

DARE
— TO —
SUCCEED

THE BUSINESS BOOK PROJECT 52 PRO SYSTEM

DON GIANNATTI

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DEDICATED TO THE HUNDREDS OF PROJECT
52 STUDENTS WHO HAVE GRACED MY LIFE
WITH THEIR INSPIRATION, ENERGY,
AND INCREDIBLE TALENT. THANK YOU
ALL FOR BEING A PART OF MY JOURNEY.
I WILL NEVER FORGET YOU.

NEVER.

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Thank you for being a part of Project 52 Pro System.

I feel honored to have your trust and your friendship. This book is the culmination of many years teaching art and the ins-and-outs of commercial photography to literally hundreds of talented professionals.

Take your time with this manual. Treat it as a buddy and refer back to it when you need a boost or to find an idea that you may have overlooked.

Do the work.

Stay focused.

And be proactive in everything you do.

You can make it in this business with the right systems, right support, and the right mindset.

Please stay in touch with me and keep me apprised of your progress.

Your success is my greatest happiness.

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This is your time... let's get on with it!

Hi, My name is Don Giannatti. This is Project 52 PRO... Getting ready for a full-time profession in photography in a year or less – one project/assignment at a time. This book was written to accompany my OnLine Training Course, but will work very well for a highly motivated, self-starter photographer.

Introduction:

I have been a photographer for over 40 years and a professional for 35 of those. From fashion to still-life and product, I have made images of nearly every genre you can imagine. This means I have met a great many photographers and clients over the decades. At one point, I added graphic design to my capabilities and before I knew it, Ocean Integrated Media was the third largest advertising agency in Arizona, and I was hiring more photographers than shooting.

These last seven years have found me teaching a lot more. My workshops have gone around the world, and I meet photographers from every level imaginable -- from those who have literally purchased their camera to attend my workshop to pros who have a decade or two already under their belt. And while the questions on lighting and gear and models and portfolios are flying, the most overarching questions are on the business side of the “art” of photography. The dream or desire of being a professional at photography, even if only on weekends or evenings, is very strong in many shooters. This course,

Project 52 PRO Edition, is designed to meet those questions head on and offer paths and directions that will help the serious photographer meet and exceed some of their goals in the acquisition of a level of professionalism that few attain.

I have three personal goals that are my overriding focus:

1. To provide a supportive and positive experience that nurtures the creativity while providing real-world solutions to the challenges of becoming a professional photographer.
2. That each and every one of the photographers engaged in this PRO online seminar see their work grow at an exponential level. From wherever they start, they will become better – and no one will be at any level less than professional by the end of the course.
3. That each and every photographer who wants it and will follow the guidance given and get a gig that pays professional-level dollars. I want everyone who wants to, to work professionally by the end of the year.

So those are my goals. I hope they are yours as well.

This online seminar is crafted for the serious photographer who wants to grow. I ask that you do every assignment and work diligently toward mastering the elements contained herein. We will organize your business, create a strong portfolio, start and maintain a marketing plan, and develop a business strategy for pitching and billing the jobs you get. That's a lot to do, but we are going to chunk it out so that no one has to feel that they must neglect family and job to do it. It will be challenging, but within the constraints we must all acknowledge. Just don't tell me you didn't have time if you know who is on American Idol or how your brackets are fairing... okay?



Here is the way to make this work

I want you to believe three important things:

1. You are the driver of your own bus. No other person is in charge. No outside elements are driving your bus. You are. Your destination to success -- or not -- is your choice as you drive.
2. Everywhere we look there are opportunities to thrive, opportunities to make a client or to deliver more than what was expected. We can decide what to make of any occurrence -- do we react or respond? (Think of this: If you have a bad reaction to a drug prescribed by your doctor, that is not good. But if you respond to the medication, that is a happy thing. We always want to respond and not react.)
3. Photography is easy. It simply is. In understanding how easy it is these days to make an acceptable image to technical boundaries, it is more difficult than ever to stand apart and above. We will work very hard in climbing to higher and higher levels of our craft and business expertise.

I hope each of you stays totally engaged. DO THE WORK, as is stated in Steven Pressfield's book of the same name.

I want you to have a notebook for ideas. Keep it with you. If you are totally not into paper and pens, grab a good iPad program that will let you quickly jot ideas down, make sketches, and keep the ideas in

the forefront. A lot of what we will be discussing will be fodder for later down the road. So keeping your ideas in a place where you can access them is really important. An idea you get today may spur an idea next May.

Make notes. Vociferously. Make them everywhere on these documents. Write all over them and then download a fresh copy if you want it. These docs are for YOU to make your ideas come to life. Challenge the ways that you have done things -- or defend the methods you use. It is all important, and it is all absolutely up to you.

We will be looking into what I call the 5% Syndrome. Five. Percent.

Not a lot. A nickel out of a single dollar. Not enough to even register on the meat guy's weighing machine. But it is where winners are made. In any endeavor.

Everyone (who tries) can get to 75%. That's "C" level work. Nothing to write home about; nothing to be excited about.

A smaller few of us get to 85%, and that is "B" level work. It is solidly better than the "C" level, but it is also far below that 100% level.

The very small group that reaches the 90% has busted its ass to attain that "A" level, even though it is at an entry-level point. Lots of people who get to this point self-destruct. The air is thinner there. The distance to fall is greater. The challenge to their ability to maintain it can be a terrible burden. Freddie Prinz comes to mind. He had it all and couldn't cope with even the thought of where he was.

Ninety percent is where a lot of people stop. They are happy to be there, but desperate not to screw up.

Ninety-five percent is rare air indeed. These are the top echelon in the fields we work in. The Avedon's and the Penn's are up in this area. The Chase Jarvis and Tim Tadder realm. The ones who are really doing stuff

One hundred percent...well, that would be an unattainable goal, I think. No matter how close we get, there will always be something we can do better or faster or with a little more finesse. But it is a hell of a goal.

Each percentage point is more difficult to get to than the last. The gap between 75% and 85% is half as much as the gap between 85% and 90%. The higher we go, the harder it is to get better and better. The path turns more steep and the turns more tight. But it is where the action is. It is where you feel most alive. And it is where we want to always push to. Being the best... the best we can be.

Comparisons to others are sometimes important as a gauge, but to our own output it is a vital measurement. We start where we are and we get better and better at it.

Downhill races are won by 1/10,000th of a second. Horse races are won by the fairest tip of a nose -- a whisker on occasion. It is not good enough to be good enough if good enough means you don't ever win.

Some of you will improve 20% or 30%, and some of you will struggle with a 2-3% gain depending on where you are. Great! We want constant growth: no matter how small the gain is, it all adds up.

Think about it.

If we could make our business better by a simple 1% a month, that would be 12% over a year, skipping from a "C" all the way to "high-B" level work. Do it a second year and, well, do the math.

If you inherited a business tomorrow, one that makes widgets for the high-tech market, what would be your first order of the day?

Would it be to increase production?

Or spend more money on advertising?

How about cutting the fat from the Research and Development (R&D) department?

Well, actually you wouldn't do any of those things because you don't know what those things are in the context of the business you just inherited.

How do you know there is fat in R&D? What is the current advertising budget, and why does it have to be raised? Are there enough existing orders that building a new widget factory is important?

The truth is, you would have to do a lot of investigating to figure out what that first move would need to be.

Research

Photographers will spend more time planning a one-week vacation than planning what they are going to be doing for the year to build their business.

How many of these departments inherent in the widget world are also found in the photographic world? R&D?

Purchasing?

Public relations? Advertising? Marketing? Sales? Accounting? Shipping?

All of them.

The widget company has scores of people in those different divisions. They have managers for each and assistant managers and executive managers and secretaries and clerks and worker bees.

You got you. For all of them.

That's a lot of hats, bucko.

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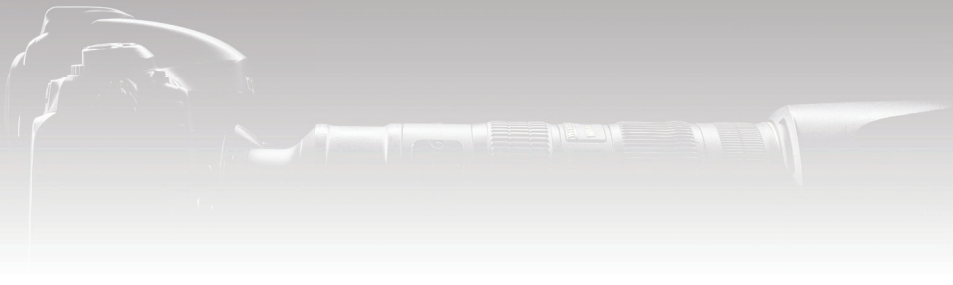
Specializing is not an option.

Ninety percent R&D and 10% shipping is a fast track to the poor house.

We need balance, equilibrium.

A plan.

NOW IT IS TIME FOR YOU TO MAKE YOURS.



Quick Note On Business Plans

I am not a big believer in the blown-out “business plan” with a hundred pages and a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis with graphs and charts and Excel spreadsheets that go out five years. I have been there, done that. And found that most, if not all, are bullshit. Life doesn’t let that stuff happen.

But a good plan -- some knowledge of what it takes and how to put it together – that we can do. Flexibility is the king of the plan.

Cause we ain’t makin’ widgets... we are servicing a client with images that are both ethereal and very real.

We need to be able to work into our plan such things as “creative” shooting, and portfolio building, and road trips, and email marketing to segments we don’t even know exist yet. Flexibility.

This is why we are working on this basic business plan. While we won’t be doing a full-on business plan, we will be creating a very easy-to-implement plan for each of your individual photography initiatives.

So... Do The Work.

“Our job in this life is not to shape ourselves into some ideal we imagine we ought to be, but to find out who we already are and become it.”

We will start with a simple list of assets: What you have versus what you need.

But first... Who you are.

Go to Worksheet #1.

{Please do not share this document with anyone. You have paid for it, and it is yours to use again and again for inspiration, ideas, and creativity.}

Following is a set of worksheets that you must commit to doing. If you don't, you may get something from this project, but you will not get the full impact that creating a solid base and foundation that you need.

Please do the worksheets. It is important.

WORKSHEET #1 WHO ARE YOU?

Let's find out about you and what you think of yourself. Find a nice quiet place and do the following worksheet.

On a scale of 1 – 10 with 10 being the best and 1 being the worst, rate your skills in the following areas:

1. Follow-through: Doing what you say you will do.
2. Committing: Taking on too much, and getting it done.
3. Delivering: Able to meet promises and deadlines.
4. Time Management: Able to manage your day-to-day obligations
5. Planning: Having a roadmap to completing a project.
6. Focused: The ability to stay on task.
7. Leadership: The ability to get others to work hard.
8. Follow-through: Making it all the way to the end of a project.
9. Multitasking: Doing more than one thing at a time
10. Charismatic: Others want to help and be around you.

Have 3 – 5 people do this for you as well. How do their assessments match yours?

Now take a few minutes to write about yourself. Sit quietly and collect your thoughts and tell us who you are. Write a description of yourself that doesn't include the word "photographer." Keep it brief, but tell us who you are as a person.

Have you ever owned a business before (not counting the current one, if applicable?)

What was that experience like?

Why do you not own that business now?

What is the scariest thing you think of when you think of owning your own business?

What Level of photographer are you currently? Are you a beginner, an intermediate, a professional, or a specialist? List five areas (genres) of photography, and tell us where you are in each. (For instance: Architecture = beginner/portrait = pro)

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In which of the areas above do you think you need the most improvement?

Why?

If you had your choice of areas (genres) to shoot, what would they be in order of preference? Choose three.

What would improve your business right now? If you could get one thing down and solidly implemented, what would it be?

Why?

Have you ever asked someone who knows what you do what they think you do? Do that for four of your friends, relatives, and neighbors. What did they say? Tell us about your dream job.

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Describe it in detail. Remember that this is a dream job, and is NOT based on current gear you own or time/travel restrictions. This is YOUR best gig that could ever be!

Why did you choose that dream job?

Tell us about your best real gigs. What were the best four shooting experiences you have had in your career? Tell us what you did and why it was the best. This can be paying job, creative shoot, etc. Your experience is what matters.

As you probably expected, we now want to hear about the 4 worst experiences you have ever had, what made them bad, and how you handled the resolution of the experience.

Rate yourself on a 1-10 scale on these single word descriptors

1. Business (Good at it 10 – hate it 1)
2. Challenges (enjoy 10 – hate 1)
3. Judgment (Good 10 – bad 1)
4. Maturity (Mature 10 – childlike 1)
5. Personality (Good 10 – bad 1)
6. Health (Good 10 – terrible 1)
7. Dependable (Very 10 – not 1)

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8. Appearance (Good 10 – slob 1)
9. Ethical (Honest 10 – criminal 1)
10. Flexible (Very 10 – rigid 1)
11. Learning (Fast 10 – incapable 1)
12. Technology (Savvy 10 – hopelessly lost 1)
13. Artistic (Very 10 – not 1)
14. Powerful (Very 10 – weakling among peers 1)
15. Motivated (Self- 10 – I needs me a boss 1)

Now tally up your score. Obviously, the higher the score, the better. And be honest -- not self-deprecating or embarrassed to be saying positive things about yourself. This is you, so fill it out as honestly as you can.

Have a close personal friend check it over and have them – insist on it – mark what they think your answer should have been. This has to be someone you trust, so choose wisely.

Now we get to what we need. NEED. Not want. Need.

What eight things do you need in your life? These are not things or gear (well, we all need an MF camera and a MacBookPro 17, but that doesn't go here... heh). These are things like “time with my family” or “the ability to travel”. List the eight things that are your most important

- 1.
- 2.

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3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.



Where Are You in Your Business?

We are a professional group and that means we are in business, or will be in business, or simply want to run our part-time photography business with as much excellence as possible.

This is an important issue for all of us to be aware of, and we will dissect it a bit here.

The kind of work that we will get as a photographer is the kind of work that we do and show and promote. If we want to make wedding photographs, we make wedding photographs. If we want to make food shots, we make food shots and we show food shots.

I imagine most of you have toyed with some professionalism at some point before this, so let's look at where you are.

If you have only done a few shots for money, let me ask how that worked for you. Did you ask a fair amount for your work, or did you deeply discount it because you feel you are not ready to charge the full amount?

Did you deliver the images as promised, or did you not get them out on time because of other things getting in your way?

Were the images as professionally delivered as you would have wanted them to be?

If you have been doing a bit more, how did those gigs come to you? Did you market for them or were they given to you through some circumstance that is more personal – like a friend or someone at work?

Have you shown your book or website to a stranger (albeit a professional working in the business) in order to get the gig? Have you approached editors or designers with your work to get the gigs you want?

If you are actually working, how is that happening? From a detailed and structured marketing plan and implementation strategy, or a helter-skelter catch-it-when-I-can and hope-to-get-lucky non plan? Somewhere in the middle of those maybe?

As you can imagine, the more structured – even if somewhat loosely structured – the plan you have, the easier it is to implement.

All of us are probably doing a little of all of that, and there is no problem with that at all. At an entry point, doing a little of this and a little of that can help us see how this whole shooting-for-someone-else thing works. We can make a few bucks and get a few pieces of gear that we may need.

But at some point we have to start to get real about how we are going to continue getting and managing the work we want to do. Where do we start? How do we get organized and find the direction we want to go? When do we start? It can be a bit daunting when there are other considerations to think about (you know, the rest of real life) during the day. It is hard, but there is some good news:

Where we all are is at the beginning. Every day.

Yesterday is not recoverable... no backup can bring it back. There is no software or hardware to save us from that which has come before. We have a new opportunity to start again today with new and incredible opportunities.

So beginning today, we are going to plan what we are going to do, based on where we are. We are going to start with a set of goals based on where we are currently.

A few words about goals:

Keep them easy to understand. Keep them "chunky."

Keep them measurable. Keep them organized. Keep them in pencil. Keep them up to date. Keep them doable.

And above all, keep them within a range of some semblance of reality.

I am not a spring chicken anymore, so my goal of being an astronaut or a stunt motorcycle rider are probably more silly than attainable. My goal of having a piece of music played by the Arizona State University Orchestra would be a challenge, but it could be done.

So when we are working on our photographic goals, we must keep in mind the realities of our real-world realities. However, we also must not use real-world realities to become an excuse for not trying. I may not be young enough to do stunt riding on a motorcycle, though my goal of a cross-country round-trip north/south motorcycle photographic road trip is attainable. It would take planning and preparation and a ton of research, but it can be done.

Let's see... Planning, Preparation, and Research.

Yeah, those are the things that we all need for our goals to be set, and reached. How I set goals: I discuss them as they exist; not how I would like to have them exist. Because there is a difference - a huge difference, and we should examine why.

Affirmations work. You can deny them till you are blue in the face, but they do. Our minds listen to our words, and by forming our words, our mind will help lead us to the eventual reality of those words. "I am a loser" will become a reality if stated every day. "I am a

winner” will become a reality if stated every day. Not in the lottery way, but in the attitude and acceptance and openness to possibilities way. It is not arrogance; it is a training tool for our mind.

Think of it as gear... heh.

I will state my goals as they exist:

“I shoot for a major regional magazine this year.” That is much more powerful than “I want to shoot for a major regional magazine this year.” Why? Because you moved the focus from ”shooting” to ”wanting.” And that makes a difference as you move from day to day, week to week, month to month. A big, big difference.

So as you begin your goal setting, let’s do that with the affirmation aspect in the forefront of our attention. Let’s get to work on our goal setting for this year...and the year after.

A Story...

“Where are you going?” I am asking this as we drive out of the driveway. You sit smiling behind the wheel and laughingly say, “I have no idea...”

“Well, when will we get there,” I ask?

“I don’t know,” you smile as you drive toward the freeway ramp.

“Do we have enough gas? Do I need an overnight bag? Will we be back before lunch?” I am really getting a bit miffed here.

“Who knows,” you state with a bit of annoyance in your voice...

“Why so many questions?” Why indeed?

Because we need to know those things before we head out in an automobile with someone. Right?

And yet photographers head out on their journey to become pro without having simple goals in mind; just the thrill of the ride and the deception of motion as a success strategy.

We can't head out until we know where we are going.

And the one big reason for it all is, how will you know when you get there if you don't know where you are going? How will you recognize the goal if you haven't any idea of what reaching it means?

Goal-setting:

Henry Ford said: "Whether you think you are a failure or think you are a success, you are right." The power of moving in the direction of what you think about is most definitely an important concept.

In the Bible, there is the quote "Whatsoever a man thinketh, so shall he be."

Yep...same thing there.

All goals should have a few basic tenants to keep them real: Goals should be specific.

Goals should be attainable.

Goals should not be easily reached, but should require effort. Goals should be something you really, REALLY want.

I think that goal-setting can be very valuable for all aspects of our lives; but for this program, we are looking at goals for photographers and their photographic work. Specifically, this project for our first exercise.

Let's set a few goals and see how this works.

We are going to begin our business plan work by setting a few goals for this Project 52 PRO Edition. Goals for our business are always great to have.

But a system will make it all clearer and easier to manage.

Commit to a system.

Do the work.

Keep your eyes on the prize... the prize being completing the work.

Stop worrying about the ROI, the outcome, what you “expect” to happen. Expectations often fail us, but if we do the work and focus only on the work, then we can be proud of our accomplishments.

Believe me when I tell you that focusing on the work, doing everything you need to do, reshooting, editing, learning something new everyday will pay off. You may not even see it coming but it will indeed pay off.

Big.



WORKSHEET #2GOALS

We know that work and life and kids and family and overtime and busy schedules can all get in the way of our working toward what we want, but I believe that we can make some goals that will help supersede the time now spent in maybe not such a productive manner.

This project is very important to me, and it is very important to you as well. If it weren't important to you, you would not have signed up.

The work for both of us – teacher and participant – can be daunting at some points as we go along, but we can most definitely get it done if we use planning and preparation for implementation.

List five goals you have for this project.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

What are the challenges you will face in completing these goals?

What are your solutions to meeting these challenges?

How will these goals impact your personal life (family, work, weekend hobbies)?

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What will you give up to achieve your goals stated above?

What will you NOT be willing to give up to achieve your goals stated above?

Remember that for every action there is a reaction. I have lines I won't cross, and things I will not give up in order to do something I want to do. Do not be afraid or concerned or embarrassed by admitting you have some priorities that take precedent. That is a very important part of our discovery. Do you have any physical challenges that may inhibit you from doing what we do on this project.

Think deeply about this. It is a huge commitment, and I want you to be totally involved. You will face challenges that must be met, and you may fail and you may succeed. Both can be somewhat unnerving... heh.

Last list:

What do you love most about doing the hard work that must be done.

Notice that I used an affirmation there and did not give up the possibility that you maybe don't like the hard work. I do that because we have to enjoy the process, as it never ends when we are entrepreneurial self- employed working photographers.



A Little Something To Help Us Plan

We are going to start our business planning, but not in the dry “business school” sort of way. We aren’t in business school – we are photographers.

Planning our business means that we have to also think about what we do as photographers. What do we shoot? Where do we shoot? What kind of subjects really gets us excited about shooting?

We will be doing a little of this and a little of that as we move through to the middle of the project. But for now we have to get our plans together and knowing what we want to do will be a big part of it.

Knowing what we don’t want to do is also very important. And knowing what we can do is even more important as we decide our first moves.

So for this lesson, listen to the Audio Review of the first two assignments and worksheets. (Audio: Worksheets- one-two.mp3)

Make notes and work on your plan for overcoming the challenges, and begin to see yourself as an entity that is totally capable of making this happen. It is all about the choices we make and the ferocity in which we make them.

The Tear-Sheet Project: First Pass.

Tear sheets are pages literally torn from magazines or periodicals or brochures. They are instrumental in helping us understand what we want to do, how we want to do it, and what our capabilities for doing it actually are.

For this first pass at the Tear-Sheet Project, I want you to keep your recent worksheets in mind. You know the challenges you have in the areas where you have them-- and we all have challenges in some areas. (NOTE: If you had no challenges, there really isn't any reason for you to simply go to New York or London and open a studio, right?) Of course, we all have challenges that we must meet and overcome in the ways that only we can.

The Tear-Sheet Project helps us define what we want to do. The worksheets remind of us of where we are. Yes, we will not be there forever, but we are now in the spot where we find ourselves today.

Assignment Tearsheet Samples

Pull eight tear sheets from recent publications. Make sure that they are image you would have loved to photograph: your ideal eight-image portfolio.

Requirements:

1. They are current images.
2. They are something that you could photograph.
3. They are within your equipment capabilities.
4. They are within your current budget to produce.
5. They are realistic as far as subject/location.

Current Images:

Images taken within the last five years or so; not historical or iconic, just solid images used for editorial or advertising.

Something You Could Photograph:

space-walking, underwater shooting near the Titanic, or from the inside a tank in Afghanistan would be examples of things that are not going to happen. When I say “could,” I mean that you would have conceivable access to the subject.

Within Your Equipment Capabilities:

If you are a natural light shooter, showing celebrity shots with 20 strobes is a time waster, right? If you have minimal equipment, for now, you have to choose subjects for which your minimal equipment can be used. If you have more gear or are experienced in rental or using a buddy’s gear, then fine. Just be realistic for yourself and your own capability.

Within Your Current Budget:

Again, travel shots in Bangladesh may be a cool thing, but a mom or dad with a full-time gig and other obligations makes this a short-term challenge that only slows us down. If you wanted to do the shot you have torn out, you could reasonably do it within your financial situation.

Make Sure They are Realistic as Far As Subject and Location:

If you live in rural Tennessee, putting shots of Lady GaGa on a cruise ship should probably be put into the second round of this exercise. For now, a country singer in a meadow with a cool prop could be a more realistic example.

Once you have your eight tear sheets, lay them down in 2 rows: four on top and four on the bottom. There is your first inkling of a portfolio right in front of you.

Remember what we said about how not having a road map means we don't know where we are going and wouldn't recognize it when we arrived?

Here is the beginning of that road map photographically. Here is the first look at what you want your book to look like. NOTE: "Book" is the term I use when describing our portfolio whether printed or online. It is a habit that I am not interested in breaking.

Looking at these eight pictures should give you a real sense of what needs to be done.

And stop thinking it is "copying" or "stealing" or any of that crap. We can't steal these shots; we can't even get the same subjects, locations, or crew to "copy" the image.

And copying is NOT what we are doing here -- we are seeking visual inspiration. A visual document of what we will look like when we get to our destination, albeit a first step.

These images will help us stay attuned to creating the kind of images we want to make. From this set of images we can start to see what interests us and what our own vision may aspire to be.

Make no mistake – this is a very difficult assignment. I am asking a lot from you. But that is the nature of art – it asks a lot of us.

An example: You are loving outdoor photography and are really excited about adventure as a genre. Cool. Try these:

- Outdoor Photographer
- Outside Magazine
- Outdoor Life Backpacker Magazine American Hiking Climbing Magazine Rock and Ice Magazine

Yes. You can do this online if you cannot find the magazines themselves. I do not want individual images from photographers' portfolios. I

want you to cut or copy/paste the images that are being used by the magazine or website.

Caveat One: Sure, you may not want to buy some magazines and cut them up; but if you love this stuff anyway, why not splurge and get a couple issues?

Caveat Two: You can shoot the pages with your smart phone and get them into Photoshop for the collage. I don't care about that.

Now for the details:

1. If it is an editorial image, note the publication and the photographer's name.
2. If it is an advertisement, note the product that was being advertised as well as the publication it is in.

I want you to take all eight images and scan or photograph them as a unit. Two rows of four images. This is the image that you will post for this assignment. A single collage of all eight images.

Please note in the description the information on the publication/shooter/product by row and image.

(Cautionary note: This is not a quick and dirty challenge here. It takes a while to really find those images that mean something to you -- and that you really love -- so do not wait for the last minute on this... get on it immediately. You may only find one shot every other day -- and that is with a lot of looking.)

Assignment (Part B):

Shoot something using one of these images as the inspiration. Do not try to copy it, do not try to fake it, do not try to simulate it.

Use the image for inspiration and make an image that is similar.

Write a paragraph or two, no more, on what inspiration you got from the image you worked from and how the image you produced was different.

This is your opportunity to make an image that is very close to your style, and capabilities, and, hopefully, vision.

Now, you may say that you want to do the kind of work that you cannot do. “I want to shoot big product shots, but all I have is a camera and a couple of lenses and I use available light.”

Then you chose the wrong tear sheets. Choose from the position of knowledge. A camera and a lens or two is all you need for a lot of photography, and that is what you must concentrate on now.

NOW.

You can always earn your way to bigger sets, more gear, and big crews if that is what you want. But for now, picking the wrong stuff – the stuff you simply cannot do – is a cop out. It is a dodge game. I’ve seen it far too often.

“I want to do a shot for my book... been seeing it in my head for a while now. Red Ferrari, tall lanky model, a lion on a leash, and all of it overlooking the Hollywood sign...”

Yeah – cool.

Except you don’t have access to a Ferrari, or a tall model, or a lion, and you live in Athens, GA.

So it becomes all too convenient to blame and whine about the circumstances putting the kibosh on our creativity.

It isn’t circumstances – it’s us.



Planning the Business Plan

We have our tear sheet assignment (Week Three) to keep us busy in the creative department, and now we are going to start to get some idea of what the business will look like.

Making some decisions early will make more sense of the planning as we set it up initially. Scenarios to consider:

Part-Time Commercial Shooter.

In order to do the work of a commercial shooter in the style/genre of your tear sheet assignments, you will need some idea of shooting space.

If you chose studio work, do you have a place where that can be done without having to tear the kitchen up every time you have a gig? Is there a rental studio in your town that would make sense? How about a co-op shooting situation where you pay a small amount for access for a specific amount of time per month? A garage can work, or a larger-sized den. The kind of clients that you would be working with would be the “pick it up and shoot it” rather than the art director, account exec, client representative, and three assistants all hanging around your garage. Right?

Take stock and get some figures together so that we can get the business plan off to the right start. If you are planning on shooting at home, figure your square-foot allocation so you can know exactly what you need to cover that amount of your rent or mortgage. If

you are looking for a co-op, get in touch with some studios that are offering that service and get the rates. You want access in off-hours, of course. Since it is a part-time gig, you will probably be shooting in the evenings and on weekends. Access on a 9 am -5 pm basis during weekday hours makes no sense.

Part-Time Editorial Shooter

Editorial shooting means less need of a studio these days. Most of this work is done on location. And much of it is done during regular business hours. This can be a problem for many photographers, so you need to plan for contingencies. What will you do if the publication needs specific shots done at specific times?

If you think this may be a problem, adjust the type of work that you are building into your portfolio to represent work that can be done on off-hours or weekends. Take editorial portraiture and food for instance. Where corporate work will probably have to be done when most people are working, some editorial work and much food/table-top shooting can be done on off-hours or weekends.

Let's look at an example of this:

You want to do fashion, and you have your portfolio gearing up to that end. Fashion is usually shot with an editor and a stylist and sometimes an art director – and most of the time a professional model. These folks work Monday through Friday and are not usually too keen on working during their time off.

So while fashion is something that you gear up to for an eventual break into the world of work, you could concentrate on small boutique fashion, hair salons and spas, and beauty work for local jewelry/product vendors.

You keep your favorite subject, but tailor it to the places where you believe you can actually get the gig – and do the gig.

Look at your tear sheet book. Does it reflect these realities? If so, great. If not, regroup and begin to add/modify what you have.

Editorial “Self-Assigned”

Here is a great niche for photographers who are wanting to break in to the magazines without necessarily having to work every weekend or late at night – or call in sick so many times that the boss puts a tail on you and you fear for your job.

Many local and regional magazines welcome story ideas and submissions. These are self-assigned stories that you do without the magazine giving you the gig. You call the shots, and you do the images before taking them to the magazine.

If you have some writing skills, they come in real handy right about now. If not, look around for a writer that may want to share the submission with you. Look at the magazines and find the writers’ names. Google them for their website or Facebook or Twitter... whatever.

Then pitch your story to them. Showing them your work and telling them how you think you could work together may shake a few loose and get them as your collaborator/advocate. Schmoozing helps too.

Recent story ideas from my part of the world:

- Grazing: Are Lands Being Overgrazed?
- The Rebirth of the BioSphere into a New Research Meeting Center
- Low Snowfall and How the Venues are Making New Ways of Having Fun
- Casino Design
- Classic Cars

- Custom Motorcycle Designers
- “Pimped Out” Golf Carts
- Olympic Athlete Hopefuls
- Pitch and pitch and pitch.

Get the shots – or at least some of them – and get the editors excited about running your work. All that can happen is that they say no.

1. There are other publications.
2. You now have a cool story for your website. So, rinse and repeat.

Full-Time Commercial Photography

This is the big enchilada in the room. You want to leave (or you are being forced out of) your current gig. You are going to need high levels of technical prowess as well as a niche for entering the crowded stream of photographers.

Look at your tear sheets. Do they represent your goals for the entry point? They should, as they are what we are working on.

You need to know what your studio needs will be, and where to do that work.

Research:

Studio rentals.

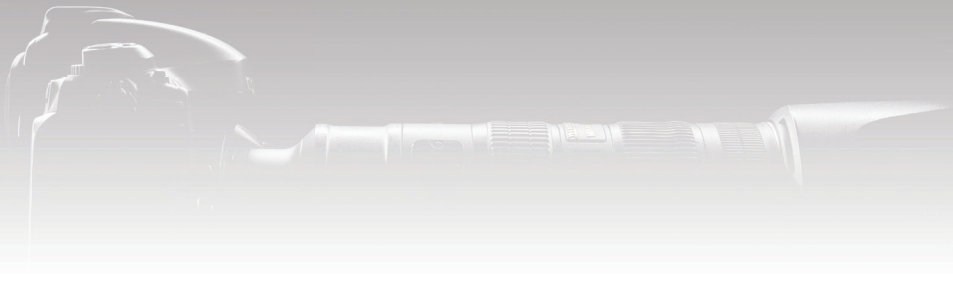
- Any additional space that could be used for shooting your studio work.
- Vehicle and gear compatibility (running a photo business from a Prius may be a bit of a challenge).
- Gear sustainability. In other words, do you have backup for your backup? What about a plan B... or C?
- What gear/stuff can you make versus what you will have to buy?

Your market:

In your town, how many other photographers do you know? Are they successful? Are they marketing? Are you willing and able to go head-to-head with them?

These are the tough questions for this week.

Take your time – this is important stuff. It can mean the difference between a smooth and a rocky start.



Putting It All Together In Order To Get It Together.

Yeah, I know that sounds kind of crazy, but that is really what we are going to do.

At this point, I am going to ask you to pull your worksheets out and use them to help us set some short-term goals:

Take an hour or so and write down your challenges, identify how they could hinder your possibility for success, and what you intend to do to counter them.

Use a computer, pad of paper, voice recorder -- whatever you are most comfortable with -- and talk yourself through the many possibilities of changing the situation for the better. Perhaps we have to compromise a bit with a spouse or significant other. Maybe there are some ways to schedule important time that will not be a drain on family togetherness. There may be some ways to channel things we enjoy into productive photography time as well. This is a personal exercise, but it is an important one.

Please do this. It is important to do it to register it into your conscience and unconscious mind. There, it will percolate and build.

Thanks. We'll wait right here while you go and do it. Take your time.

Welcome back.

OK, we have some goals set, and we have begun thinking of the type of photographer we want to be in the area we live. Part time, weekender, full timer -- all similar in the professionalism but a bit different in actual practice.

Now let's start getting some research done so we can build our business plan. Area Demographics:

This refers to an area that I like to think of as concentric circles -- growing out from the center.

Take a map of your area and draw a circle 25 miles out from your town in the center. The circle will be 50 miles across, but 25 miles from your center.

How much city/town/suburb does this take in?

What are the important businesses and demographics? For example:

In my concentric circle of 25 miles, I have East Phoenix, Chandler, Ahwatukee and an indian reservation. Ahwatukee and the reservation are not possible clients, but the nine Casinos in that circle area are. To the east of me are Intel, Motorola, and 24 identified electronics manufacturers. Tempe has many software companies, and there a sizeable amount of medical technology. North brings a dozen design agencies and graphics firms. (I know this from a deeper look, which is what we will do at a later date, but first we have to identify the areas and demographics.)

If I were a consumer photographer, looking west into Ahwatukee (above-average middle class) and east to Chandler (middle class and above) would be very useful. South to the reservation is a bust (tribal regulations) and north is mostly business.

Importantly, this area is within a 30-minute to 45-minute commute. That is important for later when we are actively marketing. I call this

circle "immediate." No, it doesn't mean we are going to only look there; it means we can market a bit differently when it comes to that point.

Let's do it again with 50 miles away (your circle is now 100 miles across).

This is an area that will take you approximately 1- to 1-1/2 hours to get to. It is less "economical" to make the traverse, so we have to treat it a bit differently when we get to the in-person marketing. Driving 2-1/2 hours round trip (unproductive time), on a guess, is probably not good use of time.

Now do the circle at 100 miles away from your center (your circle is now 200 miles across). This is a significant distance. I pick up Tucson (well, the outer part, but we are good with the extra 15 miles), Glendale, and the far West Valley area... lots of small business and companies out there. The high-growth areas of Cave Creek and Fountain Hills are well within this circle.

You now have a roadmap for areas for you to start researching. This is neither a weekend assignment nor a week assignment... this is a forever assignment. Start identifying businesses for which you think you could do photography.

One terrible month I decided to walk around a big business park and talk directly to the owners about my photography and design business, which was only about a mile away. I took a handful of postcards and a nicely-printed piece that described what I did. It was terribly demeaning, I thought to myself, but, hey, I needed work. I was willing to do this low-level crap to get a gig.

It turned out to be a blast! I met some guys who made custom motorcycle exhaust pipes, a couple of wood furniture makers, a closet installation company, and about a dozen other companies with nice people who did not give me work...but the ones I described all came

for brochures and photography within the following week. In fact, I was way busy.

My second foray into a similar area did not net any gigs, but the one after that got a client that led to two others.

It ain't easy. It ain't particularly fun...unless you make it fun. Instead of trying to sell, try listening to them explain their business. Do not intrude; do not take up much of their time. Ask them questions about them, not about how much they spend for photography. Ask them about their cool exhausts or handmade rocking chairs. It works.

These days, we have a lot of different ways to reach customers and potential customers: email, Twitter, blogs, Facebook, and, of course, that other thing our phone does...calling them. You may need to actually call them to get some information so you can use the other tools at your disposal.

NEVER discount the face-to-face meeting opportunity.

I recommend a note pad in your car or a voice recorder in your pocket for those times when you see a company or hear of a product or a boutique or a distributor that may be of some value to your marketing. Take a photo with your point and shoot (P&S) (you do carry a P&S don't you... at least your phone?), make an audio note, or write it down.

Then immediately – or on a weekly schedule – enter that information into some sort of database/document so you can begin to build a good list for basic research. You may not market to every one of them – maybe not even half of them – but you will have some winners in there.

Back to the map.

In some areas that are pretty rural, you may not have a huge town/city within those circles, but you will have at least a pretty good-sized

one. In some areas, that could include many large cities (Cincinnati, Columbus, Louisville, and more) and that would mean a bit more targeting.

The map shows you your "local" area, and it is an important area to consider as we begin to build our portfolios and businesses, as that is where we are going to find our financial base and income stream at first. Becoming familiar with your local area also means great practice for when we go regional and national later on.

I know we all read about the guy who was doing "nothing" but merrily shooting pictures when one day he was picked up by Nike or Microsoft or some Vodka company to shoot a very expensive campaign...from nowhere to top of the heap. Some call it luck. Some call it destiny. I call it bullshit.

It doesn't happen. I know because I have known two such "overnight" successes, and they were hard-working, talented professionals in their own area when they saw the opportunity revealed to them to step up and out.

The luckiest people I know are the ones who are also the hardest working. Coincidence? I think not. Build this list. Research a few as you go along.

Stay within your first circle for now.

By the way, we can get to a circle that is 300 miles from you at some point. That is a five-hour drive, and an area we can call 'local/regional' – but not yet.

What you will discover are places needing/using photography that you never thought of as using commercial photographs. You will start to develop a "possibility list" of opportunities and clients and businesses.

It's all about the numbers, they say.

Yes it is...and those numbers will lead to something good.

See if you can find at least a dozen businesses for the show in two weeks. And if you have time, let us know what you found out from doing a little research.

1. Do they have an ad agency?
2. Are they in-house?
3. Do they use freelance graphic designers?

This is a great place to start to build a list...one that is built for you. Be selective, but not too selective, as you build this list. You may be a people/places shooter. If it is a catering company you may not want to include it, as it is food. Or is it? Do they use pictures of venues? Do they use photos of happy servers and the "totally professional staff" or the guests interacting with the "totally professional" staff?

See what I mean? Do not be too selective and shut out possibilities for your areas of interest just because you think they don't use the kinds of images you make. Find out what they do use.

That is part of the research we all must do.

For instance, many of you know I have a glancing preference for Mexican food. I would eat it every single meal if my wife and kids would allow. I love Macayo's restaurant, so I just googled the following phrase: "Who is Macayo's ad agency?" and got this result:

Ideas Collide:

<http://www.ideascollide.com/work/integrated.php>

Now I will dig a little deeper.

A quick check into the contact page reveals that Mike Mason is the VP of Creative Services.

<http://www.ideascollide.com/team/index.php>

I am now following them on Twitter.

@IdeasCollide

And I just “Liked” them on Facebook.
<https://www.facebook.com/IdeasCollide>

Here they are on LinkedIn:
<http://www.linkedin.com/company/594237?trk=tyah>

And their blog may offer some insights as well:
<http://ideascollide.com/blog/>

The LinkedIn page and the blog actually have names and faces. This took me three minutes and a couple of clicks. And I have someone to contact with some information on what they do and who they do it with. A perusal of their work on the site shows me a lot about who they hire: people, architecture, and product shooters.

All within three minutes.

I now know who they are, what they do, and if I am a good match for them.

Research...it isn't rocket science, but it pays off so well with a large bunch of knowledge that we can put to use. Notice the other clients they have. Pretty cool, eh?
(By the way. I picked Macayo's right out of thin air, as I took a call inviting me to lunch tomorrow – at Macayo's.)

We will be doing more of this as we go through the 52 weeks, but it is a good idea to start working on this sort of stuff as early as you can.

I also realize that many who are doing this have already opened their studios or made commitments to becoming professional (at any level) and will not want to wait until we get to doing this module in full force – so here it is. Get after it as we do the work that needs to be done.

As you are working on your goals, knowing what is in your area helps narrow it down, and knowing what is in your area helps hone the goals more realistically. They follow each other: goals–demographics–goals.

So for this month we will be working on our goals, making some serious photographs for the portfolio, and building our initial set of business preparations.

Your two photographic assignments for this month are as follows:

1. Meet and introduce yourself to a subject (person who owns, works at, or maintains a business) in your area and ask to do a series of images of them or of their product or of their manufacturing or of their menu. People, product, environments and food/still life shooters all have the opportunity to make the images that are in their area of inspiration.

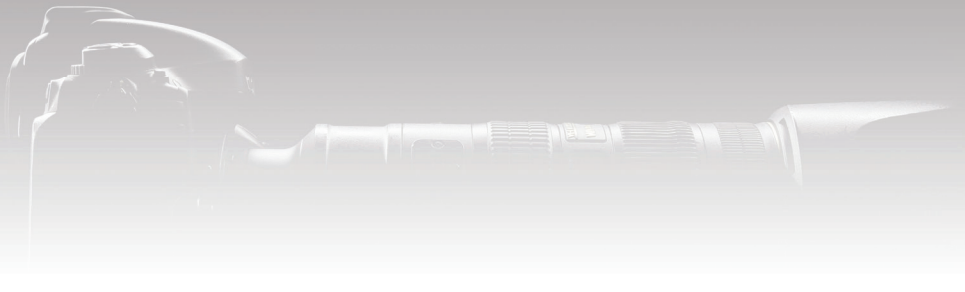
We want a sort of ‘brochure’ set of images: What they do. Where they do it. Who does what they do? Why they do it really well.

Plan on taking 6 – 10 images. Tell the story. Use all that you have at your convenience. Look at your tear sheets again. Do a shot of them on your phone camera so you have them with you. Do the shots with the inspiration.

In addition to this set of images, do one or two that are outside your area. Food shooters, do a shot of the restaurant; people shooters, do a facility shot, and so forth.

These images will go a long way toward giving you practice in what we do, from meeting strangers to doing a series of work. I hope the images are great, but even if they are not, they will be such a huge learning experience for you that it is totally worth it.

Get after it now. No delays!



Further Exploration into our Client Possibilities Research.

Let's get started with some more research ideas for those of you who may live in very populated areas. I know a few of you drew your first circle and thought, "Yeah, Manhattan, or downtown Boston" Great. And that is good. That is called density. Density can work in your favor as well as reach works in the favor of someone who may not be in a very dense area.

Density means close proximity of clients.

Density means less travel and more opportunities per square mile. Density means a hell of a lot of competitors.

Sorry about that last one, but seriously... who cares? All competitors tell us is that there is a lot of work available. And someone other than you is getting it.

That, as they say, has to change.

Big markets mean you have a much more specialized approach to your work. Big markets mean you can work one niche at a time to develop your cash flow. Working one area while marketing to another area is also possible if the density is high and the competition is great.

By the way, do you know who your greatest, most fearsome competitor is? I do. He looks back at you in the mirror each morning. She stares at you from the mirror in the hall.

You. You are the biggest competitor you have. Your priorities, attention spans, efforts (or non efforts), delaying tactics, motivations, insecurities, over confidences, and plain old inertia control will do more damage to your business than anyone you see on a blog post or in a magazine.

And we need to work on that. The great news about working on that problem with ourselves is the fantastic job security it offers. We will be doing it every day for the rest of our lives. There is no “achieved”; there is always the pursuit.

Fun. Yeah...I know.

So let's get to the bigger markets and what to do there as we initially start out on our journey. Big markets mean big agencies. Big clients. Big opportunities. Big budgets. Even bigger budgets. And “I can hardly believe my eyes” budgets. Starting out...well, they are not where we want to be.

What would happen to you if you landed a gig that would require \$25,000 of expenses based against the client billing. Since many agencies (most) pay after 60-90 days, how are you going to pay your vendors before you get the money from the agency?

And, quite honestly, I do not suggest we even go after assignments that large. Without the benefit of a lot of completed assignments, we may not even understand how a shot like that can be produced. And missing the billing or estimate just screams “amateur” in a world that has very little tolerance for anything that may cause them some discomfort.

I think making an art director, editor, art buyer, creative director, designer or public relations person choose you has as much to do

with how comfortable with their choice you make them feel as the images themselves.

So where do we start?

Magazines for one place of entry, designers for another.

Magazines may be more open to trying out new talent than ad agencies are. Their risk is much smaller, and their constant desire to find and promote new talent is a great asset to them.

Design agencies are another point of entry. The difference between an ad agency and a design agency is sometimes as simple as the way the work is handled after it is created. An ad agency usually places the ads in magazines, radio, TV, and Internet. Designers usually do the work and it is then handled by someone at the company or passed on to their ad agency for distribution.

Graphic designers are more approachable than art directors in big agencies. It is a fact.

Choosing magazines means we must do some research into the work we want to do for them. And, by the way, this applies to all of you, whether in the big cities or the smaller suburbs, so pay attention and do the exercises.

Hitting the magazine stand in order to do some research can be kind of fun. You will be steeping yourself in the work of others as well as starting to get a feel for the magazines that you want to work with -- and a few you maybe don't care that much about.

Personally I would love to shoot for Real Simple, a magazine for interior design and lifestyle, and wouldn't spend much time courting Skin, a magazine for the tattoo industry. Your choices may be totally opposite. And that is cool.

So we grab an issue of a magazine we want to work for and do some scouting. The masthead is going to be very telling. On the next page we have the masthead of Martha Stewart's Living magazine. Let's see what that tells us:

We have a wealth of information right there.

We have names and job classifications along with their ranking within the organization. (It's a corporation – being first is important.)

The Photo Director is Muzam Agha.

Now look her up online.

Does she have an Instagram account?

Does she have a LinkedIn account?

Does she have a blog, or a podcast?

Has she been interviewed.

Find out about her, what she likes in photography, what trends she is following, and make sure you are a good mix for her.

The masthead also reveals the Art and Photo department and there are names there as well. Deputy Photo Editor os Lawrence J. Whitenour Jr.

Do the same research as above.

Can you find what makes Lawrence get excited about photography or art in general?

It is not stalking; it is research.

Whether you are looking for an editor, a photo editor, a photo manager, an assignment editor... there is a list. You need to find out which is YOUR target at each magazine.

These are only a few people at one magazine. You will want to get more information on who to send your work to in order to get it in front of the people you want to see it. The best source for that is the

phone. Simply call the magazine, ask for the art department, and ask who to whom to send promotions. (Far easier is the Agency Access method, where they have done all this heavy lifting for you...but for now I think it is important to actually do some heavy lifting so you understand what is involved.)

How often and what we send to the people we want to reach has a lot to do with our own practicalities, but I believe once every other month with an email and on the in-between months a direct mail piece may be quite effective. Send imagery that will get noticed, of course. Send images that have a great deal of visual power. The noise is quite loud in the marketing world, so you have got to cut through.

That part of what we do will be covered later, but for now let's gather some names and get some research on who we want to work with. Five magazines you have identified as being a magazine you could/should work for:

1. Magazine:

Style:

Why they need me:

Who will I market to?

2. Magazine:

Style:

Why they need me:

Who will I market to?

3. Magazine:

Style:

Why they need me:

Who will I market to?

4. Magazine:

Style:

Why they need me:

Who will I market to?

5. Magazine:

Style:

Why they need me:

Who will I market to?

Understanding why they NEED you to work for them is easy for you to see -- we only have to convince them -- and that is only 50% of the equation, right?

We can do this.

Fill out the form above - and make a couple of copies of it for yourself - if you need to. And you need to.

Graphic Designers:

Small design studios are everywhere. One person to 20 people -- they are in every city in the nation. Even a few smaller towns have graphic and information designers.

So let's find a designer to work with:

Studio Hill Design, Albuquerque.

<http://studiohilldesign.com>

A look at their website shows that they do a fair amount of printwork, web design, and architectural design

The principle is Sandy Hill, and the art director is Sean Chavez.

Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/studiohilldesign/>

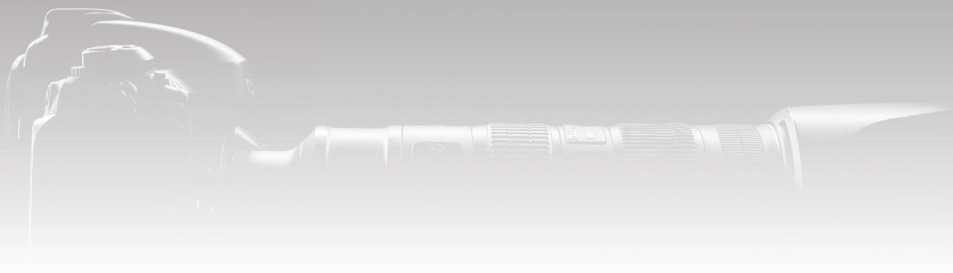
Here is their team page with all the names of the people you need to contact. You may have to use the phone, but you have enough here to start your direct mail process.

<https://studiohilldesign.com/graphic-design-team/>

Find out if there is an Instagram Feed, a Twitter Feed, a LinkedIn Professional page. So much information is available online it will be astonishing to you.

So you now have a lot of info to use to be marketing effectively to the clients you want to reach. And you have identified them as well as know something about them and their work.

Yes, there is more to it than that, but this is the basic stuff we must have to be successful in the marketing of our work. Waiting to do this after your book is done and you are ready is foolish. We work concurrently on the stuff at hand, so when we are ready with the book, we already have our list.



Goal-Setting for Short-Term Successes

Goal-setting is what we call “mapping,” or “planning,” or simply “sketching out a vision.”

Instead of wandering the deserts of creativity and ending up where we end up, wouldn't it be better to know where we will end up? If our journey is aimless wandering, we find ourselves looking backward more than forward.

Why?

Because forward is unknown, and backward is totally clear.

We can see every mistake and every misstep in glorious 16-bit color. It becomes easy to criticize and become a lifelong member of the “shoulda” group...you can even get a condo on “Someday Isle.”

When we look back, we can say with a puffed-up sense of resignation and self-appointed clarity, “I shoulda done that or shoulda done this...,” and of course, that alleviates you of any and all responsibility. You screwed up back then, but now you've caught it and rectified the mistake to the satisfaction of no one but yourself.

You have forgiven yourself for the egregious mistake, but...sorry, you still screwed up. No one really cares about the moment of clarity.

“I shoulda not hit that iceberg.” (Ccaptain of the Titanic)

“I shoulda not tried to take Waterloo.” (Napoleon)

“I shoulda not picked that fight.” (Osama Bin Laden) Yeah, hindsight is soooo much clearer.

But then you can rest over at your beachfront condo on Someday Isle... “Someday I’ll do this... Someday I’ll do that....”

Right.

Very hard to know what you will find when you spend most of your time looking in the rear-view mirror trying to make sense of where you have been.

Actually the total opposite of how we should do it. Instead of looking backwards at a situation that will never be able to be changed, we should look forward to see what we can do better next time.

And with goals, we can see and predict specific points, landmarks if you will, and aim our sights at them. If your goal is the framework for your success, a definition of the possibilities you can achieve, it’s important for that framework to have space and a clear measurable standard for reaching it.

There are times on our journey where we are hit with challenges: a metaphorical bridge washed out, or a toll road with no change. These are obstacles, but they do not deter our efforts to reach the goals we have defined; they may only delay our arrival or force us into taking another way.

They are not goal killers unless we let them be.

The space we build into our goals lets us make these changes without losing sight. The space we leave around them creates a fortress of possibilities that we may not even see at the moment, but will reveal themselves as we continue to get closer and closer to the goal.

Occasionally we may have to alter our goal as we become aware of practical limits or new paradigms that weren't considered. I think that most of us alter our goals as we move forward, and that most of us make them even more grand and beautiful than when we started. Downsizing the goal may be more revealing of the original goal-setting choice than it is of the current situation we find ourselves.

Goals should invite collaboration.

You have areas of power in your life, people who support you and push you to excel. Let them know about your goals. Get them to buy in to your goals so that they may be more in tune to your choices and offer additional support along the way. Significant partners should be invited to share in the goal setting exercise, and together you should develop the goals that are both practical, and still challenging, that will propel you to the next outpost in your career as a photographer.

Here are a few goal setting ideas built for the creative:

Think of an area in photography where you may be struggling or having a difficult time. Identify it and identify a way to change it into something that will no longer be a struggle.

What will you do over the next three months to change that from a struggle to something you are comfortable with?

What will be the immediate effect on your work when you reach that goal?

How will those results be instrumental in your work as you move forward?

I can tell you that this series is evergreen. No matter where you are in your photography, you will be able to identify an area in which you need work and develop a set of skills that let you correct it but only if your goals are clear enough to help you know what to fix, how to fix it, and what it will look like when it is fixed.

As you move through these series of questions for yourself, you will doubtlessly find more and more reasons to challenge yourself.

We talked about goal-setting previously, but more in a “large picture” sort of way. I am discussing it here as a ”short-term, problem-solving” way.

Story:

I had been wanting to move out of my big studio and into a smaller studio a few years ago. I could not figure out how that was going to happen, as I had another year left on my lease and had no idea of where I wanted to move.

Once I set the goal to be out by the end of three months, I was able to see opportunities that I had not seen previously. I could define myself and my goals with clarity. I had to make some changes in my expectations along the way, but as I consistently kept moving toward that end game goal, I saw more and more opportunities for me to make it happen.

And it did.

If I had not set specific goals, kept those goals at the forefront of my work and my thoughts, I do not think I would have seen the opportunities that presented themselves to me.

On The Divide Between Commercial and Consumer

I think that the areas that divided these two genres of photographers have diminished greatly in the last couple of decades.

Herb Ritts was a fine art commercial photographer who also shot commissioned portraiture. Lindsay Adler is a fashion photographer in NYC who also shoots weddings.

Bambi Cantrell shoots for a variety of advertising/editorial/consumer clientele. You can do both.

Shooting for consumers can keep the cash flow coming in. Shooting for commercial can keep the work sharp.

I do believe that the marketing should be kept separate. The triggers and marketing pushes that work for wedding and portrait photographers are not the same that we employ on commercial clients.

Working on developing different strategies is not all that hard, actually. But you will have to maintain a few different marketing programs at the same time. I would suggest you use your name for your commercial business and call your consumer business something that is more fictional. Mom may buy senior photos from Moonlight Studios, but a local ad agency would never touch it. Both would buy from Johnny Rogers Photography, and Mom couldn't care less if you shoot commercial photography, too. Ad agencies may not be that hot on hiring wedding shooters, though.

And one more thing:

A going concern may be something to sell, and a studio named Moonlight Memories or some such is an entity that could be sold and have new proprietors. Johnny Rogers is, well, Johnny. There is no equity in his name to sell.

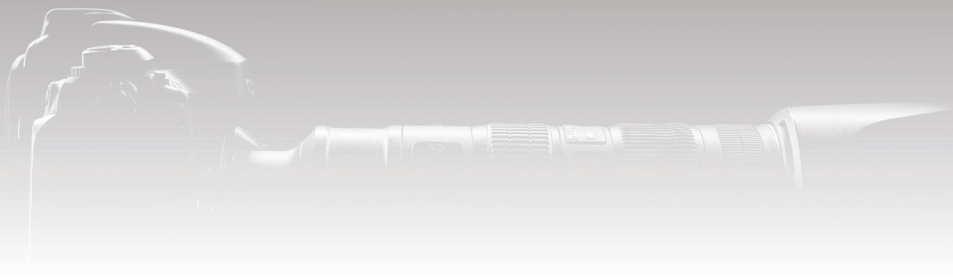
Portfolios:

Commercial and consumer may have some crossover but, of course, senior girls and maternity clients may never care to see your food or architectural work. Some portrait work could certainly cross over as well as environmentals.

DARE TO SUCCEED

I suggest you make two different websites, and you can handle the blogs however you want. Yes, it can be more work, but it may also be more income.

I would also go so far as to have different phones for each business.



Becoming Exceptional

As we move toward the beginning of our business plan, I want to take this time to discuss becoming exceptional. Being exceptional means you are a cut above; maybe two. Being exceptional means you do things differently, and better. Your business is better, your work is better, your relationships are better, and the clients who expect the mundane are always surprised by exceptionalism. Unfortunately, too many of us shy away from being exceptional.

We keep hearing people tell us that being that good is the same as being conceited or egocentric. The movement all across the land is to denigrate the exceptional in lieu of the mundane; no hurt feelings or trauma of having to deal with the fact that you may not be as good as that other guy -- the exceptional one.

What a load of junk. The ones who make it to the top of the mountain are the exceptional ones. And anyone can go up the mountain; they just have to put one foot in front of the other and not quit.

Not. Quit.

Never quitting is one of the prime ingredients in being exceptional.

(I feel I must state that sometimes one must withdraw, whether temporarily or for a longer time. Withdrawing to regroup for a myriad of reasons is not quitting. When we quit, we emotionally destroy any link to the goal we were chasing. And a little part of us dies in the quitting. Withdrawing can be a strategic decision that leads to a

different path. Only you will know whether you are indeed quitting or withdrawing. I just implore you to be honest with yourself if you have to make that decision regarding anything that is important to you.)

Sure, some will get there in record time, and others may arrive late to the party and exhausted. So? The feeling that only "special" people are allowed in will be one of the most debilitating thoughts we can ever have enter our mind. And exceptional people are not conceited;, they simply know that they are good at what they do. That others may infer that they are somehow elitist cannot be helped these days. The striving for centerline mediocrity seems to be surrounding us on many fronts. I simply believe it is a ruse to keep people from trying to do the hard work. And without the work there is no success. And without success there is no exceptionalism. And without exceptionalism, we can all experience the fairness of lowered expectations.

Recently, a photographer published a "manifesto" on becoming a great photographer. It was full of "don't bother learning" and "just spray and pray" and "sure, you're good enough if you think you are" crap. I hardly think that the words contained within that piece were helpful. To be fair, there was some good advice mixed in with what is such a terrible hijacking of the "becoming a professional" meme, but it was mostly overshadowed by the silly, faux-new-agey approach.

The point is, to be a stand-out in this business, you must stand out. In all ways - from your work to the way you treat your staff and even to how you follow up with those you may not have to ever follow up with.

When we establish a pattern of exceptionalism, that pattern follows us into other areas of our personal and professional lives.

I think our goal-setting exercises from the previous week's assignment must now be tempered with some cold hard facts on how we will do those things with exceptionalism.

And the cool thing about being in the "exceptional" mode is that it is really pretty easy, and it flows so smoothly. I think it is because being exceptional is the normal state for us humans. The extraneous forces that push it away from us are quite powerful. From pop culture to politics to entertainment to where we get educated, to stand out and work to be better is seen as a problem. "Go along to get along" can be the prevailing process. Striving is seen as too ambitious, too "full of themselves", too "arrogant" to think that they could actually do something cool.

Something big. Really big.

So, for this exercise we are going to look at being exceptional and then we can take this exercise back to our goals and further make them real in our minds. How? By envisioning each goal as being something we will achieve with exceptionalism. We will also define some exceptional tactics to help get those goals off the ground and into the air! It's time to fly.

For me there are three questions that I ask myself before beginning any endeavor:

1. Will this help my relationships be better?
2. Will this help my business be better?
3. Will this help my personal being be better?

If the answer is no to any or all of them, I must then rethink if what I am prepared to do is something I should be doing.

A hand in the back... yes you... a question?

"Well, what if you want to just sit around and drink a beer on a Saturday afternoon? That won't help anything, so I shouldn't do it?"

Hold on for a second. Let's look at it closely.

Will it help your relationship to be better? Sure - it could. If you have had an extremely busy week and need to relax, turn the brain off, and listen to some Credence, it most certainly can help your attitude and that can affect the relationships in a good way.

Will it help your business to be better? Possibly yes. Maybe you need to turn your mind off from focusing on a problem - just for a while - and this gives you ample opportunity. You may be surprised what the brain will come up with while you are busy doing other stuff.

Will it help your personal life? Well, if the two above are true, it only stands that this one is as well. Sure - we all need to unwind in the ways that we enjoy.

There is nothing wrong with adventuring, vacationing, lazing around for a while, or taking a nap. All can be of a huge benefit to us. But what if we want to buy that new lens on sale down at the local Camera Quickie?

Will it help our relationships? Depends on where we are financially and how things are going on that front. Could simply be a wash, or it could be a disaster. You'll know instantly when you ask yourself the question. And, no, spending three hours trying to justify it to yourself only digs the hole a lot deeper.

Will it help the business? See above and then ask if it is something you want or something you need. If it truly is a need, then that almost answers number one above.

Will it help you personally? Only you can answer that, but I expect there are times when knowing you have the right tool for the job can help you feel more confident.

First thing in the morning, I work on me. I say some positive things about where I am and where I want to go.

And then I ask myself what can stop me from doing what I need to do that day. I want a mental picture of the people/circumstances that can get in the way of my priorities. And instantly I make a decision to not let them prevail. No one owns my day but me.

Sure, you have to take the kids to school and also that dentist appointment. (See the three questions above... heh.) All's covered there. What do you think not taking the kids to school would do for your relationships, business, and personal life? Yeah...me too.

Understanding the challenges of the day and getting after it with a good, assertive approach will get you from where you are not moving to a track that runs pretty good. We control this track, and we do so from our feelings of whether we are deserving of a faster track or not.

I also think in order to be exceptional you must embrace the work that has to be done. Every day. No matter what, the work must be done.

Overcoming the tiredness syndrome or the apathy that can be a by-product of being tired must be dealt with daily. It is the mantra of the exceptional artist or artisan: "Get the Work Done"

An old friend of mine once told me that to be successful (and he most definitely was) one only had to work half a day. Half a day and done. He then told me to choose which 12 hours that would be. There are 24 hours in a day, and we only need work half of them.

Yeah... kind of like that.

This can be the defining point for you as well, you know: Getting to the work. You either do or do not.

"There is no try." (Yoda)

This can always produce a challenge, of course.

It is how you deal with that challenge that will either make you successful or transform your great intentions into anchors around your neck.

Always look for solutions. Always concentrate on the challenge as if there is a solution out there waiting to be discovered. Never think that any challenge is more than a solution waiting to be found.

Other people love solutions-oriented people. When you are constantly engaged with the possible solutions, others will feel so much more comfortable that they will begin to support you. You gain allies with positive focus on creating solutions. You merely gain hangers-on with a focus on the problems; and they will abandon you faster than rats from a sinking ship at the first opportunity.

One way I think a photographer can do this is to always be shooting, whether for clients or yourself, and always be making images that mean something to you. Whether on iPhone or DSLR or MF film camera - no one cares. Just shoot images and look at/think about solutions.

Be prompt. That is what exceptional people do. They don't put off stuff that shouldn't be put off. They are the first out of the gate to get things done.

Get an email query? Answer it as soon as possible.

Got a friend request for LinkedIn? Accept it.

Return phone calls as soon as possible.

One thing I do that my clients like is "recap." I take a moment after a business call to make some quick notes - bullets really - and email them to my client. This lets them know that I was, indeed, listening and that I am working actively on a solution.

Own up to mistakes early and often. Do not hesitate to say, “Whoops, got that wrong. Let’s try this...” People don’t see that as failure, they see it as someone who recognizes what has to be done and then gets after it.

Acknowledge others, and recognize exceptionalism wherever you experience it. Bad service at a restaurant will usually result in a dollar tip. That’s okay, though, because I will over tip for great, exceptional service. Acknowledging the exceptionalism of others is a way of acknowledging it in yourself as well. Because we only really want to hang out with exceptional people.

Okay, that may have gotten a few hackles up on some of you. But, well, it’s true.

If we continuously hang with and be around negative, unsuccessful people, their traits will begin to rub off on us. (Yes, I know, I sound like your mom: “Don’t let me catch you hanging with that crowd; they are a bad influence on you.”) And, yeah, we would kick a fit and loudly proclaim that they were good, decent hoodlums and would never ever, ever be able to corrupt us or be a “bad influence” on us because we were such great little kids.

Yeah.

Of course that is the words of youth. To be taken with a grain of salt and a pound of baloney. Of course hanging out with the hoodlums would be a bad influence. Of course mom was right.

And I am right at this point as well. Be around losers for a while and the loserdom starts to weigh on you, and you may eventually choose one of two paths:

Path A: You want to save them. You see all the good and just want to help nourish them back to great creative health.

Path B: You acquiesce and start lowering your standards so that they will not have their feelings hurt. This will alleviate you of your guilt of being exceptional, which means you will have to go to the top of this document and begin reading again.

There is another path, though. The path called “I’m Outta Here” and you take your leave with neither pomp nor celebrity. It is a path that may be sad and hard, but it is the only path that will lead you to where you want to be.

This goes for forums and online social media as well. I have found that once I stopped arguing with people, my own value in myself rose. I rarely engage these days. I may pop in to offer my view, my expertise, and my opinion, but then I try to move quickly away and not engage with those who want to simply argue.

Offer suggestions, not harsh criticism. Offer solutions instead of piling on the problem. Offer a helping hand without expectation of a return. Offer your wisdom and insight.

Do not be surprised if it is ignored, nor be surprised if it is rewarded. There are others, like yourself, out there rewarding exceptionalism.

When you choose to do things differently than most; when you put your solutions to work instead of perpetuating the problems; when you offer to be more you than the other guy wants to be him --then you are the exception to the rule when it comes to people.

We call that exceptional. Now.

Take a look at your goals and apply these thoughts to them:

1. How can I take an exceptional approach to this goal?
2. How will being exceptional help me reach this goal faster?
3. What can I do right now to become more exceptional in the pursuit of this goal?
4. Who can I help to achieve the goal I want to achieve?

5. Are there places in my list of goals that I may have to focus on with an exceptionalist point of view? Now we continue with a look at the daily questions as well:
6. What challenges are there to keep me from being exceptional today?
7. What solutions do I see for providing exceptional service/engagement to those I meet today?
8. What commitments must I make a priority to let those around me support my actions?
9. How can I help someone do something even better than they thought they could?
10. Where will I find exceptional people to meet and be a part of their community?

One last thing.

Exceptional people overdeliver. Every time.

Underpromise and overdeliver.

Make it your mantra. Make it your business mission. Make it a habit in all you do. Overdeliver.

Now THAT'S exceptional.



Thinking Like a Business Person

We are going to look at the ways we differentiate marketing and promotion from the actual sales component in our next week's assignment, but we need to know why we are promoting and selling.

This is business. As a business, we are in it to make a profit. What is profit?

What you make, less your operating costs, less your salary, less expenses (personal and business) is your profit. Without profit we break even.

And no, your salary is not profit – it is your salary. It is your money, and it is considered an expense to the business. Of course you set your salary, and you know how to figure that out...I hope.

It is what you need to live. It is what you need to keep you and your family in macaroni and cheese and spaghetti (or tacos, if it's my house). And it includes some money for savings.

These issues are not going to be discussed here, and I suggest you get hold of a good financial planning book while you are setting up your business. Find a business mentor or get in touch with the local Small Business Administration. There is book after book written on this subject.

We are going to look at attitude and implementation.

Photography is one of those areas that draws a diverse interest group. Gear heads and “arteests,” technophiles and back-to-roots, introverts and extroverts, and a whole host of other personalities.

Let’s look at it from all possibilities in order to make sure we understand some pitfalls in our path.

We are going to be essentially freelancers. Freelancers do not get a steady paycheck. Freelancers handle their own health insurance and medical bills and life insurance and car insurance and meals and expenses that arise in the normal run of life. We need to have discipline.

I read about a photographer who literally “lucked” onto a big job for a running shoe company and made nearly \$80,000 from that one gig.

That is incredible!!

He also did not get another paying gig (some editorial, but not big ads) for nearly 16 months. Imagine if he had gone out and spent that money on all kinds of silly things or more gear or a new car. He didn’t, by the way, and the money was able to see him through and keep him working away on his book.

He weathered that storm. Would you? Would I?

I like to think yes, but then I have been around long enough to see how this tune is played. I want you to understand it as well.

Let’s look at the cost of doing business (CODB).

First some resources:

National Press Photographer’s Association has a calculator here:
http://www.nppa.org/professional_development/business_practices/cdb/cdbcalc.cfm

Lincoln Barbour has a link to the above calculator as well as some thoughts here:

<http://www.lincolnbarbour.com/blog/2012/02/24/photo-biz-do-your-codb-to-create-your-pricing/>

Using that calculator we can find what we need to make in order to break even. Again, notice that the salary of the photographer is included in the expenses. If you pay yourself just whatever you make when you make it, the ups and downs and extremes will take their toll. The frustration of having money and then not having money and then having it again is too crazed. And being crazed makes it far more difficult to be creative.

I have seen other pricing guides and calculators on CODB, but what I like about Lincoln Barbour's (above) is that he discusses the value of the image and the usage rights.

Usage rights are so very important for many of us – and, yes, it can be a negotiating tool if need be, although I would rarely come down more than 20% – it is the staple of the ongoing and usefulness of our work.

The folks at Plus have given us some good usage and rights managed terminology as well:

<http://www.useplus.com/useplus/pluspacks.asp>

Look to them for some great info on how to create your usage descriptions and rights terms.

Once you have figured out your CODB, you need to start figuring out where your pricing fits in. Are you a per-shot kind of photographer or a day-rate kind of shooter? Are you looking to do big shoots for national clients, or are you working the region in order to build your credibility?

And, seriously, do not tell me that there is no work in your area. There is always work in your region. If it is a small town, it may be much

more challenging, so you have to look regionally. (In addition, you may have to do a little of both – consumer and commercial – to keep the doors open.) No matter – making photographs is what we do.

An aside for those who are not looking to make the break into professional photography:

I totally understand your position. You may have a great job already, but are considering photography as a good part-time income stream. That's great. Just keep in mind that the image you create is just as valuable an image as one created by (fill in your current top professional favorite). It is just every bit as valuable because the image is going to be used for something. It is not just for show or gallery presentation or to share on line. It is being used to sell, promote, cajole, move, create action, and more.

That is why we call it usage. They get to use our work to do something. Hanging it on a wall is not usage; it is art.

Pricing and Determining our Rates:

CODB in hand, we can now begin to calculate how much we need to charge per image or day or gig or event to make our numbers look good. And always we remember “usage” – the image has a value beyond your time to make it. It is a unique entity that should be created with the idea of its value being prominent.

For me, I have a set range of pricing.

My minimum is \$300, and that would be a simple drop and pop or headshot for a businessperson. I will not shoot commercially for under that rate – and that is for the drop-dead simplest shot. Maybe it should be more or maybe less, but I am happy with it.

My rates for advertising and design jobs are done with assistance from PhotoQuote occasionally:

<http://www.cradocfotosoftware.com/>

This post by Rob Haggart shows a good cross section of bids and usage attached:

<http://www.aphotoeditor.com/2009/08/27/what-to-charge-advertising-photography/>

I would also recommend you look at ASMP's pricing guides for more info and ideas:

<http://asmp.org/links/32>

American Photographic Artists has a ton of great material for you to download:

<http://www.apanational.com/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3340>

But many times I have to fly by the seat of my pants. Direct clients rarely understand usage, so I have to look at exactly what I am going to do, whether the usage would be an issue, what my and my clients expectations are, and whether the job makes sense with or without the licensing.

Typical case one:

I did a shoot for a local company that makes sealing units for fuel tanks to prevent explosions. They were needing ten photographs taken on location, and the images would be running on their technical sheets and website manual. Using a pricing calculator, the price came to \$22,000.

Now, look, they are a good company and making a profit, but do you think they are going to get a \$22,000 quote and think I am sane? For ten shots that would take me no more than two hours?

I bid them at \$250 per photograph, and they were totally happy. I made \$2500 in less than two hours (no Photoshop – perfect right from the card), and they have hired me several more times for similar gigs.

Typical case two:

A large insurance company contacted me to do three shots locally for their annual report. I looked at the design company and knew that they were pretty high end. The calculator told me \$12,000 for the three shots.

I bid it at \$12,000 plus any expenses – there weren't any – and they didn't blink an eye. They knew what this stuff costs and were willing to pay it.

How can you tell? Well, you are going to have to do some common-sense evaluation as well as some real-time research. Ask yourself:

- What is their normal way to do business? Are they a big, national company?
- Do they seem like they are new to the whole idea of hiring a photographer? Are they working with a large ad agency or design shop?

Mom and Pop-type clients are different than multi-national corporations – both in the revenue and the way they perceive their vendors.

How to beat the guessing game:

Have a printed out, online, PDF, FlashPaper, iPhone, or Android document that has your pricing written down. Make these decisions early on: What are you going to charge for certain types of images? Drop and pops for instance, or business headshots.

Being able to refer to that document makes it seamless. You do not stress about it, and the client sees it as simply the way of doing business with you. In addition you don't worry about quoting the same type of gig at different rates to the same client. It helps you define more

difficult-to-grasp gigs, and it keeps you honest to yourself. Sure you can discount whatever you want – that is a personal business decision – but you will absolutely know what the shot is worth. At least according to you.

Things I would make a list of pricing-wise:

Simplest of shots:

What is your drop-dead lowest price and what kind of shots fit that category. Know that there will always be someone cheaper; always be someone who is less ethical and less committed to the long-range goals.

Mine is set at \$300. If I pick up my camera for a commercial anything, it is going to be a minimum of \$300. It will also not be something that will take me longer than an hour with minimal – and I mean minimal Photoshop work.

For an hourly rate, I am \$300 with a two-hour minimum. So, if I am going to have to do something with an hourly rate attached, it is a minimum of \$600 out the door. Photoshop work is at \$75 per hour on normal track and double rate for rush.

I don't do a lot of "day rate" work, and I base most of my other rates on a per-gig/usage rate.

A full-day shoot in my studio may be \$2000 plus \$150 day studio rental and all consumables and expenses. A catalog shoot can be \$150-\$250 per shot, and doing 60 of them per day is then quite lucrative. Of course, that is based on volume. And, again, Photoshop work is \$75 per hour if I do it.

I have also done shoots for \$25 a pop, based on the fact that they were all the same size, at the same angle, and at numbers over 100. Shooting 100 small items without having to change the lights puts me in at about a day rate of \$2500 plus expenses and consumables.

Other gigs require more usage attached and are bid through fotoQuote and such.

Consumables:

If it is used, it is billed. If I have to purchase a specific color of seamless, it is billed. If I use a seamless that is on hand, it is also billed. Lunch and such are expenses.

Personally, I do not mark up expenses. Some do. I have used it as a “trust agent” in my business and let my clients know that if they pay in a timely manner, I do not have to mark up my expenses.

Yes, I rent my studio to my clients. If they hired another photographer who would then rent my studio, they would pay for it. I am not to be penalized because I have one. And also, yes, I use it as a negotiating tool. If I really want the gig, and they are negotiating, I can knock off the rental of the studio in the negotiations.

I keep a record of all consumables and expenses as well as receipts. Do that. It is important.



Your Power Places

We are amazing things, we humans. We have such frailties and overwhelming challenges as we meet every day. And we simply move on by them, working within systems that would be incredibly unnerving to those who were not as resilient as we are.

We have the power and ability to learn something from day one till the day we move on. We can change our minds, open new doors of opportunity, clear out faulty thinking, and become excited about something that is purely in our mind. And we can do all of that in a matter of a few seconds.

It's simply remarkable.

We all have an unlimited source of power as well. It is right at our hands, right in front of us; indeed, inside us. And most of us never choose to use more than a few percent of it. We may think about using more, but then we think better of it. We change our outlook to accept the unacceptable instead of using our power to change the unacceptable.

Adaptability is one of humankind's greatest assets, and, unfortunately, also one of its worst. We adapt instead of changing. We cling instead of moving on. We "settle" instead of working a bit harder to get a bit further or a little higher.

When the struggle gets to the point where the returns are fewer and the gains smaller, we quit. Or we get happily settled into that place where we are. We have to struggle no more; we are comfortable.

I guess that's OK. But I have always wanted to know what is over that next hill or around the bend just a little farther. One more hill...now one more.

And we have all the power we need to do these things. Great things. Small things. Incredible things.

We only have to recognize the power we have. Without acknowledging it and letting ourselves see it, we don't get to the point where we can wield it.

I will share with you my top ten sources of power. Yours will not be mine, nor should they be. I am using mine for an example of what to look for.

Resourcefulness: I am relentless in my search to do something better, easier, with more finesse. I can find ways to make things work that can sometimes surprise those with more experience in the field or subject.

Knowledge: I have a keen interest in knowing things. All kinds of things. I want to learn and retain disparate elements of a wide variety of subjects. This knowledge helps me find answers, ideas, inspiration, and solutions to a host of challenges that face me in my work every day.

Imagination: Oh, my. I do have an imagination. I like to imagine what would happen if I did A, then D, then Z, and doubled back to T. I like to find the excitement in a world that may be of my own making. Discovery is the flip side of imagination, I believe.

Visualization: I like to see things in my mind before I create them. I see images when I read and images when I listen to music. I see

something and then instantly start to figure out how I can make that image happen. Whether it is music or photography, I "see" the outcome before beginning the implementation.

Commitment: I never ever quit when I have committed to something. If I promise, it gets done. If I commit to a plan, I work the plan (deviating only when necessary or prudent, but always within the scope of the plan).

Ability to See the Big Picture: Call it a gift – or a curse – I have always been able to see challenges within the scope of the larger situation. I can see both sides of an argument and can see the inconsistencies in positions of either side. The ability to see the big picture helps me negotiate and keeps me focused on the real overlying challenges, rather than those immediately before me.

Honesty: I don't lie. I don't cheat. I never have to keep my story straight. I expect that from all of my dealings and prefer people who keep to this same code.

Willingness to Work Hard: Never one to shy away from the woodshed, I understand and respect the work ethic. I know that nothing happens overnight, and while we may be gifted in one area, we may have to work like heck in other areas to compensate for a lack of natural ability. It is not about the fun stuff; it is about the work.

Power of Legitimacy: I have a track record and an extensive history in the subject areas that I am pursuing. That track record creates a legitimate position for me and my thoughts and ideas. The fact that I know what I am talking about helps for consistency's sake as well as for the ability of clarity of purpose.

Age: Not a spring chicken, I have been around the block a bit. I recognize possible challenges before younger people because I have experienced them more. I bring a sense of history, vision, and longevity to my work.

So now list your Points of Power:

Be as open and honest as you can. Deceiving yourself is worse than trying to deceive anyone else. It hurts you more than it does them.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Many people find it also powerful to keep this list handy. If you find yourself in a tight spot, whether on set or in any other situations, pull it out and look at it again. Reminding ourselves of the true powers we possess is always a good thing. Optional iPhone shots of us in super-hero outfits are worth about four extra points. Just sayin’.

We move into marketing next, and having this list of “Power Assets” will be pretty important. Sales calls are hard for many people, but not for people with an arsenal of power sources behind them. We can remind ourselves of our ingenuity, creativeness, loyalty, or resourcefulness and then, like magic, we figure out a way to get through the task at hand much easier than when we started with no power.

You can think of the list as your “I am McGyver” chart, I suppose. Whatever works for you is probably best. I had mine laminated and kept it in my wallet for years. And, yes, I pulled it out and read it from time to time. And, yes, it helped me every time.

Be sure to run your list by a trusted friend if you want some validation. But, hopefully, you were totally honest and made the list from the center of your being. Not overly positive and not overly negative. Being too hard on yourself is as dangerous as being overly forgiving and “in the tank.”

This is the source of the power that you will call on every time you go out to shoot. Every time you negotiate a contract. Every time you scout a location or cast for talent or face an angry vendor.

I also think of the Power Sources I wish I had. These are the ones I need to work on:

Organization: I’m still working on keeping things in a more orderly fashion. I can be a bit of a slob when working. This can always cause problems.

Networking: Keeping in touch with friends and folks gets away from me, which make me occasionally seen as not friendly.

Time management: Oh, man, I work on this one constantly. Time manages to get away from me so often. It’s an ongoing battle.

What are your three “need to work on” Power Sources?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Notes On Shooting:

As we are going through these exercises, it is paramount that you are shooting and doing creative work at every opportunity.

This side of the business is important, but it is all academic if you are not shooting and making images whenever you can.

I suggest at least two photographs a week if you are currently working full time. I suggest four to six photographs a week if you are working at photography full time. Your focus is on the work, and the work should be in the style you are developing as well as addressing the holes in your portfolio.

Always. Be. Shooting.

There's a little thing Nick Onken said on a blog once. I will always remember it, as my mantra is similar:

If you are not shooting, you are planning a shoot. If you are not planning a shoot, you are marketing. If you are not marketing, you are sleeping.

Period. Got it?

Why the urgency to make images? Why the super focus on making things and shooting and marketing? Why do you have to work so hard and so often?

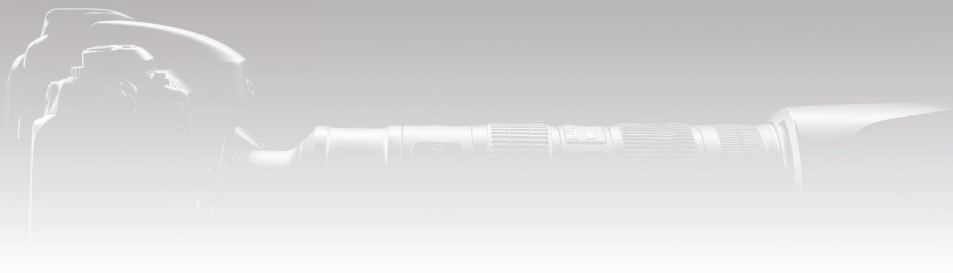
Simple.

Your competition is.

DARE TO SUCCEED

So as you are going through these exercises, remember that the goal is to get you out the door and shooting for a living, or at least part time, and you cannot do that without a solid body of work that speaks to your interests, your aesthetic, your vision.

We now move into marketing.



Real World Marketing

There is a new world of marketing ideas, implementations, sources, directions, strategies and channels for all of us to understand and use.

But first, let's discuss the difference between "marketing" and "sales." Yeah – you have to do both.

Selling your old cameras or lenses on eBay is not marketing. Sending out a postcard once a year for a 40% discount is not marketing. Negotiating for a gig is not marketing. Those are sales methods. Cut and dried, they represent the client purchasing your work. That is cool, and we need to be able to do that efficiently and easily.

But in order to get to that moment where there actually is a client, we have to look at the marketing that we do to bring the clients to us.

Marketing is activity. Marketing is a verb as well as a noun. Marketing is action -- targeted, specific, measurable action. Well, not all marketing is measurable, but we must do it anyway.

Marketing is explaining what you do to clients who must choose you over someone else to do the gig. Marketing is making sure they know you are the right photographer for the gig, and that their decision will not blow up in their faces.

We must remember that the people who hire us put a lot of themselves on the line. It is something I do believe a lot of photographers forget. They forget that a screw-up on their part can lead to someone getting

fired, and having all the family and societal issues that can be dropped into their laps.

Failure is not an option. It just isn't.

Much of the time we will hear people referring to marketing as something they specifically do to entice a client for a specific purpose:

“My mailers went out today, so my marketing is going to bring me some editorial work...” Cool.

But if there is no planning and overarching system in place, then it is really a waste of postage. Art buyers get a ton (can I say that? “Sure” – ed.) of stuff in the mail.

If they don't know you, know your work, feel some affinity to the work, or have something else to compel them to keep the postcard/ mailer, it gets round-filed really fast. I know...that sucks.

But if you think your image alone is so amazing that they would be a fool to part with it, you are not keeping up. There are a lot of incredible photographers out there and there are a gazillion incredible images to be seen. And it may be that the art buyer is thinking about that new food assignment when your architectural mailer comes in the door. She isn't thinking architecture, she is thinking food. Uh oh. Too bad for you. Round file.

There are literally a hundred different things that could cause your well-conceived, awesomely photographed, incredibly printed, and majestically designed direct-mail piece to simply not be seen. You have no way of knowing what it was, so you chalk it up to “well, they didn't like it.” You could just as easy chalk it up to “aliens had taken over the building and were deep into negotiations with zombies over who would eat the ad agency personnel first.” I mean, really, it makes as much sense. You have no idea exactly what went wrong, so you instantly blame you, your image, the designer, printer, type guy, the mail, the packaging, the rain...

Silly.

Stuff happens. Buck up, buddy. Maybe it was none of those things. Or perhaps it may have been.

When I owned my ad agency, I would get a lot of direct-mail pieces from photographers and illustrators. I got nudes, desert shots, food, architecture, fashion, beauty, still life, and lifestyle mailers every single week. The agency specialized in medical technology with a specialization in pre-initial-public-offering (pre-IPO) companies. Nudes? Food? Fashion? Really?

What that said is that the photographer had not taken any time to figure out who we were and what we may be looking for -- just "spray and pray," baby. Send out 20,000 and something's got to stick.

You want stick? Stick that stuff where no sun shines.

These are stupid ideas and it's terrible that "marketers" ever thought to do that.

You need to be very diligent, very focused, very deliberate in all you do. And marketing is no exception. In fact, I think it is the rule.

What We Need To Know

When we are trying to convince someone that we are the right folks for them, we need to know something very important. Very important.

What are THEY looking for? What are they REALLY looking for?

I don't mean what kind of photographer or photography they are looking for, although we do want to know that at some point.

But what is their motivation to look for a photographer for the upcoming assignment? There are many possibilities:

1. They may simply need a second bid to come in high so they can hire their best bud and show due diligence for the bid process. Yeah, it happens.
2. They may be tired of some aspect of working with who they are working with and are looking for someone new to handle the account.
3. They may be pissed off at their current photographer and want/need to change.
4. Maybe their new guy is booked up solid and they need something shot right now.
5. Maybe they are a new advertising director (AD) and need to show some autonomy.
6. Maybe the AD thinks the style of the new shoot is not right for the photographer who is their current "go-to" guy.
7. Maybe the aliens and the zombies have made it a pre-requisite for the release of the accounting department.
8. Maybe, just maybe, they want to try someone new.

But all of those external motivations are secondary to the basic motivation: They want to do good work that will raise their profile and help them get better clients, better assignments, better salaries, They want to succeed, and they want to be recognized for that success. You must be aware of that. A postcard with a shrimp on the front of it helps them succeed how? There may be ancillary motivations, but the desire for recognition and success is very high in this industry. And the desire to be successful creates a lot of other needs and motivations as well.

It is our overriding marketing method to alleviate their concerns and to direct them to a place that makes sense for them to choose us. We want to eliminate the blocks, and build bridges.

To do this we must find out what specific things we bring to the table and how they help the buyer to choose us. We do this within the framework of understanding their needs, motivations, and absolute necessities, many of which are client-specific and client-driven.

The Buying Process

In order for us to function within this ecosystem, we have to be able to work within the system as best as possible, negotiating the turns and swells with ease. We need to know the competition, the "going rates," and the ins and outs of the business in our town or city. We have to be actively engaged with the process, the system, the people, and the industry.

One of the most important things we can do is to get to know the competition: From rates to personality quirks to liabilities and assets. No, not their banking assets -- their ability assets. What can they do that we cannot? What work are they known for? What is the reaction when people mention their name? What are they charging and who are they charging for it?

This information is readily available at the... I lied... it isn't readily available anywhere.

You are going to have to dig for it. Research it.

Call a friend in the business who may have used the competition before and ask them: "What does he charge for a half-day shoot or a simple product shot?" Call him/her up and tell them you are new in town and want to make sure your rates are compatible (no undercutting them).

They may lie...be prepared.

And they may not and be totally open and accepting of your honesty and approach. Contrary to many forums and their members, I think most professionals are pretty open and good people.

As you are calling around to get your book in the door, remember to ask who they currently use. Do that at the meeting, of course. Find out what accounts they are working on, and make notes for your next portfolio showing.

The research you are embarking on is vital to the success of your endeavor. It is vital to the overall strategy of your first business.

Have others gone out and done this stuff without the research and study and methodical approaches? Sure! Some of them have even become successful. I wonder if it would have taken them half as long if they had done the due diligence that most any other business does when they open.

My cousin opened a pizza restaurant (take-out only) and the amount of research he did into the area, the competition, the traffic patterns, the demographics...man. For a pizza kitchen.

We have to be able to think of our work in at least the basic terms of marketing that a pizza kitchen would have to be concerned with.

So, the assignment this week is to find out about at least one of your competitors and call them for a meeting.

Call them and tell them you are doing a workshop and would like to be able to keep the instructor from strangling you in front of the class.

Tell them you are thinking about opening a studio. Tell them whatever you want to tell them, but don't be dishonest.

Don't lie or cheat your way in. It creates hard feelings, and it makes it tough on everyone who may be following you someday.

By the way, remember this, and be helpful to the ones who call you for some information someday.

You want to know what the average rates are for:

- Drop and pop Half day
- Design studio rates Portraits
- Editorial Local ads

Not all of the above; just the ones that are applicable to you and your work.

And tell them you do not need specifics. You are not asking for design agency names or leads...heh. No need to invade that much privacy -- just get the info and get out. As I said, most professionals will appreciate your approach to keeping the rates up where they should be and not being another "new guy" who shoots annual reports for \$500.

Photographer:

Specialties and rates:

Photographer:

Specialties and rates:

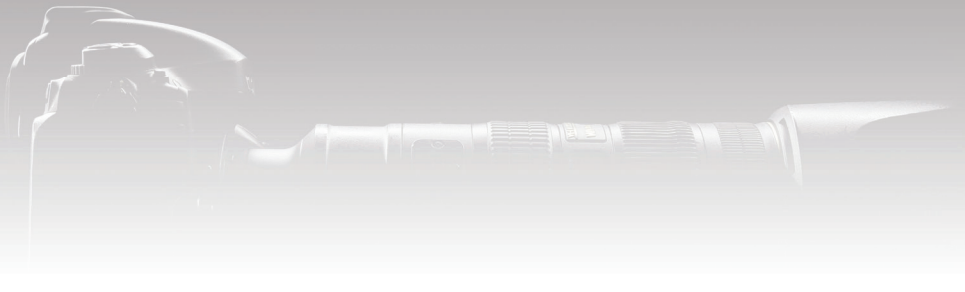
A couple of big players are all you need.

By the way, offer to buy them lunch near their studio. Offer to come whenever they have time. Do not make demands, and do not offer to work for them for free.

I am not one that relates to that well, and most of the professionals I know think that your offer to work for free is somewhat disingenuous and means you don't know what the job actually entails, or you just want to learn everything I do in order to make it yours.

It is hard work and should require compensation. If you are not asking for it, I always wonder what the real motivation is.

Perhaps you are actually a zombie. Just sayin'...



Target Marketing: The Secret of a Successful Strategy

Henry Ford made cars. He wanted to make them for the masses, and that meant he had to streamline his assembly line and do things as succinctly as he possibly could. No variations, no deviations, no customizations. “We make cars in colors to suit everyone’s taste – so long as it is basic black,” was one of his sayings. He wasn’t targeting anyone; he was making a product that people wanted regardless of what color and style it was.

Of course, those days are over. No longer do cars come in one style, one color, or even one price point. Choices abound.

We are photographers, and we need to market to those who have lots of choices. Our job is to make them choose us: In fact, we want them to choose us because we are us.

Target marketing or “Niche marketing” is our flag. It isn’t as easy as marketing something to the broad masses; it is much more focused and pointedly created to make only a few be interested in us. Those few are our targets. They are the people and companies that buy what we are selling.

Let’s look at the three types of marketing we have these days:

1. Interruptive, mass marketing. Think the Super...err... “Big Game” that finalizes the NFL season. Commercials on that

highly-watched show run in the millions for a single minute of advertising. Companies like Coke and Ford and GoDaddy spend big bucks to get in front of that huge crowd.

They know that the sheer numbers of people watching will help them reach the tiny sliver that would want to buy a domain or a truck. And because the numbers are so high, their bet usually pays off. Enough people buy their products that they feel they got their money's worth.

Whether that is true or not is a debate for another time.

2. Focused advertising is aimed at demographics. A particular magazine is very popular with a specific demographic; say, women between 30 and 40 with a college degree. The advertising is based on focusing on that group: what they like and what they need and what they think is important.

This group, while smaller than the mass market, still has widely diverse interests and desires. While they all may be between 30 and 40 and have a college degree, what their specific interests are depend on a million other inputs. From political affiliation to the music they like to their weight and social status, it all is brought to bear on whether the marketing would reach them.

3. Target marketing: Here we go. This means we have narrowed our potential customers down to a very small universe of people who may be interested in buying what we sell, and we are not about to waste time and dollars on trying to reach people who are not interested and will never buy what we are selling.

This is the marketing universe a commercial photographer lives in. We have such a tiny niche of the population that would ever hire a photographer of our type, and within that tight sliver is an even tighter sliver of genre.

A fashion buyer is not going to be marketed to by an architectural photographer. Nor would a location corporate photographer spend tons of money trying to reach the food editors.

The niches are there, and all around us, and we need to take a hard look at how we can break through the clutter and be seen by those who want to see us.

Target marketing is demographics, geography, genre, and psychographics of those whom we are targeting. These peculiarities give us, the marketing photographer, an opportunity to tailor our message to reach the folks we need to reach. Why? Because they need to shoot with us and have the incredible experience of having worked with us on a couple of projects. Right?

Right.

Geographic considerations of a market:

1. Location
2. Region
3. City size
4. Population
5. Median income
6. Business penetration (Are there businesses, or is it mostly residential?)
7. Outpost or hub: Is the area a place where most information and product is brought in – an outpost (like a very small town) or is it a hub, where information and product flow out from it (like a very large city)? Or is it somewhere in between the two?
8. Age of the area: How long has it been in place? Newer communities have different demographics and psychographics than older, long-ago established communities.

Demographic considerations of a market:

1. Age
 2. Gender
 3. Occupation
 4. Religion
 5. Income range
 6. Social class
 7. Social concerns
 8. Large or small families
- Psychographics of a market:
9. Lifestyle
 10. Benefits
 11. Degree of loyalty
 12. Accessibility
 13. Open to change
 14. Classic, modern, or "hip"

Let's look at two photographers: Adam A and Brenda B.

Both have been shooting for about five years, and both are ready to move away from their IT gigs to shooting full time.

Adam A's plan includes an email campaign, a direct-mail campaign, and some very awesome (ask him, he'll tell you) ads in local magazines.

Purchasing a list of the downtown residents of the midwestern town he lives in costs about \$1100 from the local paper. The email list is to over 35,000 people, so he must contact an email company to make sure he doesn't get mistaken for being a spammer. (Constant Contact or MailChimp are my two favorites). Thirty-five thousand names costs him about \$500 to send. He knows he cannot afford to print 35,000 cards, so he prints 20,000 cards at a price of \$14,400. Mailing costs him \$0.34 per piece if he goes bulk, so that works, and the cards are sent the week after the emails went out. That mailing set him back \$6800. And that was to a random sampling of 20,000 of the total 35,000 people.

What happens if 1% of them want to talk to him after getting these marketing pieces? That would be 350 people trying to reach him for a phone followup. Maybe it is only 0.01% that want to talk to him. That is still 35 people contacting him at the same time. And how will he know if the email or the direct mail had triggered the call? Can we use the word "deluged" here?

But not to worry, that won't happen.

You see, a full 15,000 of those names were residents and retired folks living in the downtown area. None of them are ever going to be on the hunt for a brilliant food shooter to do an advertising shoot. In fact, after re-examining his list, he finds that there are only about 650 people who were even in the business of using his services, and fully 60% of them were not in the realm of architecture that he was pursuing.

Unfortunately – this happens all too often. Brenda B worked backwards from Adam A.

She got the list made up already targeted to only the design agencies, ad agencies, and corporate communications companies in her area. Since she was mostly interested in portraiture on location, she nixed out possible clients who were actually never going to be interested and settled on that lovely list of 437 names. She created her free MailChimp email and had 2000 cards (4 of 500 each) printed for about \$1600 and began her targeted campaign.

She knew her potential clients liked portraits, were located in the area she was, and she was determined to reach them with the work she knew they needed to see.

Her return would be far greater than the Adam A's, as she has targeted and focused upon the needs of her potential buyer, where Adam A had simply "shotgun blasted" a bunch of very expensive marketing material toward people who were never going to buy his work.

Let's examine your area.

We do not want to be a hit-and-miss, seat-of-the-pants marketing person; it is too damned expensive and wasteful and can kill our fledgling business faster than going into debt to buy that Hasselblad you don't need.

And we will start with you.

Take a few minutes to write down what it is you are marketing with hopes of selling. Are you selling a service or a product? What would you deliver if someone hired you?

Now get specific:

1. What is an exact product/service that you plan on trading for dollars?

2. Why are you selling it? (Yes, to make money. I got that. But, really, why are you selling what you are selling?) Are there any other reasons other than bank account refreshing that compels you to make and sell photography?

3. These worksheets are for you to work with. They are important tools for you to be writing down and helping to congeal in yourself what it is you are embarking on.



Continuing the Analysis of Your Niche Marketing

Have you thought about what your work will be used for? What the images you make will be blended into or set into a context to make them more (or less) than they are?

You should.

It will help you understand what to photograph when you know where the photographs will be used, and how they will be used. Context is so important when we are shooting for commercial purposes.

So think about this question and make some notes: What are your photographs going to be used for?

Now think about what value you put on the work that you do. You do put value on your work, right? Good. We know what your images are going to be used for, but what value is that to you? What value is it to them?

Does that value matter?

Of course it does. It matters a great deal -- to you and your client.

A single image may impact their sales by a few percent – or a big percent -- of increase. That has value. That work has extreme value for them. To make a photograph and an ad that increases sales 5% could be huge in volume and profit for their business.

What is the value of your work:

How will you differentiate your images from those of others? In other words, will you be able to satisfy your clients with what you do?

How will your clients react to your offering? Is it what they want?

Are there any other ways that you can make your photographic offering more successful? What else can you do to provide a value added service that would be beneficial to your clients and customers?

How can you become more of a value to your client?

What would be a good way to express your short-term value?

What would be a good way to express your long-term value?

Perceived Value

The true value of what we do is in the “perceived value” of our work in the minds of our customers. That means that there are some great photographers who have lower perceived value than other more mediocre photographers with very highly perceived value.

I think that hinges on the perceived “quality” of the images that we make. And that is highly dependent on how we perceive the quality of our work. If we run our work down, we downgrade the perceived quality and value. If we recognize the work that we do as being good, we raise the perceived quality and value. If we talk badly about our industry, we downgrade the perceived quality and value of the work. If we nurture and support our industry, we raise the perceived quality and value of the work we do.

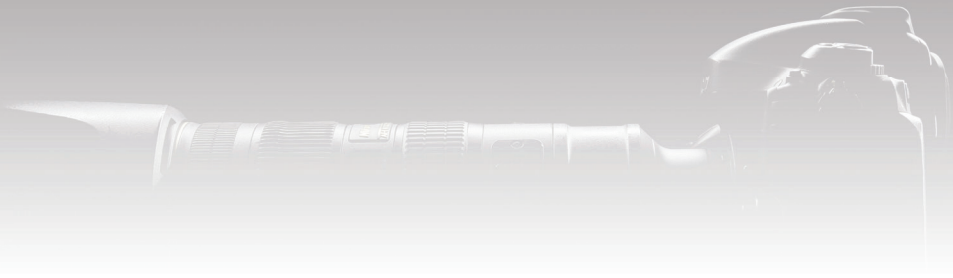
If we do not treat our work and our clients as being smart, powerful and of high quality, no one else will, either. Attitude. It can be such an important part of what we do.

Being dependable and ready with a positive attitude and a sense of excitement for the work you do can become very viral and spread through the community – both photographic and client-centric.

Take some time to develop a strong set of answers to the above.

This is a very valuable worksheet for those who are putting their initial plan together as well as those who may have been shooting for a while and not "taking hold" in the market they are working in.

Putting this information down on paper will help guide you to the next assignment: Analyzing your true market.



Analyzing Your True Market

Who are your customers?

1. List your current customers here:

2. List your Potential customers here:

3. Now list the clients you really REALLY want to work for:

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

1. Where are they?
2. Will their location be a problem?
3. Will you be able to market to them in a reasonable way?
4. Will you need any special help to get their work?
5. How will you market differently to each of them?
6. Would you market differently to each of them?
7. 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:

1. Who makes the buying decision? Do they have a particular buyer, or do individuals within the organization make the decisions on their own?
2. When and how are the decisions made?
3. How often do they need photographs? How often do they purchase or assign photography?
4. How much do they buy? What is the volume of the assigned photography?
5. How much are they willing to spend? What kinds of numbers are there for fees paid?
6. What factors influence the purchase decision?
7. 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 do. 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

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 maintains? 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?"

1. 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.

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

2. 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?

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

DARE TO SUCCEED

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 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, Location, Location. The Real Estate Sales Person's Mantra

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 photographer. 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 google 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, North Carolina, has a huge historical record and is close to the heart of the south.

Where do you live?

What is unique about it?

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

googling and maybe some Facebook searches/Twitter searches / LinkedIn searches, etc., but it is also 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.

It is okay, you have done your research at the beginning of week 15 and on into week 16, so you are armed with real data of what your prospective clients are doing to find the photographers they work with.

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.

You have your genres and niches; the things you want to shoot.

You have identified your channels of clients and how your work could and will be used.

You have created a strong sense of who you are and who the clients are that you are going to be working for. And we have looked at how geography could play a part in the decisions as we move forward.

And moving forward we are.

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 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 –



The Nitty-Gritty of Marketing

Now we start getting to the nitty-gritty of this marketing thing.

I hope you have now identified your market, what you plan on providing to your market, and who the players are in your market.

The work that precedes this point is so very important to do. And be sure that you have done more than just the few lines built into this workbook – you should have dozens of sheets of paper or Word documents filled with research and information to give us real world data for what we are now going to do.

We are going to implement the plan.

Let's identify what we will be dealing with:

Strategy, Tactics, Planning, Implementation and, Measurement.

Strategy and strategic planning is based on what we have found out about our market. It is the overarching idea(s) that will be the focus of what tactics we are going to use.

A strategy may be: to create an interest in the way you shoot editorial in regional magazines. The Tactic may be: an email campaign, direct mail, or personal portfolio showings.

The Planning may be: to gather the information on the magazines, list the emails, list the addresses, and list the phone numbers.

The Implementation may be: one email per month, one direct mail piece per month, or one personal portfolio showing per quarter.

(Of course you must actually, you know, do this stuff!)

Measurement may be: What are the open rates for your email? How many calls did you get from the direct mail? How many portfolio showings did you get from your list?

This information is now taken into consideration for how well you are doing with your marketing. The metrics are up to you and what your expectations are.

Did you meet your planned success?

How are you going to change it up for the next month; the next quarter?

If you are not getting the success rate that you want, why do you think that is?

If it is working well for you, what do you think you should do to maintain or increase the success of the marketing?

Coming up with cool ideas and wonderful shots is not a problem for most photographers. We love to make images and show them to people.

(A note: If making images and showing them to people is not something you are interested in doing, please stop reading and go fishing. Thank you.)

Where photographers fall down is in the planning and measurement of the work. They will not listen to experts on their marketing efforts and become totally dug-in with the work that isn't working. Photographers begin to get frustrated because their work is not having the impact that they think they should get. But they haven't

done the research we have been working on for all these weeks. They have instead been going on "gut," seat-of-the-pants marketing. It doesn't work. Period.

Example: Blasting out inappropriate work to clients who are not interested or, worse, could have been interested had the work been targeted to them in the correct manner.

Now, for sure, blasting out shotgun-like marketing is easy. Push a button, send a bunch of emails...snazzy and quick. It's like throwing spaghetti against the wall to see what will stick. And it's just as successful in bringing work.

If you are planning on doing this sort of quick, easy marketing, go with the spaghetti instead. Results are the same, and throwing spaghetti is cheaper and rather fun.

For those of you who are going to continue on, there is great new technology to help you do an even better job of reaching those specific clients you want to work for, and with resources at a premium, we need to be smart about what we do.

These are the properties of a well-conceived strategic plan:

- The Target: Who it is going to.
- The Timing: When it is going out to them and why.
- Integration: How it fits within the whole body of marketing and message.
- Channels: The different verticals of your market and your niche.
- Consistency: How consistent and persistent is this marketing effort going to be?

- Campaign: The items and time constraints of a particular marketing effort (monthly, quarterly, or yearly, for instance).

We must know what we want to accomplish with the marketing campaign, so let's actually identify it. What this campaign (name it) will do. In other words, what do we expect from this campaign?

And look at what we know already: whether the time of year may be introduced in the outcome or location or market size or channel or genre, and more. Much more.

Let's put together a single campaign targeting regional small manufacturers.

The Target: Local manufacturing firms with in-house creative services. From our research we have found 135 of these within our designated 50-mile radius. Doing the work helps get us the targeted list. (You can also use a list service like Agency Access to help you develop this part of your campaign.)

The Timing: February/March is a common time to be getting ready for spring and spring rollouts of new products using direct mail and email one week apart with the third week of each month for measurement and no contact.

Integration: Adding new images to the website that will support this campaign, as well as blog and direct mail - all with the same message. In addition, the work will be added to the Facebook page and Twitter.

The Channels: Use email, direct mail, Facebook, blog, Twitter, and in-person portfolio showings.

Consistency: This campaign will continue from February 1 through March 31. The campaign will feature 6 of the new images of small- to medium-product photography.

DARE TO SUCCEED

Campaign: Use three emails three weeks apart and three direct mails with one image featured. (That is all six of our images.) Utilize 1-1/2 hours of calling potential clients to get personal portfolio showings each day. The goal is to get 5-8 personal showings per month and adding one image to our blog as soon as the direct mail goes out, adding it to the Facebook page as well.

Note – we are not mailing/ emailing on the third week of each month so we can look at results and measure what is working.

Can you think of any additional tactics that you could use to get this campaign out and into the "buzz" in the market?

How about a couple of YouTube videos of the shoots from a behind-the-scenes perspective? How about some interviews on Vimeo? Can you get your images featured on another blog? Could you write an article on shooting widgets for a local magazine? How about the local Chamber of Commerce...do they allow you to do a small, soft-pitch, presentation?

We build the "buzz" and visibility of your work in as many channels as possible and then let everyone know about this campaign. And most of these take little to no money, but can contain great creativity.

Put together your plan for your first campaign:

TARGET:

TIMING:

INTEGRATION:

CHANNELS:

CONSISTENCY:

CAMPAIGN:

What challenges do you face with this campaign?

How do you plan to address these challenges?

What are your expectations?

What do you want accomplish with this campaign?

How will you measure it?

DARE TO SUCCEED

How will you measure your success?

What assets do you have in place for this campaign?

What is your budget for this campaign?

List a few other tactics that you could employ for this and other campaigns:

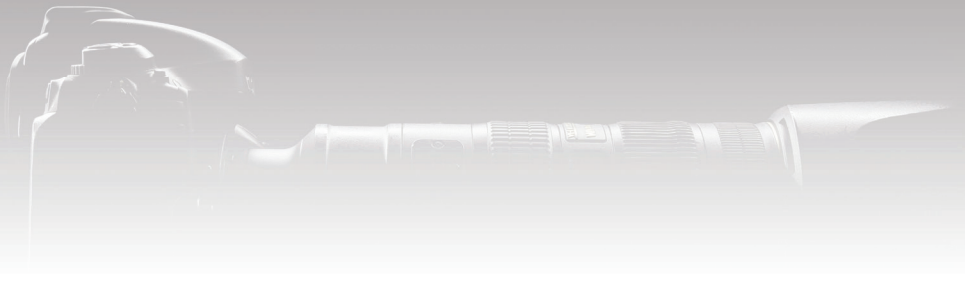
This is what you should do for each and every campaign you work on. If we cannot focus our marketing and find the measurement of your efforts, then we are tossing spaghetti against the wall.

NOTES

A series of 22 horizontal dotted lines spaced evenly down the page, providing a template for writing notes.

NOTES

A series of horizontal dotted lines for taking notes, consisting of 25 lines.



Building an Online Campaign

Let's get to work implementing our email and website campaign. We have targeted and focused, and now we have to implant.

I am going to make some very specific recommendations based on research and marketing realities at the time of this writing.

A strong email campaign does three things:

1. It alerts potential clients to your work.
2. It creates an interest in working together.
3. It leads the email recipient to your website.

These three areas have some subareas as well. Alerting potential clients to your work also means alerting current clients to new work. Leading the recipient to your website can also lead to shared and commented-on work that can help spread your work virally.

The secret to email marketing is...there are no secrets. It is a well-practiced tool that has plenty of researched success methods as well as a long history of acceptance. First we should investigate the recent meme that "Email Marketing is Dead". Okay, my response: Not true. Let's move on, shall we? Listening to that kind of drivel has never been productive.

Since we are going to create a campaign, we are supposing that we have already begun developing our lists with a targeted message and

a developed channel. In simpler words, you've done the worksheets and know to whom you are going to send what, right?

If not, do that. We'll wait.

--

Glad we are back, if you had to leave. If you didn't have to leave, it really wasn't that long of a wait.

First of all, it is imperative that you do your email through an Email Service Provider (ESP) to make sure you are not blocked for spam. These service providers have all in place to keep you legal with the Controlling the Assault of Non-Solicited Pornography And Marketing Act of 2003 (CAN-SPAM) , and that means no disastrous moments where you find that your website has been permanently blocked and you are dead in the water until you can find someone to fix it. Because good luck with that.

The goal of the campaign is to ultimately get the reader to engage with you and your photography. It is imperative to get them interested and keep them interested. The website is the hub of your work, so we drive all traffic there.

There are several as of this writing: Constant Contact (www.constantcontact.com), Verticalresponse (www.verticalresponse.com), and MailChimp (www.mailchimp.com) are the ones with which I am most familiar.

All of them are good, but we are going to discuss the MailChimp option. I , as well as lots of other photographers and designers, use them. In fact, MailChimp has become a sort of de facto choice for the arts community.

It is important to use a service that gives you all the tools you need, such as:

1. Response rate (open rate): This means you know how many people actually opened your email instead of trashing it immediately.
2. Click-through rates: It's great to know if they looked at your email, but this one tells you if they actually clicked on the link to go see more work.
3. A report on any emails that were refused, recipient couldn't be found, or other reasons your email could not get through.
4. A "spam" checker to see if your email contains anything that may cause it to be automatically sent to the spam grinder. (Words like "free," and "sex," and "mortgage" may actually cause your well-thought-out email to be simply scrubbed from existence.)
5. Your email should have the ability to be sent as HyperText Markup Language (HTML) as well as text-based with links.
6. You need signup widgets that work. You want to collect names and addresses for the email campaign, so you need an easy-to-implement tool to collect them. Now, if you are using lists from Agency Access or AdBase, you are already using a targeted list.
7. Templates that work for you. MailChimp has many graphically interesting templates that can be made to work beautifully for photographers.
8. The ability to use custom templates if you need to. Having a custom template can be very cool, but not being able to use it on your electro selective pattern (ESP) sucks.

Consistency is an ally, so you want to choose carefully as you begin your email marketing work. Jumping from template to template, ESP to ESP is counterproductive.

All of the above ESPs will allow you to test your email and template on yourself, so build and test, build and test. Repeat as necessary.

What to Show

It is important to show the correct work, but that is not an issue. We have spent a long time working on who that should be, so the right images are chosen and waiting for us to implement.

Here is my suggested way of working.

We want to drive the readers of our email to our website, but I think it is even more important to get them to specific parts of our website; in other words, targeted direction.

Let's say my email campaign is about all my new work.

I want it to link to my new work section on the website. Not the Home page, or the About page, or the Contact page – the New Work page.

If I am featuring table top work, then I want that email to link to my tabletop portfolio. I do not want them to have to think, "Wait, what was I here for?" I don't want to lose them while they are trying to find my New Work section. Link to what you want them to see.

You do this by showing an image from your New Work section, one that gives them a flavor of what the new work is you are doing, and then a paragraph on why they should go immediately to see more. Maybe you show two images, or three. I would stop there. If you show them 8 images, they may feel they have seen all there is to see. They don't bother clicking on to see more. If you show them one strong image, or a few, it may entice them on to the website to see

more. Or it could be an image that totally disinterests them and they do not click through.

Or it could be an image that reminds them of the time they were in the Catskills with a lover that eventually dumped them, so they do not click through.

Or it could have a blue basket in it and they have a mortal, if not totally understood, fear of blue baskets, so they do not click through.

What.

Did you think there was any sort of guarantee with this stuff?

Did I mention consistency and persistence were key traits to getting this sort of campaign going?

By the way, it could be an image that automatically triggers an idea they have been working on for a client and, forget the click-through, they reach right for the phone.

It happens.

The size of the images:

Most email campaigns are designed to be between 500 and 600 pixels wide. MailChimp supports 600 pixels on many of their templates. The height of a 600-pixel wide image shot vertically will be 900 pixels - taller than most monitors will be able to display. Not saying you shouldn't do it; just saying you should know that the viewer may have to scroll up and down and not be able to see the image in its entirety in their browser. This presumes there is no cropping on a 2:3 ratio camera.

I suggest that this be in the top of your mind. If at all possible, you do not want the reader to scroll.

It should be suggested at this point also that the "attaching" of images to the email is a dreadful way of getting anyone interested.

If you make them click on the link, then they may have to save it or choose to view it with no context, then they may have to open up another software to view it. Really? Is that what you want to do with the folks to whom you are trying to pitch your work?

Use an email template. Use a template from MailChimp or whomever you are going with. If you can use Dreamweaver, get a cool template and work it yourself. You will have to know File Transfer Protocol (FTP), and full-pathing of the images as well as having a place to store the images to do this, but it certainly can be done.

I like simplicity when doing emails for photography clients. You make pictures. They hire people who make pictures.

"Here's my picture." "Nice. You want a job?" "Sure."

The more you add to that mix, the worse off you become. KISS: Keep It Simple Stupid.

Great advice.

When making the images, be sure to compress them to a smaller file size so that it doesn't hog the bandwidth of the viewer. In Photoshop, use "Save for Web and Devices" and use a setting of 45 to 60 for your JPEG. This will be very appreciated by your recipient.

What else should be on an email campaign?

You should have a footer, or easily seen part of the email, that contains the following:

Phone Number | E-Mail Address | Website Address

A link to social media. I am recommending not more than two, so choose wisely. Too many choices may be not a good idea.

Send them to your Facebook and Twitter accounts. Remember, whichever they click on, they will more than likely not return to your email to click another one.

Send them to your About Me page or your LinkedIn...whatever you feel is the best tool for you to use.

The email should contain an actionable process: "Click Here" to see more work; "Visit the Website" to see my new work; "Call for the Book" to see more work.

It's a call to action. It is vitally important. Do not suppose they already know what to do.

The Website Gallery

We are sending them back to the website to see more work, so make sure the gallery is in place before you send it out.

It should have 8-24 images.

It should be relevant to the email you sent.

It should be linkable.

It should be branded and easily navigated as well as being a part of the current website so the other portfolio links are easily seen for more viewing.

Frequency:

This is hotly discussed, but I do not think one per month is too much. One per week surely is. One every quarter is totally too long between; maybe three per quarter if you don't want to do one per month.

Tracking:

When using MailChimp, you can see who didn't open your email, who did, and who did and clicked through to your website.

The first time you do this you may be disappointed but, in actuality, it is in the 10-20% range of people who will open the emails. And down in the 6% range of who will click through.

But monitoring means you have some leeway to do a "Mulligan": a do over.

Since you can see that these 56 people did not open the email, you can send it again with a new subject line. Changing up the subject line may be a great test as well as you are finding what works. It also means that next week you have an email blast going out to 56, hoping that ten open it. And the following week 46 will get your email with a new headline.

Cool, eh?

But you can also see that it takes focus and commitment.

Widgets for collecting email addresses:

MailChimp and all of the other ESPs have small snippets of code that you can place on your website or WordPress to collect emails from visitors. This is a good way to add to your list of people who may be interested in your work.

Headline Strategies:

Just as in blogging, creating a powerful headline is paramount.

An email that says: “New Work” isn’t going to attract anyone to open it. A subject line of “From Don Giannatti” means what? To who? Why? How about a subject line like one I got recently: “re: photographs” Yeah...that made me interested.

How about these:

“The Rocky Mountain High: Photographs of Colorado Resorts” “From Boat to Market to Table: Fresh Fish in Boston – A Photo Essay”

“Chicks in Short Dresses...” – naw...just seeing if you were paying attention. “The Dallas Fashion Scene – 24 Photographs by Don Giannatti”

Can you see how those types of headlines would possibly be more interesting to the reader than bland and boring?

How about:

“Vintage Cars, Vintage Hotels, and Justin Bieber – A Photo Essay”

Hell, I would open that.

Headline strategies are very important. Luckily there are many places on the web where you can learn about good headlines.

I like www.copyblogger.com and www.menwithpens.com for ideas on headlines and copywriting.

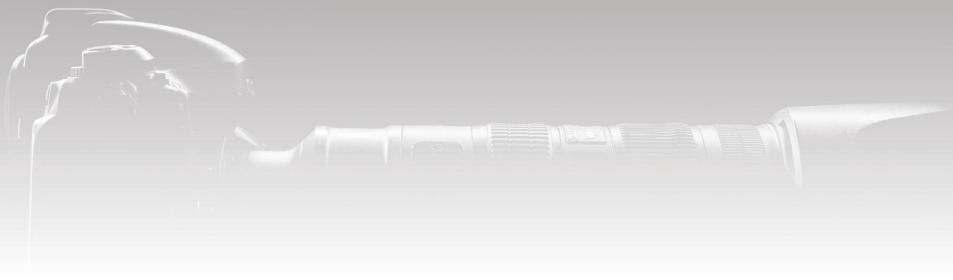
This is our initial strategy and one you can put into place immediately. MailChimp is free for 2000 names, which is plenty for our initial work.

Sign up and get your template started. There are tutorials and lots of examples to choose from. Take your time to build out a nice template. And start getting your content into it. Remember that it saves your work, so you do not have to start over each time.

Starting an email campaign is one of the least expensive tools you can use to get the word out. And yes, you will hear people saying that they tried it and it didn't work and that email marketing is dead and blah blah blah.

They didn't stick with it. Or their work sucked. Or they did it haphazardly. Or they didn't target their audience. Or they didn't have a message.

Or they just plain didn't do it right; they messed it up and it didn't work for them. It will work for you, but you must stay with it. Stay focused. Stay on message. Email marketing is not dead. Bad email marketing



Building a “Leave Behind” or Promo Card

One of the most important parts of your campaign will be the promotion (promo) card or “leave-behind” – a postcard or single-image photograph with all of your contact information on it.

In previous days, we would have to have them printed in quantity. And even then, getting quantities of 250 or even 500 were very difficult and expensive. The least you could order without paying a ton per card was 2000 items or more. We don’t need that many to get launched. Not even near that many.

Fortunately, we have several great vendors ready to help us with short-run printing. We can even order as few as 50 cards, if that is all we need for a specific campaign.

But first, let’s look at what these cards typically look like:

I prefer an oversized postcard. It costs nearly nothing more than the small postcards but has so much more real estate on it to use for my images.

Typical Postcard sizes:

- 4x6 (Standard) 4x9 (Rack Card)
- 5x7 (Large Postcard)

- 5.5 x 8.5 (Oversized Postcard) 6x9 (Oversized Postcard)
8.5x11 (Jumbo Postcard)

The 5.5x8.5 is half of an 8.5x11 Jumbo Postcard. I think it is a great size to consider, as it is a size that many ADs are used to, and it is too large to be misplaced and yet small enough to fit in their files.

Should we use one shot or a group? Yes. But I recommend never more than three shots. This is just a number that I am comfortable with. Three gives a client a great look at what you do and takes but a glance to confirm your credibility.

You could consider a single-hero shot with two backup shots, or possibly all three are the same size. Would two large images and one small one show what you do easily?

The layout matters. It matters a great deal.

Graphic design is all about how something that is seen on a page or wall or screen makes someone feel or respond. We are now designing something graphically to entice our clients to pick up the phone and call us based on this leave-behind. It has to be right.

What you will instantly notice is that, even though the images are the same, there is a big difference in what the cards "say" about the work.

Bleed cards go all the way to the edge, or bump the images next to each other. Adding borders gives the images a more disconnected feel. Floating them over other images or letting them seem to be almost casually splayed out has a much different feel.

What do you want your cards to look like and feel like?

Work with your designer to create a look and feel that makes the most sense for you. If you are doing this yourself, create a Photoshop document and make sure you can move the images around to get the feel you want. Do this with a test document so you can expand

or compress the images all you want with no fear of destroying the integrity of them.

When you are done playing with the layout, create a new layout and then put the images in. Keep from resizing them up or down after you have entered them on to the document.

IMPORTANT:

If you are doing bleeds, it is important to check with your printer to see how much over the edge it wants you do create. Printers do not print edge to edge...they print a little over and then trim all the way around.

Most printers I work with need a 1/8" spill to trim off. That means I make my document 1/4" larger (1/8" on each side) and work to that. I still put in a safety zone of 1/4" all around the inside of the document edge so I do not put something very important on that edge, as it may get trimmed off.

What else goes on the card?

Your name, website, and phone number On the back, we get down to business.

If you are planning on sending these in the mail, you must leave at least a third on the right side empty for the postage info. I would recommend a program that will make stickers for mailing and use those for the "To" section. I like them because they will also set the return address on the same label.

If you are not planning on sending them through the mail, you have the entire back to use for your message.

Don't use it all. White space is good, and if you go over 150 words, few will ever read it.

Who you are:
Don Giannatti

What you do:

“A photographer specializing in small business promotions, corporate design, and environmental portraiture in the greater Mendocino area.”

Studio:
602 555 1234

A call to action:
Call me for any of your small business photographic needs. We work within budgets of all sizes.
www.damniwishireallylivedinmendocino.com
don@unfortunatelyIdont.com

Leaving white space encourages the client to take some notes or add some notes to it to help refresh memory.

Here's a tip:

If you are talking with them and there is a reason for it, take the card and write something on it that is important, such as a second website or your blog or a reference's phone number. Did you know that people have a harder time throwing something out when it has writing from someone else on it? It makes it special and worth keeping.

Software:
Photoshop Illustrator InDesign Publisher QuarkXPress

Not PowerPoint. PowerPoint kills resolution and the work does not print well. Your files should be 300 dpi.

If the printer wants the files in CMYK, you should do the conversion.

Include any fonts you may have used unless you are sending a flattened file (Photoshop TIFF or JPEG). You can also export as Adobe PDF in the “Press” setting for many printers.

Fonts:

OK – here you can go crazy!

... ... NOT!

Stupid fonts are a terrible way to show your work. Fonts are the way we communicate our words. Funky, grungy fonts say one thing and corporate straight-up fonts say another.

Can you be playful? Sure. Outlandish? Maybe. Out of touch or design-lame? NO.

We have all heard of the tragedy of Comic Sans and Papyrus. The overuse of Ariel Rounded has rendered it toxic to many designers.

And before you say you are not a designer, I will remind you that **YOUR CLIENTS ARE!** Finding fonts that are going to do the job also need not be expensive.

Here are some resources:

Choosing the Right Font: A Practical Guide to Typography on the Web <http://webdesign.tutsplus.com/articles/choosing-the-right-font-a-practical-guide-to-typography-on-the-web/>

“What Font Should I Use?”: Five Principles for Choosing and Using Typefaces <http://www.smashingmagazine.com/2010/12/14/>

what-font-should-i-use-five-principles-for-choosing-and-using-typefaces/

Choosing Fonts

http://desktoppub.about.com/od/fontselection/Choosing_Fonts.htm

“How to Choose a Typeface”

<http://www.smashingmagazine.com/2011/03/24/how-to-choose-a-typeface/>

“Choosing the Right Fonts to Form Great Combinations”

<http://10steps.sg/articles/design-articles/choosing-the-right-fonts-to-form-great-combinations/>

“19 Top Fonts in 19 Top Combinations”

<http://bonfx.com/19-top-fonts-in-19-top-combinations/>

And yeah...there's an app for that too...

“Create thousands of font combinations from dozens of the top fonts used by graphic designers”

<http://bonfx.com/font-combinations->

Choose your fonts wisely. Try a few combinations.

Rule of thumb: If the font has flames, is made out of chickens, or has a distinctly Harry Potter look to it, it may not be right for your project.

Printing the Promotion

Many of you may want to pick up some premium papers and print the promos yourself. This is fine, and many photographers do just that.

If your printer is capable of high-quality printing, you just need the right cardstock to print on.

Freestyle Photo in Los Angeles has a large selection of premium papers. This is one I like a lot: the Epson Premium Matte.
<http://www.freestylephoto.biz/4041257-Epson-Premium-Presentation-Matte-Inkjet-Paper-8.5x11-50-sheets>

The Moab line of premium papers is also wonderful. Check them out here: <http://www.utrechtart.com/Moab-Inkjet-Paper-Anasazi-Canvas-Premium-Matte-350--350gsm--20-sheets-MP19805-i1008358.utrecht>

I have heard good things about Hawk Mountain papers as well.
<http://www.hawkmtpaper.com/>

Keep in mind that matte and papers with a bit of texture will feel richer in their hands. They also have a lot less glare than the glossy papers do.

You want to use the thickest paper you can find, but do not let that force you to settle on cheap papers. The leave-behind promo is everything you when you are not there.

Spell check and proof – many times. Get others to help you proof and proof again. A silly typo may be a real turnoff to someone wanting to give you a lot of business.

Printers:

If you want to send your work out to get it done, here are the three I am most familiar with and know to have good quality.

Modern Postcard (www.modernpostcards.com) Vistaprint (www.vistaprint.com)

Design It Print It (www.designitprintit.com)

DARE TO SUCCEED

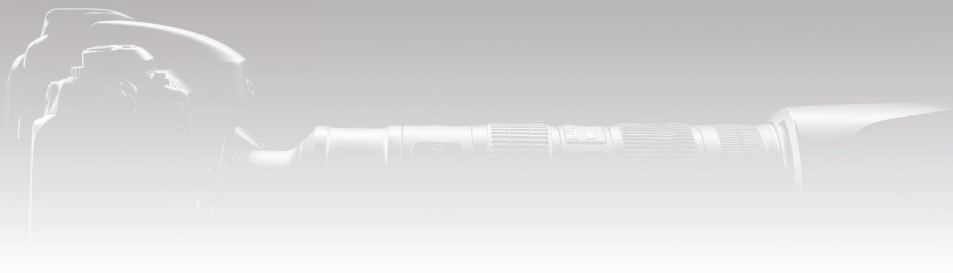
Work with getting smaller quantities at first. And make sure you give them out to everyone. Better to order or print more than to have them sitting around in your office somewhere. They do exactly no good there.

Set them free to bring you buzz, interest, and credibility!

Do some checking and start to plan your promo sheet now. We want you to have it in about four weeks -- at least a dozen or so.

BE SURE TO VISIT THE “MINIMAL VIABLE BRAND” WEBSITE COURSE FOR A FULL DIVE INTO THIS MATERIAL:

<https://www.lighting-essentials.com/mvb-1-minimal-viable-brand-overview/>



Tactics

These are the ways we do what we do. We call them tactics because they are actionable; That is, they require action to be completed.

They are also measurable, and that is very important as well.

An action with no measurement is not an action at all; it is but a wasted expenditure of energy. And there are way too many ways to waste energy to go flailing about with tactical ideas that have little or no impact.

Letters of Introduction

Yes, the simple business letter can open a lot of doors for you. It can get past the secretaries and other gatekeepers and get your introduction right in front of the owner, the CEO, the CMO, the agency head. The introduction letter is a pure form of business and not something to be brushed off lightly.

If you are a brand-new business, the letter may introduce your services to prospective customers. It may be a great way to get your name in front of a prospect without necessarily "selling" them (that comes later).

You could also use that letter to do some surveying: What is the market looking for? How can you be of benefit to the companies you are targeting? Ask for feedback, and take the information in gracious spirit.

Let them know you will be calling in a few days to discuss the questions – if they have the time to give you, of course. (Then when you do call in a few days, you can honestly say, He/she is expecting my call.”You did mention in the letter that you were going to call, right?

Right.

If you are a growing or more mature concern, the business letter can introduce new equipment, techniques, time- and energy-saving methods that could inspire the person to give you a call to discuss.

Remember to let them know how your new acquisition can help them. Simply bragging about your new Apochromatic, distortion-free F2.8 lens is not interesting. Explaining how the edge-to-edge sharpness makes flat-art copying far better than previous technology lets them know that you get what they need.

These tactics can open doors, get leads, and be a first element toward starting a conversation about your photography.

There are always advantages and disadvantages to every tactic. The major disadvantage is that they are targeted toward a single person, and that takes some time. The advantage is that they are targeted toward a single person, and that takes time – and they know it does. People like to be appreciated and feel that they are worth your attention.

Print and mail your letter the old-fashioned way. Follow up with an email if possible.

Sign each letter with your personal signature.

Follow up at every opportunity. If you noted in the letter you would call in a few days, then call in a few days. Putting it off will be a disaster for this tactic, as it is about establishing trust.

Do not do this if you have nothing to offer in the letter. Do not think that you can blow smoke and use it as leverage to get in the door. You can't. They get a ton of these and can tell the insincerity from a mile away.

Charities and Community Opportunities

Decide what you want to offer, and then work a way that the charity can benefit as well as you. In fact, the charity should benefit way more than you. Perhaps it is working with their newsletter or doing portraits of the board or print sales or... come one, there are a gazillion ways a good photographer can help raise the visibility of a charity or community group. Yes, your visibility will rise as well, but that is fine. You are doing good, and by doing good you deserve to be recognized.

The advantages are helping others, growing good charities, and meeting important and influential people that also believe in the charity you are helping.

The downside is that many times these groups have some not-so-likable people in charge. Persona pettiness can be tolerated, though; you just have to deal with it.

I have a few guidelines I use for my charity and community service work:

1. I call the shots. I do my work, my way. No exceptions.
If I were to let other people guide me to making less-than-excellent work, then that sounds more like a job than a volunteer situation. If they are paying, they can lead; if I am doing it for free, then I lead.
2. The work is only used for what we agreed it to be used for. Look, I am quite lenient, but I want to know what they have planned. Knowing this is good for me and good for them.

Seminars and Guest Speaking

Ever heard of the Chamber of Commerce? How about Toastmasters? Or the local library's "Speaker Center?" Each of them gives you the opportunity to speak or give a small seminar on what you do, and how you do it can help others who need your service.

You cannot hard sell, but you can still differentiate.

Say you were speaking at the Chamber of Commerce and planned to speak about product photography. You could go in and show your portfolio and tell them how great you are to shoot with and what your fees are. Yeah, you could do that. They will not be listening to you because everyone knows what a commercial is.

How about a presentation on preparing the items you want to have photographed for the photography? Talk about how important it is that the articles are clean and unscratched. Explain how some objects may need to be left slightly unfinished so they can be photographed from different angles. In short, help them with all of their product photography needs, even if they are currently working with another photographer – especially if they are working with another photographer. Double especially if you have information that is more relevant or shows them how the image could be better and makes them wonder two things: Why isn't their guy doing this stuff and, if you are willing to give this much away free, how much more do you know?

Trade Shows/ Events

I have attended a couple of dozen tradeshow/events, and most were very interesting. I rarely got a gig at the show, but I did get a lot of interest down the road. People with which I met and engaged were more willing to see my stuff, and I was able to meet people face to face that were much harder to reach by phone.

My call on these is to only be involved if you can do so very inexpensively. Remember that most of the attendees are not there at that moment to buy something. Trying to sell them on you or your work could be disastrous.

Trade-Out

There is a lot of this going on these days. Some of it good; some of it not. I do not want to discourage you from trading out, but only to warn you to keep it value for value.

While I may want to trade some photography for a press run of 5000 leave-behinds, trading a half day for a 1/8-page tearsheet of a widget on white is never going to happen. And remember: A tearsheet is no big deal. You can get a copy of the magazine yourself. And if it is a gig, it is already going to be printed.

A trade-out should benefit you as well as the person you are trading out with. Otherwise, it is not a trade out; it is a sucker punch.

Always make the best deal you can, maintain control of your work, and do not give away copyright. Just don't. Access is valuable. Access is currency.

Gaining access to photographing Britney Spears and having her photographs in your "music" portfolio is extremely valuable for a startup photographer, and it is probably still valuable for a newly established photographer. It gains you credibility. However, if they want all rights and you get nothing, that is not a good idea at all. In all of these tactics, time is your expendable. Time is also a commodity and a currency that must not be wasted. Be prudent and careful and try some of these tactics for yourself.

NOTES

Dotted lines for writing notes.



Let's Discuss Sales

Come back...don't run away. We will make it a bit more palatable. Sales doesn't have to be difficult, even though it seems sort of difficult.

Have you ever heard someone say they love to make photographs but hate to sell photographs? Have you ever thought to yourself that photography would be a very cool career if it didn't have any selling attached to it?

Yeah. Me too.

Examples of the "I hate sales mindset":

"I love shooting and all that it entails but, man, I am so awful at selling that it kills my momentum."

"I can get in the door to show my book, but I can't seem to close any deal. Ever. Not sure what is up with that. I guess I'm not that good at sales."

"Why can't my work be enough? Just look at the photographs and hire me."

"I just don't get why I am not busier. So many people look at my work and love it, then not a single assignment."

But there is more to selling than what we normally think about it.

While it is easier to build a good book than become a great salesman or saleswoman, it is also a necessary evil which must be overcome. Sales is business. Even more importantly, it is all about our business. Without a good knowledge of sales, we will flounder in the midst of uncertainty, not sure why no one is hiring us, not sure how to get anyone interested in hiring us, and not sure if we will ever get a gig.

Scary.

We can become good photographers and we can become good salespeople. I promise we can. Here's what we are going to do to become better salespeople for our own business:

1. Learn selling concepts and how the process of a sale happens. We want to know everything about how it happens, why it happens, and how to create situations that let it happen.
2. Learn what motivates people to buy, especially what motivates them to buy photography, and especially what motivates them to buy our photography.
3. What personality traits and business modalities trigger sales in our industry? How can we learn to control and understand those triggers?
4. Learn how we can fit into the sales methodology. How are we "wired" to deal with competition, the sales process, rejection, and fear? What methods can we use to overcome those challenges?
5. Find and create our own methodology for sales. Once they are in place, how do we constantly update and correct them for maximum power?
6. Do it. Over and over again we do it. Sell at every opportunity. It doesn't have to be difficult, and it isn't if you truly believe in your product and service.

Let's do a worksheet on sales to get you started planning your own methods:

Why do people buy?

You may be surprised that price and needs are only one small component of why people buy. Sure they need something, and you are offering it to them, but there are lots of photographers who can offer them the same thing. Theirs may be a little different, but if you think you are the only one able to do something, you may need to take a reality check.

Most people buy from an emotional center. If something moves them to an emotion that they enjoy, they are more predisposed to purchase. If you can help them with that emotion, then you have a leg up on the sales.

How can you do that?

1. Presentation
2. Content
3. Delivery
4. Story
5. Context Are there others? List them here:

Explain “sales” to yourself:

Consider this:

“Sales is converting the energy and excitement around my product into a fulfillment need in the client.”

We want to create such a buzz, such a desire for our photography, that the client must buy it. They would feel left out if they didn’t assign us the next great gig.

No, I am certainly not saying that it is easy to do; I am saying it is our stated goal. Factors that lead one to buy include:

Price / Quality / Ease
Convenience / Service / Timing
Reputation / Presentation / How the Boss Works
How the client works / Credibility
Friendship Personality / Past Experiences / Loyalty
Social Media Connections / Word-of-Mouth
Recommendations
Popularity / Fame / Fear

That is a fairly formidable list of reasons clients buy something... photography to be precise. Can you think of a few more?

Now for the really interesting question: How can you motivate the buyers into purchasing your work or assigning you to the next big gig?

You have to have some basics down pretty well:

1. Your work is impeccable.
2. The quality of your work is matched by how well you deliver and maintain a relationship with the client. We call that service.
3. Can you communicate in a manner that makes them not worry about the assignment and whether you can do the gig and get it to them? If not, work on that as hard as possible.
4. Can your experience be a motivational factor in the awarding of the gig? How can you communicate that experience?

Impeccable work:

Work that is tuned into the needs of the buyer. Work that is technically correct and emotionally, artistically, and aesthetically what the client is looking for.

If the work is not good enough, your credibility is on the line. If you are showing the client work that is not what they are interested in, your credibility is on the line. You are the visual expert here, and you need to let them know it at every opportunity.

Service:

Having the right forms and requests for proposals (RFPs) and contact information that is needed for the job helps show that you place service quite high. Delivering the files on time with the correct items included is another way to let them know that service is important to you. Look at how you do what you do and ask yourself if the service aspect of your business is up to the highest level possible. If not, change it.

Good Communicator:

Having no misspellings is a simple way of making sure they know you can communicate well. Being interested in the gig, asking questions, providing solutions that make sense, and helping the client get to the best image is a level of communication for which we want to strive.

We also want to make sure that questions that need to be answered are answered. We stay in touch with the client to keep them aware of all the possible challenges that may be facing the gig.

Experience:

Showing a good, relevant book is one way of gaining the "experience trust" that is so important. But so are testimonials, client lists, tearsheets, and great references.

Another way of showing the client you have experience is to ask the questions that show you understand the assignment. Be proactive with the planning. Clarification of the exact parameters of the gig is also important and lets the client know you understand what is needed. That understanding only comes from experience.

List the ways you may be able to create more incentive for buyers to purchase your work.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

What assets do you currently have that will help you toward motivating your clients to assign the work to you?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

Now think of some prospective buyers that you know. Can you imagine what it would be like to work with them in a sales situation?

Write out the scenario as you think it should go when you show your work to them.



We've Looked at Sales, Now Let's Look at Buyers

Buyers all have different personalities. These widely varying different types of people are something that we must take into consideration each time we go in the door to sell.

The more we know about the person we are selling to, the more prepared we can be to show our stuff, tell them how we can help, and make them feel comfortable with their decision to hire us.

Let's talk a little about the differing personalities that buyers come in.

Fear-Motivated Buyer:

She is motivated by the terror of doing something wrong, too far out of the box, controversial, or stupid. She wants to be "sold" on the fact that nothing will go wrong and implicate her.

Possibility-Motivated Buyer:

This guy wants to push the limits, take it somewhere it hasn't been before. He wants to be sold that you can bring something incredible to even the most mundane assignment.

The All-Business Buyer:

She needs something. You have it. She wants it and to know you can deliver - without headaches or problems or the project going south. She wants to be sold on how professional you are and to be sure there are no additional hang-ups in her life.

The Wishy-Washy Buyer:

He kind of knows what he wants...sort of. He can be sold on something for only short amounts of time. Given a couple more days to think about it, he may want to go the other way you discussed. Or maybe he should keep looking. He wants to be sold on the fact that his idea rocks and the execution will show him as making the right choice.

The Never-Ending-Idea Man:

Let's try this and this and this. Every possible base has to be covered. What if this goes wrong or that, and I want to make sure you can deliver simply every different way in the entire world that this could be done. He wants to be sold on the fact that you are going to make the shots that are the best and that his input is welcome, but must be tempered.

The Unsure Art Director:

She wants to hear about every idea you have, then to feed it back to you with a slight spin. This AD wants you to make the call but also have you to blame. While a dangerous engagement, it is important to sell her on the utmost dependability and track record.

There are more, but these are the ones I have mostly found out there. And, by the way, you will find these kind of buyers in every line of everything.

Some of the fears are warranted. They have been burned before. They have been led down the primrose path of awesomeness unfulfilled. It has cost them professionally and in their reputations. Even if they weren't necessarily hurt financially, it is as important for them to do well at their gig as it is for you to do well at yours.

Allaying those fears is important. You must prepare for each of these kinds of buyers and learn to pick up on their language and fears as quickly as possible. Addressing their concerns early in the sales process keeps the entire thing moving forward with less hassle.

What motivates someone to hire a photographer?

I think it is the same for nearly any hire. The person doing the hiring wants to know they will not be cheated while getting exactly what they paid for with as little hassle as possible. In a nutshell, that is.

Our job is to show our work (25%) and then to work on having them understand we are aware of their concerns and have addressed them to provide the most professional service possible (75%).

Sometimes it is the thrill of working with a new photographer, a sort of “I discovered this guy” thing or “she was one of my first hires.” It is exciting for a lot of people in the creative businesses to work with up-and-coming shooters.

Sometimes it is a necessity that the work be done, and done right, and they are looking for someone to do exactly what they want done.

Fears:

Some fears are professional reputations, financial loss, client loss, or worse. Sometimes it is as simple as fearing change, especially if they have been working with someone for a long time.

Expectations:

Sometimes they can feel as though their time will be wasted. Hey, it happens. They also don't want to be put in awkward or uncomfortable situations where the work is not very good or the photographer is annoying. They can also be on the defensive from the first two annoying photographers that came in before you, so they can go into “rejection mode.” Nothing is right, and all is wrong.

That can be a tough one to prepare for, but a good upbeat attitude and a self-confidence in your work is a must. The more confident you are, the more the person feels as though it actually may be them and not you.

Confidence is a real winner in the sales game. Work on yours with everything you've got. What are the general personalities of sellers?

Motivations:

Motivations can be income, ego, enthusiasm, or a deep-down confidence and the desire to do something cool. We are always looking for assignments that will challenge us and make us do something beyond what we thought was possible. We want to do great work.

Fears 2:

There is a big fear of rejection. Pure and simple, it is the main fear all of us have when we are out selling. It can stop us before we even get out the door to sell. It is beyond debilitating; it is destructive. It creates the "second guessing" paranoia that can kill artists when working commercially. It fosters the reaction syndrome of listening to each person as though they have all the answers.

Reactions are along the lines of being told off-handedly that your landscapes are great, and then you going to your book to stuff it full of landscapes, even though portraiture is your first love. That is "reaction" to criticism instead of response to criticism.

Responding to criticism means taking in all that is offered, mulling it over and even possibly running it by others for their take. All considerations are taken into account before any changes are made.

Expectations:

Some expect that they really, really want to see us; that they need our work desperately; that if they had half a brain they would cut the purchase order before you got to the third image.

Well, yeah, but that isn't happening, so we will have to tone it down a bit.

We should expect that they will treat us like professionals and be open to seeing our work. Sometimes even that is too much to ask, so we have to carefully weigh our options when deciding what to do next.

I say sell. Try to find that trigger that will make them respond. Challenge yourself to not get discouraged and to leave with at least an invitation for another showing.

So now we have looked at the buyers motivations and some of the expectations they have as well as some of ours.

Preparation:

The most important thing you can do is to prepare for the sales call. Learn as much as you can about the business, how they use photography, who they are currently shooting with, and what "hot buttons" you can find. No, you won't be able to do this with every single possible client, but you sure can if it is your second time to see someone.

Dig for information. The bigger the client possibilities, the more you dig. While it may be a good idea to prepare a bit for a local catalog client, digging hard for a possible national ad makes a lot of sense.

How do we prepare for meeting the possible clients who are waiting to reject us out of hand before we even show our book? No, they don't do that. If you think they do, you must work on that self-confidence thing a lot more.

Prepare Mentally:

Become excited. Talk yourself up. Tell yourself how good this gig is going to be. Tell yourself why they need to hire you (for them) and stay positive. Very positive. Stay on top of it all and be totally into the notion that you are showing them images that they should use in their work.

How many other ways can you get yourself motivated to sell your work?

What are you going to say?

I recommend writing out every possible objection you have heard and making sure you can answer it. Don't despair, though; there will always be one you haven't heard of to keep you on your toes. Heh.

What are the best answers to difficult questions? How can you handle the possible deluge of questions that may come your way? How can you make sure your answers don't sound memorized and cold?

Practice. Then take a break and practice some more. Practice answering these questions a lot. Practice. A lot.

Rehearse your sales calls if you have to. If you are not currently in sales, you have to. Try to get them smooth and evenly measured. Don't be thrown for a loop from a simple question.

As to your personal habits, I have a small check list:

- I turn my cell phone ringer off.
- I make sure my iPad batteries are charged.
- I make sure my laptop batteries are charged.
- I have my business cards and leave-behinds and all are set to go.
- I have my calendar ready for answering availability questions.
- I have my book ready.
- I make sure to have practiced my delivery and practiced my answers.

I won't go into what to wear, as I always find that sort of offensive. I will say that, unless you are a totally booked, highly sought photographer, it may not be a good thing to show up in a grubby or unprofessional wardrobe. For me, I make sure my shoes are polished and I wear a casual work wardrobe, all in black, except in four months of summer here in Phoenix, then it is khaki and subtle Hawaiian shirts. I also try to get the sleep I need and to have good personal grooming habits.

If the above comes as a surprise to you, then...oh never mind.

What should you know about the buyer before you get out to show your work?

The name and pronunciation of the contact you are meeting (ask their secretary).

The title of the person with whom you are meeting and an understanding of what that title means.

Is the person you are meeting the hiring person or an intermediary?

What type of accounts does this contact work with? This is super important in ad agency work.

What you can offer that they are not currently getting from their photographers?

Where and how will they normally use your work?

What kind of work are they currently doing?

Who are their clients?

Who are they currently using for this kind of work?

What can you bring to the table that will knock their socks off? And, if not totally knock their socks off, kind or make them wrinkle at the top.

These are some simple approaches to the ideas of preparing for the portfolio showing. Keep in mind all the different scenarios that can come at you and be ready. Really ready.

Can you step outside of your body and watch yourself? Not in a creepy way, but in a cold and detached way? I want you to think about this because I want you to watch yourself sell.

What do you say? What do you do? How do you sit? How do you react?

Do you lead the conversation or do you follow? Are you too aggressive or not aggressive enough?

Do you feature your work prominently in the process, or do you let the conversation slip away to something else without showing your work?

It happens. Trust me.

I want you to find a buddy or a friend who has some interest in helping you be better. Sell to them. Watch yourself with that second sort of creepy you that is floating out there to do this. Video tape it if you want; just make sure you are not so aware of the camera that it is a distraction.

Ask your buddy what he/she thought. Was it focused? Did you sound desperate? Were there distractions that could have been eliminated?

Did you look, sound, and act confident?

This is important, folks. Confidence sells more than anything else. This is a good assignment for all creatives.

Once you have done the "watch me look goofy" thing and found out what you need to work on, it is time to formulate a real plan on how to create a good selling appointment.

DARE TO SUCCEED

Describe what you want the customer to see when you are selling your work.

Describe what you want your customer to think while you are showing your work.

What can you say about your selling experience from previously that would answer these needs?

How can you know what they are thinking when they are looking through your book? Answer: You can't. Spending time on trying to read what someone else thinks is a wasted time. Instead, listen to what they ask. Respond immediately with answers that are both cogent and concise. Watch their body language. Are the shoulders starting to slump? Are they getting distracted or acting like they are rushed?

Does this happen to others looking at the book when they get to this area of images? If so, it may tell you something. If not, and it is random, you may need to get some new work in there.

This is a cumulative exercise, one that I would have you do over and over again until you feel confident in showing up to an AD's office and ready to show your work.

Without being timid, too quiet, too loud, overly aggressive, way too passive, or not confident that you are the right photographer for the job.

Introductions and Getting Referrals

Introductions are a great tool for meeting other creatives that may need your services. But how do we get an introduction from a client to another client?

It's not even hard...you just ask. Yep. Just ask for a referral or introduction to someone they know that could be looking or in the position to look for a photographer. It doesn't hurt. It won't give you hives. Just ask.

But if you do ask, be damn sure you follow through and meet the other person. You already have a way through the gatekeeper.

If you have gotten introduced: "Hello, this is Don Giannahoochie and Tim is expecting my call."

If you have a referral name only: "Hello, this is Don Grandinetti and Bob Ahteest told me to give Artee D a call regarding some photo work he is looking to assign."

Never leave anywhere without getting a referral. Or two.

What kinds of places/situations do you get the most referrals?

Why do you think that is?

Where will you look next to start getting fresh referrals?

Why?

Telephone Sales

Ask yourself this: Would you buy something like a photograph over the phone? Me either. So why bother trying to sell someone else photography over the phone? Instead, sell the interest in your work and what you can do for them after they see your work and get really excited about it and want to hire you on the spot!!!!

Stuff that cannot be sold over the phone will not be sold over the phone.

Phones are for developing contacts, leads, referrals, and deciding where to get great Mexican food.

Letters, as we discussed earlier, are still pretty powerful. Especially when hooked to a nice marketing piece with relevant imagery for that client. (I love quality inkjet printers.) Print them one-off for inclusion if you want to really get connected.

Promotion pieces are best accompanied by a good letter or something that tells the recipient what they are looking at! You think they get

the promotion and automatically know it is from a photographer soliciting work? No. Never take for granted that anyone, anywhere "gets" your promotion piece. Ever. Spell it out. Be specific. Ask for the job.

Portfolio Drop-Offs

They can be good. And they can be bad.

The goal is to maximize the good while diminishing the bad as best we can.

What is good:

- A drop-off portfolio request means someone is interested in your work.
- Your work may be seen by more than one AD or editor.
- You can do other things while the book is being reviewed.
- You can messenger it over and not have to drive over and shave and get all dressed up and, well, you are still going to be on pins and needles the first few times you do a drop-off situation.

So what is bad?

- You are not there to answer questions about the images (less context).
- They can spill coffee and tea on your prints. (Yessiree, they sure can!)
- You cannot get feedback from the reviewers.
- You may never know what gig you were being considered for.

(This is a tough one. I would always ask when the call came in, but there were times when I didn't get an answer, or the person making the call simply didn't know. It is entirely appropriate to ask what

kinds of images they are looking for. That question usually did get answered.)

How to mitigate that bad list:

First, have a nice little form/welcome flyer sitting on the front page.

It should welcome them to your portfolio with a logo and nice, professional typography. It should have a place for a recommendation or referral and, most of all, it should have a place where they are encouraged to give you some constructive advice for working with them. For instance:

“Any ideas on the direction of my work?”

“Hey, how do I get to work with you guys?”

“Let me know if my work is right for you at another time and what I could do to make it so”

“Hire me... I know where you live...”

No... that last one is a joke... sheesh. But then... hmmm.

I have heard of photographers actually inserting a “Table of Contents” into the print book so questions of “Who did you shoot this for?” and “Where was this taken?” are answered. You can even include thumbnails and reference shots.

Again, make sure – double sure – that it is absolutely professionally designed with professional typography and NO TYPOS!

If you have targeted your work for the client and have the best work you can do in the book, then it is simply out of your hands until it comes back. There were many times my book came back without the form being filled out, or even touched it seemed like. But the times it did come back with comments and critiques and genuine ideas for me, that was wonderful. I got one of my best clients from a referral from an agency I never worked for.

Print book versus iPad drop-off:

Many agencies will ask for an iPad drop-off. I recommend having an iPad solely devoted to your portfolio. No other games or email or anything on it to distract or be a potential problem. Many iPad portfolio programs have the ability to simply lock the viewer out of anything but the portfolios but, if they keep it for a week, you are without your iPad. At the time of this writing, there are other interesting "pad" and "tablet" tools being introduced. Perhaps iPad will lose its dominance.

Maybe. Maybe not.

Make sure you have your iPad in a case that has your name on it, and make sure your name is on the startup background as well.

Print books are more cumbersome and actually prone to more disasters than the iPad books. From spilled drinks to crumbs to filthy hands to even more gross possibilities, the print book is really more fragile.

I recommend having "drop-off" books made that are specifically for the drop-off portfolio review. Maybe they are a bit smaller or easier to create or far less costly. All of that is important.

But even more important is that if you have only one portfolio and it is being held somewhere, you have nothing to show the next client who calls for a portfolio review.

Think that chances of that are slim?

I wouldn't bet on it. Heh.



Portfolio and Presentation

What does "presentation" mean? It means how you show your work: How you present yourself, your portfolio, your working space, your business forms, and more. It is you. It is your work. There is no separation. You are your work, and your work is you, and the presentation is the culmination of the two.

Get a "real" portfolio. Make it nice. Make it professional. It doesn't have to be terribly expensive. It must be something that seems to be an extension of you.

For instance, let's say you are starting out in architecture photography. What kind of book could be an extension of that? Aluminum or polished steel come to mind. So does a book in a case. Would a larger book (16×20) be a good size for showing what you do? Or would a small, compact book show the work off with a bit of style?

I don't have the answer, but there is one for your work. Look around. Ask mentors. Get brochures and imagine your work in them. Do not buy on price alone. Just don't do it. It is your portfolio, and it must look fabulous. It is you. To spend \$1600 on a wide-angle lens and then look for a \$20 solution for a portfolio just makes no sense. If you are serious about this, you have to be serious about the things that represent your work as well as the tools that create it.

What to Show:

This is what you do, simply put. If you are a people shooter, then the book should have some people shots that inspire and astound. Don't split your book up into so many images of disparate things that you cannot have a cohesive presentation, either. I would mix maybe two, if I were to mix them. Still life and people can work. Architecture and lifestyle can work. Be careful. If you dilute the work too much, it can be disastrous. A really good book on creating a powerful portfolio is *Portfolios that Sell: Professional Techniques for Presenting and Marketing Your Photographs* by Selina Oppenheim. I love this book for its clarity and concise information on professional portfolios. See more info below.

Portfolios come in many sizes and shapes. If you are an established brand, small, tiny, precious, oversized, and gargantuan portfolios can be very cool. If you are starting out, as most readers here are, maybe we need to introduce ourselves first. Can an outrageous portfolio get you attention? Sure. But the risk that the attention may not be totally positive is simply too great. Keep it simple, keep it clean, and keep it professional.

Whether it is a horizontal book or a portrait book, there will be images that will not fit. A wide shot in a portrait book can be done only with either a spread (2 pages) or placing it horizontally on the page with space at top and bottom. You can choose to crop all of your images, if you want; that is your call. But choose the book style and presentation most suited to your work and begin.

It is important to not have the book be turned to show horizontals and verticals in the same presentation. And the presentation should "flow" well from page to page. Below are some examples of page layout. These images are shown uncropped with borders all around them. The typical image size of 2:3 will not crop down to an 8.5 x 11 without losing some image. If planned for, that is what you do; however, many photographers like to present their work in an uncropped view.

The Physical Book

What kind of portfolio should you get? Let's take a look at some options:

I will talk about the companies I have worked with. There are others, but I can vouch for these companies:

Brewer-Cantelmo:

Books, boxes, and total presentation materials for photographers.

<http://www.brewer-cantelmo.com/>

These are not cheap portfolios. The quality is high and the workmanship extraordinary. Consider them one of the premier custom portfolio companies anywhere.

Brewer-Cantelmo makes your case by hand, just for you. Choose the grain and the leather and the size.

Lost Luggage:

Boxes, portfolios and presentation materials.

<http://www.lost-luggage.com/store/home.php>

Lost Luggage's line is extraordinary as well. Modern, hip and stylish, the Lost Luggage portfolios can range from inexpensive to very expensive, and yet the quality never falters.

Pina Zangaro:

Books, presentations and portfolios.

<http://pinazangaro.com/>

Well crafted, modern, and quite popular, the Pina Zangaro portfolios are a great starting platform. You can get some great deals and portfolios at PZDirect.

Lost Luggage:

Boxes, portfolios and presentation materials.

<http://www.lost-luggage.com/store/home.php>

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Prints

Your prints should be printed to the highest quality. Keep in mind that when showing images behind a glossy sleeve, they can look a little different. Make a print and look at it behind the sleeve. I find that I prefer semi-gloss prints behind the sleeves over high gloss (personal preference).

How many do you show? Lots of people say 20-25. I am in that camp. Leave me wanting to see some more but not so bored that I close the book before I get to the end of it. I would say 35 would be the limit for a contemporary portfolio aimed at a commercial and editorial market.

Edit ruthlessly. Tirelessly. Get a mentor to help. Can't find one? Then put the top 50 of your shots in a Flickr group and ask someone to help you out. Twenty really good shots say more good stuff about your photography than 20 good shots surrounded by 20 okay shots. Bad shots say that the good ones were lucky...not the other way around.

TIP:

One way to layout your book is to make 4×6 images at Costco or Sam's Club and start laying out the images on

the office floor. I will combine and mix and reshuffle them until I get a progression of images that tell my story. If you do this in an hour, you rushed it. If it is taking more than a couple of days, make a decision and get on with it. As important as it is, it cannot be rushed, and it shouldn't become an albatross around your neck.

Printed / Bound Books:

There are many places that offer inexpensive book printing:

- Lulu
- Blurb
- Artifact Uprising

I'm sure you can think of a few more, many more probably.

Many labs now offer it as well

But there are considerations with using printed books.

Pros using a printed/bound book:

1. Quality can be very nice if you work with the right papers and are very careful with your files
2. Inexpensive: You can get a fully printed, bound book with heavy stock for under \$130. At that price, you can print one per quarter.
3. In case of loss or damage, a new portfolio is in your hands within a matter of a few days - without spending those days sitting alongside your printer caffienated through the roof.

Cons using a printed/bound book:

1. Impossible to customize for a specific client showing.
2. If you are not careful, the book can become stale.

Showing the same work in June that you showed in December is NOT a great idea.

3. If you do not upgrade the paper choices and use hard covers, they can look a bit cheesy. By all means they should never look like a wedding book.

Graphistudio (although a wedding book maker) makes some amazing books. Mine have 1/4-inch stainless-steel covers, and they weigh a ton.

Couture Book: A new and very exciting company doing books is Couture Book. You can get a beautiful book there for around \$300. I particularly like their New York and Himalaya books.

Less expensive options: A Blurb book with hard cover. I have had great work done with the hard-cover product (soft cover has been a little dicey). I made a few Lulu books that turned out pretty well, but they were not “portfolios”; they were photo books. Watch out for those books with the holes cut out in the front. They may be good for some fun studio work or for home use, but not for portfolio work.

Oh, I almost forgot AsukaBook. They are a sort of middle ground between Blurb and Couture. AsukaBook makes very nice books that can be used for portfolio presentations (around \$100 or so).

If you know of one that I have missed, it may be because I have not worked with them and cannot vouch for the quality/price/value. These are the ones I know, and I have made books from all of them. I will not recommend ones I have not worked with, but that certainly doesn't mean that there are not other high-quality books out there.

Printing Your Prints:

Either make your prints yourself or get them printed somewhere like White House Custom Colour (WHCC) or Mighty Imaging or hire a local buddy who prints really well.

Book shouldn't turn. If it is landscape, portraits are either two per page or one with wide borders. If it is a portrait book, landscapes go across with borders top and bottom. The book does not have to be twisted.

Size: The 8.5 x 11 is fine. A 14x11 may be a little better. The 16x20... well, you are into the esoteric there well as 6x9 or smaller. They could be cool; it depends on the work, I suppose.

Prints can be produced on your inkjet printer, if you have a good one. I print on an Epson with high-quality Ilford glossy or semi-glossy paper. Many of the newer printers can make amazing prints.

Places to get your portfolio images printed:

White House Custom Colour has some very tasty pricing and excellent quality.

The online printing places can be pretty good if you have the right files. Check with your favorites.

Check Sam's Club and Costco -- the ones by me both do wonderful work if the profile you are working with is correct. Pricing is dirt cheap, but you may have to have the prints done a few times to get exactly what you want.

Analyzing the Book and the Personal Brand

Sometimes the only way you can see the way is to turn around and look back a bit. Now you have your portfolio...print and web.

Let's ask it a few questions, shall we?

First: What does the book and presentation say about itself? Is it neat? Is it effective? Is it organized? Is it corporate or laid back? Is it hip or traditional? Yes, of course these are ideas that must have been looked at before you started, but now it is finished, and we need to measure the effectiveness of the work. In other words, does it do exactly what you wanted it to do? And does it do it elegantly, with panache and style?

Good.

Now what does it say about you?

Does it portray you exactly as it should? We are certainly sure that we had all this covered before we printed the prints, put them in order, bought the cool portfolio...but now it is in our hands. We have tough standards to bear here. And those standards are whether the portfolio actually does what it is supposed to do: Represent you and your work in the best possible way. If it does...great.

If it doesn't, why? What needs to be done? Do a couple of newer images need to be printed and inserted?

Hopefully, that is all that is needed. The more you worked ahead of the portfolio – doing the exercises and making the prints and working on the order – the better this final check is going to go.

An aside about personal appearance here:

I am not going to discuss hygiene and such, but suffice it to say that what you look like, how you dress, and how you present your person to others is as important as what the book looks like. OK? Good.

What about "personality?" Have you noticed rock stars and movie stars and celebrities sometimes wear outrageous things? There is a method to that madness, you know. It is about being memorable. It is about being engaging. It is about being someone who has a bit of a quirky slant to their artistic abilities.

Some photographers use hats; others use the way they dress. One photographer used to shoot in Pierre Cardin suits and ties (Anthony Edgeworth) and did so with the style that a man wearing such a suit would do. Others use hair...oh there are a million ways to make yourself stand apart. For me, it is the color black. I wear black all winter: black jeans and slacks, black shoes, black shirts, black hats, and black gloves when the weather calls for it. In summer, I have been referred to as the guy with all those cool Hawaiian shirts.

That's me. I don't recommend my style for anyone else.

The point is that I work toward that style when I am out shooting or promoting or visiting a school or a company or even shopping. Personal branding is one of the most powerful things you can do to achieve a bit of recognition and response. The rockers know it and the actors and actresses as well. (Think Steven Tyler would be so cool if he was a balding fat guy who wore Dockers?) What I am saying is

to find a personal style and stick to it. Be your brand when you are out there working as a photographer.

Brand, personal brand, is who you are. And what you do is who you are. It is the most important brand you can ever have in this business. It is essentially you presented to the world in every post, every email, every discourse, chat, forum comment, and face-to-face you will ever have.

It is NOT your logo.

It is NOT your camera. It is NOT your gear.

It is NOT how much you spend on marketing. It is NOT how much you make (or how little).

It is YOU.

What kind of person do you want people to think you are? What kind of person, not what kind of photographer. The answer to that is probably going to be a roadmap to your personal brand.

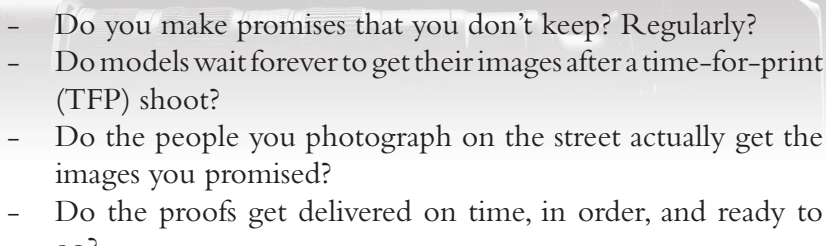
Do you make yourself an asset to your clients, your friends, and your family?

How do they perceive you when you are working or not working? Do they see you as someone who has an interest in them?

An asset is someone who is willing to help and go the extra mile. They are the ones who keep their promises, work hard to build trust, and deliver what they say they will deliver. And usually they deliver more than they promised to deliver. An asset is hard to find, and that rarity adds to your personal brand. An asset is a person that becomes a go-to person to solve problems -- because they deliver. And they are interested and focused on the person/company with whom they are working.

Be an asset in your personal brand.

How to check if you are an asset to your clients:

- 
- Do you make promises that you don't keep? Regularly?
 - Do models wait forever to get their images after a time-for-print (TFP) shoot?
 - Do the people you photograph on the street actually get the images you promised?
 - Do the proofs get delivered on time, in order, and ready to go?
 - Do you find yourself trying to explain why something didn't happen when you said it would more than once a month?

Key to above: Yes answers are bad.

Are you truly ready to do what you are doing?

Being a professional photographer is really easy. There are no tests, no special licenses, no unions, and no entry point gatekeepers. You have a camera, you have a job.

But there are many people who enter the business simply because it is so easy from a standpoint of few entry barriers. That can be a good thing and, well, a bad thing. Really, so much of it is your personal brand that helps set the tenor of your business.

A professional can do what he/she does every time. Repeatable. Reliable. Perfect. Every single time. A photographer who is ready to move into the profession shouldn't be asking about rates on Flickr forums. They shouldn't be wondering if anyone has any ideas on what shots they should do when a band wants to hire them to do some public relations shots. Gear should be ready to go and clean and powered up. Getting the ideas to flow should be a natural thing developed through shooting all the time. Not delivering a job correctly says a lot about you as a person – your personal brand. Being totally knowledgeable about what you do is extremely important. Are you ready?

- Do you know what an RFP is and how to respond to one in a way that makes sense?
- Can you make the shots you want, whenever you want?

- Are you familiar with the usage rights /normal billing for the work you want to do?
- Do you have backup gear? Backups for your backups?
- Do you deliver the work you said you would, on time, and on budget?
- Are you a compelling person to be around?

Do you inspire others to do better in their lives and work, or do you denigrate and gossip about others? Do people want to hear your opinion so they can be uplifted, or do they simply love the dirt you dig?

I guess both are brands that work, because there sure are a lot of muckrakers who "enjoy" a brand as such. But I wonder if that would be my first choice? And, of course, it isn't. So I don't care which you choose, but do be aware that there are many ways to personally brand yourself. Arrogant and self-inflated can work for some, while helpful and compelling works for others.

I am not telling you what the best way to brand yourself is here, only that there are different ways to do it. I have seen some extremely arrogant and boorish photographers achieve great success...it was indeed part of their brand. I have also seen those same personalities crash and burn due to not understanding the power and niche of such a brand. (Buddy Rich was a very difficult, and some would say terrible, person to be around. But, then, he did play the drums pretty well and was known for behind-the-scenes charity and great philanthropy.) Being a "brand" in your attitudes and dealings with others is not a guarantee to success, but it is definitely a way for people to know who you are when making decisions on whether they want to work with you.

Are you who you say you are? Is there some consistency in your personal brand?

I was recently attacked personally for an opinion on Flash sites. The tweet was petty, childish and actually pretty stupid. The tweeter's

”brand” is one that speaks of being “Christian-like” and full of love and all that ”goodness” – except if you have an opinion that differs with his. Then, his real persona comes out in spades. There are photographers online who say they want to help other photographers, but then when challenged, even politely and mildly by someone with a point, explode and become angry, vile, and mean. That brand will outweigh the phony brand with those not wanting to be around that type of person. And it will build the brand by those who want to be around that type of angry, vile person. Not bad, just different.

When you take a look at your personal brand, be sure to consider that, as a self-employed person, your every statement can carry some ramifications. And those statements can hurt some and help others. Being aware of that difference is very important. When you post something that may be offensive to some, be aware that they remember. If you want to be a consensus builder, build consensus. If you want to be helpful and an asset, be helpful and be an asset. All the time. Not just online or on your blog or an occasional tweet.

A Twitter friend, Trudy, asked me about the Always Be Selling (ABS) method, and I think this post is as close as I can get to answer it. As a professional, we are always ”selling” in some way in what we do, say, and show. Our personal brand is, well, our best and strongest selling tool. It is the way people remember us, what they remember about the encounter, what they perceive as the value of the work, and the relationship.

Changing your portfolio is way easier than changing your personal brand.

My suggestion is to take a bit of a personal branding audit.

- Ask ten people who know you well to describe you in a paragraph.
- Ask them to describe your work and your business.

- Ask them what they would change about how you do what you do.

Take a moment to evaluate what the last month has been like:

- Did you return every phone call as soon as you could?
- Did you get the proofs out when you said you would?
- Were you helpful to someone with a real question/problem?
- Did you have an altercation with someone over something that has happened before?
- Is there anything you can do to make this situation not happen again?
- Did you make and keep any promises? To others and yourself?
- Have you spent time perfecting your craft?

We could go on with more personal branding tips, but these questions are crucial. What you wear, your demeanor, your speech...all of that matters as well, but this short list makes you what you are.

Take some time to think about your personal brand. Have a good friend whom you believe to have great taste help you with it if you are not sure. I have even heard of people at some of the higher-end clothiers who will spend time and help you with your personal branding wardrobe decisions. Of course, there is more to it than what you wear, but believe me when I tell you that personally branding yourself and your work is vitally important.

The Power of Q&A

One of the most important parts of the sales/promotion/presentation situation is understanding the give and take between the photographer and the art buyer. Questions are the technique that help the photographer understand more about what the art buyer is looking for, and they also reveal to the art buyer how interested and involved the photographer will be in the creation of the images. Knowing what the client needs, and knowing how you can deliver that solution, will make the "sell" easier for you and the client as well.

An art buyer has a set of needs and wants that may not be visible on the surface in the presentation, and you will need to ask questions and lead to discovery so that you can make the quote, plan the shoot, know what is expected, and become totally ready to bid and produce the shoot. (Occasionally, the briefs are so good that you want to cry, throw your arms in the air and praise every God that exists. These times are rare. Savor them as you would fine wine.)

The best type of question to ask is one that is "open-ended." In other words, it cannot be answered with a simple "yes" or "no." For instance:

You: "Will I need to book my own travel?" Client: "Yes."

You: "How will travel be handled?"

Client: "Mary will set that up for you, and we will need to know how many bags you will be bringing. Oh, and let us know if you need an assistant so we can book that as well."

Big difference, eh?

You want to engage the client and let them reveal more and more about the gig that they may have forgotten to mention in the short version.

Try these “open-ended” question openers:

What would ...

When would ...

Why ... Where ... Who ... How ...

To start a question with these words is to engage the person in conversation. And that conversation is the powerful tool you use to find out what they really need.

I once dealt with a very quiet, introverted AD. Getting information from him was like pulling teeth. Even with the open-ended questions, he would be very restrictive in his answers. However, I kept making careful notes in my notebook, letting the flow be more measured and introspective as well, but still asking questions. Eventually, I found out that their biggest “hot button” was that the last photographer had been too “aggressive” with their subjects, and it had caused the agency some heartburn.

Believe me, that information was invaluable. And I used it to cinch the deal. And that information was not in the brief, nor mentioned in the first discussion we had about the project.

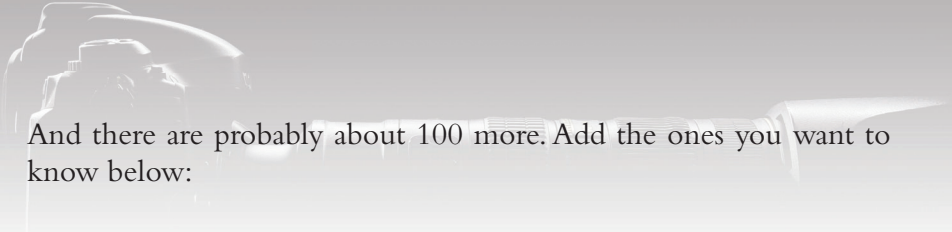
If you are encountering a “portfolio review” situation, where there is not a specific gig on the table, you may want to use questions to gather more information about the agency or company you want to work with.

Here are some questions to which you may want to seek answers:

1. What kind of work do they do? Is it advertising, collateral, web, or something else?
2. Do they use a variety of photographers or are they working with only one or two at the time?
3. How many shoots do they average per month?
Per year?
4. Are they seasonal or do they run all year long?
5. What kinds of work do they use most?
6. Do they have any criteria for using a photographer that you should know about?
7. What criteria do they use when selecting a photographer?
(Yeah, ask them!)
Is it quality, style, price, personality, studio abilities, location, speed in getting images, price? There are so many things that can determine who they hire that it can drive you crazy. But you absolutely must know these answers so that you can tailor your presentation.
8. Who is it that makes the final decision to hire the photographer?
9. Is there a "method" of hiring the shooter? In other words, a flow chart of people that must be included in the hiring process?
10. When the agency is beginning to put together a bid for a gig, do they:
 - a. Look for the lowest bid?
 - b. Is the photographer's style most important?
 - c. Is the budget first established, then a search for a photographer begins?
 - d. Base it part on reputation, part on style, part on reputation of the photographer?
11. What services do they expect from the photographer?
 - a. Do they want instant post process? Is there a need for a digital technician?
 - b. Do they expect a specific format camera?
 - c. Does the photographer need to have access to a studio?
 - d. How fast is turnaround expected to be?
 - e. How will files need to be delivered?

NOTES

A series of 23 horizontal dotted lines spaced evenly down the page, intended for handwritten notes.



And there are probably about 100 more. Add the ones you want to know below:

1. What is a typical shoot situation for the client? Is there a large contingent of people at the shoot or is it just a small group?
2. What services would they ideally want at/from a photo shoot?
3. Are there strengths and weaknesses of other photographers that they would be willing to share?
4. What types of fee schedules do they prefer?
 - a. Per shot? b. Per day? c. Project?
5. How do they expect to be billed? Will they expect a 30-day due date, or do they pay in 90 days? (Hey, you have to know this stuff up front. The cash flow monster will catch you and whomp you good if you don't.)

These are a lot of questions, I know. And I also know you will not be able to simply sit there and quiz a prospective client with all of them. You will have to decide which is most important and make mental notes of the stuff that is revealed in the “open ended” part of your discussion. Again, be very aware of how the client is behaving regarding the conversation. If they start to push back, you must adjust. This part of social dynamics is not easy to teach, and if you are not good at “reading” people, I would suggest finding some expert help with that.

Once you have this information, it is so much easier to prepare a quote, RFP, or pitch. You know where they stand and you know what they expect and you know what you must do to alleviate their concerns. The amount of power you feel when being prepared is not insignificant. It helps you breathe easier when that email comes in with a request for a bid. It makes it so much easier to discuss the upcoming gig with the client when you know what they expect and you know you can deliver.

Making a Friend

That is what you are doing these days. People like to work with people they know.

This was recently on Rob Haggart's "A Photo Editor" blog, and I think it is very apropos:

"Not too long ago your personality mattered little in photography. You could be the most abhorrent dick-wad and land all the work you wanted if your photography was awesome. I see plenty of evidence now that this is not longer possible. An art director I sat on a panel with even said "the top 5 photographers for a car shoot are all qualified to do the job. it comes down to personality as to who will get the job" Personality is one tiny part of the value chain, but it's now more important than the photography. That's astounding.

Sad if you enjoy operating cameras, but very exciting if you enjoy the entire value chain of photography services. My favorite photographers to work with have always been the creative problem solvers. Now I can clearly see the de-commodization at work."
(sic)

And I think it is very true. First a good book, then a personality that accompanies that book.

No, that doesn't mean that you have to be a wild and crazy guy or some sort of extroverted celebrity type. It means that you are not an jerk.

In a previous chapter, I asked you to consider what your book says about your personality. I now want you to think about what your personality says about your work. How is your phone persona? How is your in-person demeanor?

Do you need help with meeting people and being engaged?

This is a vital part of working with clients. And it will do you well when done well. But you have to listen.

As far as working with clients in this presentation situation, listening is the most important part of the process. Asking questions and not listening to the client's answer is useless and does no good. If you don't listen, you are not able to use the information. Practice your listening and note-taking. Take a recorder in your pocket (mine will record for 18 hours) and let it roll if you need some help with remembering what was discussed. (Hint: This will also allow you to review your own performance at the presentation. You are not going to use it for anything other than personal use, so keep in mind legal ramifications if you let anyone else listen. Personal use is usually exempted.)

LISTEN LISTEN LISTEN

Ask questions.

Listen to the answers.

Use the knowledge

It Costs What it Costs

No more. No less.

In new book, “The Fire Starter Sessions,” she describes a situation where a junior executive had a brilliant idea – one the big bosses loved. However, after she started costing it out, she found that it was a lot of money (all those hidden costs and travel and rentals and such). She feared that the proposal would be shot down. When she next saw her boss, he asked her when she was going to get started and she was a bit surprised. “Did you see the cost estimates?” she asked. He shrugged his shoulders. “It costs what it costs.”

You can get the book at Amazon

So what does that mean to us?

How often have we been asked to create a bid, give a cost estimate, reply to an email with a figure that would be “in the ballpark,” or otherwise prepare a budget for someone else’s money?

It can be one of the scariest things we do. But do it we must.

And we have to do it well. We have to do it professionally. We have to do it without soiling ourselves and curling up into a fetal position whimpering for that simple time when the cubicle was our friend.

In other words, we have to get it done like a professional. And remember that it costs what it costs.

Client to you: "... and we need two shots from above the second story patio area, shot down and with a lot of angle to it. Shoot it from the middle of the foyer area."

You: "Well there are no structures there to stand on, so we will have to bring in a scissor lift. I will get an estimate on the rental for a day."

Client: "Well, we don't want to spend any more than the estimate I gave you." You: "I understand, but scissor lifts cost more than half of this estimate." Client: "What, you don't have one?"

You: "No, ours is in the shop in Milan, so we will have to rent. If you want the shot from the middle of the courtyard, it will have to be from a scissor lift, and they cost what they cost."

You know.

Now for sure it is a good plan to always try to help your client budget well, but budgeting yourself out of the tools you need to do the job the right way is just plain crazy. You will remember they said no scissor lift, and so you had to improvise with one of those silly kite things.

They will not. They will only see the fuzzy images from the hanging camera. It costs what it costs. Does that mean that you can't find areas in the estimate to shave a little here and there? Of course not. Find them and whittle them away, but always remember the shot you want to get – need to get, must get – in order to satisfy both the client and your own vision.

And that shot costs what it costs.

We have spoken at length about the line-item approach to bids and how they benefit both the client and the photographer, but it is so plainly clear that the costs are what they are when you see the items so plainly listed. Remember that the top line – the "fee" -- is not

adjustable without a giving up something on their end. It is your fee, and it is non-negotiable. You cost what you cost.

If this makes you feel strange or somehow uneasy, I would suggest you re-examine this part of the business. You have spent untold hours and learned exactly the skills you need to pull this gig off. Even if one of the skills is how to pull the gig off without really knowing how to pull the gig off. Yeah...it's an art.

Your value is set in stone when you say that you cost what you cost. That the image costs what it costs. That the production costs what it costs. These value propositions are not frivolous; they are immediate and palpable. They help steel you against those who would devalue your work. The value you put on yourself is a deep and exciting venture. It can define you to your client.

It can define you to your crew.

It can define you to your mom (who always wanted you to be a doctor like your cousin). And, most importantly, it can define you to yourself.


When you know your value proposition, the value of the work that you do, and how others see that value, that fear and loathing thing about doing bids goes away.

Mostly.

How do you redefine your value?

Find out what others think about the type of work that you do. Ask your clients what they value most in the work you do – and in the work they get from your competitors.

Take a mental note of what you are currently charging and ask why? Are these numbers you simply pulled out of thin air? Or are they industry standard-issue, run-of-the-mill prices?



Because you know you are just a standard-issue, run-of-the-mill photographer? And we all know how much in demand those run-of-the-mill-boring-plain-vanilla photographers are. Yeah, baby. They are rockin'. Not.

What is the value of your work? What you demand for it.

Does this mean you can skip the part where you bust your ass to make really incredible, better-than-most, over-the-top, creatively killer images?

OF COURSE NOT!!!!

We are taking that as a given. This is week 27 for Pete's sake; your work is not in question here. You can shoot. You can edit. You can prepare and pack. You can make scribbles on that check list you have. We are accepting the fact that you are already a better-than-average photographer. You are a talented and up-and-coming shooter that needs to be charging what you are worth. (This is after the pre-set "get every gig" approach discussed earlier. We are transitioning a bit now to the real world.)

Assistants are important. They hold lights. They build sets. They carry heavy stuff when you are deep into the "Oh my gosh, what was I thinking when I said I would do this shot without seeing the location first?! Where's the nearest bridge? OMG OMG..." thinking. They are part of your team. They cost what they cost.

Sets are a valuable part of the shot. They can be shoddily constructed and fall apart every time the model steps up to it or built right so the shoot can smoothly move ahead.

Sets cost what they cost.

Yeah, we shoot digital. That means that sometimes we need to see what we are doing right at the shoot. Digital techs make the shoot go smoother and keep your assistant doing what they do so well.

Digital techs are important and, surprise, they cost what they cost.

If you need something to make the shoot go smoothly and with less problems, it probably has a cost associated with it. That cost is generally set by the vendor, service, technician, or talent that provides that special something.

They all cost what they cost. Exercise:

Plan a big shoot and line item all the things you absolutely need to do the shot you planned. What do they cost? Can you do the same shot without them?

If the answer is no, then you have your base.

(Look, we can always find ways around some costs. Borrowing a motorcycle instead of renting one is great if you have a bud with a Harley. But if you don't, then the headaches associated with trying to find one to borrow or rent is a cost item for your client to have itemized.)

Clients know this stuff too, you know. Sure they want the least expensive way to go (saving money is a good thing) but they also know that scrimping on art will never win them another client. Doing good work does that. (If you are thinking, "Yeah right, not the clowns I work with," then stop working for clowns and step up to the clients who do value work well done.

They can see through a poorly executed bid. They know what things cost to do it right. And they want to be sure you know them too.

So the next time you start to put a bid together, just remember: "It costs what it costs." Bid accordingly.

Making a List and Checking it a Gazillion Times Checklists are important; vitally important. Whether you are preparing an overnight on the side of a freezing mountain, taking a hot air balloon over the

tops of Monument Valley, or getting ready for takeoff in a small plane, checklists are your friend.

In fact, in some endeavors, checklists are so important that they are considered mandatory. Commercial photography is one of those in my opinion.

A checklist prevents leaving the meter in the other bag; hell, it prevents leaving the other bag entirely. A checklist means you have all the bases covered.

A checklist will save you a ton of money in lost productivity, redundant purchases (like buying a couple of stands and a Polaroid back in another city because of a forgotten bag).

A checklist will help you sleep at night. Or on the plane. Or in the back of the taxi in the middle of the Spanish country side.

Because they work.

One of the most important things a checklist can do is to keep you from leaving or forgetting or losing a vital, many times very expensive, must-have item. I have a checklist for each light, kit, stand, accessory bag, and a checklist for my camera bag as well. Lamination is cheap at Kinkos...trust me. I use them religiously.

And a checklist will help you in a very interesting way from a conceptual point of view. As you start down the mental checklist, checking off the physical checklist, ideas may flood in to your mind's eye, pre-visualizing the shot while collecting the gear to make it. Yes, it happens. I think it has a lot to do with focus and the mental commitment that working with a checklist forces on one. One last thing: The above two items lead to a third, which is simply is the most professional thing you can do: Be prepared both mentally and gear-wise.

Having a checklist is also a great way to deal with the most terrifying, challenging, and mind-melting situations -- the "out of the blue" client call.

"Just give me a ballpark number," he says cheerfully. I got three words for you. Don't do it!

Grab your checklist and make sure you go through each item with them. Grabbing your iPad, you can whip up a pretty fast estimate when all the list items are covered. Or, better yet, you can get back to him at a later date with all the pertinent info.

Have a calendar in front of you. I use Google Calendar; others may prefer iCal, or even paper calendars. Fine...just make sure you have one.

Have a pen, paper, input device ready for the specifications.

Then hit the checklist with them...before you trip up and start talking dollars. Here is my checklist:

- ✓ Client Name (Company)
- ✓ Client Company (Agency)
- ✓ Client Name (Contact)
- ✓ Client Contact Position
- ✓ Client Contact Phone
- ✓ Client Contact Email

Description of the Assignment. (What will this project look like when finished?) Shot "List" or "Editorial?"

How many finished images are expected to be delivered? When is the shoot tentatively scheduled for?

Is this a studio shoot?

If it is a studio shoot, what special materials may be needed to make the shot work? (A set, special background, and "extras," like scissor lifts and wind machines, etc.)

Location shoot?

Who will handle permits and special access?

Is there power on site, or will we need to bring our own?

Location address. (I then put it into Google Earth so I can see sunrise/sunset and trajectory for best light choices.)

What is the deadline for the project/assignment?

Will this be an art-directed shoot or will I be given free reign?

If it is art directed, who will be attending? (Believe me, you need to know this for lunch, water bottles, canapés, chairs -- even how much room is available.)

Format (Will there be any need to rent an MF digital camera?) Film? (Hey, you have to ask.)

What is to be delivered? RAW, post processed, TIFF, or JPG; color corrected or straight from the camera? How will files be delivered: electronically or on disc?

Will prints be necessary?

Will the studio do all the retouching? (Preferred, of course.)

Assistants? (This depends on the scope of the gig and what is in the description above. Remember: "It costs what it costs.")

Usage:

- Advertising National
- Regional Local
- Consumer Publication Trade Publication Display
- Billboard Packaging POP
- Collateral Brochure
- Catalogs
- Sales Kit Editorial
- National Regional Local Consumer
- Trade Publication Additional.
- Billboard Television

Location Specific:

- Exact location with phone numbers. Backup phone numbers.
- Contact person at the location. Contact phone number. Contact email.
- Backup contact. Backup contact phone.
- Backup contact email.
- Emergency contact Emergency contact phone

Security concerns

Will any special paperwork be needed to access location? Who is in charge of getting that paperwork to me?

Security person name

Security person email

Security person emergency contact information

Studio Specific:

- What size requirements are there?
- Will props be needed?
- If so, who is responsible for getting them?
- Who will approve the props (name/phone/email)?

- When will props be delivered?
- How will they be arriving?
- If sets are to be built, who is in charge of the set?
- Who will approve the set design?
- Approver's name/phone/email?

Will any additional insurance be necessary? (Jewelry, antiques, art items.)

Model Specifics:

- Will models be needed?
- Who will be casting the models?
- Who will approve the model selection?
- Approver's name/phone/email?
- Backup for approval, if needed.
- Backup approver's name/phone/email?
- Will the person who is approving have the authority to approve?
- If not, who will (name/phone/email)?

Travel Specific:

- Will there be a need for travel?
- Who will be handling those arrangements?
- Will those arrangements include air fare and accommodations?

Are there any travel restrictions or special instructions for the destination of the assignment? (Be very thorough and do your own checking as well. You are a professional photographer, and that can mean a lot of things to a lot of different people all around the world.)

Creative Specifics:

Is there a layout or design specifications and have you seen them???

Is the creativity of the photographer foremost requested, or are there constraints that must be considered?

Is there any other thing you can think of?

Okay.

Now you can give them a bid...“off the top of your well-researched, checklisted, efficiently designed, professional head.”

You are of course free to take my list above, modify it, make it look all groovy and such, laminate it, bind it, staple it, modify it, add to it... whatever.

Just use it! And watch some of the stress of bidding a gig sort of melt off.

Not all of the stress (rights are the next chapter), but a lot of the stress.

What the Hell Do I Charge for This Stuff?

Damned if I know. Seriously.

I can pay \$12,000 for a product shot, and I can get a product shot done pretty well for a hundred clams. I can pay \$500 for a headshot or get a pretty decent one from some guy on Model Mayhem for free. What does pricing mean when there is so much fluctuation all over the board?

I recently bought a new car. I shopped online and found less than a couple of hundred differences in the car from four dealers. I purchased based on convenience, the fact we had purchased there before, and a few other factors..none of which was saving \$234.

Same with photography. Now factor in the incredibly wobbly structure of pricing between the startup shooters and the big name shooters.

Startup shooters are always lower...in price. Hopefully not in quality, right? Right.

But ask yourself why?

Does the ad suffer if the photographer has only been in business for a year? Does the work look like it? How? How can anyone tell if the

image was shot by a hard-working newbie or a hard-working old guy? They can't.

That is the point: They can't. So you shouldn't mark yourself down because of how long you have been in business.

We seem to be totally engaged in what the other guy charges. How much does she get for a wedding? What is his average product shot range? How much does he make on those car shots?

Baloney. That is good for researching levels and norms, but of no value to us if we simply look at numbers.

Finding out what the normal rate is in your area (average, not so much) is one of the things we have assigned. (Averages are terribly misleading. For instance, Photog A charges \$300 per hour, while Photog B charges \$275 per hour and Photog C charges \$75 per hour. That "average" is now a little over \$200 per hour -- and none charge that rate. The "norm" is about \$275-\$300.)

When you are going in to price something, you will meet your greatest enemy in the world of setting prices: You.

Yes...you.

You will second guess and wonder about this and that while thinking the price is too high and how in the hell could anyone get this rate for a stupid photograph and why would they pick you and how you never should have worn those shoes to this meeting and what will your family say when they find out that you are a total washout and loser?

Or, you know, something like that.

I want you to think about pricing as you think about packing the right gear for the job. That is to say, you price it and bid it according

to knowledge of the job, what it is worth, and how much value you bring to the project.

A client may call to discuss a gig with you and you have gotten all the particulars (the previous week's worksheet is filled to the brim with great and solid information), and now it is time to bid the gig.

Do you really want the gig?

Seriously. This is a very important question.

I have turned down gigs that, while putting some dollars on the bottom line, would have challenged my personal taste level or beliefs.

I turned down a calendar of scantily dressed "lingerie girls with automatic weapons." Not because I have any problem with weapons; I don't.

Not because I have any problems with scantily clad women in lingerie. I sure as heck don't. But something about the two of them together seemed schlocky, greasy, and a bit tasteless. So I said no.

I also said no to the real fur shoot, the "vampire/drugs" poster, and the political referendum that I did not believe in.

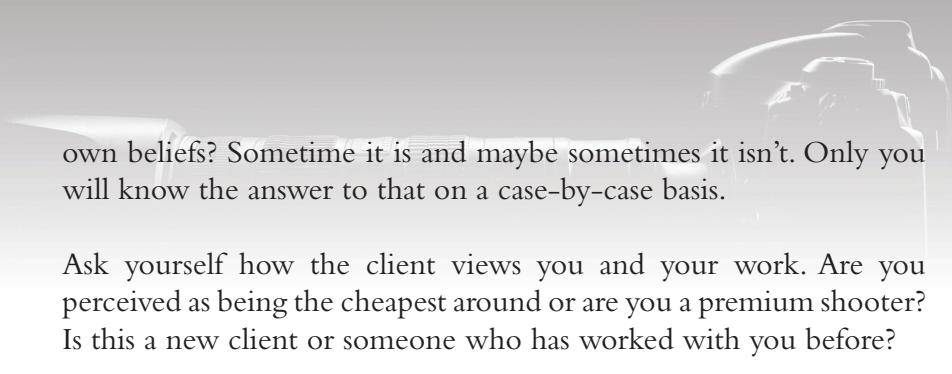
All paying gigs. All "no."

I had to ask if myself if doing the gig was something I wanted to be associated with. Was it something that would have brought me more work in different genres? Was it a career climber? Or was it something I may regret doing, whether or not it helped or hindered my future work? These are serious areas for you to consider. Maybe the gig is not right for you at all.

What if the shot you did helped sell a political candidate or platform that you do not believe in? Is it worth the money to challenge your

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own beliefs? Sometime it is and maybe sometimes it isn't. Only you will know the answer to that on a case-by-case basis.

Ask yourself how the client views you and your work. Are you perceived as being the cheapest around or are you a premium shooter? Is this a new client or someone who has worked with you before?

While these are not reasons to charge more or less, they are things to think about while making the presentation and may mean more credibility and education in the bidding process.

When you negotiate your price, and many times we must do a bit of negotiation, ask yourself how it feels when someone takes something away from you? How do you feel about that?

Would it be more acceptable if it was presented differently? How?

When negotiating with someone, they are going to be feeling similar emotions, as negotiations necessarily mean give and take. How will that affect the way you explain that if the bid is to be less costly, something will have to be taken away? Conversely, ask yourself how you feel when someone gives you something. Sometimes taking something specific away may allow for something else to take its place.

Is this a "gimme" technique?

Negotiations mean give and take to a point where everybody wins. You feel like you are going to be compensated fairly, and the client feels they are getting a good value for their expenditure.

Give. Take.

Just think about how to do it.

A few additional things to keep in mind when bidding a gig: Real World Assets:

Money:

Yes. Money is good. Anyone who tells you different is either lying or too rich to care.

Cash Flow:

Cash flow is money going at a steady flow into your business at a greater rate than that which leaves your business. Cash flow is a very important thing to consider and can be a decisive driver of your bid.

Portfolio:

Yeah, it is true. Sometimes the shot or opportunity is simply too great to walk away from (my photoshoot with Mohammed Ali for instance. I was going to get an image of The Champ, no matter what the fee).

Travel:

Sometimes the ability to travel to exotic or not-so-exotic areas of the world is simply too powerful from which to walk away. The potential for stock, portfolio images, and simply seeing parts of the world that you may have few opportunities to ever see can be a great motivator.

And bidding can reflect that. What about some nontangibles?

Like, it will be fun or interesting or you have always wanted to do something like that. Yeah, those things can happen as well.

Maybe it is the future worth of the client -- a "foot in the door" of someone who does a lot of assignment work. Yes, this is a real reason for working the bid a bit. So is being able to get into a genre that may be somewhat new to you -- a new channel, or area that has been intriguing you for a while. Always wanted to shoot dance? The Martha Graham Company comes to town, and the venue wants some publicity shots. They don't have a big budget (they never do), but you can have full access.

We call that a “HELL YEAH” kind of opportunity.

Rights:

Errr...

RIGHTS!!!

That nebulous, incredibly strange and confusing world of rights.

I suggest a few sources like ASMP and APA for you to peruse. Grab a copy of John Harrington’s wonderful business book, *Best Business Practices for Photographers, Second Edition* and spend the required time to read it and understand it.

I also recommended Kirk Tuck’s *Commercial Photography Handbook: Business Techniques for Professional Digital Photographers*.

My own take on rights is something a little personal. Some gigs I make a big deal of it, and on others, I don’t. The more art direction I have to do, the more rights are introduced by me. The more the work will be used for commerce, the more rights are introduced. Shooting headshots for the local theater guild? Not so much.

But these are my personal ways of working. You will find your way as well. It takes time and experience and doing it over and over to find your “groove,” as they say.

Put It In Writing:

People respect written contracts, written pricing estimates, or written “off the top of my head” proposals. Written down, the rules and rights are more “official” and standard than a verbal statement. Write it down and have fewer problems. Write it down and have fewer mistakes, misunderstandings, or billing questions. Write it down and

you can smile at that small claims court hearing. Paperwork trumps nearly anything else in a court of law.

Before you start whining about not wanting to "hassle" them with contracts and how it all seems so distasteful, remember that the folks who bring the coffee in every Monday have written contracts with the agency. Are you not at least on par with the coffee guy? Or the plant lady? Or the cell phone carrier? Yeah I think you are.

Get it in writing, keep it safe.

The Referral Lifeline

Building a business in a vacuum is not a great way to get anywhere fast, or even slow.

You need a team of pros all around you. From make-up artists (MUA) and assistants to digital techs and producers, the workload can be distributed only when you are totally convinced that they are competent and will not screw up their job. Which is actually your job. And we never want anything to screw up our job. Late assistants, bad MUA, producers that don't produce -- they are all reflections of your business and business decisions.

When they go well, you look good. When they don't; well, you know.

And "blaming" the other guy may work in politics, but it gets you nowhere in business. It looks weak and pathetic. But there is another area where a "Team" approach can be fostered: Your clients.

Yes, clients, contacts, social media community, Tweeps, and Facebook buds all can become some of the most important assets your business can have.

An Evangelist: "...the practice of relaying information about a particular set of beliefs to others with the object of conversion."

We aren't talking religious at this point; we are talking about the power of having someone advocate for you. And – get this – most people want to advocate for someone they like. It is a human trait to

want to share good information and good people with others. Your job is to remind them of their desire to share you with their friends, peers, and business acquaintances. Within the social media world, getting a lot of "friends" is easy; getting evangelists is much harder -- and much more rewarding.

Your evangelists will carry your message to their friends in ways you can never do. They will advocate your artistic abilities, your way of working with people, how you shoot liquids, and more. They become surrogates of your marketing message with one very strong difference: They already have credibility with their friends and peers.

One real "introduction" is worth 50 mailers to strangers. (Yes, I made that specific statistic up on the spot. I'm sure it is something like that. Maybe 52 mailers...47? Whatever.) Those introductions come from current clients, prospects, people you meet on airplanes, and sometimes from the most unexpected places. They open doors, knock down the gates, and fling open the entrance to people who may be nearly impossible to ever meet on your own.

Scenario One:

"Hello Mr. AD, sir, I am Don Giannatti and I would like to discuss a time to show you my portfolio."

"We have plenty of photographers that we work with. Send me your email, and I will keep it in mind if one of our photographers gets hit by a truck or convicted of something."

Versus Scenario Two:

"Hi Mr. AD, sir. Tom Smith at Dewey Cheatem and Howe agency told me to get in touch with you about my portfolio. Tom says it is right up your alley."

Versus Scenario Three:

“Hello, Mr. Photographer, my name is Mr. AD and Tom told me you had a killer book that I should take a look at. When is a good time to come down? We’ll have bottled imported water and delicate little finger sandwiches with toothpicks in them for your arrival.”

Okau, the water and sandwich thing is a little over the top, but you do get the idea, right? An introduction is very powerful, and a third-party endorsement is even more powerful.

How do you get them? How do you get someone to introduce you to an influential person in the business? Well...

You ask for it.

That simple.

That easy.

Ask.

When you leave an appointment, or finish a gig, ask for a referral. In fact ask for two.

“It was a good job, Art. I enjoyed shooting the editorial for the team. By the way, now that you know my style, do you have any art director or editor buds that you could introduce me to?”


Now get ready. They will either have someone or not have someone. You will not die. They will not want to strangle you. It is not confrontational at all.

Just ask.

They could look up and say, “No, I don’t.” Well, there you go. Leave it alone.

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But more often than not they will say they do and start to give you names and agencies and designers and editors. Be ready to accept that information. Record it on your smart phone or write it down with a pen and paper -- just don't leave them standing there while you look for something to write with.

And after you get the information, act on it. Act on it immediately. One more time: Act on it.

The introduction is hot for a day, warm for a week. Cold in a month. Dead cold.

Leave it alone cold.

Acting on getting in touch with the introductions is vitally time sensitive -- for you and for the person who gave you the introduction. If they happen to mention to their bud something along the lines of, "Hey, how did you like Don's portfolio?" And the other guy says, "Don who?" you will look like a chump for not following through. The AD who spent the time to get the name of his peer for you will wonder what kind of flake you are for taking the introduction and not doing anything with it.

So it is basically better to follow through immediately instead of leaving yourself wide open for a big fail -- one that won't help you with the new prospect and may actually make you look like a flake to the one who did the introducing.

Make it a rule to never leave an opportunity to ask for an introduction without asking for one. It should be standard operating procedure. It can also be the fastest way to build your list of possible clients.

Evangelists, advocates, fans...whatever you call them, they are a very important part of your overall marketing strategy. And they are also the most valuable asset you can have with that strategy because of

their credibility with their peers. Use them wisely, and keep them close.

This small band of raving fans can open more doors than all the sourcebooks, emails, and postcards in the world. They are already inside, you see. They can open the doors from the inside, and that is amazingly powerful.

Building a great team and a solid group of advocates takes time, but it is time well spent. And along the way you get to meet a great group of people; people that like and support your efforts.

That's hard to beat.

Tying Up The Loose Ends

Well, here we are at 31 weeks. Thirty-one weeks of documents and assignments and work, work, work. It is time to look at how we put all of this to use; how we actually go about getting the real meat of the challenge...the guts of it all.

I will say that making the choice to become more professional in your work will sustain you in all that you do. It will make the hardest things a bit easier, and it will take the best you have and churn out the cream.

If you can get out of the way.

One of the saddest things I see are people for whom the fear has taken hold and, instead of acting boldly, they turn away and seek the cover of safety.

(Before we continue, I do not want anyone to think that I am suggesting that you quit your job and throw caution to the wind and just "go for it." Not at all. You will have to gauge your own appetite for what you choose to do.)

I am talking about the microcosm of all the little choices we have to make once we have decided to become professional.

Dinner dates? Better be flexible. A customer has a problem, and that means you have a challenge that needs a solution.

Work/life balance? Yep, as soon as you have your first 100 million in the bank, balance all you want. Until you do, it is a pipe dream.

Billing, bidding, time structure, new gear, travel, books, props, marketing....all that means work. Work.

Finding that groove that gets you into that productive mode of "getting it done," then, getting it done.

We have all read about the overnight success stories of this photographer or that one. But I have a sneaking suspicion that the real overnight success story is in the writer's mind. Not in the reality of all the hard work, late nights, focused weeks, and missed birthdays that it took for that photographer to get there.

No matter how we slice it, this business is 40% talent, 40% work, and 40% persistence. No other way to slice it. And if you think the math doesn't work, you will have weeks when it will not be questioned.

But you will also be aware that you do things a bit differently than most others. The ones who got their information from a forum filled with people are no more qualified to give out photography advice than they are astral physics, such as those for whom "professional" is deemed by the kind of camera one is shooting with or the brand of lights.

It will be sometimes hard to bite your tongue and move on, as you know what you know, but there are times when that is the best choice.

You may also decide to sit and work with someone who wants some advice and some good direction. And doing that would be a wonderful thing. Pass on this advice you have learned; pass on the professionalism to those who need and want it. Make it a priority to help someone in your area to see what they need to do to move forward.

Do not be petty, or mean-spirited. Don't be protectionist of your work.

Share what you know, and be a mentor to as many aspiring photographers as possible. It is good for the soul and good for the photography.

Use this document to go back over plans and assets. Move priorities, and remind yourself of what it was you wanted to do when you started this course. It is an amazing time to be a photographer, and this document can remind you of how far you have come.

Whatever you do, never give up your dreams, never give up your passion.

Never give up on the plans you made when you started this course way back when. It is for you that you took it, and it is for you that you finished it.

You will want to quit.

Don't.



Addendum One: Value-Driven Pricing

The real or perceived value is what the client will pay; heck, it is what they want to pay. Successful transactions are the ones where the client feels they got their money's worth or even exceeded that expectation.

We price our work based on several determinations, but before we discuss those, let's ask some fundamental questions:

If your number one competitor drives a Lexus, should you?

If your closest competitor uses QuickBooks, does that mean you should as well?

If the highest-paid photographer in your market is getting \$8,000 for a headshot, does that mean that you can compete with them at \$7,000 per headshot?

If the lowest-paid photographer in your market is getting \$50 per headshot, should you match that price to "get going?"

When you look at a photograph, do you see what the photographer was worth reflected back? Can you tell if it was shot by a newbie or a well-experienced old guy? (Assuming, of course, that the image is a killer image.)

Of course not. No on each of the above.

There is no correlation between them and you and even them and what they use. Not even a bit of correlation. Yet I hear photographers tell me that they need a such and such lens or lighting kit or Photoshop action because that other photographer uses it. Silly. But not devastating.

What is devastating is devaluing your work for things that bear little on its creation. Does the image care if it was born from a Rebel or a 1DS? Does a D4 image automatically have more value than one from a D7000? Does Sony immediately mean that the image is off base or not one of the heavy hitters?

Of course not.

The value of the images is what is perceived by the buyer to be the value of the image. And much of what you do will influence that perception.

Remember, if you don't think it's worth \$10,000, how will you ever sell it to your client?

Studies have shown that in many cases, the client will not want to purchase the cheaper, on-sale unit of anything. They are both enamored with and impressed by the perceived value of the creator.

“Amazing, One-of-a-Kind Portraiture Created with YOU in Mind. Only \$10 Per Sitting Fee. We are totally involved in creating the image that reflects your business and its value.”

“Amazing, One-of-a-Kind Portraiture created with YOU in mind.. \$750 Initial Sitting Fee (download a PDF of our pricing here). We are totally involved in creating the image that reflects your business and its value.”

“Amazing, One-of-a-Kind Portraiture Created with YOU in mind.

We are totally involved in creating the image that reflects your business and its value.

Packages starting at \$1000 with custom options available. Call for a personal appointment to discuss your needs.”

Which of these offers truly gives you the feeling that they do indeed create one-of-a-kind portraits? Yep. Number three.

Now, the perceived value is set.

How many of us will charge our own value? How many of us have even thought of the value of our work? How many of us value it as a premium?

It is a premium, the work you do. You want to know why?

Because it is your work. You made it.

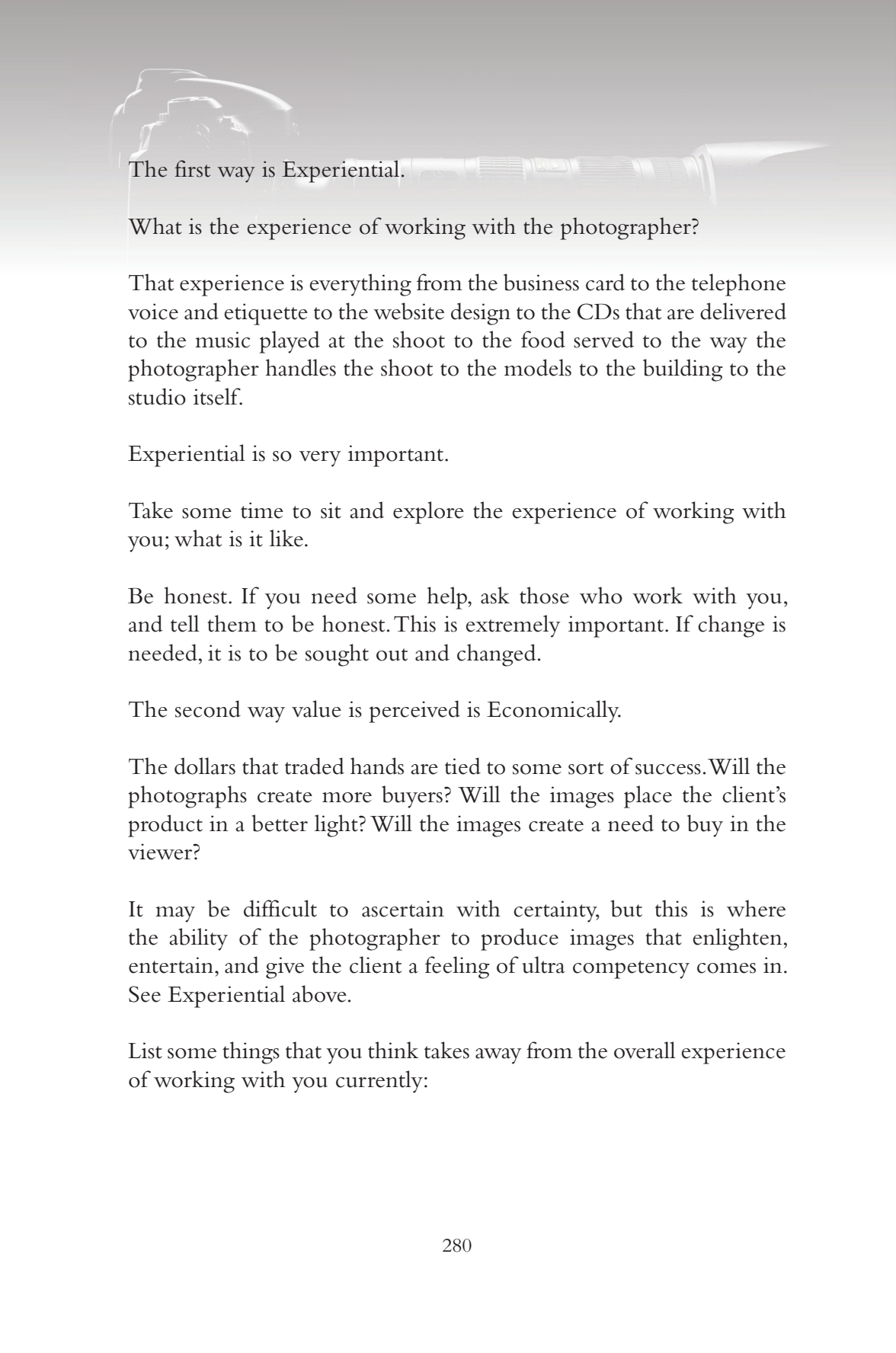
You studied, practiced, failed, researched, failed, practiced some more, failed, reviewed, learned, hit on a good one, failed, revised, and on and on and on...until the failures were beaten by the wins. You know? That is worth something.

Ask a baseball shortstop what his value is, and he may tell you 5 million bucks a year, even if he is on injured reserve all year. Why? Because he is worth it! Just, you know, ask him.

We aren't baseball players. We are artists and craftsmen and craftswomen. We make things that are unique. We make something that will help someone sell more of something or to remember some moment forever or to simply see something in a way that few have ever seen.

Artistic endeavor meets commercial application. And it has a value.

That value is perceived by the client in several ways.



The first way is Experiential.

What is the experience of working with the photographer?

That experience is everything from the business card to the telephone voice and etiquette to the website design to the CDs that are delivered to the music played at the shoot to the food served to the way the photographer handles the shoot to the models to the building to the studio itself.

Experiential is so very important.

Take some time to sit and explore the experience of working with you; what is it like.

Be honest. If you need some help, ask those who work with you, and tell them to be honest. This is extremely important. If change is needed, it is to be sought out and changed.

The second way value is perceived is Economically.

The dollars that traded hands are tied to some sort of success. Will the photographs create more buyers? Will the images place the client's product in a better light? Will the images create a need to buy in the viewer?

It may be difficult to ascertain with certainty, but this is where the ability of the photographer to produce images that enlighten, entertain, and give the client a feeling of ultra competency comes in. See Experiential above.

List some things that you think takes away from the overall experience of working with you currently:

DARE TO SUCCEED

List some things that you think are very good about the experience of working with you.

List what your clients say about the experience of working with you currently.

What things are you going to change and when?

What things are you going to keep and possibly enhance? And how?

A cheap camera, dowdy wardrobe, and dirty, unwashed car may be great for a bohemian artist who wants to impress his angst on folks, but the people we engage want to be successful – and successful photographers can help them with that.

Become aware of all the incidentals that tell a client a lot about how it is to work with you – from your website to your blog to your vehicle to your phone answering message.

We have discussed this before, but at the end of the workshop, these things need to be discussed again. Successful photographers seem to be successful. They act successful, look successful, and work in spaces and ways that reinforces this perception of success.

Perception is everything, they say.

Don't Be Afraid of 'Systems'

As a commercial photographer I know a lot about how to make things happen. In fact, being a commercial photographer is a lot of 'solutions... NOW' sort of life.

The locations are too small or too large. Too many lights or not enough. Always need another stand or something that will go just 6" higher. It is a constant battle of "making" it happen when so many things are against the photograph coming out at all.

Solutions – solving problems – that is the nature of what we commercial shooters do.

I have to admit that I have never liked 'systems'. I hated them, actually. They took the serendipity off, they seemed to be too button down corporate to me.

But I came around out of necessity. I was always able to keep things in my head; appointments, billing, conversations, expectations. All in my head.

I was also pretty good at multi-tasking.

Then I realized that 'multi-tasking' wasn't really what was going on, I was busting my ass doing things simultaneously that could easily have been done one at a time. The idea of 'multi-tasking' really is a farce for so many reasons.

We are humans and most of us humans have to have a focus. A way of putting all of our attention on one thing, and getting that thing done.

Spending 6 hours multi-tasking to get 4 hours worth of work done is inefficient at best. Destructive in many ways.

So I found myself forming systems... little ones at first, then larger and more complex ones as the gigs began to get more complex.

THE SIMPLEST SYSTEM: CHECKLISTS.

I use checklists for many of my common functions now, and I use them religiously.

I have a checklist for my shoots. And I check each thing off as I load it. Does it make loading go a little slower, yeah. A little. But I never worry about getting to a gig without something I NEED.

As I have mentioned before, I have cases with gear that is packed in accordance to the type of gig I am doing. All my speedlights (save one in the bag) are in one large tool kit with triggers, cords, modifiers and all kinds of clamps and holders. When I do a gig with speedlights, that box is there and it is everything I need. There is a checklist in the box to help me repack the items. Did I remember to get all the clamps, and are there any grids missing? Checklist... got it.

I have a larger kit checklist that combines the different containers, which are also checklisted.

A big shoot may require Lighting Kit A and Lighting Kit B. It will also necessitate stand case A and B as well. Since those cases are prepacked to the same standards (checklists) each time, I need only grab them and load them according to my needs.

Every item I use is on a check list. They are marked as loaded, and then remarked when reloaded at tear down.

I don't ever want to get home without a camera body or flash head. Again.

THE DAILY WORK CHECKLIST

I have been asked how I get so much done (even though I sometimes go to bed thinking of all the things that didn't get done). I have my daily checklist to help with that.

Here is how I do mine. Starting early morning.

5AM to 6AM: Check Email / Social Media for trending articles.

6AM – 7AM: Write for my blog/book. I try to write 1000 words a day across various platforms. These days I do a bit more than that since I am working on a novel and doing discovery for a non-fiction book.

7AM – 8AM: Breakfast, walk the dogs, take my daughter to school and such.

8AM – 8:30AM: Review plans for the day.

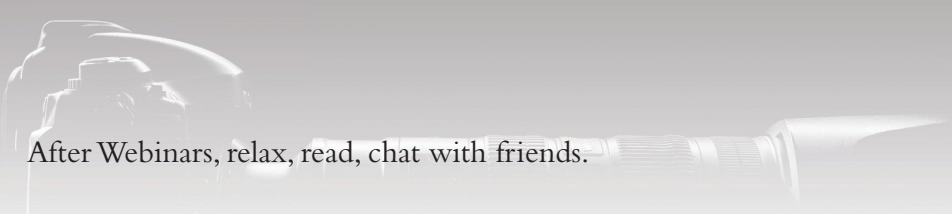
9AM – Noon: Email is off, focus on the main job at hand. Can be broken into two distinct gigs if necessary. (This includes any marketing initiatives.)

Noon – 1AM: Lunch, email, social media check in.

1AM to 4PM: Email is off, focus on the main job at hand. Can be broken into two distinct gigs if necessary. (This includes any marketing initiatives.)

4PM: Check Email / Social Media. Have a bit of fun.

5PM /5:30 PM. Dinner and get ready for webinars usually at 6PM.



After Webinars, relax, read, chat with friends.

Before retiring in for the night, I take a look at today's list and make tomorrow's list of prioritized gigs.

I rarely watch TV or movies (weekends are for that) and I rarely have the same schedule every day... this is an estimate checklist above.

Shooting days are far different and by nature looser.

CONTENT CHECKLIST: WEEKLY

I maintain a lot of online presence; from this site to the three Project 52 Pros as well as my namesake site, it can be overwhelming to keep up with it all. I have a checklist for content, updates, posts and what gets attention on what day.

For instance, I post on the Project 52 Pros sites with regularity. New assignments are added each Friday, and the critiques are uploaded the day after they are given. (Unless I forget to check my list... which recently happened when I travelled. Lesson learned. Big time.)

Here is what a content checklist could look like:

Posts:

- Lighting Essentials on Monday.
- Project 52Pros on Tuesday
- DonGiannatti.com on Wednesday
- DonGiannattiPhotography on Thursday
- New Assignments on Friday (All P52)
- Newsletter on Sunday.

I use the Editorial Calendar Plugin to keep ahead of things on my websites.

For content I also have a small checklist.

DARE TO SUCCEED

- Citations linked.
- Author Info added.
- Links checked.
- Spelling checked.
- Any additional info that was promised or needs to be on the post.

I probably add a couple of checklists to specific projects once or twice a week, but these are the ones that keep me going... and turning out a lot of content.

Don't be afraid of checklists and systems... find the ones that work for you and make them your ally in the war that is over our time – and those who want as much of it as they can get.

Exactly what IS a Marketing Campaign?

We hear this from photographers all the time: “You must market your work.”

And we know that is true.

“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, flyers, emails, balloons, sandwich boards... just seein' 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?

How do we create one?

How long should it run?

Why does it matter?

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.

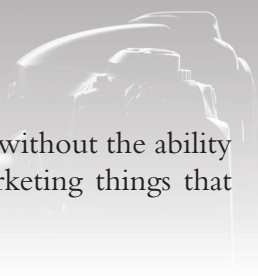
1 Email per month.

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.

NOTES

A series of 20 horizontal dotted lines spaced evenly down the page for writing notes.



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 touchpoint really. Keeping top of mind with a nice 5×7 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.

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 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. Bingewatching, 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.

Building a Marketing Campaign

Last chapter we discussed what a marketing campaign was, and how to get in front of clients that may need your services.

And any company that makes something, sells a product or service needs photographs. Yeah, they can find bad stock photography and even great stock photography for free. But free is not exclusive, and it can be very dangerous to build a brand on non-exclusive imagery.

In addition, try finding a well-made founder's shot, hero product shot, or facilities shot on Unsplash. Go ahead, we'll wait.

True, assignment-based photography is exactly what the word says... assignment based.

We have discussed the stuff you need to have, and how you need to approach those marketing system tools. Now we have to face the actual execution of that work.

This is the rubber on the road, the nose to the grindstone, the excrement/fan blade introduction moment.

Getting it done.

And it is where way too many stop.

They think "Oh hell, I cannot spend all day making phone calls or licking stamps. I cannot imagine spending my days in libraries and

bookstands looking for emails. I want to be a photographer and make a living doing what I love, not sending emails that may bounce and sitting at a desk all day.”

Cool... because no one is asking you to.

You are seeing the totality instead of the chunkiness of the tasks in front of you.

Instead of getting depressed and locked into fear of the abyss of marketing efforts staring you in the face, we are going to break it down to an easy to follow, simple method for starting small and growing to a powerhouse.

I am not going to ask you to start spending all day building lists and mailing postcards, I only want you to do one at first.

Find one new email for a client (3 minutes)

Make one cold call (2 minutes)

Send one postcard (1 minute)

Send one email (1 minute)

That is a total of 7 minutes doing the work here. I guarantee you that is a high number, it will most likely not take you a minute to address a prestamped envelope. (You do pre-stamp them, right? Just get about 30 of them ready to go so all you have to do is grab one and address it or attach the label coming off your printer... snap!)

I understand that when I say you need 250 names to get started it seems daunting, overwhelming, and seriously time-consuming.

But I also know how bad you will feel if someday you are sitting at the local flea-market selling your gear because you could not bring yourself to make a phone call or spend five minutes a day looking for clients.

Imagine explaining that to your kids or your spouse.

So here is our plan... just one per day.

Four days per week. We do nothing on Fridays in this script. (If you want to do something on a Friday, you could mail a postcard and find a new client to email, but no cold calls or emails on Fridays.)

Cmon, this is much easier isn't it.

Just ONE!

Start here and follow this plan.

— — — — —

WEEK ONE

DAY ONE (MONDAY)

- ONE new email address.
- ONE cold call.
- ONE postcard sent.
- ONE email sent.

DAY TWO

- ONE new email address.
- ONE cold call.
- ONE postcard sent.
- ONE email sent.

DAY THREE

- ONE new email address.
- ONE cold call.
- ONE postcard sent.
- ONE email sent.

DAY FOUR

- ONE new email address.
- ONE cold call.



ONE postcard sent.
ONE email sent.

NONE ON FRIDAY

WEEKEND

— — — — —

DAY FIVE (MONDAY)
ONE new email address.
ONE cold call.
ONE postcard sent.
ONE email sent.

DAY SIX
TWO new email address.
ONE cold call.
TWO postcard sent.
ONE email sent.

DAY SEVEN
ONE new email address.
ONE cold call.
ONE postcard sent.
TWO email sent.

DAY EIGHT
TWO new email address.
ONE cold call.
TWO postcard sent.
ONE email sent.

NONE ON FRIDAY

WEEKEND

— — — — —

DAY NINE

TWO new email address.

ONE cold call.

TWO postcard sent.

TWO email sent.

DAY TEN

ONE new email address.

ONE cold call.

ONE postcard sent.

TWO email sent.

DAY ELEVEN

TWO new email address.

TWO cold call.

TWO postcard sent.

TWO email sent.

DAY TWELVE

ONE new email address.

ONE cold call.

ONE postcard sent.

ONE email sent.

NONE ON FRIDAY

WEEKEND

— — — — —

DARE TO SUCCEED

DAY THIRTEEN (MONDAY)

TWO new email address.
ONE cold call.
ONE postcard sent.
TWO email sent.

DAY FOURTEEN

ONE new email address.
TWO cold call.
TWO postcard sent.
TWO email sent.

DAY FIFTEEN

TWO new email address.
TWO cold call.
THREE postcard sent.
THREE email sent.

DAY SIXTEEN

TWO new email address.
TWO cold call.
THREE postcard sent.
TWO email sent.

NONE ON FRIDAY

WEEKEND

— — — —

DAY SEVENTEEN (MONDAY)

THREE new email address.
TWO cold call.
THREE postcard sent.
TWO email sent.

DAY EIGHTEEN

TWO new email address.
TWO cold call.
TWO postcard sent.
THREE email sent.

DAY NINETEEN

THREE new email address.
THREE cold call.
THREE postcard sent.
THREE email sent.

DAY TWENTY

THREE new email address.
THREE cold call.
THREE postcard sent.
THREE email sent.

NONE ON FRIDAY

YOU ARE NOW DOING 12 CONTACTS PER DAY.

And taking less than half an hour to do them. We have eased into the work with small, bite-sized chunks that build on each other.

This is a winning strategy and we have gently slipped into it by chunking it out in incremental pieces.

(I am happy with three contacts per day, but we have elevated you slowly to four times that.)

In this five-week time period you will have:

- 34 new contact emails.
- Made 30 cold calls.
- Sent 36 postcard mailers.
- Sent 35 emails.

Some of these may be to the same people – (find a new client and send an email that day), but you have definitely touched more than 40 clients in this time.

FORTY POSSIBLE CLIENTS!!!

And it was a gentle process. One designed to minimize stress.

It may be difficult for you to start out by doing twelve per day... but you simply do not have an excuse to not do one.

Right?

ONE.

So stick with the 3 each concept every day after that. You have proven you can do it, so let's start doing it.

IMAGINE... 40 OR MORE CLIENTS TOUCHED...

You will be so far beyond most of your competition with this simple, easy to follow method that it will astound you.

BTW, by doing 3 each of these marketing actions (finding clients, sending email, sending postcard, cold calling) each day four days per week, you will be doing 180 client touches per month, while finding 48 new clients to contact... so within three or four months, you will have your list and then you will be simply maintaining it – removing inactive clients to be replaced by good clients you are going to meet along the way.

And if you do this... you will be working.

You will most definitely be working.

DON GIANNATTI

*There will be days when you will question the very idea of
being a creative professional. There will be weeks that may
seem like years when the phone doesn't ring and the email
is nothing but junk and get rich quick schemes for sale.*

*“You will question your sanity, the sanity of others,
and your very existence.*

This is normal.

This is reality.

*Just keep focused,
keep working,
keep making art.*

Embrace the process, and never lose sight of what you want.

*And know that at some point you will want to quit.
With every fibre in your body.*

Just don't.

*Change, regroup, flip it over, reinvent, recharge, take a
break, or take a long motorcycle ride to clear your head
(or whatever it is you do to clear your brain).*

*But don't stop believing in yourself.
You just may be the next
“overnight sensation”.*

DARE TO SUCCEED

DARE TO SUCCEED
THE BUSINESS BOOK
PROJECT 52 PRO SYSTEM
DON GIANNATTI

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