ILLUSTRATION AGENCIES
what to consider before signing with an agent or art representative

WHAT ARE ILLUSTRATION AGENCIES?

Illustration agencies serve a variety of functions: they bring in clients, manage contracts and advertise their artists so in the end you do less of the self-promotional legwork freelancing can entail. Sometimes having representation is necessary to break into more established markets, particularly in the case of advertising and publishing. Clients see agencies as a way to more easily find the perfect illustrator, and assurance that their work will be delivered on time. Because of this, agencies can command higher prices for jobs. Some see the commission fee as detrimental for the artist. Before you consider signing with an agent, do your research, and weigh the pros and cons.

Pros:

• **Spend less time promoting:** Constantly sending out cold emails, follow-up emails, or postcards can be time consuming and expensive. For a small commission, agencies promote artists to their contacts so the artist can focus on their illustration work.

• **Less concern about legal contracts:** Agents know how to navigate legal contracts and usage rights. They also have an understanding of industry standards, and it is their job to protect you as an artist.

• **Billing, pricing and collection is taken care of:** No more managing contracts and chasing down your clients for payment. Agencies will handle the billing and pricing for you. Although agents take care of price negotiations directly with the client, you should still negotiate your fee with your agent whenever possible.

• **Leverage for negotiations:** Agencies promise security for a client, and because of that they can often charge higher rates than an individual freelancer.

• **Advances:** Although it is ill advised, some agencies will give emergency advances on payments. This is a luxury not to be abused, but it can give financially unstable artists a sense of security.

• **Able to access new markets:** Certain markets rarely hire freelance illustrators. Many agencies have established relationships with clients in these markets, and can allow you access to certain types of work.

Cons:

• **Fee:** Agents can charge you anywhere from 10-30% commission on each individual job. Some agents also insist on handling clients that you may bring in on your own.

• **Constant communication:** Agents require constant updates when you’re working on a project. To some, it may feel as though you constantly have someone looking over your shoulder while you’re working.

• **Artistic disagreements:** Sometimes agents represent what they consider to be the most commercial pieces in your portfolio rather than what you think is your best work. They may disagree with your own personal artistic vision.

• **Job rate:** If your agents are slow to bring in jobs, the commission can be a much more harmful drain on your income.
THINGS TO DO BEFORE SIGNING WITH AN AGENT

Investigate:
Thoroughly research different agencies to weigh your options. Be sure you are okay doing the kind of work they are involved with (publishing, advertising, etc.). If you’re considering being represented, ask the agency as many questions as you can before signing on.

Contract agreements:
When agreeing to contracts, be sure to look over them very carefully and have a clear understanding of the terms you are agreeing to. Note the length of time you are committing to as well as how to break/end the contract if need be.

Negotiate commission:
Be prepared to give up 15%-30% per job, but recognize that agents can bring in higher paying jobs. This may be worth the commission, but if you find that your agent is slow to bring work, weigh the pros and cons.

Ask how:
Ask agents about their techniques for getting artists work. Do they rely on printed publicity? Are they proactive? Don’t hesitate to ask all these questions before agreeing to be represented.

Consider cost:
Agents sometimes charge their artists (on top of commission) a percentage of the costs of advertising. Make sure you understand how much this may cost you, and if you can afford it. Do they want cash up front or will they take it from fees owed to you?

Discuss your other jobs:
Some agents want to have sole representation of you, and if you have clients you’ve worked with before being represented, they’ll want to handle those too. Are you prepared to hand them over? Discuss this thoroughly with the agent before agreeing to be represented.

Keep clear communication:
Most agents require frequent updates on the progress of your work so they can continue to update the client. Are you able to give frequent and honest status updates to your agent?

What about your portfolio?
Often times, commercial art is what sells, which may not be the artist’s favorite work. Some agents will sell you on portfolio pieces you may not like the best. Are you prepared to hand over that creative control?

Leaving:
If you leave the agency, what will happen to your client list? Do they require that you give notice well in advance? It is important to know these things before signing anything.

ILLUSTRATION AGENTS & ART REPS

Below is a list of Agencies and representatives compiled from Businessofillustration.com and DirectoryOfIllustration.com

AAARep
Agency Rush
Andrea Brown Literary Agency
American Artists
Apple Illustration
Artistique Int.
Astound
Bernstein & Andriulli
Big Red Illustration Agency
Bright Agency
Central Illustration
Das Grup
David Goldman Agency
Dutch Uncle
de Moreta Represents, Linda
Deborah Wolfe Ltd. / Illustration Online
Début Art
Fillin Global Inc.
Frank Sturges Reps.
Folio
Gerald & Cullen Rapp
George Grace Represents
Herman Agency Inc.
HSG Agency
Illustration (USA) Inc.
Jelly London
JSR Agency
Kids Corner
KJA Artists
Lemonade Illustration Agency
Lindgren & Smith
Lott Representatives
Lila Rogers Studio
Magnet Reps
Marlena Agency
MB Artists
Meiklejohn Illustration
Mendola
MIA Milan Illustrations Agency
Morgan Gaynin
Pink Light Studio
Rapp Art
Richard Solomon
Rhyner, Renee
Riley Illustration
Shannon Associates
Snyder
The Jacky Winter Group
The Weber Group
Writers House

WANT TO START FINDING AN AGENT?

Get some tips on how to make your work stand out when finding an agency by checking out this article by Neil Swaab on How to Get an Illustration Rep: http://businessofillustration.com/get-illustration-rep/