

People and relationships are also just as important, sometimes more. “In the educational and cultural business, it is more important to pay attention to people and process, rather than content or specific formats or materials,” Mariana said. “Materials and content are fluid. The important thing is the relationships.”

Ártica believes in the power of the network. They seek to make connections with people and institutions across the globe so they can learn from them and share their knowledge.

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At the core of everything Ártica does is a set of values. “Good content is not enough,” Jorge said. “We also think that it is very important to take a stand for some things in the cultural sector.” Mariana and Jorge are activists. They defend free culture (the movement promoting the freedom to modify and distribute creative work) and work to demonstrate the intersection between free culture and other social-justice movements. Their efforts to involve people in their work and enable artists and cultural institutions to better use technology are all tied closely to their belief system. Ultimately, what drives their work is a mission to democratize art and culture.

Of course, Ártica also has to make enough money to cover its expenses. Human resources are, by far, their biggest expense. They tap a network of collaborators on a case-by-case basis and hire contractors for specific projects. Whenever possible, they draw from artistic and cultural resources in the commons, and they rely on free software. Their operation is small, efficient, and sustainable, and because of that, it is a success.

“There are lots of people offering online courses,” Jorge said. “But it is easy to differentiate us. We have an approach that is very specific and personal.” Ártica’s model is rooted in the personal at every level. For Mariana and Jorge, success means doing what brings them personal meaning and purpose, and doing it sustainably and collaboratively.

In their work with younger artists, Mariana and Jorge try to emphasize that this model of success is just as valuable as the picture of success we get from the media. “If they seek only the traditional type of success, they will get frustrated,” Mariana said. “We try to show them another image of what it looks like.”