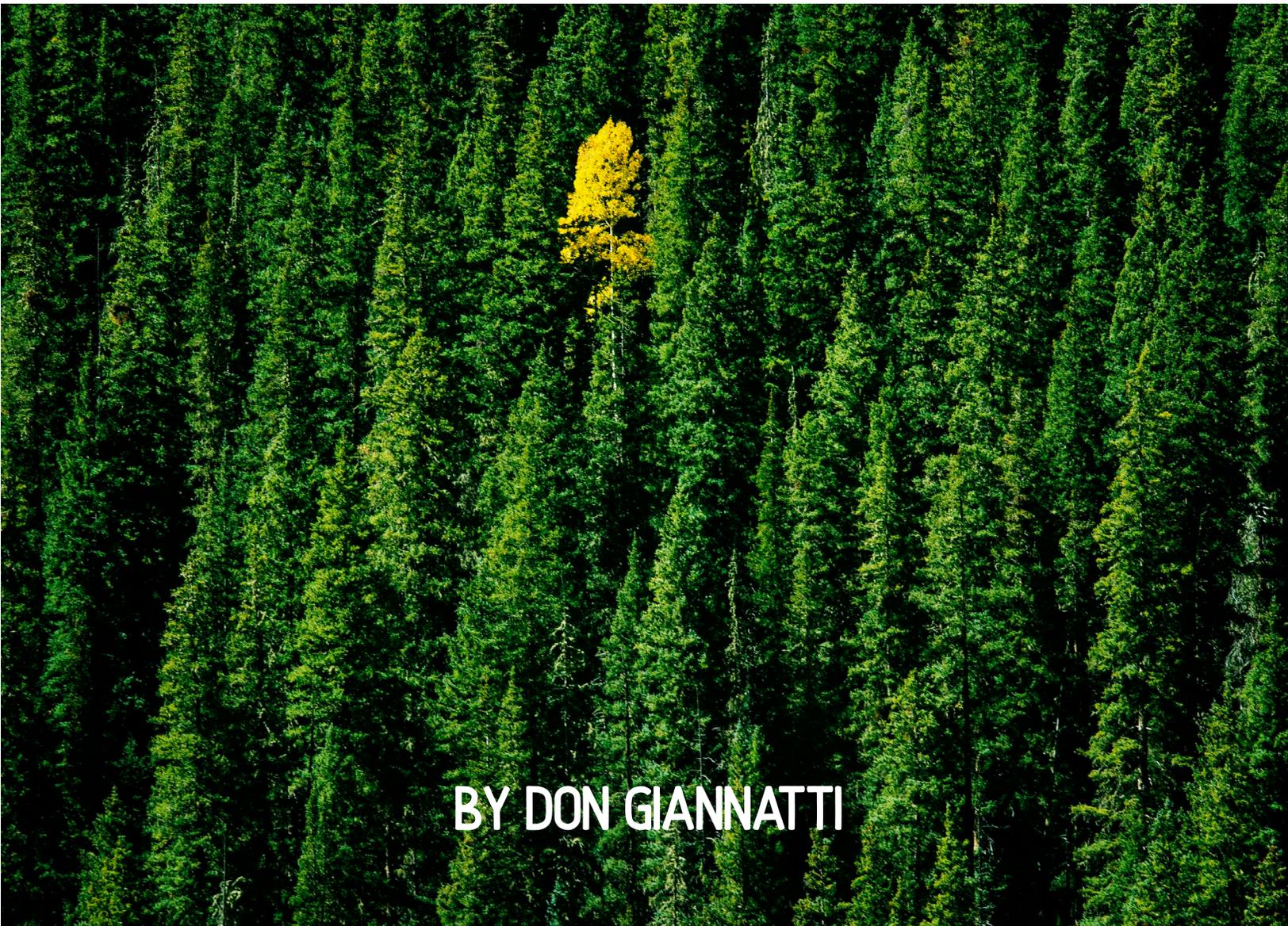


THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO STARTING YOUR CREATIVE BUSINESS

FOR PHOTOGRAPHERS, ARTISTS, AND VISUAL MEDIA PROS



BY DON GIANNATTI



The author on the top of Bear Tooth Pass, on a solo motorcycle ride. 8/8/2020

I have been a musician, photographer, author, coach, mentor, writer, and advertising executive.

From shooting fashion catalogs to the Creative Director of my own ad agency, I have been on both sides of the photography table. I went through the portfolio showings and I had portfolios shown to me.

Throughout it all, my attention has always been on the people who make things happen, make things that work, and just simply make the art that keeps the world sane.

It is not an easy path to take, but artists are incredibly important to the world... especially in these chaotic times. I hope this small book helps you in some way make a business that thrives.

-- Don

Ultimate Guide to Starting Your Creative Business

Don Giannatti



A workbook for every creative who wants to become a master of their own domain and art filled life.

Although written for my photography mentorship group, the ideas, tips, techniques, and information in this book will help every artist make that scary leap from a place of comfort to the wild world of freelance creativity.



Don Giannatti's Ultimate Guide to Starting Your Creative Business

Creating a Masterplan for Success

This guide is meant to get you thinking and planning and making the choices that will ultimately lead to you being a creative professional. The truth of the matter, is that it is damned hard to be a professional photographer or really, any kind of creative professional. Dive in to this book and make the notes you need to tailor it to your specific goals and systems.

I have been a full time creative for over 55 years, and I have had good years and, well, not so good years. Mostly the former, but the bad ones sucked. They were all my fault, my choices, my responsibility. Learn from failure, rejoice in success, but know that every day we get up to do what we do is a chance to do it better. And as artists and professionals, there is no greater gift than opportunity.

Don Giannatti
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Get Started

Knowing where you are helps determine where you are going.

FIRST UP: ASSET CHECK

As we begin this mentorship booklet, we want to make sure we are working from a position of strength.

I list a set of "Assets" you must have to market and build your business, and I want each of you to do the asset checklist to make sure you have everything you need.

Minimal Viable Brand for Photographers
<https://www.lighting-essentials.com/mvb-1-minimal-viable-brand-overview/>

If anything is missing, you should make a plan to get it done, and then work that plan as you go along in this booklet.

In order to market your work, you must feel good about your work.

Knowing that you are prepared is – at least – a psychological plus for the discipline it takes to get out and into the market.

Without the strong framework, doubt and paralysis set in.

Resistance.

It is too easy to say "Well, I would go and show my work, but my website is not ready".

OK... do nothing till the website is ready. Get on it. Today. (This will not work out well for your plans.)

"I don't have a good leave-behind, so meeting clients is just a waste of time."

No, it is never a waste of time, and while a good leave-behind is a nice touch, it is NOT the deciding factor in getting out and into scenarios where you can pitch your work.

Even a soft pitch is better than no pitch, and in some circumstances a soft pitch is all that you need.

Networking events, business groups, speakers clubs, libraries, galleries, universities... so many places to meet people and

discuss your work as a professional.

And before you say something like “but will I meet anyone who will hire me there” I want to remind you that promotion is not quid-pro-quo.

Promoting your work is 90% outreach and 10% inquiry.

Clients may prefer to hire photographers they have heard about, and who are as visible as possible in their areas than someone in a phone book.

When you are out in the world, you are constantly creating connections that you do not even know about, and can help you in ways you could never imagine. You’ll see it when you do it. When you are closed off from the world, the chances for those connections are lost, and you remain stuck.

Networking is one of the strongest things you can do with little effort that I know of.

WEEKLY PUSH:

Look into networking opportunities in your area. Start a small notebook and make entries for places that may want to show your work. Coffee shops, libraries, community centers, schools, wherever people gather together for any reason.

Also begin a list of possible networking opportunities. Are there speakers groups in your area? Business groups?

I want you to set aside your negative voice, stop the negative tapes from playing, and find a place to expand positively with your imagery.

Camera clubs can be good, but I have found them to usually be run by people more interested in their own political structure within the organization than in welcoming in someone who may unseat them. I strongly urge you to set MY findings aside and look for yourself. It is certainly possible that your experience would not be mine.

THE WEEKLY LOG

Keeping a daily journal – even crude notes and bullet points – will help you get a handle on where your time goes.

At very least, note what you are doing that is positive growth for your business.

Week One

- 10 am: two cold calls
- 10:30 – noon: processing three new images for portfolio
- 1 PM – 1:30 PM: developed leads from Google
- 2:30 – 4 PM: Social media posts, blog for LinkedIn, sent

two postcards

- 6 PM – 7 PM: Learned two new things for Photoshop from Youtube
- As simple as that.

It shouldn’t consume your every moment, and allowing yourself time for decompress, a walk around the neighborhood, or lunch with the kids is important.

NOTE: THIS IS NOT A SCHEDULE,

It is a record of what you have done – not what you propose to do.

(We will discuss “chunking” both your day, and your week, next week.)

I recommend these beautiful and handy notebooks from FIELD NOTES.

These are really handy. I have a subscription!



I really like their 56 Week Planner because you fill in your own dates. If you need to take a month to do something else, just don’t add those days.

There is a big difference between planning and recording.

Our planning should be well thought out, and leave room for the serendipitous stuff that will make a mockery of any plan that is too structured and tight.

Our recording is for an evaluation of what we are doing so we can make better plans.

Putting our planned week and our recorded week together shows us where the planning may need work, and how we may need to be more attentive to the plan to begin with.

You CAN do this.



DEFEATING FEAR OF THE UNKNOWN

One of Warren Buffett's most famous quotes (via Benjamin Graham) is, "Price is what you pay; value is what you get." It's an idea that largely guides his investment decisions and one that he has used to achieve an unparalleled level of success.

What exactly does this quote mean, though, and how can we use it to guide our own investment decisions? To answer that, let's take a look at the important differences between price and value.

Price Versus Value

The most important distinction between price and value is the fact that price is arbitrary and value is fundamental. For example, consider a person selling gold bars for \$5 a piece. The price of those gold bars is, in this instance, \$5. It's an arbitrary amount chosen by the seller for reasons known only to them. Yet, in spite of the fact that those gold bars are priced at \$5, their value is so much more.
-FORBES

Price can be understood as the money or amount to be paid, in order to get something. Cost is the amount incurred in the production of goods, i.e. it is the money value of the resources involved in producing something.

Conversely, value implies the utility or worth of the commodity of service for an individual.

A market is a place where millions of products and services offered for sale to the public, which are different size, shape, color, nature, functioning, and many other respects.

The first things that come to our mind whenever we go and buy a product is, what is the price of the good or service? How much does it cost? What is its value for us? There are slight and subtle differences between price, cost, and value, which is important to learn.

HOW DO WE PROVIDE OUR CUSTOMERS WITH MORE VALUE VS LOWERING OUR PRICE?

A recent survey asked customers to identify what salespeople do that helps their buying process.

More than 80% of the responses mentioned these practices:

1. Listen and respond to my needs. Don't sell me your product. Solve my problem.
2. Present solutions honestly and simply. Don't try to dazzle me or make your product look better by putting down the competition.

3. Follow up faithfully. Stay in contact; return phone calls and emails.
4. Respect our buying process. Get to know my company as well as you know your product.
5. Persistence/regular contact. Be persistent without being pushy.
6. Demonstrate value. Understand the difference between features and benefits in order to effectively demonstrate your product's value.

Biggest Turnoffs

The same survey asked customers to name the practices that hinder sales.

A majority of customers named the following factors:

1. Failure to follow our buying process. Not understanding who the decision makers are. Failing to understand my business.
2. Failure to listen to my needs. Not effectively relating what you're selling to what I need to buy. Failing to explain solutions adequately.
3. Failure to follow up. Not focusing on after-sale service. We want salespeople who will follow through without having to be prodded.
4. Acting pushy/aggressive. Fast-talking or fast-selling; pushing too hard for a sale. Customers are turned off by salespeople who care more about their commissions than trying to help a customer solve a problem.
5. Failure to explain solutions adequately. Inability to answer all questions. Making exaggerated claims.
6. Tendency to call too often. Harassing customers.
7. Lack of preparation. Customers don't like salespeople who waste time by calling without clear purposes.

What are your plans for addressing these items in your businesses?

But First: Read This

Too many people say “I can’t” as they tick off the reasons.

Too old.
Too in debt.
Not good enough.
Wrong gear.
Wrong town.
Wrong year.
Wrong economy.
Too much competition.

And it makes me feel like grabbing them and yelling in their faces “NO, you are justifying your belief because you and your brain will forever want you to be right!”

That’s what our brain does. It is our best friend and worst enemy but it is not malicious in any way. It wants us to be right.

If we believe something, we want to be right in that belief. Our brains will look at the world with the tendency to prove how right we are. It’s primary purpose is to help us justify our rightness.

So if we believe we are too old to do something, our good and trusty brain will look for things real and imagined to help prove that our belief that we are too old is absolutely correct.

We can call it selective bias, but it goes farther than that.

It permeates everything we do, say, think, plan, and execute.

If you think you are too old to ride a motorcycle, then you will find all the reasons old people shouldn’t ride motorcycles. You will point out brittle bones and lack of strength.

If you think you can ride a motorcycle at 70, you will ride one and prepare for the things that may happen because of lack of strength or brittle bones. You oompensate by hitting the gym, eating right... and riding that beast!

When you are scared, the bias of being right becomes even more important.

Changing jobs is a scary thing to do.

Our brain starts telling us all the things we need to hear to make sure we are right about how stupid it is to think we could be a professional artist or designer or writer.

The brain finds every tidbit it can piece together to help us prove we are right.

No steady paycheck.
No health insurance.
No stability.
No corporate safety net. Too many competitors. Too many horror stories about how others failed.

And on and on it goes.

And believe me the brain is very good, extremely good at making sure our fears are justified, and our beliefs are absolutely correct.

But in truth, nothing above is true for any given person. Not true as in forever true. Not globally, universally true like physics.

What if you decided that you have had enough of the corporate cube, and that you were pretty goddam sure there was a better way to live and work.

Then the brain starts looking for ways to help that belief become true for you.

Where once were obstacles, you see opportunities. Your brain makes sure of that.

It wants you to be right.

So much of what we think is wrong with our lives is really how we have decided to believe in what we think we believe in. And our brain has selected what we need to see to validate every part of our argument for what we believe.

Wanna be a full time creative?

Change your beliefs. Tell your brain you want out of the cubicle and the 9-5 crap and you want freedom.

BELIEVE IT.

And your brain will start to work showing you how right you are in your belief that you CAN do what you want. You CAN be a creative and make the money you need to make. There ARE ways to live the life you want to live.

I truly believe you can do whatever you want to do, whenever you want to do it.

Get Out of the Box

Learning something about yourself and your work.

Let's get out of the box... and looking toward shooting something totally different using simple techniques we are going to borrow from these videos.

The videos should give you a lot of ideas for simple tools and reflections and how to create something really different. And just because they are doing it with a smartphone doesn't mean the same techniques won't apply to our regular cameras.

Using simple props and tools for some very interesting photographs. Also note that they are not using strobes, but depending on natural light for all of the images. At least from what I can tell.

Here are some ideas to give you some of your own.

This is the link to his Instagram for a lot of other outside of the box ideas. <https://www.instagram.com/jordi.koalitic/>

A YouTube of him working: <https://youtu.be/DP6UtePp8yw>

Notes on Steven Pressfield's important book: *The War of Art*

Embrace your fears

Resistance is fear. Fear is not only powerful but contagious as well.

Pressfield says to use that fear as the motivator to run toward... the goal is to do what we fear.

If we give fear too much attention it becomes the most important thing in our life, so we simply have to do what we fear so we do not fear it anymore.

Frightened of doing something? Good, now you have identified it, go full force toward it in order to break its hold on you.

Live your "unlived life"

We seem to have two lives. The one we live and the one we want to live.

The discrepancy between the two is more powerful than we can imagine.

Afraid to show your portfolio? Afraid to ask for the gig? Afraid to put yourself in a position to be told "no"?

If we want to live the life we want to live, we gotta move that crap out of the way and just do it.

After a few times, it becomes so much easier to do again and again.

Our fears are usually made up from our resistance channel.

Act professional, not amateurish

Even if you are not what you consider a professional yet, you simply become one by "being" professional.

Return phone calls. Send emails. Market yourself. Show your work. Be confident. Find inspiration and let it lead you.

Be open and good to your friends, staff, and family... this is another way to show confidence. Confident people are rarely rude or condescending.

You are a unique property

Know that you have something to say that is uniquely and unapologetically yours.

When you discover a possible client, you must absolutely BELIEVE that you are the right creative for them.

You don't need them as much as they need YOU.

Holding your talent back is a terrible thing to do to the art world and society in general because YOU, baby, YOU got stuff to say.

The only constant is change... and change we can.

The cool thing about being a human is we can change where we are and what we do.

Slugs can't do that.

A toad is born a toad and dies a toad.

Humans have the ability to change and alter their environment, their relationships, and most importantly their knowledge base.

The more you know the more powerful you become. The more powerful you become, the less resistance can get its hooks into you and hold you back.

Doing anything that is hard or challenging creates more resistance. Understanding that everything we want to do, everything we try to do, everything that is of any benefit at all will produce resistance.

The harder that thing is to accomplish, the more resistance will be created in order to keep us from doing it.

Fear, uncertainty, low self esteem, low confidence, and a dozen other things are just us letting resistance take control.

WE are the ones who give it the power it has over us. And that makes it so difficult to contend with, but also very easy to simply identify and step around it.

Once we see the resistance for what it is, we can figure out how to go around it.

Think of a wall in the mist... we approach it and are stopped because of the massive scale of it all. We cannot see how wide it is, nor how tall it is because there is a deep fog all around us. Then we clear the fog... and find that there are several doors that were just out of sight, and the wall is only 40 feet wide with a nice gentle path around it.

Identify and destroy those resistance walls at every opportunity.

Avoid procrastination and understand how to avoid burnouts
What is more tiring than procrastination?

Worrying about something, thinking and being afraid of it, dwelling on the negative for hours, days, weeks on end is stressful.

And time consuming.

And it will wear you down.

Think of the person who never showed their book for a year because they found a dozen reasons (resistance BS reasons) to not do it. They weren't ready. Their book needed more work. They couldn't find who to show it to. They had a headache... whatever.

And then one day they beat the resistance and call a potential client who then gushes over their work, and promises something coming up soon will be theirs.

Suddenly the resistance seems less problematic. Oh, it's still there, but it is getting smaller and smaller and the power it has over us simply drains as we show our work again and again.

And again.

What we learned.

We create the resistance we must defeat in order to move forward. It is OUR job to create abundance instead of scarcity, and let our incredible art out into the world so it can be seen, shared, and hopefully bring a little brightness.

Fear of the unknown is wasted fear.

Be afraid of that which is real, and a threat. But to be afraid of something we simply made up is incredibly self defeating.

And self defeat is the goal of resistance.

Purchase Steven Pressfield's "The War of Art" at Amazon.
<https://amzn.to/3VE9KjI>

This Is The Best Time EVER to Be a Photographer

Why All the Long Faces?

- Professional level cameras are selling for less than what we paid for one in 1980. And buying a 6 year old used camera is a great way to go as well.
- Lower priced lenses are so much better than they used to be that it is astounding.
- You can do all your development in the light, in a chair, without breathing life threatening chemistry.
- There are more possible ways to show your finished work than you can list at any given time.
- A \$1400 laptop takes the place of a 12x12 darkroom and thousands of dollars of gear.
- Need an answer to a question, hit Google and it is there for you.
- Ditto for YouTube.
- Ditto twice for ChatGPT.
- Need an answer on location, hit FB and your friends can help you from all over the world.
- Most still cameras have better video capabilities than stand alone video cameras costing thousands of dollars only a few years ago.
- In fact, cameras in phones are far better than many professional level still and video cameras from only a few years ago.
- Gear is faster, lighter, more compact than it has ever been.
- Lighting has made such great strides that you can set up a multi-light studio for under \$1000... the cost of a pack and head only a few years ago.
- If you never had to haul around a Honda Generator in the back of a pickup, you may not realize how incredible it is to have lights with built in batteries.
- Builtin WiFi lets us transfer images across the room or across the world. In an instant.
- We no longer have to carry 3 different bags of film (100 ISO, 400 ISO, 800 ISO) and hope to hell that covered what we needed.
- Speaking of ISO, some cameras are shooting great images at 24,000 ISO.
- In fact, high ISO excellence is now expected in even entry level cameras.
- Automatic settings are so good they can make sure your images work in even the strangest conditions.
- Instead of being limited by how much film you could carry, a few stamp sized cards will hold more images than you can shoot in a day.
- The technical learning curve has been shortened from

years to months.

- Where it used to cost us \$20 for 36 images, they now can be captured on re-usable devices costing less than \$20.
- Want to share that image with someone special, push a button.
- Instead of FedEx'ing our work all over the country, we can now share a link on an email all over the world.
- We don't have to spend \$1000 - \$1800 on a portfolio anymore, just stick them up on a website we can get for less than \$12 a month.
- Want to publish a book, publish a book - no need to argue with a publisher.
- More people than ever before can see the work we do.

And yet to read the blogs and social media, the woe-is-me club is bigger than ever.

We are worried about competition from GWC's or MWC's. Craigslist shooters are hated.

We go apoplectic about free stock photos.

There are doom and gloom stories about this or that being the end of photography 'as we know it'.

And they are everywhere.

If you want a reason to not be a professional creative, they are out there in droves. Every where you look.

I listened to a photographer tell me how there was no work in their town and it was impossible to get anyone to look at their book. When I asked how long they had been working at it, they said "two months".

A photographer who had been very successful was bemoaning that two years ago he made \$4M, but this year will be lucky to clear \$3M.

Photographers who were not ready to be photographers shut their doors and tell the world that failure was inevitable, they proved it. Nobody can be a professional creative anymore.

Nope. Sorry. Wrong.

Becoming a full time creative has never been simpler or more empowering, although it is still not an easy path.

Learning to shoot used to take years but now takes far less time. But that time must be spent in deliberate practice.

Deliberate Practice.

That is the part that is too often left off when people are discussing the "ten thousand hour rule" mentioned by Malcolm Gladwell.

It states: "It takes 10,000 hours of practice to become world class level."

Missing part: "As long as the practice is deliberate, consistent, and correct."

If you practice 10,000 hours doing it wrong, then you will do it wrong... with world class panache.

If you want to be a full time creative these days, there are many ways to do it. Forget looking to the past for ALL the answers. Some answers haven't even been thought of yet. But when they are you want to be in the thick of it instead of standing on the sidelines waiting for that perfect moment to step in.

There is no perfect time.

There is no terrible time.

There is only this time.

One timeline for each of us.

It has a beginning and it has an end.

For all of us.

Our focus should be on what we do with the middle.

That is OUR time.

And we have no guarantee on the duration.

There has never ever been a better time to be a photographer, designer, writer, creative of any kind than today.

Right now.

In this time.

Stop focusing on what could go wrong and focus on what could go right.

Because it can always go right.

THE VALUE OF TREATMENTS

TREATMENTS (also known as “looks”, mood boards, and other regional terms, are becoming a way for photographers to set themselves apart from the competition.

Recently one of my photographers was told that Treatments were now a necessary and important way to get in front of other photographers by making the treatment something more than a simple collection of photos.

Of course we are not doing treatments for \$50 drop and pops, these documents are more for the larger jobs and the ones that need a particular way of shooting – usually brand oriented – in order to get the visual message across to the viewer.

Some photographers and those in the business call them mood boards, but for me a mood board is a term I use for graphic design or web creation. Treatments are more focused on how the imagery will be presented, and show what ways your style can elevate the brand message of the client.

Let's look at a couple of different ways treatments can be created and what we should look for in developing a template. Templates speed the process, and help us develop a quicker and more expedient workflow.

Article Excerpts:

“When the creative [concept] speaks to the photographer it shows in the treatment. Ideally the photographer is brought to the table because they will bring out the best in the creative. I don't think visuals make or break a treatment if the portfolio is referenced, but a thoughtful explanation as to how the photographer plans to approach the job is key. LIGHT and how one plans to use it is always important in my opinion. Any tonal cues or hints are usually the added spices that bring out a treatment, and any references to any iconic visuals helps. They don't need to be famous visuals, but just arresting enough to have made an impression that you can use them as an example and its easily understood. Communicating through the portfolio [which is why they were chosen] and the translation of what they can bring to the creative makes the most successful treatment.”

– Anya Mills, Senior Art Producer, The Martin Agency

“The big question is: Why should the agency/client choose your photographer over someone else? It's important that the treatment communicates and describes with words and relevant photo examples, his/her vision and approach to the shoot; this document will be compared to

other treatments received and shared with many people all weighing in. It doesn't have to be pages and pages long. A paragraph or two of the approach, a few relevant image samples and why the agency should choose him/her.”

– Julie Rosenoff, Manager of Art Buying, Havas Worldwide

NOTES FROM A REPS JOURNAL

What should be included in a Treatment:

<https://notesfromarepsjournal.com/2014/12/02/the-inside-scoop-on-treatments-10-art-producers-offer-share-their-opinions/>

Personally I think a good treatment is a way to develop some rapport with your client, establish your credibility, and give them a preview of the way you work.

I think there are several ways to go, and getting a good template may be one of the first things you can think about. These are from Creative Market, and there are many others that can be considered as well.

THE COVER:

It should contain your logo and branding as well as the project name, appropriate dates, job number, and agency name/contact(s).

INTRODUCTION PAGE:

Let them know how excited you are to work with them. Describe the project as you see it, and explain any particulars you see that could affect the pricing or production of the job. Explaining what you may need to do the gig the best way, and getting it up front is a very professional way to do present your work.

SAMPLE IMAGES

If this treatment is being submitted for a gig you have gotten, and you are working with the specifics of the gig, this is where the sample images go. How many would be up to you and the client, but I would expect 4 – 10 images based on the complexity and number of images the gig entails.

BID/FEES

This is where you do your estimate for the gig. Making sure all the numbers are clear, and all needed items noted. (Remember how important it is to catch everything, not forget something important, and line-item every single thing you may need.)

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

What they get for how much they pay, when they get what they want, and when they pay you... in a nutshell.

BEFORE YOU BID ON A PROFESSIONAL GIG, DO THIS FIRST

Preparing to Prepare a bid.

YOU ARE GOING TO BE ASKED FOR A BID...
HERE IS HOW WE DO IT SO WE GET THE GIG...

Bidding a job requires more than knowing just YOUR numbers, you have to look at it from the observations of those doing the request.

Many of the people asking for bid requests are not in the same game as we are and our customs and normalcies. They are steeped in their own customs and normalcies.

One of the trends we are seeing out there is a reluctance on the part of brands and direct clients to pay for travel.

"Why should we pay travel? Hire local."

Now if your style is what the brand wants, and it is a very distinct style, you probably will still be able to add the travel.

Ask your connection where you are bidding what they think about your travel expenses. Remember: they wanted you so they will be your advocate on getting the bid.

Always remember to line item every single thing you do with a contingency price that is at the highest possible rate instead of the lowest possible. If something goes awry, you want to be covered by any contingency.

Creating a bid with many line items also helps you explain the possible complexity of the job. Do you need a scissor lift, or a wardrobe stylist? Put it in the bid. This will make them think differently about the job if they hadn't fully formed it in their minds.

AIRLINE TRAVEL

Getting tickets far in advance is far cheaper than getting them for tomorrow.

If you are going to wrap your expenses into the creative fee, make sure you wrap in the worst-case scenario airline ticket prices. And you can use the arbitrage between the less pricey, two weeks out price and your worst-case high price to help with negotiating the price... just trade dollars for time.

"Yes, I think we can cut some money from the budget here... and here, and be good."

(Never from the fee. Never).

"But I will have to book the shoot 15 days from now."

Thus allowing you to purchase the lower-priced tickets and put those savings into reimbursing the line items you cut.

But in order to do that you must have the numbers NOW for everything you think you will need. And that is for local as well as travel work.

You should have a good idea of what your hourly/day/project rate is whichever applies to your work, and what figure you would be willing to accept to be happy.

While I rarely bid on hourly gigs, my hourly rate is \$350. I would be happy with \$300 on a two-hour minimum job.

No less.

(BTW, I really like project and per-shot pricing but that is not always possible.)

So do you have a price list for all of the things and people you may need to put together a bid?

Rental Studio: having two or three known to you is best so you will not have too much trouble getting one. Make sure you have a natural light, small product, and large product studio available, and KNOW the rates so you do not have to spend time on the phone doing what you should be doing now.

You should have a good idea about how much these service providers charge, and their websites, emails, and phone numbers.

- Studio Rentals.
- MUA.
- Hair.
- Stylist.
- Food stylist.
- Prop stylist.
- Prop acquisition.
- Model Agencies.
- Talent agencies.
- Wardrobe stylists.
- Assistants.
- Video.

- Digitech.
- Producers.
- Transportation (local)
- Rental house for lighting.
- Rental house for construction.

It is so important to have these contacts and their numbers for when you sit down with a bid for the first pass and have to start plugging in numbers.

Waiting until you need them creates unnecessary friction and lots of pain.

FINDING OUT WHO SHOOTS WHAT

Spending time with google looking for other photographers so you can see who is shooting what, where they are shooting it, and who they are shooting for (agencies, in-house, designers, marcomm...). Knowing which agency is handling what account is one of those things that can help you determine your bid.

Call photographers in your area, and in the surrounding areas you may want to work in and ask them about rates.

Let them know you are wanting to make sure you are not undercutting or selling the work at a price that doesn't make sense to that area. They will appreciate it and it will give you some great insight into the pricing and types of work being done.

(They can also be assholes and not want to help you... so sorry, it just seems to come with the territory. Move on to someone else who can be helpful. And remember to not be one of the assholes when someone comes to you with questions.)

This is neither "easy" nor is it without a few numbskulls who are scared you are going to compete with them. But it is necessary, so keep at it until you have had a couple of yeses and have the info in hand.

You may also want to join ASMP or APA or the Chamber of Commerce to get an understanding of the ways of your business in the surrounding area. Both of these groups can be very good in finding out more about the local scene.

There are many ways to get the info. Do not stop or give up until you have found what you need.

NEVER START OUT COMPETING ON PRICE

You are a professional. Your value is in what you deliver, not in how long you have been delivering it.

Thinking that because you are new you should charge a lot less is wrong-thinking. The value of the image is in the image itself, and its value to the customer. So it matters not whether you have been in business for 6 weeks or 6 years, if the image is good enough for them to use, it is good enough for them to pay what it is worth.

Period.

Competing on price is a fool's folly.

If you compete on price, you are self-employed in an industry that has absolutely no guidelines on pricing and you are driving your own prices into the toilet.

That is not even rational, not to mention a very bad way to start your business.

Do This:

Schedule downtime to call vendors and get pricing and the ranges of the ancillary people you will NEED to put a decent quote together for a medium or large job. Get to know the local modeling agencies so they are aware of you BEFORE you hit them up with a rush job.

Know who the Digitechs, MUAs, assistants, wardrobe stylists, food stylists, and everyone you may need are, and make an introduction. Know the approximate rate for a rental studio big enough to shoot a group of 12 insurance agents.

This knowledge is your lifeblood for preparing an estimate or bid for a client who is standing before you.

Being able to do that easily makes it all go easier.

Then reward your professionalism with tacos.



Preparing A Bid

Everything but the numbers.

PREPARING A BID: EVERYTHING BUT
THE NUMBERS

Now we have our numbers so it is important to find our words.

Here we go.

Most bids start with either a phone call or an email. Some are detailed and some are – ethereal – at best.

Ethereal are difficult because we simply do not have enough information to make a rational bid based on the reality of the gig.

Example:

*"Hi Don,
We came across your website and really liked what we saw. We are a small manufacturing company in Tempe and are looking for some product photography for our website and possibly to use in a catalog. We are not sure about the catalog, but are quite sure about the website. We have been using our own cameras here but realize we need a professional's touch to make the product images more effective.*

*We would like to hire you for a day to make photographs that we can use on the website soon.
Can we get an estimate for a day of photography at our plant in Tempe?
Thanks,
E..... A...."*

(Actual bid request)

Cool.

I have no idea what their products are, how many photos they expect, when they are talking about doing it... in fact, other than they realize they need better images, I have little to NO information to use for making the bid.

I must now have at least three more interactions with them before I can reasonably make them a bid that makes sense.

Let them know I have a lot of questions that need to be answered.

Have the meeting where questions get answered. (Phone or in person)

The third time I contact them will be with the bid, estimate, or proposal regarding the gig.

Four contacts for a simple project quote.

Lots to break out here.

When this sort of thing happens I would really like to be where they are when discussing the questions we need answers to. Better to show me what a thingamabob is than try to describe it over the phone. Better to get a lay of the facility and what I may need to do the gig if I actually get to see it. And nice to put faces and names together for a longer relationship.

Questions I must have answered:

1. What are the products, and how big are they?
2. How many photographs do they need of the items?
3. Do they want multiple photographs (angles) of any products?
4. What kind of background (surface) do they think they want?
5. Will there be any cutouts needed?

6. What the images will be used for?
7. How long is the life-span of the image (how long before the product is updated and needs a new photo)*
8. Will someone be there to coordinate the access to the items?
9. Who from the company will be in charge of approving the images that are created?
10. Do they have any examples of similar product shots they like?
11. Is the shooting space heated (cooled)?

Nice to know if you are thinking about rights usage. If they are going to need images every year or less, why muddy the water with a discussion of something that may not be pertinent?

Once these questions are answered I may be able to begin the bid.

Now, let's take that bid request from the same client, but do it in a way that is more information rich to help me get to my numbers.

Hi Don,

We saw your website and would like to hire you to make some shots of our products.

We are a small manufacturing company in Tempe specializing in bladders and gaskets that are fireproof and bulletproof. Our main customer is the US Military, but we have corporate clients as well.

Honestly, Don, we are having a devil of a time photographing the stuff we make with our own cameras and need a pro's touch.

Here is what we need:

1. *Two shots of our large bladder assembly for Blackhawk Helicopters 4' x 6' x 2'. This is a black rubber ribbed container that is sort of semi-gloss*
2. *Two shots of the assembly connectors (rubber, stainless, and copper) approximately 12" square by 3" deep*
3. *Two shots of the mounting assembly on each bladder (total of four shots) – detailed shots about 10" square.*

effective.

*We would like to hire you for a day to make photographs that we can use on the website soon.
Can we get an estimate for a day of photography at our plant in Tempe?
Thanks,
E..... A...."*

(Actual bid request)

Cool.

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2. *Two shots of the assembly connectors (rubber, stainless, and copper) approximately 12" square by 3" deep*
3. *Two shots of the mounting assembly on each bladder*

(total of four shots) – detailed shots about 10” square.

4. *One shot of a bladder on a storage rack. (Rack is part of the unit and is on site where the photography can take place.*

The images should be shot on white paper and we do not want them to appear to be cut out or floating, but it is important to show the detail of the product.

We have a part of the plant here that we use for photography and it is plenty big enough to shoot the items.

We need to use the shots in our website, training manuals, and possibly a catalog so they will have to be print quality as well as web quality.

We are hoping to keep our photo inventory up-to-date and we make modifications to the products on a constant basis. We will probably need to update these images 9 – 12 months out.

Attached are a few images to show you what we are looking for.

I look forward to your response,

*Thanks,
E..... A.....”*

So much more can be done before the initial phone call with the client.

I am still not going to email him a bid, but I am putting together some pretty close numbers so a quick phone call to firm up the gig is all that I need to do now. The remaining questions regarding what day the shoot is going to be and other small things can be added on that call and I can then email him an estimate in a few minutes following.

QUESTIONS ARE THE LIFE BLOOD OF THE SUCCESSFUL BID

Without knowing all there is to know about the facility, the product, its size and how many images they need, you don't even know what kind of gear to take.

Whenever a bid comes in – especially from a non ad agency type of client, it will most likely be full of holes you need to

fix. The people hiring for their mom-n-pop businesses (even Helicopter bladders) are not experienced in all of the structure of photography so they wouldn't think of it in the same way we do. You must help them fill in the blanks.

Getting the answers to the questions you need answered makes the bid process easier for both you and the client.

And another thing happens when you approach the questions with clarity, and a sense of purpose... they see how professional you are and realize that it isn't just showing up and snapping a couple of shots.

HOW TO RESPOND TO A BLIND BID REQUEST

First, never... NEVER respond with a bid.

No matter how thorough their bid request was, you must have a conversation first. There are always questions to be answered.

I do something like this:

Hi Eric,

Thanks for the bid request for shooting the helicopter bladders.

This is exactly the challenge I love when making photographs, and I look forward to making some outstanding images of your product.

I have a few questions to ask before I send over a bid, so could we discuss them by phone. Once I have those answers plugged in, I can send the bid over immediately.

Thanks again for the opportunity to work with you and your company.

Sincerely,

Don

Some of the questions I am going to ask is how they want the files.

- Do they want me to do the retouching on them, or do they have an art department that will do it?

- What level of retouching do they want me to do?
- Do they want JPG, TIF, RAW?
- Are Net 30 terms agreeable?
- Can I get a deposit for 50% (although I usually do not get deposits for gigs under \$2000 unless I have expenses that need to be paid at the shoot. I also stopped doing Net 30 for billing under \$1500. If it is only \$1500, no deposit, paid on shoot.)

Can you think of any questions you may need to add to your list?

Do that now, don't wait until you need to respond to a bid to start to try to think of all the questions you may have to have answered.

Now you can take your bid request template (Proposal), fill it in with the numbers, TOC's, fees, and shoot descriptions and send it on its way.

SWEET!!! (Time for celebratory Tacos.)

THE BAR HAS BEEN RAISED

The expression "raising the bar" means a lot of different things to different people.

But we all know what the basic meaning alludes to.

"Raising the bar" refers to a sport where athletes jump over a suspended bar without touching it and knocking it down.

Each time they do it successfully, the bar gets raised and the other competitors must match or exceed their efforts.

In photography, the bar gets raised by a lot of different influences.

- New cameras raise the bar for technical excellence.
- Photographers raise the bar for visual excitement.
- The industry raises the bar for entry into the top 10%.
- The bar is raised in nearly every endeavor these days.
- From making music to driving a truck.

Mediocrity doesn't climb with the bar, it gets stagnant and fails.

What was top of the heap 20 years ago may only be mediocre and blah today.



But most of these influences are from outside of us. External forces.

That guy did this to raise the bar. She did that to raise the bar. What about our own bar? Are we not able to raise our own standards?

Of course we are.

But resistance gets in the way and our negative mind tapes play incessantly. At eleven.

"That's too different".
"I don't know how."
"It's good enough."
"Don't rock the boat".
"If it ain't broke..."
"I'm too old."
"I don't know how."
"Those people are special."

These are the mantras of that drown out the sound of the welding.

The welding of the bar to the pole so it cannot be raised.

We fear no more because we have eliminated the cause of that dread...

The fear of the bar being raised and our failure to clear it.

But see - that's the thing.

We worry about not making it.

In High-jump the pit the athletes jump into is filled with sand.

And there are soft barriers all around the apparatus for those who fail to clear it.

In other words, you are most assuredly EXPECTED to miss the bar while trying to jump over a higher placement.

EXPECTED to.

And everyone does. Everyone.

They take a run at the new height, and they jump like they are used to - and knock it down.

Then they correct a bit... move this way, try this approach, fail a bunch of times while figuring it out.

Then - BOOM - they fly right over it.

They have reset their standards.

Reset their goals.

Reset their output.

And the bar gets moved up a notch.

And for the best of us, it is a constantly repeating challenge.

But one that we not only MUST endure, we must be obsessed by the desire to clear it.

This drive to get better has to infuse every part of your being.

Better at business.
Better at shooting.
Better at marketing.
Better at media.
Better at engagement.
Better at networking.

Better at... being better.

And these changes are not radical.

The bar doesn't move 10 feet at a time.

It moves a fraction of an inch.

Change is incremental.

Small changes end up being big changes over time.

If you dedicated yourself to becoming 1% better at anything you do each day, in a year you will be 37% better. The beauty of compound interest, amigos.

And that 37% can be an amazing amount of change in your work, clients, billing, and bottom line.

Don't push for wholesale change right off the bat - raising the bar so far no one can clear it is simply self-sabotage.

Raise it a tiny fraction each day.

Month by month the changes start to show.

You are clearing the bar you set.

Awesome.

"Clank"... That was you... setting the bar a bit higher.

Now get after it.



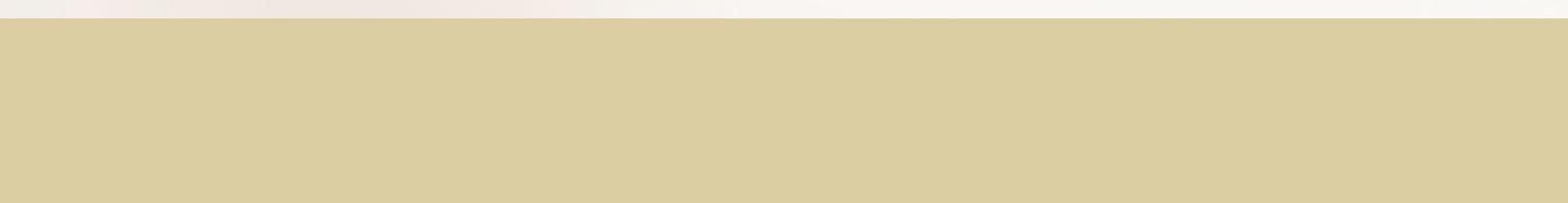
Let's Build a Hit List

OK, no... not that kind of hit list.

Did you know if you tried to get 1% better every day you wouldn't be 365% better in a year, you would be nearly 3400% better. That is because each time you get better, it compounds to a higher number.

Like interest.

So what we are going to do is create a few lists to see where we can improve.





LIST NUMBER ONE:

List the 5 things that scare you most about being a freelancer and self employed? Most scary in the first position.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

So at this point, number one is the biggest, baddest thing that scares you.

OK.

Reasons for this fear:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Now you have expressed them. On paper.

And this is where we get going.

Now take that first fear and look at it closely.

It is the only fear that you need to be looking at.
And you should be looking at it through the lens of the reasons

of the fear.

And this is the thing... is the fear rational? Or is it emotional?

For instance, if your number one fear is "I do not have the confidence I need", then we should look at the reasons you gave and find out if the item is objective and rational, or subjective and emotional.

I will tell you now that usually the reasons you gave are emotional reasons.

QUESTION: WHY ARE YOU NOT SHOWING YOUR PORTFOLIO

Rational reasons are easy to understand, and easy to measure, and can be quantified.

"I get nervous when I have to talk to people I do not know."

Rational. Quantifiable. We can work with this and find ways to lower the nervous tension, prepare for the meeting better, or work on methods to alleviate the stress. Understanding that this is a real thing, and has real solutions makes it a far more powerful statement and it has roots in the real world.

"I'm just not ready."

Emotional, immeasurable, and totally resistant to be quantified.

- What does "ready" mean?
- Who told you?
- How many opinions did you get?
- Ready for who?
- Are there any access points you are ready for?

What we find is that YOU feel you are not ready because you just feel it to be true.

That is not solvable until you decide you can deal with that issue and make it go away.

A little at a time.

Own your work. Show it to people who matter. Know that you are growing.

Then we can move ahead to real solutions to how to make sure you are ready.

Questions such as:

- What does ready look like to you?
- Describe yourself as someone who is ready.
- What is missing that makes you feel that you are not

ready?

- How can we create systems to make sure you are ready?
- Who else can we talk with that can help determine your readiness?

I hope you can see the difference.

Every roadblock is real. Whether it is a rational one or an emotional one, they both damn up the forward motion and we sit in the doldrums behind them waiting for salvation.

With rational fears, salvation is in the power of choice and how we decide to get around the damn.

With emotional fear, salvation may never come because everything it does, we throw more and more bullshit at them and twist and twist the narrative to prove we are not ready, and we just know it.

Notes:

THE MOST COMMONLY DISCUSSED FEAR;; THE FEAR OF FAILURE

And it is one terrible monster to carry around.

It is most insidious because it doesn't wait for the big moments, it is constantly chipping away at your self-esteem, self-view, and confidence no matter how small the task at hand is.

The fear of failure knows that if you have any gains, it will be challenged and may have to concede some ground.

Resistance never wants to concede anything, and will fight tooth and nail to keep grabbing more of your confidence.

So we have to focus on outwitting our selves.

That sounds like fun, eh?

Here is an article that dives into FoF fairly deep, but these two are the most important for us to remember.

Stop Doubting

Negativity is part of what turns fear into a destructive behavior or attitude. Instead of letting irrational fears turn your perspective into a defeatist attitude, you should turn these feelings around and use them positively.

Affirmations will help you cope with irrational fear because you can affirm that you are in control of your life and your feelings. Whether the fear is physical or existential, you can recognize that you deserve happiness rather than fear.

Instead of picturing another "worst case scenario" in your head, choose a positive picture instead. Meditate on that picture until the negative picture disappears. After all, the best way to achieve a positive outcome is to fixate on the positive rather than the negative.

The image that you place the most importance on will be the one that becomes a part of your thought process. You do not want that image to be a negative one.

Understanding the Different Sides of Loss

Fear is often associated with loss. Whether it is loss of life or loss of face, this loss is often at the heart of your irrational fear. This is primarily because loss is, by definition, a negative thing.

Most people worry about what they stand to lose should their fears be realized. They do not think about what they stand to gain instead.

Instead, think about the opportunities that you are missing out on by being afraid. Rather than thinking about what you will

lose if it goes wrong, consider what you will lose if everything goes well. Fear helps keep you safe. Being too safe means missing out on amazing opportunities from feeling truly alive to living out basic parts of your life.

Fear of failure will keep you sad and depressed.

Failure is simply the other part of success and without both parts neither are important.

Let's say you show your book to 10 art directors and get 10 rejections.

You can say, well, I've failed.

But I can remind you that you DID it. (Win)

You learned something about the process that you did not know before. (Win)

You now know 10 possible clients that you can go back to later. (Win)

You hopefully gleaned a little information on what you can do to make your work more appealing to them. (Win)

You hopefully got ten referrals (always ask for a referral) to clients that you can use the AD as a reference. (Win)

And statistically you are closer to getting a yes than you have ever been. (Win)

By all manner of accounting that exercise was a resounding win.

One of the things I keep harping on is changing the goals from an event to a system.

Being successful when you have no control over the outcome is quite precarious.

Having total control of the process puts you in position to receive the success, and that is what we should focus on.

Do it without expectation.

Expect to be surprised.

Never make the mistake of thinking that one event defines your work.

Being successful is very hard to describe, but working a system based in measurable bits is not.

OUR SECOND HIT LIST...

And right again, not that kind of hit list.

This is going to take you a bit of time so I am putting it up a bit early.

You need a list of 25 (twenty-five) possible clients that you are going to be getting in touch with starting mid January.

We need a list of 250 by end of the the class, but for now we are starting with list number one.

A 'starter list', if you like.

(If you already have a list, that is great. I do not want to change it at all – you keep doing what you are doing. But for this exercise we are going to take a real deep look at how a good list can be more than a name and an address.)

Here is one I have laid out based on what I do



BUSINESS NAME _____

CONTACT NAME _____ PHONE _____ EMAIL _____

WEBSITE _____

TYPE OF BUSINESS _____

FIRST CONTACT REVIEW

SECOND CONTACT REVIEW

THIRD CONTACT REVIEW

REFERRED TO: _____

MISCELLANEOUS

BUSINESS NAME _____

CONTACT NAME _____ PHONE _____ EMAIL _____

WEBSITE _____

TYPE OF BUSINESS _____

FIRST CONTACT REVIEW

SECOND CONTACT REVIEW

THIRD CONTACT REVIEW

REFERRED TO: _____

MISCELLANEOUS

BUSINESS NAME _____

CONTACT NAME _____ PHONE _____ EMAIL _____

WEBSITE _____

TYPE OF BUSINESS _____

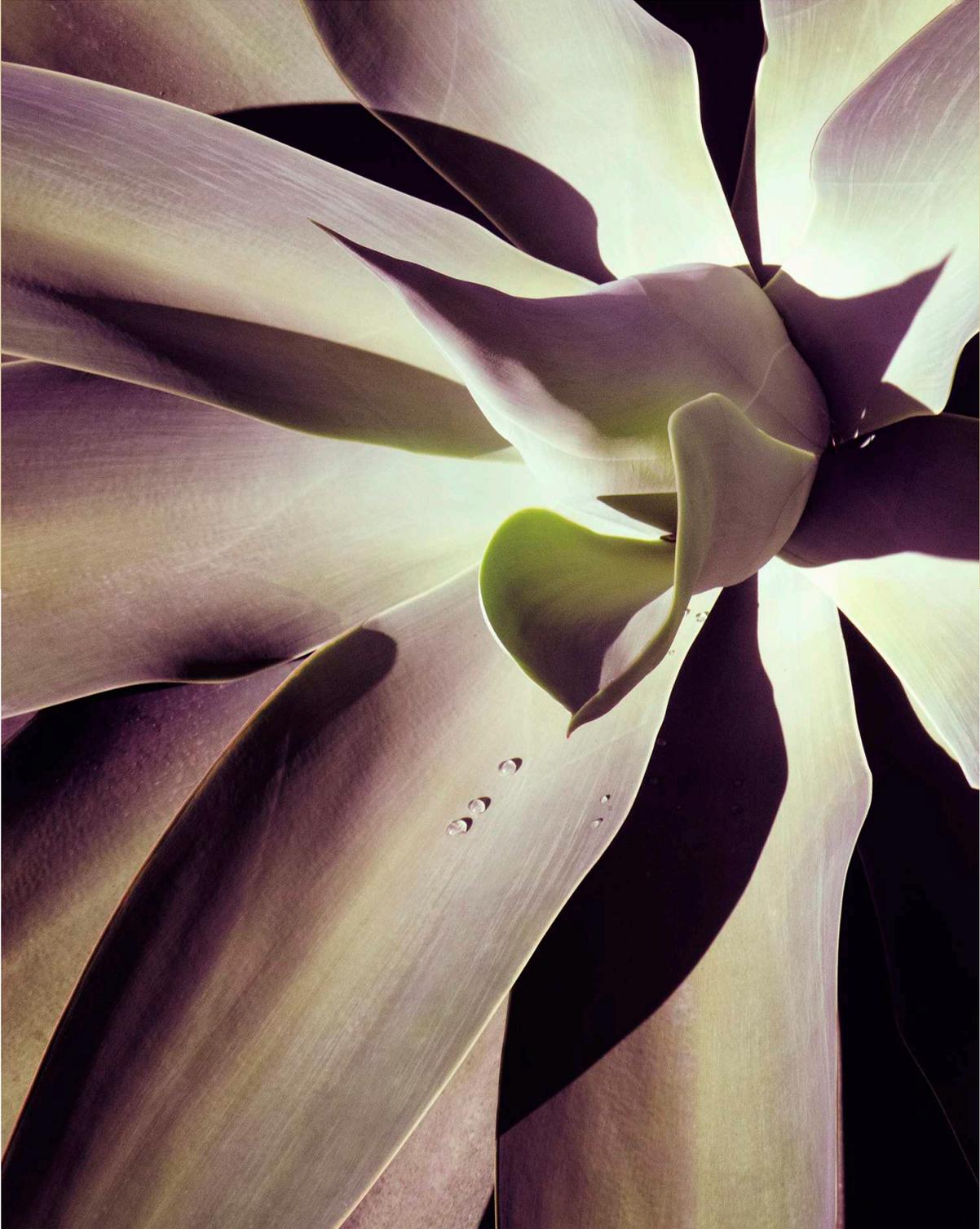
FIRST CONTACT REVIEW

SECOND CONTACT REVIEW

THIRD CONTACT REVIEW

REFERRED TO: _____

MISCELLANEOUS



How To Find Your Clients

The method is simple, but it may not be easy

This works for boutiques, small manufacturing, and some graphic designers (small ones).

Simply stop by and deliver a drop-off piece. This can be a leave-behind, or whatever you are using for a promo.

- Do not ask to see anyone.
- Acknowledge you do not have an appointment, but were in the area and always wanted to see their office.
- Pay close attention to the work on the walls (this is research as well).
- Ask if you can send the art director an email with some of your work.
- Take no more than 1-2 minutes total.
- Have your portfolio in the car so if there IS an opportunity, you are ready
- .
- Make notes as soon as you leave so you do not forget anything.

You will be surprised by how many times they will see you right then... as long as you are not obnoxious or demanding.

Keep us all apprised of what you are doing.

SOMETHING ELSE

Find a list of businesses and start cold calling.

You can find them in local magazines (think top ten lists) and business journals.

This can be tedious, so I recommend you do it in short doses once or twice a day for 30 minutes.

And as bad as it is at first, it gets so much easier as you go along and get more experience and more confidence.

This is rubber meets the road stuff, folks.

We need to get some revenue coming in.

And always, if you have any questions about a certain client or how to get past some extra-careful gatekeeper, let us know and we can brainstorm.

DO YOUR RESEARCH

You should know if the clients you are visiting are those who use photography if possible. Google is your friend. You will find a lot of information when you Google the business – even from the parking lot.

If they are not right for you (you shoot food and table top and they do lifestyle stories of the rich and famous) then drop off the piece, mark them in your “B” list and move on.

LET'S CREATE A SYSTEM FOR FINDING CLIENTS

CHOOSING GENRES THAT SUPPORT EACH OTHER

For instance: Food, Lifestyle, Still Life.

Makes more sense than Food, Watercraft, Architecture.

Right?

Some genres naturally go together.

Food, Still Life, Product makes more sense than Fashion, Food, Sports. (Although one famous photographer turned sports and fashion together into a solid career.

WHAT MAKES THIS PHOTO GREAT VIDEO:
KURT MARKUS

Finding areas that support each other also helps simplify in other areas. Food, Lifestyle, Portrait all take about the same sort of gear allocations, where Areal, Underwater, Fashion may require entirely different tool sets for each.

SPECIALTIES

Everyone has a specialty or two. Those genres they absolutely love to do. They are also usually the first button on the navigation. Having a specialty does not preclude having other areas of interest that the photographer may be very good at.

Just keep a close eye on how your genres tie into your portfolio, and into the geographical area you are living in.

Being a food shooter exclusive in a small town may be very difficult. Fashion in all but the largest cities is a challenge. Living in a big town without the ability to travel may preclude an adventure portfolio – although if there is a will, there is usually a way.

CHANNELS:

Who Uses Commercial Photography?

Brands.

Services.

Products.

Books.

Brochures.

Catalogs.

Social Media.

Charities

Government

Entrepreneurs

What is a Channel?

I consider a channel to be the overlying structure similar to

what we call genres in our portfolio.

Business is not a channel, but Camping Supplies is.

Camping supplies is a category of business that includes manufacturing, designing, importing, repairing, innovating, and sales of camping supplies. It is a wide category of business that has the constraint of “camping supplies” applied.

If we consider the channel to be camping supplies, we can see how our work can tie in to the various needs of this channel of business.

We can “focus” on the companies that make, promote, distribute, import, sell and repair camping supplies. We can identify some specific areas within this wide category by thinking of sub-channels. Camping tents and backpacks may be subchannels of the main channel “Camping Supplies”.

We will get to sub-channels in the next module. For this module, focus on the channels you need to identify.

THE UBIQUITOUS CHANNELS – FOR ALL PHOTOGRAPHERS

These are the easy to identify entries

We have identified the channels of usage for our work, but in many cases, we will have to go through one of these entities to get the assignments to shoot. So while you are building your portfolio out to make sure it is viable, chances are good that these are the people who will be hiring you to make your photographs.

Ad Agencies, Designers, PR firms, Photo Editors, and In-house MAR-COMS

Begin compiling a list of these folks in your region. You will need it when you begin to show your book.

WE NEED AT LEAST SIX CHANNELS TO MAKE A REALLY VIABLE BUSINESS

THE CHANNEL SYSTEM MADE SIMPLE

Quite simply, we are going to look for the types of businesses that use the kind of photography we create. We are going to look for, and identify them, at the highest level of category instead of the nitty-gritty subset.

We will then break down that channel into the subchannels that make sense.

Let's Discover a Few Channels

It is imperative that you understand who you work for...
... and who NEEDS the work you do.
Our example photographer:

Lives in a small Midwestern town.
Likes to shoot landscapes and environmental interiors.
Shoots basic FF 35 digital gear.
Natural Light preference.
No Studio.

CHANNELS:

Magazines (Always a channel for most of us)

From outdoor focused magazines to interior design magazines, our first channel is editorial. Shooting for the magazines gives a photographer tear sheets, cash flow and visibility. A good place to start.

Calendars

OK. Landscape calendars are popular. And some of them are lucrative for sure – but this is a very saturated market and depending on calendar sales is going to be difficult. Let's add it, but as a hopeful addition

Camping Gear Companies

Ahhh... so now it gets real. There are thousands of camping gear manufacturers from tents to pocket knives, backpacks to GPS tools. This is a MAJOR channel for a landscape photographer.

Travel Related Advertising

Places to go by plane or train or boat or canoe. Sometimes the location IS the draw for the ad. This can also be a lucrative channel for a landscape photographer

Lifestyle Products

Beautiful lake shot – add an older couple and we have an insurance, investment, pharmaceutical ad. Lovely waterfall – add a couple of teenagers and it is a destination for summer camp or an ad for flannel hiking shirts.

Adventure products

Canoes, skis, jet skis, gliders, parasails... get the drift? Lots of adventure products that all advertise. This is an easy add for a landscape photographer... just add people having fun.

Can you think of more?

OUR GOAL IS FOR SIX CHANNELS OR MORE.

Put your thinking cap on. Visit a bookstore magazine rack. What ads do you find there with landscape images being used to advertise a product or service?

Our Six Channels

MAGAZINES, CALENDARS, CAMPING GEAR, TRAVEL RELATED, LIFESTYLE AND ADVENTURE PRODUCTS

THERE IS A LOT OF POSSIBILITY IN THAT LIST

(CAUTION:

If you cannot find enough channels for your images, you are either too tightly focused on one subject matter, or your work cannot be used across different channels. (Exception: Fashion or purely editorial focused photographers.)

One thing I see a lot of in beginning photographers books: girls. Now, for sure there is nothing wrong with shooting women or glamour or whatever you want to call it. But there is essentially only one or two channels that it can expand into. That is not enough. A boudoir shooter must expand outside of the boudoir environment in order to become a viable commercial photographer. And the fine art nude photographer will find few, if any, possibilities for their work to be used commercially.

I am not telling you not to shoot those images, I am simply stating that the commercial uses are few and far between.)

Now, Let's Assess Our Viability

Location is always a consideration. Always. It is not a deathtrap though, and no matter where you live, you can find work to begin to build your business. If it is a very small town, you may have to look toward the closest big town, or start out thinking regionally. If it is any other medium to medium large city, you can begin locally and branch to regional.

Given the tools you have, do you feel comfortable in accepting assignments? This is a very tough area for a lot of photographers breaking in. First of all, gear envy is a particularly insidious disease that rots us from the inside out. If you have a modern DSLR, and a couple of good lenses, and can consistently produce the work that is in your portfolio, you can begin to build a business in commercial photography. If you need something special – rent. (And put a portion of your fees into an equipment fund... you will need it.)

Now that you have discovered a good set of channels for your work, are there any gaps in the portfolio? Going through this exercise helps you discover where gaps are in your book, and also helps you identify what to do about them. Shoot for them is the obvious answer. Got lots of lake shots, but none with canoes, boaters, fishermen, couples enjoying the lake? Yeah... there ya go.

You may have also discovered something else... and want to pursue that as well. We find out a lot about what we want to do when we actively go looking for it. That is a good thing.

Who are your customers?

List five of your current customers here:

List your Potential customers here:

Now list five of the clients you really REALLY want to work for:

Now look at the lists you have created and ask these questions:

Where are they?

Will their location be a problem?

Will you be able to market to them in a reasonable way? 4. Will you need any special help to get their work?

How will you market differently to each of them?

Would you market differently to each of them?

What are the basic, real world values that you can bring to your client's work?

To do a full analysis of the companies that you want to work with, these are the areas that you must be looking into and finding the answers will help you immensely as you begin marketing to them.

For each of the clients you are targeting for a full-on marketing blitz, answer these questions:

Who makes the buying decision? Do they have a particular buyer, or do individuals within the organization make the decisions on their own?

When and how are the decisions made?

How often do they need photographs? How often do they purchase or assign photography?

How much do they buy? What is the volume of the assigned photography?

How much are they willing to spend? What kinds of numbers are there for fees paid?

What factors influence the purchase decision?

What are the criteria that is used to buy the work? Can you find out what kind of criteria is used? The best thing this list can do for you is to create a situation where you are competing for work you can That is really a powerful tool for you.

Who is your direct competition?

You can be as generic or specific if you want. List the types of photographers that compete with you or be specific with names and addresses. This is a private list for your eyes only.

If you can, ask your clients who is also bidding on the work you are getting. And if you can, ask them what they like about you that keeps them coming back.

Differential Advantages

A differential advantage is something that sets you apart from others in your industry. It could be your style, or access to special equipment, or where you live.

What are your differential advantages when it comes to the perceived value of your work? How can you cultivate that and make it more visible?

What are the actual perceived values that your work shows?

Why do your clients work with you?

Not all of the findings will be positive, you know. We will find out that we lack something or cannot compete on something that our competitors easily beat us on. That is certainly okay and to be expected. No one is going to be the only one. And no one photographer will be the answer to every client's needs or desires.

What are Your Differential Disadvantages?

Similar to Differential Advantages, these are the perceived values of your work that may be seen as being a net negative. It could be your style, or location, or something that would give a particular client a negative box to tick in the hiring process.

Perceived disadvantages: Why may clients not want to work with you? Be honest here, and be thorough. Are there risks associated to working with you that you know of? Ask your clients what they think your negatives are.

How may you address these perceived disadvantages to mitigate or eliminate them in the minds of your clients?

Actual disadvantages:

What are some real, honest-to-goodness disadvantages to working with you?

Can you identify any clients that may not be using you because of these disadvantages?

What can you do to mitigate or eliminate these disadvantages and create a path to "yes" for your clients?

In what ways are you simply different in how you approach your work, client relationships, image presentation, and personality?

Does this help or hurt you in your competitive position? (Be honest!)

Now - imagine you are a fly on the wall listening to one of your best customers discussing using you with another art director or editor. This is a client that is very happy with your work and is satisfied with using you for more upcoming work.

What did they say?

What do you want them to say?

Listening to our customers discuss our work can be very enlightening, but nearly impossible to arrange. So you have to listen between the lines - between the bits of conversation that you have while picking up and delivering the job. Listen intently.

And simply ask. Seriously.

If you have done a few jobs with a client, take them to lunch, let them know how much you appreciate the work, and, if there is something you can do better to help them with their job, then listen. Listening is a most underrated marketing tool. Use it for advantage.

LOCATION IS KING

And it can be quite effective for photographers as well. Your location can say a great deal about your viability to do the work you want to do.

Shooting high-end still life may be much easier to do in New York City than Birmingham and nearly impossible in Peach Springs, Arizona (pop 345).

There are many other examples but I think you get the idea. Where you work can determine a lot of the choices you are going to have. Your location within the city or town may also play a contributing factor toward your viability to do the kind of work you want to do.

Let's say you live in a fairly good-sized city (Cincinnati or Austin) and want to shoot advertising. Can you imagine that having a studio near the downtown area where most of the ad agencies are located could work to your advantage? Now, for sure, it is not the most important determining factor for getting hired, but it couldn't hurt could it? And if you find a great space for a fantastic price in a neighborhood that most people wouldn't want to go in after dark, which may also play a factor in your getting work.

With all that being said, some photographers choose to work from a home office or a shared office space. Even some still life/table-top shooters I know in Phoenix have moved their operation to the living room or air-conditioned garage. This is for convenience for sure, but there may be issues with neighbors if the shoots start containing large contingents of account executives, stylists, and craft services (craft services are the caterers and assorted folks to bring breakfast/lunch and snacks).

Now consider the work of a location shooter or a travel pho-

tographer. There may be a significant advantage in living in areas that are not crawling with other photographers. You may be the only shooter in the middle of Nevada who can handle shooting a helicopter test run for a large company. Staying in touch with the magazines that hire photographers for location assignments becomes more important than the air-conditioned garage. So look around and ask yourself, "Where do I live?" I mean really examine it. Is it a large city with a lot of ad agencies? Google is your friend, so search for ad agencies in your city.

Are you in a small town that has a few industries and a handful of graphic designers? Is there a congregation of small towns within your driving range (50–75 miles) that can add to the pool? Are you in a rural area and looking for editorial work with travel involved?

Once you have this information, ask this: Does my location create any unique marketing and sales challenges/approaches/advantages to or for my work?

Sometimes we can use where we are to great advantage if it is unique. Modesto, California, is in the middle of the central valley and is close to many large cities and vacation areas. Omaha is in the middle of a big corn field in the heart of America's food basket. Charleston, South Carolina, has a huge historical record and is close to the heart of the south.

Where do you live?

What is unique about it?



**BEWARE
OF THE DOG**

What are the challenges it brings to your work and the style of work you want to do?

What advantages does it bring as well?

Is there a "season" to the work you do? In other words, is there a huge seasonal change in the place where you live?

Are there places or venues close by that can help you through any seasonal challenges you may have?

Is there anywhere close by that would be better suited for your "official" residence while marketing? For instance, let's say you live in Clear Forks, Idaho. No one has ever heard of Clear Forks, Idaho, and that may be a distraction for your marketing efforts. But Clear Forks, Idaho, is only 45 minutes from Boise. Would it be better to locate your "business" in Boise and work from your home to market your business? Everyone knows where Boise is, and there is no distraction and no explaining to do when marketing your work. Clear Forks may get snowed in and be tough-going a few months of the year, but Boise keeps on chuggin' and, with an airport, may be all you need.

These are just some things to think about when looking at how where you live can change the choices you have in front of you. I think a photographer in Clear Forks may have more luck shooting lifestyle and corporate, maybe some travel, than fashion or glamour. Don't you?

We need to complete our Market Analysis by looking at how we are going to implement the marketing messages we need to get in front of those clients we seek.

Where do the customers you want to work with find information on creative and photography that they may want to hire?

Ad agencies have source materials. From national and international directories, to websites and aggregators of work online, there are many companies and artists vying for their attention. How else do you think they find out about photographers?

How do you know? Ask them...seriously. Ask them. They will most likely tell you where they go to be inspired and to look for talent.

Then make sure you are there the next time they go looking.

How do the successful photographers in your area promote

and advertise themselves? Again, Google is your friend...use it. Dig and research where you find the other photographers showing their work.

This does not mean you have to market yourself like they do. Not at all, in fact. However, they have (hopefully) done some research to find the venues they have chosen, so an investigation into the viability of it working for you is definitely something worth doing.

Look at the top five competitors in your area or vicinity and find out what they are doing to market themselves. This will take some searching and maybe some social media searches/ as well, but it is a way of finding out what the competition "believes" works for them.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

This is raw data at this point, and what you do with it is up to you. Maybe you think that being where they are makes the most sense. Or possibly you believe that in order to stand out, you must zag while all others zig.

We have done a lot of research, worksheets, investigations, and soul-searching to get to this point: the point where we start to put it all together and get 'er done.

Gather up the materials you have been working on and write a four-paragraph description of what you do, who you do it for, why you do it better than the others, and what unique properties you bring to the work you do.

What you do.

Who you do it for.

Why you do it better.

What uniqueness do you bring to the work?

Take your time.

Work it until it is a concise four-paragraph "About Me" page. We can use it on your biography or website 'About Me' page or on social media profiles. This super-packed four-paragraph tome is perfect for so much.

But mostly it is a synthesis of all we have been discussing to this point. It will help remind you of what your strengths are and where you get your energy and why you stick it out week after week – doing the best work you have ever done.

What is your USP?

This is a quick explanation of a USP, a Unique Selling Proposition.

Your distinctive trait or attribute that sets you apart from your rivals is highlighted in a unique selling proposition (USP), a marketing tool that helps you to stand out from the crowd. A USP is essentially a claim that explains to clients what distinguishes you from competitors and why they should hire you.

Showing a particular area where you excel clearly and succinctly communicating that to clients is key to your brand. In fact it IS your brand. Your uniqueness should be a feature that appeals to clients and distinguishes from the general noise.

A compelling USP can help you build brand awareness and client loyalty. Customers are more likely to remember you both in your marketing and in working with you.

Make sure that the USP you create is genuine and in line with vision, values and objectives. Clients are smart, and they can tell when someone is lying to them or trying to trick them with empty promises.

Your USP is a marketing and brand idea that helps you stand out from the competition by emphasizing your vision, way of working, visual solutions, and the experience of working with you.

I suggest you search for articles on developing a strong USP and spend some time creating one.

You will be glad you did.

I was once in an interview situation for a very large account. I was new, and my book was fresh and a little different than most others in the area.

The senior art director was very kind looking through it, and then she closed it, looked up at me and asked;

"Why should I give you this job?"

My brain went blank, and my whole life flashed before me... how was I to answer this question.

My answer, unfortunately, was focused on my personal desire to shoot the job and how much it would mean to me. I was eloquent, thoughtful, a but emotional maybe even.

And I didn't get the gig.

I should have told them that my experience with the local talent was far greater than most, and my style was perfectly aligned to the work their client wanted done. My USP, to be exact.



Simple Leave Behinds

One of the reasons is that those sort of clients do not have a lot of other photographers beating down their doors with promos, meeting requests, and emails.

They are not that kind of client.

You may be the only photographer that has ever approached them, and they may not have any idea how to find a commercial shooter.

And quite likely they may not have anything for you to do at that exact moment. (Do keep in mind that they may INDEED have something right then since they have not had access to professional photography.)

This is where a nice “leave-behind” is invaluable.

And since these are a different type of client than those who KNOW commercial photography, we have to approach it a bit differently.

THE COVER (INTRODUCTION) LETTER

This can be a separate piece or something printed on your leave behind. Whichever you choose to do, these sort of letters help the client when they are trying to remember what you said

and who you are.

Introduce yourself. Make it brief.

“Hello, my name is Don Giannatti and I am a commercial photographer in the greater Phoenix area. I have been in business for over 20 years and am looking to help small businesses increase the level of their photography.”

This is a good time to let them know why you do what you do. “I work with small businesses to create the absolute best visuals for advertising, product sheets, websites, and direct mail.”

Share with them your purpose. Tell them what/why you do what you do.

“In today’s competitive marketplace, visuals play a vital part in presenting your products and services in the best possible light. It is not good enough to have a photograph these days, it must be a good one – and it must inspire the viewer to learn more about your business or simply purchase the product.”

Let them know you know what their pain points are.

“Whether it is product shots for your collateral materials or professional portraits of your staff, the best visual approach is always correct. I can help you with creating the powerful marketing materials that makes you stand out among the

competition. I am familiar with the requirements of print, web, and online retail stores like Amazon. With over a decade of experience, I can help your business look the best it can be."

Close strong. Tell 'em...

"I am ready to work on location, in your facility or at my studio to make the photographs you need to compete. My pricing is reasonable, and we can work with nearly any budget. Call me anytime with questions about getting the best professional photography of your service and products. Free quotes and estimates are always a feature of my business."

Then the final close.

"There is no second chance to make a great first impression. My photography will make your product unforgettable."

Then the soft close.

"I will send you some more information soon. I look forward to working with you."

Leave your contact information.

Make sure you have name, website, email, phone, mailing address, and any other bits of info you may want to put on the piece to make it easy for them to get back in touch with you.

THE VISUAL PIECE

This can be something like a 6x9 double sided card, or an 8.5x11 piece with multiple images. Some photographers have created fairly lavish and high end brochures with 8 - 16 pages, but for now we start with something nice, small, and affordable.

You can have these printed at several online printers who specialize in short run printing or print them yourself on a stiff photographic card stock. I suggest you make sure your printer doesn't gobble so much ink that it is twice what having a short run printer do, but that is up to you. You can probably find someone local to do the printing as well.

OPTION:

You can print your introduction on the back of an 8.5x11" piece instead of sending it as a separate item. That would be your call, although these items must be contained in an envelope that has your branding well seen on it. The business may want to keep it around and you want it to stand out well when they go looking for it. I recommend something like a stiff 100# - 160# cover stock. Please check that your printer can handle this card stock. You may find it can only handle 80# cover stock, and if that is what you need, go for it.

BUSINESS CARDS

Yes, business cards are still valuable. For things like this what else would you do? A business card is the most popularly accepted form of B2B communication and it is not going any-

where soon.

I recommend you make something different and cool so they can have even more reason to remember you. Moo has some very nice ones as does Overnightprints. Check out the square and 'sandwich' cards at ONP.

This is a set of tools that would be very strong as you drop by / mail them out to local direct clients. I prefer the drop-off, meet them method, but you may have other challenges to get around.

Just getting it done is the win here.

DESIGN IDEAS:

Keep the design simple. One or two images per side on the 6x9 postcard, and no more than four on one side on the 8.5x11. And even then I would do two on side one and four on the reverse side if I were to show that many images on the leave behind.

Choose a clean and readable font. Not too small, but not so large that it looks klunky.



What should be on your leave behind?

Clients don't care about how long you have been in business, what kind of camera you shoot with, how many square feet your studio is, or why you are so passionate about photography. They don't care at all.

They want to know what you can do for them, and how what you do for them will benefit them.

All too often I see photographers trying to sell with features.

"My well-equipped 1200 ft studio in the middle of town features state-of-the-art lighting, a very expensive tripod, and my never-ending collection of great photo gear. We can handle any assignment."

Uhh... no, not necessarily, Bucky. And I don't care.

Anybody with a credit card can have that stuff. Can we all say "Trust Fund?"

That may not be the case, but you haven't even come close to telling me why I should hire you to do the next campaign for these cool new Zucchini slicers we are doing over a 20 consumer magazine ad buy for a year.

I gotta sell these damn Zucchini slicers and you want to talk about passion? And if you want to tell me that you are passionate about photographing imported cheap Zucchini slicers, I may feel too afraid to hire you. Seek help, my veggie-eviscerating friend.

Let's try something like this;

"Excellent photographs sell your product while you are sleeping. They show your customers how great the zucchini slicer is, how pretty it looks on their cutting board, and creates a desire for them to have one. The images represent you, and your entire commitment to the customer."

Bad photographs do nothing, while great photographs work magic with your customers. You need the best images you can get – and you get them from me."

The first example of passion was about features... "I do this because I love this, and I got a Hasselblad!"

The second one sells benefits... "you will get this and this and then this will happen."

Benefits will always sell more than features.

I just watched a Honda SUV commercial for the 40th time (Hulu... waddaygonnado...) and the entire ad consisted of

asshats driving at outrageous speeds across the desert. Lots of dust, drifting cars, and rocks being thrown behind the vehicles doing donuts in the desert. It was all quite exciting. They chose to show me that instead of a spotless factory floor with some guy named Floyd attaching rear-view mirrors with an awesome, shining electric tool. That's a feature.

It was not a list of features of the car, or how many miles it gets per gallon. Their demographic doesn't care.

It was appealing to young people who want to feel they have a sports car, or some sort of off-road racer when in reality it is a soccer mom SUV being driven by a road-raging stunt man.

Those are benefits.

And while there may be a lot of features that make this performance happen, most people don't care. They just want the feeling of the dream.

Finding out what your customers need can be a process that ranges from simple to difficult, group to specific. We know that as a group, small business needs to get more clients. But we may have to dig a bit to know that O'Reilly's Bakery needs to be able to compete locally with a digital campaign.

You need to be able to express the **BENEFITS** of working with you and leave the features where they belong – in your studio.

When you are planning your marketing, take some time to think about your customer, or demographic.

What do they need?

What do they expect?

What pain points are they facing?

How can you help them?

Let them know what you can do for **THEM** and not what they can do for you.

If you know how to shoot for online catalogs, let them know you do it better than anyone else.

(You actually do it better than anyone else, right? Right?)

Prepare your emails, leave-behinds, and direct mail pieces to share the power of your photography with clients who need solutions.

And if you want to be passionate about delivering the best images and visual solutions they could ever get in order to make them more money along the way, then fine.

Be passionate about that.

Contacting and Pitching With Flair

Pitching an idea to a publisher or a blog is not a difficult thing to do, but there are some things that will make it so much better and successful.

CONTACTING AND PITCHING WITH FLAIR

Pitching an idea to a publisher or a blog is not a difficult thing to do, but there are some things that will make it so much better and successful.

Pitching means you contacting the magazine and letting them know you have a story, or the images to a potential story and think they should consider working to get the story to print.

For instance, I think there is a story about the small towns that are being boarded up in the western states. I have some images to go along and think that maybe they could be of interest to a the public.

So I decide to pitch the New York Times. It is a very respectable publication and does similar stories.

Dear Nyt Edytour

My name is Don Giannatti and I am a photographer and avid motorcycle traveler in the western part of the US.

In recent years I have noticed more and more small towns being boarded up and shuttered, even as they seem to be attracting attention from retirees and immigrants. I would like to propose a story on this unique situation and perhaps we can find the answers together. I am planning to shoot these towns in the Fall of 2020 with the focus on meeting the people and politicians in the area to find out what is happening from their perspective. In addition, I will be shooting video of interviews and discussions I have.

My understanding of this project comes from a lifetime in the west, and 40 years as a photographer/storyteller

gives me a perspective of understanding and empathy. I have attached three images I have already shot on this project. (More images on my website, project name: In The West: Is it Sunset for Small Town Western Life?

You can see more of my work here:

www.dongiannattiphotography.com

Contact me by email, or text/phone at 602 814 1468

Thank you very much for consideration.

Don Giannatti

It doesn't have to be long, or detailed. If they are interested in it, they will call or contact you. In fact, if you can keep it to 3-4 paragraphs you will be better off.

If you have more to say about it, send them a link to your project on your website. Do not enclose a portfolio, send them up to three images. Any more should be on your site with a link.

Focus on what you want to do for them.

Do the due diligence on looking for similar articles they may have run, or similar articles at all. While you can certainly offer a different take on any singular project, a re-hash is probably not the best thing to do.

Similar stories:

Are all small towns dying? Can you save a small town?

Abandoned in America: 10 American Ghost Towns to Visit

How to turn a struggling small town around

But nothing on the specifically noted western small towns and how they are being overlooked and ignored.

This means that my idea may have a chance... IF they think it is worthwhile to their subscribers.



ONBOARDING A CLIENT PROJECT

It is absolutely, positively critical you walk your client verbally through the process of working with you (feedback included) before you begin your process of work together.

There are a few reasons for this:

- 1) Having a clear timeline of events will help them feel safe and secure in the knowledge you're a pro with systems they can follow. Because you are!
- 2) It will help you get clear on deadlines, and have a realistic vision for the scope of the project.
- 3) They won't be blindsided when you send them an indepth questionnaire like the one below.

So, start by detailing the steps you'll take on the first call. Explain any materials you'll be sending over, how many calls you'll need to gather all information necessary, how many versions/ images they'll get to review, and that you'll be sending them a handy dandy feedback made simple form like the one below so you can work towards any final edits or additional shots.

See? Told you you were a pro! Have at it.

CONTACTING A POTENTIAL ALLY OR MENTOR

Hi [NAME],

My name is [YOUR NAME], and I'm reaching out to you because I'm a massive admirer of your work.

I've been keeping an eye out on all the great stuff you're putting out into the world, like [EXAMPLES OF THEIR WORK/PLACES YOU'VE FOUND THEM]. I really loved [SPECIFIC THING YOU ADMIRE ABOUT THEIR WORK], by the way!

I'm a [WHAT YOU DO], and [HOW WHAT YOU DO RELATES TO THEIR WORK]. I know you probably get a lot of these emails, but if it's not too forward of me, I'd really appreciate your fantastic brain on [THING YOU WANT THEIR ADVICE/OPINION ON]

In exchange, I'd be really honored to [TAKE YOU OUT FOR COFFEE/LUNCH/DINNER]/[CHAT WITH YOU ON SKYPE]/[SHARE A SKILL/GIFT YOU CAN OFFER], but absolutely understand if you're busy.

So, just in case you have an extra sec and prefer email, I'm pasting my specific questions below,

[YOUR ASK]

Thanks so much for taking the time to read this. I hope to hear back from you! Even if I don't, don't hesitate to let me know if you ever need [OFFER YOUR SERVICE IN SOME WAY]. I'd be thrilled to help.

Keep being awesome,

[YOUR SIGNATURE]

ASKING FOR A TESTIMONIAL

Hey [THEIR NAME]!

Real quick: I'm jumping into your inbox because I'm pulling together new testimonials for my website. I really enjoyed our work together, and I'd be honored to have some kind words from you included on my praise page!

This is also a chance for you to give me any constructive critiques you may have. Please don't hesitate to be upfront: all honest feedback is considered awesome.

To keep it low stress, I've included my questions in the body of this email. Feel free to reply to at your leisure. No rush or pressure over here on my end, just appreciation.

Please let me know if you have any questions at all! And thank you in advance.

The Photoshoot Project:

- Why did you decide to work with me?
- As our start date neared, what were you excited for?
- Was there anything you were worried about?
- As we moved forward with the project, was there anything that really impressed you?
- Is there anything you privately wish we'd discussed/delved into a little more?
- What would you say is the best thing about working with me?
- Was there anything you would have changed about your experience?
- Would you recommend me to a friend? (Y/N)

Boom. That's it!

Is it cool if I share the information you provided here? If you don't mind having your words posted, please include a recent headshot in this email, and I'll post it right next to your praise! Your feedback helps my future work shine even more brightly, so thanks a MILLION in advance for doing this.

Seriously. You rock.

Hope you have a fantastic day,

[YOUR SIGNATURE]

Notes:

RESPONDING TO PROSPECTIVE CLIENTS

Remember what I said about having your process mapped out? That comes into play again here.

While this email should be short, you need to be do your homework before that initial phone call. This is where doing background research on becomes important. Take a peek at their website, their social media, etc.

Checking out this new prospect before you respond to that first email is a great way to feel out whether they're a fit for you. Remember: you don't have to take on every client. Listen to your instincts. If something doesn't feel right, or you spot a red flag or two, it's OK to say no (and there's a script for that below.)

Work is so much better if you align yourself with people whose work you really love, believe in, and understand.

So check 'em out. Have some questions ready to go, along with an outline of your process.

Then... blow 'em away with your charm and finesse!

Hey [THEIR NAME]!

Thanks so much for getting in touch. So great to meet you virtually.

I'd absolutely love to help you out on this. I really love [ASPECT OF THE PROJECT YOU THINK YOU MIGHT LIKE]. At the moment, my first availability starts [DATE]. Is that a fit for your deadline?

If so, I'd love to schedule a time to touch base for a general meet n' greet call in the coming weeks, just to riff about the project a little bit, and get to know each other. I'm free most [WHEN YOU PREFER TO TAKE THESE CALLS] between [TIME FRAME] [YOUR TIME ZONE]. When would be good for you?

In the meantime, to give you a clearer picture of my style, I've included [LINKS TO RECENT PROJECTS/YOUR PORTFOLIO].

Take a look, enjoy, and let me know what you think! I you have any questions along the way, just gimme a shout.

Have a phenomenal rest of your day,

[YOUR NAME]

Notes:

A SCRIPT FOR DECLINING A PROJECT

There is absolutely nothing wrong with turning down a client. Even if it means saying “No.” to a fat paycheck trust your gut. You won't regret it.

Of course, when you're a freelancer or getting your digital business off the ground, money is always a factor. But take time to be conscious about who you choose to work with, so you don't end up chasing your tail with projects that pay well but sap all that awesome creative energy out of you.

So if your inner voice is telling you “NO!” listen to that. It might feel scary in the long run, but you'll free yourself up for other opportunities, people, and projects that jive with you 100x better.

But whatever you do: be polite! Just because they're not the client of your dreams doesn't mean they won't be a match made in heaven later, or for someone else. So think about who you recommend and be kind.

Hey [CLIENT NAME]

Thanks so much for reaching out! It's a real pleasure to make your digital acquaintance, and I really appreciate your inquiry.

This looks like a really great project! But, unfortunately, [I'M NOT TAKING ON NEW CLIENTS AT THIS TIME]/[I JUST DON'T THINK I'M A FIT FOR THIS PROJECT]. So sorry about that!

In light of the fact I can't make this work (at least not this time around!) I'm including a list of some other very talented colleagues who I think would be perfect for this.

[REFERRAL'S NAME * WEBSITE] [BRIEF DESCRIPTION]

[REFERRAL'S NAME * WEBSITE] [BRIEF DESCRIPTION]

[REFERRAL'S NAME * WEBSITE] [BRIEF DESCRIPTION]

Again, I'm really sorry we won't have the chance to work together this time! But maybe we can collaborate on something in the future.

Thanks so much! And have a great one,

[YOUR SIGNATURE]



Conventional Wisdom is Always Wrong

Follow your vision.

How to be more creative.

When we are working with our images, try to find the edge of where you feel confident and step across it for another peek at more creativity.

Having the ability to see things from new and different angles, POV's, contexts and more can be invaluable for any creative.

It can also be used to recharge when we are blocked, or the ideas are not coming in strong enough.

Here are a few things you can do.

Build your imagination muscle by asking questions that are perhaps silly, or unanswerable... it's OK to not have an answer, the thinking is the thing.

What is the sound of blue?

What does a major chord look like?

What is the texture of a poem by e. e. cummings?
And what would we light it?

Grab a photo that you like and ask questions about it; what does it sound like, what color would it be, and how would you describe it to someone who cannot see it?

Grab a photo that didn't make your cut, and explain why it didn't. Write a scathing review of the image where you pick apart every single item that you noticed causing the image to

be unworthy.

We used to think of formats when choosing a camera for a job. I would think "this is an 8x10 shot", or "I should use 35MM for this one."

We would even think about the physical act of looking into the camera as a part of our choice... waist-level, eye-level, or from something else entirely.

These days we are grabbing the camera most closely resembling the 35MM cameras of yesteryear.

That means that most of our shots are taken with the camera against our face, standing up.

Pros know to get something different or special, you must change your Point of view and NOT necessarily take the shot from standing upright.

Get lower. Get higher. Move in closer. Crop when it can be dramatic. Leave space when it can be dramatic. Force perspective. Flatten perspective.

Use the tools we have to do what they do best.

And once we get to the point where we are planning the shot... the camera is at our eye, we must ask questions there as well.

- Is this the best angle?
- Is this the best POV?
- Is this the best lens?
- What happens if I go long, or go shorter?
- Where is my subject?

- Am I sure that my subject IS my subject?
- How can I create a more dramatic image?

And on and on.

But then the worry sets in...

What might someone say about this image?

What if someone doesn't like it?

What if my shot is not as good as I think it is?

And on and on.

See, here's the thing.

It doesn't matter one way or the other. Not at all.

Expect that someone is not going to like it.

In fact, be upset if EVERYONE likes it.

Because then it is no longer remarkable, it is the lowest common denominator.

(And you are never going to make an image EVERYONE likes, so don't even go there.)

We are constantly challenged by others, by our own mind models, and by what we THINK are hordes of haters, but in reality, are mostly in our mind.

And the constant challenge from strangers and people who do not even know us are in no way connected to our creation.

Creation happens outside of our concerns, outside of our criticisms, outside of our detractors.

The more we let go of what we "should" be doing, the farther outside of our comfort zone and creative circle we go.

"Should" is a terrible word.

Take a moment and go "should" something.

We'll wait.

What did you do?

What does 'should' look like?

Other than to remind us it is a good idea to always be in the right lane while driving and other things of a practical nature, the insidiousness of what we 'should' do is so prevalent we do not even think about it.

You should do this.

You should do that.

You shouldn't make this, or shoot that, or not use this rule, or try to... bah!

Sure... you should! (Sorry, couldn't help myself.)

Absolutely do that. Absolutely do what everyone else says not to. Do it with glee. Do it with purpose.

Sure it didn't work for them... but they are not you.

The normal path may not be the path for you.

Perhaps yours takes a different route, with different tidbits of learning along the way. Perhaps you put it all together in a far different way than everyone else did.

Or maybe you just found one little thing that works for you.

And really, 'should' comes from that place within us that wants to constantly compare our work with someone else.

"I should learn how to process like that guy."

"She gets a lot of clients with those kinds of shots, I should do them as well."

"If I get this gig, I should shoot it as he did."

Conventional wisdom.

We may be confronted at this point with the false truth that we need to follow conventional wisdom.

"Conventional wisdom" is what tells us is normal. It is based on the lowest common denominator of thought processes and then filtered through a lot of 'shoulda, coulda, woulda crap to come out the other side with no heart or passion.

And after all of that, conventional wisdom is usually wrong. And it is always boring.

Man cannot fly.

Women are not capable of flying an airplane.

We will always have Passenger Pigeons.

AI will never be able to beat humans at anything?

Conventional wisdom is conventional, but it is not wisdom, it is conjecture at best, simple deduction of intellectual pablum at worse.

And in the arts, it is deadly. Absolutely deadly to art, passion, and creativity.

No one wants to create stuff that conventional wisdom says is pretty good.

Notes:

"Hi, I am an artist and I make stuff that is focused on the lowest common denominator of taste."

Not a good plan.

Begin to see your art as something that you must do, but not something that you 'should' do. What you must do will always be more productive because it is an active verb, not something that we really cannot explain.

Open up to new possibilities. Open up to new processes, POV's, parameters, and anything that you are currently doing to make your work great.

Find something to add to the recipe.

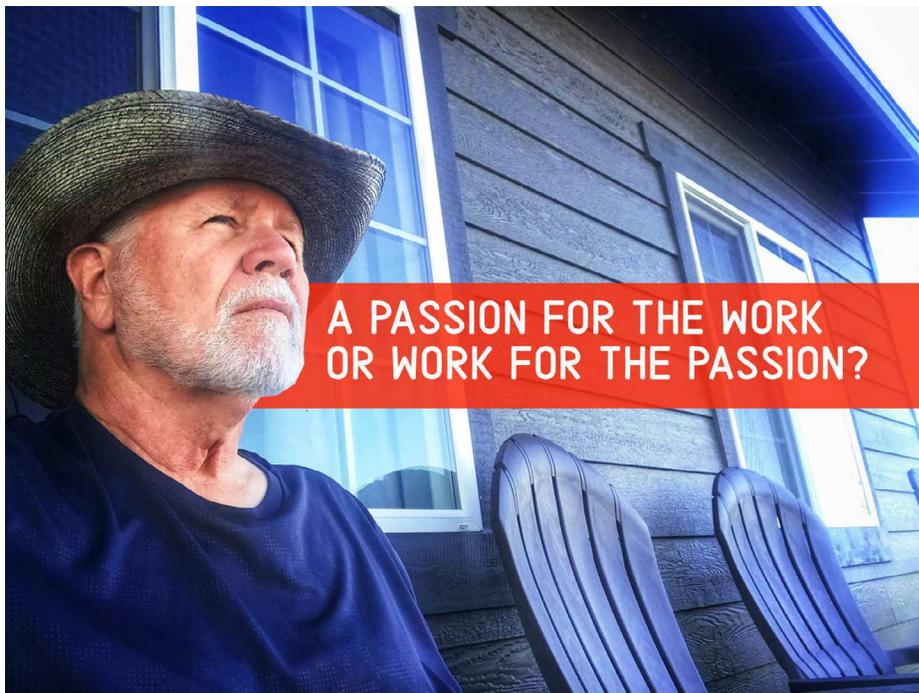
Stop comparing your work to others... stop comparing their work to yours.

Stop asking for free validation, and look for more creation of art regardless of the interaction.

Doing the work is far more important than basking in the laurels of 50 likes on social media.

Work is its own reward in this business because the work begets more work, the skill acquisition begets more skill acquisition.

And we can become less stressed, and more relaxed with the constant changes in our own creative comfort zone.



WE WILL ALWAYS BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THINGS WE HAVE CONTROL OVER.

WE CANNOT BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THINGS WE DO NOT HAVE CONTROL OVER.

Recently one of our members was hired to do a library shoot for a local restaurant client. The job was spelled out and the brief was pretty simple.

Four restaurants, 6 food shots each restaurant, and venue/facility/views type images to be used on social media.

This was a pretty simple gig that was a lot of creative snaps and some styled food. The restaurant would provide the food and it would be styled by the chefs.

So far so good.

The problems showed up when the restaurants failed on their end of the bargain... they were unorganized, sloppy, inattentive, and unable to provide the photographer with a solid base for creating good work.

There was no designated table for the food to be shot, so the beautiful backgrounds were subordinated by having to use whatever table was not in use. The styling was less than stellar, and no provisions were made for a photographer, tripod, and lighting gear.

In addition, there was an instant raising of the bar from 6 dishes to 12 and more. This left precious little time to shoot the requested venue, scenic, detail shots. BTW, they are lovely restaurants with LOTS of photographic options, so our photographer was able to make it work.

Her edit was superb, and the client ended up loving the work.

But it could have gone the other way... fast.

We are all professionals, and we know how to get out of visual jams in a myriad of ways. Solving problems is what we do.

But we are not magicians and we should not have to be pulling good shots out of bad at every turn.

When the client's actions actually prohibit us from doing our best, it is difficult

We have checklists for making photographs.

How about a checklist for clients to help us do our job better.

When you get a gig, find out how helpful they are going to be.

And remember that they may not even realize they are creating massive problems for you by not doing these things. Many of them have never worked with a professional photographer.

Once you have the amount of shots, the type of images, and the fees set out and have done the deal, you must get these answers in order to make sure you have a good shot at doing your best.

Notes:



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FOOD SHOTS:

- Will there be a designated area to shoot in?
- How big is the designated area?
- Will it have direct or indirect sunlight?
- (Of course this will be either a help or a hinderance for your style of shooting.)
- If the shoot is in natural light can we dim the restaurant lights?
- How big are the windows?
- Which direction do ther windows face?
- Can we control the parking that may interfere with the natural light shoot?
- Is there easy access to electric?
- Is there good entry/egress to that space?
- How big is the table?
- Will there be a necessity for a backdrop.
(Layflat shots do not need, but some 'natural angle' shots may require a background of some sort.)
- Will we need a surface or will we be shooting on the provided tables?
- Is parking close to the shooting space?
- Is there a back entrance that is easier than bringing gear through the restaurant?
- What color are the walls around the shoot space?
(You may have to bring in flats to make sure that obnoxious colors are not reflected back into glossy subjects.)
- Will staff be available to help facilitate the moving of gear?

STYLING:

- Who is styling the food?
- Will there be someone from the restaurant on set to provide last minute styling issues?
- Will they be providing two dishes to shoot so the photographer can pick the most photogenic?
- Are there extra place settings, glasses, snifters, flowers, and table items that can be worked with on the set?
- Will the dishes be 'will call' or will they be prepared in advance?
(Prepared in advance is an issue because the greens will wilt, and grease may congeal.)
- Who will be checking the styling before the photography?
- Who will be on set to approve each food shot in a timely manner?

PRODUCT WORK ON LOCATION:

- What size is the shooting space?
- What is the height of the ceiling?
- Is it comfort controlled (air conditioning / heated)
- Can we control the lights?
- Is there adequate access to electric?
- Are there windows, and if so, are there window coverings?
Trying to shoot product with glaring window light or direct sun can be miserable.
- Is there a table and a place to store props?
- Is there a ladder available?
- Access to water and food?
- Is parking close to the shooting space?
- Will there be anyone there to help transport gear?
- Who will be on scene to approve the images in a timely manner?

ARCHITECTURAL AND INTERIORS:

- Access to the building. Have the people who need to be notified been notified?
(Guards, building managers, real estate agents, outside security personnel, etc...)
- What are the parking restrictions if any?
- Who is responsible for making sure all the lights are on?
(Name / Phone Number)
- Who is responsible for making sure the automatic sprinklers do not go off while the shoot is in progress?
(Name / Phone Number)
- Gate or Security codes?
- People who may need to be contacted if something is going wrong?
(Name / Phone Number)
- Emergency contact on site:
(Name / Phone Number)
- Will the lawns be mowed two days before the shoot?
- How can we control parking in front of the building?
(This is usually something they can control if cars are parking in front of the building and making the shot ugly.)
- Availability of hoses and water?
- Who or how will the building be secured after you finish?
- Who will be available to approve the images in a timely manner?

LIFESTYLE / PORTRAIT

- Who is responsible for the talent?
- (I usually tell the client that if they know people, that is great – but I cannot be responsible for finding people. I would suggest an agency, and most likely not Model Mayhem or anything like that.)
- Will there be a talent list?
(Names, ages, contact information.)
- Who is responsible for getting the talent to the shoot location or studio?
(Name / Phone Number)
- Will there be a MUA/stylist?
(Name / Phone Number)
- How should the talent arrive?
(Fresh face, basic makeup, camera ready.)
- Is there a convenient area with stools, chairs, and tables for MUA?
- Will there be a hair stylist?
(Name / Phone Number)
- Who is in charge of wardrobe?
(Name / Phone Number)
- How will wardrobe be handled?
(Will the talent bring their own or will it be provided?)
- Is there a convenient changing area for the talent?
- Who is in charge of procuring the venue for the shoot?
- Who will be available to approve the shots in a timely manner?

I am sure there are more questions that could be added to this easily.

Let's do that by discussing some of the challenges you have had doing work for clients in your area.

Sometimes we cannot get the answers we need, and we, of course, battle through it and do the best that we can.

It is important to remember that no amount of finger-pointing, or kvetching about the shoot after the fact will ever be enough to save the gig.

And then we leave the client with a bad taste of what we do.

This is not a winning strategy, so we must do everything we can to make sure the gig goes the best that it can.

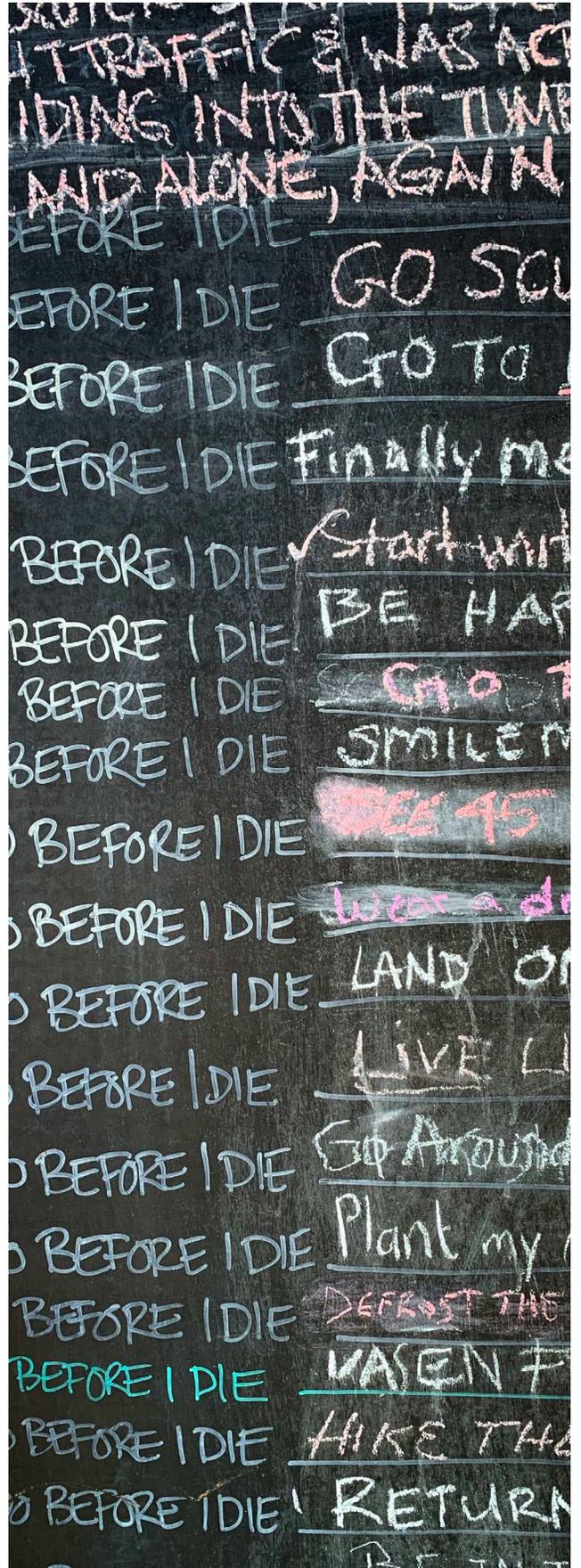
THE COOL PART

I have never had a client be upset by this type of list or these kinds of questions. They KNOW that they are important since they are affecting how well their expenditure of funds to us happy photographers are invested.

Most clients want the best possible outcomes, and will work hard to provide that information to you.

But it will most likely fall to you to initiate this conversation.

Be bold, be brave, and be firm.



BUILDING AWARENESS WITH EMAIL

We talk a lot about using email to create contact tools that can inform our clients, but we also use them for entertaining them and making them keep us top-of-mind.

Let's look at Judy's email below.

She starts with an interesting subject line:

ROLLING OUT FRESH SPRING IDEAS

by JUDY DOHERTY PHOTOGRAPHY

Notice how the words make it such a temptation to open?
Fresh. Spring. Ideas.

Using the lower case "by" also breaks up the visual and allows her name to stand out more.

Headlines are very important and you must be able to hook them in with something clever, funny, ironic, timely, or at least interesting. They get a lot of email everyday, so yours has to stand out to grab them and want to click.

Try different subject lines until you get one that you think may do the job.

The first graphic they see is her logo – big, bold, and proud.

Next we have a striking image the full size of the email. This image is crucial to having them follow on, so make sure it is one of your best.

I love the button; "Let's make a plan". Personal, friendly, and an ask. It is important to ask.

The button and the image go to Judy's "About" page where you meet her and have all of her contact info right there. So it is indeed easy to "make a plan" with her.

The body of the email are prompts to help the client get the idea that she shoots menus, savory foods, drinks, and hot foods. The "Shrooms" image is there to show lighting and a variety from the other images on the page.

She includes this copy as well:

Judy Doherty Photography is very proud to be part of At-Edge, Workbook, and Found Artists. See her new print book that takes you from the kitchen to dinner to dessert.

My new studio in the east bay is ready now with natural light, studio light, hundreds of props and surfaces to create just the right look for your brand!

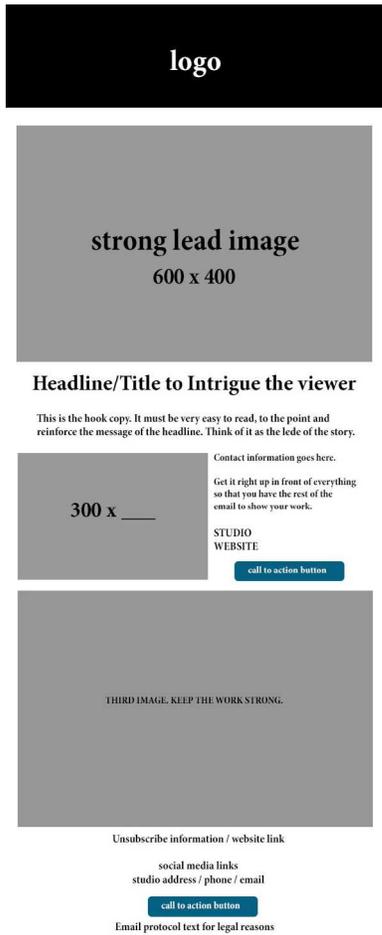
Links to all of her channels (she is very new at At-Edge, so she doesn't have a link there at the time this email went out.

The email is a visual feast as it keeps the eye moving across the page in so many ways.

Having the subscribe button at the bottom makes it easy for anyone who has had this email forwarded to them to click and subscribe. This can help grow her email list in a very smart way.

Art directors forward it to other art professionals.

EMAIL DESIGN SUGGESTIONS



Above Left: Three images, all landscape with run around text.

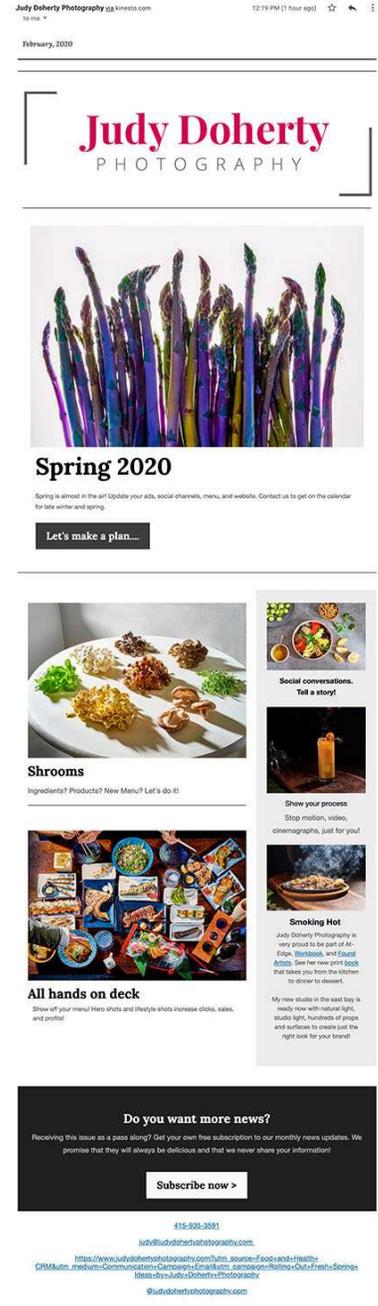
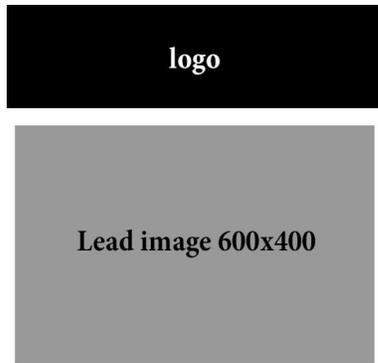
Above right: Three images, one landscape. and two portrait.

On right: One single image to fill the frame of the email.

These emails should be informative, fun and without a heavy sales approach. These are to keep you top-of-mind with clients and prospects.

Far right: A very well done email by Judy Doherty. This is one of the special emails she sends each quarter.

Emails should go out to your prospects each month.



HOW TO USE THE EMAILS:

These can be used for agency type clients as well as direct clients.

The following structure is going to work for you really well:

- Meet someone and ask for their email.
- Tell them you are going to sign them up to get your emails with their permission.
- You can then add them manually to your MailChimp account.
- Or you can write your Mailchimp Signup URL (tiny URL) on the back of your business card. (Always write on your business card) and ask them to sign up promising them no spam and no sales, just images and news on marketing they may be able to use for their business
- Send them an email with images and a marketing tip for small business. (You can find marketing tips everywhere online – keep a notepad or Evernote for ideas you run into. Look to Medium)
- You are only sending them one email a month and you will find 30 small business ideas in one blog post.

You are now building up your email list to more and more names.

Stuff to add to the email list:

- Images you have done for other local business
- Success stories
- Testimonials

This can be a very big part of your business, and even though the price point may be low, it will be gaining experience, work flow, practice and more on someone else's dime.

COLD EMAILS FOR CREATIVE APPROACHES

Dear [Client's name],

My name is [Name] and I am a professional photographer based in [City]. I came across your business online and was impressed by the work you do. I wanted to reach out and see if you might be interested in discussing the possibility of working together on an upcoming project.

As a photographer, I specialize in [Style/Type of Photography], and have worked with a wide range of clients in the [Industry] industry. I am confident that my skills and experience could be a valuable asset to your team.

I have attached a few samples of my work to this email for your reference. Please let me know if you would be interested in discussing further or if you have any questions.

Best regards,

[Name]

Hi [Client's name],

My name is [Name] and I'm a professional photographer who specializes in [Type of Photography]. I came across your business and instantly knew I wanted to be your photographer. I know my skill and style will enhance your products beyond your wildest expectations!

I wanted to reach out and offer my services to spice things up a bit. Trust me, with my skills and talent, your website will go from good to grand in no time. And who knows, maybe we'll even win an award for "The Best ___ Website in the Known Universe". I promise to share the generous award money.

I've attached a few samples of my work to give you an idea of my style. If you're interested in working together and giving your website the visual kick it deserves, shoot me an email or give me a call.

Best regards,

[Name]

Chunking Your Time

'CHUNKING' THE DAY VS 'CHUNKING' THE WEEK

We talk so much about marketing and what we need to be doing that we forget what it means to our schedule.

And we sometimes think we hear something we are not hearing.

Look, I think you should be doing three things with urgency:

Shooting – whether for a client, a pitch, or your portfolio. Shooting is the essence of what we are and do. The first pillar, so to speak.

Planning – either a shoot or a marketing approach. Yes, planning – whether you are planning a portfolio shoot or a shoot for a client, planning is super important and should be considered the second pillar.

Marketing – mailers, emails, letters of introductions, phone calls, lead acquisition, lead development, and sharing images. This sounds a like a lot. For some of us it sounds like too much.

An insurmountable mountain of shit that we have to begrudgingly do in order to maybe get a chance to offer something someone may not even want.

Sound right?

But it isn't nearly that bad.

"Research suggests that in an eight-hour day, the average worker is only productive for two hours and 53 minutes.

That's right—you're probably only productive for around three hours a day.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average American works 8.8 hours every day. Yet a study of nearly 2,000 full-time office workers revealed that most people aren't working for most of the time they're at work." – Thrive Global

And here you are with a good 10 hours staring you in the face.

Folks, you cannot do this 'marketing' and client acquisition stuff for 10 hours a day.

No one expects you to.

But for 4-5 hours a day?

Yeah... you can do that for 4 hours and kick some major butt of your competitors.

Here's the way I see it;

Pillar One: Client Acquisition

Pillare Two: Planning

Pillar Three: Marketing

Pillar One, Client Acquisition, is a pain that most of us do not welcome with open arms. It is paperwork, drudgery of phone calls that lead to voice mail, rude receptionists, a lack of really knowing who they are or what they actually want... and more.

There's that chair... we get so tired of that chair.

The first pillar is where we want to spend most of our time.



Making images, creating art, doing amazingly creative things... wow, we can do that all day. I hope you can anyway. The goal of the other two pillars is to make this pillar strong and able to support the artist.

The planning pillar is just that: planning. From shoot logistics to propping, MUA's to property scouting and releases. It is a NECESSARY pillar to hoist the first into position. Support; both emotionally and physically. (Being unprepared is more stressful than being passed over for a gig.)

The third pillar – marketing – should be a mix of fun and drudgery, excitement and work-work.

Finding clients, mailing and emailing them, and making cold calls is all so boring for some of us. It is a necessary pain in the ass.

However the showing of our work, the sending of postcards that we are proud of, or shipping out a couple of emails per week can also be very exciting. We are “DOING” it.

Making the effort IS the win. It IS the goal fulfilled.

We talked in the last chapter about forming habits based on doing the work and not attaching expectations.

Here is where it all begins to pay off.

But only if we are not overwhelmed by the enormity of it all.

THIS IS WHERE CHUNKING OUT OUR TIME AND EFFORTS CAN BE A LIFESAVER

Chunking means no more stressing at the end of the day because you forgot to send your emails, or left the postcards sitting in the glovebox of the ol' Studebaker.

Chunking is a habit helper meant to take the stress of an insurmountable mountain and shave it down to a much easier to scale hill.

There are two ways to chunk your work; by the hour each day, or by the day each week.

Chunking allows you to organize, to stay focused, to plan your day or week. It makes it easier to form habits that can be anchored in a time event (every morning after coffee, for instance).

Calendar chunking is a productivity tactic that encompasses this concept of saying no to your goal-detractors. It's a tactic that I found to provide the most significant improvement in my daily productivity levels.

The idea is that you assign a very specific task, or a group of closely related tasks, to a 'chunk' of time in your calendar. During that time you will give that task 100% of your attention. Everything else that could possibly distract you during that time is pushed to one side, and you are solely focused on that one activity.

The art of effective calendar chunking is to assign time slots to ALL of your priorities. That way, while you are immersed in your assigned task you won't have a desire to think about anything else, or feel guilty that you aren't doing something you need to be. Because that 'thing' has its own time in your calendar.” – The Art of Calendar Chunking

“No matter how skilled you are at handling multiple details, most people can only focus on a limited number of things at one time. When most people are learning, they tend to remember things that are grouped into threes. And anything above three things becomes too much for us to remember. In other words, most people tend to get overwhelmed after three different pieces – or chunks – of information.

When people don't reach their goals, it's often not because they lack the ability or will power to accomplish their objectives. It's because of the way they're focusing on the number of items, or rather, the way they are chunking things is inhibiting their success. By taking all that is coming at you and putting it into ideal-sized groups your mind can more easily handle, you are positioning yourself to accomplish your goals and achieve further success.”
– Tony Robbins

CHUNKING THE WEEK

The idea of Week Chunking is to divide your working week into “chunks” of time. The duration of chunks is not important (it could be two-hour chunks or half-day chunks). Then, you allocate certain types of tasks to specific chunks of time. If you can always allocate a particular type of task to a particular time chunk (every week), it means you actually need to spend less thinking energy and focus, because your brain gets “trained” that a particular type of work is done at a specific time in the week. Let me explain through an example (this is how I personally chunk my week):

The Example:

I chunk my week into 10 time blocks. I have one time block for AM and one time block for PM of each day, Monday to Friday. I have specific types of tasks allocated to each time block: Wednesday AM and PM are both reserved for content creation. This means I know on Wednesdays I don't have to spend energy on anything other than writing blogs, recording videos, researching business statistics and any other content I might

want to create. The Monday and Thursday AM and PM blocks (thus 4 x blocks) are reserved for client work, as are the Tuesday and Friday AM blocks (thus another 2 x blocks). The Friday PM block is strategic planning time and the Tuesday PM block is when I do everything else (admin etc)." – Talking Business

Maybe you like the idea of chunking your weeks into manageable work blocks where you can stay focused on that part of your business without moving from thing to thing.

Something like a scheduled week:

Monday

Portfolio Shooting, post processing, editing, or planning

Tuesday

Marketing emails/direct mail, client acquisition, client onboarding, phone and zoom meetings, in-person meetings.

Wednesday:

Planning and Study. Learn one new Photoshop technique, learn one new InDesign or Premier technique, read or listen to audio books for a couple of hours. Plan your shoot for Friday.

Thursday:

Morning: Content creation and planning for social media: Instagram posts for the following week, Updating web portfolios (website, behance, Instagram).

Afternoon: Research clients for client acquisition: gather emails, phone numbers, and contact info. Call each for verification 6 – 10 per afternoon.

Friday:

Shoot for your portfolio and meet with peers and support people. Lunch with other photographers, meet MUA's, laugh, and spend some time with others in the industry.

Weekend:

This is your time, but other suggestions could include shooting something for your portfolio, meeting and greeting others in the industry, and relaxing in your own way.

"Ultimately, time chunking enables you to eliminate distractions by choosing time periods and ensuring you only focus on one task during that time period. Plus, it removes the time you waste jumping back and forth between tasks. The less time you spend returning to your task after a momentary distraction, the better.

According to a study by Florida State University, productivity and performance are at their peak during uninterrupted 90-minute intervals — so, when in doubt, try chunking your time into 90-minute segments, and then move onto the next task after that." — Owl Labs

Each day needs to have a health and wellness time. Being sick, ill, weak, or not at peak health will indeed impair your entrepreneurial drive.

CHUNKING THE DAY

Perhaps you would rather to chunk out your days so that you are not so feverishly wrapped up in one activity.

That's cool too.

Taking your day in two halves – before and after lunch – you can work in 90 minute (or less) chunks that keep you excited about the work without it becoming a drudgery.

Perhaps we chunk our day out like this:

6:30 – 7 AM

Awake and Breakfast or tea and work on your ToDo list

7 – 8 AM

Read or listen to audio books on whatever interests you – from novels to productivity books. Whatever creates excitement for you is what works.

8 – 8:30 AM

Health and Wellness; Walk, do calisthenics or yoga, center yourself by becoming stronger and healthier.

8:30 – 9:30 AM

All things marketing: Get 3 email addresses, get 3 physical addresses, send 3 emails and 3 direct mail pieces, make three cold calls.

Finished early? Write in your journal, find inspiration, or work on your website.

9:30 – 10:30 AM

Learn something new: Photoshop, Lightroom/Capture One, Premier, Indesign, DaVinci... whatever. Learn something NEW.

10:30 – 11 AM

Brisk 20 minute walk

11 AM – 12 PM

Planning work, promotions, shots, portfolio work.

12 to 1 PM

Lunch

1 PM –

Shoot for your portfolio, projects, or whatever you are currently working on

This may be the best way for some of you who do not want to chunk out your week.



HAVING AN ACCOUNTABILITY PARTNER IS LIKE HAVING AN ACE IN THE HOLE

It's a sometimes subtle, and oftentimes unsubtle way of keeping yourself on track.

And here's the thing... they don't set your schedule. They aren't really your coach, although they will work to keep you focused.

They are there for you to have some semblance of accountability for the things YOU said YOU were going to do.

They are not hostile to one another, nor are they condescending. One other thing that we have to get out right away is that they are also not judgemental.

An accountability partner doesn't take you to task for not completing the things you said you were going to do, they are only there to listen to why you didn't do them and help you find a way to get more done... if asked to do so.

The two of you form a partnership in which you agree, mutually, to coach and provide the best feedback you can on a regular, even a scheduled, basis. Whether you make the meetings daily, weekly, or bi-weekly, the agreement is to share the previous time frame. What happened that was great. What happened that wasn't so great, and what challenges you both are currently facing.

That is why they call it an accountability partner, not an accountability coach.

Coaching is different and we are not going there with this.

This is not like meeting your goals. Goals will fail us most of the time.

1. Everybody has goals. Winners have goals. Losers have goals. Average, poor, and excellent producers have goals. Often the goals are the same. So goals bring nothing to the table.
2. Goals can be a flash in the pan. We set a goal for something and by hard work we reach it. Now what? It is but a fleeting moment, then we have to work out what our next goal will be. And our next.
3. Goals will ultimately defeat you. If you set a goal and reach it, then face the emptiness of that goal you can become disenchanted. Worse, if you do not reach the goal you begin to beat yourself up for failing to reach what you thought was an easily attainable milestone.

4. Goals are not a good fit for long-term stability and growth. You reach your goal of sending out 3 contacts per day. And you bask in that until you find out your competition is sending out 5 contacts per day. A system of creating small, easily measured actions to be done over and over again makes you stronger. And since there is no expected ROI, you can expand or increase those actions whenever you want.

What we need is a system.

WHY ACCOUNTABILITY?

One of the strongest things we can do when developing a system is to have that system run efficiently. It won't do it on its own. We need to be constantly working the system in order for it to be a powerful tool for our advantage.

Personal responsibility is the basic framework of any system.

If we fail to become personally responsible, we will fall easily into the "blame game" where we begin to attribute our failures to other people.

"There are too many photographers", or "clients just don't want to pay".

No, you aren't taking responsibility for getting the work by any means necessary.

I once had a photographer tell me that he was totally confused as to why he had not gotten any jobs. I chatted with him for a while then asked who he had shown his book to. He told me he had only been in business a little over 6 months and didn't really have a book to show anyone. And who would he show it to anyway?

The phone call ended soon after that.

He didn't want advice or help, he wanted someone to validate his desire to quit. And that wasn't going to be me. I am not a big fan of quitters.

Had he been accountable for his errors, we could have chatted a bit longer, developed a system for him to learn the business. Perhaps we could have created a real action plan for becoming engaged in the industry in such a way that he would learn as he goes.

But, you see, it wasn't his fault.

An accountability partner can help keep you from that abyss... the blame everyone else abyss.



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"Sometimes the simplest thing to do is to ask yourself "what am I doing – or not doing – in my system to help me grow and engage with clients?"

Then ask your accountability partner. They will have been monitoring you and will have some good follow up on what they see you are doing with your system.

Never judgmental, just being a sounding board and someone who can look in from the outside and ask you this question: "What could you do differently in your system to move your business forward?"

An accountability partner doesn't have the answers, they just need to be there to ask the question so YOU can figure it out. Perhaps they can offer advice from their own accountability issues.

There are true benefits that both of you receive when becoming an accountability partnership;

1. You get to work with someone who is facing the same conditions and realities that you are. This benefits them and you.
2. Personal accountability will always trump some sort of electronic device, or app, or daily impersonal email.
3. Accountability partnerships are for the most part free. No one charges since each is benefitting from the other.
4. How and when you do it are easier to put together because there are just two of you.

Here is how to find an accountability partner for you.

1. Look for someone you know to be an honest and trustworthy and in your same business.
2. Decide whether you want someone with the same personality as yours or if you want to play off another's different sort of energy.
3. Have a serious discussion on each other's goals. If they do not feel like a match, find someone else.
4. Set up a good time for consistent communication. Perhaps you use email, or text, every other week, and a voice call / ZOOM in the interim weeks. Whatever works for both of you would be best.

5. Be very specific about what you want to do. What actions do you want to take and what do you want those actions to generate. Remember to keep the actions to a manageable few and not every single aspect of your life.
6. What rewards will there be for success? What consequences will there be for not meeting the criteria set forth by them at the beginning?
7. Agree on a time to meet to discuss progress, realign some results, and changes of strategies. Remember this must be done as a partnership so both partners know what is actually going on.

THE BENEFITS ARE AMAZING

You will have someone specific to share with.

For one thing, you will have someone to talk to that you trust, and that will be interested in helping you achieve your aspirations. You can seem a little crazy to each other, share doubts and insecurities and know that your partner is most likely dealing with those same issues.

You will constantly be reminded of your action system. Knowing that you must now be accountable to someone other than yourself keeps you focused on doing what needs to be done. Rabbit holes become less deep, and work hours become more productive.

Fresh eyes, fresh perspective, and fresh solutions.

A good partner will give you some insights you may have not thought about. A new way of working that you may not have thought about. And your fresh perspective on their challenges may help them – AND help you because when two creative people talk about stuff – cool stuff happens.

Share the knowledge, the experience, and the access you have with another.

It's like having a strong backup plan, or a partner at your side with fresh intel that you may not have been considering.

You may not know anyone in finance and have a tax question... your partner may be able to point you in the right direction. Likewise, your partner may need someone to sound off about a confusing RFP, and you may have some experience that could help.

Having someone 'on your six' is something that can make us a bit less anxious.

Your accountability partner has a vested interest in helping you succeed. They want you to help them succeed. Working together as a team should make each stronger because of the allied interests of both of you. Words of encouragement, ideas for growth, someone to lean on a bit... all such powerful things to keep us from thinking we are all alone in our struggles.

Celebrating each of your successes with a partner who is vested in you is so sweet!

You land a big-fish client, or get the RFP signed without changes and you want to celebrate. One of the first you want to celebrate with is your partner. They have been with you through the tough times as well as working with you when things were great. Being able to convey the excitement to someone who KNOWS what we all go through to get the wins is exceptionally special.

You may make a friend for life.

We all have too many acquaintances and too few friends. An accountability partner can become a friend who carries with them a deeper knowledge of your struggles and your successes can be quite special.

So find your accountability partner and let us know who that is. Perhaps it can be from the group, or perhaps you know of someone who would be a perfect fit for you. However you do it, let's start off by getting that done.

Ten short reasons a photographer should have an accountability partner

1. Having an accountability partner can help a you keep motivated and focused on your goals, whether that's finishing a project or developing more skills.
2. They can provide constructive criticism: Your AP can look through your work and provide frank comments and recommendations for development.
3. Act as a support system: While making images might be a solitary activity, it's nice to have moral support and encouragement.
4. You can be held to deadlines by APs: While deadlines can be an effective tool for increasing productivity, they are simple to overlook when working alone. You can stay on track and fulfill your deadlines with someone you are accountable to.
5. More chances for networking: Having an accountability partner who is a photographer or works in a related industry might help you meet new people and get more business. And it works in their favor as well
6. Setting realistic goals: It might be challenging to choose where to begin or what is feasible at times. You can create challenging but reasonable objectives with someone at your side helping keep you in check or pushing you further.
7. An accountability partner can assist you in developing effective organizational habits. My AP helped me reorganize my office and was there through the pain... heh.
8. It is wonderful to get other viewpoints: Photography is a subjective art, hearing someone else's opinion might be beneficial.
9. They can aid in your victory celebration: Celebrating your successes is crucial, and an someone who is vested in you can assist by helping you recognize your efforts and your triumphs.
10. Another set of eyes can help you get through creative obstacles. Although we all think of ourselves as creative, inspiration can occasionally be elusive. It is incredible to have someone who can provide guidance and inspiration. And that can help you get beyond creative roadblocks and maintain a steady flow of ideas.

Creative Risks and Pushing On

At no time I can remember has the need to be able to deal with creative risk been more important than now.

These times are unprecedented and the need for taking a risk even more important than it usually is.

Creatives always face risk and the knowledge that the risk will lead to some sort of inevitable outcome.

And since we are creatives we sort of expect that outcome to be negative.

"What if they find out I suck?"

"What if they don't like it?"

"What if I realize I shouldn't be doing this?"

"What will I do when I finally come face to face with the fact that I am a big fraud and suck at most everything I ever wanted to do...?"

We creatives are nothing if not creative in the ways we think our failure is written in the stars and all we do from day to day is try to keep that secret safe.

But deep in our lizard brains we know it isn't true because the next morning we get up and get after it once again.

Let's take a look at those "What ifs..."

What if they are wrong?

What if they are bullshit?

What if they are frauds?

Now think about it... what would you do if you knew people

were going to like your work and don't think you suck?

Chances are you would do the same thing you are doing right now... but have a much better time doing it.

And let's take it even further - everyone adores your every photo.

(I see trees of green, red roses too

I see them bloom, for me and you

And I think to myself...)

Not having the stress we put on ourselves to be so careful with our expectations and just knowing they will be taken care of would leave more time for creating what we wanted.

And that would be super cool.

Or would it?

Would we continue to push ourselves farther and farther if we knew that most whatever we did would be accepted as awesome?

Why would we innovate? Why take any chances at all?

Why would we really give a shit... make art and get paid, baby.?

You see, there is a reason we doubt. It's part of the process of keeping us focused on the betterment of our art.

And did you notice the focus of those 'what ifs'?

They were all focused on the external... they, them, acceptance.

And we have no control over the external. Absolutely NONE.



Yet we give it all the weight.

We must stop.

One way is to gather feedback, adjust accordingly, test again, and repeat.

Feedback is often difficult to get, and that is one of the things that makes it so valuable.

While we cannot control the outcome of our 'what ifs', we can certainly control our ability to get feedback.

Post your images.
Go to workshops.
Meet your peers.
Find potential clients.
Show your book.
Meet the buyers.

And gather the data.

Who liked it, who was unimpressed.

Ask the ones who don't seem to be engaged what you could do to make them more excited about your work?

"Thanks for viewing my work. I know how long you have worked in this industry and your work speaks for itself. I wonder if you would have a bit of advice to help me be a better photographer?"

Always let them know you think they are an important resource, then the ask.

When we get the data, we adjust.

7 out of 10 clients did not seem to like my shot of the old Bentley. Two of them mentioned it in their critiques. Let's replace it.

8 out of 10 seemed to love the food section. Let's add some more food and hit them again in 4-5 months.
DATA... data data data.

We have no control over the outcome.

We do have control over the data... and we can keep manipulating our work using that data to get to a place where we may be able to expect a positive outcome.

Of course, I should add that we absolutely MUST be in love with what we create. If you are not a food shooter, don't bother to make it a specialty since you will be competing with those who simply adore shooting food. They will always win.

Embrace the work, and find the data.

Then embrace the data to find what you need in your work.

Create a Shoot Schedule for your new work.

Once we have the data, we can move quickly toward adding the new images to our portfolio.

I teach a class every couple of months called *The Thirty Day Portfolio Slam* where we concept and build a portfolio for our work in a month.

Here is how we do it.

Shot list.

Put together the shot list by using images from the internet that inspire you. NO, we aren't copying anyone or anything, we are being inspired. A photographer's pots and pans shot may inspire our cake image, and an industrial shot may inspire our portrait series. Inspiration is not copying.

Prop list:

What do you need?
Where can you get it?
Where can you put it?

Storyboard (well, kinda like a storyboard)

Put pencil to paper and begin sketching out the images as you want to create them. Remembering we need closeup, medium shots, and distance shots to keep the viewer's eyes moving.

You should plan to do all three of these shots on every setup you can.

Schedule

Make sure you can shoot at least four times per week for extended times. Plan the shot list to fit the days so you are not hopping from one set to another. For instance, on the day you are shooting cookies, it may be a good day to do coffee, or sandwiches.

The Story (narrative) portfolio

If you are going to do a project like covering an event, or the road between here and there, you should plan that trip and have a shot list for each day. Sometimes it is not possible, but making the effort is a big help to getting it done. Leave time for serendipitous interludes - they happen on the road.

Let's Make Some Money

How to make money with photography is a question that is asked more frequently than any other. And there are two ways to respond to this, in my opinion.

The first approach is to list all the skills a professional photographer has developed over the course of their career, including developing a strong portfolio, handling all business-related tasks (accounting, advertising, etc.), obtaining repeat clients, identifying a niche, diversifying their sources of income, and so forth.

In my opinion, none of these actually makes much of a difference to an amateur photographer and feels more like the outcome of making money than a plan for it.

There is a second method to discuss earning money through photography, but few people bring it up. Because talent is involved. Also, talent is a tricky thing.

Are You Talented Enough?

Keep in mind that talent comes in various forms. You don't need someone else's talent, but it helps if it's different from everyone else's. Whether you shoot a simple camera or a technological icon, the images are all that really matter. Great photos have been taken on point and shoot cameras up to the largest plate film cameras ever made.

Everyone believes they are talented. Or, even if we aren't certain of it, we like to convey a certain level of talent. So how do you recognize talent? Four items:

It grabs your attention like nothing else.

Is photography what you do best? Is there something that, no matter what else you're doing, manages to draw you in? It's a solid indication that you have a skill if it beckons to you, tugs at your heart, and occupies your thoughts. Yet, talent is just at its infancy at this point.

People seem to like your work.

This has become a little difficult thanks to social media, which is built as a positive feedback loop and can lead to confirmation bias. But, if you frequently receive compliments on your work from professionals in the field, customers you work with, and others with genuinely good taste, this is another powerful sign of skill. Yet, this is still insufficient on its own.

Network

There are many occasions and circumstances where having your information available can be very helpful for you. Again, this is a seed-planting exercise; you hardly ever run into someone who is looking for a photographer right now, but many relationships can be established in the real world. If you

choose to take this route, be sure to have a convenient way for people to get in touch with you and learn more about your job. Business cards used to be used for this, but nowadays there are many digital alternatives, including, of course, texting, that work just as well.

Digital networks like Facebook and Instagram are also places where networking can take place. Also, these settings might offer easy ways to draw attention to your work. But, these connections are shallow, and there isn't much one can do to maintain them or influence how they turn out.

Get out there.

Going directly to brands and people they would like to work with or for and saying, "Here I am!" is probably how the majority of photographers think about trying to get recognized. This is a difficult path to take because people that hire top-tier photographers already have access to the greatest talent and typically have preferred agents they work with. Even yet, a great talent can undoubtedly succeed, particularly if you've already achieved some success and renown.

Making money in photography is not hard, but it can be unsteady, or even dicey at some point.

Learn to hold on to your money. Learn to budget, invest, and purchase only what you need, and find alternate sources if you can.

You will also learn to make macaroni and cheese seven different ways as well as how to season Ramen to taste like... well, seasoned Ramen.

Consistency is the goal and it can be elusive if we do not treat what we do like it is a business.

Making photographs is a business.

Contacting and meeting clients is a business.

Keeping records is a business.

Sharing images and being social is a business.

Blowing your own horn is a business.

And your business is also TALENT - and the nurturing of that talent has to be paramount to your efforts.

Never confuse your work with a hobby, or your talent as something not worthy of being compensated for.

The idea of the starving artist is a false one. Artists have been some of the best paid and highest earning trades for a long time. The malnourished bohemian artist twisted by bad choices, bad luck, and cruel fate is a myth.

WHAT ABOUT RIGHTS?

There is no more confusing subject in the world of commercial photography than the discussion of rights. Who gets to use your work and for what and for how long?

You will hear photographers saying "never give up your rights" and - well, yeah, that's a good idea but not terribly realistic.

Fact of the matter is there has been a substantial number of photographers willing to give up their rights combined with little to no explanation on what reproduction rights mean for both photographers and clients.

Tell a restaurateur who save for 8 years so he could buy a restaurant that while he indeeds owns his pans, he can only use your photograph for 6 months and then he has to pay you again.

Or the woman author who is bootstrapping a book and needs a headshot for promotional materials. Six month usage rights and a dozen restrictions on your image and you may not get the gig, ya know.

On the other hand, companies like Pilsbury and Subway know and understand usage and expect to pay for it.

You just have to be smart about where you apply and not apply the idea of usage rights.

Small bed and breakfast in town; probably not.

Local pet store; probably not.

Major retailer promo; yep.

Mom-n-pop restaurant; probably not.

Chain restaurant; yep.

Headshots for a realtor brokerage; probably not.

Headshots for Maybelline; yep.

The challeng is there are no rules, no standards, and no where to turn when you are wondering about this stuff.

It's good to have a mentor in your pocket, or a peer to call and run this stuff by to help you get a grasp on all the moving parts.

COPYRIGHT VS BUYOUT

I never let go of my copyright. I just won't do it.

(Hey, Don, what if someone offered you a million dollars for your copyright on an image, would you take it? Huh, smart guy? Answer is easy; "Yes, of course. I ain't stupid!")

But that isn't going to happen.

But here is what DOES happen;

A client calls and asks for a bid. You put all the numbers together and send them the bid. Using the bid form in this book, it is noted to them that you retain copyright.

They get back to you and say they need the copyright so they can use the photos however they want.

This is the challenge because they do NOT need the copyright, they need a buyout.

I explain that the copyright stays with me, but I am very happy to work out a buyout plan for them so that they indeed own their own images and can use them for whatever they want to.

Forever.

A buyout means that you can give them all rights in perpetuity (fancy legal jargon meaning forever) while still maintaining the copyright to the image. This can include all usage and exclusivity as well. That means you cannot sell that image to anyone else for any use whatsoever.

A buyout generally runs between 50% and 200% the normal fee for exclusive, in perpetuity, rights released images.

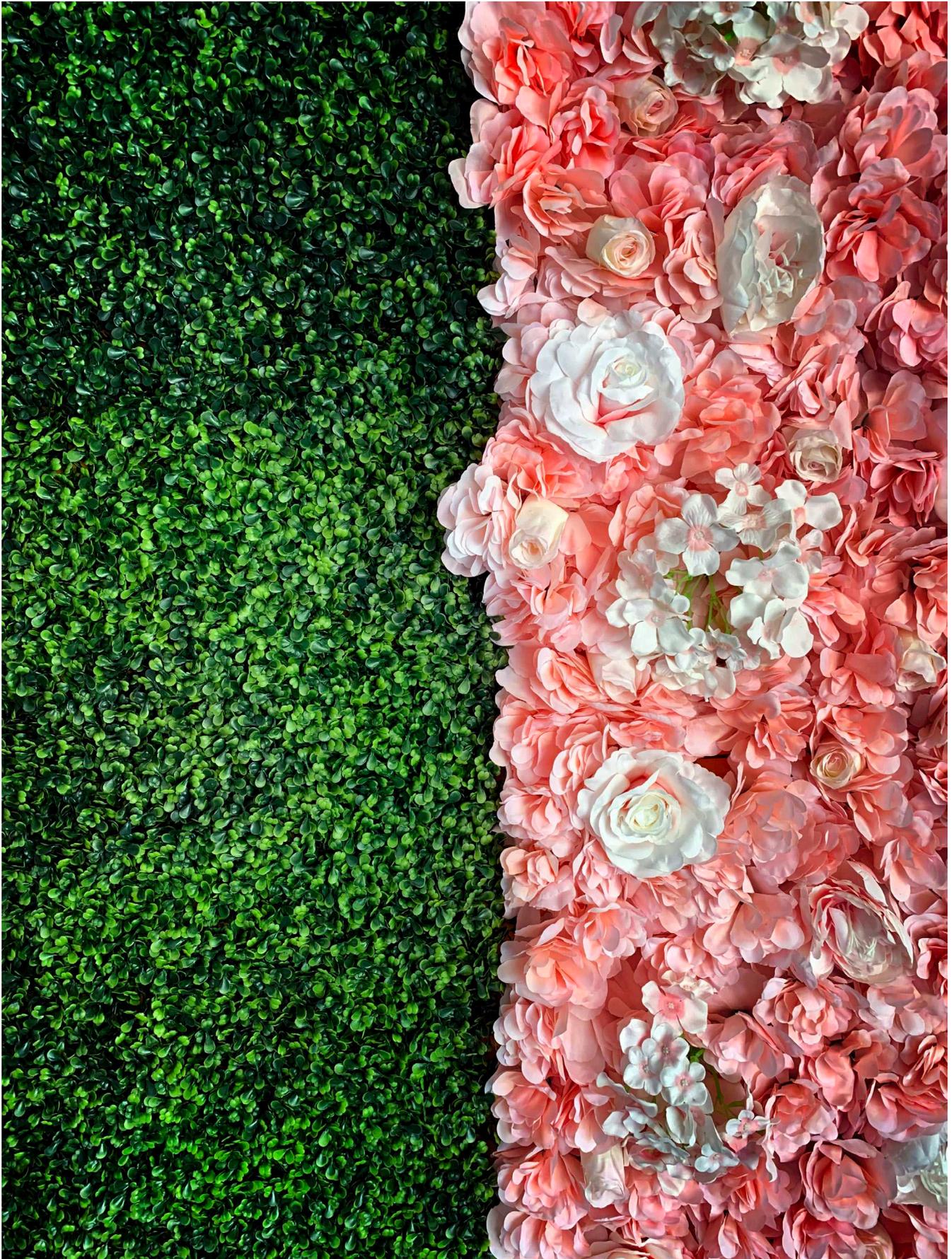
If the client balks, let them know that selling the copyright disadvantages both of you. Why pay for something they do not need. A full buyout is what they were discussing, so why add the burden of additional monies for copyright?

To each of you I would say this. Only you can make this decision as to how you want to handle usage rights and buyouts.

It is more challenging when you are starting out, though because you have mortgages and bills to pay. I don't want you to lose a good gig at the outset because you have adopted a non-negotiable stance. But I don't want you to be played either.

Here are three scenarios for you. You decide what you would do and see my suggestions for these on page 89.

1. A local business needs 50 headshots for his employee brochure. He wants to start up a relationship with you as he has lots of plans for new stores. Do you press rights?
2. A large corporation wants four images for their ads. They will be running these in 12 different trade magazines. Do you press for rights?
3. A magazine has an assignment for you to photograph the 4 star chefs in your city. Do you press for rights?



BECOMING AWARE: AN EXERCISE

This will take some planning and a bit of a habit change for you.

Perhaps. Perhaps you are already doing some of this.

Maybe it should say Becoming MORE Aware.

We'll see.

YOU WILL NEED:

Small notebook.

Pen/pencil

Phone with camera or a P&S in your pocket.

THE EXERCISE:

Write down and shoot everything that interests you for even a tiny moment.

OK, I know we cannot do that all damn day for a week.

You will probably have to find some slots of time or wait for the moment to make that entry.

FOR INSTANCE

- Light on muffins in kitchen.
- Back and bright.
- Shadows cast forward.
- Deep shadows.
- Reflection being thrown from the butter knife.
- Early morning, 6:45AM June 13.

Pull out the camera and shoot it. One or two shots is all that is necessary.

I want you to fill a small notebook in 2 weeks.

I love these Field Brand notebooks. They fit in your pocket.

These are a bit larger, but also excellent.

This is a very easy to carry notebook... 3"x5" and waterproof.

I am sure you can find something in your local stores as well.

Put observations on one side, and paste in photos on the other side.

(How to get the photos to paste in:

Put all in a folder and run a Photoshop Contact Sheet II with the images at 2"x3" then cut them out and glue them down.)

Only one observation per page with an image against it on the other side... the spread.

Photograph a few pages of your vision book for sharing on the first week of July classes.

And be prepared to tell me what you found as you went through this exercise.

VISUALIZATION EXERCISE TWO:

Answer these questions:

What do you want?

What are you willing to do to get it?

What are you NOT willing to do to get it?

How will you go about getting it?

Who else has gotten what you want?

How did they get it?

When you get it, how will you feel?

If you do not get it, how will you feel?

If you could have just one of these three things which would you choose?

__ more time

__ more money

__ more support

Prioritize and list your daily grind.

What comes first in the day?

Why?

How is that helpful?

How is it harmful?

When the lunch whistle blows, where are you?

How many hours do you spend thinking about what you have done?

How many hours do you spend thinking about what you have NOT done?

How many hours of 'work' did you do today?

Why?

What important thing got done today?

What important thing did NOT get done today?

You do not have to share that with anyone, but if you choose to NOT do it, you will not be able to discuss how change agents can help you identify and modify the bad habits that are keeping you from making your work great.

WE OWN WHAT WE DO

Let that sink in for a moment.

“We Own What We Do...”

Both artistically and humanly. Our actions define us, not our words.

What we do IS who we are. What we think creates what we want to do, but doing it is something different altogether.

We all know people who talk and talk and talk about their problems. They have so many problems that they can never get over talking about them.

But the problems never go away because of the talking. Ever.

Ever ever.

They go away when they stop talking and start doing.

Artists do the same thing. We want to do more, get more done, be more productive.

CREATE MORE!

But if all we do is talk about it, nothing will change.

The needle does not move.

What we need to do is our action plan.

I know we have talked about this in the past, and I KNOW that these last few weeks have been taking quite a toll on all of us... but that is when we need to go to work the most.

The rabbit hole of self-pity is shallow, cold, and smells a bit like rotting carrots... just sayin'... The utterance of “I’m bored” should shock you into an instant state of action. Binge-watching two days in a row means you need an intervention... fast.

What needs to happen is that you recognize the fear, pain, distrust, failings, and evil all around you for what it is... something to be smashed by our doing something. Yeah, you can do your own intervention.

Resistance hates it when we do something.
Resistance hates it, even more, when we do something good.
And resistance really really hates it when we do something that will make us want to do something again.

We talk about momentum.
We talk about creation.
We talk about “our work”.

Those aren't inanimate objects or just thoughts... they're fuel for our lives.

FUEL. FOR OUR LIVES!

- Building your list is fuel.
- Building your email template is fuel.
- Building your portfolio is fuel.
- Working on new work is fuel.
- Learning a new skill is fuel.

Fuel for the next stage of the journey.

Right now there are a lot of depressed, angry, confused, and misdirected people out there. Whether from social unrest or cabin fever or both, they are not happy.

That unhappiness can spread to our creative space as fast as a virus from Wuhan can decimate the world's economy.

Fast.

But we can do something about it.

We can create something.

Instead of just being angry, create something that will help others cope. Instead of being bored, create something that will bring joy to someone else who IS bored. Instead of thinking that everything is going to hell in a handbasket, create a new and more design-centric handbasket... whatever you do will help you AND others to get through the work that needs to be done.

There are too many people willing to do the minimum to get by. Whether in a deeply troubling social situation, or with something they cannot control... just give them the bare necessities and they will be happy.

They will never grow, nor will they thrive... they will just be.

Today, content creators, artists, creatives of every kind MUST engage like never before so we can deliver something powerful to move masses... or even just one person. We won't know until it has been created.

So... let's get moving faster than we have been.

My suggestion is to strive for 1% better today than yesterday, and 1% better tomorrow than today.

Small steps. Baby steps. Work your way to the top steps.

It's not a sprint, it is a marathon and we gotta get after it.



Build a Creativity Factory

As the portfolio takes shape, the email and direct mail campaigns go into auto-pilot, we can sometimes drift into a state of becoming lackadaisical about our portfolio and the day to day business stuff we may take for granted. We are so busy being busy we forget that there is a deliberate process going on here and we need to push it forward.

Our portfolio is our biggest asset, and marketing and business are also absolutely important. But in order to remain creative, keep on pushing the limits, and create new creative stuff, we need a plan.

Let's do an inventory of your creative assets.

One: What you can do very well (fictitious example)

- Still Photography
- Portraits
- Food
- Motion (Cinemagraphs)
- Work with non-pro talent
- Post Processing
- Photoshop
- Capture One
- Business basics

Two: What you can do well:

- Writing
- Copywriting
- Scheduling
- One-on-One meetings
- Presentations
- Concepting with clients
- Client Interactions

Three: What you need to work on:

- Cold Calling
- Phone skills
- Compositing (Photoshop)
- Maintaining my website
- Researching clients
- Getting meetings
- Follow-through
- Personal Brand
- Social Media Consistency

That sounds like a lot of us in some fashion or another.

So we have our list...

List one is cool, we are good with it.

List two is also fairly cool, we are most likely working on all of them because we are already good at them.

List three is where we will most likely have to spend some time building and fabricating what we do to build them to at least level two.

And while we cannot do all of them at the same time, what we can do is to combine our good and very good assets into ways of making a difference in our third list items.

For instance, if we are good at scheduling, we can take that skill and develop some way to get our Social Media Consistency up to snuff. Our ability to work with non-professional models means we may be able to develop better phone skills or help with cold-calling.

An example from my own world:

I am very good at developing ideas, but they tend to get left on the burner since I am not good at follow-through. I can start a million things, but finish only a few. This was getting in my way in a huge way when I began writing books and articles.

I was, however, pretty good at time management. I had worked with extreme deadlines, cost points, and schedules that would have scared the crap out of me if they did not absolutely, 100% be carried through. The agency business is time management at its finest.

What I did was schedule in a time slot for me to look over the progress of each of the projects I was working on. Before I would jump from one to another, or start one before I was totally finished – we call that the shiny bauble syndrome. While I thought in my mind that I was being oh so creative, I was only shipping about 50% of my real output because I was not finishing what I had started.

Adding an area to my day planner that forced me to continue over work that needed to be done, I would then see it in the calendar as an unfinished task. That meant I had to finish it to keep my task list from becoming unmanageable.

And it is always there... like a flashing neon sign saying “waddaya doing now schmuck? You’ve got work to complete.”

I also introduced deadlines to my own output. Deadlines are not my friend, but they are indeed important to my own process.

A looming deadline can focus my mind and force me to build my day around becoming more productive

There is always a shiny bauble out there, but with a tightly constructed schedule, a hard deadline, and that (annoying) task list, I am getting far more done than I used to. And the journal is where I can place all those shiny baubles until I have time to figure out what to do with them.

But in order to do that, I had to utilize some new tools and concepts on how I was working. I had to come up with a “system” for getting more done in the time I was allotted.

SOME COOL TOOLS:

This is the system and tools we can use to create our “creativity” factory,

These tools are our technicians, they are our team for the build.

Capture ideas:

Journaling, notes to self, ideas, tasks

Use online tools for fast productivity, notebooks for more longevity.

Organize information

On paper as in a journal or planner, online with a cloud-based planner
Notion, Evernote, Pinterest may all work for you.

Produce content

Photographs, ideas for photographs, sketches for the portfolio

Don’t let perfect be the enemy of good.

Calendar /Office Space/Task List

(A working office space, some sort of task list, I use a part of my journal and Google Calendar)

For me, the office must be conducive to producing work. I am not fond of messy spaces, or ‘make-do’ office space unless I am traveling. My space is a part of who I am and it must reflect MY aesthetic. So important.) I also have a massive whiteboard calendar that I am utilizing more and more. Colored markers help me keep track of specific tracks.

Taking our list apart to find out how our strengths can be adapted to help fix our, umm... un-strengths – is our over-riding job as we navigate toward new work, new clients, and new ways of working.

Stress is a creative-killer, and the world is full of stress these days. No matter where we turn we find uncertainty, negativity, and in some people’s lives... rage. This can be very difficult to overcome and it is indeed hard to think of being a creative factory when so many things seem to be aligning against us.

Here’s my advice: Focus on you, on what YOU can DO, not what others think or want you to do. Being creative and making art to ship is our goal. A great portfolio is only a lot of focused hard work away.

Approach each challenge with a solution in mind. In other words, ask yourself what it would look like if you had already achieved the goal of fixing that challenge?

Example:

“I wish I could be more organized. My office is a mess and it is not a ‘happy’ place to work.”

What would it look like if you had this challenge under control?

"I would have a lot more desk space, the walls would not be so cluttered, and my technology would be more a part of the office rather than stuff piled in at all angles wherever I could find space for it."

Great!

You now know what you must do. Take it in bite-size chunks. Clean off the desk by getting a box and putting all that stuff in it. Only retrieve it if you need it, and put it in its place if it is something you need to get to a lot of the time. The rest of the stuff in the box will be re-examined as far as whether I need to keep it after 30 days. Stuff I haven't used in thirty days will be dealt with.

Take all the stuff off the walls and re-imagine that space. Only put stuff up that you want to put back. Get rid of the rest of it.

Take one wall at a time.

Think about new paint.

Would something from IKEA be the answer for shelving? Is there some sort of furniture that can hold my printer and scanner and keep them from taking up so much flat-space? Install power boxes so I can access power without crawling under the desk.

Yeah, that is MY list of challenges for my office.

If I were going to create a YouTube strategy, I would create a 'post schedule' that will have me make 6 videos ahead before I post the first one. That way I will not be scrambling to create a new one each week. I can keep creating and only panic when I have but two in the queue.

This is the foundation of our "Creativity Factory".

All factories must work at full peak efficiency in order for innovation and creativity to thrive. Our goal at this point is to take where we are, assess where we are, imagine where we want to be... and raise our level to meet the challenges.

The over-arching goal is to have a system for creating new output, while at the same time working toward fixing our current challenges to decrease the stress we feel because of the things we have not mastered. Yet.

Perhaps you won't want to call it a factory, but I like the metaphor because it harkens to hard work, constant innovation, and measured output.

And remember: the most important part of this factory is the shipping dock.

Make it!

Then Ship It.



You Wanna Get Paid, Right?

CREATING SOME SENSE TO OUR PRICING STRUCTURE

Now that we are identifying and meeting clients who want to work with us, we face the dreaded “how much does it cost” question, and we need to respond with certainty and deliberate confidence or we risk the possibility of looking like we don't really know.

And that confusion for our clients can be very deadly for our business.

So, how much DOES it cost?

First, let's ask something every bit as powerful: How much are you worth?

So many things depend on that answer, and a great deal of that answer depends on a great many things.

- Where are you?
- How long have you been in business?
- What kind of track record do you have?
- Can I get testimonials?
- What makes you worth that much?
- What do you bring to the table that exacts that kind of value?

Yeah... hard questions. But we must be able to answer them cogently, and with some level of work to back up the answers we give.

And pulling numbers out of thin air is not the best way to do it.

(We have discussed pricing issues before, so head on over to

be refreshed on what we discussed.)

This is going to be more of a discussion of a pricing STRATEGY... a way to use pricing/value to help you indeed land the job.

First, we will discover what you are worth... and the answer is probably way more than anyone will ever pay. Because you are you, a unique you that no one else can become.

Of course, we will be looking at the value you bring to your shoots, what it is worth to the client, and why the value you bring is important to them.

Values you bring can be very challenging to explain. Some are measurable and some are not.

It is hard to place a value on “creativity”, or “uniqueness”, or “style”. But we all know they are of tremendous value when they align with the customer's view of the product or service.

Others are easily quantified; you have been making photographs for seven years, and you have won several awards, and you have created campaigns for some well known area stores or companies.

The fact that you have done it before is a VALUE that you bring to the table.

A full understanding of the technical aspects of the craft of photography, and a strong understanding of the way marketing works – especially using visuals will be another huge value to most clients.

Also in the mix is where you live, or where you work. The area



itself will provide some boundaries for your value.

For instance, a commercial pet photographer will be able to charge more at her Palm Beach studio, than at her sister can at her Albuquerque studio. There is more money in Palm Beach, and people have expectations of what things are worth there. In Albuquerque there is a different prevailing view of money and what it can or should purchase.

And within each community, there is some variation as well.

So you need to know what the prevailing price points are so you can be within them, AND within what you feel you are worth.

You may be worth a million bucks, but chances are unlikely that someone in Yuma, Arizona is going to pay that much for a picture of their Iguana... ya know.

Finding out what the prevailing pricing is in any given area is not an easy task You may want to ask other photographers, art directors, editors, and even clients you may already know. Take all that data and find out where you are and where you should be.

But in the end, choosing those numbers is going to be a lot of arbitrary acknowledgment of the proscribed and perceived value based upon exiting data, observation, quantum physics, the angle of the moon on Thursday, and some good old fashioned guessing.

Let's choose some numbers that may make sense for a lot of people in the group. I'll call them NOTNYC prices (although I am not altogether sure NYC will continue to be the highest-priced market).

It is very important for us to decide a base price – something we KNOW is going to be our fee when we pack our gear and head out the door. And we can use a simple formula in the beginning to track challenges that may present themselves as we do more and more work.

You will make mistakes. You will overbid and feel guilty. You will underbid and feel stupid. Clients will make your life hell, and they will be the saving grace in so many of your endeavors.

But to try to "make sure I don't screw up" is a huge waste of time in the beginning. We need experience in the trenches. We need to get a big gig. We need to underprice a gig and end up spending more time than planned. And it is OK to do so.

In fact, I think it is necessary.

So let's look at this sort of approach:

OUR BASELINE PRICING GUIDE

PROJECT TYPE / PREVAILING PRICE	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	PREMIUM
OUR BASE PRICE	\$1000	\$1500	\$2000	\$2500
SIMPLE JOB	+\$500	+\$750	+\$1000	+\$1250
MODERATELY DIFFICULT	ADD: +\$1000	+\$1500	+\$2000	+\$2500
A MORE COMPLEX JOB	ADD: +\$2000	+\$3000	+\$4000	+\$5000

You will most likely have to adjust the numbers above as you understand more about your location and what the prevailing pricing is there.

Now, remember, this is your base price... the basic number that YOU want to go home with. You may have to push it up a bit or bring it down a bit, but this is the most important part of your gig price because as you adjust here, you are adjusting YOUR money. Everything else on the bid is passthrough monies. Expenses, expendables, lunches, travel etc...

There is nothing wrong with adjusting these figures when you feel you must or in a way as to be sure to get the gig.

We do this so we can SEE what we want and make adjustments from there.

DO I PUBLISH MY PRICING?

As a commercial photographer, no. I have never seen it done.

As a product/service on your website as a category I think it may be a great way to differentiate yourself.

Some assignments or jobs that could work with a pricing structure:

- Library shoots
- Bulk packaging (bottles, cans etc)
- Drop-n-Pops
- Headshots
- Predesigned social media profiles
- Model portfolio
- "Amazon" type shoots
- Instagram Marketing Library
- I am sure you can find more if you put your mind to it.

HOW SHOULD YOU CREATE THESE PRICE LISTS?

We want to have an inexpensive level, a moderate level, and a premium level.

The inexpensive level should provide the basics of the job. No frills.

The premium should have as many frills as you can think of to justify the very high rate.

Where we focus our marketing and our energy is on the medium, the intermediate rate.

All the basics with enough frills to give it the value that exceeds the base level by a huge percentage.

Studies show you will outsell both the premium and the base with this center price point.

Let's take an IG library shoot based on 1 image per day:

BASIC: \$2250

- Photography, basic editing, Instagram color grading, and uploading to the client's dropbox (or similar).
- Based on one shoot per month, 35 deliverable images.

INTERMEDIATE: \$4750.

- Photography, basic editing, custom color grading, 8 'graphical' images per month, 35 delivered images
- Images are uploaded to the client's IG through "Later" for display 1 per day, two per Saturday (or whatever they want)
- Graphics can be offers created by the client and implemented on the Instagram uploads.
- Simple caption text with pre-supplied hashtags.

PREMIUM: \$7500

- Photography, basic editing, custom color grading, 16 'graphical' images per month 80 delivered images
- Two shoots per month, bi-weekly
- Images are uploaded to the client's IG through "Later" for display 1 per day, two per Saturday (or whatever they want)
- Graphics can be offers created by the client and implemented on the Instagram uploads.
- Simple caption text with pre-supplied hashtags.
- Additional copy for graphic images by pro copywriter

With this menu, the client can easily see that the middle one is the best one for them to choose. Most people do now want to go through all the hassle of uploading and hashtags and captioning – and they are happy to pay for it.

BUILD IN FLEXIBILITY

Rigid pricing can only be used for specials... "This month only...", "flash sale on headshots..."

For the rest of it you must learn to be flexible, be able to read the client a bit as you are explaining the work, and adjust as needed.

Am I telling you to always lower your price? No, I am not. Flexibility could simply mean adding ten images to sweeten the deal or work out a weekly payment schedule that can keep your cash flow healthy.

How you handle these different parts is of course up to you.

I would probably make up a couple of cards for leave-behinds or direct mail. Photography mixed with good design and copy that explains YOUR value proposition to them.

Studies show that good photography directly correlates to more sales and less consumer interaction.

Values you bring to the table are:

- A unique perspective
- A high level of professionalism
- Excellent understanding of the brand (You gotta research)
- The ability to solve visual challenges
- Experience photographing the product of for that service
- Branding consistency
- Client-focused solutions
- Aesthetically excellent images
- Knowledge of how IG works (learn if you do not know)
- Past experience with similar brands

Hey, that is a lot of value.

You are saving them money, time, worry, work, and effort to learn something they may not need to learn.

Assemble a price list for your work (the kind of work we are looking at here).

Think of ways we can help get this onto your website, create a new website, add a few postcards or direct mail and find the clients that appreciate the work.

You will most likely have to adjust the numbers above as you understand more about your location and what the prevailing pricing is there.

Now, remember, this is your base price... the basic number that YOU want to go home with. You may have to push it up a bit or bring it down a bit, but this is the most important part of your gig price because as you adjust here, you are adjusting YOUR money. Everything else on the bid is passthrough monies; Expenses, expendables, lunches, travel etc...

There is nothing wrong with adjusting these figures when you feel you must or in a way as to be sure to get the gig.

I HAVE THIS LITTLE QUIRK

I will plan and plan and plan to do a road trip. I will get maps out, study the weather, print out routes and get them laminated, pack and repack my motorcycle...

And the night before I am in a funk.

"I don't wanna go", I'll tell the wife (also known as St Marian, Shepard of Old Crazy Coots).

I lay in bed the next morning waiting for the alarm to go off and then get up and think "why am I doing this? I have too much to do. I am leaving the family to go out alone and probably will get eaten by a bear or a mountain lion, or worse run out of donuts."

But I get to the bike which is packed from the night before and I sit on it and sigh one more time.

I don't want to go.
I really don't want to.

But there is a voice that says "if you don't go you will not be able to ride up 191 with possible thundershowers, or get to see the sunrise at Bryce, or grab tacos at that great little place in Hanksville, or Delores, or Durango, or..." yeah, I know pretty much all of them. It means that by 9AM I will be pissed off at myself for not going.

"One more thing you said you were gonna do and didn't," I would say to myself.

So I slip it into first gear and head down to the 101 and by the time I reach the exit ramp for the Beeline I feel a little better. I

stop for water in Payson and I feel a lot better.

By the time I get to Heber or Show Low, I am elated. I remember why I wanted to ride. I remember the feeling of the road and it rejuvenates me to the point that I laugh about not having gotten on the bike sooner.

It is the same with photography.

(And selling your gear is pretty much like me scrubbing a trip to the rockies... impetuous and probably gonna regret it big-time)

Resistance can take so many forms that we forget what a fkn bastard he can be.

Not feeling very creative?

That's resistance.

You already are creative. You KNOW you are.

You have proven your creativity...

But resistance comes sneaking in and begins to create doubts, feelings that you would normally squelch get built upon until they are more than a nuisance, they are real.

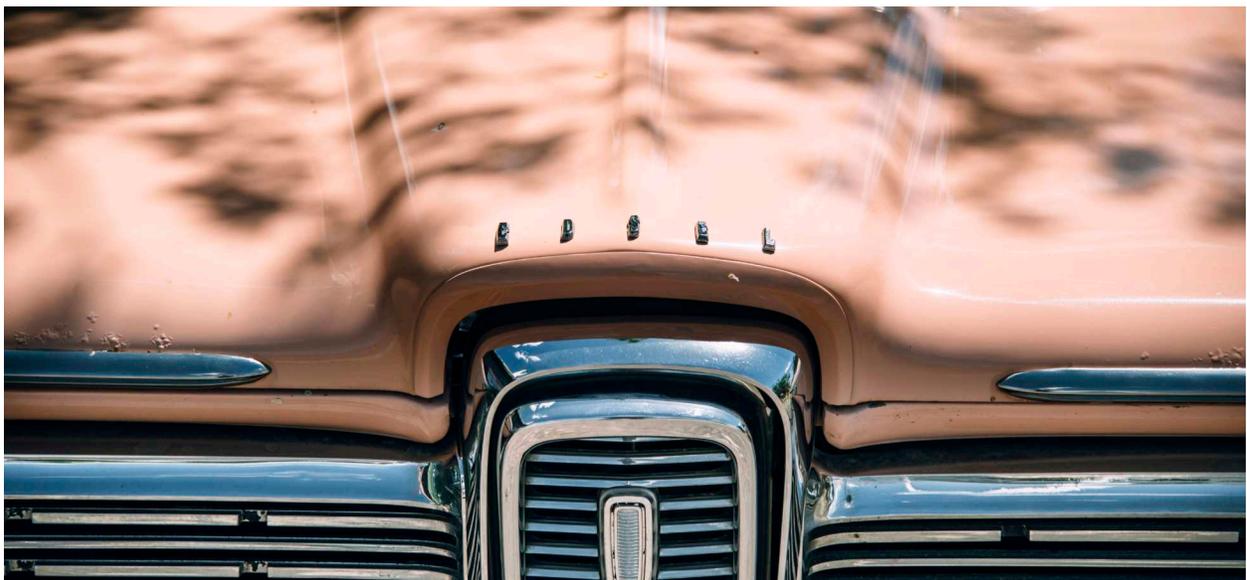
Does Passion come before hard work?

Or does hard work spark the passion?

Depends on which form of resistance you are fighting.

If you are feeling you are not working hard enough, go ahead and grab the camera and head out to make some photos.

Resistance is gonna hate that and work as hard as possible to make you seem inadequate, lost, uncreative... but if you keep



shooting the influence of those things begins to diminish.

I know, I have faced this same thing.

On more than one occasion.

If you feel you are not creative, and therefore not entitled to the work, then you have to prove yourself wrong.

And the best way to do these things is to let go of the worst self-defeating mechanism we humans cling to...

Expectations.

Forget them. Wipe them from your brain. Do not even let yourself entertain a single expectation.

"I gotta be creative today"... NO, you simply have to go out with a camera.

"I gotta work harder and force myself to..."

NO, you simply have to go out with a camera.

"What if there is nothing I find to photograph, does that make me a creative sloth?"

NO, you simply have to go out with a camera.

Managing expectations is one of the primary points of mental health I think, and too many of us simply let 'expectations' rule our lives and our output, and our relationships.

It is not easy to drop them, but it can be done.

Grab a camera.

Drive around for 3 or 4 hours.

Go downtown.

Go to the river.

Hit the dragstrip.

Visit an old friend.

Stop for a soda at somewhere you have never been before.

And if the moment strikes you, make a photograph.

I don't care if it is good, I have no expectations.

You don't care either because you do not have expectations either.

Just snap this.

Then snap that.

And somewhere along the way, there will be a little spark that goes 'click' and then you are making more photographs. And whether this takes one trip or 10 doesn't matter, right?

Because we have no expectations.

We are embracing the process.

We are giving ourselves over to the process.

And the expectations will take care of themselves.

I promise.

Suggested approaches from the Rights Section previously in the book (page 76).

1. No. The headshots are going to be used for a single brochure and they want more. The turnover in the business means there is no real reason for rights managed work.

2. Yes. Big corporations paying for all that ad space absolutely know the way rights and reproduction fees work. Tread lightly here but fight for your rights.

3. Yes. I do not give magazines my copyright. I will never do it. There is no good reason a magazine needs the copyright to the images they publish.



How Do You Know If You Are Doing It Right?

One of my friends asked: "... what if you're learning it wrong, how do you know?"

Good question.

The answer may be a bit circuitous.

It all comes down to making sure you know what you want to achieve.



And knowing what you want to achieve is both achievable and within your grasp.

In other words, I may want to be an astronaut.

Astronauts are cool.

But no one gets accepted into astronaut training at 70 years old.

So no matter how hard I work, how good I become, the fact of my age means being an astronaut is not a realistic destination.

But say I want to learn to play the trumpet.

Yeah, I can play the trumpet at 70, and if I practice every day,

with a good teacher, and a disciplined schedule, I could learn to play the trumpet pretty good by the time I am 75.

Maybe get a gig or two.

But that also comes with the understanding that I know what I want.

I want to play jazz.

I focus on it like a laser.

I become obsessed.

Obsession is the one thing that separates the good from the great.

Great artists are obsessed.

I do not believe you can achieve true greatness without being obsessed.

But that may be for another article.

This one is how do you know you are doing the work you are doing is right?

There are a couple of exercises you can do.

First, look at the best work in the same category or genre you are working in. Then analyze them carefully... very carefully.

What do you see in their work that you do not see in yours? Write it down.

What characteristics in their technical skills are different than your own? Does that matter?

Talk to a designer or art director who may be willing to look at your work and give you an honest evaluation. I do not recommend other photographers for that. (And I am sorry that I feel that way, but lately I have seen far too many - shall we say 'protective' photographers.)

If you know for sure the photographer is a straight shooter and not an egomaniac hell bent on protecting their turf, then proceed.

With caution.

There are several symposiums and workshops that have portfolio reviews where professionals will spend a half hour or so looking at your work and giving you an evaluation.

There are coaches and mentors who will also review your work and give you advice and help you work through the challenges you may be facing.

And lastly, peer reviews like those at informal meetings and get togethers can also help you make decisions on what your work may need to bring it up to par.

Or - perhaps you are simply doing it exactly right.

Are you confident in what you are doing?

Does it make sense to you?

Can you see growth and compatibility with the clients you have and want?

Sometimes we look for solutions in places where there may not be a problem.

A great portfolio doesn't do much good if no one sees it.

A strong visual body of work means nothing if the photographer is anti-social or not willing to engage with clients and others.

My advice is to listen first to your gut, then to mentors and coaches, and then to your peers. If everyone is telling you the same thing, then there may be a reason to make some changes.

But my guess is that you know deep down whether or not your work matches up.

Finding validation can be good, but it's usually un-necessary.

On Hiring a Mentor or Coach

These are investments that must be considered. The paths of apprenticeship are all but non-existent. That was how many if not most of the commercial artists gained their real world knowledge of how this all works.

Now it may be up to you to find someone who is a veteran of this crazy business and lean on them for guidance.

You won't find it on Facebook.

You won't find it on Instagram.

Ditto YouTube (with a few exceptions - looking at you Dan Milnor)

You won't find it on many online education channels.

The difference between a Youtube star, or an Instagram "Influencer" is as different as B2B is from B2C.

Most of them are selling you, the photographer/consumer on whatever it is they sell. Courses, presets, actions... and they use their status as popular characters to do that.

The best mentors I know are not huge internet celebrities. They are far too busy for that.

Look around and find someone who is doing what you want or has done what you want and get yourself mentored.

Spending a few grand upfront can save you more in pain and cash than you can imagine.

PITCHING SMALL BUSINESS FOR RECURRING GIGS AND IN-COME

Small businesses from restaurants to hardware, boutiques to pool supplies need to market now more than ever.

This is opening up an opportunity for you to find on-going accounts. Ones that pay you monthly for work to keep their social media campaigns on track and on-brand.

You could charge anywhere from \$1000 per month to \$5000 per month doing these marketing shoots.

That is recurring income.

What if you had 1 at \$1500, and one at \$2000 and then picked up another at \$2500... now pushing \$6K from three recurring gigs?

I am not promising that will happen, I am saying it is possible and very likely IF you market your asses off.

But we need a way to put this info out to our potential clients and leads.

I have written a script to consider. You may use it to create a web page, direct mail piece, leave-behind... whatever. Feel free to change it, alter it, rewrite it. Whatever. (If you come up with some awesome stuff, share it with your peers here. No one is in the same market, so it is all good.

I tried to keep it plain and without a real 'voice' so you will want to add your brand to it. (There are no f-bombs, so you know it is mild for me... heh.)

Here is the script. Customize it for your use.

A Madison Avenue Advertising Plan on a Main Street Budget.

Wow... things have sure changed a lot over the past few months. So much talk of the "new normal" and how our businesses are changing, or 'transforming' as is the current lingo.

But as important as that is, we must focus on what has not changed. That is where the gold is, and how advertising and marketing will continue to thrive.

The mediums are changing, but the message, authenticity, and brand continue to need a place to express themselves to your customers and clients.

Madison Avenue has seen the changes and quite frankly, they are frightened of what it means to them and their revenue. But unfortunately, they are focused on saving their butts instead of

wondering how YOU will survive.

We want you to thrive, not just survive.

Most small businesses on Main Street (USA, FRANCE... wherever) cannot afford luxury magazine ads and they don't work all that well for small business anyway. Purchasing local TV ads means being on at 3AM sponsoring someone hawking a new 'Fat Burning System' that entails eating only ice cream and broccoli. It's just too expensive to be seen when most viewers – and your customers – are watching.

Direct mail still works, but it must be connected to a solid on-going media campaign to give it a sense of urgency and consistency.

Where do you turn to get your message out without spending more than you should, but getting a return that makes sense?

Social Media.

Instagram and Facebook are becoming a preferred method for small businesses competing with larger ones, and for boutiques and specialty shops that want maximum bang for their advertising dollars.

A consistent Instagram feed and targeted Facebook advertising are affordable, measurable, and powerful.

And those ads and campaigns are built on images. Photographs. Great photographs.

Advertising agencies know great photography works in every medium. Some ad campaigns will spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on the images they use for advertising. Because they know photography – amazing photography really works. It sells ideas, services, and products.

And great photography sells products and services online as well. Amazon knows it. Etsy knows it. Email retailers know it. Even Madison Ave knows it. And believe me when I tell you they are already moving toward this new way of advertising, although they will still be expensive.

Engaging photography, solid messaging, and consistent connection can build relationships. One or two posts per month from a random customer's iPhone is not a marketing campaign. Taking photographs of your food out on a table in the sun is not appetizing. Shooting your neighbor's daughter with a camera phone is not going to sell fashion. It just isn't.

You need a professional who understands how to create the kinds of images that your clients expect to see, and you want to represent your brand.

One or two posts per day, with a solid plan for growth and featuring images that pull your clients in is the way forward in this crazy environment of uncertainty. And it is totally affordable – especially for small businesses in challenging times.

Let us show you how you can harness the power of Instagram, Facebook, Pinterest, and other social media using the best imagery you can possibly find while spending less than you would on a single traditional magazine ad insertion.

Call for a consultation (we'll use ZOOM) and find out how you can spend less, engage more... and create raving fans for your products or service.

A FEW THOUGHTS ON THE FUTURE OF THIS GAME

What was... and what will be.

Reps:

Once the pinnacle of professional photography marketing, reps will find it hard to keep promoting their talent. The talent may be in all levels of disarray, and the clients even worse. The usual rep/agency relationship may have to be totally restarted anew.

In the meantime, photographers who are lean and mean, who are creative and have used their creativity to grow new things should be talking directly to the agencies they can reach and to the clients that they want to work for.

Still Photography:

Big studios turning out only stills will find a very different landscape when the dust settles. Clients are going to be wanting to spend money, but their needs are going to be quite varied – and you better be damned ready to deliver.

A friend in Phoenix had a client he had worked with steadily for over 10 years send him an RFP for a Ten Hotel shoot. He does these all the time, but this time they needed a few 2-minute videos. His response was that he was good with the stills, but they would have to find someone else for the video. They found someone else... who could do both. You do not have to become a videographer, you just have to deliver the goods... there are videographers out there you can hire to shoot while you DIRECT!

Waiting for the RFP:

The normal marketing situation is that we send out postcards and emails with our precious images on them and hope that by doing that we will attract attention. Some of us send out thousands (the not smart way) and some of us find a more targeted list of about 200 or so names.

Now you will be pitching one-to-one. Find a client you want to work for, and pitch the visual ideas you have. Become PRO-

ACTIVE. Let them know you want to work for THEM, not just looking for anything you can find.

One of my photographers found a client a few miles from him. Saw their website and knew he could do some great work with their product. He purchased a few cans of it, spent some time shooting them (straight, splash, conceptual) and ended up with some nice portfolio shots. He ALSO shot them so he could pitch them. And he did. Right to their marketing person (finding clients is a long and painful process, but one that can be done if you WANT to work).

Within a few hours, he got a very positive response.

A few days later he received a nice RFP and ended up with a solid client who has booked more assignments with him.

This will mean more work for us. It will. But it will be the difference between sitting and waiting and taking control of who we want to work for.

Clients will appreciate this form of one-to-one marketing because it is personal. And, guess what, it is what they are going to be doing as well.

You must have "a story".

Just being an entity who makes pictures was once enough. Not anymore. Clients are going to want to know more about you, your motivations, your art, and what about you makes you special enough that they should hire you. If you need help with this, get it. But don't fake it, discover it, and let it be the most authentic thing you have ever done. Bullshit is transparent.

Being On-Time is late:

And we are not talking about showing up at 8:45 when you agreed to a 9 am meeting. It means showing up with more ideas, new ideas, ahead of the curve ideas. It means being ready to discuss the newest trends, delivering the hottest work, and to lead as a visual artist, not simply stay current or show up late with the same ol' shit everyone else is delivering.

Make yourself indispensable:

Do more than was asked. Take the lead when considering the deliverables. Your clients need more from you than what you agreed to, so do it. When you do a job for someone, make them see how they need you to keep working for them. Do that by following this next rule...

Over Deliver:

Just do it. No, they didn't ask for the cinemagraph, but you delivered one. They didn't ask for 6 choices, but you did it anyway. The client wasn't expecting a Facebook ad, or three Instagram ads, or a template for a product sheet along with your imagery, but hey – they got one. This will be a new way of working for many of us.

HOW DO WE THINK ABOUT MONEY?

OK, look. You may need a calculator for this, but most of us can figure it out pretty quickly.

Question one: How much do you want to pay for the things you want?

1. as little as possible?
2. as much as possible?
3. I didn't understand the question.

I am imagining that most of us chose 1. As little as possible.

Guess what – so do our clients. They want to pay as little as they can for as much as they can get.

Wouldn't anybody?

So understanding that we freelancers begin to think “well if we start small, they will begin to realize how good and wonderful we are and will willingly open their giant wallets and throw cash at us cackling “take my money... you are worth every nickel you god of all things digital...”

Yeah. That rarely happens.

We get stuck working for those nickels, hoping for their understanding of our value to change. And guess what, my over-worked little munchkins... it NEVER does. Well, it can happen, but again that is rare and rare stuff is not worth talking about when we are looking for our own value propositions.

So what do we do now?

We stop chunking out small gigs for little money and make sure we start at the right price. The right price is what we need to charge for the value of our work – and the value of our time – and be able to stay in business doing what we do.

How much do you charge for a headshot?

- \$150?
- \$250?

How many headshots do you have to book to make a goal of \$8000 a month?

This is our goal, by the way.

We aim today for a solid 8K... per month. Annualized, of course.

Well, at \$250 per headshot, that would mean we have to do 32 headshots a month. 40 per month at \$200.

It's difficult enough to book 2 headshots a month, can you imagine trying to market and book 32 headshots per month? You would literally not have any time left to shoot, edit, and process the 32 headshots. You would end up walking in circles and chanting something like “take me away Peter Hurley, for I have sinned”.

But if we can book 2 good-sized projects a week, or one big project a week, it becomes much more doable.

Our goal is \$2000 per week.

That is two half-day shoots at \$1000 per, or one medium day rate shoot at \$2000 per.

That means 2 or 3 clients per week.

And voila.. goal achieved.

“But wait, Don, you pickle-brained moron... how are we going to get that kind of work,” you shout from the back of the bar.

By focusing our efforts on that kind of customer.

Look at your customer roster.

Too many restaurants do not expect to pay over \$200 for 30 photographs because they have been trained to purchase volume instead of quality. And, sadly, there are lots of underemployed folks that consider \$200 for a couple of hours amazing money. They are working somewhere making \$16.50 an hour and they just got a chance to shoot pizza for \$100 an hour!?!?!?!?!?!?

Are you pitching headshots instead of “Influencer Packages”?

Are you looking for any old gig that can happen or have you set your sites on something substantial? Cause if you do that, and you hold on to it with all your attention and strength, you just may be surprised by what happens next.

Are you thinking small? Because you think you have to think small in order to “break into” the business?

Because that is bogus, dudes. You gotta get gnarley and tubular with your focus... and party on!

It will be most excellent.

Have you thought about bundling?

Have you thought about adding items to the packages that seem like a great deal to your customer, but are a lucrative upsell for you?

Consider:

"I will shoot your headshot and full length for social media for a price of \$1100. You will get four prints or files that you can use on your websites and social media accounts."

Orrrr

"My social media package includes a headshot, full body shot, and poses that cover all the angles you will need. We will spend the time necessary to put you in the best light possible and make these shots do what you want them to do.

Do you need more customers?

We can focus on a welcoming approach that matches your demographic focus.

Do you need more sales?

We can help them see how passionate you are about what you do, and convey that passion to them. They will be begging you to take their money.

Whatever your needs are, we will craft an experience that will be driven to success.

Deliverables include:*

Four high-resolution files ready to be used in print and media.
Four medium-resolution files for websites and online PR kits.
Four low res files for email, Facebook, Pinterest, and Instagram

The same files are delivered at medium resolution without a background for making social media posts, calls to action, and Instagram stories.

Let's get together and talk about your immediate needs, and what will be needed down the road as your business keeps on growing."

(Maybe show a cutout and get them excited about what they can do with that cutout, or motion graphic.)

Another crazy idea may be to offer them a "fantasy" – "hero" portrait using their image and one of the AI generators. Or make it a "painting" or a "cartoon" or so many other ways to beef up the sale without costing you much money at all.

And no matter what area of photography you are in, look for opportunities for a retainer. Retainers keep cash flow flowing with cash.

And that is a good thing.

Major points.

Do not charge by the hour.

Charge by the value of the work.

Occasionally charge by the shot, but always look to your unpublished day rate to get the per-shot price.

Explanation.

If your day rate is \$2000, then you have to ask yourself how many shots can you do in 8 hours.

If it is furniture on sets, perhaps two = \$1000 per shot.

If it is plated food, with styling, perhaps six = \$350 per shot.

A day running all over the factory could be a project rate = \$2000 (including 8 photos, additional photos at \$100 per)

Shooting by the hour is painful if they try to nickel and dime you with little, crappy 2-hour shoots where they cram everything but the damned kitchen sink into that hour and are then pissed off cause they didn't look amazing.

Shooting by the day is problematic because sometimes it doesn't take all day, and then they think you owe them the remaining two hours because they "paid for it".

Thinking like a business is not the same thing as thinking like an artist.

Do you think that there is \$7 of coffee in that Venti?

Or that shoe inserts really cost them \$22 to make?

Picasso had less than a dollar's worth of paint on a \$10 canvas. Ya know.

We do not care about what it costs to make, we care about what it is worth to the client.

Start planning your package rate products NOW.

** Note: these figures are an example, not a recipe. You must adjust them to your way of working and your demographic.*

BIDS, CONTRACTS, AND THE FINE PRINT

We are now at the point of bidding a job. You know, the scary stuff we fear because we are not prepared, we don't know how much to charge, and we feel like we are flying blind in this part of the business.

In this part of the business you are flying blind if you are not prepared with all of the numbers and information you need at hand to make a good bid.

You should have contacted a few of these vendors to check in with their rates, usual availability, and ways of working (deposits, 30-day payments, etc...)

If you wait until the last minute, putting together a bid will be a huge and sometimes unwinnable challenge.

BEFORE you need their services, you should have a chat with the following people (vendors).

Rental Studio:

Daily and hourly rates. What do they supply. Hours and after hours operation.

Makeup Artists:

Daily and hourly rates. Payment schedules, kit fees, assistant rates.

Digi-tech:

Daily and hourly rates. Payment schedules, kit fees, etc...

Wardrobe Stylist:

Very important for lifestyle work. Rates, payment schedules, specialties.

Location Permits:

Know where you need permits, the time frames, and if there are fees attached.

Photo Assistants:

You are going to need a photo sherpa for some gigs. Find one NOW.

Modeling/Talent Agencies:

Call them, introduce yourself. Get a rate sheet, and be ready to be looked at pretty closely. I have found a personal meeting and a showing of your book goes along way toward creating trust.

Having all this information at your fingertips is so important.

Waiting for the gig to come calling before you do this stuff will NEVER be a good idea. You will get the call at an inopportune

time, they will want a price ASAP, and you will be sitting there wondering what to do and how to put a bid together. You will panic, and start making mistakes.

Mistakes that can cost you lots of money on the gig.

And, remember, you do not have to be 100% accurate with the bid - you note that in the header:

"The numbers shown are approximations based on the parameters of the job as I understand it. Changes in the scope of work and the possible changes that would create in the pricing from the vendors will be noted before the bid is finalized."

And now you can go to your computer and start to key in the numbers you need to have in order to make the bid.

You will not be expected to know the price of a rental Scissor Lift, or a team of Paramedics standing by... yeah, that has happened, but you will be expected to know approximations of the teams you work with.

Never, ever pop off a number over the phone or in an email without sending your terms of service and expectations along with it. If you do not send yours first, they will send theirs and that changes the turf and relationship of the gig.

Your TOS agreement and price page constitutes a contract. There is usually no additional contract concerns to address.

What to do if the client sends you a contract with terms that you don't want to follow?

This happens quite a bit.

You get a call from a client who wants a bid, and they send along their service agreement or whatever they call it. Know that it is a contract.

And in it they have language that puts you at risk, or they want you to give them copyright and every photo you took.

I will then send them my Bid with all of my contractual info on it including the fact that I do not let my copyright go. I do not sign theirs, and if they ask, I tell them honestly that they do not have any reason to own my copyright. What they are looking for is usually an exclusive buyout on the images they choose.

That we can do.

Just know that if you sign their contract without having them change the language, then it is binding. Some clients sneak it in as a "payment voucher". If it has legal language on rights, it is a contract. Be careful.

Terms Document (cut and paste)

This is a very good Terms document that you can use for your bids. Highly vetted, it hits all the right points for commercial photographers.

Agreement: This agreement between Photographer (_____) and Client governs the assignment described in the estimate and these terms and conditions constitutes the entire agreement between the parties concerning the assignment.

Estimate: The fees quoted by the Photographer are for the original job description as presented by the Client. Any subsequent changes, whether made orally or in writing may result in additional charges. The accompanying quote is a good faith estimate of the time and expenses the Photographer anticipates.

Client Representation: The Client is responsible for the presence of an authorized representative at the shoot to approve the Photographer's interpretation of the assignment. If a client representative is not present, the Photographer's interpretation shall be deemed acceptable.

Definitions: 'Publicity' use is when the Client submits to an outside publication (print or electronic) for editorial use and The client is not paying for that use. 'Advertising' use is when the Client is paying for the placement of a photograph in whatever media it appears (print or electronic). 'Collateral' use is when the photograph appears in a publication or materials the Client produces (print or electronic) and whose audience is employees, customers, shareholders, or the general public. 'Personal Display' use is when a photographic print is hung in a home or office and will not be seen by the general public. 'Commercial Display' use is when a photograph is hung in a public place.

Additional Usage: If Client wishes to make any additional uses of the photographs not covered in the initial agreement, Client shall obtain permission from the Photographer and pay an additional fee to be agreed upon.

Copyright: Grant of any reproduction right to the Client is conditioned upon receipt of payment in full. All

rights not expressly granted in writing shall be reserved by the Photographer.

Authorship Credit: A credit in the name of the Photographer shall accompany his photographs whenever practical and customary.

Retouching: All final processed files include basic clean-up or as quoted in fees. Any retouching requested by the Client beyond the initial agreement will be billed at \$100/hr.

Tearsheets: Client will provide Photographer with two entire copies of any publications his photos appear in (except in cases of Publicity use) upon publication.

Payment: Advance payment may be required to initiate production. Client shall make final payment within 15 days of invoice. Late payments will be billed at current Prime APR + 10pts.

Cancellations/Postponements: In the event of a cancellation or postponement of a shoot by the Client or subject, Client shall pay all expenses incurred by the Photographer up to the time of the cancellation, plus a fee to be agreed upon. If a shoot is canceled within 24 hours of departure for the shoot, Client shall also pay 50% of the anticipated photographic fee and 100% of the anticipated fees of any subcontractors booked for the job.

Indemnification: Client hereby indemnifies and holds the Photographer harmless against any and all liabilities, claims, and expenses, including reasonable attorney fees, arising from Client's use of Photographer's work. The Photographer similarly indemnifies and holds Client harmless against any and all liabilities, claims, and expenses, including reasonable attorney fees arising from Photographer's negligence.

SIGNATURES _____

WHAT FOLLOWS AFTER THIS IS THE NUMBERS SHEET.



HOW TO NOT HAVE A BID FIASCO ON YOUR HANDS

Here are three ways to screw up a bid. There are several more, but I am told printing a 6,398 page book would be expensive, so I am going to go with these three as cautionary tales.

Fiasco Number One.

A client of nearly ten years has been doing quarterly updates to their national and regional advertising. The images run in several regional publications, newspapers and in-store Point of Purchase displays. The photographer that has been shooting the work for them was charging \$12,000 per shoot based on the usage.

This rate had stayed fairly steady for nearly 8 years. Mostly because the photographer was doing a lot of work for them and kept this price steady as a favor and so that they could budget without getting bids each time.

The last quarter he did not get the gig. A new photographer had pitched them and told them he was happy to shoot it for \$3000.

This photographer could probably have gotten the gig at \$10,000 and made \$7000 more if his work was good. The interloper, having no idea at all what the gig was worth, just screwed himself out of at least \$7000, maybe more.

He also set the new bar at \$2500... which is unrealistic in the commercial world with that kind of usage.

Why would he do it for so little? I can imagine that he had no idea of what the value of commercial photography is set at, nor is he aware of usage and how usage is priced. Look, this is a billion + a year client, and these images are very important to their marketing.

(Solution: Know the industry. Know the market. Get involved with that part of the industry, and get help on shoots that are for national clients. There are consultants and websites that can help. Wonderful Machine has people who can help with bidding on a per bid basis, and fotoQuote has a service that will help you put together something that makes sense.)

Fiasco Number Two

The client is a national ad agency with regional offices. Their client was a company handling the work of a celebrity.

The gig involved the celebrity and an endorsement of a beauty product. The shoot was a buyout, with everything from national advertising to electronic media. Three shots of the celebrity with and without the beauty product and one shot of the product itself.

The bid was created using standard bidding and buyout parameters. And the photographer actually wanted the gig so the bid was modified (down a little) to a rate of \$40,000.

All was set and agreed to... then... nothing.

Then my photographer received a phone call from another shooter looking to rent her studio for a 'celebrity' shoot. Turned out that the agency had been looking and found someone - well - "cheaper".

The interloper was shocked that the rental was \$450 for the day. She had bid only \$2500 for the whole job and felt that if she spent \$300 on the rental studio, she would not make enough money from the gig.

Ya think?

She had taken nothing into account that a seasoned shooter would have.

How about craft services? This is a celebrity, her entourage, the ad agency entourage, MUA, hair stylist, stylist, and wardrobe person. Food alone could easily be \$1200. And of course, the photographer had no liability insurance, which is insane with that many people on set.

And it was a total buyout!!!

The shot was set, it was a disaster, and in the end, the agency lost the account. Why they would have even thought that someone quoting \$2500 for a gig of this magnitude would have a freaking clue about what the real world is beyond my understanding.

(Solution: Get educated on licensing, why rights matter, and how much a shoot of this size and usage requirements would be. The above resources are important, but there are professional sites online as well as the peers in your town that may help you work this out. And if they are not willing to help, they are total assholes. Find someone else to help. Dig, research, dig some more.)

Fiasco Number Three.

A photographer was called to bid on a job involving widgets... lots of little widgets. The bid was for simple "drop and pop" shots of 450 items.

When the time came to begin the planning for the shoot, the client informs him that there will actually be three shots per widget.

At the same price as negotiated... but the new shots involve different angles.

The photographer tried in vain to explain how the light was different and how having 1350 shots meant much, MUCH, more time.

But to no avail.

What should have been a 2-day gig stretched into 6 days of blinding quick shooting and upset clients (it should not have taken this long) and more.

It was a potential disaster for the photographer.

(Solution: Well, full disclosure here The photographer was me. And when I was told that there were far more images than expected, I rebid the gig. And when they said it was too much, I politely declined the gig. They found someone to do it though... and there ya go.

That photographer is happily (or whatever) shooting boring, monotonous widgets at \$3 a piece. By the time he is done, he will have worked nearly a week at a rate that should have been one day.

MAKE SURE THE BID MAKES SENSE... TO BOTH YOU AND THE CLIENT

The phone rings a little before lunch. You answer it and a voice on the other end says, "How are you. You showed your book here at the agency a few weeks ago, and we have a job we would like you to bid on. We will email over the particulars if you are interested." The first thing you think is "Damn - I am just the hottest thing since sliced bread, the bomb, the..." - it hits you. You are going to have to price a gig. Put some numbers down. Make a commitment to a price. Submit a bid.

Nothing causes more heartburn for emerging photographers than pricing. What do we charge? Will I be too high and not get the job? What if I am too low and they either think I am incapable? What if I am so far under that I lose money - or worse?

And what happens if after you submit the bid, you get a call from the agency point person who asks for some clarification on your bid, and shares with you that they would love to hire you – but you are a couple of thousand over the budget, and a bit higher than the other 368 photographers that bid it.

OK – it probably wasn't 368 – it just feels that way.

Now the heartburn of submitting a bill becomes the 'catastrophic nightmare' that is known to the emerging photographer as "negotiating" with the client. And you want this job... you really want this job.

They have accepted the bid you sent, but want to see if they can get the price down lower. If you have not prepared a bid correctly, this can be a terrible event for you. If you have a fear of negotiation, it will even be more horrendous.

Here are some tips for making the negotiations more palatable and also ways that you can provide a win/win for your client. Remember, they are not adversaries, they are people who want to work with you.

Prepare a Bid That Leaves "Room for Negotiation".

One of the easiest ways to be able to negotiate is to have things that are negotiable. If your bid is a single fee price, you may have a problem figuring out what to cut. And how to re-arrange things that you will have to be responsible for if the shoot is a go is a terribly difficult thing to do in your head – with the client on the phone.

Working in your head makes no sense. Write things down. Use a bidding software, or create a spreadsheet to keep it all in order.

"Line Item" expenses are a good way to let your client see what is involved and what it will take to make the photographs they need. Airfare, food, assistants, prop rentals, car rentals, hotels, stylists, MUA's, models and more. Sometimes much more, are needed to do the job to your clients needs.

Creating the line items means two things: Charge what it is worth, and add some markup when possible. Some ad agencies require backup documentation, so be aware of what you can and cannot do and adjust accordingly.

Then add each line item with the amount that you need. Be very meticulous when preparing these estimates and make sure you do not low-ball the pricing of these line by line items. They can be definite places for negotiation. Price them at what you research as a fair price, but not the cheapest you can find. If you are already at the bare-bones number, you have no wiggle room.

And in the art of negotiation, wiggle room is a good thing to have.

So let's say we have a bid going out for a two-day brochure job on location. We will need to have an assistant for the heavy lifting and digital assistance.

I could say "\$12,000 for the shoot".

The client calls and says, "We are pretty good, but we can only get the client to spring for \$10K. What can you do?"

Without the itemized list of what it will take to do the shot, it becomes a crazy mix of numbers in your head. And that can mess you up terribly. Without the line items to refer to, you are changing things and missing opportunities. What do you chop without sounding like you had no idea what you were doing when you tossed that number out?

It becomes more heartburn.

The Line Item Approach

However, with the line item approach, we can negotiate ways to do what needs to be done.

Shoot Fee: | \$5000
Usage Fee: | \$2500 (Client wants buy out on two images)
Assistant: | \$600 per two days
Equipment Rental: | \$500 (lights, stands, additional boom, backup pack)
Travel (8 hrs total) | \$950
Gas/Vehicle | \$350
Food | \$300 (\$75 per diem per person)
Hotel | \$650
Scouting | \$500
Digital Storage | \$300
Miscellaneous | \$200

First – the top line is off the table as much as possible. If you charge that much, then that is what you charge. If you start to negotiate that fee, then you will lose every time. (Note, I am not saying you shouldn't do what you have to do, but for me – if that is what I said I needed for me, changing it only says I wasn't sure what I actually was doing, and my first figure was pulled out of thin air.)

What if we are able to convince the client that they don't need a buyout, only usage for the two images for the brochure run. That could save \$1500 there. Can we find cheaper accommodations with the client's help or through Priceline? We could save a bit there. The client has already picked the location, so instead of a scout, we only need to swing by and check it out... \$100.

And we have arrived to the clients price of \$10K without too much pain and angst.

I may opt for Mickey-D's and Subway for \$40 a day if it gets me the gig. I can find cheaper accommodations, and maybe I waive the travel if they can provide it in-house. But I don't change the number at the top. That is my fee. THAT is what I need to be paid for doing the work as described. Carved. In Stone.

(Or at least a very hard, igneous material that would be difficult, but not impossible, to alter. I'm just sayin'...)

Compromise and finding ways to work together are an important part of your photography business. Do not pass on the opportunity to roll up the sleeves and get into the hard work of finding out how you can make it work. Your client will appreciate it – and you will have more opportunities to shoot for them.

Finding out what to charge is another article, but for now here are some resources for you:

ASMP (American Society of Media Photographers)
APA (Advertising Photographers of America)
FotoQuote (Software)
BlinkBid (Software)

Also note that Photoshelter has lots of resources on bidding and negotiating for the commercial photographer.

Your work has value. And the value is important to you both as an artist and a businessperson. Taking less than the value of your work will make you feel less positive about your work and yourself.

Prepare yourself for No Deal.

Negotiating must always include this important component – the ability to simply walk away from the deal.

With no regrets, no looking back.

If the deal stinks, it will stink when you are done. But then you will spend time regretting it, smoothing over possible irritations and with less money for your efforts than you should have. Listen to your gut... if it sounds too good to be true, it is – and if it sounds pretty fishy, it probably is as well.

And prepare for more because the client has learned they can beat you up and win. If they win once, they will assume 'no contest' for the next match. And now you are in the position of having to become an aggressor in order to win back what should have been. There are some clients who are worth it... but I find with the competition so great out there, they simply move on. They may feel they have won before and you winning

would make them a loser.

No winners and losers at this stuff. It is a terrible mindset to be in. Always work for a win/win solution for you and the client - and their client if that is the nature of the gig.

It is not about winning – it is about business. Smart business practices always make sense. And even so, winners like hiring winners – you can't imagine how hard it is to change your reputation in a smaller market. From cheap and easy to elegant and expensive? Yeah... believe me, when I tell you that is a most difficult thing to do.

Notes:



ON GETTING A DEPOSIT...

Do it.

Or risk more than just the time you have given to the gig already.

Back in the day I got fed up working with the advertising agencies in my city. They started making a habit of 60 - 90 - 180 payment schedules for photographers (we were called 'vendors' on the accounting log).

After a particularly harrowing experience, I found myself with a couple of thousand in the bank with nearly \$130,000 in receivables while looking at an upcoming week of 5 days of shooting. This would entail dozens and dozens of rolls of film and processing, and signing for tens of thousands in model fees, catering, extra expenses, and more.

I was feeling a little gut punched. One agency had owed me money for four months, and just notified me that they had 'lost the billing' so it would be a few more months before I got paid.

Agencies seemed to 'lose the billing' a lot in those days.

After that harrowing week I realized I had trained clients to treat me like crap. This was my fault.

The agencies were not late on the copier rental fees. They weren't late on their payroll. Agencies were not late on paying the phone bill, or the water bill or the lease payments for their fancy cars. All of those invoices were never lost.

Only photographers and illustrators seemed to be so unlucky.

I looked myself in the mirror one bright, sunny morning and decided I was never going to do a job without a deposit to cover expenses and any additional billing items (models, MUAs, film, processing, polaroid, assistants etc...) ever again.

And the first time I asked for it, they said no.

And I said "I understand. Thanks for thinking of me."

He asked me why I wanted a deposit, so I told him. Clearly and concisely. I wasn't rude or condescending. I told him that I was fronting money and getting in hot water with my 'vendors' and that I wanted to maintain a working relationship with them while building my business.

He said he understood, we shook hands and I left.

I felt like throwing up.

It was a good gig, and there was some serious money on the table. At the time I had 4 full time assistants, and I just walked away from a gig because of a decision I had made to myself.

I did not hear from that agency for several months, but then I got a call for a catalog/product pshoot with a lot of products. I met with the AD and we looked at what would be needed. This gig would take at least 1000 sheets of 4x5 and 50 boxes of 4x5 polaroid. We needed a male and female hand model, and there were a few specific props that had to be purchased/rented.

It was a very cordial meeting, and I thought maybe he forgot my stipulation from last time.

I got back to the studio and my studio manager got to work coordinating a full eight days of shooting while putting together the estimates for consumables and the reimbursed items that would have to be covered.

I sent the bid back (by motorcycle messenger... remember those?).

The next day another messenger arrived at my studio with a check that covered my expenses.

You teach people how to treat you. I stayed on the highest ground, made my case, and it made sense to them.

When you do not ask for a deposit, you run the risk of blowing your capital, getting in a bad position with your vendors and talent, and start to feel the pressures of owing a lot of money to someone that you simply don't have because the client has dropped the ball.

(Someday I will talk about the Christmas Eve I awoke at 4AM realizing that my ad agency was on the hook for \$2.1M ad buys and we had not heard from our client for a week. It worked out, but Tums stock went up three points in January.)

Keeping cash flow consistent and never being too far 'in the hole' is a very empowering place to be. You can take more risks and build more contacts when you are not in total fear the modeling agency was sending the goon squad because you hadn't paid them in thirty days even though you haven't been paid yet.

And really, my failure to handle my own finances should not bear on the ability of a model to make a living. I needed to get my schtick together for them as well as me.

Deposits are the best protection against someone who doesn't pay. While you may not have made any money, you are not OUT any money either. Your deposit should cover your expenses plus a few hundred for the unseen that always pop up.



Working with new clients always requires a deposit. Working with clients you have had for a while, and know very well is easy... the deposit is just part of doing business and they are on board.

You teach them your worth.

WHAT HAPPENS IF THE CLIENT SAYS THEY DON'T HAVE THE MONEY RIGHT NOW

(All caps because this happens a lot.)

Walk away.

If they do not have it now, when will they have it?

And if they are such bad business people that they are willing to engage you without having funds in hand because maybe they think you will take the fall...? Well screw that.

I been around the block too many times for that crap to smell like perfume.

Figure out your out of pocket expenses, add 15% and get a deposit.

It's just good business.



The Ultimate Guide to Self Promotional Tools

Deciding what kind of promo to do is something that takes a bit of thinking and planning. It also takes some research. And it takes a coherent system so that your promo can be seen far and wide – wider and farther than they were intended to be seen.

Think of a set of postcards. There are some client types that would be interested in them and a few that would not. So it would behoove you to make sure your client type would be someone who would be responsive to your promo. (Or, you can go crazy and send them something outside of their normal stuff – just make sure it is so good they can't ignore it. Or you.)

Some clients LOVE the postcard promo. Some hate it. You will be sending to both initially... it is just the curve of it all. As you go along, you will learn which clients love which sort of promo by gauging their engagement with the work. We can do this the same way traditional marketers have used metric points to gauge their ad dollar's reach.

More on that in a moment.

Let's lay out 3 different promo pieces; a postcard, a multi-page magazine, and a small poster.

The templates we/you create will be usable for more than one promo, and may be the catalyst for more promos along the way.

THE PROMO MATERIALS: POSTCARDS:

5X7, 5.5X8.5, 6X9; These are the three most common sizes. And they are common because you can order them that size without paying special size or cut fees.
(NOTE: 4X6 are nice sizes but usually they are sent as a set of cards. I have seen as few as 8 and as many as 50.)

You can choose to print them single side or double side. Just make sure you have a reason for that choice. 'Random images' is NOT a reason.

You also must decide if they are to be sent as a set or individually.

There are instances where you may want to send a set of cards. This would get considered a premium promo piece and is probably best left for special clients, or those clients you REALLY want to work for. I suggest only one premium promotion per year, although some photographers will do two.

Design should be kept to simple and smart for a postcard promo. Once you start to become clever with the cards (folding, die-cut, foil, etc...) it can become more of a premium promo.

MULTI-PAGE PROMO:

These days that means either a newsprint newspaper style, or a "magazine". Brochures are not really the bailiwick of photographers although there is no reason (other than aesthetic) that they couldn't be. Just know that if it looks like a "brochure" it will not be taken as seriously as a "magazine" would.

There are also only a few configurations:

5x7 trade book (Blurb)
6x9 trade book (Blurb)
8x10 trade book (Blurb)
5.5x8.5 magazine (Blurb/Magcloud)
8.5x11 magazine (Blurb/Magcloud)
11x8.5 magazine (Magcloud)

You can find other configurations out there if you look for them, but these are the most popular.

HOW MANY PAGES?

On a trade book I would look at a minimum of 24 and a maximum of 52.

On a magazine I would look at a minimum of 8 and a maximum of 24.

Keep the usage in mind.

Is this a dropoff? Is this a premium? Who in your list will get this and what do you want it to say?

I can do this stuff.

I can make stuff look good.

I can make killer shots from bad stuff.

I am creative enough to make these images for you.

I have something to say and I want to say it my way.

Each of these approaches may be good for your client list, but it will take research and planning to figure out which you should be concentrating on.

For instance, I would send a far different set of images to a magazine publisher than I would for an in-house corporate graphics department.

Wouldn't you?

At least at first.

And remember – no one gets this perfect the first time out. You must be in it for the long haul and commit to keeping the promo thing up.

POSTERS

No, not the huge Farrah Fawcett types of poster. Small posters like 13×19 and 11×17 are very cool and can be received well by clients. You just have to make sure that the imagery is well presented, and that the poster is something they would want to put on their wall.

There are many ways of making posters that get used. If you are wanting to get your poster on the wall, consider a calendar approach, or a simply designed 'todo' list. Perhaps you could list three dozen great design URLs at the bottom or the best design podcasts.

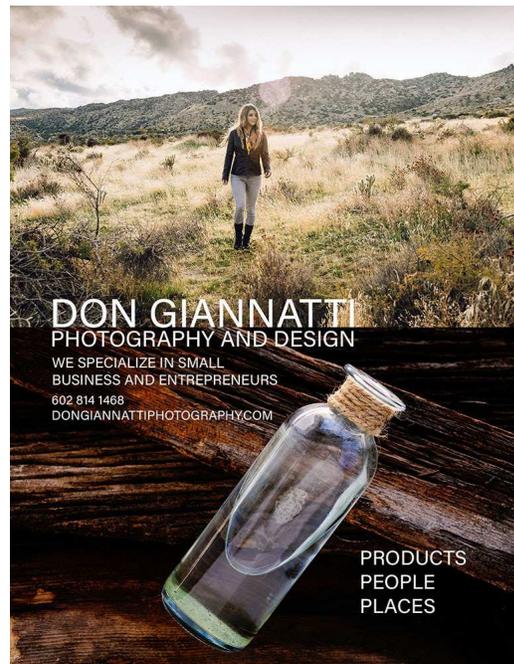
Or just go with good typography and an interesting photograph. There is no right way and simply a lot of wrong ways.

For posters – and all promo materials – bad typography can kill them. Inappropriate imagery can sink them as well. Printing must be top drawer and the image must be something you think they would want to look at for a reasonable time.

Posters can be printed at Overnight Prints, Magcloud, and Vistaprint.

FOR NOW, LET'S START PLANNING OUR MATERIAL CHOICES.

A full free workshop on creating the tools you need to start your business: **Minimal Viable Brand for Photographers**, under the workshops tab: www.lighting-essentials.com





THE CONUNDRUM... THE STRUGGLE... IS REAL

"Do I choose a photograph that "they" will like?"
"Do I show them something awesome that they have never seen before?"
"Do I play it safe?"
"Do I get overly creative?"
"What if they don't like the image I choose?"

Show your favorite work and also something they would want to see. Do not overthink it, but think it through for sure.

"What if the image doesn't look exactly like what they are looking for?"

Nothing.

Nothing happens. And that's OK.

First of all – there is no "they". There is no cabal of art directors or gaggle of art buyers or flock of picture editors out there with the exact same taste, the exact same temperament, the exact same aesthetic.

There are people with wildly divergent tastes.

The best thing to do is to choose something that shows what YOU can bring to the table. What are YOUR aesthetics?
By tipping your creative hand, they can make a determination

of whether they may want to co-produce something with you.

We think we are auditioning for a job when we are really auditioning for permission to keep auditioning. We are trying to have them be interested in us, engaged with the idea of using us, and aware of what we are doing.

The job thing comes later.

When they get a gig and remember our promo from a year ago. When they bring a new client on and think that we are the best fit for that client.

When the job they are working on reminds them of that set of postcards we sent and in fact, those cards were the impetus for the creative they are working on.

And all of that happens.

Every day. Somewhere.

HERE'S HOW WE START:

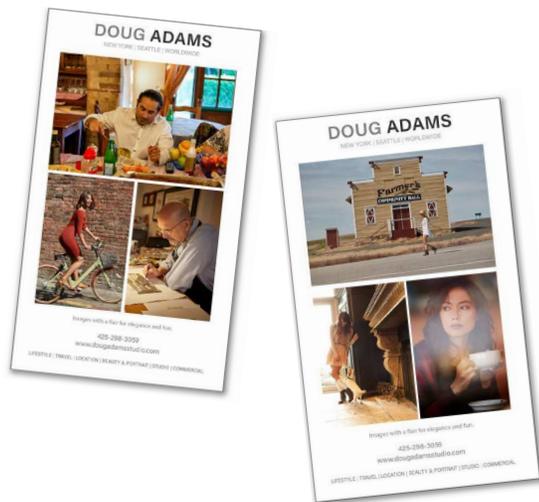
DEVELOP THE THEME OR PROJECT WE WANT TO FOCUS ON FOR THE PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS

In this instance, we are looking at a set of postcards. If we are going to do double-sided, we need at least 8 images for the 4 cards. So we have to figure out:

What we want to say with this promotion

- What we want to show
- How do we want to use the promotion
- What we expect from the promotion
- How best to follow up on the promotion
- This can NOT be a random set of 8 postcard images. That will not do. They need to relate to something we want to impart on the client.
- Perhaps we want to show off some expertise
- Perhaps we want to show off a particular style.
- Possibly show work that will get them excited enough to call us.
- Just an awareness card to let them know we are out there and more will be coming.

And a lot more reasons that may be as different as all of you are reading this.



Evaluate your possible images.

- Do they meet technical and aesthetic goals that you are happy with?
- Do they have a bit of “wow” factor to them?
- (Postcards must have more “wow” than a mini-magazine because they don't have context to give them more meaning.)
- Save the possibilities into a folder so you can pick and choose later.
- Design a mini-postcard, or do 4 up on a single piece of paper to see what they look like together.

Let's look at a simple direct mail piece.

I love the idea of postcards, whether in a group or single. Postcards are inexpensive, easy to handle, and are well liked in the community of clients we work with.

Recommendations:

4x6 Postcards.

Best used in a group. For instance, putting 5 - 10 of them into a small box for a lovely, hands on presentation. 4x6 postcards are too small for single image presentation.

5x7 Postcard.

The smallest I would send.

OK to use for a single, stand alone mailing, but also pack more punch in small groups of 3-8.

6x9 (5.5x8.5)

Perfect for single post presentations. Easy enough to send, easy enough for the client to handle on their end.

8x10 and larger.

This is a challenge. They are very large and can be damaged in the post, and they can be harder for your client to store or display. However, they can be very powerful when approaching direct clients and brands.

Layouts can be varied, of course. And if you have access to a designer, you can do them any way you want.

If not, use one image on each side, with your logo and contact information. Bleed off the edge if you choose to, but it is a choice. Borders look good as well.

Choosing your images for a promotional piece.

This is always a conundrum for a lot of us. We want to make sure we pick “the right image” for this all too important piece.

Do we show them what we think they want to see, or do we show them something we think is cool.

The answer is yes.

But this means we have to know our style, and believe that our style of work will fit with the client we are sending them to. That means we have to show the client a well designed and creative image, with excellent presentation.

Because in the end, this is what they want to see; your creativity at work.

You may think that a client who makes umbrellas only wants to see umbrella photos, but in actuality they want to see something totally creative.

They probably figure that you can shoot an umbrella if you show them something with a lifestyle, travel, or location theme. And if you are a still life and product shooter, there are many ways to show your skills off both with and without an umbrella.

There are a few simple things that you need to think about. While the work doesn't have to be an exact fit, it should have some correlation to the client you are showing it to.

- Don't send food photos to a hardware client.
- Don't send hardware photos to a baby clothes client.
- Don't send car photos to a pharmaceutical client.
- Don't send nudes to... well, don't send nudes.

The short answer is to send a photo that you can make a case for them to use, or simply send your best images. Period.

Creating a Contact Sheet in Adobe Photoshop

One of my favorite tools is the Contact Sheet II tool in Photoshop. I use it to make old fashioned hard copy contact sheets of my images to be used when I need to do picture selection and story editing.

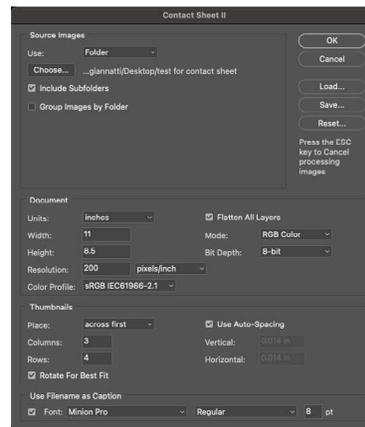
It is pretty simple.

Put all of your images in a folder and then, in Photoshop, run File > Automate > Contact Sheet II

At the top it will ask you to choose your source folder. Choose the one where your images are.

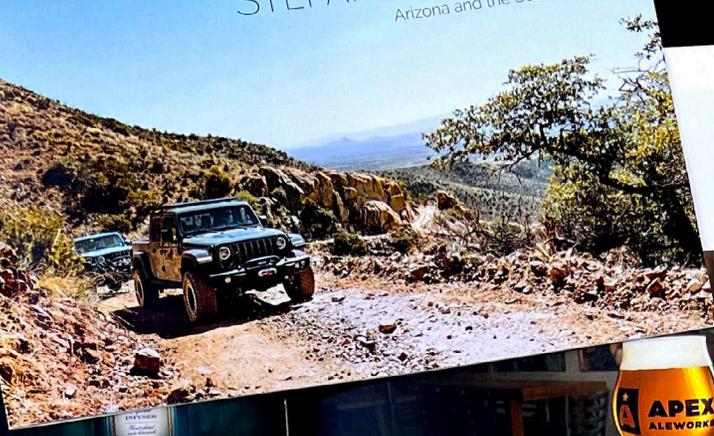
Pick the paper size you are going to use; 8x10, 11x14, and my favorite: 11x17. You can then set the rows and column figures so as to maximize the amount of images you end up with. Fewer rows and columns renders larger images.

Then run the process and print out the results. You can cut them out to create story order, or simply to put one against the other for comparison.

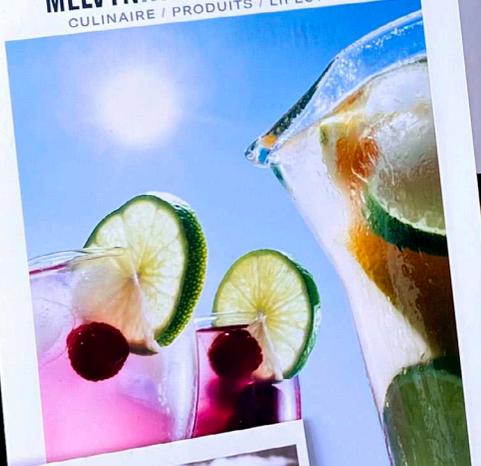


A contact sheet created in Contact Sheet II

Products



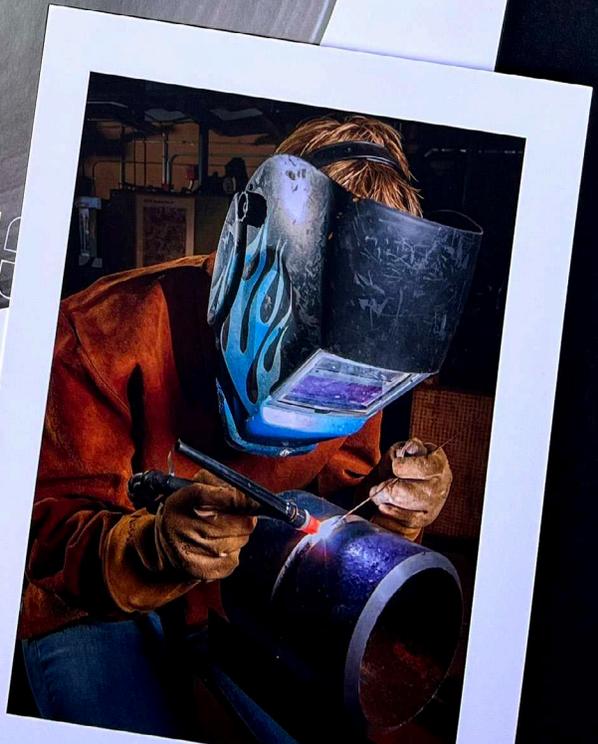
MELVYNKOURIPHOTOGRAPHE
CULINAIRE / PRODUITS / LIFESTYLE



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CARMEN BLIKE



THE POWER OF USING TYPOGRAPHY WELL

Typeface: A group of similar glyphs based on a style that is consistent. For instance, Helvetica is a Typeface. There are probably a dozen or more weights and strokes in Helvetica. Thin, Medium, Black, Narrow, Wide. All Helvetica, all are then the typeface.

Font: Helvetica Narrow is a font within the typeface of Helvetica. It is the singular weight and thickness that distinguishes it from the other members of the Typeface Helvetica. Adding Italics and bold are still what we would call a font.

Be prepared for massive misuse of these terms and absolute confusion about what they mean.

But NOW YOU KNOW.

If you set a line with the same typeface, it could contain different fonts.

This is Garamond **Bold** and ***Bold Italic***.

All are the same typeface, but using three fonts:
Garamond
Garamond Bold
Garamond Bold Italic

One thing that is fairly certain is mixing fonts within a typeface is a good practice and one that will be fairly safe. All the fonts are designed to work together and they do so with elegance.

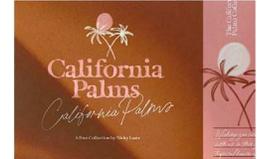
Mixing Typefaces can also be an interesting thing to work with. Within moderation, and with cause... in other words, deliberately mixing the typeface to create something interesting.

You can choose many different types of printed pieces to use for your promotions. From postcards to posters, brochures to magazines, there are so many ways to show your work to best advantage.

<< On the left are some promo pieces by my Project 52 Photographers. They range from simple to complex, heavily designed to simple image and text.

That is the wonderful thing about making these promotions - they are an extension of your own creativity, and can be a very effective way to show off your work to potential clients as well as having a keepsake for your business.

LEFT: Examples of mailers by my Project 52 alumni.



In the examples above, the mixed typefaces are combinations of what is called a "Display" type. That means that neither of the typefaces are really good for text or lines that are long or small. Display fonts are often used for logos and headlines. They are a design element.

There are other uses for mixed typefaces that use similar faces but compliment each other.

The way I think of fonts is hierarchical. Bold is stronger than medium which is stronger than thin. Italics are used for emphasis, bold italics are used for bright, BOLD emphasis.

We can break up the page by size and weight of the same typeface by using the fonts in hierarchical ways. We can also use size and color to help lead the reader to an even deeper understanding of what is being said.

It is very important to do your marketing every day.
Without good, consistent marketing, nothing happens.

It is very
IMPORTANT
to do your marketing
EVERY DAY.
Without good,
CONSISTENT
MARKETING,
NOTHING
happens...

Add in colors, screens, and spacing and the story can be told brilliantly with just typography. Blending interesting typography with interesting photography makes a very strong duo... and if the copy is strong... watch out!!!



FONT COMBINATIONS

Bodoni FLF
kollektif

Heading One
Heading Two

This is the main body text where you will write all the important information that you hold.

Suranna
Didact Gothic

Heading One
Heading Two

This is the main body text where you will write all the important information that you hold.

**HUSSAR
EKOLOGICZY**
Montserrat

HEADING ONE
Heading Two

This is the main body text where you will write all the important information that you hold.

MONTERRAT
Gidole

HEADING ONE
HEADING TWO

This is the main body text where you will write all the important information that you hold.



FONT PAIRINGS FOR THE NON-DESIGNER

PLAYFAIR DISPLAY
Roboto

HEADING
This is Roboto, used for body text.

OPEN SANS
Lora

HEADING
This is Lora, used for body text.

RALEWAY
Merriweather

HEADING
This is Merriweather, used for body text.

ABRIL FATFACE
Lato

HEADING
This is Lato, used for body text.

LOUISEWESTLAND.COM

Notes:

5 elegant font pairings
for modern brands

Playfair Display
Open Sans

Cormorant Garamond
Source Sans Pro

JOSEFIN SANS
Muli Regular

Cardo
Assistant Regular

FORUM
Glacial Indifference

STEPHCORRIGAN.COM

Finding creative font pairings is easy. You can search it online, or check out font stores like Creative Market and Envato.

There are many resources to help you find well paired fonts.

A few 'rules' though.

Never more than three fonts on a piece. Even better is two font families used with various weights (bold, semi-bold, regular, etc...) used for an hierarchical presentation of the information.

Most important in large letters, medium for the message, smaller, more delicate for things like contact info and captions.

serif + sans-serif
FONT PAIRINGS *that communicate*

TRUST

Adriane Text

With Gibson. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. *Lorem ipsum dolor sic amet.*

Soleil

With Borgia Pro. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. *Lorem ipsum dolor sic amet.*

Gibson

With Adriane Text. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. *Lorem ipsum dolor sic amet.*

Clarendon Text

With InterFace. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. *Lorem ipsum dolor sic amet.*

Freight Text

With Freight Sans. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. *Lorem ipsum dolor sic amet.*

Abril Titling

With Fira Sans. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. *Lorem ipsum dolor sic amet.*

Fira Sans

With Freight Text. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. *Lorem ipsum dolor sic amet.*

Corbel

With Bookmania. The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. *Lorem ipsum dolor sic amet.*

It's never a bad idea to get a designer involved in the process if you can.

I have used some very good designers at Fiverr and Freelancer.com. Be very clear with what you want and make sure the designer you choose has a style that fits yours.

What Exactly IS a Marketing Plan?

We hear this from photographers all the time: "You must market your work."

And we know that is true.

Remember your three pillars.

Pillar One: Client Acquisition

Pillar Two: Planning

Pillar Three: Marketing

All of them come into play when we begin to strategically market out work. And we hear that we need to:

"Send out a postcard."

"Use email lists."

"Magazines are hot right now."

Yeah, all of that is true, but without context and planning it is as meaningless as telling someone to "try harder".

Let me simply say that one postcard will do nothing.

NOTHING.

An email with a few random shots will be as memorable as last week's fast-food lunch.

Look, there is no question that a marketing campaign is absolutely the only way to keep your work - and you - top of mind for those who are giving out assignments.

Because they don't give out assignments every day.

A big agency may only have 2-3 dozen assignments a year.

And smaller, local agencies even fewer.

And with 100 photographers trying to be the ones chosen, and a solid list of people they already trust, being 'top-of-mind' for the client is too important to ignore.

So we all know that marketing is important. And we know about postcards, fliers, emails, balloons, sandwich boards... just seeing' if you are still with me.

Direct clients are also in need of a consistent touch, but not with the immediacy of agencies, PR firms, graphic designers, and magazines. More about direct clients at the end of this piece.

But the other half of a marketing campaign is the word 'campaign'.

And that is what I want to focus on today.

What does a campaign entail?

A coordinated and consistent execution for getting your images, services, and offering out into the marketplace. The goal is to keep you and your work top of mind for those who are hiring photographers.

How do we create one?

Using the three basic tools, direct mail, email, and cold calling, these "push" tactics are simple and basic, but should be treated as a major part of your brand. Bad design, and inconsistent



imagery can be very dangerous.

How long should it run?

I think it is important to plan for a year of work. Shorter won't cut it, and things may change that would make a longer plan obsolete.

Why does it matter?

Being top of mind, and showing potential buyers that you respect them and want to work with them is one of the most important goal of any B2B marketing plan.

First, let's discuss random vs campaign.

Random means nothing to anyone and gets nothing in return.

A random selection of images from your portfolio simply doesn't cut it these days. Way past the time 3 or 4 cool pictures said anything to anyone.

A connection is the point. You want to draw the viewer in with a connected set of visuals that make them see possibilities and be excited about the creativity.

This means you must be shooting with connections in mind. And for sure, most of us will be creating fresh, self-assigned images for our marketing pieces.

Connecting the images through various means... color, composition, subject matter, story... and all with a consistent style that lets the viewer KNOW you are the master of your work will go farther than a couple of unrelated, although possibly wonderful, shots from your book.

PLAN YOUR CAMPAIGN

Make sure you know that you are going to be in it for the long haul. I recommend planning for a full year, and I recommend starting the next year's planning about halfway through the current one.

What should it look like?

It should be deliberate, structured, and consistent. An inconsistent campaign will do very little for you and is really a waste of time and resources.

For someone who is starting out, or in the first couple of years and who has not done a consistent campaign before, this may be a good starting point.

1 Email per month.

Use an email company like Mailchimp, Constant Contact, or whatever one you really like so you can create graphically pleasant, designed emails with some flair. It is also important to track who opened, how many click-throughs you got and be able to go to your analytics to see the time spent at your site from the email.

BTW, the ability to do A/B testing of headlines is very important as well.

Yes, you can send them from your own email, but without the ability to make it graphical* or do all of the other marketing things that must be done, it may not be the best choice.

One postcard every two months.

Or something similar. Just a touch-point really. Keeping top of mind with a nice 5x7 card with a couple of images on it to remind them that you are still around. Know that they will receive about 5 of these before they start to really make the connection. So one just aintagonnadoit, Jack.

One larger piece per year.

Something like the magazine offerings from Blurb and Overnight Prints. There are also various printers all over the world that do short-run newspaper type pieces that are quite popular. See the materials at Minimal Viable Brand for Photographers for a listing - and if you have any to add, send them to me.

To be sure, you must curate your list as carefully as possible. Everyone on the list gets the emails, hot prospects get the postcards, and very hot (I gotta work with this client!!!) get the magazine or large piece once per year.

For those in a small market, 300 - 500 names including regional is a good place to focus your overall strategy. In bigger markets, or towns with lots of agencies and designers, a list of 250 - 300 would be a good place to be.

And, no - you do not wait until you have 300 names to start marketing, you do that with 10.

And build from there.

COLD CALLING IS A NECESSARY PART OF THIS AND ANY GOOD MARKETING PLAN.

You must be able to get on the phone so you can gather emails from businesses, find out the names of the art directors or designers or art buyers you need, and to actually meet them in person.

In-person meetings should never be panned, as they are probably the most important tool you can use.

But it is hard to get time with the people you want to meet. In order to do this, you have to pick up the phone and call, leave voicemail, then another, then another... not in the same week, of course – but over time you will end up getting that person on the phone and then you can set up a personal, in house showing of your book.

You do have a book, right?

THIS IS A ONE YEAR PLAN

So you do all of your work with this long term plan in place. Most of us will continue with this same plan the following year as well, but if you are noticing specific approaches bringing in more calls and bids, you can focus on adding something to the basic campaign.

You should be shooting every week, for sure... but you can now see the importance of keeping your work fresh and exciting as these things can be very demanding if you are trying to do them last minute.

Printing costs can be controlled by printing only 2 cards at a time allowing for the list to grow and not have wasted cards sitting around.

However, printing a set that can be used for marketing AND as leave-behinds also makes sense.

DOING THIS WILL PUT YOU IN A DIFFERENT CLASS OF PHOTOGRAPHERS

It just does, folks.

There are so many photographers out there with no marketing, or random marketing, or disconnected approaches and fitful half-assed attempts that it makes my head swim.

A consistent, targeted, deliberate campaign with a well thought out set of images and marketing message WILL get you noticed.

Just as a well-produced big, heavy, glorious printed portfolio moves you a notch up from the iPadders and “all you need is a website” crowd, being consistently in front of the clients will move your credibility up a couple of notches.

Trust me. It simply does.

JUST DO IT

This doesn't cost a lot of money, but it will take you some time

to gather the names for your list.

However, I have a great and simple method to find the names that you can do with no effort at all. Simple enough a baby could do it while napping in the backseat.

I am glad to send it to you for a mere \$3.5 Million.

Because if one existed it would be worth at least that much - maybe more.

Sorry - it is brutal, it is boring, it is time-consuming, and it forces you out of your comfort zone in ways you cannot imagine.

Tough.

It has to be done. Whether by phone, or email, or meet and greets or whatever, you MUST find your list.

("Hey, Don, what about those great list providers online?")

Well, there are those.

And you can purchase them if you like. Just know that every other photographer looking for an instant, killer, no-effort way to build their list just bought the same one. And quite frankly, maybe being involved for a few months may help you... but I guarantee it will not save you.

I would imagine that perhaps 1 out of 100 gigs assigned every day came from someone on that list. OK, maybe two.

Maybe.

WHY DIRECT CLIENTS RULE AND ARE TREATED DIFFERENTLY THAN AGENCIES

Direct clients are not being pursued daily by hordes of hungry shooters. In many cases you may be the only photographer to even contact them. (Most photographers are still seeking that magic unicorn of 'how easy can I do this' and will NEVER approach direct clients. Too hard, and with all the great shows on Netflix... c'mon. Binge-watching, baby!)

But you can do this.

Direct clients, small businesses, brands are out there in every industrial park, manufacturing zone, and town across the world. There are far more of them than ad agencies and graphic designers.

And if they make something they need photographs. Tech sheets, websites, product sheets, trade shows, annual meetings, presentations... and, no, they are not going to find three shots of their lead designers with their new pocket radiation

blaster on Unsplash.

Service businesses need photographs as well. Good ones, not from their dad's iPhone. In the competitive markets, we see in every sector, their brand image is of vital importance.

For these clients, it is perhaps good to have something like a multi-card portfolio to leave with them. An 8.5 x 11 card with three images, a letter of introduction, and a list of specialties that they will understand may be a great way to work with direct clients.

Perhaps once per quarter, they get something from you... email or postcard. The campaign may be a bit truncated because being top-of-mind may not be as difficult as with clients who are being slammed with proposals and cool shots of HDR mountain scapes...)

THINKING HOLISTICALLY AND WITH DELIBERATE PLANNING, IT CAN ALL COME TOGETHER BEAUTIFULLY

A campaign is just that. Forward-thinking, deliberate, methodical, and consistent.

It forces you to see beyond today, and plan what next month - and the one after that - will look like as you forge ahead with your battle to be noticed.

And believe me, it is a battle.

We have to dominate the competition. Yeah, in a friendly, non-homicidal way.

While battling with ourselves to stop procrastinating, looking for reasons to NOT do it, and give up the unicorn of 'it's that easy...".

The first battle is easily won.

The second, I am afraid, is not.

Notes:





Understanding KPIs and What You Can Do With Them

When you know your numbers, you can see how success works.

First an explanation of what a KPI is.

Key Performance Indicators

When we plan a trip, we look at maps, decide where to stop for the night, how much gas we may be using, the fastest or most scenic route to get there, and likely how much time we will spend on the road.

And we know why that is important. Not having enough money for gas, or being stuck in the middle of Wyoming with no hotel in sight is bad planning.

This is road trip planning for our business.

How much we need, how we will fare from week to week, month to month. How far is it between gigs and payments received, and what kind of system do we put in place to manage, monitor, and develop our business?

A KPI is a measurable value that demonstrates how effectively you are achieving key business objectives.

We can use them to track progress and evaluate our success in achieving specified goals.

It is important that they align with our overall business strategy and main objectives.

Make them specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART).

Examples of KPIs for photographers:

- a. revenue/expenditure
- b. client acquisition rate
- c. cost per acquisition
- d. website traffic
- e. social media engagement.

When we look at these numbers we can identify areas where we are falling short and make the changes needed.

KPIs are used to evaluate the effectiveness of the strategies and tactics we have employed..

They must be monitored and reviewed regularly to ensure they remain effective and relevant.

They keep the photography team on the same page, aligned with the same goals and strategies

They help you benchmark your performance against competitors and industry best practices.

These are the scary parts of starting your business. The numbers, we call them.

Let's put it to work.

How many clients did you contact last month?

How many of them asked to see your work?

How many of them did you track as coming to your website?

How many contacts do you normally have to make to get a gig offer?

How much does it cost to meet a client that gives you a gig offer?

How many gig offers fell through?

How many gigs did you do last month?

What was the percentage of contacts to showings, and showings to sales?

What capital was spent acquiring each gig?

Can you see how knowing this stuff can be super important for your business?

If, for instance, we see that you contacted 30 people, got 8 invites for a gig, 3 fell off, and you ended up doing five, then we have some goals to work with. We want to make the same number of contacts again to see if it really does match up with the number of gigs that have been done.

The next month you do the same amount of contacts and end up with roughly the same amount of go/no go responses.

Cool. Now if we double the contacts, will we double the completed gig rate?

The numbers say yes, although there can be spikes and troughs.

There are far more things we can measure as well.

How much do the gigs pay (average and mean)?

What is the normal amount of capital expended on a campaign (postcards, postage, email costs, etc)?

Where in the area do our most lucrative accounts come from?

What kind of photography are we selling and are we more or less profitable with that kind of work?

How do our clients find us, and can we control that medium? In-person success vs online success.

Establishing objectives:

KPIs can assist us in establishing precise, quantifiable, and doable objectives. We can concentrate our attention and resources on the most crucial aspects of businesses by setting clear goals. For instance, we may decide to aim for a 20% increase in earnings over the following six months. To monitor our progress toward this we can utilize KPIs like total revenue, average revenue per client, and client retention rate.

Monitoring progress:

We need to be focused on monitoring progress toward our main objectives. We can spot trends and patterns in perfor-

mance by routinely tracking KPIs, and charting them if need be. We may decide to increase investment in search engine optimization if we see the number of visitors to the website has been rising. And we know how much that costs, and also how much each client costs on average to bring in.

We can use them to assess success and pinpoint areas for development.

Using measurable numbers, we can find out if we are on pace to meet goals by comparing actual performance to goals. If we aren't meeting expectations, we can look to the KPIs to find possible underlying causes and make adjustments. Perhaps we opt to develop a loyalty program or enhance our customer service if we aren't keeping our clients or have too many unhappy ones.

We need to have data-driven information about our business. That improves decision-making.

Photographers who analyze their KPIs can spot trends and patterns in their performance. And that makes for happy photographers because we can SEE how our ideas and marketing strategies are working. Maybe we change it up and do three postcards in a short time, or develop a marketing piece that is sure to turn heads.

Benchmarking against competitors:

We can simply rate our performance against that of our rivals.

What are they doing that we are not? How can we change up what we are doing to make us more competitive? The data may show us a way.

Key Performance Indicators can assist us with goal-setting, progress monitoring, success evaluation, decision-making improvement, and benchmarking against rivals.

Here's your competitive edge.

Most photographers will not do this. "The numbers" scare them. I've heard them say that they didn't want to learn the numbers because they may get too discouraged, or face the fact they are not viable. Or even, sadly, that it is too boring and all they want to do is shoot.

Some of them do make it, but most don't. All it takes is a bad decision based on bad numbers to derail what could have been a good start to a career.

Take some time and start tracking where you are making and spending your money. The insight can help you grow faster than you think.



Be Good To Yourself

THE MOST IMPORTANT STORIES WE WILL EVER HEAR COME STRAIGHT FROM OUR OWN MINDS.

STOP SELF-FOCUSED NEGATIVITY

1. Have Daily Negative Thought Time

1. Set aside daily time for negative thoughts. Committing to 10 minutes a day of pondering and revisiting things is a paradoxical method to overcome negative thinking. NTT (Negative Thinking Time) must last for 10 minutes each day. Write down any unfavorable thoughts you have throughout the day and promise yourself that you'll review them at Evening. You'll eventually acquire control, and you'll stop thinking negatively.

2. Ditch the Negative Thoughts

Change your negative thoughts. Negative thought patterns are not overcome; rather, they are replaced. These negative thought patterns have become brain pathways for the majority of us. Four easy actions:

1. Take note of the moment the pattern began.
2. Recognize that you want to change the pattern.
3. Clearly state what you wish to change.
4. Choose for a different behavior that advances your objectives.

3. Act as your own best pal.

To ourselves, we are cruel. Most self-talk is negative—nearly 90% of it. Three actions:

1. Let it go. Do not dwell; just let it out to aid in processing. The pity party will end in three minutes.
2. Follow it. Recognize when you are thinking negatively. Being aware will help with reframing.
3. Restate it. After you are aware of your motivation, think about what your best friend would say to you. Tell yourself what you require hearing after that.

4. Write It Out

Note the cause of the negative thought. Writing instead of thinking helps clear the mind, and seeing the words on paper or a screen makes it simpler to understand them and go on.

5. Look for Things To Love, Like, And Appreciate

Strive consciously to think positive ideas rather than fighting against unpleasant ones. Speak (out loud if you can) about the things you value, enjoy, and love as a potent means of achieving that. Entering a difficult conversation? "I adore the flavor of the coffee today." "I enjoy how comfortable this chair is against my back." "I value the opportunity to discuss ideas with my team," "You'll find relief if you only reach for it."

6. Tough Introspection

Consider how you responded to some challenging questions.

1. What benefits do my negative thought patterns give me? What do I get in return?
2. What am I losing if I think negatively? How much will it cost?
3. What advantages will having good thinking bring me? What expenses come with a more optimistic outlook?
4. What events in my past gave me bad thoughts?
5. Now what do I do?

7. Establish New Habits

Instead of considering it as “overcoming” unfavorable cognitive patterns, consider it as creating new habits. You achieve this by focusing on topics that you already feel good about and, as a result, think positively about, where there is nothing to “overcome.” The beach, being outside, your pet, your painted toenails, etc. Start with a simple task.

8. Ditch the News First Thing

Research has shown just three minutes of negative news in the morning will significantly increase your chances of a negative experience over the course of the day. Research has also shown that a positive mindset increases productivity and satisfaction while reducing error rates. Mindset is a choice, but not always an easy one. Look to eliminate negative influences and stop watching the morning news!

9. Affirmations Work

Open your eyes when you awaken and express your thankfulness for the new day. Make a habit of writing down positive affirmations like, “I adore the people I work with,” “I contribute positively every day,” or “I am open to inspired thinking.” When a negative notion arises, recall your past successes and the satisfying feelings they brought. Daily practice of positive thinking is worthwhile.

10. Develop Your Success Routine

Try performing a technique called “Quantum Programming” every morning for fifteen years. It entails setting aside some time each morning as soon as you wake up to meditate and concentrate on the kind of person and life you wish to lead. In order to keep moving forward toward your dreams, you also set a few crucial goals. Negativity will disappear when you are working diligently toward your goals.

11. Lead Your Thoughts to Creativity

Negative thinking patterns can quickly take over, but a great (and helpful) strategy is to recognize the pattern and associate it with a project you’re enthusiastic about. Then, intentionally resolve to: Spend five minutes thinking about your exciting project every time you catch yourself focusing on anything bad. I recently done this, and the new endeavor is now finished ahead of schedule!

12. Develop an Attitude with Gratitude

Most people underestimate gratitude, although it’s crucial to living a good life. Even though life doesn’t get any simpler, we get stronger as we learn to see the positive aspects of everything around us and how to reframe challenges. Make a good list and check it frequently. Be very explicit about what you desire and keep your attention on that. Over time, what you are seeking will be drawn to you by a concentrated, optimistic mind.

13. Try Movement And Meditation

After my blood-clot adventure I learned that being active is more important for a healthy body than most of us think. And physical health can equate to mental health as well. Walk, run, do yoga, swim, or simply walk around your personal space. Movement is life.

Three Tips for Stopping Self-Sabotage

1. Perfectionism Sucks

Self-sabotage is fueled by perfectionism. Imagine that you are a creative individual working on a piece of art when you make what you believe to be a mistake. You destroy the artwork rather than attempting to correct the error. This is a wonderful illustration of how perfectionism can lead to self-sabotage. Thankfully, perfectionism is not a permanent part of you. It is reversible, just like self-sabotage.

2. People Need to See Your Work

There's no getting around it; self-destruction can be selfish. When something is taken from someone else, including your art, this is true. Consider the value that other people's art has brought to your life. Consider the positive effects your artwork might have on your friends, family, and complete strangers. Remember this the next time you are inclined to let self-destructive behavior derail a creative endeavor.

3. Find The Basis for Your Challenges

If self-sabotage has been a problem for you for a while, you might want to consider seeking professional counseling. This is not a reason to be ashamed. The truth is that counseling would likely be helpful for everyone on Earth. Extreme sensitivity and intense emotional reactions are typically displayed by artists. Sometimes they use self-sabotage to cover up their injuries and misery. Sometimes all they need is an objective outsider to point out workable ways for them to cease hindering their own artistic success.

This booklet is designed to get you thinking about building a career in the visual arts. Project 52 Pro System and The Creative Class are created around the proposition that making a living as a visual artist is not only possible, but obtainable with effort and focused work. Our groups are small by design, and big on delivering in the kind of information and assignments you need to build a great portfolio and compete in 2023 and beyond.

For a list of great resources, see this page:

MINIMAL VIABLE BRAND FOR PHOTOGRAPHERS

<https://www.lighting-essentials.com/mvb-1-minimal-viable-brand-overview/>

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON PROJECT 52 PRO SYSTEM

<http://www.project52pro2016.com/>

FOR INFORMATION ON MENTORSHIP BOTH GROUP AND INDIVIDUAL

<https://dongiannatti.com/>

The photographs in this magazine were drawn from many decades of photography. Cameras represented are: Canon, Nikon, Hasselblad, Mamiya, Lumix, and iPhones. All photos by the author unless otherwise noted.

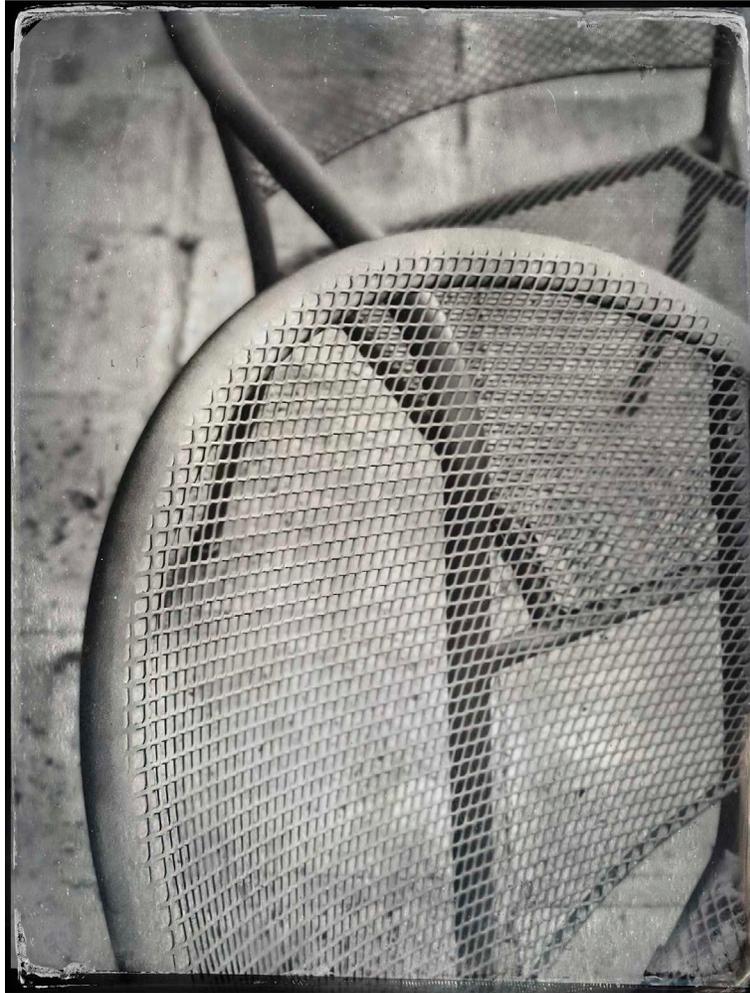
I sincerely hope you enjoyed this publication and it helps you on your journey toward being a creative professional.

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602 814 1468



Ultimate Guide to Starting Your Creative Business

For over 15 years I have led workshops in the real world and online. We started at Flickr, but moved to Facebook when I decided to make it more of a full fledged group mentorship on developing the skills needed for a full time career as a photographer. From portfolio building to understanding the bid process, we gave out one assignment per week to be reviewed, live, by me and occasional guest creatives.

I want to thank each and every photographer who put their trust in me and let me help them succeed in this wonderful, but sometimes wacky world of freelance art making.

And a few words to my wife and family who put up with me always having to be near a computer and a microphone for the several times a week meetings; thank you so very much. Your support and occasional quick dinner, hot tea, and dog wrangling let me enjoy the really fun part of my life working with creative artists.

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100%

HUMAN-GENERATED CONTENT



THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO STARTING YOUR CREATIVE BUSINESS

FOR PHOTOGRAPHERS, ARTISTS,
AND VISUAL MEDIA PROS

BY DON GIANNATTI

Whether you are a photographer, designer, writer, or visual artist of any kind, this book will get you thinking about how to jump start your business.

If you are brand new to the world of professional art, it will help you get going and bypass the many pitfalls of the commercial art business. If you are a veteran, it may open your eyes to the possibilities of changing it up a bit to get better results and a more sustainable profitability.

PHOTO OF THE AUTHOR BY ANJALI FONG

