



How to Open & Operate a Financially Successful

Painting, Faux Painting, or Mural *Business*

By Melissa Kay Bishop



The companion CD-ROM contains all forms from the book, PLUS a pre-written, editable business plan in Microsoft® Word format.

CASE STUDY: GAUGING THE PROCESS

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C. Ashley Spencer is an artist with an entrepreneurial spirit. She owns two successful decorative painting companies. Her first, Casart, is her faux finish and mural painting business. The second is Casart Coverings, a product line of pre-made or customized wall coverings. They are scanned images of murals or faux finishes printed on a canvas-like material with a repositionable, self-adhesive backing.

She has built her business on talent and hard work but also by networking with clients, paint stores, interior designers, and interior design events. If there is a home show in your area, register to have your own booth, or just attend with a stack of business cards.

Spencer works closely with all her clients to develop creative ideas for various art projects. She maintains this type of relationship directly with clients, professional interior designers, and decorating firms.

Beyond asking the basic questions of new clients, such as what the scope of the project is, what type of room is it, and what their budget looks like, she gets her best information visually. When meeting with a client, Spencer brings her "Book of Ideas," a collection of magazine clippings, organized by color for decorative and faux finishes, and a separate book for murals from which they can flag ideas they like with sticky notes. She also brings her portfolio, as it has much more than what is on her website, and any samples of her work that is in a finish or color they request.

While giving clients time to look through the books, Spencer takes this opportunity to measure the walls and survey the environment. She looks at their style of home décor, their color choices, and how they have assembled their rooms. She looks for their attention to detail.

She also looks at the need for prep painting, the need for large furniture moving, and whether there is a need for a parking pass if the client is a business or lives in a gated community. These are all preparations for which she holds the client responsible.

Spencer charges for this initial consultation because there is valuable time involved and it helps to weed out clients who are not serious about having work done. Once she prepares her proposal, a commission agreement is accepted and signed, and a deposit is sent, she begins work on her sample boards. Once these are approved and the on-site work is completed, she deducts a portion of the initial consultation charge from the final statement.

Spencer advises that a balance should be maintained between the administrative side of work and the artistic application so that your mind can be free to create.

What to ask

That first consultation with a new client is a valuable time for the both of you. Some painters choose to ask for a fee for the time they spend on this initial meeting. It is valuable time and if a potential client is willing to pay for a consultation, it shows that they are serious about having the work done. Many painters choose to not ask for a consultation fee as a service to the client in an effort to attract more potential customers. If a home or business owner is undecided about whether to have the painting done, this consultation time is an opportunity for the painter to get the client excited about the project's possibilities and persuade him or her to have the work done and to hire your services on the spot. If you have arrived on time, brought the proper tools, appeared professional, and are excited about your work, there is a good chance