



Selling Your Work with Nic Newcomb

Notes from Nic's talk at the August 2026 Hey Clay Social

Context: Nic came in to talk about the business side of a ceramics practice: how he built work that could actually sell, how he got it in front of buyers, and what he wishes he had known earlier.

Building a product - Nic's first consideration when planning how to sell more efficiently was the practical constraints of a community studio [finite shelf space and firing fees], which shape what you can reasonably make. Nic's long-term goal was to quit his day job, which meant he needed a product, not just a body of work.

- Led to the creation of a mold-made airplanter called the "[Air Pod](#)"
 - Didn't need to be marketed with his name attached → Keeping his name off it focused the marketing on the object, which helped the piece [get good press](#) [Nic noted that good photography and email marketing made that possible]
 - Led to the development of Nic's successful pattern: taking a sculptural object and figuring out how it becomes reproducible and sellable
- Nic's next goal: to scale, meaning increase volume, meaning more of the same thing but made more efficiently
 - Advice: Keep asking what is sustainable and long-lasting, and what the market wants that you can actually provide
 - Moved towards plates and other dinnerware, which raised the question of how to make in a less one-off way (led him to slip casting)

Where to sell

Consignment

- The store sells your work and you are not paid until it sells
- You carry the inventory and front the cost of making it

Retail markets

- Maker sales and craft fairs, like the pottery fair during BCAT
- At Renegade, Nic sold very little, but the Instagram promotion from attendees was the real return.
 - Photographable work gets photographed!
 - Take your booth design seriously [more info on that later]
 - For Nic's dinnerware, he found high contrast, bright color, and graphically organized pieces did best
- Audiences vary within one market: homeowners, fellow makers, and casual buyers who did not know they were coming to a craft fair
 - Casual buyers can be a valuable long-term connection if you get their email
 - With fellow makers, decide in advance how much of your process you want to give away

Wholesale and trade shows

- At a trade show, you have a booth that is yours to brand. The goals are different from a retail market and a booth can run around \$5,000



- Wholesale buyers tend to keep buying [They are investing in you because your success is tied to theirs, and you are committing to consistent quality in return!]
- Promotional support may vary (Some will push your work on big social media; some ask for selling exclusivity)
- Small stores are often easier to work with and usually pay up front: a 50% deposit before you make anything, with the balance on shipping (which is helpful for cash flow)
- An off-duty buyer is who got Nic into Architectural Digest, and that led to wholesale interest. (You never know who is looking!)
- Wholesale is what allowed Nic to quit his day job!

Large chain stores

- Anthropologie, West Elm, and similar retailers have tricky payment structures = a lot of work up front and a slow payout
- You get exposure but you can also get knocked off :/

Ecommerce sites

- Nic recommends avoiding these... You make the work, send them photos, they list it, and you get 50% once it ships = Structurally, it tends not to work in the maker's favor.

Collector-focused fairs

- The ACC fair and events like it, where the emphasis is on craftsmanship and the audience is craft enthusiasts
- Pottery trails, where individual potters set up outside their own studios, and the emphasis is on one-of-a-kind pieces. [Ex. The Asparagus Valley trail]

How To Sell

Your booth

Nic's test: picture your booth through a camera. Someone should be able to take one photo and understand your vibe. The design decisions carry the whole story.

- Contact info, clearly visible - Your name on the wall/table/clear of the imagined viewer's photo
- An explanation of how to pay - maybe a QR code, be clear if you take Venmo/Apple Pay/etc
- Label clearly with your prices - Not knowing the price is a barrier. People will not ask whether they can afford something they are falling in love with
- Display with purpose - Plants, tablecloths, fabric, risers, etc.
 - Put work on different levels for a more aesthetic set up
 - Build a focal point and a visual hierarchy: a show-stopper in the center, then depth and a range of price points, unless you specialize
- Giveaways: take-a-button, postcards. A postcard should have a picture of your work and your contact info, and ideally be nice enough that someone hangs it on a wall or a fridge
- Limit options so people are not making too many decisions, but still show that a collection exists
 - The goal is that the range comes across without getting lost in the pitch

Inventory



- Trade shows: one of everything, or enough to tell your story
- Retail markets: more is better than less, though it is hard to judge

Pricing

- Start with what it costs to make: materials plus the cost of your time → How you value your time is personal, but Nic suggests you double it
- Look at the marketplace and figure out where you believe your product should sit in the market's price range
- Challenge yourself to price higher than feels comfortable, even by \$5 or \$10
- Keep a price list and compare all new pieces against it
- Being serious about your work asks other people to be serious about it → Don't undercut the makers around you
- Watch what actually gets you to your goal number - Selling fewer lamps at a higher price got Nic there faster than plates did so plates became lower priority
- Product decisions follow the same logic: a vase might be \$300, but add a lightbulb and it is an \$800 lamp → Most people sell small, so Nic started making big
- Decide what success looks like before the sale
 - Sometimes you get sales. Sometimes you get connections.
 - Remember that your audience at a given sale may not be right for your work → Their price point and their interests make a big impact on your likelihood of selling [Ex. selling larger sculptures to buyers looking for small carryable tchotchkes]

Getting paid, packaging, shipping

- Take cash and digital!
 - Venmo and Apple Cash are easy to use and offer
 - Aim for the least possible friction
- At minimum, wrap in clean newsprint. Bags are better, and ribbon or twine can make it feel finished.
- Send people off with a postcard or business card
- Packing materials are expensive :(Nic ships UPS Ground, and treats packaging as part of the product

Talking to buyers

- Talking to buyers browsing your work can be intimidating, so try to read the room buyer by buyer
 - Some buyers prefer to browse → Give basic information without pushing
 - Some buyers are interested in story → "Can I tell you a little about the product?" is a good opener
 - A one line explanation of your story and price range could be helpful
- Bartering is up to you... Decide in advance whether it is on the table

Marketing

- The algorithm makes it hard to reach your own people, so email marketing is worth the investment
- Substack is also a good option because it lets you use their platform and collect email addresses



- Nic's goal is to hire someone to rebuild his website and marketing so he can focus on email

Staying creative in production rhythms

- Custom orders!
- Be careful not to scale too much
- Selling varied collections → Nic sells a vase in small, medium, and large, but buyers cannot choose the specific shape
- Carve out time for exhibition work separately from production work.