

President's Message:

Developing Your Opportunities

As I correspond with large and small stained glass studios, hobbyists, and multi-generational artists, I find most are concerned about either not having any work, not having enough work, or having to reduce their scope of operations. For decades, the stained glass industry has been perceived as a “dying” art, with a painful lack of knowledge by the general public about who we are and what we do. I have never heard complaints about having too much work or too much of a backlog.

What a fantastic opportunity!

Those who persist and are creative in their efforts to survive will have an even bigger slice of the pie, so to speak! How do we move in that direction?

First, we need a plan to create a market for ourselves. All of the talent in the world will not make you successful if no one knows you exist. Finding inexpensive ways to tell the world and investing in techniques that will give you a good ROI (return on investment) are critical to long-term success. Although highly recommended, I am not addressing the multitude of virtually cost-free social networks that can be accessed to publicize your business. What follows are techniques that I have used over the years that have helped me when I needed more stained glass work.

First, let people know who you are and what you do. Join service clubs, be active in your church and volunteer some time with your Chamber of Commerce or other civic endeavors. Donate some smaller stained glass items to fundraisers that are highly publicized and get your name out there with free advertising. Celebrate a studio anniversary or other occasion and get your local paper to do an article on you and your accomplishments.

Secondly, get credibility. Join the SGAA, participate, meet other members and learn from them. You will reap whatever benefits you sow. You will learn, your clients will be impressed, and your reputation and your business will be advanced according to your efforts.



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Thirdly, think outside the box. Have you ever had a fundraiser for the youth in your church during the fourth quarter to deliver stained glass Nativity scenes, crosses, or puzzles? Have you had a booth at a Home and Garden show that attracts 25,000 upscale buyers who will see your work? And they ask, “Do you do church windows, too?”

Does your community have an annual trade convention that showcases local businesses? Almost all church denominations have annual conferences that allow booths for display and information about your work. I have done or am doing all of these above-suggested opportunities, and I know they all provide the ability to develop your opportunities!

Lastly, focus on the use of your time and talent. It is very easy to spend 80% of your time talking and working with those who only provide 20% of your income. We all spend too much time talking about our passion for stained and architectural glass to anyone who will listen. While sometimes necessary, reminding yourself of your priorities must be continually a part of your plan if you want to achieve your goals.

In this time of opportunity, it is good to know that there are many ways to be successful in stained glass. Managing our time, overhead, materials, and people is critical. I encourage you to spend some time being proactive in this business that we have chosen to pursue. The formula for each of us is different; however, it is agreed that what we do is truly a combination of business and pleasure.

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