

# Taking your Art Business Online

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July 30, 2020

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Photo credit: Songline

With social distancing many artists realize that now more than ever it makes sense to take their art business online.

In 2020 Guelph Arts Council and the Downtown Guelph Business Association hosted Guelph's very first Art on the (Virtual) Street event whereby artists pivoted their business sales to be 100% online. Artist participant [Taras Lachowsky](#) reflects on his experience as an artist vendor and noted "human to human connection is important...my advice to artists going into online sales would be to organize your artworks and have really good photographs."

How to bridge personal connections with your customers online and having great photo documentation of your artwork is just one of many things to consider when taking your art business online. To learn more about this process, I interviewed Ken Braithwaite, Web



Ken Braithwaite, Web designer/founder, [Ethos Design](#). Image provided by Ken Braithwaite

designer/founder, [Ethos Design](#). Ken graciously shared these insights and experiences:

## 1. What's involved with taking your art business online?

Everything you do online and offline gives people an idea of who you are, what you do, and why you do it. A website connects all of these because it's where you get to define yourself online the way you want to. It also leads people through a simple sales process. People want to buy from those they know, like, and trust. So you've caught their attention, engaged socially, and shown you can be trusted as a professional.

## DIY

Results can vary depending on your website budget. If you have tech skills you could opt for a DIY option like Squarespace or Wix. Both offer affordable monthly programs but you're limited to the site themes provided. It may be too restrictive and you may need to hire a designer after the fact.

## HIRING A PRO

Hiring a designer is a good option, but can get expensive. It helps to work with someone who demonstrates they're interested in what you're doing, and not just trying to sell their marketing scheme. You need someone who'll take the time to get to know you, and what you're about. Otherwise, you could end up with something you're not happy with.

## PAYMENTS

Stripe and Square are good forms of secure payments and integrate with most platforms. Square has the added benefit of providing a mobile, in-person shop, allowing you to use your smartphone to make sales anywhere with an internet connection. Both options are free to get started, and charge a per-transaction fee around 3%.

## **2. How best to expand your social presence and market your wares/services.**

### DIY

YouTube videos provide ideas for social media platforms. You don't have to be great at every platform, just focus on two or three that suit your business. Some can be monetized. For example: if you started your own YouTube channel teaching people how to draw, the potential exists to earn additional passive income if your content is consistent and popular.

## HIRING A PRO

If you someone to manage your social media, make sure they take the time to reflect *your* voice and spread your message. If someone says they'll make three posts a week on one platform, I wouldn't see that as a good plan. Trading time for money limits everyone's potential. Social media is fluid and spontaneous. You'll likely end up doing the commenting and messaging yourself anyway. That said, there are people who do this right and know how to make it work.

## **3. How to choose social media channels for your business/type of art.**

Definitely Instagram as a social hub - especially if you're doing some kind of visual art. Post with purpose. If you're able to teach people the tricks of your trade, YouTube and TikTok are great. TikTok has short educational videos with personal stories, and they're super engaging.

The key is learning who your audience is, where they are, and then engage with them. Listen to what they say. Provide the type of content they want.

## **4. What ways can you suggest to engage with audiences and potential buyers?**

Spend time growing your social networks. Focus more on giving than getting. Add new people and actually engage with them. Likes are the lowest form of engagement. Share and

comment on their posts. Get to know people. They'd rather buy from someone they know, like, and trust.

## 5. Sales

You need to sell things to stay in business. *To Sell is Human*, by Daniel Pink, is a good sales book, helping you communicate key information without giving off that 'sales-y' vibe. Your online presence is about clear and consistent communication. What you say, matters equally as how you say it. Know who you're talking to, and what they need to hear, and you'll be on the right path.

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Additional Resources for Taking Your Art Business Online:

[Guelph Chamber of Commerce Directory](#)

[Guelph Business Centre](#)