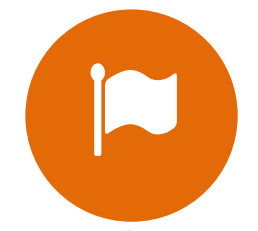


How to Build a Solid Client List

Don Giannatti (aka; wizwow)

And keep them coming back

Our Four Point Plan



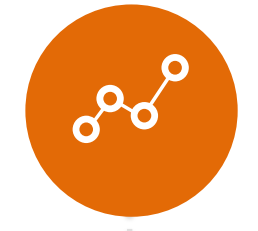
Introduction: Our Work
Knowing what we do best is critically important

The Portfolio
What We Do



Building a List of "Channels"
Who Needs What We Do

Getting Personal
From Channels to Specifics... the Nitty Gritty



Staying Connected
Build trust and credibility

Get in touch
We want to hear from you





Introduction

Our work is our vision... is it ready?



I'm Don Giannatti - Welcome

I have been a photographer, designer, and art director for nearly 40 years.

In that time I have been a commercial photographer with an emphasis on people and product work, an art director for two ad agencies, and a Creative Director/Partner for one of the most successful ad agencies in Phoenix. That was then – this is now. I run Project 52, a year preparatory for photographers wanting to break into the business, and needing real world, solid, no BS advice.

I have successfully mentored photographers from all over the world into creating their own commercial photography business, and I am creating this program for you – the emerging photographer.



Your Portfolio: The Power of Imagery

A portfolio should represent your “body of work”, not a collection of images.

When we first start out in photography, we try this and that and every new technique that comes along.

While that is both fun and educational, it can end with a mish-mash of images that do not relate to each other – or you. Developing your vision is a task that takes lots of work, but it can really pay off when the images clearly show YOU and your photographic style.



“ There are no secrets to success. It is the result of preparation, hard work, and learning from failure.

Colin Powell



What is in your portfolio now?

Is it landing you commercial clients?

This is always the hard part... Looking at our own work with a critical eye toward what is and what is not our best work. And then to ask if the work is the kind of work, or the caliber of work, that will get jobs in the door.

Your portfolio is your calling card, your best advertising, your credibility, your most powerful visual statement, and your proof that you can do what you say you can do.

“I’m a photographer...” only goes so far. At some point someone will simply ask you to prove it. The proof is your portfolio.

Look at your images, those in your current ‘book’. Look critically and answer these questions;

Do these images live up to the needs of my clients or clients I would like to have?

Are these images relevant to the type of work I want to do?

Are they relevant to the work being done in my region?

Now take each image and write down two places where that image could be used to sell a product or a service. It is not hard to do with an image that has the right values. It may be harder to do if the image doesn’t meet any of the criteria.

(Use the PDF sheet “Image Uses”).

Body of Work vs Collection of Images

One will impress clients, the other impresses your mom.

A body of work is one that contains images that tie to one another in some visual way. It can be a point of view, a subject choice, the way a photographer uses light, or chooses a lens. A body of work contains images that are authentically the photographers. They are images that seem to fit and belong next to the other images.

Often times this is what people refer to as a photographer's "style". The body of work is the context and the individual images contained in it help define the work as a cohesive vision. It is this cohesive vision that we want to project.

Look at these photographers for some ideas of what a "body of work" looks like:

[Ryan Pfluger](#)

[Scott Toepfer](#)

[Joel Grimes](#)

[Albert Watson](#)

[Sarah Moon](#)

[VK Rees](#)

[Chris Crisman](#)

[Adam Voorhes](#)



Preparing a Vision Based Portfolio

Preparing the mind before grabbing the camera

The “Faux” Portfolio Exercise

Figuring out where you fit in

1. Find a good selection of magazines from your region / local area. City magazines, trade magazines, regional publications and anything that could be considered reasonable for you to shoot for NOW.

2. Look for images in those publications that you would have loved to shoot.

(It is best to concentrate on Ad images – not editorial. Advertising is what we are looking at in this exercise.) Rip the images out and create a ‘tear sheet’ stack of pages. Start with about 10 – 12 ads.) Now the question; can you shoot these images?

A. Given your current gear.

B. Given your accessibility to subject

C. Given your skill set (which will be developing of course)

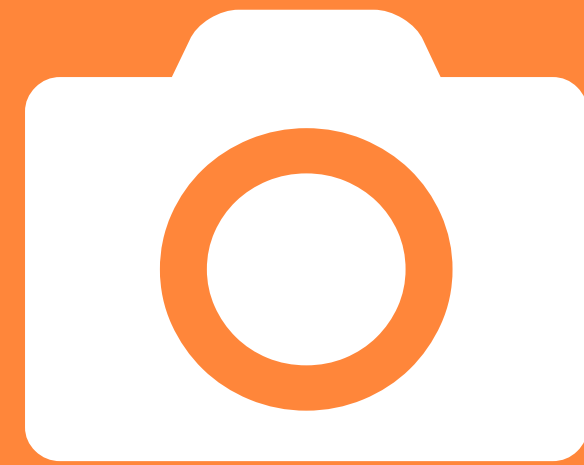
D. If not – why not?

3. Deconstruct the images.

How were they lit? How were they produced? What do you think they did in post? What makes the image pop?

4. Choose a first image. What would you do differently? (This is important. If you would have done it the same way the other photographer did it then they don’t need you.) Explain how your image would have sold more product/service.

(See PDF: Ad Images)



NOW DO THAT SHOT!

Your way. Your gear. Your vision.



Your Image: Practical Observations

Every image in your portfolio must answer these four questions and establish credibility

✓ **Is the image technically proficient?**

Color correct. Sharp. No dust spots. Perfect retouching. No unexplained blown highlights or shadows so deep that nothing lives there. Composed the way you want it, and presented perfectly. No Excuses.

✓ **Does the image represent your style?**

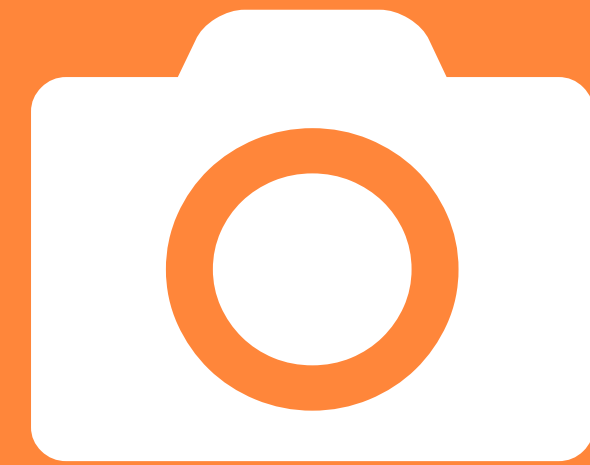
Is it an authentic photograph – one that you make from a point of vision? Or is it a bad copy of someone else's work? Remember, while we are doing a shot that a customer hired someone to do, we are doing it OUR way... not imitating what was done before.

✓ **Does the image solve a problem?**

It doesn't have to be a huge, global challenge, but a simple problem. Problem solving is what we do as commercial photographers. Two people – problem. Glassware – problem. Still life – problem. Active models – problem. When you are deliberate with your shooting, creating images that solve problems becomes the norm.

✓ **Is it an interesting photograph?**

Sharp, color correct, 'perfectly composed', problem solving images in your style can still be boring. Is your photograph boring? Be honest – get critique. Boring, uninteresting, 'seen it before' imagery will not land you gigs.



NOW DO IT AGAIN!

And again and again and again if needed.



Be Deliberate with Your Work

Sloppy, slap-dash, quickly shot crap will not win assignments.

✓ **With each image you produce, do the same checklist as before.**

Is it technically proficient?

Is it in your style?

Does it solve a problem?

Is it an interesting photograph?

✓ **This works for images already in your portfolio as well.**

Most of us have images we have taken over the years and really are attached to them. Pull each image up on the screen. Ask the questions above. Note the answers. (A PDF is supplied for you: Portfolio Image Audit. Please feel free to print as many as you need.)

✓ **What about the image that was an epic 'save' for all that went wrong.**

Usually it is something like this: Weather was uncooperative, model was late, MUA was drunk, wardrobe didn't fit, fog was rolling in and time was growing thin... and then – VOILA – you actually got a shot. Here's the hard truth... unless it is a spectacular shot, the back story is worthless. No one cares. Shit happens... we are problem solvers. It was expected.

✓ **Be brutal but be honest.**

Sometimes you just believe in an image. Go with that gut. We are not editing for someone else. We are editing for us.

Keeping Track of the Images

How you do it is up to you, just make sure you do it.

- ✓ **Create a folder named “Portfolio Possibilities”**

Put it or an alias to it on your desktop and if there is a possibility that an image you shot may end up in the portfolio, drag a copy over to it. (One reason I prefer an alias to another drive is that it will only make copies.)

- ✓ **Once every month take the time to review every image in that folder**

Move the ones you totally reject to the trash (if they are copies of files that you have backed up). Be done with them. If they suck now, they will suck later.

- ✓ **What about an image you aren't sure of?**

Put it into a subfolder – I named mine “Lost Ones”... meaning they seem lost with the current set of images I am curating. I may pull them out at a later time and see if something grabs me, or some context has arisen where the image may make a lot of sense.

- ✓ **Once you have chosen the images you feel strongly about, print them.**

Yes, exactly. Print them and tape/post them around your computer area so you see them when you are working. I do this for about a month. I will know after a month or so if I still think that image makes the cut. About 50% of each month is moved to the “Portfolio” folder for adding to website or printing for “the Book”.

Time to Edit the Work



Take Your Time – But Hurry Up


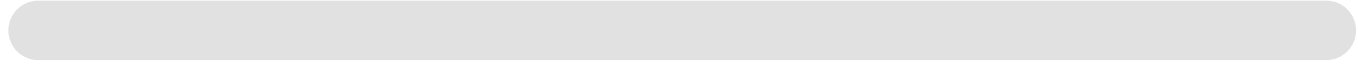
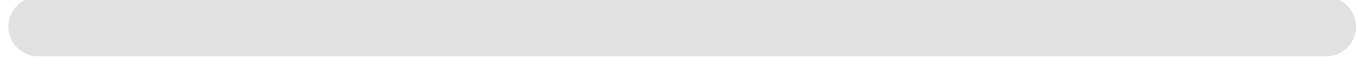
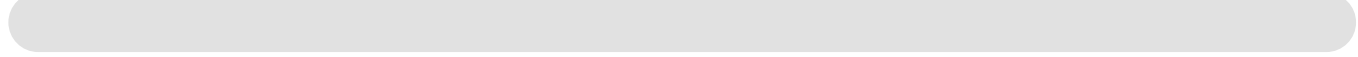
No – It is not an oxymoron – it’s a way of working



I call it Patient Impatience. Yes, we know we need to have patience, but we can also be super proactive in moving this process along.

What % do you score your body of work?



- Technically Exceptional  ? %
- Represents your style  ? %
- Solves a problem  ? %
- Is an interesting subject  ? %



We Edit for Our Vision

Do not second guess what you think
someone wants to see.

Epic fail – every time it is tried.

Create a Mini Portfolio of your “Body of Work”

I prefer small, 4x6 prints (Costco/Sams Club) and a big table.

✓ **Lay the images out and just LOOK at the them. Take in the whole group with one view if possible.**

Are there images that simply jump off the table at you? Are there images that seem ‘wrong’ or out of place? Are there images that seem weak next to the stronger images?

✓ **Cull them out. Don’t throw them out – just isolate them for awhile.**

Remember – at this stage we are looking for strong imagery, not thinking about markets or AD’s or how many “Likes” they got. And we have to remember that sometimes an image we think is not strong enough may actually be a great image – just needing context to reveal that greatness.

✓ **What about the image that was an epic ‘save’ for all that went wrong.**

Usually it is something like this: Weather was uncooperative, model was late, MUA was drunk, wardrobe didn’t fit, fog was rolling in and time was growing thin... and then – VOILA – you actually got a shot. Here’s the hard truth... unless it is a spectacular shot, the back story is worthless. No one cares. Shit happens... we are problem solvers. It was expected.

✓ **Be brutal but be honest.**

Sometimes you just believe in an image. Go with that gut. We are not editing for someone else. We are editing for us.

In a solid portfolio, flow is as important as the images

Flow is the order in which you show your work.

✓ **Choosing what images go where in the line up is part magic, part science**

There are many schools of thought on this process. Some photographers pack all their black and white together, and some keep the genres in separate areas (still life, fashion, food), and still others prefer to show the images in a loose relationship with something other than genre or presentation as the context for the work.

Commercial portfolios tend to be more traditional in approach, with each genre getting its own portfolio (food, still life, fashion). This seems to be across the board with photographers in large towns or small. But a handful of commercial shooters – especially those with very definable styles – are showing the work in a more loose fashion. You will find them with web groupings like “portfolio one”, “portfolio two” or “things – people”. Which ever way you choose to show the images, the order you put them in can be critical.

Everything from color to leading lines to the direction a subject is facing in a portrait can determine the flow of your book. If you are anything but 100% comfortable, I would suggest contacting a local designer, or finding a portfolio consultant to help make the book one that will be an asset instead of a bunch of nice photos.

✓ **Remember that the image on the page has its own power...**

And that power can be used for good or evil. How it is shown can make all the difference. Choosing images, and flowing them through the book will be one of the hardest things you will be called on to do as a photographer.



“Ghost Clients” are not real
Trying to figure out what someone you
have never met wants to see in a five
minute interview with you is... crazy!

Editing for the 'ghost clients'

A truly monumental waste of time

Bottom line is that we will never really know what anyone wants to see – other than the small checklist earlier. Visual people are excited by visual things that stimulate them. That is your mission – stimulate their vision with your own. Show your visual, artistic and photographic talent with every image you produce.

The funny thing is you may not get hired to do what you show in the way you show it. Commercial photography is that way. We work so hard to create amazing portraits in locations that are lit with moody, cinema like precision. The AD's love the work – it stimulates them. And when they get a gig that calls for a portrait they remember your knock out stuff

The gig is, however, a guy standing next to a server stack in a server room, can you light it all up and make sure it isn't real moody or anything.

Yes. Yes we can. Why? Because when we deliver that perfect image – the one the AD wanted – we get a nice little piece of paper we can deposit into our bank account and keep on making those awesome, moody portraits.

(See the photographer Chris Buck's website for clarity on this... check out the tear sheets.)

How to Build a Truly Awesome Book

I don't use that word very often, but it IS what we need

Here are a few ideas for building an amazing book that will be a dynamic tool for getting assignments.

Over deliver on creativity.

Every shoot you do is treated like it's a \$10K job from the best ad agency in the world. You make everything happen perfectly, and deliver shots better than anyone expected.

ProBono projects for worthy causes.

Many photographers have started brilliant careers working for charitable organizations. I know a photographer who got to travel the world for a year on his client's dime – shooting photographs that would actually help the people he was photographing. He did great work. He built a fantastic portfolio, and is now shooting travel assignment work.

Personal Projects.

I simply cannot stress how important it is for you to be working on a personal, self-assigned project at all times. Not only does it keep your creativity muscle in good shape, it helps clients see what you do when you are not shooting for them.



Your portfolio is your truth

Spending the time and resources on making it more authentically you is a strong investment in your business.
