

CCSA TODAY

Fuel Your Creative Fire



RIDING THE TIDE

**Studio Growth & Creative
Inspiration for Summer**

Stacking up the pet love



CCX3211 Stack-a-Dog Mug ----3-3/4"Dia. x 2"H
CCX3210 Stack-a-Cat Mug ----3-3/4"Dia. x 3"H

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Welcome



Summer is here, and that means we are getting closer to our biggest event of the year—the 2025 CCSA Convention in Denton, Texas! We are counting down the days until we come together for an unforgettable experience filled with learning, networking, and inspiration. If you haven't made plans to join us yet, now is the time!

This year, we are thrilled to introduce a brand-new event—the Day of Clay! Taking place on Thursday before Convention officially kicks off, this special event is designed to give you hands-on experience with clay, deepen your skills, and explore

new creative possibilities. Whether you're a seasoned pro or just starting to explore clay in your studio, this is a can't-miss opportunity to expand your offerings and ignite your creativity.

Beyond the Day of Clay, we have an incredible lineup of Pre-Convention and regular classes, featuring outstanding speakers and industry leaders who are ready to share their expertise with you. We are especially excited to welcome special guests like Wendy Batten and Russ Webb, who will bring their unique insights and energy to our event. From business growth strategies to hands-on workshops, we have curated a schedule that will help you take your studio to the next level.

CCSA Convention is more than just a conference—it's a chance to connect with fellow studio owners, suppliers, and industry experts who share your passion. It's a time to be inspired, learn fresh ideas, and leave with actionable steps to elevate your business. This is your opportunity to invest in yourself and your studio, and we can't wait to see you there!

Make sure to register, book your hotel, and get ready for an incredible few days in Denton. Don't miss out on this chance to learn, connect, and grow. We'll see you in September!

Dena Pearlman, Executive Director

As we head into the summer season, excitement is building for what is sure to be a busy and creative time in our studios. Families, friends, and campers will soon be filling our spaces, ready to make memories and masterpieces.

With all the hustle and bustle ahead, I encourage you to take a moment to prepare—not just for the influx of painters, but for yourself as well. A successful summer isn't just about keeping shelves stocked and calendars full; it's also about finding balance. Whether that means planning a short getaway, scheduling some quiet time, or simply stepping outside to soak up the sunshine, remember that taking care of yourself helps you bring your best to your business.

As you stock up on supplies, plan events, and gear up for the season ahead, know that the CCSA is here to support you. Our community is built on sharing ideas, inspiration, and encouragement, and together we can make this summer a season of growth, success, and fun!

And when the summer rush winds down, we hope to see you at the CCSA Convention in Denton, Texas. Convention is the perfect opportunity to reconnect, recharge, and gather fresh inspiration for the year ahead. It's a time to learn, share, and celebrate everything that makes our industry so special. We can't wait to see you there!

Wishing you a fantastic summer filled with creativity, connection, and a little time for you, too!

Katie Yallaly, CCSA Board President



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The Board of Directors listed below would like to welcome you to contact them regularly regarding ideas and concerns.

We are YOUR Board and, while volunteers, are working for you!

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WHAT KEEPS US GOING BETWEEN SEASONS

What is it that keeps me going?

This is an annual conundrum: How do you get started after a busy holiday season but before the busy summer season? What keeps you going? Just like the busy seasons, the lags in between are annual and that means that every year, I'm figuring it out again.

For me it has been planning. Refining. Cleaning up and cleaning out. Making decisions about what we really need and remembering why I kept—well, more things than I care to admit.

(I really should figure out a system to keep track of why we keep bisque. Like writing on the item what sample I was thinking it would be good for. Probably won't ever happen, but it would be a great idea!)

This is, of course, the time of year that many of our manufacturers have events, and attending those is good for my creative soul, because it is so good to reconnect and connect anew with other studio owners. We don't get many opportunities for that, and there is something to be

said for being in a space with people who understand what you do and why you do it.

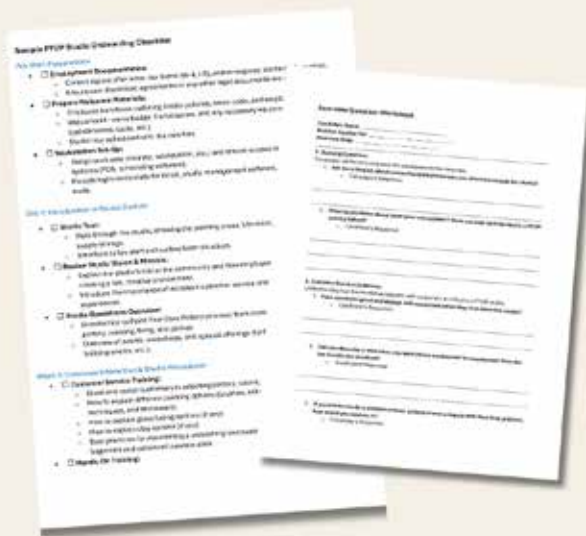
This year, the world outside of our studios feels a little uncertain. We've been around for other uncertain times, and we certainly know how to adapt to them. Is part of my anxiety the number of "five years since the start of isolation" reports? Probably. That time was so uncertain, and remembering how hard it was brings back not-great memories.

Memories can be a lesson in how to face the future, too. No matter what is happening, we are here.

I like that my space is a bubble where the Real World doesn't intrude. My studio is a place that people can come for a respite from the outside world. No matter how you feel about things, art is a calming force. You can be where people feel safe or heard or accepted or allowed to be whoever it is they are. You can turn the news off, tune out, and allow people to focus. This can be your gift to the world, that creative space.



CCSA BENEFIT SPOTLIGHT



STAFF MANAGEMENT MADE SIMPLE: 15 MUST-HAVE HR FORMS

We're excited to introduce a new resource designed to make hiring and onboarding staff easier, especially for studios in need of a strong starting point or looking to refresh their documentation.

Whether you're a new studio owner building your team or an established studio looking for ways to streamline processes, these Hiring & Staffing Forms offer a practical, adaptable solution.

THE CONVENTION EXPERIENCE FOR INTERNATIONAL MEMBERS

By Rachel Garnier, Paint It Yourself Pottery Co., Cheltenham, UK

Sometimes you come across an idea that will so totally transform your business that it warrants a video call to your colleagues in the middle of the night. For me, that call was made last September from Convention. I couldn't believe that such a simple idea had the ability to easily fix a dilemma with which we had been struggling for years: With such a vast array of ever-growing uncollected items, how could we easily work out when they were painted and recontact customers to come and collect? We give customers a month to collect but in reality we were just keeping everything and it was beginning to take over the kiln room.

Being the boss of a small business within a very niche industry can feel very lonely and relentlessly hard dealing with everything that's constantly thrown at you. Finding a tribe who so generously share their ideas, help, and passion to enable you and your business to thrive is as miraculous as the day-to-day kiln transformations we perform. Whilst there are small groups of owners all over the UK who are friends and help each other, and suppliers who are generous with knowledge and help, we do not have any equivalent event like Convention or a UK organisation like the CCSA that actively encourages the sharing of knowledge and relationship-building between us and suppliers and among studio owners themselves.

The added cost of flights from UK does make it an expensive trip, but the benefits by far outweigh this. The way Convention runs is unlike anything you will see in the UK. It is just so much slicker and more professional. Conventions, in general are not really such a big 'thing' here, so I wasn't too sure what to expect. But I loved every part of it. It is fabulous having everything in the same place, with spacious bedrooms and the added ease of just being able to go downstairs to attend! This is particularly good when you have the shock of an 8.30 am start—that's early for us!

Something else I particularly loved was having all the suppliers in one place. In addition, the idea of receiving free

pottery to paint (make-and-takes) is unheard of us! Only one of our suppliers runs a Pottery Camp here and we don't even get free brushes very often. US suppliers are SO generous! Also, Pottery Camp in the UK is only focused on painting, with no business classes. I always found this disappointing because the business side tends to be the most challenging aspect of what we do. In such a niche industry, who else understands the demands,

annoyances, and joys we all live with? The breadth of information on offer is staggering, and whether you're new to the industry or have had your business for many years, you'll find gems of knowledge in every class.

So what made me call my colleagues in the middle of the night? The simple but genius answer was colour-coded stickers, with a different colour denoting the month it was painted. We put up a chart to help keep track and haven't looked back since! We can now work out who painted what, when, and our collection rates have become much higher.

More importantly, somehow along the way I had forgotten that happy customers who actually see their creations are much more likely to come back. It's all very well that they're happy with their initial painting experience, but there is nothing

as amazing as people seeing their finished pottery—it really is such a special part of our job and all too easy to forget that to lots of our customers, what we do is magic. There is nothing like the buzz from hearing the oohs and aahs and seeing the huge grins on customers faces when they collect. And of course, happy customers are much more likely to return.

Small though it may seem, it was this discovery that will make me return as often as I can to Convention. It was exactly the stimulation both I and my business needed. I will definitely be going again—and this time with the additional suitcase I had to buy last time to get everything home. Next time, for the outward journey it will be crammed full of bubble wrap!



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CREATING SAMPLES TO INFLUENCE OR MATCH TRENDS

By Crista Toler, Mayco, Studio Market Specialist

One of the first things I learned as a studio owner is that just because I prefer a shape or design motif doesn't mean my customers will. Likewise, customers may like things that I don't. However, reflecting design and pop culture trends in your studio can make a positive impact.

There is a surge in the desire to have things in our homes customized for our tastes and surroundings. The fact that PYOP studios provide the tools for personalized decorative and functional items puts you into a position to capitalize on the quest for handmade hobbies, especially now that DIY is trending. Simple designs resonate with people and inspire them to create something they love, with their own hands. People are busy with families, work, and obligation overload, so they rely on you to help them know

what to paint in their precious time.

Decorating pieces and creating a display or vignette to highlight a trend is an investment in your business and takes time and energy, so you may not want to allot those resources to trends that may not last long. But people often want to be part of things that they see as fresh or cool, so showing them the latest inspiration serves to remind customers that not only are you the authority on design style, but also that your studio is a place to create art that they will want to use in their homes.

Don't stop with just painting samples. Build your display to include





Bonus Pictures!

Check out the digital edition for more trend inspiration!

colors and props to further tell the story of why a potential painter should decorate a piece that features mushrooms, cowboy boots, bowls, cherries, or fish. Use your samples by photographing them in different ways for social media and emails. Pan over the entire display and share it on reels along with trending audio. Shoot a how-to video to share on socials or a screen/iPad in your studio. CCSA's Marketing Monday is a great resource for sharing trending projects and designs.

Take it a step further and celebrate a new trend or popular design motif with an event. Give it a catchy name to go with the trend, and provide simple designs that can be easily duplicated or patterns that can be traced. Ovals and circles (and not perfect ones for sure) work beautifully to create olives, flowers, fruit, and geometric designs.

Need help getting samples created? The Y'allstars PYOP Club by Ammie Y'all offers on-trend designs with step-by-step project guides, design templates, and project photos that make creating samples a breeze. Use this as a jumping off point to create more samples to go with the theme.

Need to outsource? Offer a trade with a local artist or customer whose style you like. Build a relationship with a local influencer to promote the idea of painting pieces in that trendy theme. Even just talking about how popular that motif or color palette is can boost credibility. Offer them a gift certificate to your studio in exchange for their promotion or tailor a trade that works for both of you.

Simple organic design 47:23

s are popping up on Pinterest and other inspirational sources. Keeping your projects simple will make customers feel more empowered to create something that pleases them.

Here are a few design motifs to promote in your studio:

- **Cowgirl** Paint boots and hats in vintage colors, neutrals, or pink. Cowboy Carter is hot, so jump in with both feet (er, boots).
- **Bows** These work in any color! Try one giant bow on a mug or multiple smaller bows on a larger piece. Mix in dots for extra punch.
- **Olives** Do a simple video showing how easy these are to create with circles and ovals. Martinis go well with olives

and are often depicted with a simple triangle for a glass.

- **Cherries** ... or strawberries, blueberries, tomatoes (it's a fruit, remember?) or pieces that feature them all!
- **Fish** Swimming in groups or singles, blue and white or colorful.
- **Oysters** We're seeing them on dinnerware, handbags, and more!
- **Mushrooms** If you don't have mushroom-shaped bisque on hand, decorate plates, bowls, or mugs with mushrooms in vintage colors
- **Hydrangeas** So easy to create with fingerprints and loose outlines.
- **Playing cards** Show these in pastels or classic bold colors.
- **Cats** How can you go wrong with a display of cat-themed designs and shapes?

Not sure what's trending? Talk to your customers, spend a few hours walking around local shops, or pop over to your favorite social media platforms and look around. Suppliers' websites are also a great resource and are full of design ideas to give you a boost!



LARGE-SCALE OFFSITE EVENTS: SO MANY POSSIBILITIES!

By Jackie Burrow and Gail Schomisch, All Fired Up Las Vegas

Greetings from Las Vegas, Nevada! We've been open since 1998 and have shifted our operations to revolve primarily around big mobile offsite events. Here's our work in a nutshell and how you can imagine the possibilities for large-scale offsite events in your area:

If you ever watched the TV show *Shark Tank*, you might remember hearing the sharks make a comment along the lines of "scaling the business." Kevin O'Leary and Mark Cuban were big on informing hopeful contestants that their offering just wasn't scalable, and therefore they couldn't get behind them with an offer. We have, quite simply, "scaled up" our studio and have run with it ever since 2012. Even at our largest location years ago, with seating for 75, we found it was not big enough to compare to our huge parties at schools, churches, corporate sites, and parks and recreation locations.

So filling a multipurpose room or church hall with 150 to 250 guests open-house style over a few hours became our brand of happy. Studios these days are holding lots of themed events and that's an awesome trend to ride—but remember, even generously sized spaces need to turn tables multiple times to gather what is possible in a massive space with a team of staff to execute an awesome two- or three-hour event with lots of painters!

Studios are also finding success with bar, restaurant, winery, and distillery partnerships for offsite paint nights that reach a customer base that might not normally come into your studio space. These tend to capture a higher price point per patron, so

even a smaller gathering of 25 to 50 guests can be worthwhile to travel for. Our REAL joy, however, comes from facilitating mass volumes of lower- to medium-cost price points in a large offsite venue—something smaller studios can really benefit from if they just don't have the ability to seat many guests simultaneously.

We love elementary kiddos at public, private, and charter schools, at summer camps, and at school breaks. We prefer to be an "outside vendor" as the entertainment at camps hosted and run by schools, childcare programs, church retreats, and parks and recreation sites. Adults make up less than 15% of our bookings, but we cheerfully accept them

Here are a few examples of project categories we focus on:

- **Legacy tile mural** projects with 6-inch tiles for exiting middle schoolers, family tiles, peace walls, and more.
- **Family fun nights** at schools and churches with a 3D pottery variety.
- **Themed school events** like Holiday Ornament Parties, Mother's Day, and Spirit Nights.
- **Summer camps** featuring party animals, mugs, bowls, or tiles that we always call "plaques."
- **Large corporate events** like company picnics, holiday parties, or team-building sessions.

Although a great deal of our offsite work is in schools, we do also enjoy large crowds at churches, corporate sites for hefty team-building, and other special events that call us to be "featured entertainment." These can be special occasions, employee picnics, holiday parties, or trainings called staff





development. A favorite annual event for us is a mountain summer camp setting for our county's parks and recreation program with 200+ kids.

Even if your studio is in a smaller market, you can still enjoy marketing to, and gathering up, these larger event possibilities! A small church site could produce a profitable paint social like "Family Cross Painting," for instance. Rather than just the youth or women's group (which yields smaller headcounts), it gets opened up to the whole congregation for a special event (yielding a much larger audience). See the shift in mindset to achieve "large scale"? On the same track for churches, we also do a large volume of First Communion Blessing Cups with Catholic second graders each spring. You can find many of these projects in our line of coloring book items at Bisque Imports under their tab for Large-Scale Offsite events. They have partnered with us on our tried-and-true, popular designs that make event production easy and successful.



Your main customer here is not the individual household so much as it is the main decision-maker who has decided to hire your studio. Our marketing materials are geared to that type of personality and the language is adjusted to appeal to that audience, nonprofit group, HR director, or PTA/PTO team who would be the ones making contact. We market year-round and constantly mine for new events and partnerships. We do not cold call since our approach is a much softer sell; we market mostly with email, snail mail flyers, or sometimes a painted sample and

flyer hand-delivered to a high-value target.

It takes persistence, flexibility, and perseverance to grow a whole consistent program, but just like any other discipline you offer in your studio, what you focus on WILL grow. An added

benefit to drive traffic to your studio is that every piece of pottery going back to large audiences has the ability to hold a bounce-back coupon, birthday package brochure, or list of upcoming classes you offer in-house. You have a captured audience already interested in you, so it's a perfect opportunity to promote filling seats back at your studio!

This type of work can supplement your bottom line during slow periods or on your quietest days in the studio. It can take over your life like it did ours, or you can land somewhere in between. Remember, this work can turn into annual, built-in, repeat bookings when you produce a good experience for your audience. We consistently hear from school parent surveys that our epic holiday ornament parties are voted the top family favorite event experienced all school year. In fact, it's the time of year RIGHT NOW to market holiday pottery paint parties to PTA and PTO groups, so put a flyer together and get it out there!

Be fearless, say yes to every opportunity, and don't hesitate to reach out to chat with us—we are happy to help in all ways to assist with your success. We're here to support our fellow CCSA members and welcome you to contact us anytime for complimentary help at 702-269-4444 PST, or allfireduplv.com. Happy hunting!



BACK TO THE BASICS

By Lisa Feltz, Bisque Imports

In the Back to the Basics series this year, I'm addressing questions presented by CCSA members. In this issue, I'll tackle "Where can I look for good business advice?"

What a great question! The contemporary ceramics industry is largely composed of independent business owners, so it can be challenging to know where to go for support. It may help to consider the type of assistance you need when deciding where to turn—general business advice or industry-specific information.

General Business Support

US Small Business Administration (SBA) offers a wealth of resources, including counseling, training, and access to funding, specifically designed to help small businesses start and grow. To find local SBA district offices for personalized assistance, visit sba.gov and explore the "Local Resources" section.

SCORE is a network of volunteer business mentors who provide free mentoring and workshops to help entrepreneurs succeed.

Local Chambers of Commerce can provide networking opportunities as well as direct you to resources for your business.

Business coaches can help you develop skills, strategies, and goals to strengthen your business.

Business Blogs

- **Startup Nation:** A platform with resources, forums, blogs, and expert insights for startup founders.
- **Shopify Retail Blog:** Offers useful information and insights for retail entrepreneurs, especially those using the Shopify platform.
- **Fast Company:** A business blog that keeps you updated with business news and tactics.
- **Harvard Business Review:** While not solely focused on retail, it provides valuable insights from researchers and consultants.
- **RetailWire:** A leading online resource for retail industry professionals, offering news, analysis, and discussion forums.
- **Forrester Retail Blog:** A trusted retail market research firm providing in-depth insights into consumer trends and technology changes.
- **AllBusiness.com:** A platform with resources for small businesses, including how-to articles, business forms, and expert advice.
- **HubSpot:** A well-established blog focusing on sales and marketing, useful for eCommerce owners.
- **Neil Patel Blog:** A trusted authority in online business, offering valuable insights and strategies for entrepreneurs.

Industry-Specific Support

Trade organizations The CCSA provides a wealth of resources tailored to the industry. You may also find support from the National Retailers' Association, or a retailers' association at the state level.

Suppliers and manufacturers For product support, safety and usage information, contacting the supplier and/or manufacturer for support is imperative in order to receive accurate information.

Mentors and advisors Seek guidance from experienced business owners. Connecting with studio owners who are in similar markets, at similar stages in their business, or have similar goals can provide a wealth of information and support.

Remember that whether you're seeking general or industry-specific advice, you're not alone. Reach out when you need support to find the help you need!



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3.25"H x 2.5"W



Rainbow Mug #4245
3.25"H x 5.5"W x 4"D

Mushroom Trinket
Tray & Box #5452
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Securing the Spark

CREATING A CONTINUITY PLAN TO PROTECT YOUR STUDIO'S LEGACY, PART 2

By Susan Bucci, Painted Peacock, Greenville, North Carolina

Alright, powerhouse, you've already taken the first steps toward securing your business's future, so don't slow down now! I know, digging through paperwork and tracking down vendor contacts isn't exactly thrilling. You'd rather be creating, connecting, and doing what you love. But hear me out: this work is the safety net that keeps everything running smoothly, whether you're off on a dream vacation or just dealing with an unexpected curveball (like, I don't know, a surprise llama parade in front of your studio—because, let's be real, life is unpredictable).

If you're just joining us and thinking, "Wait...continuity plan? What even is that?"—no worries! Go back to the last edition and get caught up. We've already tackled the first few steps, so start there and then come back when you're ready to keep rolling. Trust me, your future self (and anyone who ever has to step into your shoes) will thank you.

So grab your favorite drink, put on some music, and let's power through this next step together. Because while it might not be as fun as painting a masterpiece, it's just as important in making sure your business stays strong for years to come.

This time, we're focusing on Property, Insurance, Utilities, and your Vendor List—four key areas that will ensure your studio keeps running smoothly no matter what.

PROPERTY

Whether you own or lease your studio space, you need a detailed record of everything, from your lease agreement or mortgage details to equipment and inventory. Who holds the deed or lease? Are there renewal dates or special clauses? Do you have an up-to-date list of major assets like kilns, pottery wheels, or computers? Knowing these details will save future decision-makers from a logistical nightmare.

INSURANCE

This may not be the most exciting topic, but it's your financial safety net. Keep a list of all business-related policies—liability, property, workers' comp, and any specialized coverage you have. Include contact information for your insurance providers, policy numbers, and renewal dates. If something happens to your studio, your team needs to know exactly where to turn.

Utilities and Repairs

Ever had a power outage or a plumbing disaster in the middle of a busy weekend? It's crucial to have a list of utility providers (electric, water, internet, phone) and reliable repair contacts (HVAC, plumbing, tech support). Document account numbers, service agreements, and preferred vendors so issues can be handled quickly and efficiently. In our studio we post this section in the kiln room as well so things can be taken care of if I can't be reached for any reason.

Vendor List

Your business relies on a network of suppliers—paint, pottery, packaging, and more. If someone had to step in and place an order tomorrow, would they know who to call? List all vendors, their contact information, ordering processes, and key account details. This ensures smooth operations and prevents any interruptions in your supply chain.

You did it! Another chunk of your continuity plan is officially in the books—go ahead, give yourself a little victory dance (bonus points if you do it in your studio and post it in CCSA Chatter). I know this isn't the most exciting part of running a business, but trust me, every piece you put together is setting you up for a future where you can take time off without worrying that everything will fall apart.

Want to make this process even easier? Break it into bite-sized pieces, tackle one section while sipping your morning coffee, or reward yourself with your favorite treat after finishing a task. Better yet, turn it into a game! Set a timer, race yourself, and see how fast you can gather the info. Whatever you do, just keep going. Your business, your employees, and your future self will thank you. I'll see you in the next edition when we check a few more things off this list. Until then, keep being the powerhouse that you are!



MAXIMIZING SOCIAL MEDIA TO GROW YOUR PYOP BUSINESS

By Terri J. Welch, Paint 'n Fun Ceramics, Christiansburg, Virginia

In today's digital world, social media is a powerhouse for promoting your PYOP business. Whether you're looking to attract new customers, engage your existing audience, or increase foot traffic, the key is to be where your customers are—and that means utilizing platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, LinkedIn, and more. Here's how to make the most of your social media presence and maximize your organic reach.

Choose the Right Platforms Your social media strategy should focus on the platforms your customers use the most. Different demographics engage on different channels, so it's important to tailor your content accordingly:

- **Facebook** Ideal for community building, event promotion, and showcasing customer creations. Great for engaging families, parents, and local groups.
- **Instagram** Perfect for visually appealing content, behind-the-scenes footage, and short-form videos. Appeals to millennials, Gen Z, and art lovers.
- **Snapchat** Useful for sharing quick, fun moments, flash sales, and exclusive sneak peeks. Popular with younger customers, especially the college crowd.
- **LinkedIn** Best for networking with corporate clients, event planners, and potential business partners. A great tool for marketing team-building events and corporate outings.
- **TikTok and Reels** Engaging short-form video content helps showcase the creative process and the joy of painting pottery.

Content That Captivates To get the most from your posts, focus on high-quality, engaging content that entertains, educates, or inspires your audience:

- **Behind-the-scenes** Show your kiln room, new arrivals, or a time-lapse of a piece being painted and fired.
- **User-generated content** Encourage customers to share photos of their creations and tag your business.
- **Live demos and tutorials** Host live painting sessions, Q&As, or interactive workshops.
- **Contests and giveaways** Boost engagement by offering a free studio session or a discount in exchange for shares

and comments.

- **Storytelling** Share customer testimonials, highlight birthday parties, or showcase artists who frequent your studio.

Engagement Is Everything Social media is a two-way street. To maximize organic reach, you need to engage with your audience consistently:

- **Respond quickly** Answer comments and messages promptly to build relationships.
- **Ask questions** Get people talking with interactive posts like "What's your favorite pottery piece to paint?"
- **Polls and challenges** Use Instagram Stories or Facebook polls to let customers vote on new designs or classes.
- **Tag and mention** Encourage customers to tag your business in their posts and return the favor by resharing.

Leverage Local Groups One of the best ways to reach new audiences and attract more followers to your page is by utilizing local Facebook groups and community networks. In addition to social media, explore other low to no-cost local opportunities to maximize exposure:

- **Chamber of Commerce** Many chambers allow members to post events on their websites, helping you reach a broader audience.
- **Macaroni Kid** A great resource for promoting events, especially kids' camps and family-friendly activities.

Consistency and Scheduling Posting regularly keeps your audience engaged and helps the algorithms work in your favor. Develop a content calendar to maintain a steady flow of posts:

- **Daily stories** Offer quick snapshots or short videos.
- **3–4 feed posts per week** Showcase new pottery, customer highlights, or upcoming events.
- **Weekly live sessions** Try a behind-the-scenes look or Q&A.
- **Monthly giveaways or challenges** These help boost engagement and attract new followers.

Check out the digital edition on **Leveraging Local SEO and Hashtags**



NO MORE 24/7: ENTREPRENEURS, TAKE BACK YOUR LIFE BY CATHERINE COWART ROE

by Julia McNair, Do*It*Yourself Crafts, Birmingham, Alabama

As a business owner, are you ever really “off”? This is the problem I face, taking time for myself and my family, and giving myself time away from the studio. Catherine Cowart Roe knows that feeling. She was a CPA who left a corporate job to open her own firm. Like many people, she discovered that “working for yourself” meant “working all the time.”

This wasn't what she wanted, and she set out to make changes. In her book *No More 24/7: Entrepreneurs, Take Back Your Life*, she creates a plan for entrepreneurs to run their own businesses, instead of the business running them.

You know you need to make a change, but where do you start? She gives us the blueprint for this. She addresses what a good entrepreneur does—setting boundaries, prioritizing work based on how their minds work, setting goals, taking breaks, and more. She also discusses the fears that a business owner has and tackles how to overcome them.

Her promise to the reader is that they don't have to be tied to the business 24/7 to be successful, and that in fact you need the opposite—time away from your business is key. The change in mindset is crucial, and she gives the framework to make this happen.

She begins by discussing the why of what you need to step back from your business, and how that will work for you. She calls this “Understanding Your Bandwidth” and it helps you analyze where you need to go from there.

I enjoyed this book, especially as someone who struggles letting go of the minutiae of running my studio but realizes that it isn't sustainable for me to be a control freak. I see where I can apply what she says immediately, but also long-term changes that will help.

Three other books on my TBR this quarter also look interesting. When I'm considering business books, it's difficult to find something for our niche: we are retail, but we are a creative industry. We face unique challenges, so many books don't fit our particular set of circumstances.

In *Lingo* by Jeffrey Shawm, the concept is that you have to find the right way to communicate to the customers you want, and to do that you must first understand the language they use when seeking out your product. I am curious to read further, because of how often I still have the conversation about what kind of store we are, even after more than 25 years in business. What do we need to say in our social media, on our website, and in our signage to get customers to understand what we are? A quick glance at his table of contents shows chapters about the secret languages of perspective, familiarity, style, pricing, and words. I'm intrigued!

I've added *Thanks for the Feedback* by Douglas Stone and Sheila Heen to the stack, mainly for the subtitle: *The Science and*

Art of Receiving Feedback Well (even when it is off base, unfair, poorly delivered, and, frankly, you're not in the mood). Their main topic? How we see ourselves, and why that's blocking our ability to receive feedback—positive and negative.

One chapter is titled “How Good Do I Have To Be? Draw Boundaries When Enough Is Enough,” and I'm pretty sure we all have had the customer that makes this lesson necessary in our lives.

Finally, I'm looking forward to *Great Work: Do What Matters Most without Sacrificing Everything Else* by Amanda Crowell. How often do we get distracted from a big project because we've gotten too busy to give it the attention it deserves? This book focuses on prioritizing our Great Work without sacrificing everything else in our life. I think we all end up missing out on things because we get caught up in what is right in front of us, especially if it's easy, rather than reaching beyond to something that is more of a stretch.

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THE INS AND OUTS OF DRYING CLAY

By Maggie Fretz, The Ceramic Shop and Roselli and Starr Stilts, Norristown, Pennsylvania

Clay drying is the process of free water in the clay body evaporating and moving into the air. It's important for potters to know the different stages of drying clay so we can properly take advantage of them, knowing when to push boundaries and when to leave well enough alone.



You can see the difference in the color of the clay and the shrinkage from leather-hard (left) to bone dry (right).

STAGES OF DRYING

Clay goes through several distinct stages while drying: wet, leather-hard, and greenware. **Wet clay** is clay right out of the bag, clay that has been thrown or freshly hand built. Pots just off of the wheel will be more saturated than clay out of the bag because of the water used to decrease friction while throwing.

Leather-hard refers to partially dried clay and covers quite a wide range in the drying process. I

think of these different stages as different types of cheese. When the pot feels like brie, handling it may leave it misshapen and covered in fingerprints. Colby Jack is a great time to wire pots off of the bat, but is a little too soft for ideal trimming because the clay doesn't come away smoothly. Cheddar is the perfect stage for trimming, attaching handles, and carving. Parmesan is too dry for attaching and trimming because it could result in a "chatter" texture (rippled surface), or pressure from a trimming chuck may cause cracking.

Greenware and **bone dry** are often used interchangeably. This is the most fragile stage because the clay is extremely susceptible to breaking. At this point the clay has lightened in color and is completely dry to the touch. If the pot feels cooler to the touch than a bisqued pot, there is still water in the clay and it is not yet bone dry. Because the nerves on our hands are not super sensitive it's fairly common to see a potter touch a pot to their cheek to double-check if it is cool or at room temperature. This trick may be less effective in cold and damp climates. If you aren't certain your pieces are all bone dry, you can utilize the preheat feature on your kiln. A preheat holds the temperature of the kiln at around 180–200°F (below water's boiling point) for however long you choose. This will quickly and evenly drive off any lingering water. However, regularly firing very wet clay may

shorten the life of your elements.

Some people consider bisque the final stage in the drying process as well as the first stage in the firing process because this is when all of the chemically attached water has been fired off. This low temperature firing chemically alters and lightly bonds the clay particles together in a process called sintering, imparting strength for the glazing process. With no water left, bisque pots are extremely porous. When water-based glaze is applied to the bisque, capillary action pulls the water from the glaze into the open pores of the bisque. That water then slowly evaporates back into the air, or is driven off in the kiln.

DIFFERENT LOCATIONS AND HUMIDITIES

Location, Location, Lo-time of year: Where you are, the time of year, and the conditions in your studio will have a great effect on how your pieces dry. Colder temperatures and high humidity will increase how long it takes for the water to move from the clay. This is why a pot thrown in Philadelphia will take longer to dry than if that same pot were thrown in Phoenix. Depending on where you live, adding a humidifier or dehumidifier can help offset the natural climate of your area.

Check out the digital edition to read all about best practices.



HOW TO HAVE HARD CONVERSATIONS

By Jessica Cowan, The Pottery Place, Chattanooga, Tennessee

The dreaded S-word is plaguing us all again, so it feels like a great time to visit how to have hard conversations—and train our staff to have them—about issues like shivering, breakage, and other problems that are not the customer's fault yet still need to be resolved. First things first: Give yourself, and your staff, a little grace. Things happen, and whether they are beyond our control is irrelevant when you have an upset customer in front of you. Keep things solution- and customer-focused, and you'll be back to happy pottery times before you know it.

Shivering always feels particularly tough because it's not the fault of anyone in the studio and it's easy to want to blame the manufacturer ("passing the buck," so to speak) But all that will do is create distrust from your customer on the quality of your base product. So what do you say that both takes accountability for and acknowledges your responsibility to fix the issue? In my studio it is something like this:

"Hey friend, we pulled your piece out of the kiln—it looks soooo good by the way; I love the details on the strawberries—but unfortunately during firing your piece experienced something called 'shivering.' It's not that you or I or anyone else did anything wrong, but the bisque and the glaze were simply not compatible with each other, which kind of makes the bisque 'pop out of its jeans,' if you think of the glazes as jeans. This is a raw materials issue that happens during the manufacturing process; our suppliers work hard to ensure only the best pieces reach our shelves and would absolutely not have sent us these items if they were aware of the issues. You're not going to be able to use this piece to eat or drink off of but I do want to work with you on a solution to have a finished piece that you love."

The words are easy enough to say, but having these hard conversations with a positive disposition—and training staff to do this—is the golden ticket to positive customer relations. Are you a studio owner or manager who exclusively has these conversations with customers? Or is anyone on your team equipped to handle common issues? Do you want them to be? Keep reading because I'm about to give you the secret: empower your people. It might take some extra training, but it will be worth it in the end to know you aren't coming into the studio with a stack of customer problems that really don't take your specific skill set or insight to solve.

Start with identifying your most common problem(s) and write out what you (the owner/manager) would say and the solution(s) you would be comfortable offering. This will give your staff a basic "script" to guide them through the conversation so that they don't seem to be caught off guard, and solutions so

that they know what you find acceptable. Next, you'll have to work on quelling anxiety and potential emotional dysregulation that comes with having these hard conversations. The truth is, it only gets easier with practice. Hopefully you don't have so many problems that your staff is flush with practice opportunities (call me if you do, I'll help), so how do you gain experience?

The solution is roleplay and other dedicated training exercises. Consider the upset customers you've had in the past and write down as much information as you can remember about their demeanor, how the conversation went, and how you wish it had actually gone. Using any specific "problem," roleplay with your staff what it will look like to have that same problem under different circumstances. Literally pretend to be the customer and have the conversation with your team as if you really were the customer. It will be awkward at first, and there might even be some giggles from being in character, but this exercise will help your staff dial in on the details of the issues while allowing you to offer a guiding hand in a dedicated learning environment where you can approach these situations in the right way.

For example, while the solution might be the same, a shivered set of baby prints is going to illicit a different reaction from the mom of the baby who is hoping to gift them next week versus a daycare center contact who arranged a summer camp. Being able to identify what type of emotional investment a customer has in the piece can help you empathize correctly and arrive at a solution sooner than later. Your staff can learn to have these conversations and in turn will cultivate a creative community where they are in tune with its wants and needs. The real question is...are you ready for it?



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Glitter in colors and sizes not available in your town

Two Chicks project books for adult classes and licensed silk screens



UNLOCKING THE POWER OF THE CCSA STUDIO SALES TRACKER

By Ferne Benson, Mr. Toad's Pottery, LaVale, Maryland

Running a successful PYOP studio requires more than just creativity; it demands effective business sense. I know this firsthand. Early in my journey as a studio owner, I struggled to make sense of my sales data. I'd find myself scribbling down monthly totals on scraps of paper or guessing which categories were driving my revenue. Every year when the CCSA financial survey arrived, I'd scramble to pull numbers together, worried I was missing key details.

That's why I was thrilled—and relieved—when I discovered the new CCSA Studio Sales Tracker. This tool does exactly what I had spent months trying to piece together on my own. Now, instead of guessing which parts of my business are thriving, I can confidently see trends and make smarter decisions.

Why Use the CCSA Studio Sales Tracker?

Tracking your sales is essential for understanding your revenue sources, identifying growth opportunities, and ensuring your financial records are accurate. The new CCSA Studio Sales Tracker offers a streamlined way to record sales by category each month, empowering you to:

- **Identify top-performing categories**
- **Spot seasonal trends**
- **Better allocate resources**
- **Easily complete the CCSA Financial Survey in 2026**

When I started using the tracker, I realized my birthday parties were consistently outperforming my other offerings—something I hadn't fully appreciated before. As a result, I shifted my marketing focus and created add-on experiences to boost those sales even further.

Getting Started Is Simple

- 1. Download the Tracker:** Open the CCSA Studio Sales Tracker and familiarize yourself with its layout. The first tab features the main tracker, while the remaining tabs provide a helpful guide to setting up product categories in your POS system.
- 2. Organize Your POS System:** Accurate data entry starts with clear category definitions. Whether you use Square, Clover, or Shopify, make sure your items are categorized properly. Examples include:
 - o **Bisque** for walk-in pottery sales
 - o **Birthday Parties** for group sales
 - o **Canvas Painting, Clay Wheel**, and more for specialty offerings
- 3. Enter Your Sales Data:** At the start of each month, enter your sales figures for the previous month. The tracker will

automatically calculate year-to-date totals and percentage contributions for each category.

- 4. Review the Insights:** Use the tracker to assess which areas of your business are thriving and where you may need to focus more attention. For instance, if summer camp revenue is steadily climbing, you may want to add more themed events to capitalize on that trend.

Pro Tip: Develop the Habit Early

The key to maximizing this tool's value is consistency. Set a reminder at the beginning of each month to update your tracker. I treat it like my monthly "business checkup," where I sit down with a cup of coffee and reflect on what's working and what could improve. Taking just a few minutes to review sales trends has made a big difference in my planning.

A Helpful Resource for Growth

In addition to monitoring monthly trends, the tracker will simplify completing next year's CCSA Financial Survey. By recording your sales consistently, you'll already have the information you need to showcase your studio's performance.

Start Today for Greater Success Tomorrow

The CCSA Studio Sales Tracker is designed to make tracking your studio's sales simple yet powerful. Open the file, follow the guide, and commit to building this positive habit. By embracing this tool, you're positioning your studio for stronger growth, smarter decisions, and greater financial success.

If you haven't already downloaded the tracker, now is the perfect time to start. Trust me, your future self will thank you!

BONUS MATERIALS

2025 Studio Tracker Guide

Need help getting started? Our step-by-step guide walks you through how to use the 2025 Studio Sales Tracker and helps you set up your POS system to retrieve the right sales data. This guide ensures you can accurately track your revenue by category and make the most of this powerful tool. Follow along and get organized with ease!

Step-by-Step Video with Wendy Pettys

Need help getting started? We've got you covered! Follow along with CCSA Board Member Wendy Pettys in our step-by-step video tutorial, where she walks you through exactly how to use the tracker.

STRENGTHENING YOUR ONLINE PRESENCE

By Madeline Riegel, Glazed Expressions, Des Moines, Iowa



In today's digital-first world, your online presence is often the first impression potential customers have of your business. Whether they discover you through a Google search, a social media post, or an online directory, what they see can determine whether they choose to visit your studio or move on to a competitor. A strong, up-to-date online presence is one of the easiest and most cost-effective ways to refresh your brand, often requiring little more than a day or two of focused effort. Here's are some areas to concentrate on to

make sure your digital storefront is making the best impression possible.

Using Your Brand Online to Attract Customers Your online presence isn't just about providing information—it's about drawing people in and creating an irresistible desire to visit your business. Consistency is key: potential customers should find accurate, up-to-date information across all platforms. Visual appeal matters, too; high-quality images and engaging content can make your brand stand out. Additionally, creating a little bit of FOMO (fear of missing out) can be a powerful motivator—share limited-time offers, showcase unique experiences, and highlight customer testimonials to build excitement.

The importance of a strong online presence is backed by data. By leveraging these insights, you can fine-tune your brand's online strategy to attract and retain customers:

- **81%** of retail shoppers conduct online research before making a purchase.
- **76%** of consumers look at a company's online presence before visiting in person.
- **75%** of searches with local intent on mobile devices lead to in-person visits within 24 hours.
- **93%** of customers read reviews of local businesses to determine their quality.

Start with Your Website Your website serves as the hub of your online presence. It should be clear, accurate, and easy to navigate. Take the time to review and update the following:

- **Basic information:** Ensure that your hours, contact information, location, and pricing are correct.
- **Policies and FAQs:** Customers rely on this section for details on cancellations, reservations, or any special guidelines.

- **Visuals:** Refresh your website with new photos that showcase your studio, recent work, or happy customers enjoying the space.
- **Links and navigation:** Check that all links work properly, both internal (within your website) and external (to social media or booking platforms).
- **Mobile friendliness:** Since many customers browse on their phones, ensure your website is mobile-friendly for a seamless experience.

Social Media Updates Even if you don't post as often as you'd like, maintaining an updated profile across social platforms is essential. A few simple updates can make a big difference:

- **Profile information:** Double-check that your hours, website link, and contact details are correct.
- **Header and profile pictures:** Swap out outdated images for fresh, high-quality visuals that reflect your brand.
- **Engagement:** While you're updating, go ahead and post! A quick update about new offerings, upcoming events, or behind-the-scenes content can help keep your audience engaged.
- **Platform review:** Ensure consistency across all platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, X, BlueSky, and any others you use.

Optimize Your Search Visibility Many customers don't find your business through social media or your website first—they find it through search platforms like Google or Apple Maps. Keeping these listings accurate is crucial:

- **SEO updates:** If possible, refresh some keywords in your website's descriptions and content to improve visibility in search results.
- **Google Business Profile:** Update your hours, location, and any special attributes (e.g., family-friendly, free parking, accessibility features).
- **Apple Maps and Yelp:** Even if Yelp isn't your favorite, people still check it. Ensure all details are correct and consider responding to recent reviews.
- **Responding to reviews:** Engaging with customer reviews—both positive and negative—builds trust and credibility. Thank customers for positive feedback and address concerns in negative reviews professionally and constructively.

Refreshing your online presence doesn't require a massive overhaul—it just takes attention to detail and consistency. In a matter of hours, you can ensure your digital storefront accurately represents your brand, making it easier for potential customers to connect with you.



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Mushroom Medley Canvas

By Michele Muzones, Art Rave Inc

SUPPLIES

- 12"x12" canvas
- Brushes: 16 Bright (½"), 10 bright (¼"), #6 round

ACRYLIC COLORS

Black, White, Cobalt Blue, Chrome Yellow, Dark Purple, Bright Red, Green Oxide, Burnt Sienna (Blick brand, but feel free to substitute)

DIRECTIONS

1. **Underpainting:** Paint the canvas black OR large bands of Dark Purple, Red, Blue, and Green.
2. Trace **outlines** of mushroom and foliage in chalk
3. Paint **mushroom tops** in base coat of Red, Red-Orange, and Deep Yellow, adding deeper shades for shadow and white for highlights.
4. Paint **stems and deepen shadows** on mushrooms.
5. Paint base coats for **green leaves, white daisies, and purple flowers**. Add one stroke of Light Green highlights to leaves.

6. Leave a little space between the background and the other painted elements that shows the underpainting. Paint **background and sky**, starting at the bottom with Dark Greens, then Medium Greens, then Light Greens, and White. Gradually add cobalt blue getting Deeper Blue towards the top.

7. **Final touches:** Add additional layers of White to all the white areas to brighten them. Add White dots to Red mushrooms.



Scan for the
complete
project
video
tutorial.



Fused Glass Soap Dish

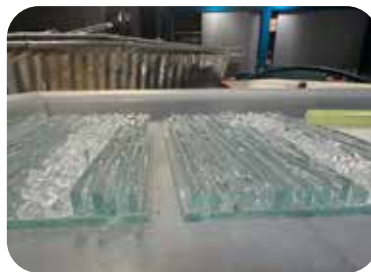
By Teresa Spencer, Soul Fire Art Studio, Ltd., Delafield, Wisconsin

SUPPLIES

- Clear glass base (shown on 3 7/8" x 5 7/8")
- Clear glass
- Coarse clear frit
- Glass tools
- Hairspray to secure pieces
- Soap dish mold or small sushi mold

DIRECTIONS

1. Cut the base piece precisely edge to edge of the rim of the mold. (Customers must understand that they cannot extend glass of the edge on this project!)
2. Cut strips of clear glass about 1/4" wide. Don't strive for perfection. The inconsistencies, wobbles, and different heights make this project interesting.
3. Start laying the pieces by placing them on their cut edge, starting on one side of the piece and leaving a very slight gap between the edge of the glass and the first strip.
4. Put a drop of hairspray at the ends and center the strips when placing them. This will not only secure the pieces to the base, but the capillary action will pull the hairspray between the strips, further securing them. This design works best if you adhere as you go.
5. Support the outside piece with your fingers while adding new pieces to avoid pushing everything around until the hairspray starts to set up. The outside piece should be just slightly shorter and should be one solid strip, to better restrain the others from flopping over.
6. Tightly sandwich in additional strips, working your way across the project. Longer pieces make the process move quickly, but it's more interesting to use smaller bits for added texture.
7. For additional texture, add a channel of coarse frit somewhere in the piece, filled to the height of the surrounding glass.
8. Fire to a Tack+30 fuse (as seen in the clear sample) or to a contour fuse (as seen in the sample with the black strip). **See the digital edition for the firing schedule.**





You're My Best Catch Dad Plate

CCSA Summer Project Guide 2025, Page 33

SUPPLIES

- Bisque: Coupe charger
- Pattern
- Tissue paper
- Pencil
- Sharpie
- Sponge
- Small and medium liner brushes
- Paper

GLAZE COLORS

Pale Blue, Dark Blue, Green, Bright Green, Gray, Medium Blue, Yellow, Teal Green
Writer bottle: Black, White

DIRECTIONS

1. Place tissue paper over the pattern and trace the design. Position the tissue tracing on the bisque and retrace the design with a marker. (The marker will bleed through the tissue, transferring the design.) Don't trace the lettering onto the plate yet at this step.
2. Paint the area above the fish (where the lettering will be added) with 3 coats of Pale Blue.
3. Paint the fishing pole handle with 3 coats of Dark Blue.
4. Paint the reel with 3 coats of Green.
5. Paint the reel handle with 3 coats of Bright Green.
6. Paint the fishing rod with 3 coats of Gray.
7. Paint the inside of the fish D A D parts with 3 coats of Medium Blue. Paint the inside parts of D A D with 3 coats of Yellow.
8. Paint the remaining fish body with 3 coats of Teal Green.
9. Paint dots on the reel Gray.
10. On the Dark Blue handle, add an inside a stripe of Medium Blue.
11. Add a highlight line and a few dots along the Gray pole with a White writer bottle.
12. Reposition the tissue tracing and transfer the lettering onto the plate.
13. With a Black writer bottle, fill in the letters and outline the design details. Let dry.
14. Glaze and fire to Cone 06.

This project can be found in the **2025 CCSA Summer Project Guide.**

SB155
Rounded Bud Vase



SB156
Ringed Bud Vase



SB157
Curvy Vase



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SB156 Ringed Bud Vase 3.75"L x 3.75"W x 5.5"H

SB157 Curvy Vase 3.25"L x 3.25"W x 7.5"H



Oh, Snap! Summer Snack Server

By Lindsey Hutchins, Marketing and Creative Teams Lead, Bisque Imports

SUPPLIES

- Bisque: Flat round server (shown on BI #3139)
- Pattern
- Clay carbon paper
- Pencil
- Toothbrush
- Assorted brushes

GLAZE COLORS

Melon-Choly, Toad-Ily Green, Tu Tu Tango, Orange-A-Peel, Cant-elope, Cotton Tail, Orange Ya Happy, Blue Isle, Irish Luck, Teal Next Time

DIRECTIONS

1. Transfer the design to the bisque and then lightly trace over the design with pencil to darken the lines slightly.
2. Water down Melon-Choly to a skim-milk consistency. Paint 2 coats over the server, on top of the traced design. Let dry.
3. Lightly sketch some oranges, leaves, and orange blossoms around the alligator. Write OH, SNAP! at the top in the font of your choice.
4. Paint the alligator's body with 2–3 coats of Toad-Ily Green.
5. Paint inside the mouth with 2–3 coats of Tu Tu Tango.
6. Paint the outer rims of the cut oranges and the whole orange with 3 coats of Orange-A-Peel.
7. Paint the triangle sections of the cut oranges and the alligator's eyes with 2–3 coats of Cant-elope.
8. Paint the pith of the orange, the flowers, and the alligator's teeth with 2–3 coats of Cotton Tail.
9. Mix a dime size amount of Tu Tu Tango and Orange Ya Happy to make a darker orange. Use a liner brush to outline the insides and outsides of the oranges. Add some dots on the orange's skin.
10. Paint the leaves half Blue Isle, half Irish Luck, using 2–3 coats of each.
11. Using Teal Next Time, paint in the alligator's spikes with 2 coats, outline the alligator, and add texture, accent lines, and dots on the alligator's body.
12. With a liner brush, add streaks of Orange-A-Peel, Orange Ya Happy, and the orange mixture inside the sliced oranges.
13. Paint some Blue Isle accents on the white flower petals. Add a dot of Cant-elope in the center.
14. Add additional accents with Irish Luck on the alligator's body, then add a pupil in the alligator's eye.
15. Add a white dot in the alligator's eye and white accents on the cut pieces of orange.
16. Using Teal Next Time, paint the lettering with 2 coats and outline the leaves and add vein accents.
17. Use a toothbrush to create splatters with Teal Next Time.
18. Clear glaze and fire to Cone 06.



Clay Berry Bowl

By Lynn Webb, Practically Picasso, St. Petersburg, Florida

SUPPLIES

- White clay of choice
- Slab mat
- Needle tool
- 8" circle template
- Bowl for draping
- Straw
- Round sponge
- Clay tile
- Letter stamps

DIRECTIONS

1. Roll a $\frac{3}{8}$ " slab of clay and use the circle template and needle tool to cut an 8" circle.
2. Smooth edges and carefully drape over the bowl so it begins to firm up.
3. Use the scrap clay from cutting your circle to build a coil foot for your bowl. Scratch and attach this to the bottom of the bowl.
4. With the straw, poke holes throughout the bowl to allow for water drainage. Be careful not to poke so many holes that the bowl loses its integrity.
5. When the clay bowl has started to firm, up carefully remove it from the form and place on a ceramic tile to continue drying. The bowl must be removed from the form before drying to prevent cracking.
6. Optional handles: Use the coil method or strips of your slab to create handles. Scratch and attach.
7. Allow to dry slowly, then fire to Cone 04.
8. Glaze as desired and fire to Cone 06 for low-fire clay or Cone 6 for mid-fire clay.

Trend Flash



Trend Flash



Strategize for Success

MAXIMIZING SOCIAL MEDIA TO GROW YOUR PYOP BUSINESS

By Terri J. Welch, Paint 'n Fun Ceramics, Christiansburg, Virginia

In today's digital world, social media is a powerhouse for promoting your PYOP business. Whether you're looking to attract new customers, engage your existing audience, or increase foot traffic, the key is to be where your customers are—and that means utilizing platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, LinkedIn, and more. Here's how to make the most of your social media presence and maximize your organic reach.

Choose the Right Platforms Your social media strategy should focus on the platforms your customers use the most. Different demographics engage on different channels, so it's important to tailor your content accordingly:

- **Facebook** Ideal for community building, event promotion, and showcasing customer creations. Great for engaging families, parents, and local groups.
- **Instagram** Perfect for visually appealing content, behind-the-scenes footage, and short-form videos. Appeals to millennials, Gen Z, and art lovers.
- **Snapchat** Useful for sharing quick, fun moments, flash sales, and exclusive sneak peeks. Popular with younger customers, especially the college crowd.
- **LinkedIn** Best for networking with corporate clients, event planners, and potential business partners. A great tool for marketing team-building events and corporate outings.
- **TikTok and Reels** Engaging short-form video content helps showcase the creative process and the joy of painting pottery.

Content That Captivates To get the most from your posts, focus on high-quality, engaging content that entertains,

educates, or inspires your audience:

- **Behind-the-scenes** Show your kiln room, new arrivals, or a time-lapse of a piece being painted and fired.
- **User-generated content** Encourage customers to share photos of their creations and tag your business.
- **Live demos and tutorials** Host live painting sessions, Q&As, or interactive workshops.
- **Contests and giveaways** Boost engagement by offering a free studio session or a discount in exchange for shares and comments.
- **Storytelling** Share customer testimonials, highlight birthday parties, or showcase artists who frequent your studio.

Engagement Is Everything Social media is a two-way street. To maximize organic reach, you need to engage with your audience consistently:

- **Respond quickly** Answer comments and messages promptly to build relationships.
- **Ask questions** Get people talking with interactive posts like "What's your favorite pottery piece to paint?"
- **Polls and challenges** Use Instagram Stories or Facebook polls to let customers vote on new designs or classes.
- **Tag and mention** Encourage customers to tag your business in their posts and return the favor by resharing.

Leverage Local Groups One of the best ways to reach new audiences and attract more followers to your page is by utilizing local Facebook groups and community networks. In addition to





social media, explore other low to no-cost local opportunities to maximize exposure:

- **Chamber of Commerce** Many chambers allow members to post events on their websites, helping you reach a broader audience.
- **Macaroni Kid** A great resource for promoting events, especially kids' camps and family-friendly activities.

Consistency and Scheduling Posting regularly keeps your audience engaged and helps the algorithms work in your favor. Develop a content calendar to maintain a steady flow of posts:

- **Daily stories** Offer quick snapshots or short videos.
- **3–4 feed posts per week** Showcase new pottery, customer highlights, or upcoming events.
- **Weekly live sessions** Try a behind-the-scenes look or Q&A.
- **Monthly giveaways or challenges** These help boost engagement and attract new followers.

Leverage Local SEO and Hashtags Using location-based tags that include your city or neighborhood to attract local customers. Relevant targeted hashtags can help your business appear in more searches, such as #PYOPstudio #PaintYourOwnPottery #HandmadeMemories #LocalArtStudio #FamilyFun #CreateMemories. Avoid being overly generic (e.g., #PotteryPainting is better than just #Art). Branded hashtags (e.g., #PaintnFunCeramics) help build recognition and make it easy for customers to find your content.

The ideal number of hashtags depends on the platform. Use fewer, highly relevant hashtags on platforms like Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter (1–5). Use more (but not max) on Instagram and TikTok (5–10). Here's a breakdown of the best practices for each:

- **Facebook** (1–3 hashtags) Hashtags aren't as widely used on Facebook, but adding a few relevant ones can help categorize content. Place them at the end of your post or

within the sentence naturally. Example: *Join us for a fun night of pottery painting! #PaintYourOwnPottery #FamilyFun*

- **Instagram** (5–10 hashtags) Instagram allows up to 30 hashtags, but using too many can look spammy. Mix popular, niche, and branded hashtags for the best reach. Example: #PYOPstudio #PaintYourOwnPottery #HandmadeMemories #LocalArt #CreativeFun #FamilyNightOut
- **TikTok** (3–5 hashtags) Use a mix of trending hashtags and niche hashtags to help TikTok's algorithm recommend your video. Example: #PaintParty #DIYPottery #CreativeVibes
- **LinkedIn** (3–5 hashtags) Stick to industry-specific and professional hashtags that relate to your business. Example: *Looking for a unique team-building event? Try pottery painting! #CorporateEvents #TeamBuilding #CreativityAtWork*
- **X (Twitter)** (1–3 hashtags) Keep it short and relevant; too many can clutter your message. Example: *Join us for a relaxing evening of pottery painting! #CreativeEscape #PYOP*
- **Pinterest** (2–5 hashtags) Hashtags help with searchability, so include keywords people would search for. Example: *Try a fun DIY pottery night! #DIYPottery #CraftIdeas #PaintYourOwnPottery*

Analyze and Adapt Track your performance to see what's working best. Use Facebook Insights, Instagram Analytics, and Google My Business metrics to adjust your strategy. Identify your most engaging content and create more of it! By meeting your customers where they already spend their time, creating engaging content, and fostering meaningful interactions, you can turn social media into a powerful marketing tool for your PYOP business. Stay creative, stay engaged, and watch your organic reach grow—one pottery piece at a time!

THE INS AND OUTS OF DRYING CLAY

By Maggie Fretz, The Ceramic Shop and Roselli and Starr Stilts, Norristown, Pennsylvania

Clay drying is the process of free water in the clay body evaporating and moving into the air. It's important for potters to know the different stages of drying clay so we can properly take advantage of them, knowing when to push boundaries and when to leave well enough alone.



You can see the difference in the color of the clay and the shrinkage from leather-hard (left) to bone dry (right).

STAGES OF DRYING

Clay goes through several distinct stages while drying: wet, leather-hard, and greenware. **Wet clay** is clay right out of the bag, clay that has been thrown or freshly hand built. Pots just off of the wheel will be more saturated than clay out of the bag because of the water used to decrease friction while throwing.

Leather-hard refers to partially dried clay and covers quite a wide range in the drying process. I

think of these different stages as different types of cheese. When the pot feels like brie, handling it may leave it misshapen and covered in fingerprints. Colby Jack is a great time to wire pots off of the bat, but is a little too soft for ideal trimming because the clay doesn't come away smoothly. Cheddar is the perfect stage for trimming, attaching handles, and carving. Parmesan is too dry for attaching and trimming because it could result in a "chatter" texture (rippled surface), or pressure from a trimming chuck may cause cracking.

Greenware and **bone dry** are often used interchangeably. This is the most fragile stage because the clay is extremely susceptible to breaking. At this point the clay has lightened in color and is completely dry to the touch. If the pot feels cooler to the touch than a bisqued pot, there is still water in the clay and it is not yet bone dry. Because the nerves on our hands are not super sensitive it's fairly common to see a potter touch a pot to their cheek to double-check if it is cool or at room temperature. This trick may be less effective in cold and damp climates. If you aren't certain your pieces are all bone dry, you can utilize the preheat feature on your kiln. A preheat holds the temperature of the kiln at around 180–200°F (below water's boiling point) for however long you choose. This will quickly and evenly drive off any lingering water. However, regularly firing very wet clay may

shorten the life of your elements.

Some people consider bisque the final stage in the drying process as well as the first stage in the firing process because this is when all of the chemically attached water has been fired off. This low temperature firing chemically alters and lightly bonds the clay particles together in a process called sintering, imparting strength for the glazing process. With no water left, bisque pots are extremely porous. When water-based glaze is applied to the bisque, capillary action pulls the water from the glaze into the open pores of the bisque. That water then slowly evaporates back into the air, or is driven off in the kiln.

DIFFERENT LOCATIONS AND HUMIDITIES

Location, Location, Lo-time of year: Where you are, the time of year, and the conditions in your studio will have a great effect on how your pieces dry. Colder temperatures and high humidity will increase how long it takes for the water to move from the clay. This is why a pot thrown in Philadelphia will take longer to dry than if that same pot were thrown in Phoenix. Depending on where you live, adding a humidifier or dehumidifier can help offset the natural climate of your area.



BEST PRACTICES: SLOW VERSUS FAST DRYING

The easiest way to dry clay is to leave it uncovered and to let it dry slowly and evenly. Any outside drying force—a fan, air vent, proximity to a firing kiln, or direct strong sunlight—could make your pots dry unevenly, and this can cause warping and cracking from the tension of shrinking at different rates.

Drying pots quickly: Many things could cause you to rush a pot's drying time: a tight production schedule, limited studio time, or classic impatience. The things that cause uneven drying are all the things that we can employ to help us speed up the drying process. But when placing a pot in front of a heater or fan or near a firing kiln, the key difference between this being a help or a hindrance is rotation. By turning a pot regularly you avoid catastrophic differences in drying from one side of the pot to the other. Setting a timer while you work on other projects is a great way to ensure even rotation without forgetting about the drying pieces.

Drying pots slowly: We know certain tasks need to happen at certain stages of drying. However, we cannot always be at the mercy of the clay's timeline. Holding pots in the leather-hard state is a common necessity in classes that meet weekly at community centers as well as in-home studios. Depending on the quantity of work that needs to be kept damp, there are several different methods to use. Wrapping a pot in thin plastic will help hold in the moisture. Thin plastic like the type used for dry-cleaning bags is ideal for this. The more tightly a piece is wrapped, the longer it will stay damp. If the pot has been leather-hard for a while, you may want to lightly dampen a paper towel and wrap the pot in that before wrapping in plastic. For shorter periods you can fill a ware board with pots, and cover the ware board as a whole with plastic. The tighter the plastic is tucked, the longer they will stay workable. Even with tight plastic coverage there will be moisture loss. Using a water bottle with a mist setting and lightly spraying your pots is a great tool to keep pots in the workable leather-hard stage.

If you have the space in your studio you can have a more dedicated damp box or cart. A damp box can be created by filling the bottom of a large plastic tub with an inch or two of plaster.

Add enough water to keep the plaster damp to the touch, and store pieces as long as you want them to be leather-hard. The efficacy of the seal will determine how often water needs to be added to keep a damp environment.

If you're looking to keep a larger amount of work at the same dry stage, North Star makes the VersaCab drying rack. You can also turn any ware cart into a damp box by covering every side with thick plastic. Be sure to securely tape all sides except the front. Tape the front plastic only on top, making sure that the plastic extends to the metal frame. Use magnets to make sure the front piece of plastic is taut and secure but allows you to open the cart as often as you like.

A common occurrence for potters new to the wheel is to throw pots with tapered walls that are thick at the bottom but very thin on the top at the rim. If the tops of these pots dry too quickly, they become very fragile and are susceptible to breaking and cracking when turned over for trimming. It's often a good idea to turn the pot over as soon as the rim is dry and the pot doesn't have any give. This way the bottom of the pot has more contact with the air and is able to dry faster. To avoid further drying of the rim, you can wrap it in a piece of plastic to halt the drying process in that area.

WHY CLAY EXPLODES IN THE KILN

The very common misconception that air pockets will cause explosions in the kiln likely became so pervasive because that idea is an easy shorthand when teaching clay to children and those new to pottery. But if clay is completely and totally bone dry, air pockets will not explode in the kiln. The real danger in air pockets is the moisture that gets caught in them. When the water inside the air pocket starts to heat up, it turns into steam and expands. This expansion is what causes the explosion. Steam is, after all, what powered the industrial revolution.

Adding wet clay to your studio can seem like a daunting task. Taking the time to learn the ins and outs of the stages of drying clay can reduce cracking, kiln explosions, and the accompanying unnecessary headaches.







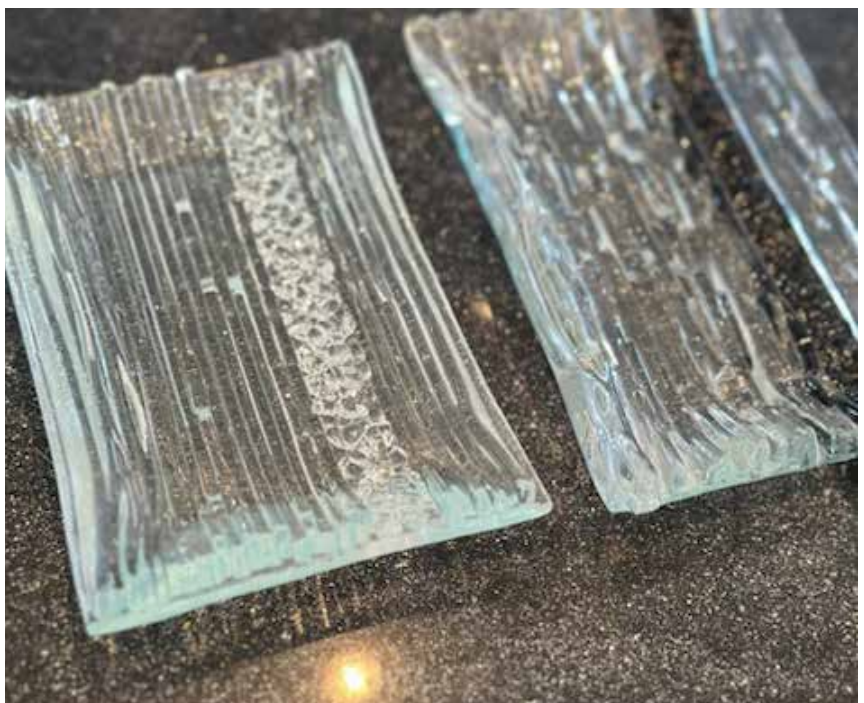
Fused Glass Soap Dish

By Teresa Spencer, Soul Fire Art Studio, Ltd., Delafield, Wisconsin

TACK		
Rate	Temp	Hold
200	1050	15
150	1225	10
400	950	3:00
200	800	10
300	100	-

TACK + 30		
Rate	Temp	Hold
200	1050	15
150	1255	10
400	950	3:00
200	800	10
300	100	-

CONTOUR		
Rate	Temp	Hold
200	1050	15
200	1250	10
300	1340	10
9999	950	3:00
200	800	10
300	100	-









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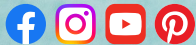


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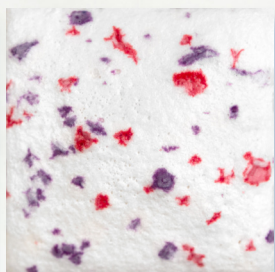
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Snow Gems



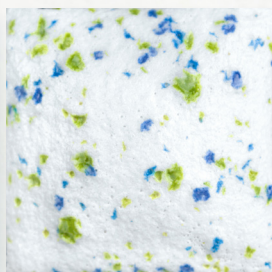
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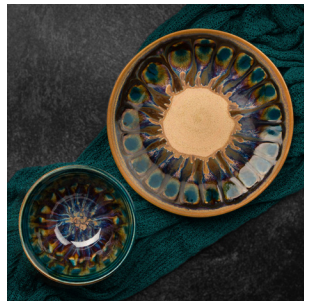
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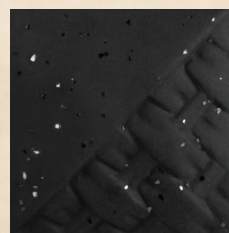


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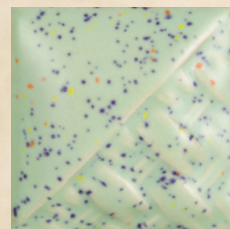
EG007

Terracotta Engobe



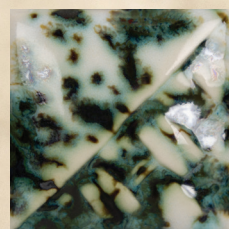
SW220

Black Timber



SW221

Mint Speck



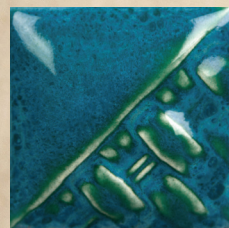
SW222

Green Jasper



SW223

Milk Glass



SW224

Tropical Teal



SW514

Sage Gloss



SW515

Aqua Gloss

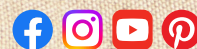


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