost-effectively. Your company should have systems for boilerplate proposal templates, document procedures, research sources, and content such as diagrams and flowcharts. Assemble checklists as the first step in the process for proposals from standard to the unique. This helps give you the maximum impact with the least cost and time. It also helps you use junior team members (if you have any) in your proposal process.

Finalize Client Needs & Priorities

Organize your research and develop a summary of the client’s needs and the associated priorities. This drives the majority of variable issues in the proposal creation process. Remember that the proposal’s purpose is to present a plan to solve the client’s problems in a prioritized fashion.

Determine Scope & Cost of Problems

Clearly articulate the scope and costs of the problems. Get in the habit of documenting and verbalizing these items. A problem has no urgency until you associate a cost with it. This adds an emotional factor that you can use to close your client. The client has given you most of this information during the initial interview and subsequent survey. Write it in their own words where possible, thereby giving them ownership in identifying and personalizing the problem.

Determine Range & Cost of Solutions

The next step is to prepare a range of solutions and their costs. You might feel tempted to use a solution or set of solutions that you’ve used in the past without carefully considering this client’s particular needs. Resist this temptation. Take a fresh look each time because each client really is different. You’ll then be prepared to discuss why your 3D art solution is the best one.

Systems save time and money because they help you cover your planning details, including estimating material and labor costs as well as a schedule that fits in with everything else you have going in your 3D art business.

You should have an accounting system in place that allows you to historically analyze the profitability of each project. In the early days as a professional 3D artist, you may well lose money by underestimating projects. To become truly successful as a professional 3D artist, you must consistently estimate projects that are profitable and get accepted. This is a true art in itself.
Prepare the Proposal

Prepare the proposal as soon as you have all the elements together. Use a checklist to ensure that everything gets done and that you don’t leave something important out. I highly recommend using your email program and/or word processor’s mail merge features for contact information. There’s nothing worse than some other company’s name showing up in the proposal making it look like a cut-and-paste hack.

You need to do a lot more than just run a spelling and grammar check on the document to eliminate every error. Read the document slowly, line by line, and have someone else do so as well. Proposals are the business equivalent of a résumé. Typos and spelling errors are never acceptable in either.

When you’re satisfied with your proposal’s final content, look, and feel, print enough copies to have extras on hand when you make the presentation. A client will often ask for an electronic copy of the proposal and others may resist a personal presentation. Do your best to present the proposal face-to-face, even if you deliver it by email prior to the meeting. If the client won’t schedule a meeting to discuss the proposal, it’s a strong indication they are not that serious or that you have competitors bidding for the project.
**THE PROPOSAL**

**Figure 28: The Proposal Contents**

The proposal is often the heart of the 3D art professional’s selling process. If you get this far with the prospect and commit their time to go through the proposal phase, you’re probably close to getting a contract.

The proposal is also an important step in the courting process, where the you and the prospect are evaluating each other. Put your best foot forward. You should continually invest in refining your proposal template as much of every proposal will eventually come from your standard boilerplate.

Use diagrams and pictures as much as possible (you are a 3D artist, after all), and make the proposal itself aesthetically appealing. Most entrepreneurs and executives are “visionary”, or future-thinking, which also means they’re oriented towards imagery. The more you can include pictures, charts, and diagrams that tell the proposal’s story, the better.

**Cover Letter**

The cover letter outlines the problems, the cost of the problems, the cost of the solutions, the benefits, and the timeline to accomplish the project. It should be written in a conversational tone and should also contain a strong “call to action.”

**Title Page**

Make the title page simple but bold and consistent with your letterhead, business cards, and other stationery. The title should state something like: “Proposal Prepared for <Company Name>”. Include the client’s logo when possible to make it more personal. Include the word “confidential” on the title page and on every page of your proposal.
Table of Contents
A simple table of contents is appropriate if the proposal has more than five or six pages. Make the sections easy to find.

Executive Summary
The executive summary expands the points made in the cover letter. Remember that your reader is an executive, even if they own or manage a small business. Present a high-level overview of all the important information in your proposal. The rest of the document contains the supporting details. This should include all key costs, timelines, problems, solutions, and project objectives.

Current Conditions
This is where you describe the problems/needs and the cost of those problems/needs. This is the bridge between what brought you together at first contact and the remainder of the proposal. Any emotional and urgency statements made by the client regarding the situation belong here. The more you connect the client to the pain of the problem or the urgency of the needs, the more quickly they’ll want to resolve it.

Measurable Objectives
Include specific measurable objectives when stating the solutions. Begin setting expectations and conditioning the client on the precise nature of the final deliverable. Vague proposals make closing the deal difficult. Even if the deal does close, the client’s expectations may not conform to any tight project definition— a sure recipe for trouble. How can you exceed the client’s expectations and deliver satisfaction when no one knows exactly what those expectations are?

The objectives should describe both the nature of the solutions and their benefits. Remember, clients buy benefits, not solutions. Your job is to describe the positive effects and feelings that come from resolving the problem.

A Value Focus (ROI)
Whenever possible, quantify the estimated return on investment for doing the project. You can discover this during the initial interviews and preliminary survey phases of your proposal development process. This does not control the client’s decision to go with the project, but it does often provide a logical and rational decision point that sways the client’s decision maker and/or stakeholders.

Use the benefits described in the objectives and tie them to bottom-line dollars. How does any business expand the bottom line? By increasing sales, increasing productivity, and/or decreasing expenses.
Detailed Scope of Work

The detailed scope of work is appropriate for some complex 3D art projects (such as illustrating a complete textbook) and should be a detailed work breakdown of the objectives documented earlier. Remember that too much detail can hurt you if your prospect has other vendors bidding because shrewd buyers will compare multiple bids and play each one off the other until they’ve reached the lowest bid. Never get caught in the price vice. Always base your bids on providing the best possible value regardless of cost.

Methodologies

If you have some proprietary methodologies, patented software components, or some other unique tool that you will bring to the project, feel free to include this in the proposal. The more you and your company gain recognition as the only solution, the more clients you will win.

Project Schedule or Timeline

A high-level overview of the project schedule is appropriate for many 3D art projects, particularly large and/or complex projects. You may need to show that you can accomplish the project in the time allotted or identify important milestones in the proposal phase that affect the decision process. You’ll often document a timeline simply to educate the client about how long it takes to complete each phase of a project. As a 3D artist, you need to factor in such variables as rendering time. You may well spend more time making test renders than actually creating scenes and/or models. Time spent rendering may leave your computer unusable for anything else. Be sure to factor this into your timelines.

Options

In some situations, you may find it appropriate to include optional strategies or solutions that solve the client’s problem. These options may vary by price, time, or by breaking the project into smaller phases. As a general rule, you should only do this if the client insists because offering multiple options can confuse the decision.

Company Expertise

If appropriate, include a description of your 3D art expertise. Make this consistent with the literature in your press kit and on your Web site and customize it for the client and their particular problem/need. Emphasize the specific 3D art skills and expertise required to solve the problem/need. The more you’re perceived as a specialist (or better yet, THE specialist) in the client’s problem, the more valuable you become compared to any competing vendors.
Company Background
If you’ve been in the 3D art business for a while, it’s helpful to outline any attractive aspects of that history. Companies are more apt to deal with a vendor who has been in business for ten years versus ten months. Highlight key milestones, hires, client wins, and project successes. Customize your backgrounder to include current or past clients or projects that are similar to the client receiving your current proposal.

Mutual Requirements
Your clients will often have obligations to make the project successful that go beyond writing the checks. They may need to provide resources, equipment, and personnel. Use this section to set up-front expectations of any required client participation.

Terms & Conditions
The terms and conditions section covers the expectations behind your relations with your clients in layman’s terms. It’s best to avoid legal language because this will likely delay the project as the client sorts it through their legal department. This section also describes how and when you’ll get paid.

Many 3D artists who have lost their shirts by underbidding a project have resorted to a time and materials billing approach instead of getting better at estimating projects. You may have no other choice in some cases when unknowns are many and the client wants the problem solved immediately. However, in the long term, you will make more money with accurately-estimated fixed-bid projects.

Acceptance
For many 3D artists, the proposal serves as the contract, and the acceptance section includes any remaining language necessary to accomplish this. The acceptance section should include date and signature lines to culminate the relationship.

Warranty
A warranty is a positive sales tool. Include your warranty in your proposal if you provide one. Your ability to make and utilize a bold promise of satisfaction can make the job of closing the client much easier. If you reliably deliver your 3D art to your clients’ satisfaction, then you have nothing to lose and everything to gain by offering a guarantee.

Some ways you can minimize risk include:
- Guaranteeing to satisfy your client on a daily basis, otherwise you will work until they are at no extra charge.
- Guaranteeing against all defects of workmanship.
- Guaranteeing that your 3D art will be appropriate for the stated purpose(s).
Appendices
Use the appendices section to include any documentation that can enhance your attractiveness as a vendor or emphasize the unique nature of your company and 3D art. If needed, include charts, diagrams, or more detailed aspects of the project. These could include:

- Sketches
- Photographs
- Samples of relevant past work
- Resumes
- References

Sell the Proposal

Present Proposal
Almost never present the proposal in person. Schedule a phone or face-to-face meeting to follow-up and answer any questions. You should deliver the proposal electronically or by mail at least a couple of days prior to that meeting. This ensures that your prospect has sufficient time to review and prepare intelligent questions.

Close the Contract
This step is pretty much a formality provided you’ve done your homework while preparing the proposal. Still, things can and do happen. You may misjudge your client and will have to push to save and close the contract. Use the strategies in the following section on the sales process. You may need to hear "No" three or four times before they say "Yes".

Next Steps
The work begins as soon as your client signs the proposal. The sooner you start producing results, the more time cushion you’ll have, the greater the chances of satisfying your client, and the less buyer’s remorse will set in. Get going quickly by being prepared to start the project as soon as possible after presenting a proposal. Making immediate tangible progress instills confidence in your client. See the section on Project Management for guidelines on how to hit the ground running.
THE SALES PROCESS

The sales process generally consists of ten steps. Some situations won’t require each step, however understanding this process removes the mystery from selling and makes you more successful- and by extension more profitable.

PREPARATION

Preparation is always the first step of the sales process. First impressions are everything. You must understand the prospect and their business in order to anticipate their needs. You must do your homework.

You must also understand and articulate your company and your 3D art products and services. Thoroughly researching your prospect’s company and its industry prepares you to present your company within the context of the prospect’s business and your 3D art as solutions to their specific problems.

Preparation also means anticipating objections and being able to answer them in advance. Every business has common objections. List all of them and find thoughtful ways to respond so you can answer your prospect quickly and thoroughly.

SELL TO YOURSELF

You will find it almost impossible to sell your 3D art to somebody else unless you have first sold them to yourself. This isn’t about positive thinking. It’s about your core belief that you have a valuable product or service to offer the world.

If you lack confidence going into the prospect meeting, they will almost certainly sense it and your chances of securing them as clients will diminish. Why should they believe in you if you don’t believe in yourself?

As part of my preparation before visiting a new prospect, I review a list of the great things about my company. Sometimes while in the trenches, you forget to notice how far you’ve come. List all your accomplishments, your unique talents, and your satisfied clients. This helps you pre-frame an important foundation for your presentation.

Have that information as a primary focus before going to a meeting. This gives you the confidence you need to succeed and to sell. The prospect wants to know what makes your 3D art special. Be prepared to answer.

Remember that the art of selling boils down to creating emotion and that ALL buying decisions come from emotions- even emotions based on the security of not getting fired for making a bad decision. You must put yourself in a strong, enthusiastic state before talking with a client.
PROSPECTING

In the section on *Marketing your 3D Art*, we covered many of the aspects of prospecting for clients. Pay attention to a few key points during the sales process. Marketing drives sales, and your USP drives your marketing. When you clearly understand your USP, you automatically target likely prospects for your products and services. The better the fit, the more likely it is that you’ll make the sale.

You need to understand what makes your prospect’s company tick. You need to understand their business processes, their risks, their competition, their industry, and how they make money. You can then speak into their listening with your USP.

Have a multi-pronged approach for reaching your target prospect. You establish market presence and top-of-mind awareness by reaching the prospect from as many places and in as many ways as possible. This makes the selling process easier as everyone is more comfortable with the familiar.

**Telephone Prospecting**

Don’t be afraid to use the phone. To their severe disadvantage, few 3D artists use the phone. Write scripts, memorize them, test them, and master the things that work.

Prospecting is a numbers game where the results are directly proportional to the number of calls you make and the quality of the prospects you approach. If you’ve done your preparation on your prospect and your own company, your success rate will go up. Get their attention and interest and don’t be afraid to ask for referrals, even if you don’t get their business.

Don’t make the telephone call to make a sale, but to get an appointment. Focus on this fact during your conversation. Nobody is going to purchase 3D art from somebody who contacted them on the phone. Get the appointment now. Worry about the sale later.

**Give to Get**

We’ve talked about permission marketing, your strategy for getting the appointment. Make a promise, claim, or offer that the client considers valuable enough to warrant a subsequent conversation. Be creative! Come up with something that won’t cost you a lot but that the prospect will welcome.

What might your client value? Perhaps a calendar with 12 stellar examples of your 3D art. Maybe a poster or even generic images for their Web site. Anything they will hang onto and use for a long time to come. Of course, your meme, contact information, and a brief description of your 3D art services will be included in every package—won’t it?

Offering free goods, services, consultations, etc. provides value for your prospects and also helps you qualify them. No businessperson will invite you to their place of business, give up a couple of hours of their time, and assess their want/need for 3D art without a certain level of
SELLING YOUR 3D ART

interest. Once you have that interest, you have the opportunity to make an impression and create the foundation for a relationship.

CREATE A CONNECTION

You need to create rapport with your prospect. This distinguishes you from the ordinary 3D artists. Be personable, likeable, and create trust. The art of selling is really the art of making friends. Your best clients are probably people that you like.

Psychologists and lovers create intimacy by asking questions because almost everybody likes talking about themselves. Use questions to create rapport with your prospects. Some powerful questions are:

- How did you get started in this business?
- What are your company’s goals?
- What are your strategies to grow your business?
- How do you currently use technology in your organization?

My company asks questions on the first telephone contact and uses a detailed questionnaire in our first meeting. Leverage the power of questions. This gets the prospect comfortable and allows you to get to know them. That knowledge guides your selling process.

Use the power tools of influence covered earlier to command the prospect’s attention. Create key phrases or “sound bites” that your prospect will remember, and work these into your presentations.

GET THEIR INTEREST

The most effective way to get a prospect’s interest is to make a big promise about how your 3D art can solve the client’s problem. Once you get their attention, follow-up with supporting facts, benefits, and evidence. If you target the promise at a prospect need, they’ll really listen to what you have to say next.

QUALIFY WITH QUESTIONS

After creating interest, you need to qualify the prospect. The most powerful qualifying strategy is to ask probing questions. You should have their attention by now and, if you’ve done your homework, a good sense of their problems. Ask questions to determine the urgent problems and the cost of those problems. Use this phase as an opportunity to condition the prospect by magnifying the problems/needs.

Create a connection between how they feel examining these scenarios and the problems that they themselves acknowledge. Leveraging emotion is critical here because all buying decisions are emotional. Get them to agree point by point to create urgency in solving their problems. Without urgency, they won’t buy. By demonstrating that you understand all of the ramifications of their problems, you expand your influence as a trusted advisor.
You need an acute awareness of the prospect’s motivations and the psychological drivers associated with this buying decision. Is this a middle manager responsible for creating company marketing collateral? Have they already made a decision to buy but not who to buy from? Did the last 3D artist fail to perform? Make sure you understand these motivators before you start the test close.

The “Yes Train”

The “Yes Train” concept has been around the sales profession for ages yet remains a great tool for closing sales. The premise is that a prospect who has answered “Yes” to most or all of your questions (particularly your test close questions) will be more inclined to say “Yes” to subsequent questions in order to remain congruent. As you’re preparing your presentation, sales pitch, and test close strategies, create a consistency in your questioning methodology where a series of “Yes” answers move you closer to your sale.

The other important psychological component is that “Yes” is a positive word associated with agreement while “No” is a negative word associated with disagreement. The goal of your presentation is positive alignment and agreement. Go for the “Yes.”

Obtaining Agreement

Your first meeting with a prospect should focus on understanding how they make their buying decisions. Determine early on what the key factors are in terms of objections and benefits. The way you reach agreement with the decision maker is by making sure that your 3D art provides the benefits they are looking for and overcomes any objections that might create resistance to your closing the sale.

Continually probe for the prospect’s benefits and objections, then communicate your offering relative to these decision factors. As you get a firmer understanding of these driving factors, you should persist in communicating your compliance with these factors. This takes time and repetition. Getting agreement requires feedback from the prospect. Keep asking powerful questions.

Test Close

You can begin to test close once the prospect has agreed on the emotional motivators (problems or needs), the cost of the problems, and that your company can solve the problems. The test close accomplishes two things: it helps bring out client objections, and it gets the prospect focused on buying. Use these generic questions to trigger their imagination on the test close:

- “If you were to go ahead with this project, when would you want to start?”
- “How long have you considered using 3D art for this purpose?”
- “Does this sound like something that you would want to do?”
- “If we were to come up with a solution that fit your budget, what kind of payment options would be important?”
- “Who would be the main contact when we started the project?”
“On a scale from 1 to 10, with 10 indicating you are ready to invest in this project right now, where are you?”
“Based on what you’ve told me, I suggest we include “component x” into a second phase of the project. Do you agree?”
“Would it be worth $5000 to know that you’ll be getting some great 3D art?”
“Would you be interested in only purchasing a non-exclusive right to use my 3D art to lower your costs?”
“What aspect of this project is the most urgent?”

When you’re testing a close, pay careful attention to the prospect’s body language. If the prospect gets defensive, you’re trying to close too early. Back up and qualify with questions. If they warm up to you while you’re test closing, then seize the opportunity because your prospect is getting ready to buy from you.

**Assume the Sale**

Assuming the sale means making your 3D art real in the prospect’s mind. Help them visualize the deal as if it had already happened. This is a very subtle but powerful process. You must continue leveraging the emotions associated with the problem. Talk about the deal as if it were done.

The prospect needs to FEEL the positive result of buying from you. If you’ve done your job throughout the selling process, you have associated positive emotional feelings with doing business with you. Now is the time to summarize those benefits. Ask questions that relate to these positive benefits and enroll your prospect. Emphasize the problems, cost of the problems, and the benefits you have to offer. Create the contrast between the pain of the problems and the pleasure of solving the problems. It’s all about emotion.

**Overcome Objections**

Carefully observe prospect objections throughout the selling process. The good news is that objections are how the prospect tells you what issues remain before they are ready to buy. In short, they are literally telling you how to sell to them. Many 3D artists dread objections. You should welcome them. Overcoming these objections will most likely make the sale. Some generic examples of objections are:

“I’m really focused on reducing expenses so I’m really not in the market for 3D art.”
“I don’t think we can afford this.”
“It all sounds good, but I want to shop around before I make a decision.”
“Why don’t you leave your proposal and I’ll look it over tonight.”
“How long have you been in business? I’ve never heard of you before you contacted me.”
“I really don’t think I need so many images.”
“I want to talk it over with my partners.”
“My brother-in-law can do this for a lot less.”
Strategies for Handling Objections

There are as many ways to overcome objections as there are objections. Let common sense be your guide. Here are some generic strategies for common objections:

**Ignore Them**

You can test how real the objection is by simply ignoring it and reiterating the problem, the cost of the problem, and the benefits of your solutions. If the prospect comes back and restates the objection, you’ll need another response.

Example:

**Objection**

“We’re not ready to make this kind of decision.”

**Response**

“Do you mind if I ask you some questions? You told me that your 2D artist takes a long time to make requested changes because she needs to start over each time. Is that correct?” Ask several more questions like this.

**Deny Them**

Denying an objection is essentially telling them they are wrong and immediately following up with the facts. You must be tactful with this response, but it can be very effective.

Example:

**Objection**

“I can’t justify this expense right now.”

**Response**

“You’ve told me that your conversion ratio for your Web site is less than 1%. Other businesses like yours using 3D samples of your products have a conversion rate of almost 5%. With each additional 1% conversion, you’ll net $100,000 per year and the cost for me to create these models for you is far less than that. You can’t justify not doing this.”

**Turn Them Around**

You can turn an objection around by making it the reason to buy. The way to do this is to take the core of the objection and convert to a benefit.

Example:

**Objection**

“We really can’t afford this kind of solution.”
Response

“You’ve told me that every month your creative department loses 20% of its productivity because you’re relying on 2D graphics solutions. It sounds to me like you can’t afford not to switch to 3D. This solution directly affects your bottom line.”

**Explain Them**

Explaining your way through an objection is simply taking their objection, agreeing with it, and making it the to reason to buy.

Example:

**Objection**

“My brother-in-law can do this for a lot less.”

**Response**

“You’re absolutely right. You’re brother-in-law can do this for less, because for him, it’s a hobby. He’s doesn’t have the costs of high-end computer equipment, specialized training, years of art school, or the portfolio that I’ve built over several years.”

**Minimize Them**

While you need to be careful not to put your prospect on the defensive, you can often overcome an objection by minimizing it.

Example:

**Objection**

“Your bid came in at $10,000. We were looking for something closer to $6,500.”

**Response**

“You told me that this solution could boost sales by 10% at a minimum. Is that correct? For 30 employees with an average salary of $30,000 per year, the additional cost will pay for itself in less than a month. That seems well worth the cost.”

\[
\frac{3,500}{30 \times 30,000 / 365} = 26.5 \text{ days}
\]

**Ask for the Order**

Great closers ask for the order. Unless the prospect begs you to work for them, you have to ask them to buy from you and to sign the contract. There’s no way around it.

Asking for the order lets the prospect know they’re buying. You won’t get much resistance if you’ve handled the first nine steps properly. Make sure that you’ve done test closes with positive results and that you’ve handled the main objections. Otherwise you’ll have to retrace your steps.

- “Are you interested in saving money?”
- “Can you see where my using 3D art will save you money?”
“If you are committed to saving money, when would you like us to start?”

“Since you obviously want to increase productivity when there is a clear ROI, may I have your agreement to go ahead with the project?”

“Would you like to go ahead with the project?”

Don’t be afraid of ‘No’ and don’t be afraid to ask more than once for the order. You may have to ask 4 or 5 times to make the sale. Put your ego aside and keep asking until the answer is ‘Yes’.
ESTABLISHING FEES

Fee establishment is one of the most important aspects of becoming a successful 3D art professional. If you want to generate a hundred thousand dollars a year as a 3D artist, you must generate at least a hundred and twenty thousand in value (any successful businessperson consistently delivers 120% of the value they are paid for). That’s $10,000 a month, $2,307 a week, $329 a day and $41 per hour (assuming 52 40-hour weeks per year). I trust this example makes it clear to you that generating a good income requires you to have a strategy that goes beyond trading time for money.

MAXIMIZING YOUR VALUE

Keep developing your strategy for establishing and maximizing your value and fees, and you’ll realize that you’ll have to have support your high income with multiple vehicles. Build up these vehicles over time and stay aware that these key drivers accelerate your company’s value.

Figure 29: Maximizing Your Value
Unique Products and Services

The last thing you want is to submit proposals that clients will compared against five to ten other proposals that are almost identical in scope and price. Even if you believe you can succeed in the commodity 3D art markets, you must strive to differentiate yourself in the marketplace.

Look for unique solutions, processes, or techniques that make you stand out from the pack. Even delivering a commodity solution in a proprietary way can make a difference.

Zygote markets the 3D Human Anatomy collection. The company has invested many man years into the model collection and still continues to aggressively invest in this product to maintain our leadership position. We also have thousands of other models that we use in our custom business that give us a competitive edge.

High Demand Markets

Business is all about supply and demand. Constantly seek emerging high-demand markets that complement your existing core 3D art skills. Technology markets are constantly changing, and you need to keep in tune with change, particularly as it relates to your clients.

Synchronizing your market focus of emerging 3D art technologies with your client’s business boosts your value proposition. It gives you additional revenue opportunities once your client base has its fill of your original 3D art offerings.

Create Intellectual Property

Create proprietary methodologies, content, shaders, model libraries, and styles that your competitors can’t duplicate. If you’re a programmer, you can even code your own applications or plug-ins for truly customized results.

Leverage Other Resources

You can maximize your value by leveraging other resources such as employees, partners, vendors, and contractors. Few 3D artists can reach the six-figure income level on their own, let alone seven figures. Doing this requires you to combine the resources of others and to make a profit delivering them to your clients.

Even a solo 3D artist can sell a complementary artist’s services to a client on a commission basis. As you grow your 3D art company, there are more opportunities like this to exploit. As you expand your business, look for ways that you can put yourself between value-added resources and clients and make a profit through the successful delivery of these resources.
Develop Your Expertise

You want to offer 3D art services in emerging markets and to expand your expertise in these areas as well. It's easy as a 3D artist to find a niche that has you landing clients and staying busy, but that can be a trap if you’re not careful. Don’t become obsolete because you got comfortable. Technology changes quickly and so should you.

Once you’ve identified the hot markets to operate in, you must find work that stretches your abilities and creates the opportunity to enhance your skills. You won’t be as profitable as you make these shifts, but you must make this investment to enhance your value.

Complement experiential training with seminars, books, and conferences. Stay current with 3D industry developments and keep an eye out for new courses, content, and/or tutorials that could give you an edge.

Don’t forget to tell the world about your expanding abilities. Create case studies, white papers, sample images and/or animations, and press releases around your newly developed 3D art skills. Write articles and include these in your newsletters, website, and press kits. Feature your awards and testimonials. This is your social proof that you have something special to offer.

Exceptional Customer Service

Clients value artists who can deliver exceptional customer service. Complement your 3D art offerings with the intangibles that constitute great customer service. See the Relationships section for complete details on accomplishing this goal.

Deliver Client-Centric Value

Even if your 3D art company is in an emerging and lucrative market, your clients won’t recognize your value if they don’t want or need your offerings. If you did your market planning, you’re focused on offering the right 3D art products and services to an interested market. You do need to recognize, however, that every client has her or his own unique needs and problems.

Developing your proposals and delivering your solutions requires you to address each client’s unique circumstances. Pay attention to the factors driving the client needs and fill those specific needs.

Don’t be afraid to look outside your company to fill those needs. If a partner artist has the right solution to the problem, take the steps to get her or him involved. Your client will appreciate your thoroughness and willingness to solve their problem in the best way possible.
Outstanding Products and Services

Look at the market leaders in almost any industry and you’ll find that they got there by consistently offering better solutions than their competitors. The economy is driven by excellence.

Focus on quality in both your work and attitude and always strive for improvement. Closely monitor your competition and try to maintain an edge. Continually delivering solutions that stand above the pack earns you a reputation for excellence and the rewards that go with that distinction.

Real World

My company constantly encounters “hit and run” consultants, opportunists who take advantage of a client’s naïveté or vulnerability. They deliver the low-ball bids, then exploit the client in the back-end.

This strategy may earn some quick bucks but is no way to build a lasting business. Having an excellent reputation is the way to build a thriving business that lasts.

TIME AND MATERIAL FEES

Some 3D artists operate on a time and materials basis. You might need to use this approach if you have no way to predict the work or if you have a long-term contract. But this isn’t optimum. Avoid trading time for money.

If a particular 3D art project requires time and materials billing, you still have some strategies for optimizing these fees and pleasing clients at the same time:

- Focus on building relationships.
- Research the market and educate your client on market conditions.
- Convince your client that you’re the best consultant for the job.
- Offer 100% money back guarantee.
- Offer value-added collateral and informational materials that augment your base fees.
- Establish minimum blocks (such as 30 minutes to 1 hour) to avoid lots of interruptions from the client. Interruptions cost you time to get back on track to your original task.
- Differentiate yourself from your competition.
- Do what you promise, when you promise.
- Deliver exceptional customer service.
- Deliver outstanding work.

Zygote Media Group almost never quotes an hourly rate because that rate is higher than most attorneys and accountants. But we’ve built process, skills, and intellectual property that allow us to work much faster than the average shop. This makes us competitive in overall price while maintaining our quality standards, a potent combination.
**Retainers**

Clients often want to guarantee your availability for work with unpredictable scheduling. You can set up a retainer agreement to establish both a valuable guaranteed revenue stream and your availability to the client.

When trying to accelerate cash flow in your 3D art business, selling pre-paid blocks of time good anytime in the reasonable future can bring in fast cash. Discounting your normal fees by 5 to 10% lets you set this money aside in an accrual account for use when you perform the work or invest in your business.

**Performance-Based Fees**

Some 3D art projects might be billed based on performance. If you specialize in graphic novels, you might base your fees on an upfront payment (the advance) with additional fees payable based on sales (royalties). Royalty arrangements are a great way to lower initial costs without sacrificing long-term gain- if (and only if) the project performs well.

Use royalty arrangements with care. You only want to do this when your careful research indicates that you can expect long-term revenue greater than what you could earn by going with regular billing.

Selling through online model banks is almost always performance-based. Research your projects thoroughly to maximize your return. Make products that are appealing to a broad market and first to market or a high end market that will pay top dollar. There’s little room for “me too” products in this market. On the contrary, products must be unique or represent a paradigm shift in functionality to achieve a reasonable sales volume.

**Value-Based Fees**

Basing your fees on a fixed and measurable deliverable is the fastest way to achieve high income from your 3D art efforts. This gives you the opportunity to develop skills, content, or techniques that allow you to deliver more value for less effort.

You may have to show the client why value-based fees are in their best interest. Some already understand the concept and even request this type of arrangement. Some arguments you can use to convince your client include:

- They get a defined and tangible result for a fixed price that is agreed upon in advance with no surprises.
- A value-based fee allows you to solve the problem with whatever resources necessary without the client incurring additional charges.
- There are no limitations on answering phone calls, attending project meetings, and other communications. The fixed-price fee includes everything.
If the project requires additional work that was unknown in the beginning, you’ll do the extra work at no extra charge. Be careful with this one!

The billing will be much more straightforward than time and materials, and there is no need for endless negotiation and approval for work beyond the scope of the original agreement.

You want to make yourself available to the internal team without the client feeling pressured to limit that in any way.

The challenge and opportunity is that you’ll often be confronted by a client who is used to working with other artists on a time and materials basis. This is a tremendous opportunity to show how the value-based approach makes you different than your competitors.

Produce referrals and testimonials from previous clients as proof that your value-based system is superior. If you’ve done the right educational process with previous clients, they’ll confirm your position and can help you convince your new prospect.

**Minimize Your Risk**

Fixed-price bids can make the novice 3D artist nervous, especially if they’ve had bad experiences in the past. Some guidelines to minimize your risk include:

- Develop exceptional project estimating skills. There is no room for guessing.
- Break the project into small blocks to minimize your risk.
- Begin value-based projects in areas that you know well.
- Carefully track the real costs on your projects to constantly improve your estimates.
- Empower and train junior team members to deliver at a high capacity.
- Develop intellectual property that provides a great deal of value for clients with little or no additional effort on your part.
- Create processes for dealing with projects that make you as efficient as possible.
Lifelong Relationships

Words of Wisdom

"A good head and a good heart are always a formidable combination."

– Nelson Mandela
In order to become a successful 3D Art Professional, you must master relationships. Everything you do as a professional 3D artist depends on developing quality relationships with clients, vendors, employees, and partners.
The ability to succeed in life, be it business, marriage, or parenthood all boils down to relationships. You must know how to build, nurture, sustain, and use relationships as a vehicle for exchanging value that profits both sides of the relationship.

NETWORKING

Effective networking puts you on the express train to success as a 3D art professional. Networking for business is based on the idea that people are always more comfortable purchasing from a friend than from a stranger. Networking turns strangers into acquaintances and acquaintances into friends. It's all about relationships.

WHAT IS NETWORKING?

In computer technology, networks facilitate the efficient and reliable transfer of information to a diverse set of recipients. People networking is the same. Everyone is a conduit, facilitator, and originator of information. Like a computer network, the higher quality of information and communication in your people network, the better results you’ll get.

Networking requires regular meetings with other people who have common interests. This can include business or personal interests: chamber of commerce, Rotary club, politics, conferences, seminars, golfing, professional sports events, charities, even your children’s athletic events.

Networking creates opportunities for you and others by meeting people, communicating, and building relationships over time. You create value for yourself and others by connecting, sharing, and assisting.

The more you give, the more you get. Get a clear vision of the actions that constitute networking so you can more proactively create opportunities while serving others. Use these guidelines to get you started:

- Exchanging information
- Exchanging referrals
- Exchanging requests and favors
- Communicating (face-to-face, by email, letter, phone, and even cards)
- Introducing people
- Participating actively in networking events

Don’t forget to thank people for their advice, referral, support, or information. Always acknowledge a person for their assistance and continue offering your reciprocal help in return.

Networking works because each person gives away something more valuable to the receiver than the giver. As long as people continue to contribute, the value creation is much greater than the sum of its parts. Some benefits of networking are:
LIFELONG RELATIONSHIPS

- Being part of something that is bigger than you or your company.
  To do together what you couldn’t do alone.
- The opportunity to meet and get to know people that may become your friends or business associates.
- To have access to opportunities that would you might not get with traditional sales and marketing strategies.
- To have access to resources that you might not obtain otherwise.
- A rewarding social life.
- The stability and comfort of a support group.

YOUR NETWORK FOUNDATION

Build your network step-by-step. Begin at home. Examine the network of those closest to you: your family, friends, and community. You’re already networking, whether you know it or not.

Figure 30: Your Network Foundation

You can easily make this existing network more effective by making sure these people know more clearly what you do for a living—especially if you can relevant online forums where you can network with many people at once. Make a habit of mentioning the nature of
your work and some of the projects you’re working on, making sure to include how you’re solving problems for your clients.

Networking usually rewards you most with your friends and family. Being able to help out those you already care about is natural. From here, expand outward into more formal and business-oriented networking circles. Evaluate in advance the kind of people you want and need to network with. What do you want to expand your influence? The best networks are those where you can combine personal and business interests.

**Characteristics of a Great Networker**

Know the attributes of a successful networker before you begin. You may not have the skills and personality for networking when you’re starting out. Few people do. You can develop them with practice. Some things you’ll want to focus on include:

- Good communication
- Be likeable and personable
- Be positive
- Be more concerned with giving then getting
- Don’t manipulate
- Be alert, conscious, and aware
- Be creative. Ideas are valuable things
- Be helpful
- Don’t sell unless asked
- It’s not about you; it’s about them
- Be thorough
- Don’t make expectations of others
- Always follow-up
- Look for ways to help people in the network
- Stay in touch
- Be thoughtful
- Don’t make uncomfortable requests

Use this as a checklist when you’re in the networking arena. Become a friend and a reliable resource and you’ll start reaping the benefits.

**Networking Events**

The next step in establishing your network is deciding where you’re going to network. There’s only so much time for networking, and you’re going to have to make some choices. Look at the Network Foundation diagram to start brainstorming where you want to begin networking. You’ll also want to consider the following additional networking opportunities:

- Trade shows
- Conferences
- User groups
- Professional associations
- Networking clubs
- Technology partners
Be Prepared

Planning always produces better results than leaving things to chance. The more conscious you are of how to gain quality results at a networking event, the more likely it is that you will be successful. Here are some things to consider before going to events:

- What is your company’s elevator pitch?
- Who do you want to meet?
- Have you done some research around the speaker or meeting topic?
- What conversation openers can you use around this topic?
- How does this topic relate to your business?
- What do you know about the attendees?
- Do you know somebody there? Would it help to mention your attendance to these people?
- What is the one thing you most want to accomplish at this event?
- What other results do you want to achieve?
- Do you have enough business cards?
- Do you have something to capture notes and numbers?
- What current events can you use in conversation?

Prepare yourself mentally as well. Walking into an event with a positive attitude, physical state, and lucid mindset gains you the kind of notice you want.

How to Work a Room

There is an art to moving through a room with impact and results. The real key is to be personable, a great conversationalist, and aware. Learn to perceive when it’s a good time to step into a conversation and when is a good time to step out. Leave while people still want you to stay. Never overstay your welcome.

- **Have positive and open body language.** From across the room, you send a message. Stand straight, smile, and look approachable.
- **Use names.** People like to hear their name and repeating it not only creates rapport but also help you to remember it.
- **Identify isolated people.** Look for people who seem isolated or out of place and make a point to welcome them.
- **Introduce yourself and shake hands.** Create a style for meeting people. Demonstrate your personality with your eye contact and handshake.
- **Master the art of conversation openers.** Practice different conversation openers. Consider the type of event, the person you’re approaching, and the results you want to achieve.
- **Make and get introductions.** Meeting new people is the foundation of networking. You should therefore be deliberate about introducing and tactfully getting introductions from people you know.
- **Don’t sell.** The biggest mistake novice networkers make is trying to sell instead of building genuine connections.
- **Capture names, ideas, information, and next steps.** You can dramatically affect your effectiveness by making sure to
remember names, key ideas and most importantly, any promises you made so that you can follow through.

**Networking is Communication**

Your networking is only as effective as your communication. Always initiate a conversation with a potential networking contact with the goal of creating a connection and establishing rapport.

**Getting Starting**

The first ten seconds are the most challenging when meeting new people. How to get through this very brief time? Smile, get in state, and do it. Open with a relevant comment, particularly a question. This doesn’t mean asking about the weather. Some conversation starters:

- “Do you know John well?”
- “What did you think of the speaker today?”
- “I didn’t know you knew Helen. Where do know her from?”
- “Great suit. Is that from Bernini’s?”
- “I understand you’re an attorney”
- “I’m new here. Bryan Brandenburg.” (Offer your hand)
- “That was an interesting perspective on (topic). What did you think?”

**People Love to Talk About Themselves**

Getting people to talk about themselves is one of the most powerful rapport-building strategies. Not only do you establish a connection, you get to know the person much better than by spending the whole time talking about yourself. Show genuine interest and ask transition questions that naturally progress the conversation.

Avoid demonstrating your vast knowledge about a particular topic with a protracted discussion. You’ll accomplish much more by asking intelligent questions that are relevant to the person’s interests. Some topic areas that you could talk about are:

- Their profession
- Their family
- Sports
- Politics
- Where they’re from (For national events)
- Where they grew up
- Their hobbies
- Recreation
- Vacation
- Charities
- Technology
- Current events

Look for subjects the person feels really passionate about. Have enough conversational sensitivity to tell by their voice and body if they’re stimulated by the conversation or not.
Powerful Endings

Good books, songs, and movies have strong beginnings and powerful finishes. So do great conversations. It’s just as important to bring conversations to a strong finish as it is to have a potent start. Don’t slink away just because you’re no longer central to the conversation. Some closing remarks you can use are:

- “It was a pleasure meeting with you. I hope to see you here next time.”
- “I have an article on (topic) back at the office. I’d be glad to send you a copy.”
- “Nice talking to you. Good luck.”
- “I know somebody who is looking for a good (their profession). Do you have a card so I can email him your information?”
- “I’m sure I can find that Web site that covers (topic). If you give me your card, I’d be glad to email you a link when I get back to my office.”

Follow-up

Don’t offer anything that you don’t have every intention to do. This includes statements like “let’s get together for lunch” or “I’ll give you a call.” Say when, then make it happen. Send the article, follow-up on the referral, or make the call.

The Old Give and Take

We talked about reciprocity in the sales section, and this concept certainly applies in networking. Prime the networking flow by giving first to build up your account. The littlest things can get big things moving.

Don’t keep score while doing favors. It’s obvious and a real turn off. Shun anything that resembles an implied connection between a favor that you’ve done for someone and any request you might make.

On the other hand, don’t be shy about making requests. Just make sure that you have rapport with the person and that your requests are reasonable. Asking for a referral, a contact, or some information are all acceptable if you are polite and don’t pressure.

Million Dollar Networking

Networking is one of the best things you can do for your business AND personal life. It takes practice, but that’s the fun part. You can find an incredible number of interesting people out there in the world waiting to meet and share their lives, contacts, and ideas with you. Here are some guidelines to help you become a master networker:

- Give of yourself. Program yourself to consistently give of yourself to the network. Little things really do add up.
**LIFELONG RELATIONSHIPS**

- **Follow-up with everything you promised.** Be dependable. It’s so easy to stand out in the world of business because so few people really follow through and are people of their word.

- **Send Thank You notes.** This one little habit makes a big impression. It’s personal and always a well-received acknowledgement of somebody’s effort.

- **Make introductions.** This simple effort creates tremendous good will and is the foundation of networking.

- **Connect with People.** The beauty of networking is the power of relationships. After all, they’re members of your species. Get to know people and honestly care about them.

- **Be aware.** This means using all your powers of perception and senses. Combine this with a good conscience and good intention and you’ll be a welcome part of any network.

- **Be outcome oriented.** Networking is like anything else in life: You can reach your destination if you know where it is. Be clear on your goals, outcomes, and desired results.

- **Be organized.** Networking is characterized by the mastery of a myriad of details (names, promises, connections). You must be organized in order to give and get the most value from your network.

- **Give referrals.** Referrals are a binding force in networking. If there is a comfort level with a person, don’t hesitate to give a referral.

- **Stay in touch.** Your sincerity is demonstrated when you keep in touch with people with no hidden motives. There’s nothing worse than hearing from somebody only when they need something.

- **Mentor members of your network.** You can give of yourself by mentoring another member of your network. There’s a real beauty to “generations” of mentors in a network.

- **Be on time.** Punctuality is one of the cardinal rules of business. It expresses respect for the other person’s time, which is life.

- **Be a good listener.** You have two ears and one mouth- a key indicator of the proper ratio of use.

- **Be a good citizen.** Creating any kind of longevity in a community of any kind means that you must be a basically good citizen. This means playing by the rules of your society and not trying to cheat them in any way.

- **Exchange business cards appropriately.** Networking isn’t business card swapping but it supports the connections established. Offer yours and ask for theirs.

- **Don’t lie, make excuses, or exaggerate.** Networking is about relationships built on trust. You must be a person of your word. Integrity is both a network building tool and a pretty good way to run your life.

- **Don’t be self-serving.** Having a genuine concern and regard for others will make you an attractive force.

- **Don’t manipulate.** Almost anybody knows when they’re being manipulated. It may not be immediate, but these tactics are destructive over time. Be straightforward and honest with your intentions.

- **Keep people informed if they’ve provided a contact or referral.** If somebody has honored you with a referral or contact,
LIFELONG RELATIONSHIPS

keep them informed of the key events of that relationship. It’s a nice way to stay in contact and will be appreciated.

CLIENT RELATIONSHIPS

You’ll never make a sale without knowing how to create and maintain relationships with your clients. You need to become a trusted advisor and friend. That doesn’t happen instantly. It’s an ongoing process.

UNDERSTANDING CLIENTS

The Client’s View

In order to make the sale, you must understand the buyer’s mindset. Behind every expenditure lie a number of emotions that are driving the buyer’s decision. The more you tune into these emotions, the more consciously you can address them during the process and minimize their negative impact on closing the sale.

Figure 31: The Buyer’s Mindset
Insecurity
The buyer often has a sense of insecurity when making a decision that involves spending the company’s capital. Not only do buyers need to make a good choice, they must also minimize the risk of losses from a bad decision. Buyers feel tremendous pressure to make the best decision. A bad decision could cost the company money and the decision maker their job. Do your best to address these insecurities even if the buyer doesn’t articulate them. Make the buyer feel safe with you and your 3D art company.

Risk
Buyers evaluate risk during the buying process. Good business requires risk management. Try to ascertain what risks the buyer believes exist with the project, your company, or going with an outside vendor in general. Be sure to address these concerns throughout your communications.

Impatience
If the problem is urgent, the buyer will usually feel impatient. There is an inherent stress factor as the buyer feels pressure to make the decision quickly while fearing a potential rush into a bad decision.

You can assure the buyer that you’ll be able to move quickly once the decision is made. Try and understand the issues the buyer needs to understand before being comfortable making a decision and then create certainty around those issues.

Worry
Prudent decision makers worry, regardless of the confidence they show on the outside. It’s their job to worry about the details of their decisions. Make it your job to find out what their big worries are and turn them into little ones.

Exposure
Buyers evaluate their exposure throughout the buying process. The extent and range of exposure varies depending on the type of project. Put yourself in the buyer’s mind and business to examine the exposure. Help the buyer troubleshoot exposure scenarios to reduce or eliminate them.

Ignorance
Seldom can you get a client as proficient in the project’s technical details as you are. You’re the expert 3D artist, and there is often some intimidation stemming from the client’s insecurities around their technical ignorance.

Do your best to educate clients by communicating in clear jargon-free language, providing white papers and/or sample images plus other
educational resources, answering their questions, and working with them until they understand the issues at hand.

**Skepticism**

Buyers have a natural and programmed skepticism when dealing with sellers. Almost everybody has been misled by a salesman in her or his life.

Overcome skepticism by building a relationship with the client before you ever start to sell. Work to understand the client, the company, and the problems they have. Create a friendly rapport and gain their trust.

Probe the client to discover any elements of skepticism. Don’t ask why they might feel concerned, wary, or skeptical with you or your 3D art company. Focus on why they might be uncomfortable with designers in general or with using outside resource to solve their problem.

**Resistance**

Resistance is a trained reaction developed over many experiences with sales people. Without resistance, the client would buy everything that people had to sell and would soon be out of business.

Address resistance by not pushing against it. Resistance is an adversarial position. Become their partner and trusted advisor. Give some general solutions to their problem with no expectations of reimbursement. Brainstorm and demonstrate that you have their best interests at heart, and the resistance will soften and eventually melt away.
What the Client Looks For

Buyers need a level of comfort across a number of areas in order to feel certain that your 3D art company and its products and services are right for their company. Neglect even one area and you could lose the sale.

Preparation

A buyer always evaluates how well prepared you are. It’s a test to see how you’ll perform once the contract is signed. They assume that your having given careful thought to their business and the problems and solutions you are proposing means you will execute once the work begins. You’re in the spotlight at a much higher level during the proposal than during the actual work.

Client will often scrutinize your company’s preparation and diligence during the buying process:

- Were you on time for meetings?
- Did you send the proposal when you said you would?
- Did you address the issues discussed in previous meetings?
Was all documentation and correspondence carefully and professionally prepared and delivered?

Did you demonstrate an understanding of the client’s problem and business?

Did you present the most cost-effective solution that solved the problem, or did you try to add less-than-useful solutions just to increase the price?

All these things go through buyer’s minds as they interact with you and your company during the buying process. The client’s primary concerns center around their needs and their company’s needs. Sure it’s self-centered, but that’s why you’re in business. They want a vendor who caters to those needs and who offers the best solutions possible.

You must project a client-centric focus during the entire buying process. I’m not saying lose money or hurt your business to reach those objectives. Focus your communications in conversations, emails, and all correspondence on the client and their needs. When you talk about your 3D art company, its products and services, and your solutions, frame these discussions around the client and their needs. If you’re the best at what you do, discussing this in the context of how you can serve the client makes this more interesting to them.

Trust

You will rarely get the sale without a high degree of trust from the buyer. Trust is not an instantaneous process, even if you were introduced through a strong referral source. Being trustworthy is your best strategy for winning trust in the relationship and closing the sale. This means keeping your promises, maintaining integrity in everything you do, being on time, being up front, and maintaining an open dialogue with your buyer. Great relationships are built on trust.

Trust takes time. Don’t try to close before you have it. Pay attention to the subtle clues.

Have you met the inner circle?

Do you have access to sensitive or confidential information?

Does the buyer disclose more personal information about herself or himself?

Is the buyer giving you insights on how to close the sale?

Education

Educating your buyer is another critical component of closing the sale. The bigger the price tag, the more clarity the buyer needs before making the decision. You don’t need to educate the buyer about every detail of the project. Just make sure they understand the issues around their problem and your solutions.

My company uses questionnaires to determine the buyer’s level of understanding around their problems and possible solutions. Asking the questions up front allows us to determine the type of education we need to provide to make the sale. We track the issues that arise during
this process and address them in the proposal, as well as reiterating during each discussion to create a comfort level and mutual understanding with the buyer.

**Solving Urgent Problems**

You must understand the buyer’s urgent problems because they provide the catalyst for action. If the buyer doesn’t perceive their problems as urgent, you’ve got an uphill battle to close the deal. Use probing questions to determine both the urgency of the problems and their cost. This will allow you to create even more urgency through your ability to articulate impact on the client for not solving the problem.

A buyer’s feeling of urgency creates a natural tension that must be resolved. Your job during the sales process is to magnify the problem, the cost of the problem, and your product or service as the perfect solution. Help the buyer visualize the problem your company solves. Associate the benefits of solving the problem with your company and make it urgent. The tension has to resolve itself. It’s your job to hold firm on the vision of the solution so that the current situation will start moving towards that end.

**Return on Investment (ROI)**

Any well-run company never spends money indiscriminately. Although they occasionally purchase products and services for intangibles such as quality experiences for employees or customers, the majority of investments are just that: investments.

Spend time with the buyer to understand the financial parameters of the decision to deploy your 3D art solutions. Ask questions, particularly during the evaluation process to understand resource costs, especially those relating to human resources.

Ask straight-forward questions like “How much time per week do you think this will save you?” Sometimes client make statements like “This should reduce the pages we spend describing this process by 15%.” Use these statements in your proposal calculations.

My company includes ROI in our proposals and quotes our buyer’s estimates as much as possible. This makes a strong argument when emotional factors must be balanced with a logical decision.

**Range of Solutions**

As a professional 3D artist, always look for long-term relationships. The contract you close now could be the first of many in a long and rewarding relationship. The buyer generally has this view as well. It takes time to evaluate vendors. If the vendor provides satisfactory services, the client will resist making changes.

The buyer’s assessment of your company depends on whether you can perform the service required and whether you can provide additional services in the future. When presenting your 3D art company during discussions and in proposals, demonstrate your capacity to offer the
additional range of solutions that make you an attractive long-term partner.

**Listening**

Clients want consultants who know how to listen. Managers look for this in employees. Listening becomes even more important for outside resources, especially those providing costly and mission critical services for a company—such as 3D art destined to become part of a key product such as a textbook.

Listen to the buyer. Messages may be subtle or vague. Take copious notes. Get clarification whenever you’re not sure. The buyer will appreciate your questions and concern. Summarize key points and get confirmation. This demonstrates your professionalism and engages them in the problem and your solution.

**COMMUNICATION**

Relationships depend on communication. Learning to communicate helps you with every aspect of your life. By making a lifelong commitment to quality communication, you’ll make your world a better place.

Communication is a lot of things: conversation, informing, responding, listening, and more. But the primary purpose of your communication is to:

- Create a positive feeling with the person or group you are communicating with.
- Disseminate important information.
- Create a new result.

**TYPES OF COMMUNICATION**

Communication builds relationships. There are many ways to communicate in this modern era, each more efficient and cost effective than the last. Learn when and how to use them. You must decide how to express the essence of you and your 3D art company from its mission to its USP using the variety of available communications vehicles.

Some of the ways you can reach out and touch someone today include:

- Phone
- Fax
- Email
- Blogs
- Text messaging
- Instant messaging
- Internet
- Conversations
- Web site
- Voicemail
- Presentations
Continually refine the way each communication channel connects with the message you communicate. Do this through each relationship touch-point in your company. Establish and maintain consistency and congruency across every one of them.

**Powerful Communication**

Communication is one the most esoteric sciences known to man. Wars are fought, marriages end, and customers are lost when there is poor communication. Here’s a checklist of the elements of powerful communication:

- **Active listening.** Be engaged when communicating with another person. Make them the most important person in the world at that moment with your mind, body, and spirit.
- **Sincerity.** Sincerity creates trust and intimacy.
- **Collaboration.** It’s human nature to be part of a group. Be a team player.
- **Responsibility.** Be able to respond and respond when called upon. This makes you trustworthy.
- **Confidence.** Your self-confidence inspires confidence in you.
- **Attitude.** Everybody loves a positive attitude.
- **Honest.** Great relationships are built on trust, and trust is built on honesty.
- **Voice projection.** The greatest communicators speak to crowds and project their voice to reach even the back of the room. Make sure your message is heard.
- **Respect.** Respect should guide your communication. There’s no room for sarcasm, blame, or patronizing.
- **Powerful body language.** Over 70% of the message in a conversation is communicated with one’s body. Make your body language a powerful message.
- **Matching pace with listener.** Get on the same wavelength with the person with whom you’re communicating. People like people like themselves.
- **Self-Control.** Some circumstances could cause you to react, and you’ll usually regret them. The more you’re in control of your communications, the less damage control you’ll have to do.
- **Feedback.** Feedback allows you to engage and direct the flow of conversation.
- **Solutions oriented.** Always think about how you can add value to a communication. Be solution oriented.

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**Words of Wisdom**

“When the eyes say one thing and the tongue another, a practiced man relies on the language of the first”

— Ralph Waldo Emerson
Empathizing. Empathy is your ability to really know and feel what the other person is experiencing. It’s a tremendous rapport builder and communication vehicle.

Jargon less. Always communicate at a level your listener can understand. Don’t use jargon unless they do. In general, the less jargon, the more effectively you will communicate.

Creative and helpful. Add value for people by being creative and helpful. There are plenty of takers infesting the world. Be a giver.

Proactive. People naturally like people who take action.

Listener-centric communication. Speak into their listening. Communication is not about you. It’s about them.

Contrasting. Contrast is a powerful communication tool. By creating visual contrasts, you add the visual dimension to the auditory and enhance understanding.

Relating. Expressing your ability to relate creates intimacy and trust.

Reflecting emotions. Having emotions is part of being human. Everyone connects with emotions.

Drilling down and exploring. Knowing how to drill down and segue in conversation makes you an interesting conversationalist. Just remember to make the explorations of interest to the person you’re talking with.

Paraphrasing. Paraphrasing is a feedback tool that shows you really are listening and creates rapport. It’s also a good tool to make sure you really understand what you just heard.

Destructive Communication

Destructive communication is just that: destructive. You should strive to reduce or eliminate the following destructive communication patterns:

Blaming. Evolved people take responsibility for their life and don’t blame other people and circumstances for things gone wrong.

Complaining. It often takes less effort to resolve a problem than to complain about it. There’s a difference between brainstorming solutions to a problem and complaining.

Justifying. Justifying your actions demonstrates your weakness and inability to make your own decisions based on character and principles.

Denying. Denying leaves things unresolved. Either accept responsibility or agree to disagree.

Patronizing. Patronizing conversation is usually transparent to the recipient and just sends the message you don’t think much of the person.

Sarcasm. The word sarcasm comes from the Latin word sarcasmos which means “to tear flesh”. Enough said.

Resenting. Like blaming, resenting is a way to dodge responsibility for your own life while destroying your own well-being with anger in the process.

Confronting (Negatively). See Conflict Resolution, below.
LISTENING IS COMMUNICATION

Listening is the most important aspect of communication. Being a good listener is easy with practice. Some elements of good listening are:

- **Focus and concentration.** Don’t be distracted when on the phone or when talking to someone face-to-face. Make them the center of attention.
- **Open and warm body language.** Body language carries the majority of your message. Make it a positive message.
- **Involved and engaged facial expressions.** Good communications usually means good eye contact. This means your facial expressions are the most visible portion of your body language.
- **Consistent eye contact.** Eye contact is a key indicator that somebody is listening. Send the message that you’re engaged.
- **Show interest.** Use reflection, feedback, and language to communicate that you’re genuinely interested in the conversation.
- **Care.** Reflect your caring and interest with your voice.
- **Reflected emotions.** Stay in tune and mirror the emotions of the person talking to you as appropriate. This is a rapport builder.
- **Capture the main ideas.** A demonstration of active listening is being able to capture and reflect the main ideas that you’ve heard.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Conflict is sometimes inevitable, no matter how good a communicator you are. Keep conflict resolution simple by being humble and willing to admit your mistakes.

Ask the questions:

- What am I willing to do to make this better?
- Is there a misinterpretation?
- How can I communicate my needs in an empowering way?
- What’s good about this?

If you’re wrong:

- Apologize for the result.
- Don’t minimize with an excuse.
- Articulate your intention.
- Offer to remedy the situation.
- Reiterate your respect and admiration towards the person.

Simply having a high regard for other people and realizing that you have your share of character flaws almost always makes conflict resolution easy.
Presentation Mastery

As a professional 3D artist, you’ll often have to make presentations. These can be powerful opportunities because you’ll have the stage and, if you’re well prepared, you can dramatically persuade an audience. The keys to presentation mastery are:

- Do your homework.
- Create a connection.
- Set the tone.
- State your subject.
- Outline the main idea.
- Outline the goal of the presentation.
- Identify the actions needed from listeners.
- Present the main idea.
- Reiterate the main points.
- Restate your needs.
- Probe for questions.
- Identify next steps.
- Establish a call to action.
- Set deadlines.
- Follow through on any commitments.

Follow these guidelines for successful presentations, but know that the real secret is practice, practice, and more practice. Each presentation will get better if you make improvement a goal. Evaluate, self-critique, and believe that you can do a little better each time.

Need help learning how to give effective speeches and presentations? Visit www.toastmasters.org to find a Toastmasters club near you. This is a very low-cost way to meet great people and to practice your skills in a supportive environment. I cannot recommend Toastmasters highly enough.
Words of Wisdom

"If one advances confidentially in the direction of his dreams and endeavors to live the life he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours."

– Henry David Thoreau
In order to become a successful 3D Art Professional, you must learn to take your company to the next level each and every day. You can achieve exponential growth by gaining new clients, keeping current clients, and increasing the revenue potential on everything you do.
GROWTH STRATEGIES FOR YOUR 3D ART BUSINESS

Figure 33: Million Dollar Growth

Once your 3D art company has some traction, you can improve your profits and revenues without getting a single additional client. There are six ways to grow your business:

- Gain new clients.
- Reduce attrition of current clients.
- Increase your product & service offerings.
- Increase the size of purchase.
- Increase the length of time-based purchases.
- Increase the profitability of each client.

You’ve reached the most exciting section of the book. You may not use all of the strategies suggested here. That’s OK. Even one good idea could double your revenues and profits.

GAIN NEW CLIENTS

We’ve covered a lot of ways to market your company to new clients. This section contains growth strategies that could profoundly impact your business and provide you an unlimited marketing budget.

INACTIVE CLIENTS

Most 3D artists I’ve talked to don’t even try to recover inactive clients. This is a big mistake. You tend to magnify the problem or just want to move on, when a simple apology and offer to make things right could bring back a client worth thousands of dollars in billing.

Clients can quit contacting you for a number of reasons:

- They had a bad experience.
- They no longer need your product or service.
As their needs evolved, they believed your company no longer could offer what they need. They just got busy and forgot about you.

You can see the importance of having a communication process for staying in contact with clients, if only because some quit buying for the sole reason of “out of sight, out of mind.” Think about all the vendors that you’ve stopped buying from for no real reason. It happens to everyone.

There are clients that you have consciously let go because they are bad clients. I recommend consistently “firing” the bottom 5-10% of your client base as a regular practice. But most 3D artists already have an attrition rate far higher than that.

**Make a Target List**

Go through your database and make a careful list of clients who no longer buy from you. Cross out those whom you have no interest in rekindling a relationship with. Next, categorize the remaining list using the following parameters:

- Don’t know why they’re inactive.
- Was a problem but you thought you resolved it.
- Was a problem but you didn’t resolve.
- Determine how much each inactive client spent with you.
- Date of last purchase. You’ll want to focus on more recent clients first and work through to a point of diminishing return.

Now get excited. With a little diligent effort, you can revive 25-50% of these clients, thus dramatically increasing your revenue base. The keys are humility, sincerity, and resolve.

**Disgruntled Client**

*Understanding What They Want*

Before contacting an inactive client, it’s important to spend some time focused on the outcome and preparing. Disgruntled clients have certain needs that must be met before they become active again. Here is a checklist to review before you make each call:

- They want to be regarded and respected.
- They want you to make things right.
- They want to be listened to and heard (two different things).
- They want to make sure that the problem doesn’t happen again.
- That you understand the problem and why they would be upset.
- Don’t defend yourself or make excuses. Acknowledge it shouldn’t have happened.
- You should be prepared to make an offer to resolve the problem and communicate your willingness to go great lengths to win them back.
Contact Them

The next step is to contact them. Call them and ask for a meeting. Explain that they are a valuable client and you’d like to understand if there is anything that is keeping them from doing business with you. You must communicate your absolute sincerity and concern.

If the client had a bad experience, try to make it right regardless of fault. Offer to refund their money, correct the problem, and give them a discount against future services or whatever would be appropriate for each particular situation.

Apologize no matter whose fault it is. The client is always right. They write the checks and in an economy driven by customer satisfaction, you have to go the extra mile in order to stand above your competitors.

Be prepared for the fact that you will not resolve every situation. You may get screamed at or abused. Stay the course, be calm, and reiterate your sincere apologies. In some cases, there will be no possibility of reactivating them or getting a rational response to your call. If you are professional and earnest, the worst that can happen is they will feel better about the situation enough to not complain to their associates about your company - a very good thing, since each complaint can be damaging. Send the people a sincere letter thanking them for assisting you in identifying problem areas within your company.

You’re in the Spotlight

If they do agree to accept your effort to resolve the issue (be it redoing the work, free products or services, etc.), you must be exemplary in executing your promise. Get a clear understanding of your commitment and the timeframe for its completion. You must go the extra mile here.

Follow-up

Communicate when you’ve fulfilled your obligation, thanking them for the opportunity to clear up the problem. Send a sincere letter reiterating your appreciation for working with you to resolve the misunderstanding. Depending on the type of 3D artwork you do, simply maintain regular contact to inquire if everything is acceptable and if there is anything you can do to be of service.

Problem Unrelated to Your Service

You’ll often find that inactive clients are merely having financial or other difficulties that have prevented them from continuing to do business with you. Express your genuine and personal concern for their problems. Ask if there is anything you can do to help. People remember who offered them a hand they were down. A small gesture
here goes far in referrals or in more projects when they get back on their feet.

**They Thought They Outgrew You**

Sometimes you’ll have clients who have grown and feel they needed a bigger organization or changed technologies. You’ll find this out when you call them. In a lot of cases it boils down to a perception problem that you quickly educated the client out of (we’ve grown too, we offer that services, and so on).

If you truly can’t serve them, let them know how much you’ve appreciated their business and ask them to feel free to contact you if they have anything you can do for them in the future. If they were satisfied with your services, don’t hesitate to ask for referrals. Be sure and follow-up with a letter or email.

**They Just Got Busy or Forgot About You**

As a professional 3D artist, you might find it appropriate to send out a letter or letters to clients to stay in touch and acknowledge that you haven’t heard them. Come up with several letters appropriate for your particular business and send them out at specific times relative to the last purchase.

You need different letters because the reasons for not buying vary from client to client. Track each mailing so that you can refine the process based on which letters pull the best and so that you can determine your ROI. Follow up with phone calls.

If it’s appropriate for your business, send them a coupon for a free hour of services. The perceived value is high, they will hold on to it, and will be inclined to use it to initiate future work.

**Satisfaction Guaranteed**

You can significantly decrease a buyer’s resistance by guaranteeing their satisfaction. Many if not most 3D artists shun this strategy for fear of being taking advantage of. That can happen. The key is to have a solid grasp of how long things take, what can go wrong, and to have a mutually clear contractual understanding of what is promised.

The fact that most 3D artists won’t guarantee their work gives you a significant competitive advantage. All else being equal, prospects will tend to do business with you because of your confidence and commitment to do whatever it takes to satisfy them. Remove the risk associated with doing business with you, and you will increase your sales. You send a strong message to your prospect that they can feel 100% confident in their decision to hire you.

You need to decide what your guarantee looks like and then boldly promote it, making your exact promise clear in the prospect’s mind. Here are some examples of guarantees you can make as a 3D artist:
At the end of each day, the client doesn’t have to sign your work order until they are 100% satisfied. You will work to remedy any outstanding problems until all outstanding issues are resolved.

- You guarantee free revisions for 30, 60, 90 days or more.
- For longer projects, guarantee each milestone. After you’ve handed off the deliverables, the client needs to sign an approval of the delivery that they are completely satisfied. If not, you will work until they are content.

**Minimize Your Risk**

You certainly don’t want to make a 100% money back guarantee on a $10,000 3D art project. Try offering a staged guarantee in these cases. Break the project into small pieces and guarantee 100% satisfaction on the completion of each piece, or else you will work until they are satisfied. This limits your risk. It also conditions your client to be satisfied, because the next project segment doesn’t begin until they are completely satisfied and have signed off to that in writing. This powerful method limits your exposure while ensuring client satisfaction.

**The Statistics**

A national survey revealed that no more than 3% of customers across all industries ever ask for a refund. Unless your 3D art is flawed, you really don’t have much to worry about. Test your guarantee and measure the increased sales vs. any refund. If you’re like most companies, your additional revenues will more than make up for any losses due to client refunds.

**Clearly Articulate the Guarantee**

The more you define a specific guarantee, the more effective it is. Forget fine print or loopholes. Come up with something bold that you can leverage in your sales and marketing processes. Sales resistance is all about being afraid of making the wrong decision. A good guarantee can instantly eliminate any reason for your prospect to do business elsewhere.

**Partnering**

Often companies who do not compete with you have clients who need your services. Establish a relationship with these companies. They can promote your products and services to their clients, and you can greatly leverage the goodwill established with minimal effort.

The key is to demonstrate a benefit for being your partner. In some cases, you can pay a generous commission or agree to market their services to your client base. Each relationship is different. You have to understand your potential partner’s needs and how you can bring them value greater than their investment.

In some cases, you may want to offer your products and services under the partner’s company name. This practice, called co-branding,
can be very attractive since your partner retains a great deal of control. Be flexible. Your goal is to cost-effectively outsource your sales and marketing, which makes sense if you can maintain your margins on your services.

Sometimes another 3D artist will bring you in on a job because they can’t handle all the work or because they lack the expertise that you have. Negotiate a fair system for sharing the work and the profits. There are three basic components to every 3D art job: getting the work, foundational assets for the work, and the specific work done for the client.

**Getting the Work**

This means delivering a paying client. In the section on Close Ratios, we determined how much we could spend to acquire a client. Here, you can start determining how much you should pay for acquiring work through a partner.

**Foundational Assets**

These are assets that you and your partner bring to the client’s project. The client, however, is indirectly paying for this intellectual property, equipment, processes, and so on. Perform these analyses before you enter into the agreement; establish fair value for these assets. It will be easier to come to an agreement before the check arrives in the mail.

**Specific Work**

Specific work is measurable time you and your partner spend on the project that is done specifically for the client. This is probably the most straightforward aspect to measure.

These three ratios should be evaluated with each partner relationship to determine a fair compensation for both sides. I suggest you evaluate this both before and after each collaborative project to adjust your ratios and make it work for both parties.

**Direct Mail and Email**

Many 3D artists say that direct mail doesn’t work. They’re right if they’re doing mass mailings with little thought for their target market. They’re absolutely correct if they don’t follow up mailings with a phone call.

Direct mail or email is one possible first step in a prospect communication. You must have a targeted list. For example, Zygote Media Group has partnered with channel partners with opt-in email lists. These promotions to targeted users have been very successful. Who can you target as a professional 3D artist? If you’re local, you can buy lists of businesses by type, contact, etc. Ask yourself how you can become an expert in the recipient’s eyes or otherwise gain permission to continue the sales conversation.
More recently, my company began accumulating emails by contacting these prospects and opting them in. We added this information to our database and are now distributing our newsletter by email. It’s free and we can distribute in HTML, allowing us to precisely measure what the prospect is reading and where they are coming from. This allows us to fine tune our offerings because we know which prospects are interested in the information we are sending. As a 3D artist, you can send HTML emails containing samples of your work.

The most important aspect of direct mail or email marketing is to remember that this, like other forms of advertisement, is an interruption unless you offer something in exchange for the prospect’s time such as information, content, valuable discounts, etc. Without such an offer, there is no real reason to have the next conversation. This is why infomercials have become so popular in recent years. Viewers are entertained as they learn something while being sold to. That’s why my company uses newsletters. We give something away each time we promote to the target client.

**Testing is Key**

Ask any direct marketing gurus the most important key to success and they’ll all tell you the same thing: test, test, and test some more. A different headline can produce a 1,000% better return, as can different product mixes and calls to action. You have to methodically test for a direct mail campaign to work.

That’s why my company loves highly targeted, client-specific direct email. We know if the prospect opened the email. We know if they read this article or that one. We know if they clicked for more information on one of our special offers. We know.

**No Spam**

Never spam a prospect. It does take a little extra time to get an opt-in email, but you can feel confident that you’re not creating bad will. Besides, spam is increasingly against the law- as it should be.

**Telemarketing**

Telemarketing can work in some situations in conjunction with other marketing such as direct mail, newsletters, etc. Some guidelines for effective telemarketing include:

- **Mail first.** You can increase the effectiveness of telemarketing by mailing first and then following up with a phone call. This creates a connection because a) you’re being a responsible person to call after a mailing and b) you’re not a stranger because you already have a relationship.
- **Use scripts that don’t sound like scripts.** Be prepared to segue once there is interest. The more prepared and professional you sound, the more effective your pitch will be.
EXPONENTIAL GROWTH

- **Don’t try to sell on the phone.** Your goal should be to secure an invitation for the next conversation, not to make a sale. Build consent.
- **Have a referral.** If you don’t have a referral, figure out a way to get one, otherwise you’re pretty much wasting your time.
- **Know your prospect.** Once again, it’s not about you. It’s about them.
- **Be in state.** Smile, project your voice, and stand tall. Be enthusiastic.

REDUCE ATTRITION OF CURRENT CLIENTS

Keeping an existing client requires about 10% of the effort of gaining a new client. You should therefore make it a conscious mission to keep your existing client base extremely satisfied. Automate and incorporate tools for doing this into your client communication process. Remember to always practice fervent follow-up.

YOUR BEST CLIENTS

You want a quality service program that guarantees a professional level of work for every client you do business with. Maximizing growth and revenue potential requires you to pay attention to your best clients. This seems like common sense, but some 3D artists are penny wise and pound foolish when it comes to client relations; they over-deliver to the wrong clients.

The very best and profitable 3D art practices can turn away the bottom 10% of their client base every year while focusing their existing client marketing efforts on the best 20%. This top client base may not necessarily consist of the top dollar producers; it can also include the best referral sources or the best long-term growth prospects.

At least yearly (but better yet, quarterly), do an inventory of your clients. How you can increase your value proposition to the top 20%? Project the makeup of that top tier a year from now or even over the next several years. This gives you greater clarity about the nature and composition of your ideal client- a very powerful tool when prospecting because it tells you who to prospect to.

By understanding your top 20%, you’ll fine-tune your marketing for new clients to reach that target market. The 80/20 rule definitely applies here: 80% of your business will come from 20% of your clients.
COMMUNICATE REGULARLY

Regular and useful communication with a client makes them feel important and keeps your name in front of them. This means communicating before, during, and after a project. You should design a documented system for handling this so that everything occurs on a schedule and is appropriate for your current stage of involvement with your client.

Newsletters

My company’s newsletter is an important communication tool for prospects and clients. It comes out monthly and provides value in every issue that is pertinent to their business. See the section on newsletters for details on how this works.

Project Communications

Carefully craft all written memos, status reports, and other forms of documentation. Make them documents that you can easily forward for distribution or editing by internal team members. Create a feedback loop to refine the process. Determine if there is anything else your internal liaison needs to make the documentation more useable.

Promote your brand and logo with everything you deliver. Professional excellence builds good will as these communications are scrutinized throughout the project. The documents must be impeccable with no spelling or grammatical errors. Use graphs, charts, and drawings where possible to make materials more useable. On completion, deliver all documentation in a single binder if appropriate with your logo prominently on the cover.

My company spends a great deal of time producing professional template materials with boilerplate components that we then customize for each client. This makes every document look as though we spent a lot of time and thought preparing it. Best of all, we’re able to leverage this work across our entire client base. You can too.

Listen to Clients

Communication is a two way street. It’s important for distributing important information to the client, and is critical for soliciting and really listening to their feedback. Ask questions. Visit the client during key milestones to get a reality check on their satisfaction. Don’t take it for granted that the original decision maker is happy just because the team leader hasn’t complained.

Get to know the client’s industry. Develop a sensory acuity about how to maximize your 3D art within their organization. By showing knowledge in their business, you will gain their respect and subsequent reliance on you as a trusted advisor.
**Client Satisfaction Surveys**

Use client satisfaction surveys at the end of each project. This sends a clear message that you care even after you’ve received your final check. It also provides feedback that helps you ensure their ongoing satisfaction.

Your client satisfaction survey is your roadmap and checklist throughout the project. You must be fully aware that these are the parameters by which your performance will be judged. Here is a sample questionnaire:

**Figure 34: Client Satisfaction Survey**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Client Satisfaction Survey</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Did we keep our promises?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Were we prompt and accessible?</td>
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<td>Did we provide adequate documentation?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Did we keep you well informed of our work?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Did we communicate to you in a way that you understood us clearly?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Did we listen and react to your needs and requests?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Did we work well with your project team members?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Did we contribute beyond your expectations?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Did we inform you appropriately regarding any changes to the project?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Would you consider having us perform additional services for your company?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relative to other vendors, how would you rate our services?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Relative to your initial expectations, how would you rate our services?</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Refer the Client’s Product or Service**

Everybody loves referrals. If your client has a business that you feel comfortable about referring, then create a program to promote them. You might be able to set up a reciprocal arrangement, but take the first step yourself. Sharing promotional efforts builds tremendous goodwill.

There are many simple ways to make referrals. You can list them in your client’s section on your Web site and include a link. You can include a case study on your website and include it in your newsletter. You can ask the decision maker for business cards and other promotional materials and pass them out. Put a label or stamp with your company’s name and ask them to mention where they heard about the company.

**Over Deliver**

**Meetings**

In most organizations, it’s easy to deliver additional value around meetings, because most companies run meetings poorly. Capture important notes during your meetings, then deliver your neatly typed notes in your client’s format. This captures the main ideas and benefits of important discussions and is almost always appreciated by your client’s team members. Send this as soon after the meeting as possible.

Proactively help define the agendas and outcomes for each meeting. Help keep things on track and try to meaningfully contribute towards the meeting goals. Become highly proficient at running successful meetings.

Do action items for other team members impact your project’s success? If so, tactfully contact the team member and keep tabs on progress; offer your help if it makes sense to do so. Keeping the project on track internally helps you accomplish your goals as a consultant. It also gets you viewed favorably as a team player.

**Reports**

Delivering quality reports during your client engagement builds your image as a professional advisor. In your earliest meeting possible, get together with the client and define parameters for the report format and content. Every client has different needs so assume that your template must change for each client. Information important to one client only bores another. Define up front what works for each client, then deliver it.
As with the rest of your communications, a picture is worth a thousand words. You or your staff should become proficient at producing flow charts, Gantt charts, performance charts and architectural diagrams. Drawings in your report that communicate an abundance of information make it easy to use.

Perfect the art of the executive summary. Busy executives in the client organization usually want a one-page summary (or even less). Make sure your summary communicates the report’s key issues. If they want more information, they’ll drill down.

**Accessibility**

Make it easy for prospects and clients to contact you around the clock via email, phone, or mobile. Make yourself at least as accessible as internal team members, and you will be regarded as one. Have backup plans when you know you’re not going to be available. Proactively contact your clients letting them know if there will be a period of time they won’t be able to get a hold of you and give them some alternative options.

**Profit Engineering**

Our company focuses on profit-engineered artwork and production. We pay attention to the business process and associated costs, and try to achieve the best possible solution for our client’s bottom line. We’re pretty good at communicating this to the client so they can appreciate our responsible efforts.

**INCREASE YOUR PRODUCT & SERVICE OFFERINGS**

You can increase your revenues by offering additional products and services to your existing and future client base. Keep your focus, being sure to carefully expand incrementally beyond your current offerings to avoid distraction.

Look for products and services that your clients are already asking for that you don’t offer. Survey your clients to determine what other vendors they are working with and what kind of products they are already buying.

**Up sell**

Have you ever bought a suit and then been offered accessories, or bought a book on Amazon.com and been offered similar books? Have you ever bought a car and not been offered under coating and that high-end stereo? When you sign up for a magazine, were you offered a discount for signing up for additional years?

Research has shown that the best time to sell another product or service to a customer is when they have just made a decision to buy
from you or they are a current client, and while you are in the process of delivering their purchase.

You can significantly increase your revenues when you methodically plan your up-sells. Research your previous sales and identify what additional purchases were made for each standard offering sold. Zygote often sells our complete 3D anatomy collection to clients who just came in for one system. Some clients who buy our collection will upgrade to some additional add-on packs such as muscle or heart textures. Once all parties understand the value proposition, it makes sense to maximize the sale at the time.

You’ve probably up sold accidentally in the past, or maybe you haven’t fully leveraged your existing upsell strategy. By consciously identifying the opportunities, you can more systematically make the offers and close the sale.

To make the up sell work, offer additional value to the client; four for the price of three, a 5% discount for including the animation package now, a 10% discount for purchasing custom design in advance, etc.

**Mid Project Up Sell**

If you have applied the techniques outlined in this book, you have become a trusted team member during your project implementation. You have had the opportunity to talk with internal people on how the project affects them. All this presents you with a number of opportunities for additional work. Send a memo or letter identifying another problem you can solve and your recommended solution. This sets the groundwork for the next sale.

**Additional Products & Services**

Concentrate on niche services that have a high profit margin. Don’t want to add envelopes or office supplies to your mix even though all your clients buy them. Emerging markets are a good place to start. Think about other partners you work with occasionally such as texture artists, modelers, animators, and 2D graphics pros.

Contact similar companies outside your market, and simply ask them what range of services they offer. Often you’ll find that there are additional services that a company like yours has already proven works. Success leaves clues and sometimes the best ideas have already have been discovered.

**Leasing or Bundle License Options**

Many leasing options exist for large model collections. If you find the right leasing company, you can creatively bundle in maintenance programs and custom work to accelerate cash flow for your company. Depending on your product or service, you can establish long-term leases where you replace your client’s model collections at periodic intervals at a fixed monthly cost.
The client that likes the cash flow options of a monthly payment rather than one-time expenses probably likes lease options for that very reason. There are many creative ways of using leases to put immediate cash in the bank.

**Retainer Programs**

Does your 3D art business deliver work to clients on a regular basis? If so, retainer agreements can provide a healthy and steady revenue stream for your company. You can sell retainer programs for six to twelve months and can receive a substantial deposit on signing. You then receive monthly or quarterly payments, this creating a lot more predictability in your cash flow. If you’re in demand, this is a prudent strategy.

**Premium Technical Support**

Many services and related support can create additional revenues. You can design a premium support offering to take advantage of this. You can sometimes outsource this to subcontractors who specialize in this kind of service, and you can charge a margin or receive a commission from the vendor.

You could offer your own service if your organization is large enough and if you have clients that can benefit from such a service. It all comes down to value for the client. If they can make a phone call and pay $100 per hour for support that saves them much more than they’re paying, this could be a strategy for you. Talk to your clients and employees and maybe start with a small roll-out. This makes sense in cases where work is ongoing, such as Web site design and maintenance.

**Partner Products/Affiliate Programs**

Many large technology and communications companies have formal commission programs. If you refer a client for services such as printing, Internet access, Web design, etc., you can receive 10-15% of the sale. Some companies even provide you a commission over the first 12 months of service for the client.

Web affiliate programs have automated this process. Many products and services have affiliate programs. You place a banner on your Web site with a link identifying your site as the source of a particular visit. You get paid when one of your visitors clicks the ad buys something.

You can’t provide all the services your client needs but you can make additional revenue and profits by handing over leads or even private label other company’s products and services to your clients. Contracts that guarantee your commission can make this some of your most profitable work.
INCREASE THE SIZE OF PURCHASE

You may be able to increase revenues just by getting your existing clients to buy more of what you are already selling them. You need to make the offer attractive and take in consideration the time value of money. Also evaluate your savings by being able to close the sale in one contract rather than in future increments.

CONSULTING HOURS

If you want to accelerate revenue into your company, offering additional hours on an approved contract for a discount can put money in the bank. The best time to offer this is often during the final contract review before a decision is made. Simply offer this as an option for your client to purchase in advance (hours they will likely use anyway) for a 5-10% discount. The caveat is that they must pay for the hours on signing the contract. Look for work you know they’ll need, such as next year’s calendar.

When you calculate the time value of money combined with the time and overhead to go back in and negotiate a change order or additional contract, you may have actually increased your margin. Even better, you have cash in the bank to invest in your company. If you’re just starting out, this could be a real benefit.

From the buyer’s perspective, especially if interest rates are low, there is a definite savings. If the client is confident they are going to use the hours anyway and cash is not a problem, it’s a pretty easy sale. This technique isn’t for everyone but in some cases, if you need to make a choice between borrowing money from the bank to capitalize your company and giving a discount to a preferred client, the discount could be the best way to go. You may also have an advantage in that the skills, tools, or capabilities may be in place and be able to the delivered at greater profit.

ADDITIONAL FEATURES OR MODULES

Are you also a Web developer or knowledgeable in a field beyond creating 3D images? Do you know something about an area that your client hasn’t considered (such as animation)? Have you identified some attractive and valuable features not covered in the initial request? If so, offer these additions at a discount if the client includes them in the pending contract. Always focus on client ROI and benefit as you’re looking for these additional revenue streams. Offering an ecommerce solution like GoECart.com can be a lucrative revenue stream for 3D artists doing Web site design because of the additional graphics required for the store design.
INCREASE THE LENGTH OF TIME-BASED PURCHASES

Many professional contractors sell services based on time (such as consulting, service, or maintenance contracts). You can offer an extended period of time at a discount during final negotiations to increase the contract’s overall size. Many different industries have multi-tiered pricing strategies to extend the time of purchase, making a long-term commitment an attractive offer. The same can be true for you as a professional 3D artist.

This is one of my favorite strategies because of the ramifications of extending the client’s time commitment. The longer the client has agreed to do business with you, the longer your opportunity to sell other products and services. This can have a tremendous effect on your bottom line. If you have a range of services that can benefit from a long-term relationship, consider coming up with low-priced, easy-sell contracts that simply secure a long-term relationship. Even if you break-even on these contract, you will have the opportunity to sell to the client for a profit on other products and services as an existing vendor.

INCREASE THE PROFITABILITY ON EACH CLIENT

The purpose of being in business is to make a profit; otherwise what you have is a hobby. You can accelerate your growth by increasing the profit per client. Any good businessperson is already focused on this but I’ll cover the subject anyway and hopefully provide some new insights.

PAY YOURSELF FIRST

Many 3D artists don’t show a profit in their business, yet they have a steady revenue stream, sometimes even revenue growth. They seem to be able to pay their phone, rent, marketing and everything but themselves.

The reason these professionals don’t make a profit is because profit is not their top priority. I have met and worked with some of the best cash flow managers who always could come up with money when they needed it, but year after year they could never scrap together an ounce of profit. It’s all psychology and habit.

The key to making a regular profit is to make it your first item of expense. The percentage may vary from client to client based on things like the size of the deal, strategic value or cost of acquisition but the payment happens automatically on receipt of any client payments.
When you are consistently building your cash reserve with every client, you will position yourself to be a successful 3D artist. You’ll have the strength to be more selective about projects and clients and you’ll have the resources to invest in cost saving processes and technology. Your mind will be more at ease because you will not be playing the constant cash flow juggling games that plague so many businesses.

**Cut Expenses**

This seems like an obvious strategy but many revenue-focused consultants neglect a profit-centric focus. If you have a 5% profit margin and want to double your profits, you can either double revenues or cut expenses by 5%. Which is easier?

The key to making the profit work for your 3D art business is to create a system of rigorous cost controls. This means creating a plan and sticking to it. Eliminate time-wasting activities that don’t add real value to the project or your client relationship like lunch meetings and other “schmooze” activities. Use as many contract resources as possible and reduce fixed costs wherever appropriate.

**Automate Processes**

Ironically, most small companies and professionals who make their living preaching the virtues of automated solutions have less technology and art deployed in their own businesses and marketing than the majority of their clients. It’s the classic “cobbler’s children have no shoes” syndrome. As you survey the landscape of increasing the profitability of each client, do a thorough analysis of your own business process to assess the cost savings involved with automation, use of 3D art, and the prudent use of appropriate technology.

My company identified client communications as one key areas that has benefited from automation. We implemented a CRM database process that paid for itself in a few months. This means that the ability to offer needed and related services that they might, say, embed in their Web site along with the actual graphics, is a value-added differentiable service that will save your client time. Taking advantage of processes you normally would see contracted elsewhere and making them part of your service stable keeps the business control centralized and makes a difference to the client. It also means fewer mistakes on promises and follow-up procedures.

We use QuickBooks to automate our billing process both with technology and documented procedures. This allows us to bill for our services more quickly and get paid sooner, which is a boost to cash flow.
MANAGE YOUR CONTENT

As a professional 3D artist, your whole business revolves around creating and using 3D content including:

- 3D objects (figures, props, buildings, vehicles, etc.)
- Texture and other maps
- Saved scenes

As you work in and grow your business and client list, you’ll amass a growing amount of 3D content. Managing this content unlocks new doors to business success.

How does managing your content relate to exponential growth? Easy. The more content you have, the more you may be able to recycle it for future projects, thus reducing the time spent on each project. Does this mean you charge less? If you’re billing on a time and material basis, yes. If, however, you’re bidding on a project basis, then you realize that the value of your project has nothing to do with how much time you spend doing it. If you can provide the same value in half the time, don’t you still deserve to be compensated for your value? I certainly think so.

What happens as you become able to do more and more projects in less and less time? Your profits go up. How do you measure the success of your business? You get the idea.

ARCHIVING AND BACKUP

Archive everything, every model or map you create or purchase, every scene you create for clients, every production rendering and scene files (as opposed to tests), etc.

Three things will become very apparent by following this practice:
First, you will find yourself managing a growing library of content. Second, the more content you have, the more disastrous any data loss will be. Third, your work will get faster because you’ll have the basics set up once for reuse, like light sets, common scenes, etc.

ARCHIVING DATA

Think about how best to archive your data. If you are a one-person company, you will most likely store your 3D content on your computer. If you have multiple computers and/or people in your company, you may want to assign a dedicated computer as a data server.

Wherever you decide to store your 3D content, you’ll want to create an easy system of file folders and/or drive partitions to carefully organize your data. You can do this by content type, date, client, numbering scheme, or any combination of the above. The only requirement is that you are able to quickly locate any content at need.
EXPO\NENTIAL GROWTH

Why archive all of your 3D data? You never know when an old client will want an update, nor do you know when you’ll need a particular piece of content for another client. Save everything!

**Backining Up Your Data**

As I mentioned above, the more 3D content you have, the more disastrous any loss will be. You must therefore take steps to safeguard your content and data. If possible, I recommend having a separate computer dedicated to nothing but data storage or backups in case your main computer fails, gets a virus, etc. At minimum, I recommend having automated backups that save copies of your data to a separate hard drive in your computer. By “separate hard drive”, I mean a separate physical hard drive, not a logical drive partition since that will not withstand a mechanical failure.

The best backup strategy is to have your data backups spread across two or more computers, which will preserve your data against a catastrophic failure of any one machine. Even better, if you have adequate storage space in a secure facility removed from your own (such as in another city), you can store your backups there. This guards against major disasters.

Even if you don’t have access to remote computers, you can still back up your critical data offsite (away from your home or office). This is as easy as burning your data to CD or DVD and storing the discs in a bank safety deposit box.

Whatever you do, make sure that you are taking steps to prevent data loss. Do this and a failure or accident will be only an inconvenience. Fail to do this and you could well be out of business. It’s up to you.

**Third-Party Content**

There is a huge amount of 3D content of all types available for free or purchase for just about any conceivable purpose. This means that you can spend more time creating scenes instead of modeling from scratch. Note that you may need to model from scratch at times depending on your industry and client, however using these online content shops can save you lots of time and effort. Best of all, you can often reuse the same content over and over again.

Here are a few of the leading online 3D content providers:

- **3D Café.** [http://www.3dcafe.com](http://www.3dcafe.com)
- **3D Commune.** [http://www.3dcommune.com](http://www.3dcommune.com)
- **3D Science.** [http://www.3dscience.com](http://www.3dscience.com)
- **Content Paradise.** [http://www.contentparadise.com](http://www.contentparadise.com) (or open the Content room if you are using Poser version 5 or later)
- **DAZ Productions.** [http://www.daz3d.com](http://www.daz3d.com)
- **Digimation.** [http://www.digimation.com](http://www.digimation.com)
- **MEC 4D.** [http://www.mec4d.com](http://www.mec4d.com)
- **Renderosity.** [http://www.renderosity.com](http://www.renderosity.com)
- **Runtime DNA.** [http://www.runtimedna.com](http://www.runtimedna.com)
EXPONENTIAL GROWTH

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GOOD LUCK!

Bryan Brandenburg
GROW YOUR 3D ART BUSINESS EXPONENTIALLY – WHETHER YOU’RE A SOLO 3D ARTIST OR A GROWING DESIGN COMPANY

B E C O M E A 3 D A R T P R O F E S S I O N A L

Becoming a 3D art professional in the 21st century requires a new brand of business, management, sales and marketing skills. More companies are outsourcing modeling, animation and web development functions than ever before. Technology marketing and consulting guru, Bryan Brandenburg, shares a variety of innovative strategies in a book written for 3D art professionals. Based on almost 30 years of experience in the high technology marketplace, ranging from 3D model companies to computer entertainment, he has developed a winning strategy that has landed him business relationships with a variety of customers, from consumers to multi-billion dollar companies like Microsoft and Disney. He is currently the CEO of Zygote Media Group.

This book provides over 200 proven strategies to exponentially grow your business, regardless of the size of your 3D art company. This is creative sales and marketing at its finest. There is a wealth of tangible techniques to increase your sales and your profits in your 3D business while your customer satisfaction leaps to new heights.

Step-by-step chapters cover:

- The Successful Artist Mindset and the road to exponential growth
- Management - managing your way to profits in all areas of your business
- Marketing - how to maximize ROI and create an infinite marketing budget
- Sales - how to fast track to “Yes.”
- Relationships - turning strangers into clients and clients into referral networks
- Growth - acceleration strategies for your consulting business

If you are currently employed looking to supplement your income or you have a large 3D design or graphics business this book is guaranteed to increase your bottom line with just one idea. By systematically employing the strategies outlined in this book, you’ll be on your way to becoming a Successful 3D Art Professional.

"As the world’s largest library of digital 3D content, Turbo Squid works with probably more professional artists than any other company. Bryan’s book will be invaluable for those that want to take their 3D Art profession to the next level in enjoyment and profitability"

Dan Lion, VP of Sales & Marketing for TurboSquid.com

"A powerful collection of ready-to-use strategies that any 3D artist will find essential to growing their business. For over a decade I’ve watched Bryan practice these strategies with amazing results. He knows what makes computer-types tick, and has written material that describes in detail how to build a successful business using tried and tested techniques."

Mark Mongie – Senior Art Director, Electronic Arts

"Bryan Brandenburg has a 100,000 ft. view of the 3D industry. His consulting services to T-Splines have been instrumental in shaping our market strategy as we prepare to release our modeling tools."

Matthew Sederberg – CEO, T-Splines.com

BRYAN BRANDENBURG, has consulted with hundreds of organizations including Symantec, Disney, IBM, Virgin, and Microsoft. He is a syndicated writer and is a frequent guest on radio and television. Mr. Brandenburg has published seven books, a monthly print magazine and has been a principle contributor to over thirty software products, including Norton Utilities, Norton Antivirus, A Bug’s Life, and Small Soldiers. He is the CEO of Zygote Media Group the oldest and most respected 3D modeling company in the industry and lives near Snowbird ski resort outside of Salt Lake City, Utah.