

Everything you need to connect, communicate and succeed.



Inside Mac Radio

Host Scott Shepherd interviews Susan Bachman and Jan Welborn-Nichols, Market Arts Creative.

Hi Ladies. How ya doing?

Hi Scott. We're doing great. Hey, we wanted to let you know that Susan and I are using iChat right now since I work in Ann Arbor and she's in the Nashville area. So that's just one of the ways that we use cool Apple stuff to stay connected.

Wow! Isn't that cool?

We think so. But then we have the misapprehension that we're cool. So of course, we have to use cool Apple technology.

So why don't you guys tell me how you got together to do what it is that you're doing?

Together we're Market Arts Creative and we create original content and branded web platforms for clients. But after about 91 years of doing that (dog years, Jan) yeah because that's how hard we worked. (And we're old.) Yeah, but we're still hot (at least inside our heads). But let's not go there.

We looked into the future and saw that we weren't going to be part of it unless we really disrupted the way that we were working. About 18 months ago, I made the transition to all Mac technology. Susan, as the world's greatest designer was already using a Mac.

Right, I've been using Macs since my trusty Mac 2si about 100 years ago. It was the top of the world but now with the MacBook Pro it's a whole different world. (Let's not mention that monstrously big monitor that you have.)

So I moved over from the PC side and we immersed ourselves in all things Web 2.0. For instance, until about 18-months ago we didn't own an iPod (how did we live)? We didn't know that social networks existed. We thought that's what you did when you went to a Chamber of Commerce meeting. So we had to do some homework and immerse ourselves in FaceBook, LinkedIn, YouTube and even iTunes.

Over the past 18-months we've experienced our own learning-through-suffering program. But we were really helped out by the people at the Genius Bar. They really do mitigate suffering. Now, we produce our own podcasts using Apple products, primarily Garage Band and Final Cut for video. As we mentioned, we use iChat to enhance our virtual working relationship. Everybody knows that Apple products allow you to be creative, but they have allowed us two grown-up girls to completely makeover our business and reinvent what we're doing.

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So tell me about what you guys are doing in the realm of podcasts and the web stuff that you're creating?

The first podcast that we're doing is an interview show and it's called Conversations with Creative Minds. (That's with Jan as the host. I'm a visual person. She's a writer and loves to be on camera. So it works out well.)

Thanks. That's a nice way for you to say I'm a ham. Anyway, we invite very different people on the show from comedians to cosmologists, authors to actors. I talk with them about the practical applications of creativity in their lives. From those sessions we come away with 10-minute videos that are posted on the site, www.conversationswithcreativeminds.com. They're also available for download on YouTube and iTunes. These people have remarkable things to say about the ways in which they innovate, get things done, and achieve. After every program, Susan and I sit down and just go "Wow! I never thought about it that way before." That lead us to the idea to do a talk show about our talk show. And that's how our audio podcast Creative Juice got started. This is Susan and I exploring an idea from the interview. (We're just recording what we would have sat around talking about anyway. And we hope that other people find it as entertaining and interesting as we do.) It can be kind of dangerous because we're having a great time and we hope that translates.

One of the reasons we do the show is that we wanted to walk our talk; showing rather than telling people what we can help them do the same.

Have you found that your clients, in addition to the branding, web and marketing work are interested in doing their own podcasts or embracing new media?

It's really interesting, because people are intrigued by social media, but they're very cautious. (Fearful too of entering a new world of marketing.) Yes. That's true. And fear causes a kind of paralysis (hopefully short term). So this is leading to a lot of conversations. People are teetering on the brink but they're reluctant to dive in as we did.

I think this hesitation is related to the fact that social media demands a new viewpoint of marketing, one where you are willing to give up some control. You have to be willing to put your content out there, to share your knowledge and invite people to comment on it. If you're a bit control-freakish, this is a big step to take. But more people are looking closely at social media and are starting see it as a part of their marketing program.

What else have you found that people are really interested in these days?

Because of the extremely difficult economic times, people are looking at how little they can budget and still get an effect. So micro web sites that might house an audio podcast are a viable choice. It's a good approach for professionals who want to promote a product or a book.

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It's also a good venue for educational institutions to attract new students. We're experiencing clients who are interested in starting small and introducing a little bit of interactive media.

What have you been experiencing getting people into social networking environments?

The point of entry is very appealing to people because it's practically free. But regardless of what social network you choose, Facebook, YouTube, Vimeo, etc., it's about maintaining brand integrity. It's one thing to throw a video up, but if you don't frame it with brand-consistent content then you're really throwing away the time spent and not getting your money's worth.

Susan's favorite social network advice is simply put up a picture folks. You need to have a presence on these sites. Otherwise, it's like having a bag over your head.

One of the ways that people can stand out at a time when there is so much market fragmentation and segmentation is to exhibit some personality. Whether you're a firm of one or an organization of many, personality matters. When you're so professional that personality is absent it's like Gertrude Stein's quote, "There's no there there." We've been in the business for some time of helping people take advantage of the innate, most original branding tool there is – an authentic voice and a genuine personality. We've tried to serve as an example with our firm web site, www.marketartscreative.com, by daring to put ourselves out there as personalities.

So everything we're doing is about walking our talk. Yes, there are benefits to podcasting. We've experienced them, we've done it and we can help you get a head start. There are benefits to communicating your authentic, genuine self through your web site. We've done that and we can help you do that too.

We've used Apple tools to be more creative, more real, more human and more recognizable.

As an example people will put a blog up but they don't refresh the content. I think that hurts you more. Right?

Yes. That's really true. There are so many great resources that we share with clients to address those issues. One of them is Mark Glazer's Media Shift blog. He's really smart and has great things to say about what you just mentioned Scott. For example, in order to make the most of search engine optimization, you should add new content, between 3,000 to 5,000 words every four to six weeks. That's a significant commitment. So if our clients are going to blog, we make sure that they have a structure, a plan so that they can fulfill that commitment and take advantage of what blogging has to offer.

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There's something else that we've started using for people who can't sustain blogging and that's Twitter. By the way you can tweet us @MarketArtsJan or @MarketArtsSusan. Twitter is a great min-blogging tool because you can only send messages up to 140 characters. If you're terse, like my partner Susan, it's a great medium.

It's still a commitment to establish your presence and build a following. Just this morning Susan, you mentioned that someone was violating one of the rules.

Oh yeah. They were blurting. This means that you're talking about yourself all the time and not interacting with the community, which is the purpose of the site – to add content, but to also engage and converse with the audience.

Do you think that using Twitter is relevant beyond the short text-like messages that this is what I'm doing right now?

There are all kinds of people on Twitter. You have the opportunity to follow thought leaders in your area. People like Chris Brogan or Peter Shankman for social media. Or, just for fun, I follow The Makeup Divas. You can identify people to follow that are relevant to your business or your interests.

Another great thing about Twitter is that a lot of reporters use it. It's a good way to monitor bloggers and journalists in search of a source that you, or your clients, may be able to fulfill.

Yeah, it's way more than what your kitty ate for breakfast (which is annoying unless it's my cat).

Again, it's really useful for following thought leaders in a variety of industries and uncovering PR opportunities. All of this is part of a plan. You don't have to do it all. You certainly don't have to do it all at once. For instance, find out who's blogging about your industry. If you produce homemade canned goods and peach preserves, then find out what the foodies are blogging about. You may have a great distribution or marketing opportunity that you know nothing about if you're not tracking blogs or following the appropriate people on Twitter.

Do what we did. Start small. It's just like what Henry Pollack, one of our interview guests said. In science you have a hypothesis, followed by experimentation and verification. If it's not turning out the way you thought. You do a mid-course correction. This is something we talk about a lot. Starting does not mean that you are stuck going in one direction forever. Now is not forever. You have a plan. Then you let the market guide you about where you should want to go.

This is great information. And it's great to see how you guys have embraced technology to move your business forward. And also help other people do the same. The technology is not as intimidating as it used to be and people can learn this stuff in a fairly short period of time and start utilizing it right now.

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You learn what you need to learn when you need to learn it. Like anything else, you learn one thing and that makes learning the next thing easier. Neither of us are very technologically gifted. (Is that a nice way of say that we're techno-idiots?)

We like to say that we're idiot savants when it comes to technology without the savant part. But we're absolutely fearless. We'd like to communicate that same fearlessness to other people. Come on in. Have some fun. You can use this to build a business.

Ladies, where do we find out about all the stuff that you are up to?

We'd love it if people would visit us at our firm web site
www.marketartscreative.com.

And you're also welcome at our podcast site
www.conversationswithcreativeminds.com.

You'll also find our audio podcast Creative Juice on the Conversations site.

We're also on iTunes, YouTube, Vimeo, Facebook, LinkedIn, Plaxo and Flickr.

We used iChat to host our virtual launch party across two states and then posted the pictures to Flickr/MarketArtsCreative.

Hey guys. Thank you for being here. I want to have you back to see what else you're doing with technology to help grow your business and help other people be more productive.

Thank you Scott!

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