

An Entrepreneurs guide on being an artist

by Alexander Klebe

Being an artist is like being any other entrepreneur. It is a dynamic, fulfilling way of life with many benefits. But essentially it provides what almost everyone craves: personal freedom, being able to choose what you do, where you do it and when you do it. However it requires vision, discipline and planning. It is a path marked with challenges, great and small. The biggest challenge is to embrace a perception of life where you absolutely can and will succeed i.e. believing in yourself and your dreams. This article suggests ten easy to follow steps towards making this change in perception. It will help bring you closer to identifying your true passion in life and transforming it into your profession. The central question of this article is: "What can I do now to start living a life, that is guided by my dreams and by my heart?"

1. Dream

As children we are natural dreamers, we create a dream world for ourselves and play in it. But slowly, as we become "educated", we literally lose the ability to dream and sadly we slowly lose the ability to believe in the possibility of actualizing those dreams.

„Never give up on a dream just because of the time it will take to accomplish it. The time will pass anyway.“

– Earl Nightingale

As we went through the societal machine and "grew up" we were mostly taught to focus on getting a title, a job and buying instant satisfaction. It was encouraged to believe more in marketing and consumable happiness than the own dreams and intuitions.

But of course as everyone eventually comes to see the only problem is, money can't buy happiness. Fulfilling your dreams can. It is you, who is responsible for your life and happiness. Nobody else.

It is time to start dreaming again, it is time to remember what you had been dreaming of, when you were a child. Maybe somebody told you, "you can't do it", but that's not true. Only those who have realized their own dreams can

really know when something is possible or not. Remember most dreamers were and are regarded as crazy in the beginning. It is you, who is responsible to make your own dream come true. It's your life, your one life to live. So do it! Be precise! Make a statement of intent; visualize it in a collage or mind map. This will help to remind you of your dream everyday. Believe in your dream and in yourself. If you do, others will also. Say "YES" to life, in every coincidence lies a little bit of magic that can teach you something and bring you closer to understanding your true self. Listen to your intuition, inspirations and desires, converse with a diversity of thoughts but follow heart.

2. Create

Start creating. Realize the small ideas and dreams you have as soon as you can. Learn from the problems that arise and re-evolve ideas and approaches while doing it. Design a work environment that invites your creativity and stimulates your work flow. Establish a routine, set goals daily, weekly, monthly. Dedicate yourself to the realization of your dreams, continue doing it & let the flow of realization build its own momentum.

"Your only job is to shrink the time between idea and reality."
– Aaron Levie

3. Brand

Create a small brand for yourself. Decide on a name, design a logo, print some business cards and a website will do for the beginning. Show a selection of your works online. Many tools that help you to create your digital exhibition space are free in a basic version. For Starters, we recommend: wordpress, tumblr or blogger. Distribute your projects via facebook, twitter, behance or youtube and invite your friends to comment, like and share your works. Make a habit of updating your page and social networks with recent work. Step by step your portfolio will grow and tell more about your individual way of expression, passion and profession.

4. Market

Create some first products and services from what you have. Keep it simple. People love buying things with heart from people with heart. Make it easy for potential clients to buy from you. Create products & services at a broad price

range, becoming more exclusive and worthy. You can start with something small for \$1, \$5 or \$10. Later create something more valuable for \$25, \$50 or 100\$. Later you can establish very exclusive products or services for 1000\$ or more.

Check out the Pareto principle:

20% of your sales revenue will come from 80% of your customers and 80% of your revenue from probably 20% of your customers. But you need both groups. Care for each and every one of them.

Satisfy your customers but more importantly satisfy yourself, with the services and products you deliver. Set your standards at a level, where you have to grow each time you reach for them. Make it an experience for others to buy from you.

5. Reflect

Have you ever tried meditation? It is nice to look at the things from the unattached level of observer. Look at your situation, as if you were interviewing yourself: "Who are you and why are you doing what you do? What motivates you? What are you proud of? Where do you want to go? Or where do you see yourself in 3 or 5 years?" These questions are important for your own record and often it helps to record them in some way or another. I keep a diary, for dreams, ideas and tasks. I needed to learn to set milestones for every other week, month and year, even if the milestone was to play Frisbee in the park. So everyday when I wake up, I have task to fulfill, that is a little part of my big dreams. This also helped me to record, what I have done and keep a diary about the important steps. Then you can read and review those tasks later, and see how you have fulfilled them, and what you had to "invest" in order to harvest, you will see your own success with different eyes and learn from every one of them.

"Making a living is not the same as making a life"
– Maya Angelou

6. Collaborate

One basic key to personal growth and great performance is collaboration. Accepting that every one of us has some kind of super power. Imagine how cool the superheroes were, when they discovered their superpowers – how they felt, and now imagine they collaborate with others, what great things are they

capable of. In creative or artistic teams, it is almost the same for me. Different people have different kinds of special abilities, the more they use them, the better they get. When there are crazy enough musicians for example, jamming together in a jazz band, new sounds come into existence as soon as they find the collaborative flow. Working together with other creative people should always be like that. Surround yourself with creative people.

Find others who are equally crazy, get involved and create new projects together, think of common areas, where your arts combined create great results. Every portrait is a short collaboration between the photographer and the subject. Especially in the fields of visual productions I love to work with other artists, like yoga masters, who know how to speak with their body or musicians, who tell a thousand words with one deep look into their soul.

“We are privileged to be alive, and we should make the most of our time on this world.”

– Richard Dawkins

7. Network (and Karma)

The basic rule of karma: “Give the best, to be given the best” is also valid for your work and of course your network. A book publisher once described his job to me, “I move what others have written.” Unless you have a manager or agency representing you or even then, you can more importantly count on success of your networking. It is not about who you know, but who knows you, and even more important who recommends your work to others. Karma says, that if you do good deeds, the universe will return you the favor multiplied by 10. It is the same with networking. It might not be the exact person, but when you deliver good work to other people, they will naturally be interested in keeping a good relationship with you. Many times these relationships grow in value with every year or project you do together. It’s Karma Theory in action: Build your “Karma Bank” account and your relationships will compound in value over time and good relationships lead to recommendations and a broader network.

8. Be humble

Make it a habit to listen first to your clients, and then ask yourself, “How can I solve their problem or even solve your clients client problem?” What is your

experience in that field? What potential can you bring to the table? Of course, you are good in it. But accept, that there is most probably someone who is better – but he is not around at the moment, to do the job. Recognize your own faults, but count your blessings. Many times, a small favor or project, like a flap of a butterfly's wing can turn into a (innovative) tsunami.

9. Plant seeds

Every interaction, every project, and every little piece of heart-guided work you do leaves a seed behind in your footsteps. Let these seeds grow, appreciate them as small gifts from your past, that eventually bear fruit. It's the same with creativity, someday you find a flowering garden in front of your door, when you care for each flower of it. The Chinese bamboo for example needs 3 years to root, but once grounded it flourishes.

10. Give what you expect to get

Teach what you have learned. Share your knowledge and experience with others. Sharing knowledge is a great way to never stop learning. It also means to continuously improve yourself. The moment you stop becoming better, you have stopped being good. Ask yourself in which ways you can assist others and be generally helpful to people in your network. Be a reflection of what you like to see in others.

*“Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever.”
– Mahatma Gandhi*