

## The Three Pillars of Sales Support.

You probably started your gallery with a vision of helping artists, selling your own art or for some other equally valid reason. You knew that you would need to advertise, maintain your gallery space, and pay staff and so on.

You want to accomplish your goal plus get some time to golf, go on vacation, etc. How can an art gallery management program help to achieve this?

Most galleries are small businesses - one to five employees including the owner. Initially you may have deployed manual or semi-manual methods of tracking clients, art pieces and artist payments. The tools available today makes all of this easier and allows you to know your best clients and communicate with them at less cost, know how much you owe your artists, track your inventory, create invoices and much more.

To implement a system there is an initial learning curve and you may wonder if it is all worthwhile. It has been proven that in a short period of time; you start to wonder how you survived before.

Let's look at the Three Pillars that will all support your business and its growth.

**Pillar ONE** is your main gallery program.

**Pillar TWO** is your website.

**Pillar THREE** is taking your 'gallery' to your clients.

**Pillar ONE** is managed by software like GallerySoft, ArtSystems and Masterpiece Manager. All have been available for some time and offer similar functionality. How do you decide which is the right one for you?

The Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) is comparable - buy for a single set price or pay by the month. You will need support, at least initially, to get the most from the program. All of the programs offer similar features including client contact - emails, letters and phone, complete inventory records including images, invoicing, integration with your accounting system and uploading to the web.

Secure access, access from anywhere and automated data backup is also essential. This is a where a hosted solution is superior.

**Pillar TWO** - There is a big advantage to having your website updated from your gallery software so instead of entering your art (inventory) into your gallery program and then again on your website, enter it once and then automatically update your website. The best programs can also remove the sold pieces. If you already have a website it can be updated to work with your gallery program although the ease of doing this will vary with the gallery program you choose.

**Pillar THREE** - If one of your goals is increasing your sales by taking your gallery to your prospective client then you need to choose a program that allows you to access your gallery data from anywhere. The common way of accessing your data remotely is by using a Remote

Desktop Program (RDP). Make sure the program you select can be accessed over the Internet from anywhere.

Notebooks, Netbooks and Tablets now make it very practical to take your gallery to your prospective client. Any device should have connectivity over the cell network.

- Notebook computers work OK but they are cumbersome and don't have built-in access to the cell network. These typically have good resolution and speed but have limited battery life.
- Netbooks are similar to Notebooks but are smaller. Some now have built-in web access from whichever supplier you choose. Resolution and speed are usually not great.
- Tablets are the emerging class that really takes portability and functionality to a new level. The best example today is the Apple iPad Wi-Fi + 3G device that connects to both the Internet and cell network.

The device needs to have a high enough resolution and size to show your art at its best, be easy to use and allow running of your gallery software with full functionality such as invoicing.

Of course the big 22" monitor is best but it is pretty hard to carry! Cell phones such as the Blackberry and iPhone can be used but they are pretty small. We have looked at the options and we think the best choice is the Apple iPad. Why?

- It can use the RDP for easy access to your data back at the gallery.
- The resolution is excellent.
- It can display your website.
- Speed is comparable to your in-house systems.
- It is very portable –
  - 11" by 8" by 1" thick including the carrying case.
  - Includes on-screen keyboard so there is nothing else to carry.
  - A mouse is not required since it uses a touch-screen.
  - Weight with case is 2 pounds.
- Battery life will keep you going all day without the need to recharge.
- Use it as a picture frame by loading the originals of your art images.
- Some art fairs now have iPad apps to help you find your way around – e.g. <http://www.artbasel.com/go/id/ss/>.

If your goal includes increasing your sales then we think the Three Pillars go a long way to supporting that goal.