

**the Business
of the**



Professional Development Series

Entrepreneurial and Technical Training for Artists
and Small Business Owners

Spring 2019

STORYTELLING & PERSONAL STATEMENT

Presented by the DC Commission on the Arts and
Humanities, the Department of Small and Local Business
Development, and the Office of Cable Television, Film,
Music, and Entertainment

WELCOME

Thank you for joining us for the 2019 spring semester of The Business of the Arts. During the six-week program, facilitators from the Department of Small and Local Business Development (DSLBD), Washington Area Lawyers for the Arts, and the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities (CAH) will provide arts, humanities and creative professionals the knowledge and technical support to improve the sustainability of their business operations. From managing finances to perfecting your brand story, each session guides you through key components of building a successful business and increasing your revenue.

The Business of the Arts Professional Development Series is presented in partnership by CAH, the DSLBD Innovation & Equitable Development Office, and the Office of Cable Television, Film, Music & Entertainment (OCTFME).

Upcoming classes:

Landscape on Access to Capital, April 3

How to File Your Taxes, April 10

Copyright and Trademark, April 17

Register online at **dcarts.dc.gov**

OVERVIEW

LEARN & TEST PERSONAL STATEMENTS AND PITCHING

Participants will learn how pitch their business to multiple audiences in multiple ways, and practice pitching to the class.

At its heart, all business is selling, and all selling is storytelling.

This module is about getting to the core of your story, and getting telling that story no matter where you are or whom you are speaking with.

ARTIST BIO VS. ARTIST STATEMENTS

Although they seem as though they would be the same, these are actually two, distinct texts that serve different purposes. After clarifying the differences, we will break down the components of the Artist Statement and draft one together.

ARTIST BIO

Bios are used in your professional package, as part of a catalogue at an exhibition, in publicity and printed programs, and other promotional materials. Your artist biography should integrate portions of your resume and artist statement. In general, bios are more factual about you as an artist, whereas statements are more about the ideas, concepts and techniques behind your work.

Example:

Anysa Saleh is a San Francisco based Media Artist. She was born and raised in California's Central Valley. Saleh later moved to the Bay Area to pursue her graduate degree and earned an MFA in Media Arts from California College of the Arts. She has exhibited in the United States and abroad. Currently, her work is part of a traveling show moving from Michigan, New York City, California, and ending in Dubai.

ARTIST STATEMENT

An artist statement is text that accompanies and explains the artist's intentions of their body of work. A strong artist statement supplements the visual information in a portfolio or exhibition so that the reader/viewer can better understand it. Your artist statement should stand on its own so that the reader can imagine what your work looks like even if they have not seen it.

Example:

I often wonder what went through my father's head when he decided to leave Yemen and raise a family in the United States. Different Among The Different is a piece about choice. The slow moving visuals ask to choose to stay tuned in and read each word or watch the Muslim woman continue with her journey, navigating a new city with the same challenges she's faced over and over again. The text is a collection of offensive statements said to me growing up different among the different.

ARTIST STATEMENT

Like the elevator pitch, your artist statement helps you make a connection with an audience, potential customer, grantmaker, investor, etc. It is a living document that will continually change with you and your work as it develops. An artist statement may also change based on the body of work you are showing.

LENGTH APPROPRIATENESS

An artist statement generally ranges between 100 – 300 words. A longer artist statement might describe a large body of work, accompany an exhibition or be used by curators, journalists, publicists, and critics. A shorter artist statement might be used to address very specific information about your body of work, and can be used as an introduction to documents or applications. A super-short artist statement, or “elevator speech” should be more-or-less memorized, so you can clearly articulate to viewers what your work is about, both verbally and in writing.

NB: If you’re applying for a grant, follow application instructions regarding length. If an application asks for a 500 word artist statement – do what they say!

What Goes In

DO write a strong, compelling statement that connects the viewer to your work.

DO develop a strong first sentence.

DO keep it as short as possible.

DO focus on topics that may not be apparent from viewing your work.

What Stays Out

DON’T use ‘artspeak’, overly flowery or pretentious language, or art jargon.

DON’T try to impress the reader with vocabulary or extensive knowledge of art criticism.

DON’T announce what the viewer should feel, just clearly express what you have accomplished.

ARTIST STATEMENT WRITING EXERCISE

The best way to get started with an artist statement is to begin writing about your work in a 10-minute brainstorming session. Do it quickly, and don't worry particularly about grammar or word-smithing. There is no structure or format to this. Just write or type everything that comes to mind about your work. Utilize the Brainstorming Questions to complete the "Artist Statement Brainstorming" box. If what you brainstorm sounds more like a fact about you, drop it into the "Bio Brainstorming" box for later use.

BRAINSTORMING QUESTIONS

- What does your art/product look like? (Size, colors, shapes, textures, light, etc.) Make your description visual.
- What inspired the piece? Talk about the work from a conceptual, thematic, and/or emotional point of view.
- Is there a central or guiding image or idea?
- What are its different elements and how do they affect each other or interact?
- What kind of materials did you use/are you using to create the work? Why?
- What was the process of development for the work?
- How does the work use space/relate to the surrounding space?
- What would be the ideal space in which to exhibit or present the work?
- Where does it fit into (or relate to) your awareness of other contemporary work?

Bio Brainstorming Facts
About You

Artist Statement Brainstorming
Ideas, Concepts, Techniques

BASIC PITCHING

"Always be closing." This mantra is controversial, but it covers the idea that every person a business owner talks to, can be an asset to the business, and in any conversation there can be appropriate ways to pitch the business. Developing the elevator pitch and moving beyond it are both incredibly important for ensuring that you can capitalize on your entire network for support as your business grows.

FOUR BASIC "PITCHES"

Fundamentally a pitch is telling someone about your business in a way that has them buy into an aspect of your business. They may be a customer or lender, an investor or lender, a service provider for your business, or simply a business champion.

ELEVATOR PITCH

Everyone discusses the importance of an elevator pitch, but the challenge is to have what you say sound natural and well attuned to your audience. The challenges are to move away from slogans and having several variations on a theme. What do you need to say to make someone want to ask questions or learn more?

CAPABILITIES STATEMENT

Capabilities statements are a staple of the contracting and procurement world. Standard templates cover what your company can do, and they serve as a functional résumé for your business. They are less used, in this exact form, in consumer facing markets. However, the basic concepts of the capabilities statement, and having one prepared, can help an entrepreneur when deepening an elevator pitch into a conversation. They also are great drag and drop content when completing other forms.

INTERNET PRESENCE (STATIC PITCH)

There are many ways to have an internet presence, from website through all of social media. Keeping up with the many ways to have an online presence can be a job unto itself, but creating static content that covers the same information as the capabilities statement helps those interested in your business feel confident. And conversations on social media can be very similar to an elevator pitch, though it is good to lead back to a static web presence.

INVESTOR PITCH

While the world of investor pitching is constantly adapting, there is a commonly accepted 11-slide structure for what to present to an investor. It draws from the lean business canvas. You may never use the slide deck for presenting, but it is another tool for ensuring that you fully know the critical information about your company and can cover it on the go.

CONSTANTLY ITERATE YOUR ELEVATOR PITCH

The elevator pitch is a learning tool, but it is important that it not become a crutch. The most important piece of an elevator pitch is making a connection with whom you are speaking with. Thus sometimes it is not the first thing you will say, and you may only mention your business after you have established a personal connection.

For today's exercise, estimate one month in your business and when money will flow in and out of your businesses, totaling the dollars each week on the inflows and outflows that you built into your lean canvas model.

WRITE OUT 20 VERSIONS

There are different ways to phrase the same thing. Start with writing some general variations. Then try something completely different. Then define your key personas and write variations for those persons. Then write variations for someone completely different (someone likely uninterested at first blush.)

WATCH THE REACTIONS OF PEOPLE

Successful entrepreneurs frequently are very good at reading people's reactions. It is a skill, and one that if it does not come naturally can be built through active considerations of someone's reactions. Negative reactions are also a learning opportunity, and some entrepreneurs are very successful despite have repeated "door" closed in their "face". One key is for people to find your interest genuine.

ASK FOR ADVICE OF THOSE WHO REACT

Some entrepreneurs chose to be very blunt in asking for advice, even when they received a negative reaction. Sometimes asking for advice opens a new door, or presents completely new information. Constantly gathering more information about reactions helps to refine your approach and your pitch.

DON'T LET NEGATIVE REACTIONS GET YOU DOWN

Was it something I said? Analyze each negative reaction to determine a few things: (1) was the person having a bad day or overly rushed? (2) is that person just not a nice person? (3) did you somehow accidentally offend them, and can you repair that? (4) did you hit too close to something they are interested in doing or already has a connection who does that work? In all of these things, were there non-verbal cues you might have noticed before you engaged that would have helped you anticipate their reaction?

ELEVATOR PITCH

WORKSHEET

In today's exercise we are going to write out twenty actually different variations on your elevator pitch, pausing every three lines to practice in teams or with the whole group.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

YES, YOU CAN ITERATE YOUR PITCH AGAIN

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

IT'S ALL THE SAME INFORMATION



Thinking that “I have to have” all of this documentation and preparation can be overwhelming to many small businesses. Each one of these tools help continue to clarify for you or for others what you are actually doing. You should use the tools that feel comfortable to you but that also seem to have salience with your markets, whether those are consumer markets or other stakeholders in your business.

If you are creating a capabilities statement for government procurement, there are very specific certifications and identification numbers to include. Much like a résumé, they may vary industry by industry and from procurement system to procurement system. If you are doing Federal or DC Government Contracting, the DC Procurement Technical Assistance Center at DSLBD can provide technical assistance.

CAPABILITIES STATEMENT WORKSHEET

For today's exercise, we are going to talk through what is on a basic capabilities statement and think about how a one-pager can highlight the most important aspects of your business.

CAPABILITIES STATEMENT	
Include Name & Logo of Company	Contact information of a specific person, including name, phone, email
Core Competencies	
<p>Short introduction relating your company's core competency specific to your clients' needs, followed by key-word heavy bullet points</p> <p>Tips for creating your capabilities statement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use short sentences. If you use periods on one bullet, use them in all bullets. • Tailor your capabilities statement the same way you would a résumé. • If you have specific products or services, list those clearly. • The capabilities statement should be one page. • The capabilities statement should use the same font, colors, and branding that your website and other branding materials use. • Only distribute a PDF version. 	
Past Performance	Differentiators
List any similar work you have completed and the customers you supported. If possible, include specific references and their contact information	List what makes you better than the likely competitors for the business you are seeking.
Company Data	Relevant Codes
If relevant, add specific data about the company if it relates to the work you are seeking.	If relevant, add data like a DUNS number, NAIC codes, NIGP codes, and any certifications
Add the logo, address, phone, web, and other general contact information.	

ABOUT

CAH

Established in 1968, the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities supports programs that promote progress in the arts and humanities through grants, professional opportunities, and other services to individuals and nonprofit organizations in all communities within the District of Columbia. CAH is the designated state arts agency for the District of Columbia, and is supported primarily by District government funds and in part by the National Endowment for the Arts.

DSLBD

The Department of Small and Local Business Development supports the development, economic growth, and retention of District-based businesses, and promotes economic development throughout the District's commercial corridors.

OCTFME

The mission of the Office of Cable Television, Film, Music, and Entertainment is to produce and broadcast programming for the District of Columbia's public, educational, and government access (PEG) cable channels and digital radio station; regulate the District of Columbia's cable television service providers; provide customer service for cable subscribers; and support a sustainable creative economy and labor market the District of Columbia.

