

# **One for you, one for me**

or how I sold ten paintings and covered the material costs for ten more before making even one of them.

A free report by Gary Peters

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## **Who's this report for?**

This report is for those of you who would like a bit more flesh to the bones of the One for you, one for me idea.

In it you can discover what I did to make the One for you, one for me offer happen and work for me – from working out my costs, to sending out a regular newsletter to the actual launch itself.

Hopefully by sharing my story of what I did and what I didn't do will make things easier for you if you're thinking of creating or adapting the One for me, one for you idea for yourself.

At the back I've included links to all things technical I've used as well as to people I've read, borrowed from and been inspired by.

This is very much a work in progress – I'm thinking of turning it into an ebook – so once you've read it I'd love to hear from you. I've included five questions at the end asking you how I can improve this report and also create something really useful for you. It would be great if you could spend 5 minutes and respond.

And of course, if you use the One for you, one for me idea for yourself I'd love to hear how it goes.

Right, let's crack on!

## **The origin of an idea**

This year I realised I was sick of having my work pile up in the studio and spending a large part of my income on my painting. I realised I'd love to get my work out of the studio and also find a way to cover my costs – maybe even manage to pay for a few coffees and muffins too.

I've been reading people like Seth Godin for a while, was intrigued by the path Hazel Dooney was taking along with people like Clay Collins and Chris Guillebeau. I was also really interested in the model Kristin Hirsh was using with her strange angels and well, I wanted to find a way for me to “go pro” as it were. Or at least step up my game.

So I started exploring a few different ideas to do this. I got to thinking if I could get someone to cover my costs to make two paintings, one painting could be for them, the other for me. They'd get a good painting at a very affordable price and I'd get a piece to exhibit and hopefully sell. Win, win. The only cost to me would be my time.

## **The idea**

The One for you, one for me idea is pretty simple – find people to pay to cover the materials you need to make two pieces of work. You make the work, they get one piece, you get the other.

## **Checklist / order of events**

- Built my web site
- Started my newsletter and built my list
- Worked out my costs
- Set up a paypal account / created my “Buy Now” buttons
- Created a sales pages on my web site
- Wrote my launch emails
- Launched
- Followed up

## **Pre-launch**

### **Built my web site**

I'd already got a web site which people could check my work on. While there are things on it I'd like to change, I figured it was good enough for now and wouldn't harm the One for me, one for you offer.

If you haven't got some sort of web presence for your work, get on to it! I use Indehibit for my site. It's a great piece of software and has a great community. It helps if you've some confidence in using html or are prepared to learn. It's really not too difficult to learn.

Even if it's a blog using Blogger or Wordpress (both of which are free) it's a good start.

### **Why start a newsletter?**

I started my newsletter as a way to get my work out to people, to pique their interest and perhaps start a conversation. I didn't do it for sales. In fact I felt really uncomfortable making the offer – I didn't want to be some sleazy marketing and sales creep.

A breakthrough with this dilemma came for me when I was talking with people and friends at a wedding. I was amazed by how interested people were in what I did and how they genuinely wanted to help. I realised I could do this without being sleazy – people were interested in having a conversation and finding out more.

Other benefits I've had since writing it is that I get emails from people saying how much they like getting the newsletter, how it makes them think about things and brightens up their Fridays.

I've also become more comfortable with writing (and hopefully better). One of the reasons I started the newsletter was to force myself to get better in writing about my work. Often competitions want a brief statement, or you need to write proposals for exhibitions. This seemed like a perfect way for me to get the practice.

#### BUT I CAN'T WRITE!

Yes you can! It doesn't have to be Shakespeare. Try thinking of it as if you're writing a letter or email to a friend. Perhaps even a postcard. A simple "this is what I've been up to in the studio" kind of thing.

#### WHAT TO WRITE ABOUT

Pick one of your paintings and write about it as if you were talking to a friend about it.

Write about a recent exhibition you went too, your favourite movie or anything really. The main thing is to write!

Handy tip: When I write I know the first version is going to suck. Especially when I first start. And that's ok. Once I've written something, only then do I go back, edit it and knock it into shape. Or I write some more as I've warmed up and edit it all later.

I've noticed over the six months I've become quicker at writing, and hopefully better too. It's much easier now than it was when I first started. Sure, some weeks it's takes me a while, but generally I've gotten much quicker. It probably takes me a morning to get everything all together. I'll write something up in the week. Leave it a day and then edit it, format it, add the pictures and get it all ready to go.

TESTING, TESTING, ONE TWO THREE

Test your newsletter with some of your friends, just to see if you can do it and to make sure everything works.

I explained to half a dozen or so friends what I was doing and asked if they'd mind helping me for a few weeks when I did some testing.

The friends I chose I knew would be able to gently tell me straight as to whether it was working or not.

In this test period I wanted to see if I could maintain writing a weekly newsletter, to see if I enjoyed it and to see if it worked for my readers.

As HTML newsletters and email readers don't always get on I also wanted to make sure they got everything in one piece and looking OK.

I use MailChimp to deliver my newsletters and manage my list. They're awesome. You can use the service for free for up to 500 people on your mailing list. And you don't need to know any HTML code – they've plenty of easy to edit templates.

An aside – you could write up several newsletters in advance. I keep meaning to so I've got a couple tucked up my sleeve if I can't write one week. It hasn't happened yet!

Oh, and as for frequency, weekly suits me. Other people do a monthly one. Find whatever works for you.

So, that was my newsletter started. I'd been running it for six months before I came up with the One for you idea. In this time I'd got 50 people on my list, most of whom had been on there for three months or more.

I figured 50 people was more than enough for me to try my idea out. If it failed, it would be small and amongst people who knew me and my work. So very little risk and a lot to be gained.

So, the next step was to work out the numbers...

### **Working out my costs**

I sat down and worked out my costs to make a single painting.

How much for:

- Canvas
- Paint
- Brushes
- Coffee

I had a look at my expenses for the previous year to see how much money I'd spent on materials to help me. For example: If I'd spent \$1000 last year on materials and made 20 paintings on average I'd be looking at \$100 for materials for each piece.

I added a bit for studio rent – I figured it would take me a day or so for each painting.

The final figure I came to was a best “guestimate”. Not the most rigorous way, but good enough for me to know I'd cover my material costs.

I then of course doubled this for two paintings.

You may have another way of working out your costs.

### **Packing & postage**

I'd posted paintings within New Zealand before so looked at old receipts to get a price.

I'd made boxes to send these paintings so allowed for these packaging costs too.

I took a best guess at costs to send work overseas.

### **Working out my total costs**

Cost of materials + Packing & postage = Cost

Double it and bingo!

### **What I'd do differently**

I'd definitely recommend actually boxing a painting up as if you're going to send it to someone and take it to the post-office or couriers and get a price. Fortunately my guesstimate was good enough. I could have however been screwed and lost out. I didn't know there was a different rate of insurance for art objects.

### **Prices for shipping**

I chose to use one price, regardless of whether I was selling the work to people overseas. I figured this made things easier for people. One price, no surprises with postage. I could afford to do this as there's no Goods and Services tax (GST) on goods I sell to people overseas.

Next time I may consider having a base price and charging different rates for postage. I don't think people necessarily mind paying the postage as long as it doesn't make the overall price ridiculous.

### **Set up a PayPal account**

You're going to need to be able to receive payments. PayPal is probably one of the most common ways to send and receive money online.

Using PayPal I could easily create buttons for payment and accept credit card transactions without any cost up front on my part. When a transaction took place, a small percentage would be taken by PayPal for their services.

If you're in the US or the UK you could use Google checkout [<http://google.com/checkout>] as an alternative.

In the end PayPal was really my only choice. Yes, there are plenty of other options, though many of them charge set up fees and seem rather complicated. This was the lowest risk option and pretty easy to set up.

### **Built a sales page on my web site**

Setting up a web page with the offer details was really important for several reasons. It made it easier for me to include paypal buttons so I could accept credit card payments. (I wasn't sure if I could include buttons in my emails and was worried they may break. Html emails can be a little tricky to get right – I didn't want to take the risk.)

It also meant I could keep the final launch email relatively brief and then reiterate the details of the offer so people definitely knew what they were getting. I didn't want to have to deal with any misunderstandings.

## **Non-sales sales letters**

As you may have noticed, I'm not one for the hard sell. Yes, I've read about writing sales letters and squeeze pages and all that internet marketing malarkey.

Some of it is good. Really it is. It gets you thinking about who your customers are and what they're looking for. It encourages you to think about how what you're doing is beneficial to people.

And some of it, well, it just isn't for me.

I've realised the sales letter was about finding my own voice and writing something that I was comfortable enough with. I say enough, as it was a little daunting to do. However, what had I to lose?

As I mentioned my main concern was making sure that my newsletter didn't become a sales device.

Over the 12 days of the launch I had two people unsubscribe. My first two. Why they unsubscribed I'm not sure. And yeah, I felt a little hurt. And then I got over it. Whether their leaving my list was connected with my offer I've no idea. The reality is that it's okay if they don't want my newsletter or to hear about the offer it's their choice and it doesn't mean I did anything wrong.

A friend who's on my mailing list said she really liked my approach. Not "salesy" at all, very light and easy to read. No pressure.

I think the key is to find your own voice and do what you're mostly comfortable with. I say mostly, because it's probably not all going to be comfortable. There's a good chance that writing 'a sales letter' will push a load of buttons for you. That's OK. It can be interesting.

And as someone once told me about the money thing, and without wanting to sound harsh in any way, “You’ve just got to get over it!”.

## **The Launch**

Launches needn’t be big or grand.  
They just need a little planning.

### **A 12 day launch**

I ended up doing mine over 12 days. This gave me enough time to mention what I was doing in two newsletters prior to my final email going out.

It looked something like this.

**12 days out** from launch date In my newsletter I mention I’m working on project with the promise of more information next week.

**1 week later / 5 days out** from launch I make it clear as to what the offer is and give an indication of the price. Not the actual price, just that it will be a lot less than 500 bucks. By doing this, I hopefully keep people interested. If I told them the price straight away there’s no mystery, no reason to keep reading.

I also explain how the launch email will come on a different day to my regular newsletter.

This I did because I set up my newsletter to create a dialogue about my work, not for selling work. It’s primarily about the work I make, about giving people an insight into what I do, how and why I make my work. It’s not about selling.

However, my making a living is part of what I do, what we all do. To totally divorce the money side from my painting wouldn't be authentic. For me, the aim is not to have it contaminate or undermine my practice (be it the work or the newsletter). So it felt right for me to separate the actual offer itself from my regular newsletter.

**Launch date.** With everything in place I sent my launch email. It clearly explained the offer, the price and had a link through to my sales page where people could use the Paypal buttons to sign up and pay me.

I also I tried to answer any questions people may have had – questions about delivery, timing, import duties, etc. All of this information was repeated just to make sure that people were clear as to what they were signing up for. There was no small print. It was legible and in plain English.

## **Post launch**

### **Receiving payments**

During this time I received several emails from people wanting to work out payment arrangements – which we were able to do.

As it was, only two of the ten people that subscribed used Paypal. Some paid me cash, as they live locally. Others, being in New Zealand, asked for my bank details and simply transferred the money directly into my account (a practice that is very common here in NZ).

However, as my mailing list grows and more people from overseas become interested in my work, then Paypal is going to be invaluable.

## **Length of offer**

During this time I also decided to run the offer for one month only. I did this hoping the limited time period would make it more compelling. In my next newsletter I let everyone know when the offer would close.

## **Follow up**

Since the end of the offer I've let people know how things are going in my weekly newsletter. I've even shown some work in progress shots. I've spoken to a few of the people who signed up – my collectors! – and plan to contact them all directly over the coming weeks.

## **What I'd do differently**

### **ACTIVELY BUILD YOUR NEWSLETTER LIST**

I'd been writing my newsletter list for about six months when I made the offer. I'd actively been trying to build my list over the first three months and then I then stopped. Mistake.

I should have kept actively building it, even if it only meant emailing five new people a week to ask if they were interested in joining. If I had done so and only one person a week had joined I'd have had 65 people rather than 50 people on my list.

Fifteen additional people may not sound like many, but seeing as I've had 20% of my readership sign up that could have been at least another three more sales. All for writing one email a day.

### **ACTUALLY CHECK THE POSTAGE COSTS**

A really simple thing, I know. However, I took a best guess at posting overseas. I was lucky, my guess was close enough.

However I learnt that art items are insured differently and I could have been screwed if they were any more expensive than I bargained for.

So, pack up a painting, bubble wrap it and box it, take it to the post office and see how much it'll cost to send. You may want to allow for your time too – it can take a while to wrap, box and post several paintings.

#### TEST YOUR PAYPAL BUTTONS

Test your PayPal buttons by getting someone you know to actually use your sales page so you know for sure things work. You could even get one of those pre-paid credit cards and test it yourself.

Yes, PayPal will charge you for the transaction but at least you'll know that everything is working – imagine having done all the hard work and then not being able to accept people's money.

And yeah, I never tested my buttons. I simply hoped that if there were any problems people would let me know.

I was lucky – things worked!

And yes, you can set up a sandbox account with PayPal to test buttons, and it may be worth your while. I personally found it to be a lot more hassle than it was worth. A real pain. And even then you're not actually testing the real, live buttons. So find a way to test your buttons before you launch.

#### INCLUDE DIFFERENT PAYMENT OPTIONS

So far, for a variety of reasons (not wanting to use their credit card, wishing to pay in instalments) people have got in touch with

me and I've invoiced them with my bank details. No big hassles, and actually nice to be able to speak with people.

On a small scale this is fine. I can see, however, this may not easily scale, so next time I'll find a way to cover this in my email or payment options.

## **Things I struggled with**

### DE-VALUING MY WORK

I was worried whether this would de-value my existing work in any way. The reality however, is that while I've shown pieces in several good shows, I've only ever sold two pieces of work in my entire career. One to a friend I used to work with behind a bar, and the other to a friend's mum. And both pieces at, I think, 50 quid. So who was I trying to kid? As much as I may place a monetary value on my work, until someone ponies up with the cash, it's all fantasy.

And yes I know money can and often does act as a signifier for quality and worth, however I figured I had nothing to lose.

If nothing else this would set a base price for my work that I could then build upon. If other pieces sold in the meantime, then this would hopefully increase the value of the pieces people had bought through the offer – a good thing for them and good thing for me.

I'm not signed up to any galleries either, so that made things easier. If I was signed up with a dealer, or had work in several galleries, then I'd speak with about it, gauge their opinion and act accordingly.

As it is, one of the collectors who signed up has given me an extra 40 bucks as he feels it's well worth it. So as I see it, and this may

well be through a slightly wonky perspective, I've now got a base price of \$200 for my work.

## **What helped me make it happen**

### JUST DOING IT

I realised early on that things didn't need to be perfect. Sure, I wanted everything to work and be as good as I could make it. However, I also knew that if there was the odd typo, if I'd missed something that it wasn't the end of the world.

When I started the 12 day countdown I didn't even have a name for the project. Okay, I had the working title of "The Keeping Gary in Paint and Coffee Club". A bit of a mouthful to say the least and not the catchiest.

I figured that if I couldn't come up with a name I could always call it "the project with no-name" and make a joke of the fact I couldn't come up with a decent name.

What was important for me was to get things going, build up a momentum quickly so I could easily keep doing what needed to be done through to the end.

### SHARING MY IDEA WITH PEOPLE I TRUSTED

I spoke with several friends and a couple of people involved in the arts on a professional level. All gave me good feedback and support. They all thought it was an interesting idea and were keen to know how I went with it.

It was also valuable for me, as it forced me to articulate my idea clearly – all good practice for writing my emails.

Though what if the people I spoke to had said, "No, Gary – that idea sucks". Then what would I have done?

I'd like to have think I'd have done it anyway, believing it to be a good idea and worth a shot. The reality may have been a little more bumpy and uncertain. I would have certainly thought twice about the idea and who knows, may not have carried it out. I don't know for sure.

I do know, that you have to be prepared for people to rubbish your idea as much as you're prepared for them to like it.

#### BEING OPEN ABOUT NOT KNOWING EVERYTHING

There were details about this project I wasn't certain on when I started. And even as I write this, there's a couple of things I've yet to work out – and that's OK.

By being open about not having everything fixed in stone made it easier for me to get on with this and make it happen. As long as the main direction / intent of the project was clear I figured I could make everything else up as it was needed. If I got things wrong I'd say so and make the necessary changes. And so far it's worked.

#### REALISING I HAD NOTHING TO LOSE

As I mentioned previously, the whole “devaluing my work” fantasy could have de-railed the project. Though once I realised I had nothing to lose, then why not do it? In fact I had a whole heap more to lose by doing nothing.

### **In closing**

It's been a very positive experience for me and my work. I've effectively sold 10 paintings – a 400% increase in previous sales! I've generated interest beyond my newsletter list and currently am working on 16 of the 20 paintings with all the materials being paid for. Awesome!

I'm currently considering having a show of all the work before I ship the pieces off and would really like to create a catalogue too.

It's all rather exciting!

Thanks for reading. I hope you've found this both useful and interesting. If you're inspired to use the idea for yourself I'd love to hear how it goes.

Cheers,  
Gary

ps. Oh, as I mentioned at the beginning I've five questions I'd love to hear your answers to. You can find them on the next page. It would be great if you would give them a little thought and drop me a line. Thanks!

## Five questions

Regarding the One for you, one for me report:

1. *On a scale of one to ten how would you rate the quality of the content in this report?*

*If not a ten, then...*

2. *What would it take to make it a ten?*

And in general:

3. *With regards to your practice, what free product would you love for me to create *\*just\** for you?*
4. *What is your biggest fear or frustration when it comes to your practice?*
5. *What's your ideal *\*perfect\** outcome when you engage in your practice?*

Send your answers and any other thoughts you think may be helpful or of interest to me at: [feedback@garypeters.info](mailto:feedback@garypeters.info)

Thanks!

## Resources

### THINGS

Wordpress – blogging for free

[www.wordpress.com](http://www.wordpress.com)

Blogger – blogging for free

[www.blogger.com](http://www.blogger.com)

Movable Type – blogging software as used by über bloggers

Jason Kottke ([kottke.org](http://kottke.org)) and John Gruber ([daringfireball.com](http://daringfireball.com)).

[www.movabletype.com/](http://www.movabletype.com/)

Ehostpros – cheap and pretty reliable web-hosting

[www.ehostpros.com](http://www.ehostpros.com)

Mediatemple – not so cheap web-hosting and who I’m currently using to host my web site.

[www.mediatemple.net](http://www.mediatemple.net)

Indexhibit – what I use to manage and maintain my web site

[www.indexhibit.org](http://www.indexhibit.org)

Mailchimp – for your newsletter. And pretty awesome too.

[www.mailchimp.com](http://www.mailchimp.com)

PayPal – to receive online payments

[www.paypal.com](http://www.paypal.com)

Twitter – social networking in 140 characters or less

[www.twitter.com](http://www.twitter.com)

## PEOPLE

In no specific order...

John T Unger – firebowls, art heroes radio and getting off your arse and doing something about things.

[www.johntunger.com](http://www.johntunger.com)

Alyson Stanfield – the art biz coach

[www.artbizcoach.com](http://www.artbizcoach.com)

Seth Godin - Linchpins, Purple cows and Tribes to name a few of Seth's killer concepts and books. Marketing for you and me.

[www.sethgodin.com](http://www.sethgodin.com)

Hazel Dooney – an artist going making her own way in the world

[www.hazeldooney.blogspot.com](http://www.hazeldooney.blogspot.com)

Gaping Void – cartoons on the back of business cards and more

[www.gapingvoid.com](http://www.gapingvoid.com)

Clay Collins – online marketing specialist

[www.projectmojave.com](http://www.projectmojave.com)

Chris Guillebeau – writer (the art of non-conformity) and traveller

[www.chrisguillebeau.com](http://www.chrisguillebeau.com)

Merlin Mann – writer, the Inbox Zero guy, [kungfugrippe.com](http://kungfugrippe.com), You look nice today and so much more.

[www.merlinmann.com](http://www.merlinmann.com)

Kristin Hersh – musician leading the way with her strange angels and 50 Footwave.

[www.kristinhersh.com](http://www.kristinhersh.com)

AND FINALLY, ME AND MY STUFF

My web site, where you'll find my paintings and more:

*[www.garypeters.info](http://www.garypeters.info)*

Sign up to my weekly newsletter, Back to the studio:

*[www.garypeters.info/newsletter](http://www.garypeters.info/newsletter)*

And find me on twitter:

*[www.twitter.com/stoplooklive](http://www.twitter.com/stoplooklive)*

Feel free to share this report with anyone you think may be interested or benefit from it.

And if you feel like tweeting about it or sharing it on your favourite social network, go for it!

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