
Dreaming of Turning Pro

How to start earning a living as
a photographer

Syv Ritch

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INTRO

In almost all business courses, business publications, and business articles, they will tell you that it's 10 times easier to get work from existing customers than from new customers. It's all fine and dandy, but how do you start? By definition when starting you have no customer. Getting the first few customers is the hardest.

I have been there a few times. I used to do construction photography and event photography. With the 2008 financial crash, almost all of my construction customers either closed or went bankrupt. The few that were still operating cut their budgets to the bones. No new photography, no new payment. Either all my event customers stopped having events or stopped paying for photographers, "Didn't Bill showing us his... We'll use Bill from accounting." I lost most of my contacts, they were laid off.

In less than 3 months, my business collapsed. I had to start new again. I chose pets, some cats but mostly dogs, all brand new clients.

The standard joke is:

*What's the difference between a photographer and a pizza deliveryman?
The pizza deliveryman can feed a family of four.
— So many people claim credit for it, that...*

Joke aside.

*Professional photographers do two things: they take photos and they sell the photos. If you're not taking photos, you should be selling!
— Anonymous*

Becoming a professional photographer is not an easy task. It takes work and risk. This is not for the faint of heart.

I've learned persistence. It would have been so easy for me to quit a million times. But I love photography too much. And I have seen the results of being persistent and believing in what I do.

— Jody Rogac

ACTUAL PHOTOGRAPHY JOB POSTING:

Job Type: *This is currently a part-time position; however, this role has the potential to develop into a full-time resource as we scale our e-commerce division's needs.*

Responsibilities:

- *Perform studio photography set construction.*
- *Perform product video filming and / or editing.*
- *Product photography (shooting, cropping, creating and manipulation)*
- *Photograph licensed sports apparel, sports equipment and novelty items*
- *Ensure all products are accurately photographed, renamed and uploaded to our servers in a timely manner.*
- *Support design and development of web graphics including ads, email campaigns, banners, animated graphics*
- *Support design and develop of print collateral including catalogs, ad layouts, large format*
- *HTML page development and production*
- *Requirements:*
- *Degree in an art related field and 4-5 years experience as a graphic designer*
- *Preferred experience in a studio environment.*
- *Proven experience with digital camera / lighting equipment.*
- ***Full knowledge of Quark, In Design, Photoshop and Illustrator on a Mac is a MUST***
- *Experience with Dreamweaver, HTML and graphic preparation for websites*

- *Experience with JavaScript, Flash, AJAX, animation and action scripting is desired*
- *Strong organizational, multi-tasking and time management skills*
- *Solid experience of print production and web design creation*
- *CSS (preferred)*
- *Desire and ability to thrive as a detail oriented team player who can work with minimal supervision.*
- *Ability to successfully operate in a fast paced deadline driven environment.*
- *Proactive and able to take initiative to "do whatever it takes" to perform in your role.*
- *Computer proficiency with Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator on Mac computer.*

Location: ...

Compensation: \$10/hour *(His words, my emphasis)*

From these requirements, you are almost 30 years old: university degree + 4 to 5 years experience. You are a photographer, video "man," IT professional, web designer, and Adobe professional. All that for \$10/hr?

What can you learn from this employer? You won't learn photography or video... you are already experienced. You won't learn IT, web design or publishing... you are already experienced. The only thing left to learn is the photography business. But you can't learn that, since you already have 4 to 5 years experience, you didn't learn it before and you will be only paid \$10/hr. If in the 4 to 5 years of experience you had learned anything about business, you wouldn't accept being paid \$10/hr.

If you think that's ridiculous, not really. There are many other examples of that type.

I live in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. We have a few community colleges with photography programs to become professional photographers.

Every year they “pump out” around 150 “kids” dreaming of becoming pros. By now, we should have a professional photographer at every street corner. It’s not happening! Why? Because they have only one to two courses teaching the business end. No sale involved...

ECONOMICS 101: SUPPLY & DEMAND

What does economics have to do with photography? Not much! What’s economics to do with professional photography? A lot!

You need to know and understand the “supply and demand” theory of economics. It’s not that difficult, and I’m sure that you already know it.

Supply and demand is an economic model of price determination in a market. It concludes that in a competitive market, the unit price for a particular good will vary until it settles at a point where the quantity demanded by consumers (at current price) will equal the quantity supplied by producers (at current price), resulting in an economic equilibrium of price and quantity.

The four basic laws of supply and demand are:

- If demand increases and supply remains unchanged then higher equilibrium price and unchanged quantity.
- If demand decreases and supply remains the same then lower equilibrium price and unchanged quantity.
- If supply increases and demand remains unchanged then lower equilibrium price and higher quantity.
- If supply decreases and demand remains the same then higher price and lower quantity.

— Wikipedia

So in plain English:

1. More professional photographers with the same number of customers, the prices will go ↘

2. Less professional photographers with the same number of customers, the prices will go ↗
3. Same number of professional photographers but more customers, the prices will go ↗
4. More photos with the same demand for photos, the prices will go ↘
5. More photos with a higher demand for photos, the prices? We don't know!

Facts that we know:

1. There are lot more photos on the Internet.
2. There's a tremendous need for more photos by businesses.
3. The vast majority of the photos on the Internet are of poor quality aka: "crappy."

We also know that over the last 2 years, **prices have gone up!** iStockPhoto charges more. It used to be \$1/photo, now the real price is around \$8/photo for a very small size, aka "web size and resolution." The price depends on the number of credits for the photo and the quantity of credits bought. Non-exclusive celebrity photos were as low as \$0.05/photo in monthly subscription block. Now, non-exclusive celebrity photos are around \$3/photo in monthly subscription blocks.

This means that the demand for photos is growing faster than the available pool of wanted photos.

*I've noticed over the last couple of years, as more content moves on line or originates online, that a lot of clients and readers say: "We want more pictures, we want bigger pictures." **I see more and more demand for high quality pictures.** There's a lot of user-generated content out there, and there's a use for it – people love to share their photos. But professional photography is extremely important to illustrate and excite and engage. **People are rarely excited by a***

blurry cell phone photo, unless it's of their own children. (Her words, my emphasis)
– Moya McAllister: Story Worldwide

PROBLEMS WITH PHOTOS ON THE INTERNET

There are many problems with the photos on the Internet. The main ones are:

1. Finding the right photo. Many non-professional editors do not know how and where to find photos on the Internet.
2. Most of the photos on the Internet are not properly labeled and/or catalogued.
3. Most photos on the Internet are from smart-phones, iPhones, and low-end point and shoot cameras.
4. How do you buy and pay for a photo on the Internet? Are you going to cut a check for \$7.00? The cost of issuing a check is around \$60 for a large company. POs, accounting department, request, processing....

Solving these problems is one of the ways of becoming a professional photographer.

THE MAGIC BULLET

Everybody wants the magic bullet and every company is willing to sell you the magic bullet.

Buy Nikon and... buy Canon and...

Buy my secrets and you will become a bazillionaire. Nothing to do with hard work, just buy my customer list and... guess what will happen if I sell you my customer list? Nothing! They will not buy from you. They are buying from me. You are not me. It's me, they know. It's me, they trust to deliver the photos. They are my contacts, not yours.

You will have to work hard, pound the pavement, build your website, send the emails, reply to the emails and to the phone...

I can provide directions. It's like learning how to walk. Nobody can do it for you. We can help, we can direct, we can't do it for you. You fell many times, it did hurt, you cried and finally you got over it. Now, you don't even think about it anymore. The problem is that you need to go through the process.

The problem is that there are formulas. Every successful professional photographer has his/her own formula. It's not a generic formula.

ARE WE OUT OF THE CRISIS?

Yes! We do not have anymore the articles suggesting that the unemployed high-tech workers can make a living by becoming professional photographers. Looks like it's much more difficult to become a professional photographer than just pressing the button.

Is everything hunky dory? Definitely not! Business is picking up again in almost all areas of the business of photography. Many "wishing to be" pros have "gone out of business." I will argue that they never were in business. They were in photography seeing if they could make some money, they never were in business. They never were "pros."

*You can't be a professional photographer without being a businessman.
If not, you won't be in business for very long.
— Dan Sanderson*

CHICKEN AND EGG

Starting as a professional photographer is the chicken and egg dilemma. How can people beat a path to your door until you've established a reputation? How do you establish a reputation if people don't know you?

That's what this workshop is about. There's no simple answer, there's lot of work to do and let's face it some of it is unpleasant.

SPECIALIZING

Blair Enns wrote the book: "Win Without Pitching Manifesto." It's about the business development / consulting firm for ad agencies and design firms that believe there is a better way to build a marketing communication agency. It's not about photography, but close, it's the business and the same customers. Either, you can either buy the book at <http://amazon.com> or you can go to his website: <http://www.winwithoutpitching.com> and:

- Buy a hard copy of the book
- Buy the e-book
- Read it for free online

The first thing that Blair discusses is specializing:

*The world does not need another generalist design firm. There are enough full service advertising agencies and marketing communication firms. **The world is drowning in undifferentiated creative businesses.** What the world needs, what the better clients are willing to pay for, and what our people want to develop and deliver, is deep expertise. **Expertise is the only valid basis for differentiating ourselves from the competition. Not personality. Not process. Not price. It is expertise and expertise alone that will set us apart in a meaningful way** and allow us to deal with our clients and prospects from a position of power. (His words, my emphasis)*

– Blair Enns / Win Without Pitching Manifesto

What's your expertise? What's your knowledge? Do you know people? Do you know light? Do you know...?

Uncle Harry knows how to push the button aka the shutter but not always. That's why he'll do it for free.

AMATEUR VS. PROFESSIONAL

The simplest answer is:

The amateur does it for the love, while the professional does it for the money.

– Dozens of people claim to have coined the phrase

It's not that simple.

Many amateur photographers are so much better photographers than many professional photographers are. They often have a vision. They have a better sensibility than some professional photographers do.

The amateur photographer doesn't have to make/take the photos if she doesn't feel like it. The professional photographer must deliver "good" photos, on demand, no matter what the circumstances...

The amateur photographer doesn't rely on photography for earning a living, the professional does.

FOR / AGAINST BEING A PROFESSIONAL PHOTOGRAPHER

	For	Against
Gear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional gear • Mine's bigger than yours • What's not to like? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gear is heavy • Gear is expensive • Insurance
Money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occasional/regular large windfalls depending on selling skills/luck • Will depend on your business sense 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No regular salary • Depends on your business sense • Depends on sales • Retirement (no pension plan unless your own) • Pay for your own health care in the

		US
Status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional gear • Being famous (could happen) • Meeting famous people • Seeing your work on other people's wall 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can't just have a small camera and take photos when you chose • Often related to the gear you carry with you
Independence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting your own hours • Setting your own vacations (if you can afford it) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually means working at all hours & days including weekends. • Can you stick with your own schedule?
Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Photography is your passion • Hard work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hard work • Have to produce "good" photos on demand • Long hours

QUESTIONS THAT ONLY YOU CAN ANSWER

- Are you trying to:
 1. Make a living
 2. Make a difference
 3. Leave a legacy
- Is it more important to add new customers or to increase your interactions with existing ones?
- Are you prepared to sell actively or do you wait for buyers to walk-in and buy it?
- Do you want to dominate your niche or be like Jane S.?
- How long can you wait before you "succeed"?
- How open to criticism are you willing to be?

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

CAN I MAKE MONEY FROM MY PHOTOGRAPHY

It's possible. That will mostly depend on what's "your" photography. Like I said, possible but not easy.

- Currently, Jan-2011, iStockPhoto has stopped accepting wildlife photos.
- Currently, Jan-2011, iStockPhoto has significantly curtailed acceptance of travel photo.

Many photographers sell travelling photos/wildlife photos from their websites...

CAN I MAKE MONEY FROM PHOTOGRAPHY

Yes, definitely! If you treat photography as a business, your success is **almost** guaranteed.

People will always want photos of themselves, of their families, of their friends... Companies will always buy photos for advertising, promotion...

The Internet is a "huge" consumer of photos. Yes, a large number of people on the Internet steal "inferior" photos for their own website. However, there are enough people on the Internet that are willing to pay for the "good" and the "right" photos.

CAN I MAKE MONEY FROM THINGS THAT INTEREST ME?

Definitely yes! That's how you should do it if you want to keep your sanity. What's the point of doing photography of things/people that do not interest you? You'd be much better off getting a "regular" job.

For almost all professional photographers, photography is not only a job but also their passion.

DO I NEED A BUSINESS DEGREE?

No. Actually, a business degree will be a hindrance. In business school, “they” only teach you the “big business” way of doing “things.”

To survive as a photographer, you will need business sense.

THE SECRETS

The secret is that there is not really any secret. Most of the secrets are common sense. The number one problem is that there is no "right way" of becoming a professional photographer. Ask the question of how they started to a few professional photographers and each one will give a different answer. However, there's some hope, there are some common threads like hard work and luck are often involved.

WILL YOU BE COMMODITY?

Some "professional" advisor will tell you that you must not sell your photos for "peanuts." It kills the market for all the other professional photographers. The "funny" thing about these people is that they will cut their rate to get a competitive bid!

Pressing the "button" is a commodity. No if, no but... But, I'm special, my unique vision... Let's face it, **your vision is not unique**. If you do have a unique vision that is successful, you will be copied immediately! Look at HDR made famous by Trey Ratcliff with his website Stuck In Customs <http://www.stuckincustoms.com>. They are so many people doing it that they have Flickr stream, they have Flickr groups, photo groups by the hundreds...

So the question is how do you differentiate yourself? Niche? Kind of... The answer is **expertise**. It's not niche, it's not specialization. It's expertise and knowledge will lead to niche and specialization.

What are you an expert in? People and companies will pay premium prices for expertise.

- Are you an expert in architecture?
- Are you an expert in nuclear physics?
- Are you an expert in forensics?

- Are you an expert in making people smile?
- Are you an expert in posing people?
- Are you an expert in getting access to difficult places?

HOW DO YOU SHOW YOUR EXPERTISE?

1. Writing! In a photo world, writing is one of the most important skills for a photographer.
 - “But I’m a photographer, if I wanted to be a writer...” Too bad, that’s the way it works, you don’t make the rules, neither am I.
 - “I don’t know how to write, I’m a visual person.” Look at me with <http://www.foto-biz.com>. My writing was poor when I started, now it has improved¹, there’s still a lot of room for improvement.
2. Write articles about your expertise.
3. Make and post photos with your expertise.

BALLS, COJONES, CHUTZPAH AND HARD WORK

Becoming a professional photographer is not easy. It’s hard work. You will have to do many unpleasant things, like phoning around, selling, talking to people...

You will need “balls, cojones, and chutzpah.” If you do not want to do the selling, you will need somebody else to do it for you, like a rep.

The problem is that the good reps are already busy. They only take photographers that are “up and coming” and not yet fully established². They do not take beginners without a track record. The value of a rep is her contacts. Does she want to destroy her record of accomplishment with people that she doesn’t know if new photographers will be able to manage

¹ How much have I improved? You decide...

² The keywords are: **not fully**

the project, be personable enough will all the strangers and finally deliver the photos that were expected?

I love being a photographer... but there is no job security, everyday is an unknown and you can't be sure when another job will come through, when another show will happen, if you will make a sale.

– Rachel Barrett

IT'S NOT ROCKET SCIENCE

No, it's not rocket science, but it is hard work, **it is painful work**. Becoming a professional photographer is:

- 10% photography
- 50% selling
- 40% technology like the computer, the Internet...

As you become a brand, raise your prices, the equation will change to:

- 15% photography
- 30% selling
- 20% schmoozing
- 35% technology

Finally, when you are established and/or have your own studio with employees that can do the selling for you:

- 20% photography
- 10% selling
- 40% administering
- 30% technology

As you can see, the actually photography is only a small part of being a pro.

Photography has a long history of rules, best practices, and experts who will be sure to tell you the proper way to engage with the discipline. Don't listen to any of them. In fact, don't even listen to me.

I have accrued over 50 million photo views, built up StuckInCustoms.com into over 200,000 unique readers a month, written a best-selling book -- I did all of this without listening to anybody. I never read a book on photography; I never took a class about photography. I say all of this not to impress you -- but to impress upon you the importance of finding your own path.

– Trey Ratcliff of <http://www.stuckincustoms.com>

THE FIRST RULE OF DOING WHAT MATTERS

Go to work on a regular basis.

Make your schedule before you start.

– Zig Ziglar

1. Allocate the number of days, weeks, months needed.
2. Allocate the number of hours per day.
3. The hardest or the easiest part depending on your point of view:

follow the schedule.

I NEED

I always hear from people that want to become professional photographers:

I just need a 500mm f/4 for the wildlife with a full frame Nikon D3x.

Or

I just need the Canon 85mm f/1.2 for the portraits.

I actually know of two professional photographers that have the “famed” Canon 85mm f/1.2. One does weddings and the other one mostly children

portraits. Turns out that neither of them carries their 85mm f/1.2 in their camera bag! Henri, the wedding photographer, used it only for one week, and never since, but he can't get himself to sell it. Charlotte tries to use it at least once a year...

So what's wrong with the 85mm f/1.2? Everybody that doesn't have one will tell you that how fantastic it is in the low light and the outstanding bokeh. I borrowed Henri's for a weekend. I'm cured, I don't need to buy one.

1. The number one problem is the 1.2 aperture. At 8 feet (2.5m) and f/1.2, the depth of field is only 1½ inch (4cm). That's approximately the length of the nose. When you focus on one of the eye, the rest of the face is out of focus. Works great for "artsy photos", it rarely works for customers. Very few people buy prints where most of their face is out of focus.
2. The optical quality is not that great under f/2.8, no poster size prints at f/1.2!
3. Excellent for focusing in the dark! The focus is instantaneous even in a coalmine.
4. Big and heavy. The big chunks of glass are very heavy, 2.3lbs that's a little bit more than 1 kilo. It's heavier than my 70-200L IS f/4 zoom! There's no IS, so it's either raise the ISO or...

SECRET

Contrarily to the photo clubs, where the so-called experts tell you that you should use selective focus to enhance the important subject to give depth, customers **usually** want their photos in focus. Why?

Because we, humans, do not see as "selective focus"³.

³ That's unless you are short-sighted and you do not wear any eye glasses/contacts...

What is usually? My experience is 80% to 90% of my customers do not like/want their photos with selective focus. There are times when it works, but then I have to sell it to the customer.

DO I HAVE TO QUIT MY DAY JOB?

Eventually yes, maybe? That will depend on you.

- What are you trying to achieve? Being a full time photographer, or just a part time photographer.
- What type of income do you want?
- How much savings do you currently have?
- How much equipment do you currently have?

The important question, when part-time, is can you be reached during the day? If your job/times allow you to be reached during “work time” hours, then no problem. If not, you will have to make arrangements such as:

- A telephone answering service that can talk to the person. Like a good receptionist, and you will call them back if they need more.
- A voicemail that will page you and you call them back very quickly.
- A Blackberry/iPhone that you can reply quickly during breaks.

If you are doing assembly work in a plant, it’s more difficult to do these than in a white-collar place where you have your own office. Alternatively, you find a “stay at home mom,” smart with a great voice. You spent a couple of hours teaching her your business, photos, prints... She is paid for answering your phone but doing much more than an answering service.

That way, you can keep your day job with the steady pay until you are ready or want to jump full time.

WHEN'S THE TIME TO BECOME FULL-TIME

It's time to become a full-time professional photographer when your contact list is big enough. What does "big enough" means? Big enough is when the list generates enough work to keep you busy, to keep you away from the food bank, to keep you from losing your house...

If you are a wedding photographer, how often does the same person get married and remarried? Your customer is not a repeat customer. Your customer can be a referral for others...

If you are a "preggie" photographer: Your customer can be a customer every couple of years...

If you are a baby photographer: Your customer can be a customer every 3 month for the first 2 years...

You get the idea.

I'VE BEEN LAID OFF, I WANT TO BECOME A PROFESSIONAL PHOTOGRAPHER

Not a good time to start. It can be done but it will much harder. In 2009-2010, all the high tech magazines advised the newly laid-off high tech worker to become a professional photographer.

- Do you have the education? Are you a good photographer?
- Do you have a portfolio on the topic?
- Do you have the equipment?
- Do you have a family breathing down your neck?

You will have to market much harder. Not just smarter, but also much harder. It's never easy to start. You, being under pressure will make it more difficult.

FAMILY

We, humans, just like dogs, are social animals. We live in packs. The pack is often called a family, a social group, a social network...

Many parents want their children to become doctors, lawyers, engineers, and more recently "Internet entrepreneurs"... I've never met parent talking about their kids and saying:

- *I'd like Lucie to become a photographer*
- *I'd like Joe to become a landscape photographer*
- ...

Once you announce that you want to become a professional photographer, many of your friends, families, and relatives will be over you like a wet rag and tell you how bad or how dumb an idea it is. You will have to learn to deal with them...

- *It's too risky*
- *How will we survive without your paycheck?*

The worst is when those comments come from your husband/wife. Many people have survived, worked hard and earn a living as a professional photographer.

A "somewhat solution" is when they make those comments, answer with specifics. This is exactly what I will do...

SESSIONS

At the beginning, until you have enough experience, you should always offer 2 sessions. Your photos will improve exponentially by doing 2 sessions. After a while, you will keep on using the 2 session as your standard.

WHY TWO SESSIONS?

1. At the beginning, you will have the chance to “fix” your mistakes in the second session. This gives you the opportunity to learn and build your experience.
2. People have no experience dealing with photographers, unless they are professional models. People are always nervous, worried of what they look like and of what will happen during the 1st session. The people will always be more relaxed, better prepared in the 2nd session.

You'll find that most of the keepers will be from the 2nd session.

EQUIPMENT

If you look at the Nikon ads, just buy a couple of Nikon D3s, a few Nikon lenses for a mere \$25,000 and you are all set.

If you look at the Canon ads, just buy a couple of Canon 1D series, some Canon lenses for a mere \$25,000 and you are all set.

Do you start to see a pattern? Spend \$25,000 with me and you are all set.

Sony and Olympus are saying that if you are smart you'll buy their cameras and lenses. And Pentax doesn't even try to reach that market.

- 90+% of all professional photographers use either Nikon or Canon cameras.
- 75+% of all professional photographers use either Nikon or Canon lenses.

CANON VS. NIKON

Canon makes fantastic cameras and many outstanding lenses. Nikon makes fantastic cameras and many outstanding lenses. People have fought wars over which brand is better? Canon vs. Nikon. Want to have fun? Go to a photo club and say:

Nikon's no good!

They will first cover you in tar, roll you in feathers, and then lynch you. These guys are real fanatics.

Just a quick reminder, if you like classical music and get yourself a Stradivarius violin for 5 to 10 millions, you will not play like David Oistrakh.

- *Oistrakh used the 1702 Conte di Fontana Stradivarius.*

- *Jascha Heifetz used Stradivarius and the ex-David 1742 Guarneri. David Oistrakh and Jascha Heifetz were the two best violinists of the 20th century.*

WHAT DO MOST PROFESSIONALS USE?

WEDDINGS

The vast majority of professional photographers that either do portraits, weddings... use the Canon 5DMk2 with the Canon 24-105 f/4 lens. Why?

- It's a very sharp lens. Especially the ones manufactured since 2008.
- They do not need speed. f/4 is enough.
- They need very high resolution for the 20" by 30" prints... and this lens is very sharp.
- They need a "universal" lens. The 24-105 is very close to that, from the wide to the portrait tele.
- Only Canon has such a lens. The Nikon 24-120 version 1 was definitely not up to par. The new 2010 version is a significant improvement. How good? We'll have to see, it's not up to the "measurabators" but up to the number of pros that will be using it.
- The Canon 5DMk2 has 21 megapixels, and fantastic low light capabilities.

PAPARAZZI

The majority of the "paparazzi crowd" uses the Nikon D3/D3s with a 24-70 f/2.8 or a 70-200 f/2.8. Why?

- Most paparazzi don't know much about photography. They are not into photography. They are into celebrities and money.
- Most paparazzi do not need high resolution. Their photos will be used mostly on the web and in "low quality" papers/magazines. When I say

“low quality,” I mean the paper/pulp used to print is of a low quality. It’s rare that the print size will be larger than 8” by 10”.

- Most paparazzi need a photo that is 100% focused. They wait and shove the camera in the face of the celebrity.
- Most paparazzi need a camera with extremely high-ISO.

SPORTS

Half of the sports photographers use the Nikon D3/D3s and the other half use the Canon 1DMk3 or the 1DMk4. Why?

- Canon used to own that market, but Canon screwed up with the 1DMk3. The focus tracking on moving object didn’t work properly when released. It took almost 4 month for Canon to resolve the problem. Many sport photographers switched to the Nikon D3, its auto-focus is fantastic.
- Many sports photographers still use the Canon line-up because of the superior set of telephoto lenses. Nikon is in the process of upgrading its lens lineup but it’s not there yet.
- Canon has fixed its focusing problem. The Canon 1DMk4 is an APS-H sensor format. It’s a cropped sensor, but only a 1.3x, instead of the standard 1.5x/1.6x. This means that a 600mm lens on a Nikon D3s will be a 600mm lens, but a 780mm on a Canon 1DMk4. The longest lens with the better details always wins!
- The Canon 1DMk4 is a 16 megapixels instead of the D3/D3s being a 12 megapixels. They can crop...

LANDSCAPES & STOCK

Most landscape/stock photographers, that use dSLRs, use either a Canon 5DMk2 or a Canon 1DsMk3. The Nikon D3x is more expensive, and not that much better than the Canon 5DMk2 or the 1DsMk3. Why?

- The landscape/stock photographer needs to have the highest resolution possible. He needs to sell the largest print available. That print will bring the juiciest profit margin. A stock photographer is paid 25 to 75 times more for an XXXLarge: 3700 pixels by 5600 pixels than an XSmall 300 pixels by 400 pixels used for a small web photo.
- The Canon 5DMk2 or the Nikon D3x can do A2 size prints without upsizing.
- The landscape photographer doesn't need an action camera. The landscape doesn't run away. The light changes but not that fast.
- The landscape photographer doesn't need high ISO. Often, he will use a tripod.
- The landscape photographer doesn't need high-speed or accurate auto-focus. Most landscapes are done with wide-angle lenses that have a huge depth of field.
- The stock photographer often uses flash as the primary source of light in studio.
- The vast majority of stock photos are made under controlled environment.

WILDLIFE

Most wildlife photographers use Canon. It used to be a 1DsMk3 with 21 megapixels and either a 500mm f/4 or a 600mm f/4. Now, a huge number of wildlife photographers have switched from their full frame to the Canon 7D. Why?

- The Canon 7D is a cropped APS-C sensor. 1.6x to be exact. Therefore, the 500mm f/4 is an 800mm on a 7D, and the 600mm is a 960mm. The longest lens with the better details always wins.
- The Canon 7D has an outstanding focusing system that competes very well with the Nikon D3s/D300s.

- The Canon 7D has 18 megapixels, which is close enough to the full frame 1DsMk3 with 21 megapixels.
- You can get a Canon 7D with a Sigma 50-500mm zoom for around \$3,500 in Canada, which is the equivalent to an 800mm on a full frame camera. In some places, it can be even cheaper. The Canon 800mm is a special order and around \$12,000 in Canada. And that's for the lens only!

WHAT DOES ALL THIS MEAN?

- 90+% of the professional photographers use either Canon or Nikon.
- In general, Canon has a big leg up on the long telephoto lenses.
- In general, Nikon has a leg up on the wide/medium lenses.
- In general, Canon has the higher resolution cameras.
- Canon "always" has the higher resolution available. Currently, the Nikons are 12 megapixels, except for the D3x that is a 24 megapixels but at the price of \$8,000 and the D7000 at \$1,100, which is the start of the next generation at 16 megapixels.
- Canon has the technical advantage by designing and manufacturing its own CMOS sensors. The Canon CPUs are significantly faster than the Nikons. The Canon 1DsMk3 can "pump" five frames per second at 14 bits; the Nikon D3x can "only" manage 1.8 frames per second at 14 bits.

MY TAKE ON THE CANON VS NIKON LINE-UP

- I feel that at the lower end like the Nikon D3100 or the D5000 against the Canon Digital Rebel Xs and T3i, Canon is superior to Nikon. Many options are unavailable on the Nikon. The Canon cameras feel so much more solid.

- The Canon 50D/60D vs. the Nikon D90/D7000, it's "pretty much the same." Canon has a higher pixel count, a much better video, but Nikon has better feel and the D7000 seems to have a better focusing system.
- In the upper mid range like the Canon 7D and 5DMk2, Canon trounces the Nikon D300s and the D700 with the pixel counts and the focusing of the 7D. Some people are saying that the Canon 5DMk2 is the best selling full frame dSLR, ever!
- The high-end cameras like the Canon 1DMk4, the 1DsMk3 are more than competitive with the Nikon D3s, D3x.

WHAT ABOUT OLYMPUS, PENTAX, OR SONY?

Don't they have good cameras? Don't they have excellent lenses? Yes and No.

OLYMPUS

- Olympus has a great success with its micro 4:3rd format. Olympus Photography is a small division of the Olympus Optical Ltd. It's only a third of the company. They do not have the size and the financial strength to continue the relentless development of new cameras.
- I've tried the Olympus E5 and it's a fantastic camera.
- I love the Olympus lenses, they are fantastic. I almost bought an Olympus E3 system.
- Olympus has some of most innovating technologies. They created the in-camera vibration control. They created the "dust control" system. For a long time, only Olympus had the tilt and swing LCD...

So why not choose an Olympus camera?

- **Olympus officials have mentioned in various interviews that the E5 will likely be their last dSLR.**

- The Olympus's highest resolution is 12 megapixels. It has a rough time competing with the Canon 7D's 18 megapixels and the 5DMk2's 21 megapixels.
- The new Olympus E5 is excellent competition to the Nikon D300s. The problem is that the Nikon D300s is near the end of its commercial life, the new D400 is coming soon.

PENTAX

- I've owned a full Pentax system: bodies, lenses, flashes...
- The ergonomics of the Pentax are fantastic. I would say that they are the best. Even better than Canon's or Nikon's ergonomics.

So why not choose a Pentax camera?

- The focusing system is poor. The focusing system is not in the same league as either Canon's or Nikon's focusing systems.
- The lenses, in theory, are very good, but the manufacturing quality can be either great or poor, it's a lottery.
- What did it for me was Pentax Canada's terrible customer service. I needed repairs. It took forever, a few trips back and forth and Pentax refused to honor the warranty. They refused to talk to me. It was always "talk to your dealer." That was the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back. Even after two trips back to Pentax, the lens wouldn't work properly on one of my Pentax.

SONY

- In 2006, the Minolta/Konica consortium got out of the camera business and sold their photo division to Sony who at the time was #1 in the point and shoot cameras.
- As of 2011, Sony has the cheapest full frame camera at \$2,000 US. It's the 850 and it's an excellent camera. It has the highest pixels

count at 24 megapixels [The Leica S2 is a medium format camera]. It's the same sensor as the one used by Nikon in the D3x. Nikon buys their sensors from Sony.

- Sony has very good lenses, and the Zeiss lenses are fantastic with a price to match. Their optical quality is definitely on par or even better than either the Canon or the Nikon lenses.

So why not choose a Sony?

- Sony is erratic in camera updates. Their flagship, then, the Alpha 700 hasn't been updated since 2007. That's four years. Technology as significantly advanced since then. Sony showed a camera, behind glass, at CES 2011 that eventually will be the replacement/upgrade of the A700.
- Sony doesn't seem focused on the "professional end."
- Sony seems to be all over the place. They don't seem to have a plan. They introduce new models without following up on upgrades, just a new camera here, a new camera there, but no continuity.
- Many of the top of the line Zeiss lenses are special orders only, at least in Canada where I live.
- Almost no professional camera vendor sells Sony full frame cameras. I'd have to go and order them at the Sony store, at least in Canada. This means that I can't even try it or get a feel for it.
- Sony doesn't have the same breath of lenses or accessories as Nikon or Canon. The choice of macros lenses is limited, no perspective control lenses, no "nuclear powered" telephoto lenses...
- Before switching from Pentax to Canon, I was looking at the full frame Sony 850 and the 900. I still decided to go for Canon because in Vancouver, BC, I couldn't find a camera store that would rent me Zeiss lenses.

CONSIDERATIONS

20 years ago, the motto was:

Don't bother upgrading your camera; instead buy better, newer glass/lenses.

20 years ago, you couldn't make the difference between a Nikon FM2, a prosumer camera, and a Nikon F3, a "real pro" camera. Same photographer, same lens, same film, the photos were identical.

Today, the quality of the camera is the difference. By the way, the quality of the photographer is still very important, but not as much. Technology has filled-in many of the gaps. 30 years ago, the eye and the technique were equally important. Today the eye is much more important than the technique.

PRO CAMERAS VS. PROSUMERS

Pro cameras are big and very expensive. The Canon 1DsMk3 has the same 21 megapixels CMOS as the Canon 5DMk2. The Nikon D3s has the same 12 megapixels CMOS as the Nikon D700.

In Canada, the 1DsMk3 is \$7,100 and the 5DMk2 is \$2,600. While the Nikon D3s is \$4,700 and the D700 is \$2,350! Half of the price of the D3s, but the same CMOS, the same CPU, and the same AF.

So what's the difference? The 1DsMk3/D3s is built like a tank. Weather proof, "drop" proof, a better AF, a shutter that is rated to 300,000 exposures. The 1DsMk3 has been out for almost 4 years, and it's still current! Try that with the prosumers cameras. With the 1DsMk3, you are the "pro"! So why do a huge number of professional use the 5DMk2 instead of the 1DsMk3?

1. It's cheaper. \$4,500 cheaper! That's a lot.
2. Most of the photographers with the 5DMk2 are not action photographers. They do not need the better AF system. You do not need an ultra-responsive AF to pose a bride.
3. Most of the photographers with the 5DMk2 are not sport photographers and do not need the camera to be weatherproof

The prosumer cameras are always at the technological edge. A new version is coming every 12 to 18 months to accommodate the advance in the CMOS technology and the CPU increase in speed and power.

IMPORTANT TECHNOLOGIES

FOCUS

Does the autofocus work? It works 10 times better on high-end professional cameras than on the lower-end dSLRs. Speed is nice but how accurate is it? Exposure, high ISO, lenses... do not matter if the photo is out of focus, or you can save yourself a lot of money and switch to Lomography. As a professional photographer, can you live with an accurate focus 50% of the time? Can you live with an accurate focus 70% of the time? Can you sell an out-of-focus photo? The "new" focus module from Nikon, the CAM 3500, is what allowed Nikon to come back in the professional ranks with the Nikon D300/D300s, D700, D3/D3s, and D3x.

Canon has regained its "mojo" with the Canon 7D and the 1DMk4. The AF "works."

CHIPS: SENSOR AND CPU

It's the combination of the sensor and the CPU that makes or breaks your photos. They control the noise, the sharpness... If you want to improve the quality of your images, upgrade your camera body to the most current and

your photos will improve immediately. However, can you afford it? On the other hand, can you afford not to upgrade? i.e.: other photographers, larger prints, new look/gadget... A Nikon D90 has better noise control, up to ISO 800, than a Nikon D3. The D300s and the D3s have regained their lead over the "prosumers". It's not because of the sensor, but because of the much faster CPU that can use algorithms that are far more complicated on the data stream. How's about that, for computer talk? It means that the CPU can evaluate many more options before deciding on how to process the data stream. The CPU knows nothing about photos. The CPU only knows about data streams, and we, the photographers, translate that into a photo.

EXPOSURE

All camera manufacturers have resolved that problem 15 years ago. The exposure from a Nikon is different from a Canon or a Pentax... However, it's a matter of preferences. It's not that one is wrong and the other one is right, it's what you like and what you feel.

PLASTICS

The reviled plastics have allowed for the "proper" manufacturing of lenses and cameras. Because plastics are machine made, they can be manufactured into any shape required with an almost 100% accuracy. The computer designs have allowed for the great improvements of the zoom lenses. Today's cheapest zoom kit lens is 10 times better than any of the hand designed and manufactured professional, top of the line, zoom lens of 30 years ago.

SHARPNESS

All new digital cameras are far too sharp for making good photos! We always want more megapixels and higher sharpness. I can see myself in my

subject's eyes. How's that for sharpness? Now you can see all the reflectors in people's portraits. Sharpness rarely makes the photo.

On the other hand, sharpness is required for making the big, large, and profitable prints.

THE FORMAT WARS

MICRO 4:3RD

This is the latest venture from Olympus and Panasonic. They have smaller cameras because they've removed the mirror box. The beauty of the Micro 4:3rd is that all camera manufacturers must follow the same standard. This means that you can use a Panasonic Micro 4:3rd lens on an Olympus Micro 4:3rd camera, and vice versa.

There are many problems with the micro 4:3rd cameras and that type of format like the Sony NEX, which uses the APS-C sensors instead of the 4:3rd sensor:

- Looks amateurish. Isn't that Uncle Harry's the latest camera?
- The autofocus is poor. It works for posed portraits, but try to follow focus somebody running slowly. I couldn't. Until there's a breakthrough like the famed Nikon's focusing system or the new Canon's focusing system, I wouldn't want to risk my business on this new technology.
- The choice of lenses is poor. It's improving, but it will take a few years and will the specialty lenses will ever be available?

The micro 4:3rd cameras are still first and second generation. The manufacturers are still learning what they are doing. The users still learn how they can use the camera in the "heat of the moment."

Many professionals use the Olympus or the Panasonics as a third camera. That's for when they want to carry only a small camera or for when they want to look anonymous. The micro 4:3rd are far better than the Canon G12 or the other point-and-shoot cameras.

4:3RD

The 4:3rd format is only used by Olympus in their dSLRs. Olympus "big wigs" has commented without any official announcement, that **the Olympus E5 will likely be their last dSLR**. They announced that there would be no further upgrade to the 400, 500 or 600 series dSLR. That's too bad because I really like their lenses. They are fantastic!

The 4:3rd format is a dead end for the professional photographer. Spending any money on Olympus is throwing good money after bad. If you already have an Olympus 4:3rd, this could buy you some time. The problem is how do you compete when their latest camera, the E5, is a 12 megapixels and the Canon 7D, with its wicked fast autofocus and amazing CPU processing power, can fire at 8 frames per second and does 18 megapixels while tracking high speed subjects.

We all know the:

It's not the camera, but the photographer behind the camera.

However, that's not how it works in real life. There's some physics involved. A 12 megapixels camera will always struggle to keep up with 18 megapixels camera. Nevertheless, Olympus did an excellent job with the E5 for 12 megapixels.

APS-C AND APS-H

The vast majority of the digital SLRs are APS-C cameras. The only APS-H cameras, which I know of, are the Canon 1DMk3 and the 1DMk4. The APS-C

format encompasses both the "amateur" and the "prosumer" cameras. When you start with either Canon or Nikon camera, just can go "up the food chain" to the full frame.

Today's APS-C cameras are fantastic. They are miles ahead of any film full frame cameras. They are also at least on par with any film medium format camera!

The problem with APS-C cameras is that you are on par with Uncle Harry, your worst competition. You will need to find a way of differentiating yourself from Uncle Harry or from the GWC: Girl With a Camera. **Do not forget that for most "regular people," aka the customers, the bigger the camera, the better the photos!**

Your photos are nice, you must have a good camera!

How do you look professional with an APS-C camera? By your behavior! You need to do things that no amateur, Uncle Harry or GWC, would do. The simplest and cheapest way to differentiate yourself from them is to use the "grey card" before shooting any portrait, take a shot with the grey card, and explain:

It's to get the color of your eyes right.

FULL FRAME

The vast majority of portrait and/or wedding photographer use the Canon 5DMk2. It's a slow camera with an older autofocus system, but it has 21 megapixels and fantastic low light capability. Most photographers say that ISO 1600 it's at least as good as the Nikon D700 with "only" 12 megapixels. With 21 Megapixels, a 16" by 20" is no problem whatsoever.

Many sport pros use the Nikon D700 when they don't want to pay for the D3s. Again, it's only 12 megapixels. Do you need the size? The 16" by 20" is

a struggle. You will need a much more accurate exposure and focus. That's when you will only sell canvas prints for the big print sizes. The canvas hides many of the imperfections.

The Leica M9 is the only full frame digital rangefinder. It almost makes sense if you already have Leica lenses. That sure beats Uncle Harry or the Girl With a Camera. My problem with the M9 is the limited number of lenses and accessories. However, if you can afford one, you can also afford to have a second system with Canon or Nikon.

MEDIUM FORMAT

Mamiya offers a medium format camera that's a "deal." The DF22 with a 22 megapixels Leaf digital back and a standard 80mm lens. The price is just under \$10,000.

The Pentax 645D is here and is priced at just above \$10,000, for the body only, in Canada.

Hasselblad also offers a medium format camera, the H4D-31, with a standard 80mm lens for "only" \$14,000.

Leica S2. It's half way between the full frame format and the medium format. It's supposed to be great handling, but the price...

The "cheap" Hasselblad, the Mamiya, or the Pentax are "only" \$2,500 more than a Nikon D3x or \$3,000 more than a Canon 1DsMk3.

These are the rock bottom prices and that's with just a standard lens. So how can you afford these starting prices? The answer is **lease**. Hasselblad provides its own financing. Retailers of Mamiya have other leasing arrangements. Depending on the deal, your down payment, your trade... It starts at around \$300 per month.

With that medium format camera, you “crush” both Uncle Harry and the Girl With a Camera. You show that you are a “real” professional photographer.

It's regrettable but most professional photographers are judged by their equipment. That's also how they are judged by fellow photographers, especially at photo clubs. **Which camera you have is at least as important as your portfolio.**

A medium format camera is a basic requirement for many high-end advertising and even editorial fashion photography.

Say goodbye to action, wildlife photography... The autofocus isn't too responsive. You are lucky if you can get two frames every three seconds. A walking person is OK, but running? Wish you good luck. Even on the fashion catwalks, where money is not a problem, they do not use medium format cameras.

IS IT RAINING OUTSIDE?

Depending on where you live, you will have to consider the environment. What's the weather? Rain? Snow? Sandstorms? Tornados? ...

If you live in Southern California, rain's not much of a problem.

I live in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. This is the land of the “last temperate rain forest.” The keyword is rain. We have the Pacific to the West, the Cascades and the Rockies mountains to the North, to the East and to the Olympic Mountains to the South.

Many times, I've had to stand in the rain, take the photos while I'm in the downpour and “they” are under cover, and dry.

Can your camera and your lenses stand in the rain? Don't say:

I don't take photos in the rain!

Are you telling me that you will pass on a \$5,000 photo shoot because it's raining or snowing? Will you pass \$10,000? ...

My main camera is weather resistant, my backup is not. Most of my lenses are weather resistant but not all, so I have a Kata rain covers.

SO WHICH CAMERA SHOULD YOU GET?

- You already have a decent camera, meaning a dSLR, that is not a "bottom-end" dSLR, with a couple of lenses and some flash. If it's a Canon or a Nikon, then keep them and build on it.
- You need to start fresh. Get either a Canon or a Nikon. Your finances will dictate the model level.
- What about Olympus, Pentax, Sony? If you can get something out of it, like a sponsorship, then **it may be worthwhile.**

There's a reason why the vast majority of professional photographers that use dSLRs, use either Canon or Nikon.

MAKING THE DECISION

Actually, you will not be making the decision! The decision has already been made for you.

Your job is discovering it. The real problem is that you can't afford to have everything. I can already hear you saying "but I never use..." As a professional photographer, you may need it.

- You can't justify the purchase of some specialized lens. It's extremely expensive and you may be using it only once a year. Do I hear tilt and shift lenses? What about macro-lenses? What about a 1200mm telephoto monster? Those are extremely expensive items. Can you

afford the \$100,000+ price tag? For one job, you can expense the \$3,000 rental per day.

- When was the last time you used a bellow system? In today's world, they've been replaced by macro and micro-lenses.
- Flashes and lights. If you are doing weddings or other high volume of flashes, you should investigate the Quantum flashes with the T5d-R or the Trio. You can take high volume, high power flashes without having them shut down after 10, or 12 continuous flashes. As far as I know, Quantum only supports Canon and Nikon in their auto-modes. Metz supports Olympus, Sony, and Pentax, but in Vancouver, Canada, they are special orders, and it takes at least 3 weeks.

THIRD PARTY EQUIPMENT

The most often-used third party equipment is a lens from another manufacturer. The lenses from third party like Sigma, Tamron or Tokina, are so much cheaper than the similar lenses from Canon or Nikon.

You have to be very careful.

- Some manufacturers specialize in wide-angles like Tokina.
- The third party manufacturers do not have access to the internal, proprietary information. They just buy the equipment and reverse engineer it. They don't always get it right.
- **The third party lens must follow the standard of your camera.** It's very important. If not, you will zoom/focus in the wrong direction and you will miss the photo.
 - Does the zooming happen in the same direction? From wide to tele: Canon is clock-wise, Nikon is counter clock-wise.
 - Does the focusing happen in the same direction?
 - Is the zoom and focus rings in the same order as your Canon or Nikon?

- If the lens has a vibration reduction/image stabilizer, how good is it compared to Nikon's or Canon's? My Sigma is better than Canon's equivalent.

Usually the "professional" Canon and Nikon lenses are "better" than the 3rd party lenses.

- They are much expensive than the equivalent 3rd party like Sigma, Tokina... because they are built on separate factory lines with lower production speed. All professional Nikon and Canon lenses are individually testing a many points during the manufacturing stage.
- Usually, they have better components
- Usually, they have better glass
- Usually, the glass is better ground...
- Usually, they have better weather proofing
- Usually, they have faster focus
- ...

Does this means that there is no lemon from the "professional" lenses. Yes, there are lemons, but much less, they have much higher standards.

Usually the "amateur" lenses aka the kit lenses from Canon and Nikon as just a good or just as bad⁴ as the 3rd party lenses.

Some 3rd party lens manufacturers have lenses that the camera manufacturer doesn't have:

- Sigma 120-300mm f/2.8
- Sigma 200-500mm f/2.8
- Tamron 18-270mm f/4-5.6

There are others, including flashes...

⁴ That will depend on your point of view.

VIDEO

In spite of the convergence between photography and video, they are completely different beasts. Video by photographers became a viable option when Canon came out with the Canon 5DMk2 and their new firmware that supported 1080p at 24, 25, or 30 frames per seconds.

Doing both photos and videos is not an easy task, especially at the same time.

Be careful of not over promising and under delivering. **Customers expect a lot more from the video side than from the photography side.** Why? Because people watch TV every day. People only see photos on in the newspapers and the magazines. These are small images often printed on “low quality” paper⁵. People do not realize the size of crews involved in making the movies/TV shows.

Video is time in motion with long durations. It’s almost impossible to shoot video handheld with a dSLR. You will need to have a good tripod. The low-end SteadyCam is not enough for the weight of a “reasonable” dSLR with a “reasonable” lens. Shaky video is the sign of an incompetent.

MAJOR DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PHOTOGRAPHY & VIDEO

1. The lighting must be continuous in video. In photography, it can be either continuous or flashes. If you move in video, the lighting must follow you or you must light the whole scene⁶.
2. The script in photography is optional. It’s called the “shoot list.” With a good point of view, an experienced photographer will get by without a photo shoot list. In video, the script is mandatory. No if, no but... No

⁵ When I say low quality, I mean the low quality of the pulp used.

⁶ Which is very expensive especially when you have to supply your own power truck, i.e. \$\$\$.

script? Then your video will be a disaster. The script in video is much more important than any camera operator skills. People will watch a poor video if it has a great story. Don't believe me? Have you been to YouTube lately? People will not watch a video with a "crappy" script, no matter how good the camera operator's skills.

3. The sound must be top notch. The sound counts for more than half in the video. Almost no dSLR with video has a decent microphone for the video. You will need external stereo microphones. Lectrosonic's least expensive set up for microphones, wireless transmitters, recorders will be \$1,000+. You will need one microphone for the groom/bride for the vows, another microphone for the officiant, a couple of microphones for the musicians and the singers... Sound has never been a problem with photos.
4. Support is a huge requirement for video. If you will be moving around, you need some kind of SteadyCam system or some dolly, meaning \$\$\$\$. If you are static, you will need to use a sturdy tripod with a fluid head. In photography, the tripod is optional.
5. Focusing is critical and difficult in video. Currently, there's no good AF system in dSLR in the video mode. This means that the focus must be done manually. How smooth is your manual focus to track your subject... I know that the Nikon D7000 can track focus in video, but it's so slow and so noisy, it's not ready for prime time.
6. Editing is huge in video. Depending on your skills, the software and the computers, a 1-minute video properly produced with sound will take from half a day to a whole week to produce!

THE MAJOR PROBLEM OF VIDEO

Video is nice, video is sexy, and video is the new in thing to do. I'm better than you are, I offer video...

Video is a lot of work. Usually, you will need one person dedicated to the video and one to the photos. Alternatively, "Let do it again for the video," this often results in very bad video or very bad photography. The customer is not an actor that can do things on command. Even professional directors do multiple takes to get it right.

The "real problem" with video is that it's two to three times more work than photos, especially with the editing and the post-processing. Video is only an add-on, you are paid so much less for videos than for the photography.

You are being paid \$100/hr for the photos while you are being paid \$20 per hour for the videos.

Video can be good source of income if you can sell it as a separate item from the photography. Then, you will need a second crew and photography becomes the second fiddle.

Right now, 2011, doing video is a money pit that will drain many of your resources. Until customers are ready to pay full price for video, I'm staying away from videos. I'm willing to take a loss of the first few as a learning experience. I'm not willing to take a cold bath on every video for the next foreseeable future.

ALTERNATIVES TO VIDEO

Instead of delivering videos, I deliver what in the "good old days" was called a slide show. I create my own slideshow in Lightroom. There is hundreds of software, at under \$100, that do slideshows on steroids.

COURSES

Don't even think about offering video to your customers without taking some courses on video. A buddy doing videos is not good enough unless his name is Vincent Laforet, <http://www.laforetvisuals.com> from "Reverie" fame.

Many community colleges offer evening or weekend courses on video.

- *Make sure that you take the video course on video. D'oh! The course for regular movies. This course that is taught by a videographer, not a photographer.*
- *Make sure that you **not** take the video course on how to use your camera for videos. A regular photographer who is not an experienced videographer teaches this course.*

FLASHES

Only people that do not understand light and the purpose of lighting would say:

I only do available light. It's more natural.

The purpose of using flash is to “tame” the light. Done properly, flash is natural. The purpose of lighting, whether with flash or continuous light, is to control the light so you can make the photo look like what you want. In an ideal case of perfect light, we wouldn't need to light up the subject. Lighting is done either with continuous light or with flash/speedlights.

If you will do video, you will need continuous light. It ranges from the LED light panels to compact fluorescents and incandescent.

If you will be using flashes, you should look at either the Canon 580Ex2 or the Nikon SB900. Both of them have top of the range specification and a myriad of options. Most importantly, they can rotate 180 to the left or the right. They can even rotate down.

You should also consider battery packs for the flashes. The Nikon SD-9 or the Canon CP-E4 with NiMH Eneloop batteries or a Quantum battery pack. Not cheap, but it makes a world of difference. The Eneloop batteries keep their charge for a full year. These battery packs won't damage your flashes

when you rapidly fire the flash. It's possible to overheat the flashgun by rapid fire and damage the flashgun.

If you will be doing many weddings, you should invest into Quantum flashes.

PRINTING

We often make most of the profits on selling prints. In the "good old days," to do your own printing in black and white was OK, but color? Not for the faint of heart. Just maintaining the temperature at $\frac{1}{4}^{\circ}$ was a nightmare or you'd get a color shift...

Fast forward to Photoshop and Inkjets, now with the right printer, the right paper, and the correct printing profile, you can match the most demanding custom printers.

Over the last year, I've stop selling 4" by 6" prints. I give them away if they buy enough. I start at 5" by 7", but I don't even show them to my customers.

DO YOU OWN PRINTING

1. You will need your own printer. D'oh! Let me rephrase, you will need your own "real" printer. Not a "Cheapo El Super Deluxe" printer. A good starting point is the Epson 2880 series inkjet printers or the new Epson R3000.
2. Buy "good" archival papers. Usually, it's a good idea to buy the paper from the printer manufacturer and the ink manufacturer. You can use other paper manufacturers like Ilford... but it will be more work "to get it right", profiles... The profiles are for the unique combination of the paper, the printer and the ink.
3. Never, never buy refills for your inkjets. You will lose the print extended life. You will often lose the printer extended life.

4. It's often more convenient but more expensive to do your own printing, unless you start to get some volume. One of the biggest cost is the ink, especially when it dries!

USE A CUSTOM LAB

Because a lab is a custom lab, doesn't mean that it's a good lab. My experience with custom labs has been "poor" shall we say. From lost jobs, jobs that were delivered late, to very poor quality... I ended up using the "best one" in town. Excellent but \$\$\$.

You will need to get recommendations from friends/other photographers. Even those, try them out before using them for your customers' photos.

USE A REGULAR LAB

Confession time: I use Costco for most of my 5" by 7" prints. They use Noritsu QSS printers with Fuji 65 Crystal Archival Paper.

They are fast enough, next day service, and the price is cheap. By using:

- <http://www.drycreekphoto.com/icc/> and getting the profile of your Costco
- Setting your photos to: "Do Not Change"

It's good. Better than a good custom lab? No, but that's not the point. They offer prints that are good enough up for a size up to 11" by 14" at a price and at a speed that I can't get from my custom lab.

COSTS

Everybody thinks that a camera is all they need to get into the business of photography. On average, I spend about \$3,000 Canadian per year on

equipment: that's for camera updates, accessories, computers, software upgrades... I'm chicken feed, a small potato.

Rod Mar is a Football photographer, that's American Football for everybody else, because what the North Americans call soccer, is football for the rest of the world. In an article Rod Mar list his equipment, I just added the equipment cost:

Equipment	Canadian Cost
Nikon D3 bodies (3 of them)	5,000 * 3 = \$15,000
Nikkor VR 600mm/f4.0 lens	\$10,500
Nikkor VR 400mm/f2.8 lens	\$9,000
Nikkor VR 200-400mm/f4.0 lens	\$6,500
Nikkor VR 70-200mm/f2.8 lens	\$2,000
Nikkor 24-70mm/f2.8 lens	\$2,000
Nikkor 14-24mm/f2.8 lens	\$2,500
TC14 1.4 extender	\$500
Nikon SB-800 flash	\$500
Gitzo monopod	\$300

Pocketwizard MultiMax (2x)	\$600
Pre-trigger and remote cord for MultiMax	\$300
Miniball head (to attach camera w/wide angles lens to monopod for overhead wide shots)	\$200
Rain covers	??
Raingear	??
Think Tank Airport Security	\$350
Think Tank Speed Demon and pouches	\$250
Think Tank ShapeShifter backpack	\$300

That's a cost of **almost \$51,000 in equipment** and that's only the beginning.

In addition, the memory cards, the office, the computers, the laptops, the various software... By the way, in North America, unlike the rest of the world, the prices do not include taxes. The taxes are an extra \$6,100, in British Columbia, Canada.

The lenses will last between 5 to 10 years depending on how careful he is. The cameras need to be replaced on a rolling basis every 9 month or every year. The shutter is only good for three hundred thousand clicks. On the other hand, you can upgrade them all at the same time to have identical cameras. The flashes need to be replaced regularly.

Ain't cheap! How much do you have to charge per photo session just to break even?

OTHER

- Before buying a camera, you will have to take your competition in consideration. Is Uncle Harry your competition? Then you will need to get a "higher end" camera.
- Getting a medium format camera, like a Mamiya, a Hasselblad, a Phase One/Leaf or the new Pentax 654D eliminates the "Uncle Harry" competition. A friend of mine just bought a Mamiya with a 22Mb pixels Leaf back. **Mine's bigger than yours!**

THE CUSTOMER

What does the customer have to do with which camera I get? Actually plenty! The customer doesn't get to decide camera A vs. camera B or lens A vs. lens B. The customer decides the camera class and type.

If your customer demands a 20+ megapixels camera that looks professional, you will have to use that equipment. You like it, don't like it, too bad! That's the way it goes.

1. The customer doesn't need the 21/24 megapixels for her photos. She won't buy more than 11" by 14" prints. A 12 megapixels is good enough for what they need.
2. The customer doesn't know what "right" for them.

It's not a matter of "The customer is always right." You are right, you know better, you are the expert, and the customer is not the expert, but...

1. The customer wants a 21/24 megapixels camera for the high resolution.

2. The customer may have not told you everything you need to know, like the posters they will make afterward.
3. You haven't done your job of spending the time to educate the customer.

Since you don't inspire confidence with your "prosumer" camera, the customer will find another photographer that will provide the 21/24 megapixel photos with her "professional" camera.

HOW TO PAY FOR THE EQUIPMENT?

PAY CASH

- Can you afford it?
- Contrarily to what many of you think, it's not the cheapest alternative.
- Is there better use for the cash, instead of using it on equipment?

CREDIT CARDS

Visa/My bank sends me a monthly bill that covers all the purchases from the 28th of the month to the 27th of the next month, when they issue the statement. The payment due date is the 17th of the following month:

- So I buy my stuff on October 28th
- Visa will bill me on November 27th
- I will have to pay by December 17th.

That's 7 weeks of interest free loan or 0% for 7 weeks. And yes, I will pay my credit card on time and in full.

There are two types of credit cards:

1. The regular credit card, issued by a bank/credit institution with an interest rate of 10 to 25%. You must pay it off every month. The fees

and interest charges will “kill” you! I have two regular credit cards. One for the business expenses and the other one for the personal expenses.

2. The credit line credit card. It’s usually tied to the house, the mortgage, or a great credit report. The interest rate is “prime” based. Mine is “prime” + 1%. This means that the interest rate floats and changes whenever the bank’s prime rate changes.

If I need to buy expensive equipment, I use the regular business expense credit card. When payment is due 7 weeks later, I pay it off with the credit line card. That’s another 3½ weeks extra of credit, again free if I do not carry a balance on the credit line credit card.

CREDIT LINE

I have a separate bank account for the business. You must too. The business bank account has a credit line associated with the bank account. I had to sign personally for the guarantee. My interest rate is prime + 2%. This means that the interest rate floats and changes whenever the bank’s prime rate changes.

USED EQUIPMENT

Instead of buying brand new equipment, some people prefer to buy used equipment. In the “good old days,” used was OK. You couldn’t make the difference between a photo taken with a new Nikon F4 and a photo taken with a used Nikon F2. Today’s a different story!

CAMERAS

Make sure that you buy current technology. In the “good old days,” the new technology was the film. Now the new technology is the camera body.

What's the life left of the body? The Canon/Nikon "amateur" cameras are rated for only 50,000 shutter actuations. The prosumers cameras will have a life of 100,000. Some new ones have 150,000 actuations. The professional cameras have a life of 300,000 shutter actuations.

LENSES

Lenses have a much longer life than a camera body. Technology changes but the improvements are gradual. Both Canon and Nikon have introduced, in 2010, their new 70-200mm f/2.8, the workhorse. The clear optical benefits of their new lenses can only be viewed with the Nikon D3x, the Canon 1DMk4, the 1DsMk3...

Before buying used, make sure that you bring a laptop to test the lens.

The best is to find somebody that has the "right" system and want to switch to the competition and you can buy the lot! A Canon guy switching to Nikon or a Nikon guy switching to Canon is your ideal supplier. It's likely that he was careful with the gear...

ACCESSORIES

Many accessories are cheap enough to buy new over time. I would never buy used flashes. Many flashes only have a life of 5,000 flashes. The Quantum flashes have a life of 50,000+ flashes.

WHAT TO BUY?

What kind of equipment to buy...? That will depend on the purpose. Premier League photographers, football, races, basketball... will need to buy much more expensive equipment than for the same sport at the peewee level. In the peewee league, you do not need internal zooms with internal focus, it's mandatory at the higher level. Your zoom and focus must not change when you let the camera hang down!

You cannot charge \$5,000 for a large print if the customer saw you take the photo with a Canon Rebel... You can charge \$5,000 for the large print if they saw your lights, the flashes, the diffusers, the assistants...

THE CUSTOMER

What? Does the customer decide which camera I get? Yes and no. The customer decides what he wants to get. If the customer wants a 240 Meg TIFF file without interpolation, you will need either a Canon 5DMk2, a 1DsMk3, or a Nikon D3x. The customer demands a 20+ megapixels camera. It's not what she needs, but what she requires. No if, not but... and no "I'll explain why you are wrong!"

EXERCISE

Find at least two places where you can rent:

- Cameras, with and without the accessories like memory cards and batteries.
- Lenses
- Lighting
- Backgrounds, backdrops, stands...

What brands are available? What are the costs? There are a few places in Vancouver:

1. One of them is closed on Saturdays. So they rent on Friday afternoon, and you have to return on Monday before noon. They charge only for one day of rental.
2. Another place is opened on Saturday, so you pick up the Saturday afternoon and must return Monday by 11 am, and they charge only for one day of rental.

-
3. **You must see not only what they can rent from the product list, but also what's actually available.** One of the places renting Canon only has 3 70-200 f/2.8L II IS lenses for rent. They are always out on the weekends. I can never get one of them. It's on the list, but there's a waiting list.

HOW TO DEAL WITH THE COMPETITION

Before we deal with the most important topic, which is getting customers, you need to be ready to deal with your competitors. Even in families. If your family is large enough, there may be more than one person doing photos for the “clan.”

UNCLE HARRY OR THE GWC

As a professional photographer, your biggest competition is either Uncle Harry, the GWC, the Girl With a Camera, or the MWC, the Mother With a Camera, who just bought the latest Canon or Nikon.

Your photos are nice, you must have a good camera!

If you have the new camera, then your photos must be better.

1. Do you have a better camera than UH or GWC? A full frame camera? Then you have a better chance. Whether we want it or not, we are judged by which camera we use. The rankings are from the bottom up:
 - Pentax and Sony
 - Olympus
 - Canon
 - Nikon
 - Leica
 - You can change the ranking by having a Canon with the white L lenses. The other L lenses like the 17-40, or the 24-105 do not count, they are black! Nikon lenses do not count since they are all black, like the kit lens⁷.

⁷ If you think that I’m joking, go to a coffee shop on day put your small camera with a black lens on the table, then go another coffee shop and put a “real” dSLR with a white lens and see the reactions.

- Sony and the white Zeiss lenses not only improve your ranking, but you must be a better photographer because you are using the white lenses.
 - Get a medium frame camera. You win! No UH or GWC has a medium format camera. Mamiya, Hasselblad, and Pentax have “lower end” medium format cameras at almost reasonable prices. With that, you “crush” both Uncle Harry and the Girl With a Camera. You show that you are a “real” professional photographer. **It's regrettable but most professional photographers are judged by their equipment.** Which camera you have is often more important than your portfolio. There are countless of Craigslist requests that ask for not for the portfolio but for a full list of your gear.
2. Show a large photo book, portfolio with photos that are at least 11” by 14”. It must be nicely done, no plastic sleeves.
 3. Make a real book! Make your own book with Blurb, MyPublisher or any other web companies. Blurb is an online printing company that allows you to create and print books in run of single unit. <http://www.adoramapix.com> also has photo books at “reasonable” prices. Neither UH nor GWC has one. Neither most of your competition. Book prices can range from \$50 to \$100 for a 36 pages book. **Make sure that you use a designer and do not do it yourself.**

CAMERAS

Every professional photographer screams bloody murder; there are millions and billions of free photos on the Internet. The two largest photo websites are:

- Facebook: 29+ Billion photos [Nov-2010]
- Flickr: 6+ Billions photos [Nov-2010]

Flickr publishes stats on the cameras used on Flickr. The numbers I use are as of Nov-2010.

The number 1 camera used on Flickr is the Apple's iPhone. The number 2 camera used on Flickr is the Android phone. The largest group of cameras, for the photos posted on Flickr, is the smart phones group and the camera phones group. When you include the point and shoot cameras, they represent the vast majority of the photos posted on Flickr.

I've checked Facebook through my daughter's account and almost all of the photos that I saw there were from iPhones, smart phones, and the very low-end point and shoot cameras. We don't have a break down for Facebook, but my "gut feel" is that Facebook is even more slanted toward smart phones and the like.

Please note that almost none of these people knows how to operate a photography business with its two requirements:

- Getting customers
- Getting paid for delivering photos

Yes, Uncle Harry with his new "CaNikon" will do the wedding for \$250. Is he going to do the wedding properly? Unlikely! When Uncle Harry "screws up" a wedding, he not only "screws" the bride, the groom, the families, but he also affects most of the guests. If any of the guest will have a wedding in the near future, that guest will only want to have a professional photographer. In fact, Uncle Harry after "screwing up" is the best advertising for professional photographers.

COMPETE WITH A LOWER PRICED PHOTOGRAPHER

Your worst nightmare: you finally got "a live one," a "could be" customer, a real one looking to buy your platinum extra deluxe package. She's

convinced, she wants it, but she has to check with her husband, her boss, her best friend, her cat and her dog. Meanwhile, somebody tells her about how her friend used a guy that did everything, including washing the dishes, for half of the price!

What are you goanna do?

- Lower your prices. How low can you go? How will you compete against free? Will you pay the customer to make the photos?
- Sell prints or sell memories?
- Give extras, but keep the price identical.
- **Create an experience: Weddings or portraits? What about including a make-up artist in the package?**
- **Guarantee 110% money back guarantee.**
- **Scare them in using your services instead of your competitor's.** You are insured. Is your competition insured? Many locations require photographers to have liability insurance...
 - You can't replace memories. They are priceless.
 - When people lose their houses due to fire or flood, they always try to salvage the photos! They do not rush out of the burning house with their MP3 music collection.

COMPETE WITH FREE

Regularly, you will be faced with somebody else that will give or even pay to have their photos published...

Either you differentiate yourself, or you compete on price, or you will go out of business. Can you compete on price? Think that you can?

- With her cousin who just bought a "real camera" and will do it for free!

- With millions and millions of photos on Flickr that is available for the tidy sum of \$0⁸.

HOW DO YOU COMPETE WITH FREE?

Actually, it's very simple to compete with free! **You just have to offer something that free does not offer.**

- Convenience: Your photos are well labeled. It's all in one place...
- Speed / accuracy: Order processing, the customer gets what she asked...
- Peace of mind: Liability insurance, model releases...
- Quality: Better photos, better vision...
- Selection: More choices from the same source...
- Huge prints, canvas...
- Books...
- Bonuses: Free prints...
- ...

Many people will pay for the quality and the convenience... Many people will rather get their photos for free. Do you really want these customers? Can these people be called customers? I thought that customers implied some kind of payment, I may be wrong...

Please note that there are industries that have been very successful when competing with free. The software industry has been competing with free for almost 20 years. Microsoft wins at every turn with Windows against Linux, which is free. Microsoft wins at every turn with Microsoft Office against Oracle's OpenOffice, which is free.

⁸ This has nothing to do with quality.

On the other hand, many companies provide free software and make lots of money with it, like RedHat, Oracle, and FirebirdSQL... by offering customization, support, and rapid access to support...

CUSTOMER SERVICE

On 11-Nov-2008, Grover Sanschagrín did an interview of Craig MitchellDyer at PhotoShelter. The interview is available at **My Nose, Your Business:** <http://blog.photoshelter.com/corp/2008/11/my-nose-your-business-craig-mi.html>

I think photography is just like any other business. It's all about customer service. You can be the best photographer in the world, but if you're a jackass, no one will want to work with you. It doesn't matter if you are working a wedding, working for a wire or a newspaper editor or a big time magazine art director, remember the customer is always right.

Making deadlines, following up on things, good communication, etc are all things that I think keep people coming back to use my services.

I basically try to shape my business as a business I would want to use. An example, a good website; if I go to a website that sucks, I do not care how great you might be, I am not going to use a business with a bad website.

Emails: If I send an email to a company I expect a quick response, so I make sure to answer emails within an hour if possible. Obviously, when working and such that is not always doable, but, same day for sure.

People are busy and might be sending an email to a lot of different people and a lot of times the first person to answer gets the job.

— Craig MitchellDyer

I don't think I could have said it any better.

EXPERTISE

Uncle Harry or the Girl with Camera's expertise is pressing the button. Sometimes, they even know how to use the camera. They are no expert in ...

For example with weddings, do they know how to flow the photos so that you have all the "relevant" photos, how to arrange the groups including the kids, and how to make sure that everybody has their eyes open at the same time?

For example, you want to specialize in architecture. Just pressing the button is not enough. Do you know what needs to be emphasized? Can you identify a Mediterranean Revival Style and contrast it with Bauhaus. Can you speak the jargon? Can you understand what they need... not just what they ask for.

The more of an expert you are in the field, the less competition you will have. No need to lower your prices...

HOW DO YOU SHOW YOUR EXPERTISE?

Once you are an expert, the question is how do you show your expertise? That will depend on you and your field of expertise.

- Bio: it could be either your education like a Ph.D. in "bat poops."
- Writings: either on various websites, your own blog, scientific publications, newspapers...
- Workshops: people can't be your customers unless they take your workshop! Wouldn't that be great for wedding photographers? Uncle Harry or the Girl with Camera doesn't give workshops to their customers.

Think about the possibilities, the people can only become your customer if they pay to take your seminar.

1. You are "the" expert
2. You get paid for the seminar
3. You will very quickly get in the news for free publicity
4. ...

EXPERTISE VS. UNIQUENESS

Do not confuse expertise with uniqueness. If you are still under the illusion that you are unique, I have news for you. No, you are not unique. Your vision is not unique. Even if you have a unique vision, it will be copied very quickly.

Take a look at HDR travel photos. It was made famous by Trey Ratcliff of <http://www.stuckincustoms.com> . I don't think that Trey created the HDR travel photos, but he made it "famous" and well known. Now they are thousands of similar websites.

Las Vegas, John Michael Cooper started "Trash The Dress" in 2001. It's a second photo shoot of the bride but this time done in alleys, on the beach or in a garbage dump and the wedding dress gets destroyed. Now almost every wedding photographer has an option called: "Trash The Dress" on his or her price list.

Millions of photographers are still copying Ansel Adams.

On the other hand, very few people can copy your expertise. It's too expensive. It takes years and years to build expertise. Your expertise can be in any field that you want. Nobody can take your expertise away. On the other hand, other photographers can take your uniqueness away overnight. And what will you do then? Your competitive advantage is gone.

Your expertise could be in an industry and your access to that industry. Your expertise could be in Photoshop. Your expertise could be in handling

children. Your expertise would be in handling animals like crocodiles... How many other photographers do you think can handle crocodiles? 5 or 10? As a professional photographer that can handle crocodiles, are they going to pay you \$10/hr? Not only can you charge full price, you can also charge for your assistants. No question asked.

If you need to win on price, you are not setting yourself apart as experts.

EAMON MACMAHON

Eamon MacMahon, <http://www.eamonmacmahon.com>, is a young Canadian photographer who does a fair bit of editorial photography for many magazines, including the Walrus. He has a vision, he has the look. Unique? I don't think so. Many "kids" at the local college in photography course have very similar look. But Eamon is different:

1. He's one of the very few aerial photographer that photographs the "no city". There are many aerial photographers, but they mostly concentrate on the cities. He photographs the mountains, the glaciers, the farmland...
2. He gets along with people! He makes people comfortable! He often photographs and reports on small landlocked communities where he flies in and stays for a week or two. He's able to integrate and gets the people to agree to photograph them.

LIABILITY INSURANCE

What does that have to do with me, you ask?

You are walking down the street, photographing a brand new fire hydrant. Somebody turns around, looks at you taking your photos, falls on the street, and is hit by a car. You didn't touch the person, you didn't push the person,

or you didn't even take a photo of that person. You are sued by the insurance company of the driver and by the injured person, because:

1. You are a photographer
2. You did not have a permit for the photo shoot from the city
3. You never go wrong blaming and suing somebody
4. You are an easy target

Are you covered? Is it worth the money?

1. People always talk about liability insurance: if something bad happens, you are covered and they won't seize your house, the cat, the dog, and the kids.
2. Many locations require you to have liability insurance. No liability insurance, no working at that place. No if, no but... No work. Period. The city of New York requires at least a \$1 million dollar liability insurance before issuing a photo shoot permit. In many instances, they require \$5 million in liability insurance.
3. Most events require photographers to carry their own liability insurance.
4. **You can use the liability insurance as a competitive advantage against that "cheap" cousin/friend who will do the wedding coverage for \$250.**

BADMOUTHING THE COMPETITION

At IBM, it's against corporate policy and is a fire able offense if during a sales call, you mention a competitor's name especially in a disparaging manner.

If "they" ask about "Joe Photo" your direct competition, never badmouth your competition. Never say:

1. He's always late...
2. Last time he got drunk at the wedding...
3. He always goes over budget...
4. He's so slow with the delivery of the photos...
5. He uses a cheap photo...

Instead, you can always say:

- *I am always on time, like today...*
- *I never eat nor drink at any of these receptions...*
- *I am always on time and on budget*
- *You'll have your photo proofs the next day...*
- *Your photos will be printed on the highest quality photo paper and will last at least 65 years. If they ever fade, I will replace them for free.*

I never badmouth my competition. I only say how I differentiate myself as a photographer compared to "Joe Photo." Also, notice, that at no point do I mention the aesthetics of "Joe Photo."

SHOW YOURSELF AS A PROFESSIONAL

I was at a reception, taking photos of the guests, and suddenly this guy turns around. He had 2 Canon 1D cameras around the neck, one was the 1DMk3 and the second one was the 1DsMk3, monster flashes and L lenses: \$20,000 hanging around his neck. He had far more gear than I did. I think he said he was the cousin of the master of ceremony, not that I actually listened to him. I'm the "professional," he's the "jerk" who followed me around, and whatever I did, he always said:

What about doing it this way? (In front of everybody)

Implying that I didn't know what I was doing. He had more equipment than I did, he made more noise. How did I look professional?

This simple lowly accessory got this guy out of my hair: **THE GREY CARD**

First, I took photos of the person/group with the grey card, then without the grey card.

- When people asked, "What's that?" and they always ask, I explained: "It's to make sure that I get the color of your eyes right."
- He did not have a grey card.
- He never used a grey card.
- I established to him and the world that you knew what I was doing.

Eventually he left me alone.

WHY WOULD THEY BUY FROM YOU, INSTEAD OF YOUR COMPETITION?

It's up to you to answer that question. This is when and where you decide of your future. It could be:

- I'm the cheapest. Difficult to stay in business as the cheapest photographer against free from Uncle Harry. What next? Will you pay the customer for the privilege of taking their photos?
- I'm luxury. This is an experience that you will remember the rest of your life.
- I'm unique. You can't have photos like that anywhere else. Make sure that you are really unique. The problem is that if you are unique, other photographers will copy you very quickly.

Las Vegas, John Michael Cooper started "Trash The Dress" in 2001. It's a second photo shoot of the bride but this time done in alleys, on the

beach or in a garbage dump and the wedding dress gets destroyed. Now almost every wedding photographer has an option called: "Trash The Dress" on his or her price list.

- My vision. Can you make wedding photos that are radically different from everyone else? See I'm unique.
- I'm famous. Stars will come to a photo shoot with Annie Leibovitz. You are not Annie Leibovitz, but you can become famous in your niche.
- I get the job done. I deliver what I promised. Trust!
- I make sure that you will be happy and satisfied or 110% money back guarantee.

EXAMPLES OF WHAT'S WRONG

WILL PHOTOGRAPH ANYTHING

I often scour the Internet and lurk on photographers' websites. I look for ideas for myself and too often two hours later, where did all the time go? Sometimes I find gems, here's one from photographer Anonymous.

Not many of my pictures follow the conventional photography guidelines, and that is what sets me apart from every other photographer. If you are looking for great pictures that don't look like every other studio's work, you are in the right place. If you are looking for a generic "say cheese" picture, look elsewhere. I strive to put an artistic touch to every photograph I take, and love being challenged. All of my photographs are taken with a digital camera.

My prices are in most cases much, much lower than other photographers around here. Email me for more information on pricing for your individual needs

I'll photograph anything: (His words, my emphasis)

- *Wedding Photography*
- *Senior Portraits*

- *Landscapes*
- *Concerts*
- *Family Portraits*
- *Child Portraits*
- *Sports Photography*
- *Band Promos*
- *Parties*
- *Fashion Portraits*

Would I risk my wedding to this guy? It's a guy. No woman would write something like that. Would I allow this guy to capture/screw up my treasured memories?

So what's wrong here?

1. The presentation: It's terrible. The website is as gaudy as the text.
2. The specialty: "I'll photograph anything." He has no clue about what he's doing. He specializes in "I press the button" and I don't care about what.
3. "All of my photographs are taken with a digital camera." Do I hear a 4 megapixels Canon G3? On the other hand...
4. "My prices are in most cases much, much lower than other photographers around here." Why?
5. Who are his customers? They must be cheapskates, they only want some photographer whose "prices are much, much lower than other photographers." These customers are the people that don't have an Uncle Harry who just bought the new CaNikon with the 5-5000L/1.2 zoom.
 - Is this what you want to present to your customers?
 - Is this how you will gain new customers?
 - Is this how you will get repeat customers?
 - Do you want these customers?

THE \$200 ASSIGNMENT

Should you accept a \$200 assignment? Most professional photographers and photo associations will tell you a resounding NO!

Not so fast! I think that many people are missing some of the issues. **Some \$200 assignments are definitely worth it, many \$200 assignments are definitely not worth it.**

One of the major shortfalls is people's failure to look at the total value of the assignment. Does this assignment add value to you, the photographer?

Reasons to accept the \$200 assignment:

- You will own the photos.
- You and the customer will use the photos.
- The assignment will give you access to places that you couldn't get otherwise.
- The assignment will give you access to people that you couldn't get otherwise.
- You will generate further business from the assignment.
- You will generate a different business from the assignment.
- The assignment will help you fill holes in your portfolio that you wouldn't be able to do otherwise or would be too expensive to do by yourself.

Reasons not to accept the \$200 assignment:

- They want to have a long-term relationship:
 - Yes, but it will be a \$200 long-term relationship.
 - What happened to the long-term relationship with the "ex-current" photographer?

- They will pay the full price next time... If you believe this one, I have a bridge to sell...
- They will own the copyrights.
- They will give you a credit.
- ...

There have been a couple of places that I have tried for years to “get in” and have always been turned down. I would take any assignment, even for free, that would give me that access. Then I'd be able to make my own way in.

That's why, if it was the right assignment, I would do the \$200 assignment.

GETTING CUSTOMERS

Now's the crux of the matter. To be a professional photographer, you need to have customers. They are the people that pay for your services, for your times, for your photos.

AM I GOOD ENOUGH?

Millions and millions of people do photography as a hobby. Usually a couple of years later, when they meet a professional photographer, they show them their photos and ask:

Am I good enough to be become a "pro"?

The problem is that people are mistaken about what it means to a "pro." Being a "pro" means earning a living from photography. Being a "pro" means having customers. Being a "pro" means being paid for selling photos.

So, Am I good enough to become a "pro"?

Let's talk weddings as an example. When taking photos of a wedding:

- Are the photos in focus?
- Are the people recognizable?
- Are the people's eyes open?
- You are not showing people/kids "picking their noses." It's called editing.

Then you are good enough!

Any mother will buy enough half-decent photo of her child. The photo doesn't have to be perfectly lit, the photo has to be in focus, and the child must recognizable. The child must be in some type of activity without the

“say cheese grin.” I know. That’s how I started as a teenager, selling photos of my friends to their mothers. I was using a plastic camera, a Kodak Instamatic that cost me around \$15 to buy and the photos were black and whites.

TALENT

Is talent required? No! Talent is not required. It’s preferred, but not required. **Talent is highly over-rated. Hard work and the desire to improve yourself are far more important than talent.** Talent doesn’t show up at 5 am for work. Talent will help, talent will make it easier, but hard work is more important.

WORK ETHIC

Is “work ethic” required? Yes, it’s a requirement. It’s what will guarantee your success. The work ethic will make you want to learn more, to experiment. You will improve with time.

I don’t know of any professional photographer, including me, that doesn’t improve with age, it almost like wine. I can’t believe how bad I was 10 years ago... but the customers bought and paid me then, they buy from me and pay me now.

SKILL

The most important question/skill is how good at you at “schmoosing”? Can you chitchat? How good are you at making people feel comfortable?

HOW TO START AS A PRO

There are three ways of becoming a pro.

1. **You are lucky.** Somebody asks you to take their photos. Usually, it's a family or a friend. Somebody asks you to sell them a photo you took for ... These photographers are the lucky one, and shouldn't be professional photographers. Photographers never become rich and since you are the lucky one, don't waste your luck, use it on winning the Lotto and do something more profitable.
2. **Become an assistant** to a professional photographer. As an assistant, you will learn both the photography and the business end of being a professional photographer.
3. Become a professional photographer **the hard way**, by starting from scratch. You will have to earn your clients by promoting.

I do get some referrals, but not enough. If I waited for the phone to ring, my dog would be starving, the bank would have repossessed my place and ceased the cameras.

The problem is how do you start? You pound the pavement! That's how.

1. Create a flyer.
2. Since you don't have work, block by block, drop the flyer at every house, be it weddings, portraits or even commercial.
 - o Almost everybody goes home after work.
 - o Even if people are not interested in what you are advertising, they may be looking for something else or closely related.

What's the success ratio? At one per hundred, you are doing very well. At one per thousand, that's OK. Less than one per thousand, you will need to rethink either the flyer or the neighborhood.

The cost of a flyer is minimal. A thousand color flyers... is around \$100 in my neighborhood.

I can already hear:

That won't work for me. I only do weddings or senior grads...

That's not how advertising works. Take the example of "deodorant for women."

- They advertise them
- 1/2 of the people who see these ads are men
- How many of the women already have a deodorant that they are happy with and will not switch from: 80%? 90%? 95%? I don't know for sure but it's a very high number

Somehow, Colgate - Palmolive and Unilever make billions of dollars from advertising and promoting female deodorants.

I don't have samples!

Hire a couple of models from Craig's List or from <http://ModelMayhem.com> and make the samples. That's what almost everybody does, including many photojournalists.

- Sitting at home will not bring any new client.
- Having just a website will not bring new clients unless you are already well established.
- There are 30+ billion websites/blogs. That's 4½ websites/blogs per person on earth. The web is mostly a lottery, you can improve your chances, but it's still a lottery.

WORD OF MOUTH ADVERTISING

Everybody and their dog will give you the advice that word of mouth advertising from satisfied customers is the best. You didn't need to pay for

that advice, it's everywhere on the web, in the business forums, and the photo forums...

- It's free
- It's other people doing your job
- It's more powerful than paid advertising
- ...

There are a few problems with word of mouth advertising:

1. For word of mouth to work, you need to have already satisfied customers. Don't forget that you are starting. This means that you don't have satisfied customers.
2. If word of mouth worked so well, why did Colgate - Procter and Gamble spend 4 billion on advertising? That's a B. The 4 billion is the same amount as their profits for 2010. They could have doubled their profits if they would have used word of mouth advertising instead of paying for advertising. It's the same for Microsoft, ATT, Verizon...

Relying on word of mouth advertising doesn't work. It has never worked. You have to do the work, get the recommendations, the referrals... Don't expect to have somebody else do it for you, or you'll be waiting for a long time at home.

WANT TO HAVE A PHOTO BUSINESS?

If you want to have a photography business, you will need new customers. D'oh! What an obvious thing to say. Maybe obvious but too many people forget it. In marketing lingo:

1. Identify and reach the potential customers. Who are they?
Demographics. Young, old, an income between \$75,000 and \$200,000, reside in... Can you reach your potential customers? Do you

have the money to buy the advertising to reach these people? Will you phone them one by one? Will you send them emails or snail mail? Alternatively, will they find you on the web?

2. Your potential customers must have a problem that they want to solve using your photos. It could be memories such as wedding, portraits, or editorial to bring in advertisers to their publications. Your vision must be related to their vision of their problem.
3. **Your potential customers must have the desire and the ability to spend the money on your photography.** If they don't, that's when I receive the email/phone call that I have been specially selected for the special opportunity to raise my profile by giving away my photos and my labor. They may even give me a credit somewhere for my photos.

Of the three requirements to grow your business, the most important is the first requirement: Who will be your photo customers and how can you reach them? Solving that problem is more than half of the battle, because if not, you are invisible.

A VERY WISE WACKO

A few years ago, I met Michael. Michael was Rivka's boyfriend. Michael was a real "wacko."

A wacko is a person regarded as eccentric or irrational.

— The free dictionary

He was often irrational and would go "crazy." He claimed that it was from Vietnam.

Michael was huge: 6 feet 4 tall and 250+ pounds. Every so often, he would go "nuts." With no education, he washed store windows. One evening, with

my wife, we were at their house and I tried to make conversation, chitchat about work...

I asked him how did he get his customers?

He walks down the street with his bucket, mop, and squeegee. He goes from store to store, and asks:

Do you want your windows washed?

- If no, "goodbye."
- If yes, then it will be either \$15 or \$25 depending on the size of the windows.

One thing you need to know is that I hate doing cold calls. I'd rather be sick that make cold calls. Actually, I make myself sick so that I don't have to make cold calls.

I asked him how he did it:

It's very simple, I need to go into 5 stores to get 1. So I earn \$3 for every store that I walk in.

I don't get paid for washing the windows. I get paid for walking in and asking if they want to get their windows washed. (His words, my emphasis).

For me, this was a revelation.

THE PORTFOLIO

You can have your portfolio online or you can have a "book" that you can hand over to your "potential" client.

PORTFOLIO PURPOSE

The purpose of your portfolio is **not** to show your photos. The purpose of your portfolio is **not** to show your mastery. The purpose of your portfolio is **not** to impress the “potential” customer. The purpose of your portfolio is **not** to get the Ooh! or the Aah!

1. The purpose of your portfolio is to build trust.
2. The purpose of your portfolio is to build confidence in the “potential” customer that you will be able to deliver on your promises.
3. The purpose of your portfolio is to build a relationship between you and that person.

The better your portfolio, the more likely your “potential” customer will look at the whole portfolio. The better your portfolio, the more likely you will show your portfolio.

PORTFOLIO WEBINAR

The folks at <http://photoshelter.com> regularly have webinars. They invited Stella Kramer. Stella Kramer used to be an editor at many big photo desks, and is now a consultant.

<http://blog.photoshelter.com/2011/02/building-a-better-online-portfolio.html>

It's a one-hour video:

- What to shoot: topics...
- Create relationships
- Career

PORTFOLIO SIZE

You portfolio should be:

- What makes you unique?
- Between a dozen photos to two dozen photos! That's it.
- Only one topic. Variations on the topic are OK. Different points of views, of the same topic, are OK. But it must be only one topic. The photos must be different, not a cookie cutter variation of the same topic.

If you do portraits, you can include portraits in work place, at home, at school... Showing food photos is pointless to somebody looking for portraits.

- Only 1 photo from 1 shoot, or "you are padding your portfolio."
- It's OK to have more than one portfolio. How many specialties can you have or do you specialize in the pressing the button and shoot anything.
- Clean, simple, and classy. Not cluttered.
- Look professional.
- Refreshed on regular basis. Your portfolio should always be new and updated. The same person can see your portfolio every 3 months and see many new materials.
- Big images. Usually the bigger is the better.

Here's another point of view:

20 images in a portfolio box, same size paper, same process, consistent output, of a fully or nearly resolved cohesive body of work. Work that is tightly edited, intelligently sequenced and grounded by a well written project statement would be ideal.

If you have two or more bodies of work then bring one other portfolio to look at in case the first one isn't the viewers cup of tea.

— Laura Pressley, Executive Director at Center, Santa Fe

IS ANYONE MAKING MONEY?

Vance Safley asked in the professional forum of

<http://forums.dpreview.com/forums/forum.asp?forum=1014>

I am interested to know how the economy and digital photography has affected the ability to make money with their photo studio. I have felt the effects of the economy as people are not eager to spend \$ on things like photos. I have also felt the affect of less customers due to the the ease in which people can take and print their own prints. I realize the quality it not going to match what a studio can do but with quantity comes some quality. Out of the thousands of shots people take everyday some become very nice printable photos. I am beginning to think that the price of the print has diminished and I am trying to figure out how to market and price the photo session. The quality time with a professional photographer is what I think will never change.

– Vance Safley

Then there are 120+ comments about “professionals⁹” about how terrible things are.

- Digital has killed the business of photography
- People don't buy photos anymore
- Uncle Harry or GWC are killing the business of photography
- People do their own photos
- ...

You name it, the excuse is there, but nobody asks or answers the most important question:

Why buy from you?

⁹ This is in quotes because we don't know for sure. Too many of the people commenting are anonymous.

That's right, why should people buy from you? Why should they spend their money with you right now.

PROFESSIONAL PHOTOGRAPHER SKILLS

Some photographers are extremely successful. Some photographers are moderately successful. Some photographers even earn a good living from being a professional photographer. What's the common thread between all of these photographers?

People! It's how they interact with people. **The number one skill to master to become a professional photographer: people skills.**

Wedding, portraits, fashion, advertising, photo journalist, paparazzi, travel, food, corporate, industrial... all of them require you to deal with people at some point during your job. Note that these times are the critical times to being a professional photographer and earning a living from professional photography.

It doesn't matter if you do landscape, stock photography, birds in flight... somebody has to buy your photos. You can't make a living with only microstock landscape photography. Almost all the other type of photography involves people as subjects, buyers, end-users, promotions...

How good are you with people? Can you "schmooze" with people when you don't have a camera? If you are able to "schmooze" with people, you will make people feel comfortable with you. Your photos will improve. There are many other skills involved in being a professional photographer, but having "people skills" is the #1 and the most important skill.

Karsh was a very good photographer, but his most important skill was interacting with people while taking their photos. His people skills make him an extraordinary photographer.

ADVERTISING VS. MARKETING

What's the difference between advertising and marketing when it comes to your photography business?

Advertising is the purchase of time or space in a media. You can buy time on the radio, on the TV or... You are buying the time to show your information. You can buy space in a magazine, in the newspapers or on the Internet such as banners or Google to show your information. Overall, you are paying for the exposure. The more "eye balls," the more you will be paying. To advertise you will have to pay.

Marketing is the activity of reaching and contacting your potential customers. Many of these activities do not cost any money. Marketing includes:

- Phone
- Email
- Networking
- Exhibits
- ...

Advertising is the most expensive part of marketing, but in many cases, it does make sense. If you are a wedding photographer, advertising in wedding magazines makes sense, just like having a booth at the various bridal shows.

- The more targeted marketing/advertising the more effective it will be.
- The more often you target the same people, the better it is. Up to the point where you become a nuisance or your emails end-up in the spam folder, never to be seen again.

ARE YOU A YES MAN OR A NO MAN

I know that 1/3rd of all the photographers are women, and it's growing to half, but it sounds so much better.

When somebody asks you for something, do you say?

No, it can't be done!

Or

Let me think about it on how we could do it.

If somebody tries to cut on the expenses what do you say?

No, I can't do it!

Or

If we do it this way, it won't turn out the way you want.

There are two types of people. The "yes man" is the one with all the repeat customers. The "no man" has to struggle to keep getting brand new customers.

WHAT ARE YOU SELLING? SERVICES OR PHOTOS?

What are you selling? Are you selling a service or are you selling photos?

If you are selling photos, you sold the photo and now the transaction is closed. There may be another transaction with the same photo but that's stock. With today's prices, selling stock will get you from \$3 to \$20 depending on the commission per photo, if you are lucky. Many photographers are getting less than \$1 per photo.

If you are selling a service, you can sell “anything.” Of course, you still have to deliver the photos:

- When you sell memories such as weddings, birthdays, events. You can sell albums, prints, LCD photo frames with JPEGs pre-loaded... You can resell the same photos to the same person in a different format or print size.
- When you sell solutions to real estate agents, restaurants, hotels... they need to show how good they look. The photos need to be replaced every few month or whenever they do any change, so it can be reflected in their marketing.
- When you sell full editorial packages, including the story and the photos for a magazine. As a travel photographer, you can hope to be paid a hundred for your three or four photos, depending on the location. If you can write or team with a writer, your value significantly goes up.

What does your competition sell? Photos or services? My bet is that your most successful competitors sell services. When you sell services, it's not just a onetime use, you can even sell subscriptions. Think about it, monthly payments and the customer comes back for more photos.

WHAT ARE YOU SELLING?

30 years ago, I worked with Dan Sanderson, who told me:

There are two type of 10 years experience:

- *10 times 1 year experience and*
- *1 time 10 years experience*

You want to work with the latter...

– Dan Sanderson

The question is why would somebody pay \$7,000 for a wedding when they can get similar photos for \$250? Some semi-pros are even charging \$500 per wedding flat fee, including the prints!

People fail to realize that often the photographer's cost is only one of the minor costs. Catering runs in the tens of thousand dollars for a mid-size wedding. Renting the venue usually cost a few thousand dollars. I was quoted \$1,875 for 230 wedding invitations! That was for the wedding invitations only!

Somehow, trying to explain that to the brides' parents doesn't seem to work. It's like banging your head on a wall. So don't try. Why? Because it never works and they'll think that at best you are arrogant, at worst you are a jerk. It's not worth fighting losing battles.

Instead, **Sell Trust**. With you, as their photographer, they are guaranteed that their will have the photos that will bring all the great memories. So the question is how do you do that?

- Money back guaranties
- Recommendations from friends
- Testimonials
- You being nice and supportive through the whole process:
 - Are you on time at your appointments?
 - Do you follow up on what you say/promise?
 - Do you have an introductory session, where you explain what's going to happen and how?
 - ...
- FUD: Fear, Uncertainty and Doubts. What will happen if you hire somebody without liability insurance? Will they deliver the photos?
- ...

SQUIRRELS

In January 2009, the largest European photo magazine is Chasseur d'Image, a French photo magazine, had a very interesting article on one of most misunderstood critter, the squirrel. Many people see them as cute and friendly, other see them as pests. It was not a "one pager" on squirrels like in Pop Photo magazine, but a full 10 pages on how to make photos of squirrels: the good, the bad and the ugly...

Squirrels are everywhere, in almost every park, people feed them, and people take photos of the squirrels eating in their kids' palm.

Now it also turns out that there are photographers who specialize in squirrels! Many photographers have specialized themselves. Some even became famous like Art Wolf who became famous for his wolves photos, but squirrels? What's next? Rabbits, brick roads, storms...?

Wait! Actually, there are photographers who specialize in storms, they are called storm chasers. Making photos of roads is actually a very good topic for stock photography. There are all kind of roads, in different light...

The more you specialize, especially in a topic that interests you, the more likely the world will beat to your door. The more esoteric your specialty the more you will be able to charge as a photographer.

DO YOU SPECIALIZE?

In an evening, very late in the evening, I got a phone call from a photo buyer from Switzerland, who was looking for at least a hundred photos of rabbits. Rabbits in the wild, rabbits in the home, rabbits as pet, rabbits as pest, rabbits as food... His English was terrible, my German is non-existent, and we ended speaking in French. He called because I wrote a blog post about squirrels and mentioned rabbits.

He spent a couple of days looking for photos of rabbits, without much success, a photo here, a photo there, but no collection, no choice. I mentioned "what about iStockPhoto, Fotolia and the other microstocks agencies with millions of photos." That was already his first thought. He said that they didn't have anything. It's too bad that I wasn't able to help him. His budget was over 10 thousand Swiss Francs or just under 10 thousand US dollars.

I decided to check it out myself:

- iStockPhoto: 7708 photos dealing with rabbits, mostly drawings or cutesy rabbits on a white background, or a rabbit next to an Easter egg.
- Fotolia: 6, only 6 photos of rabbits.
- Getty Images: 879 photos, cutesy rabbits on a white background or kids dressed up as rabbits...

Everybody decries how the big stock agencies are killing the photo market.

- What do you have to offer?
- What do you specialize in?
- What should you specialize in?

Search for your favorite topic in iStockPhoto, Getty's, Flickr... What do you find?

SPECIALTIES

I was downtown, when I bumped into an old friend, actually more of an acquaintance than a friend. We went to the nearest coffee shop and had coffee with muffin. We started to yak... How's it going? How's business? I can be a good listener, and I let him talk. 30 minutes later, his business was

doing very poorly. Eventually he gave me his business card. He specializes in:

- Database programming
- Microsoft Excel
- Microsoft Word
- Network setup
- Network maintenance
- Computer support
- Training

What's missing?

- Marital counseling
- Financial advisor

He claimed to be an expert in everything! No! He can't. Each topic, that he claims to have expertise in, is so big itself that you can't know everything in it. As he spoke about his networking expertise, I mentioned multicasts¹⁰, he didn't even know what's a rendezvous point, see Google: network multicast "rendezvous point." He's not the only one to specialize in everything.

Of course, his business was not doing well.

- Are you claiming that you specialize in everything?
- Are you claiming that you specialize in "pressing the button"?
- Are you showing construction photos in your wedding portfolio?
- Are you showing wedding photos in your construction portfolio?

Why? To show that you can do everything? When was the last time you took your car to a jet engine mechanic?

¹⁰ This is a very specialized area of the networking: sending only one TCP/IP packet to many destinations at the same time, just like cable TV.

- It's OK to have a couple of photo specialties.
- Only show the photos that cover what you try to sell. If somebody talks to you about wedding, then you can mention that you also do weddings.

WHY BUY PHOTOS FROM YOU

I live in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. Vancouver is fairly large city with 2 million people including the suburbs. In 2010, Vancouver was hosting the Winter Olympics. Over 1,200 photography businesses are registered in the Lower Mainland, that's the whole area. There are many more photographers, but they are not registered as businesses with the tax people.

I was talking to a photographer friend and we were discussing wedding photography. How many wedding photographers?... and the like. Then we went to the web and going through various wedding directories... we estimated that there are around 4,000 wedding photographers in the Lower Mainland. Some photographers only do a couple of weddings a year, but I know of at least two photographers that do more than 100+ weddings per year.

With so much competition, why would people buy from you?

- Because of your unique vision? I don't think so. There is no more unique vision in photography, there are only "some pioneers" that everybody else copy. Think "Trash the Dress." I regularly scour the Internet for new ideas on how to make new photos of my old subjects.
- Because of your skills? I don't think so. According to Canon, Nikon and all the other manufacturers you just need to buy their cameras with their super-duper brand new lenses and you're done. Nikon CAM 3500 auto-focus module is spectacular. Exposure is usually correct. Lighting

and flashes with the Pocket Wizards and/or the Nikon Creative Lighting system and now you can make magic that, 15 years ago, was only reserved to the grand masters. Press enough times on the shutter and something decent/good is bound to happen.

So back to the original question, why would people buy photos from you?

- Because of your business savvy. You are still in business, and your competitor is not.
- Because of your marketing. You have reached the person that needed photos that you have produced or could produce. It could be either in person or on the Internet.
- Because of your people skills. People would rather deal with you than the next photographer. You are more pleasant, you are more reliable, and you are easier to do business with...

Find out why people buy photos from you. That's what will make you successful.

WHY YOU? WHY NOW?

Why you, why now? That's really the only questions between you and a sale.

If someone is going to buy from you, is it because you're the cheapest? That's a hard thing to maintain. There better be a more sustainable reason than that.

If they're going to buy from you today, is it because you're in proximity, the closest, the one source that can satisfy the itch they happen to have? It's a little like being a peanut vendor at the ball game. You need a big crowd and you have to give up a big share of your income in exchange for being in the right place at the right time.

The goal is to create an offering that can answer these two questions:

- *Why from you?*
- *Why right now?*

Most businesses that struggle are unable to answer these two questions in a compelling fashion. They act as though they deserve that sale, or that they need to aggressively close so you'll buy today, instead of working to build in these very elements to the product itself.

— Seth Godin

So how do you know why you and why now?

- Introspection
- **Asking your customers**

Don't tell me that it's because of your personal vision. Look at all the wedding photos, if they are in focus and ½ decently lit, they all look the same.

If you can answer the “why you” and “why now” then you will thrive and prosper. If you can't answer these two questions then you will struggle to earn a living. These answers will direct your business plan, your marketing...

CUSTOMER PROFILE

Who's your customer? You will find that the vast majority of the times, it's a woman. There may be a man involved, but it's usually a woman.

- Weddings: The bride and the mothers in law are the main driving force
- Baby: It's the mother and the photos are for the grandparents
- Pets: The woman will usually buy the session and the prints for her boyfriend/husband
- Advertising agencies: most of the staff is female
- Fashion: women hold almost all key positions
- Industrial: most orders come from the PR department who are mostly females
- Publicity: the vast majority of the key positions are female

What does this mean?

1. You need to dress appropriately
2. Shoes, they must not been run down and dirty
3. Appropriate language. No off-color jokes, no "racist/sexist" jokes...
4. Don't be too pushy
5. Do not use your physical size to impose...
6. ...

CRM VS. CEM

CRM

In business CRM, Customer Relationship Management, is the magic powder that allows you to improve your interaction with the customer so that she will happier and therefore buy more. Eventually that customer will become more profitable. With CRM, you capture as much information as possible about the customer's birthdays, family info..., profitability, how good the customer was...

With a good implementation of the CRM, you can offer customers better deals for them and for you. You can remind/congratulate them on their birthday, anniversary, promotion...

CRM GOALS

- Better customer service to establish customer loyalty
- Increased efficiency
- Lower operating costs
- Help with the marketing by targeting the marketing better

CEM

In business CEM, Customer Elimination Management, is how you lose customers. It can be intentional or accidental.

- Intentional customer elimination is when the customer is actually losing you money. Can you afford to keep this customer?
- Accidental customer elimination is when somebody¹¹ applies the policy to the letter and infuriates the customer.

Remember the last time you called your cell phone provider, or your ISP or an airline for help?

Which one do you want to operate? Here are some customer relationship management software:

- ACT! from Sage
- Maximizer from Maximizer Software
- Salesforce
- OnContact from OnContact
- Goldmine from FrontRange

THE GATEKEEPER

Often, I need to phone somebody but there is this receptionist. She [it's always a she] has instructions to transfer only the calls from... and I am not on that list of person that she should transfer the call.

Failed phone call:

Me: "Can I speak with Kev Perry?"

Her: "Who shall I say is calling?"

Me: "Syv"

¹¹ Maybe it's not you, but the receptionist or ...

Her: "He's on the phone right now. Do you want his voice mail?"

Successful phone call:

Me: "Hi, this is Syv Ritch, is Kev Perry in? Thank you!"

And that's it. Nothing more, nothing less. Most of the times I am transferred.

GETTING THE NAMES AND ADDRESSES

One of main obstacle is getting the names and addresses of the people you will need to contact.

EDITORS, CURATORS...

Getting the phone number of an editor is more difficult that infiltrating your nearest spy agency. Their phone numbers are rated Top Secret A++. Nobody will give you that.

The first thing is getting the names. Almost all publications mention the writer's name and often their email address, but the editors' names?

In North America, there's the Reader's Digest:

- Writer's Market - Robert Lee Brewer (updated yearly)
- Photographer's Market - Mary Burzlaff Bostic (updated yearly)
- Christian Writers' Market Guide 2011 - Sally E. Stuart (updated yearly)

You can either buy them or go to your nearest library to get the names that you need.

If that's not enough, you will have to pay \$\$\$ for places like ADBASE or Agency Press. Not cheap, but it will get you the names, emails...

CORPORATIONS, PR PEOPLE...

That's much easier. Go to the company's website, the name of many of the principals, PR people... are listed there. The vast majority of the corporate or PR people are listed in the specialty directories. These specialty directories are very expensive or you can have free access at your central library.

Then read the section: Getting The Appointment

GETTING THE APPOINTMENT

I have used <http://www.foto-biz.com> to talk about the business of being a photographer and about Lightroom. How many photography websites are out there? One hundred thousand, a million websites? Nobody really knows, but my scientific, fully fact checked, gut feel is closer to a million photography blogs/websites than closer to the hundred thousand mark. How many of these blogs/websites deal with the business of photography? I would say about a couple of dozen. Good photography business information is very rare. I could say that photo business information is a rare commodity, but commodity and rare in the same sentence is an oxymoron.

Photography books, there are so many photography books. I did a search at Amazon.com and found 217,434 Results. How many photo business books? Not that many. May be a couple of hundred and very of these books are:

- In print
- Have real substance

For me a "real good" photo business book will have: step 1, step 2..., and go to the bank to deposit your checks. These books are very rare. Elyse Weissberg wrote one of those very rare books that deal with "how do you promote yourself," that is in print and has real substance: "**Successful Self-Promotion for Photographers.**"

Instead of giving you a review of what I think about the book. I'd rather quote you a couple of paragraph on how to get an appointment with a photo buyer and you will see if you can apply it to your case.

Don't start with a phone call because it can be almost impossible to reach a busy art director by phone and, frankly, you run the risk of being a real nuisance if you do get through. When your name is not familiar to people you are trying to reach, it's definitely better to use mail.

Here's an effective approach to make sure an art buyer will recognize your name — and answer your calls. Start with a small group of art buyers you'd like to meet — say, ten people. Produce and mail ten appealing promotion cards. Send out a card with a different image two weeks later, and continue to do so every other week for twelve weeks, until you've sent six cards.

Anyone who receives a promo card every other week for twelve weeks will remember your name. Then call the art buyer to set up an appointment or to drop off your portfolio. If you leave voice-mail messages, be candid: Tell the art directors for whom you leave messages that you "hand-picked" them to target, that you've sent them promotions because you like the work they produce, and that you would like to work with them. Being honest and sharing your enthusiasm usually works.

Can you use this approach in your business? I can, I have used it myself, and it worked. I did get the appointment.

WHO IS THIS FOR?

This book is targeted toward photographers who want to break-in or grow their editorial, magazine, advertising, corporate work. It's not specifically geared toward retail such as weddings, babies...

Many of the self-promotions techniques can be adapted to your own circumstances. If I gave stars on a 1 to 5 scale, I would give **"Successful**

Self-Promotion for Photographers” a 6 stars rating. That's how good it is. My book is full of stickies and highlights and I have read this book 3 times so far. It's one of the best \$20 to \$30 to spend on your business.

HOW OFTEN SHOULD YOU PROMOTE?

This year alone there will be at least a thousand new titles about photography and there will be approximately half a dozen new books on the photography business. Since the start of the new millennium, there has been only been 45 new books on the business of photography. I will have to say that one of the very best is: “**Successful Self-Promotion for Photographers**” from Elyse Weissberg.

I'd like to quote another anecdote from the “Successful Self-Promotion for Photographers” book.

Send frequent postcard mailings — once a month, if you can manage it. As each card arrives, it reminds your potential client that you are available for an assignment. In fact, the card is better than a voice message — the client sees your name and an image as a reminder of your style.

One photographer I represented tried that approach. He had never promoted himself before, so the art directors were not familiar with his name or his work. He sent out postcard images every month in what began as a lesson in patience. The phone didn't ring until the eighth month, but then it didn't stop ringing and he secured many jobs. Some months later, the photographer stopped sending cards because he was too busy shooting to keep his direct-mail campaign. Guess what happened? The calls stopped coming. To this day he continues to send monthly cards. He doesn't have to “follow up” anyone as long as he keeps sending the postcards

I have done this, and this lack of continuity in self-promotion has hurt me, actually quite hard.

THANK YOU NOTE AFTER MEETING

The meeting went well, they haven't decided yet. I have a good feeling, the presentation went well, and they seem to know what they wanted.

Now what? If I need to change the proposal, that's OK. However, if I need to sit tight and wait, I hate that. Patience is not my forte. Have they decided? What are they discussing? I can't push. However, I can write a handwritten thank you note. I have a whole bunch of cards that say "Thank You."

It was a pleasure to spend time with you yesterday. Thank you for spending an hour with me to discuss your ...

Thanks

Syv

I never use email for the thank you cards. I never use those e-cards, almost all of them end up in the spam folder, or being killed by the anti-virus either on the mail server or on the person's computer.

The thank you card, with an envelope and stamp, costs me around \$5. Before that stage, I usually have already spent an hour doing the presentation and 3, 4 or 5 hours preparing for the presentation and the proposal.

On a couple of occasions, customers have said that the thank you note did tip the balance in my favor.

ANSWERING THE PHONE

Whenever I receive a business related phone call, I always answer:

Me: Syv Ritch speaking

...

Me: How can I help?

The “how can I help?” happens usually after a minute or two of the conversation. That's how I end the chitchat. I started doing it 3 years ago, when I was at a “networking event.” There was this guy, one of the speakers, that was very successful. There were many people around him. I gravitated toward him and started listening. Contrarily to most speakers, he wasn't talking about himself, how great he was. What kind of genius he was and his IQ score...! He was very polite, an affable host and making people at ease. Within the first couple of minutes of every conversation, he always said:

How can I help you?

It was very interesting, so I started doing it too. It has helped my business. On at least a couple of occasions, I got the photo shoot because of it. Usually after the delivery of the photos, I have a chat with the customer on how they found me, how did the photography shoot go. Are they happy with the photography? ... In addition, twice they said that I got the job because of my attitude and it started with the:

How can I help?

RETURNING PHONE CALLS

Sometime ago, I got a call from Junique, never heard of her before, 2 phone calls and 3 emails later, I got this small but interesting job, photographing her in the South Shore of False Creek in Vancouver, BC.

After I delivered the photos, I was chatting with Junique as why she used my services, since it was not my specialty.

You were only one of the FIVE photographers I called. Nobody else returned my call on the same day.

What? Junique called me on a Tuesday morning, around 9:30 am. By 10 o'clock, I already returned her call. The emails went back and forth, and by the end of the day, I had the job.

It turned out that two other "guys" returned her call by the end of the day, and the last two "guys" didn't even bother to return her phone call. At least, they could have called back that they can't do her photos. She will never try to contact them again.

It always pays to behave professionally.

MANNERS

They are like laws in that they codify or set a standard for human behavior, but they are unlike laws in that there is no formal system for punishing transgressions, other than social disapproval. They are a kind of norm.

— Wikipedia's definition of manners

Good manners include:

- Introducing yourself or having somebody introducing you
- Being polite
- Being dressed appropriately
- Contributing to conversations without dominating them
- Eating neatly and quietly
- Arriving when expected...

How many photographers do forget their manners?

I was at a reception, "somebody with a big camera [a Nikon D3]," arrived late and immediately started bossing people around by moving them around. He wore worn-out jeans and sandals. He never introduced himself. We were supposed to recognize him by his camera and flash. He took a

break during the reception and "stuffed" himself as if he had nothing to eat for the last week.

What's the likelihood that he will be hired again?

MOO BUSINESS CARDS

I ordered 50 Moo business cards from <http://moo.com>. By the time the shipping was included, it was \$30. \$30 for 50 cards, that's \$0.60 per business card. Wow, expensive! Kind of.

The Moo cards allow you to upload photos, as many photos as you want, up to the total number of business cards. This means custom business cards. I went to my local printer, he can't do that, but he could farm it out and it would cost me around \$8 per card! Now, 60 cents per card is not that expensive.

So why use the Moo cards? I ask people to choose which business card they want. **It's a great conversation starter.**

THE GOOD OF THE MOO CARDS

- It's a very heavy card stock
- The business cards are laminated and feel great
- Up to 50 different photos for 50 business cards. Where else can you get that?
- Great marketing from Moo cards
- Moo has a Flickr group
- Fantastic

I received the following email.

Hello

I'm Little MOO - the bit of software that will be managing your order with us. It will shortly be sent to Big MOO, our print machine who will print it for you in the next few days. I'll let you know when it's done and on its way to you.

Flickr users, listen up: Please do not remove the photos from your account, or change their privacy settings, until your order has been printed, or some pictures may come out blank.

Isn't it great?

THE BAD OF THE MOO CARDS

1. The name section on the other side doesn't look great. I selected the vertical, right justified layout for the text, but it doesn't look good. There may be better way of arranging the layout, the fonts... It's not bad, but definitely not great like the rest the cards.
2. Moo cards should do a much better job explaining the guidelines for the photos.
 - a. The photos must be simple photos with a simple design. If the thumbnail doesn't look good, the photo on the business card will not look good.
 - b. The dynamic range of the photo should be low
 - c. Not too many blacks in the photo
 - d. Not too many whites in the photo
3. The colors are not exact. If there was a profile for their printer, I missed it.
4. The photos need much more sharpening than my regular sharpening.
5. The photos need to be reformatted for 1039 pixels by 697 pixels at 300 dpi.

Will I use again Moo business cards? Yes, but this time I will first order the 10 free samples pack to preview it. I will set it up much earlier, it took 2½

weeks for printing + shipping, and I will buy at the same time a set of mini cards.

SMART VS. LUCKY

Would you prefer to be smart or be lucky? Personally, I'd rather be lucky than smart. If you are lucky, you can always hire somebody that's smart.

A few decades ago, when I came to Canada, I tried to meet with Pat H., a senior managing editor. I spent 6 weeks trying to get the appointment. After contacting "the man who saw the man, who saw the bear," I finally got my appointment. Pinni and I went to the meeting. The only problem, Pat wasn't there! Pat couldn't make it. His wife delivered their second baby just the day before. We met with Dan S. Dan was a consultant, he assisted Pat. We got the job and 2 month later, we were done.

At the end of the job, there was a debriefing with Pat, Dan, Pinni and me. Dan came, because he was the one that hired us. After 15mn, Pat left and we finished the debriefing with Dan. A comment leading to the next one, Dan offered me a very small shoot at the fixed price of \$2,500. The small photo shoot, turned out to be very difficult, complicated and took forever, still it was \$2,500 fixed price. 300 hours later, I was working for \$8 per hour!

Four years later, after 200 hundred thousand dollars worth of work, we parted company. Pat's wife delivering her second child the day before my meeting and meeting Dan S. instead of Pat H. was my luck. No smarts involved just plain luck.

THE BIG LAUNCH

You have the great idea. You are going to do it. You prepare your website. You are ready to launch. You can either "go big" or "go incremental."

I have tried the "big launch" and the "go big" spending half of my marketing money only to go flop. I did buy advertising. I did print and delivered over a thousand invitations. I got the reception, the caterer, the food...

Total sales: \$385. What? Yes, only \$385. I lost over \$5000 on that big launch.

Unless you are an advertising professional, or your best friends have a column in the newspaper or have their own TV show where you can get free advertising, you will be better off doing a small, incremental promotion.

Every major online service like eBay, Google, Amazon, PayPal, Twitter, Facebook started without a big launch.

YELLOW PAGES?

Let your fingers do the walking! This was the slogan of the Yellow Pages in the previous millenium. Even today, in the Internet age, businesses advertise in the Yellow Pages. Are you advertising in the Yellow Pages? I'm not! Why? Because I tried.

I did it for two years. The first year, I did a 1/8th of a page ad. How much business did I generate? Zip, Zero, Nada, None. Every month, I would get three or four phone calls, but this was from people trying to get the cheapest deal they could get.

If an eighth of a page is not enough to generate business, what about a quarter of a page? The second year, I took a 1/4 of page ad. How much business did I generate with a 1/4 of a page? Again Zip, Zero, Nada, None. Every month, I would get a dozen phone calls, but again this was from people trying to get the cheapest deal they could get and I am not the cheapest or they wanted something I did not do. Once I was able to ask a

few questions like “where did you get my phone number...” The most important was:

Me — How many other places have you called?

She — You're my fourth and I have three more.

She was phoning seven photographers to find the cheapest. No portfolio, no photo sample, no reference...

Me — Why not go to Sears or Wall-Mart with 36 photos for \$9.95.

Special from Sears

She — Good idea, thanks.

In total, I wasted/lost almost \$11,000 by advertising in the Yellow Pages. I haven't been able to track a single sale back to the Yellow Pages.

SPONSORSHIPS

A few professional photographers earn a good living from sponsorships. The keyword here is a few. It's very difficult to get a “famous” sponsorship.

- Canon's Explorers of Light: There are only 63 photographers! [Dec-2010] That's out of the few millions of professional photographers that use Canon's cameras.
- Nikon Ambassadors: No exact number, but many more. You need to either be “already famous” have a popular blog...
- Olympus Visionaries: less than a hundred
- Sony Artisans of Imagery: half a dozen
- I don't know about Pentax.

Many other companies will sponsor photographers, but not for money. Free equipment, samples... and will pay expenses and time for you to travel to shows, workshops...

October/November 2010: Sigma has offered many Canadian professional photographers free lenses. I want to protest since I wasn't included.

- Sponsorship can be a good thing. You get free equipment. You get them to promote you as a brand.
- Sponsorship can be a bad thing. Many times, they will control what you say.

A FRIEND IN NEED

In 2009, one of my biggest customers went "belly up," closed, bankrupt, sort of. They did file for bankruptcy after they paid the "small guys," including me. They owed me \$400, which they paid in full.

6 month later, I got a phone call from Travis, the ex-owner. He was trying to get back in business and there were a couple of photos that he wanted to use, but he couldn't afford to pay me anything.

Travis — I need the two photos from last year, but I don't have any money. Can we arrange something?

Me — Of course, anything I can do to help. The only thing that I will ask is to have my name published, under the photo. Would that work?

Travis — Of course, thanks. I owe you one.

9 month later, late night, much later than usual, I received a phone call from Travis, he was back in business and needed my services for the following month, two full days with payment on delivery. That wasn't me who asked, he offered.

Your customers and employees will remember how you treated them when times were tough, when they needed a break. No one remembers how good you were during the boom times.

CHEAPSKATES

I was talking with Sam, a friend of mine. He was "complaining" that all his customers are cheapskates. His customers don't want to pay for the 11" by 14" or 16" by 20" prints. I started asking where he gets his clients. Many of his clients came from his wife, Airin. Airin is a barterer. She loves to barter.

Barter is exchanging good or services without using money and the keyword is exchanging and not the word paying.

Sam doesn't barter but many of his customers do. It turns out that he promotes, actually his wife, at places where cheapskates congregate. A cheapskate is a cheapskate. A cheapskate doesn't pay for things that are not a necessity. A cheapskate pride themselves on being cheap and how little money they paid for ... including photos.

- You can't earn a "proper living" from cheapskates.
- I refuse to deal with cheapskates. Cheapskates are vortexes that suck all of the resources and prevent me from looking for "real customers."

CLEAN SOCKS

I have to come "clean." I've had some embarrassing moments as a photographer.

I went to a Madeleine's house, with Sam, a colleague. It was to make photos of her dogs. Like many homeowners, she asked us to remove our shoes for the carpet. As I sat on the stairs and started to remove my shoes, Sam used one foot to remove his shoe, then the other foot to remove the other shoe.

Then... the big toe appeared. It wasn't a small hole in the sock. It was the full big toe. Sam tried to hide it, but it glowed in the dark, it had blinking

lights, fluorescent and shined in the dark. Sam was so embarrassed that he mumbled something in way of apologies.

Every grown man must have clean socks, that don't smell, without any hole.

Didn't your mother tell you that you should wear clean underwear in case you get into an accident, and they have to take you to the hospital?

PAPARAZZI

Paparazzi: photographers that take uninvited candid photos of celebrities.

They usually do it through following, ambushing, and stalking the celebrity. But many celebrities share their schedules with the paparazzi so they can raise their profile in the media.

There are various surveys, but these surveys are from photographers that volunteer for these surveys. The average income of a paparazzi is around \$100,000 per year with the possibility of getting the money shot that will make them millions. A good paparazzi earn around \$250,000 per year with the possibility of getting the shot that will make them the millions.

Why so much money? When most other photographers "starve"?

- Agencies and magazine are willing to pay real money for good photos, especially compromising/embarrassing photos.
- People spend their hard earn cash to buy these magazines.
- People pay Internet subscriptions fees for their favorite Hollywood stars.
- Paparazzi's photos not only have a one-time value, they also have a very long archival value. The archival value is based on the longevity of the celebrity or what are they doing now.
- These photos provide excitement and dreams.

- Most agencies, like MB Pictures, Bauer-Griffin, X17, and Splash News have price grids for which celeb does what.

RELIGION

I have known Danny for years. We often bump into each other. He's a good photographer, but business is not what it should be. He always complains about how bad business is, then he always asks, if am too busy, that I should send him some customers. I have not. I have recommended a few other photographers but never Danny. Why? Because he wears his religion on his sleeves and he makes everybody uncomfortable with it.

- I can't remember a conversation where he didn't quote the Bible.
- He has many stickers on his car about "Jesus being his real boss..."

Your religion is your religion. You can be proud of it. Photography is a business. It's not a pulpit to preach a religion. Don't bring up religion or politics in your business. Now if your customer asks or brings it up, that's a different story.

If your business is in your religious community, then emphasize it, but not with the Joe Public.

PUBLISHING

Having a book published establishes you as a photographer of "importance." Who the hell is a photographer of importance? A photographer is important enough to publish a book. In the "good old days" of the last century, it was very expensive to publish a book. The minimum run in the US was 5,000 copies and in Canada, it was 2,000 copies. That's a lot of money. Between the writing, the making of the book, the printing, the distribution, and the marketing, the cost would be from \$100,000 to \$500,000. You must be important to have somebody risk \$100,000+ on you.

With publishing, you need to find a publisher and an editor that are willing to risk money on you. It doesn't matter how good you are, they will only risk the money if you can "guarantee" sales.

Bob Young started working on low volume digital printing presses. In 2002, he created <http://lulu.com>. In 2004, Eileen Gittins created <http://blurb.com>. With these and other companies, you can create your own book, upload it with them, and start selling your book, one book at a time. They will print book in single copy. They are other companies that you can use, but Blurb and Lulu are the biggest.

Since you are self-publishing, you make a lot more money per sale of each book, but:

1. You need to promote your own book.
2. You will never sale your book at Borders¹², at Barnes and Nobles... or other bookstores.

However, you can use and advertise your book as promotion. People will come to you based on your book.

TAKE THE HIGH ROAD

I was sending emails back and forth with a guy about some interview, and then suddenly out of the blue I got the following email:

I don't want to deal with someone that I don't know.

Where did this come from? No idea. May be I gave him the wrong idea, maybe I ... I was taken aback. A simple: "I can't" or "Sorry but I am not interested" or ... would have been good enough. I waited a couple of hours and replied to his email with:

¹² That will depend on whether Borders will stay in business, after filing for bankruptcy in Feb-2011.

Sorry to hear that.

How likely that our path will cross again? It could even be in a business environment. Will he remember it? Never grovel, but you are never wrong taking the high road.

- "It's business, it's not personal" Tom Hagen in "The Godfather" — Mario Puzo
- Always be polite
- Cut your losses
- Don't burn bridges

TURNING DOWN BUSINESS

Every so often, I get a phone call asking me about wedding photography. I don't do weddings. Why? Because of the stress, not of dealing with the BrideZillas but the stress of dealing with the parents. Usually I turn them down and depending on my mood and where the wind comes from... I will recommend some other photographer.

I don't take jobs that I can't do. Some people say, take them as a learning experience. I don't, I prefer to specialize. I can earn a better living, I can charge more, and I'm more pleased with myself.

I also turn down photo shoots where I can't earn a living, unless it's a non-profit organization that I support. Usually they will say that it will raise my profile in the industry. I have a policy for the non-profit. My policy is:

- Proper attribution directly under each photo
- Attribution to me with copyright: ©Syv Ritch
- Attribution to my website: <http://foto-biz.com>
- Notice that the photo was donated by Syv Ritch

- The font to be used must be the same as the body of the article that my photos illustrate
- They agree that any breach of this policy will result in having to pay the full standard fee, tripled.

Once they receive my policy via email, they usually ask me to modify them or rescind them, just for one time. This means that surprise, surprise “they are not really interested in raising my profile.”

It's cheaper for me to “not work” than to work at a loss. Every photo shoot cost me money. If I'm not working, I'm not losing money. I have a couple of personal project that I can dedicate my time to.

“LONG TERM RELATIONSHIP”

I hate it. I really hate that expression. When I hear this expression, I know that it's time to get my gun, my dog, the beef jerky, and run for the hills. They are trying to “screw” me.

I've had the conversation. They want the photos, they want them hi-res, they want to publish them, and most importantly, they want the copyrights.

It's not much now, but we want to establish a long-term relationship.

- Why don't they have long-term relationships with their previous photographer? Was the long-term relationship a short-term relationship?
- Why are they looking for new photographers?
- Why do they want the copyrights?

As you must have summarized by now, the “long term relationship” will be short lived. I negotiate on price, I negotiate on terms, but I do not negotiate the copyrights.

PHOTO BUSINESS IDEAS

What are you going to sell photos about? What's the subject, who are the customers and who are the competitors. This section is to give you ideas. There are hundreds of variations on these ideas.

ARCHITECTURE

Architecture is a photography field without much competition. Why? The number of customers is fairly limited. The cost of getting involved in architectural photography is high. Architectural photography is difficult. You need a strong knowledge of:

- Architectural history, from the Greeks in the antiquity to modern architecture. Even today, many architects use Greek inspired buildings, like the pillars at the entrance of almost every "formal" building.
- Understanding of architecture to highlight the interesting parts, the difficulties of the design.
- What about the interior design, the furniture...
- Photography: view cameras, and techniques...
- Lighting of large to huge places. Balancing indoor with outdoor lighting. Nighttime photography and lighting...
- There are only two real considerations when photographing a building:
 - The time of day
 - The camera placement

The important thing about architectural photography is that it's recession proof! In good times or in bad times, architects, designers, and engineering firms need to have new photos so they can sell their services.

EQUIPMENT

Just a few years ago, mid-2000s, most architectural photographers still used 4"x5" view cameras for the tilt and shift lenses.

Then Canon came with the Canon 1DsMk3 and the Canon 5DMk2 with 21 megapixels, the TS-E 17mm, 24mm, 45mm and 90mm and a nodal panoramic head. You could not only compete with the view camera, you can do lot better with HDR, huge panoramas...

TECHNICAL

A Canon 1DsMk3 with the TS-E 17 and 45 is around \$11,000 in Vancouver, Canada! The same combo with a Canon 5DMk2 is around \$8,000. No cheap, but when you consider that sheet film cost around \$9 per sheet, plus processing, plus contact sheets... It's a bargain in the architectural world.

The other alternative is the Nikon D3x. Nikon "only" has a 24mm, 45mm, and the 85mm tilt and shift lenses.

The big things are:

1. Horizontal and verticals must be straight
2. Proper lighting, with the right amount of light and shadows
3. Proper balancing of indoor/outdoor lighting with HDR and/or many powerful lights

Great indoor, outdoor panoramas are a bonus.

CUSTOMERS

It's called architectural for a reason.

1. All architects and architectural firms need photos, record of what they design/build

2. Civil engineering firms. They build bridges, roads... and participate in the design of large buildings...
3. Architectural magazines
4. Large building/contractors companies that actually build the ... They will need construction records like foundations, exterior shell, piping...
5. Home designers

When doing architectural photography, do not bother with real-estate agents. They are not interested, at least not in my part of the world. They couldn't care less if the verticals are slanted or not... They will do it themselves, most of the time, with a point and shoot or use some photographer that will do it for much cheaper. See the Real Estate photography section.

How did you start?

I started cold-calling interior designers and got referrals.

— David Paler

COMPETITION

Very little, just the existing established photographers. Your opportunity is when one of them is retiring, sick, on vacation, not available or quit the business. Nevertheless, there's always room for one more.

PORTFOLIO

Around 20 prints, large prints, starting at 16" by 20". That's the starting size, the larger, the better.

Make sure that your portfolio includes a couple of institutional buildings, a bridge, one nice house/home, a couple of interiors, and one place daytime, and night time.

WHAT TO SELL

- Prints: canvases, large posters for internal use and to give to their customers
- Publication rights for articles in printed media, mostly as press releases
- Web rights for their own website, for articles in blogs/web media, mostly as press releases
- Their own marketing/publications
- Videos for web with 360° panoramas

The publication rights are usually for a long time. Many architectural firms still use photos of building designed and built in the 1960s and the photos of these buildings were taken in the 1960s!

ART CONSULTANTS

Art consultant is not a type of photography, it's somebody that consults. D'oh! She consults, but the question is to whom? Most of the time, she will consult for organizations, usually large organizations, that want to buy art. The art consultant will show the customer various photos be it in print or on the web... The customer decides, the art consultant charges the customer and sometimes charges you a commission. A good art consultant shouldn't charge you a commission. The customer already pays them.

Some of them specialize not in photography type but in industries like health care, governments... mostly depending on their contacts. Some of the art consultants have very rich clients. Some of the art consultants have low budget clients. The odds are in your favor with the "higher end" clients. The buyer not only pays for the art, the buyer also pays for the services of the art consultant.

WHERE TO FIND THEM

Like everything else, Google. Search for "art consultant OR consultants" without the quotes.

By the way, why the OR (must be uppercase)? Because Google does a very poor job of identifying the plurals vs. the singular. Then you can add "health", "corporate art", "interior decorators", or "interior designer" with the singular and plural form.

WHAT TO SEND

Send emails to these art consultants asking, "To be considered for placement on their list of artists" and include:

- Your bio
- Your artist statement
- Your website
- Your price list. You also need to make sure that you provide volume discount. Such as 10 prints as 10 different prints 25% off or...

In the Subject of the email start with "Query: ..." with ... being your photography type/subject. Only list one or two topics at most.

How many will reply, who cares? Your cost is your time... I know one guy that sold \$19,000+ in a month through three separate art consultants!

BABIES

1. For women only! I know it's sexist and not correct. In today's world, a man making photos of babies, children, or teenagers is a sexual abuse lawsuit waiting to happen
2. Must love kids and babies
3. Must have patience

Photos of babies are some of the most wonderful photos and some of the worst photos ever taken. That's why great pros are always in demand.

The photos are for the mother and the grandparents. These photos do not need to be "great." The main problem is to capture the familiar faces and the familiar behaviors of the baby.

EQUIPMENT

The equipment must be light and quick. Any dSLR with a 70-200mm zoom will give you great photos. If you can afford the cost, the size, and the weight of the 2.8 then... If you try to save some \$\$ or want something lighter, then there's the "famed" Canon 70-200mm L-IS f/4. I love mine.

TECHNICAL

When making photos of babies, you shouldn't use flashes. You should use continuous cold lighting. Flashes easily scare many babies and young kids. In addition, many parents believe that using a flash will damage the baby's eyes. This means that you will have to either use LED lighting or fluorescent lighting. Never use incandescent lighting. Incandescent lighting is too dangerous near children and babies.

You can place them behind a screen to transform it in a large light source, and make sure that you make the mother place her hand on the LED to verify that's its cold lighting.

Simple lighting with good close-ups will work magic on your sales.

CUSTOMERS

1. 99% of the time, the parents and grandparents are the only customers. It's rare that even other family members would buy your photos.

2. Publications: they are mostly looking for kids and babies doing some type of activity, including sleeping. They are rarely interested in close-ups. The publications will be requesting model releases from the parents/guardians whether they need them or not.

COMPETITION

The main competition for the baby photos is from the female wedding photographers and from the friend with a camera.

1. The wedding photographer thinks that since she's done such a good job on the wedding, she can also do a good job with the baby. There's no connection between the two.
2. The friend with the camera has a leg up on you: regular access to the baby. However, the friend with the camera only gives away 4" by 6" or 5" by 7". The mother has never seen her baby on an 11" by 14" or 16" by 20" or 20" by 30". It's a completely different experience.

Your job is to provide a different look from their existing photos. You do that with either a very wide angle or a long tele wide open at the level or below the baby.

PORTFOLIO

A dozen of large prints, including a canvas for people to understand what they can get.

WHAT TO SELL

- Prints, prints and prints
- When they ask for a CD/DVD, gladly give the Facebook size: up to 720 pixels in size, then explain about the printing. You can show them two

prints: 1-hour photo vs. your custom print. Only then will they understand

- Small book of baby's activities...
- Prints for grandma...
- Canvas for the wall...
- Framed/mounted photos for the relatives...
- Photo frame viewer pre-loaded with all the photos at the resolution of the frame view, VGA, SVGA or XWVGA...

BUSINESS CARDS PORTRAITS

How specialized can you go? Those are not portraits, but portraits for business cards only! Don't laugh. It's a great promo. Louise L. uses the business card portraits to get new customers. Great for getting your foot in the door.

EQUIPMENT

The simpler, the better. The light, flashes and reflectors will make or break the portrait.

TECHNICAL

Very difficult. The business card portrait has to be very simple. Lots of middle tones but with highlights and shadows. Almost similar to the actors head and shoulders comps.

The usual resolution is 300/350 dpi. Business cards are usually 3 ½" wide by 2" tall. The photo has to look good at 450 pixels tall or wide.

You will need to offer both square and tall formats. The portrait has to look good in both formats. The photos must convert well to black and white, or you must provide both.

CUSTOMERS

The customers are usually small business people and real estate agents. It's a great way of getting you foot in the door.

It's also a great referral item.

PORTFOLIO

Not a portfolio per-se. More a good flyer that has both:

- A photo of a person taken with the pop-up flash
- A photo of the same person with proper lighting

The flyer should include photos of at least three people:

- A middle age man
- A middle age woman
- A younger man

Do not include a younger woman that looks "too good" or "too sexy." People will not relate to them.

Instead of a flyer, you can make a 4" by 6" print or even better a 5" by 7" or a postcard that you can distribute. Either you can distribute it yourself, or you can use the post-office to do your distribution. Canada Post calls it "Unaddressed Mail – Direct Mail" and charges \$0.16 per flyer in thousand for distributing to businesses for a non-contract. You can even get it for ½ of that price with a large enough contract.

CATALOG

It's never sexy, most of the time it's small articles with a very standardized lighting. If you can get the job, it's well paid. It's not an easy job. The secret sauce is the lighting of highly reflective chromes...

EQUIPMENT

- You do not need a high res camera. The photo used will be between 100 pixels to 1000 pixels. Rarely bigger
- You will need a good macro lens, no bellow/extension tubes.
- Good cold continuous LED lighting
- A tent for lighting the subjects/objects

TECHNICAL

The “real pros” actually shoot the photos tethered to the computer. This will restrict you to the Nikon D300 series and the D3 series with Nikon or the 50D and up on the Canon side. This gives you a “real preview” before shooting.

The continuous light allows the preview and the correct setup, instead of hunting with trial and errors.

LED lights are now a requirement. Using incandescent lights can damage many items. You will often need to mix some food, salads on cutlery and plates... The other alternative to LED is fluorescent lighting, but it’s much more expensive and difficult to use with small items.

CUSTOMERS

Small manufacturers/distributors. They need the catalog for their website. They also need to send the catalog to their customers. The simplest is to have family or a friend that works over there and ask.

It’s not too difficult for the “no-connections,” make a postcard with 2 or 3 photos at the front, addressed to the manager or not even a name, just saying something along the line of:

For your photography need for a catalog, call/email...

Usually the reception, mail person will pass it along to the appropriate person.

COMPETITION

Very little, just the existing established photographers. Your opportunity is when the manufacturer/distributor changes their photo department and fires everybody¹³ or one of the photographers is retiring, sick, on vacation, not available or quit that business to do something else.

New manufacturers / distributors: they will usually have new arrangements.

PORTFOLIO

Must include:

- A couple of people with cloths on
- At least one photo of a watch
- At least one photo of a cutlery: knife, fork and spoon
- At least a couple of photos of wine glasses
- Photos of small items like screws, nails...
- Photos of an iPod, BlackBerry...

WHAT TO SELL

Always photo files. They always buy almost all the rights. You are paid either per photo delivered or as a flat fee per job.

CHILDREN

1. For women only! I know it's sexist and not correct. In today's world, a man making photos of babies, children, or teenagers is a sexual abuse lawsuit waiting to happen.

¹³ Excuse me, the proper term is "let go."

2. Must love kids
3. Must have patience

Children are different from babies. D'oh! Of course. You also sell different photos. When I was a young teenager myself, that's how I started my photo business with just a Kodak Instamatic 126. This was a super/duper cheap camera, well below the current level of a point and shoot. I would venture to say that the quality level would be a par with a cheap cell phone camera, much lower than today's smart phones.

I was 12 and I made very good money selling photos of my friends to their mothers. I would print all the photos in black and white and show their mothers the photos. Almost all of them bought the photos. That's how I started in photography and gave me the business sense.

Very few people will get their children posing for photographers. And then, you only get the stiff wooden photos with the grin aka the fake smile. Some families will get a couple of photos of the kids when they get the portraits of the whole family.

Children that are more than 6 or 7 years old will not pose for anybody unless they are professional child models. You should strive for activity photos.

EQUIPMENT

This is one of the simplest setup. A camera with either a medium wide angle or a short tele. No flash...

TECHNICAL

No technical issue, but many issues relating to the kids. That's the hard part.

CUSTOMERS

The mother of the children. She will buy the photos for the rest of the family.

One photographer, that I know of, has a poster at the bus stop just in front of the school. That's her only advertising and she's very happy with it. No other marketing.

Most of her work is in late winter and in the spring. She makes enough money in 5 month for the whole year.

COMPETITION

1. The school photographer and the photographer that does the school photo. However, those are studio photos, and always with the grin and say cheese.
2. The customer or a family member with a point and shoot camera.

Your job is to provide a different look from their existing photos. You do that with either a very wide angle or a long tele wide open.

PORTFOLIO

About two dozen photos of both girls and boys from four to young teenagers. The kids should be playing or engaged in some activity.

Large prints, including canvas.

WHAT TO SELL

- Print, large print and large framed prints.
- Give away: the small 4" by 6" prints.
- Photos Facebook size. Everybody expect them. A few for the kid, so she can use it for her own Facebook page. They will make their own

prints from these. Explain about the printing. You can show them two prints: 1-hour photo vs. your custom print. Only then will they understand.

- <http://picscatter.com/> is the hot thing right now.

CHURCHES, TEMPLES, SYNAGOGUES...

Churches, temples, synagogues... are a whole "beast" by themselves. They are the door to a new, extremely profitable, world. The churches are the centre of a community with a huge number of events. From baptism to weddings and funerals, there are hundreds of photo opportunities. When I mention church, it also applies to the temples, the synagogues...

The church is not just a center of religion, but it's also a center of cultural and social activities. They often have daycare and/or organize trips to...

- Participate to various activities and bring your camera
- Offer the photos to the priest, the reverent... for their newsletter, website... for free
- Organize a board by the entrance and put your prints. Not if but when, people want prints, they can buy them. Nothing outrageous but no "cheapskates" either

The churches are a great gateway to many specialties. It gets you in at the ground floor. Once a member, there no barrier of how far you can go. The church members are also members of the community at large. They also need photos outside of their church.

Most of these opportunities are for professional photographers that are members of the church.

EQUIPMENT

That will depend on what you are doing.

TECHNICAL

That will depend on what you do.

CUSTOMERS

Usually offering the church to document the events/activities will bring you customers. It's very rare that the reverent... has a record of the activities done either by the church, in the church or on the church properties.

Offering the photos to your church both supports your church and gives you the opportunity to show your work to all the church members.

Don't even bother selling. If the members like your photos, they will come to you. This is the "softest sell."

This is a great entrance for wedding photography.

COMPETITION

Very little to none. Even if there is another photographer, don't worry about it. Just keep doing your own thing. This is one of the best ways to build a clientele. It's much slower than full marketing/advertising. However, you should be fully self-supporting within a year, if you work at it.

PORTFOLIO

None needed. People will see your photos related to the church then they will ask you to photograph their family...

WHAT TO SELL

You do not sell to the church members instead the church members will buy from you.

The fantastic thing about being involved in your church... is the people. They come from all walks of life. They work everywhere. They know many people. If you want to deal with an organization, just make it known through the newsletter, the announcements... if somebody knows how to get in touch with ... Very often, there'll be somebody volunteering to help you.

CLUBS / LODGE

Clubs and lodges are center of activities like the churches, except that they are much more directed to a specific purpose. They are wonderful places to start and develop a photographic career. Your success will depend on the level of activities that happen with the club or the lodge.

Clubs and lodges usually meet on a monthly basis, while the churches meet on a weekly basis.

EQUIPMENT

That will depend on what you are doing. Event, posed groups...

TECHNICAL

That will depend on what you do.

CUSTOMERS

Usually offering the club/lodge to document the events/activities will bring you customers. It's very rare that the club or the lodge has a record of the activities done either by the club or on the club/lodge property. Bring your camera and take photos.

Offering the photos to your club/lodge both support your club and gives you the opportunity to show your work to all the members.

Organize a board by the entrance and put your prints. Not if but when, people want prints they can buy your photos. Nothing outrageous but no "cheapskates" either. Don't even bother selling. If the members like your photos, they will come to you. This is the "softest sell."

COMPETITION

It's quite rare to have competition. Even if there is competition, don't worry about it. Just keep doing your own thing. This is one the best way to build a clientele. It's much slower than full marketing/advertising.

PORTFOLIO

None needed. People will see your photos related to the lodge then they will ask you to photograph their family...

WHAT TO SELL

You do not sell to the club/lodge members instead the club/lodge members will buy from you.

COMMERCIAL / ADVERTISING

Commercial and advertising photography is where the big \$\$\$ is. Not only the rates are excellent, but the usage/copyrights also equal extra \$\$\$.

My experience in that field is extremely specialized. I did constructions sites.

Here are a few books that you must read:

- **Successful Self-Promotion for photographers:** Elyse Weissberg. I will give it a 6 stars on a scale of 1 to 5. You should get this book even if you are not into commercial/advertising photography
- **Commercial Photography Handbook:** Kirk Tuck
- **Photo Portfolio Success:** John Kaplan

ADBASE/AGENCY ACCESS

To succeed in commercial photography or editorial photography you need to know who to contact and how to contact them. The person to contact is the editor...

The editor has two conflicting problems:

1. They want to know about new photographers, they want to know about new work.
2. They don't want to be harassed, they have work to do. They don't want to receive spam, they don't want to receive cold calls...

Editors move often and quickly. They move from one publisher to another, they move from one publication to another within the same publisher. They move from a publisher to a commercial client. They move from commercial clients to publishers. They go consulting, they go back to be an "employed" editor...

It's difficult to keep track of them. The two biggest companies in the US that make their business of tracking them are AdBase and Agency Access. They are the same but a little bit different. There are other companies.

You can go to their websites and take a look. Do **not** buy, just look. Think, contact them by phone, and tell them that you are a ... ask them what can they do for you.

They are not cheap, but they are definitely worth the price. You can't do what these guys do. The editors actually asked to be on their lists or to be removed.

Before spending any money, read: **Successful Self-Promotion for photographers**: Elyse Weissberg at least a couple of times. Then you will know what to ask and for what purpose.

CRAFT FAIRS / ART SHOWS

CRAFT FAIRS VS. ART SHOWS

From the names, I assumed that they were similar, just different wording. Wrong! Although the mechanics involved at the same, they are completely different "beasts." What makes them completely different "beasts"? The customers! The customers of the craft fairs come to buy economical things that are handmade aka cheap. The craft fair's customer will not pay \$450 for a 16" by 20" canvas. The art show's customer doesn't see a problem with paying \$450 for the same 16" by 20" canvas. They expect it. Art show customers equate price with quality and art.

CRAFT FAIRS/ART SHOWS: A WASTE OF TIME?

The art shows can be either a very lucrative market or a black hole that will suck all of your time. It depends on how well the photos relate to the people coming to the art show. It also depends on how well you relate to the people coming to the art show. The art shows can be quite expensive, especially to setup until you have a workflow that works.

In my opinion, the craft fairs are a waste of time. Between the cost of attending, the travel, and the "cheapskates", it's very unlikely that you will be making a profit.

COSTS

- Exhibition fees: You need to rent a table. Some of the art shows do include electricity, at other you will need to pay extra for the electricity. The fee also varies depending on the day of the week, with weekdays being cheaper than the weekends.
- Exhibition supplies: you need to buy/borrow/rent a table with stands to show your photos. If it does not look good, people will not become customers. Some shows provide you with the table, most of them don't.
- Commissions: Some art shows charge per table/space, some others charge a fee + a percentage of the sales.
- Remote credit card payment system: 11" by 14" prints and 16" by 20" prints are more than a \$100. This means that you will need to be able to accept credit card payments. Usually it's a remote credit card system with a built-in cell phone to accept the credit cards.
- Travel & Transportation: You will need to travel to many of these shows and gas is very expensive these days.
- Salaries: Can you be there every day? If not you will have to pay somebody else to go there...
- Supplies: Wrapping paper, receipts...

BENEFITS

- Sell prints: Money coming in!
- Marketing research: You **must** engage people in conversation by telling some of background of the picture they are looking at. From that, you get a feeling for what people want and what people are not interested in. This is definitely one of the biggest benefits of these craft fairs/art shows. This marketing research alone is worth the troubles.

- Get referrals: That depends on the subject/topic of the photos. People, pets: OK, construction and industrials: No.
- Reputation: Some of these art shows are extremely worth it, but then it has to be a long-term effort.
- Cross promotion: Promoting the website at the fair/show.
- Meeting people: These art shows force you to go out and to go to talk to people.

SETUP/INVENTORY

While some shows provide you with the table, some don't, then you will need to bring your own table. You must have your own:

- Table cloth
- Shelves
- Stands/racks to display the photos

How many photos to bring? That will depend on your volume.

- 8" by 10" = 200 to 300 prints with another 100 prints as backups/duplicates
- 16" by 20" = 60 to 90 prints with another 30 prints as backups/duplicates
- 20" by 30" = a dozen prints with another 5 or 6 prints as backups/duplicates
- 20" by 30" gallery wraps = a dozen prints with another 5 or 6 prints as backups/duplicates

The large sizes never sell as well as the smaller sizes. The 20" by 30" are extremely important. Don't expect to sell any. You are lucky if you sell one. The 20" by 30" are the photos that bring the people to your booth.

DRESS-UP

This used to be extremely popular in the 1970s and the early 1980s with Polaroid cameras. There was a set of Western/Cowboy clothes for both men and women. A photo, 5" by 7" or 8" by 10", instant sepia print that looks like an old photo. At the lower-end price you got a paper frame, at the higher-end price, you got a "real" frame.

EQUIPMENT

- Your camera on a tripod with a standard lens for either a full-length portrait or a $\frac{3}{4}$ -length portrait.
- 2 lights
- An inkjet printer, or even better a dye-sublimation printer.

TECHNICAL

The technical problem is not the cameras and the lights but the clothes that need to be cleaned or dry-cleaned on regular basis, without wearing them out or the colors will look faded.

CUSTOMERS

Usually at a craft fair or part of an event like churches, clubs, lodges, company summer... get together...

COMPETITION

Used to be a lot of them. Every fair, market had a dress-up stand. Now, it's rare. No competition, now you can make some money at it.

PORTFOLIO

Only a couple of large photos that show people in the cowboy / cowgirl outfit.

WHAT TO SELL

- Prints, all sizes including the 4" by 6" with some "kind of frame" available¹⁴. Nothing's free.
- Instead of selling each print, you can charge a flat fee if you doing it at a corporate event. The problem is that you will need a larger inventory of cloths.

EVENTS

Events photography used to be a big thing before the 2008 financial crash! Heck, I used to do it myself! It is more difficult than it looks. It depends on what you are selling. Event photography is taking photos of the principals on the stage and photos of the various guests.¹⁵

There are two types of events photography:

1. The event organizer, usually a corporate "higher-up," will pay you. Flat fee, so many digital files, so many prints, all rights included. You cannot in any way to use any of the photos for yourself, for resale...
2. The event organizer pays a modest fee. People will usually buy their own photos. And that's where everything goes wrong. You must be able to print the photos immediately! So people when they see their photo will take their credit card out and pay the \$13 for the photo in some cardboard slip-on frame. Now, not only you must take the photos, you must have at least two assistants with laptops and at least

¹⁴ Whether it's a cardboard insert or slip-in frame.

¹⁵ It's also taking the ugly, standard photo of 2 or 3 people shaking hands while holding the giant cardboard check.

two inkjet printers or an industrial dye-sublimation printer. You must also have at least one assistant to take the money, some people will use cash, but the vast majority of the people use credit cards. If there's any kind of volume, you will need two people for handling the cash, the credit cards... You must also have a website to keep the photos so people can order print. Very few will do, but you must have it.

EQUIPMENT

Same equipment as wedding photography, either a Canon 5DMk2 or a Nikon D700, with a couple of flashes and monster battery packs.

TECHNICAL

Receptions are different from weddings, in that at the wedding, the bride, the groom and the families take precedence. They will have their own dances, their own tables... so you can isolate them and make your photos. You do not have that luxury with events.

You do not know who's important, and who's not.

Some photographers "pre-load" the reception room with two or three radio controlled bounced Quantum flashes.

CUSTOMERS

- Large law firms
- Large accounting/consulting firms
- Publicity companies that organize events
- Non-profits for fundraising events
- ...

Those clients are difficult to get. It's mostly through: "The man who saw the man who saw the bear" aka your contacts. Alternatively, you can try "your luck" with the PR department.

COMPETITION

The existing photographer. Until the crash, Uncle Harry or the Girl with Camera was never involved. It's a matter of luck, the previous photographer is not available, so it's your turn. On the other hand, it's their first time that they organize an event and have to get a photographer...

Now most of my contacts have been laid off during the recession. In today's market, in Canada, they are much more frugal. I see event with the brother-in-law of the VP taking photos...

PORTFOLIO

- Hard to make, unless you go to other receptions/events
- Start belonging to a club, a user group, a sig... even a photo club and take photos to use as your portfolio.
- You will need around 20 photos. Make sure that you also include three or four black and whites.

WHAT TO SELL

Your best bet is to sell the whole package. The company pays for everything and you will supply them with all the prints. They will distribute them...

Doing retail and selling each print individually is a nightmare. I tried once, what a nightmare, I lost my shirt on that episode...

GROUPON

Groupon is the latest “hot” marketing tool. They will work with you to design the Groupon offer for you to get between a thousand clients to two thousand clients. Wow! In addition, usually it’s over the space of 2 or 3 days. That’s how powerful Groupon is.

WARNING ABOUT GROUPON

If you decide to use Groupon for your marketing, there’s no guarantee that they will accept you.

Thanks for contacting Groupon!

Since we can only feature a limited number of businesses, our schedule is carefully constructed to highlight a variety of business types, locations, sizes, and price-points. At this time, we don't see an opportunity to feature your business.

We have your information on file, and if it's OK with you, we'll be in touch if an opportunity arises in the future.

Again, thanks for writing, and let me know if there's anything else I can do to help.

Daron Mitchell

<http://www.grouponworks.com>

HOW IT WORKS

1. You contact Groupon
2. You have a conversation/email with them
3. You offer a “special” between 50% to 75% off
4. Groupon sends an email to their subscribers in that area/postal code/zip code/category or interest.
5. The special offer is valid only for a few days
6. The customer pays Groupon

7. You receive 50%¹⁶ of what Groupon received. The other 50% is their commission

You didn't pay anything. You get between thousand and two thousand customers. Like I said: Wow! What's the downside?

ECONOMICS

Before we can deal with Groupon, we need to go through an economic lesson on marginal cost:

The marginal cost is the change in total cost that arises when the quantity produced changes by one unit. That is, it is the cost of producing one more unit.

— Wikipedia

Let's see the cost of a 4" by 6" print:

1. The photographer's time to go to the place to take/make the photo
2. The photographer's time to take/make the photo
3. Other costs associated with making/taking the photo, like accessories, assistants, rentals
4. The photographer's time to process the photo
5. The cost of printing the photo: paper/ink... Costco/Walmart: \$0.12
6. The photographer's time to pick up the photo
7. The photographer's time to deliver the photo to the customer

All things taken in consideration¹⁷, the cost is around \$300. Now let's see the cost of a second 4" by 6" print of the same photo.

1. Zero, was done on the first print
2. Zero, was done on the first print

¹⁶ It the current standard, but sometimes they will charge more.

¹⁷ The costs in this example do not include what's called the overhead like rent...

3. Zero, was done on the first print
4. Zero, was done on the first print
5. The cost of printing the photo: paper/ink... Costco/Walmart: \$0.12
6. Zero, was done on the first print
7. Zero, was done on the first print

In this case, the marginal cost is \$0.12 if we use Costco/Walmart.

Now let's change from the print to making a portrait of one person with one print.

1. The photographer's time to go to the place to take/make the photo
2. The photographer's time to take/make the photo
3. Other costs associated with making/taking the photo, like accessories, assistants, rentals
4. The photographer's time to process the photo
5. The cost of printing the photo: paper/ink... Costco/Walmart: \$0.12
6. The photographer's time to pick up the photo
7. The photographer's time to deliver the photo to the customer

All things taken in consideration¹⁸ the cost is around \$300.

Now let's see the cost of a portrait of another person with one print.

1. The photographer's time to go to the place to take/make the photo
2. The photographer's time to take/make the photo
3. Other costs associated with making/taking the photo, like accessories, assistants, rentals
4. The photographer's time to process the photo
5. The cost of printing the photo: paper/ink... Costco/Walmart: \$0.12
6. The photographer's time to pick up the photo
7. The photographer's time to deliver the photo to the customer

¹⁸ The costs in this example do not include what's called the overhead like rent...

All things taken in consideration¹⁹ again the cost is around \$300.

In this case, the marginal cost is around \$300.

That's why cruise lines that are not fully booked usually sell cruises at the very steep discount, but only in the last few days before the departure. Their marginal cost is almost zero. They already paid for the ship, the employees, the food, the gas...

WHY & WHY NOT

- Groupon will significantly increase your sales. Can you cope with the increase volume? Can you make two thousand new portraits within a year? That's 6½ portraits per day of different customers for 300 days.
- Contrarily to Craig's list or barterers, Groupon customers are not "cheapskates." Groupon's customers are people that usually want to experiment for cheap but are willing to try luxury items/services.
- Since Groupon is on straight commission, they are not interested limiting the sales number to only 25 sales. They have to make their quotas...
- Groupon is great if you sell products, and it's not that expensive to built/produce one more.
- Groupon is not so great when you are selling a service. Can you cope with the increase customer volume? Will you need to hire somebody else?
- You will not make any profit on the Groupon sale. You've offered a special at 50% off, and then usually Groupon takes 50% of what the customer paid. All you have left is 25%. Can you afford it? Some do, some don't.
- **Will these Groupon customers be repeat customers?**

¹⁹ The costs in this example do not include what's called the overhead like rent...

PAYMENT

You only get paid after delivering the service or the photos.

*Groupon will pay Merchant the Remittance Amount for each Voucher properly Activated for which a purchaser has fully paid Groupon and **for which Merchant has provided associated goods and/or services to purchaser.** It is Merchant's responsibility to provide Groupon with a redemption code each time a good or service is delivered to purchaser. Upon receipt of these codes, which serve as proof of delivery of goods and services to purchasers, Groupon will forward an amount of the then-collected Remittance Amount Total to Merchant in proportion to the goods and services the merchant has provided purchasers to that point in time (i.e., the % of Gropuns that have been redeemed)*

– Groupon contract

HOBBIES

Go a large magazine store or a library and look around. Any hobby with magazines has potential. The publishers did a market study and spent money creating, printing, and distributing the magazines. The photos are the three Ws:

1. **Who:** Photos of the people engaged in the hobby
2. **What:** Photos of what the people are "hobbying"
3. **How:** Photos of how the people are "hobbying"

GARDENS

I didn't expect that millions and millions of people are gardening "nuts." There are hundreds of magazines dedicated to gardening. There are thousands of gardening clubs.

There are very few gardening photographers. You need to know your botanic, the full names, the genus... Some photographers even specialize in trees only. When, where and what they are.

EQUIPMENT

Used to be mostly view cameras, now everybody is using digital and mostly macros and wide angle lenses.

TECHNICAL

1. The biggest problem is getting good tripods that can get you down to ground level.
2. You must provide the full scientific/Latin name of all of the plants.

CUSTOMERS

1. Mostly books and magazine publishers
2. Sometimes, but rarely, somebody will want to have their garden photographed

This is not a diverse clientele, but they usually buy in bulk. They will buy from dozens to hundreds of photos at a time.

COMPETITION

Very limited competition. It's a small world. Therefore, it's easier to break in the field.

PORTFOLIO

A website with hundreds, thousands of photos. The easiest is to use some place like PhotoShelter.

WHAT TO SELL

1. The more common species: Royalty Free photos
2. The more rare species: Rights Managed photos

MINIATURE RAILROAD

I had no idea of how big of a business miniature railroad is until I met Alex, an executive in his late 50s. He's a miniature railroad fanatic. He converted his whole basement into a miniature railroad. It's huge, his basement is at least 15 hundred square feet!

He writes articles on miniature railroads, sells his photos by the hundreds. Most of his photos are just "howtos" of electronics...

EQUIPMENT

- A small simple camera with a standard lens and macro capabilities
- A good tripod that allows you to get low to the ground or in awkward positions

TECHNICAL

The major problem is the lighting. It's difficult to deal with flash because of the tight places. I recommend using cool LEDs behind diffusers.

CUSTOMERS

- Mostly other miniature railroad fanatics, with the various magazines
- Club members at the monthly meetings
- Since Alex designs some of his electronics, he also sells a monthly newsletter subscription that used to be on printed-paper and snail mail. Now he sends the PDFs via email.

COMPETITION

Very limited. It's a small world of clubs/magazines.

PORTFOLIO

No need. They are not interested in the portfolio. They only want the finished goods, the photos, and the articles.

WHAT TO SELL

Articles complete with photos.

LANDSCAPE

Everybody loves landscapes. Humans have been painting landscapes since the beginning of civilization in Mesopotamia. Things haven't changed in the four thousand years. We are in the third millennium and people still make landscapes while customers still buy landscapes.

Quang-Tuan Luong of <http://www.terrageria.com/> is the first photographer to have photographed all the US national park. He's built an "excellent" income from his website. Up to 2009, he used to sell 60% as stock/digital files and 30% as prints... Now he sells less than 20% as stock/digital files and over 70% as prints.

EQUIPMENT

The larger the camera, the sharper the lens, the better. A good and solid tripod and you are set, except for the landscape. Speed is not of the essence.

The undisputed king is the Canon 5DMk2 with the 24-105L f/4.

TECHNICAL

- Sharpness
- Low ISO
- Straight horizons

- ...

CUSTOMERS

Everybody, doctors, dentists, lawyers... see the rentals section.

COMPETITION

- Plenty and very little. Very few photographers are specialized and have a large enough collection to give choice
- Every other photographer claims to be a landscape artist
- Galleries in touristy areas

PORTFOLIO

No portfolio as such, you must show all of your photos.

WHAT TO SELL

- The more local the photos, the better they will sell, unless it's a universal/religious place.
- The larger the print, the better it will sell. Rarely will people buy small landscapes. They look terrible.

LOCAL TRAVEL

This is the same as the landscape, except that it's related to the place that you will sell the photos. Locals buy these photos because they can relate to it.

Randy Santos of <http://www.dcstockimages.com/> sells photos of Washington, DC. From book publishers to interior designers. He's been doing it since 2004, with his own website that is tied to <http://photoshelter.com> for his back-end.

Mark Maziarz of <http://www.parkcitystock.com/index.htm> sells photos of Park City, Utah. From book publishers to magazines, interior designers. He's been doing it since the early 2000 with <http://photoshelter.com> for his back-end.

Ken Kameneski of <http://blog.kenkaminesky.com/> sells HDR prints from his website as prints and stock. Many of his photos are presented as blog entries with <http://photoshelter.com> for his back-end.

MAGAZINE FEATURES

If you only sell photos to a magazine, you are only paid for a few photos. Almost no magazine will send you out for 3 month, pay you for your time, and publish 40 to 100 photos. National Geographic and Geo are the only magazines that I know that still do this type of reporting.

You are more likely to be published if you have both the photos and the article. If you refuse to write, you can team-up with a writer. Or:

1. Get a digital tape recorder
2. Dictate your observations
3. Back at home after you have processed your photos, get the writer to write the article

CUSTOMERS

The magazines! D'oh!

- 2011 Photographer's Market. Published by Writers Digest Books and updated every year. That's for Canada and the US.
- 2011 Writer's Market. Published by Writers Digest Books and updated every year.

This gives you what the magazines publish, their address, their contacts, their price range... You can also go their websites. They will give you the names and the emails addresses.

COMPETITION

- Very big competition of the top names
- Very little for the "less than top names"

PORTFOLIO

No need. They are not interested in your portfolio. They only want the finished goods: the photos and the article.

After you have been published many times, if you have the right marketing campaign, you can start to be commissioned for editorial commissions. Then you will need both a website and a portfolio.

WHAT TO SELL

Both the article and the photos will significantly increase your chance of success.

The only magazine that I know of that will prepay to go on location and... is National Geographic and Geo from the Stern Group.

NEWSPAPERS

Every photographer as one point in time has dreamed of being a photojournalist. Ain't happening anymore. Almost every newspaper has either closed or been bought out to be part of a huge media empire.

You can still sell a photo here, a photo there, but only for the event/happening/crash/fire that they do not have a copy of.

The pay is pitiful. It's going to be very difficult to earn a living at it. If your finances are strong enough and you can stick at it for long enough then eventually you can go up the food chain.

There are some locations that are much better than others, such as Washington DC, or some other capital...

PETS

Over the last ten years, people have been making portraits of their pets. Many people treat their cat or their dog like children. Most of the other people²⁰ treat their cat/dog as a member of their family. An indoor cat lives around 15 years. Between the fight with other cats, the coyotes... an outdoor cat lives around 6 to 10 years.

People want memories.

EQUIPMENT

You will need an action camera like the Nikon D3s/D300s or the Canon 1DMk4/7D with a 70-200mm.

TECHNICAL

Photographing dogs at the beach is like photographing football players... You will need very good reflexes. Have various toys for cats and bring some "sealed" catnip for the cat.

CUSTOMERS

1. Everybody with a cat or a dog. However, usually it will be a woman that will be hiring you.

²⁰ I treat both my cat and my dog as member of my family. They are not children, they are member of "the joint."

2. Publications: they are mostly looking for cats and dogs doing some type of activity, including sleeping. They are rarely interested in close-ups. The publications will be requesting model releases from the owners whether they need them or not.

COMPETITION

1. Me!
2. The customer or a family member with their point and shoot camera.

Your job is to provide a different look than their existing point and shoot camera. You do that with either a very wide angle or a long tele wide open. You must take the photos at the level or below the "beast."

PORTFOLIO

The portfolio must be mostly of cats and dogs doing some activity, running, sniffing...

Some "standardized" posed photos, especially for cats and dogs doing shows.

WHAT TO SELL

- Print, prints and prints
- Files Facebook size for submitting the cat/dog for competition
- Small books with a dozen photos

PHOTOS: FACEBOOK SIZE

Many people want to display photos on their blog, on the Internet. As a customer, the user of the photo, I want the photo to be the biggest size possible. As a photographer, the producer of the photo and the seller of the photo, I want the photo to be as small as possible.

As a professional photographer, I need to show photos on my websites. As a professional photographer, I don't want them stolen by somebody for their own website without me being paid. People need to see the photo clearly, and the thumbnail generated from the photo must be clear. Google does capture the photos, create a thumbnail of the photos, and display the thumbnails for people doing the searches. All these conflicting requirements and I'm not talking about Google and image search. How they rank images...

This is from my "vast" experience, i.e. the school of hard-knocks or how many screw-ups I have done.

The photo should:

- Up to 720 pixels wide or tall, the old maximum Facebook size
- Be at 72 dpi²¹
- Be a JPEG
- Use the sRGB color space
- Have a sizable watermark and like the three bears: not too big, not too small. BTW, Google will penalize you for have a watermark, since they muddy the thumbnails.

The IPTC fields of the JPEG must be filled in with:

- Keywords
- Title
- Location
- Caption
- Description
- Copyright
- EXIF data not required

²¹ The 72 dpi is just in case, they don't know what they are doing, which is the vast majority of the photographers and the users of the photos

The digital photo can be sold for the price of around a 4" by 6", or slightly less than your regular 4" by 6". People can and will make print out of these digitals and there's nothing you can do to stop them. They bought the photo; they think that they own the photo. Your best bet is to explain and show them the difference between a professionally printed photo and the low-resolution digital photo printed at a 1-hour photo.

So why is this called Facebook size? Because it is the most standard size used by people on Facebook. People are used to photos of that size on Facebook, just like to 4" by 6" photos in the printed world.

THE NEW FACEBOOK SIZE

In February 2011, Facebook introduced changes to their photo handling.

1. The new maximum size of photos on Facebook is 2048 pixels wide or tall.
2. The new photo viewer that allow you to download and save the photo in "hi-res" mode.

The problem is that there is no hi-res or low-res, just the number of pixels. A 720 pixels image will give a half-decent 4" by 6" or even a 5" by 7". The 2048 pixels image will give a good 8" by 10" print and a half-decent 11" by 14" print.

So what to do? I don't have a good answer yet. Right now, I still give the photos as 720 pixels wide or tall and will sell the 2048 pixels image unless they buy lots and lots, then it will be free.

PORTRAIT

Portraits were the backbone of the photo industry. Every town had a couple of studios where people came for their photo.

Almost all portrait studios have disappeared from the landscape. "Nobody gets their portrait in a studio anymore." Today, people want "environmental" portraits. They want activity, they want...

EQUIPMENT

Again and again, the Canon 5DMk2 with the 24-105 or the Nikon D700 with the 70-200. A couple of flashes...

TECHNICAL

It's not that technical, almost all of the problems are due the interaction or the lack of interaction with the subject.

CUSTOMERS

Everybody. Everybody wants a good portrait. The problem is that nobody knows what a good portrait is. Most people have only seen 4" by 6" photos or 5" by 7" photos. They've never seen a real 11" by 14" portrait or even better a 16" by 20" portrait.

COMPETITION

Again, the Uncle Harry or the Girl With Camera. Uncle Harry will give them the file, but will never show them a "real" print.

PORTFOLIO

A few posed photos, a few action shots like walking/running... Make sure that you will include a couple of Black and Whites with windows side lighting...

WHAT TO SELL

Large prints and a few Facebook size photos.

PROMOS

SILENT AUCTIONS

Most people are creatures of habit. When we found something that works for us, we keep on doing it. I was speaking with Wayne. He specializes in portraits, high-end portraits, and expensive portraits.

During the conversation, I asked him how he gets new customers:

Silent auctions

We both live British Columbia, Canada, and many public schools and most private schools have yearly fund raising events with silent auctions. A silent auction is a variation of the regular auction. There is no auctioneer and the bidders write down their bid on a sheet with the goods/services going to the highest bidder.

After drilling, probing, and pulling teeth, he revealed his secret sauce:

1. *Offer a portrait shooting session and one print.*
2. *Give the value of the portrait shooting session and the print.*
3. *Display a few sample portraits.*

The problem, with these silent auctions, was that many of the people that won the silent auction would not call to make the appointment for the portrait session. So back to the drawing board to make some fine-tuning:

1. *Offer a portrait shooting session and one print.*
2. *Give the value of the portrait shooting session and the print.*
3. *Display a few sample portraits.*
4. ***Put a very short expiry date on the portrait session.***

Bingo! Almost all the winners call within a couple of weeks. The short expiry date is what gave the "kick in the ass" and gets the people moving. This works very well for Wayne, can you modify it to fit you? Or simply copy it?

PHOTOBOOTH

I was downtown, in one of the big towers. Pretty standard, a fairly large entrance with 2 corridors of elevators. I walked in at 8:25am, I had an appointment with a customer for 8:30am. There was a photo booth with a huge, 50 inch or so, plasma TV displaying rotating photos.

A 30 seconds look and I had to go to my meeting. 11 o'clock, I was finished and went to check the photo booth. Mark and Penny were doing photos of the people for free. You just had to wear either a clown red-nose or a headband bopper. Then if you wanted, you could buy an "almost instant" print 5" by 7" or 8" by 10". Mark was shooting tethered with the photos showing on the TV. Penny was making the prints.

Everybody that passed by, looked and checked, but most of the people being photographed were office workers groups, from three people to a dozen. Some woman who would use the clown red-nose usually headed it.

I just hanged around and during one of the lull, I started talking with Mark. He was doing the photo booth as a promotion. He said that it looked like he was going to break even! He had to rent the space in the atrium, and it wasn't cheap. Mark said that he already booked a couple of children/birthday parties. And, that was only by 11:30am. I didn't keep a careful tab, I was talking to people, but almost everybody bought a few of prints.

Mark was using a Canon 1DMk3 with a 24-70mm. He also used three fluorescent lights, two for the people and one for the background. Mark was shooting tethered with the EOS utility to a small desktop computer that also

drove the big plasma TV. Penny was using Lightroom on the same computer, taking the money and printing the photos.

What a great marketing idea!

REAL ESTATE

Before the recession and the housing/real estate crash, real estate photography was starting to take off in many regions of North America. Now? That depends which region you are located.

EQUIPMENT

Mostly wide angle. Your camera must be able to do both photos and videos with panoramas.

TECHNICAL

Dumb, but make sure that the photos are sharp and in focus! Dumb, as I said. However, many realtors show out of focus photos.

Lighting is important, how to light interiors mixing with exteriors and incandescent/florescent lights. It's called gels on your flashes.

CUSTOMERS

The real estate agent with higher end houses to sell. The problem is that she has to pay you long before she sells the house, unless it's a very hot market, but then she doesn't need your services.

COMPETITION

The real estate agent herself. She thinks that she can do as good a job and she doesn't have to pay.

PORTFOLIO

Your portfolio must include nicely “prepped” interiors. Photos of the house/building with verticals that are verticals... A couple of night shots... at least one interior panorama.

One 360° interior panorama for the web.

WHAT TO SELL

- Real estate agents are independent small business owners who rent space in the real estate office. You can try to sell the real agent herself or you can make a deal with the real estate office, by offering group rates. Group rates for the office do not mean lower rates, but it could mean extras, such as free 360° web interior panoramic views...
- Files. They are not interested in the prints. They will post the files on their website and the MLS listings.
- The 360° interior panorama.

REAL ESTATE AGENTS

I live in Canada on the West Coast. This is one of the most expensive area in North America to own a home. The average price of a house is 1.2 million dollars²². That’s the average! The average price for an apartment is \$570 thousands. The market is hot. The prices haven’t gone down since 1986!

The real estate agents are making a mint! Canada is different from the US. In Canada, each party gets their own agent, the selling party pays for the full commission fee²³. Then the agents split the fee between themselves. The buyer doesn’t pay any commission to her realtor.

²² This is Canadian dollars. The Canadian dollar is worth more than the US dollar.

²³ In Canada, the commission is usually set to 7% for the first \$100 thousand, then 3% on the remainder. It’s the standard but can be negotiated.

In the US, each party pays for their own agent.

When somebody buys a house, it's "tradition" that the realtor gives them something... from a good bottle of wine, to something for the front...

Some realtors give large photos prints to their customers:

- Flowers, macros...
- A local panorama, a local landscape

Most of those prints start at 16" by 20" and many go to 30" by 40".

Realtors are independent small business people, but they mostly operate from the office of a large company where they rent desk/office space, like Century 21, Remax...

You can make a deal with the office to offer all the agents from that real estate office a choice of 20 or 30 different prints "finished and wrapped" in different configurations at 25% to 33% discount of your regular price. You do not want to deal with the individual realtor. The discounts are for the volume. No single agent can sell enough. The real estate office can easily sell a few hundred properties per year and buy 30 to 100+ large prints.

No discount, no incentive for them to get involved.

ROAD PHOTOGRAPHY

Sitting on the side of a curvy road, take photos of cars and motorcycles as they pass by. Can you believe that not only you can make a full time living but also employ a few more people? This is exactly what Darryl Cannon of Killboy and his blog: Killboy Blog is doing. By the Smoky Mountain National Park between Tennessee and North Carolina, there a famous road called the "Dragon." People travel hundreds and thousands of miles to drive the

"Dragon." Darryl and his people park their cars on the side of a nice spot and take their photos.

Now for the important question: How do they sell the photos? Their cars have the website name on a huge sign hanging from the side of their truck saying: killboy.com. People go to their website to buy prints of their riding. This is nothing new; this was done for decades with river rafting. Except that the photos, with the river rafting, were done in conjunction with the river rafting company. What attraction exists in your area?

<http://killboy.blogspot.com/> and <http://killboy.com/>

This doesn't just apply to cars and motorcycles. You can do the same thing on a popular bicycle ride area, or running/jogging, cliff jumping...

ROCK / MUSIC

All music band need photos. They want the photos for themselves and for their fans. They even need photos for promos. It's like sport photography, it's very hard to break in at the high end, but very easy at the low-end. Most pubs/bars do not care, a \$10 for the entrance fee, be early to get a good front row and to the side seat...

EQUIPMENT

A good low light camera and good low light lens. No flash unless they specifically allow it or you will be ejected.

Many concert venues will not allow you in with a dSLR. They will let you in with a point and shoot camera. That's where the micro 4:3rd are more than fantastic.

TECHNICAL

Almost all photos follow the same pattern. There isn't much you can do different. Photos of band on stage all look the same. Access to the band and the concert is far more important than your skills.

CUSTOMERS

- All music bands, especially at the "lower end of the scales," are cheapskates. They don't want to pay.
- All music bands, especially at the "higher end of the scales," think that they own everything, including you the photographers and do not want to pay.

The customers are mostly the PR agencies, the reps, and eventually the magazines/publications. That's when you can start to make the money.

COMPETITION

Contrarily to what most people think, there isn't much competition anymore. The pay is so low at the beginning that most photographers drop out.

PORTFOLIO

Your portfolio should have photos of the "biggest names" you can access. Even if you can't access personally, good seats at a concert with the right equipment will get you a couple of photos.

A couple of photos of concerts. The other photos of a couple of bands in some "grungy" warehouses/construction sites...

WHAT TO SELL

Some photos, but mostly rights for... Make sure that the rights are limited in time and type of display/promotion.

*Publicists will frequently ask for free images, they work for the bands and labels and their only concern is exposure for their clients, the priority is not making sure the photographer gets paid. The photographer can frequently be put in a tough spot where the publicist needs an image to send to a publication, the publication expects it for free, and then the photographer is pressured to give away the photo to keep everyone happy. This isn't a great business model for the photographer. The best thing to do in general is to reach out and show the work to the publicist and labels and artists but be clear that if they need use of the images for publicity then there will be a licensing fee involved. Publicists, while good contacts and gatekeepers to the artists, don't have independent budgets to pay photographers, it's not their call. As a general note, **I'm not sure who pays for concert photography anymore**. There are very few paid assignments for shooting concerts, and the market for current music stock is so saturated that a photographer is lucky to get something picked up for a fee here and there. Getting the photo pass is easy, getting paid anything afterward is hard. (His words, my emphasis)*

— Jacob Blickenstaff, music photographer

SENIORS

Photos of seniors in North America mean a completely different thing from the rest of the world.

Photos of seniors in North America mean photos of young “kids” graduating from high school. Usually it's some kind of studio work. It's one of the last areas that studios can be extremely profitable.

EQUIPMENT

Tripods, good lights either as flash, reflectors... The most often used combo is again the Canon 5DMk2 with the 24-105L f/4 or the Nikon D700 with a 24-70 f/2.8.

TECHNICAL

Most of the time, the camera/lens is irrelevant.

1. The most important is how can you relate a 17 or 18 years old teenager? How can you make them feel good about themselves? What kind of experience do you offer? Make-up, hair... Props like a Harley...
2. How good are you with great, flattering lighting. Time to head to David Hobby, the Strobist? <http://www.strobist.blogspot.com>

CUSTOMERS

Seniors and teenagers! D'oh! You need to "stalk" a couple of them. Go the school and watch them when they leave school. Look for a couple of "beautiful" and popular girls. Approach them and offer them senior photos for free.

If they like it, they will show it to everybody else...

Warning: The girls must not only be pretty/sexy but popular. Without being popular, you are doing it for nothing. Whatever these girls will say will be a negative onto you. It's like using Michael Vick as a representative for dog biscuits.

COMPETITION

A lot. You not only need a website, you also need to work on Facebook. Most seniors run their lives on Facebook, so you must be there.

PORTFOLIO

A dozen of photos that include mostly "posed activities," like sitting/riding a Harley... Walking at the beach... Leaning on a tree by a small pond/waterfall...

Include a couple of Black and Whites.

WHAT TO SELL

Prints with the good photos as Facebook size for Facebook i.e. 720 pixels wide or tall.

HOW TO GET CUSTOMERS

This is the most difficult part.

- The simplest is to find a few “kids” to do the sales in their high school.
- Postcard mailings to the senior’s house every month starting in October of the school year. The problem is buying and finding the mailing lists. They are notoriously inaccurate. Do you have contacts in the school administration without breaking the law?
- One photographer, that I know of, bought the advertising at the bus stop just in front of the high school.

SPORTS

You are a sports fan, football nut, golf, baseball, basketball... You name it. Being a sports photographer will get you on the sidelines... Dream on! Don’t hold your breath. Yes, you can do it but it’s a very long process. You need to be authorized by that league and by that stadium/venue. There are contract licenses... all kind of legal mumbo jumbo to keep you out, and keep them in full control.

EQUIPMENT

The equipment depends on the sport. Usually you will need at least one good and long/huge tele.

TECHNICAL

In 2004, Robert Hanashiro did a presentation on being a professional football photographer, the NFL. Since 2004, the only thing that has changed is the actual camera, the rest still holds true.

http://www.sportsshooter.com/special_feature/2004_luau_video/shooting_football/index.html

Also, take a look at: <http://gizmodo.com/5735854/how-to-photograph-football>

CUSTOMERS

Since you are starting, your customers won't be the big news organizations, the TVs... Actually, they will never buy from you for the major/premier leagues. They already have contracts with Getty or some other news organization.

The vast majority of your customers are the parents.

- For your own team, where your kids are in, a next game delivery of the photos is good enough.
- For the opposing team, just have flyers to give the parents of the other team pointing to your website.

You can also sell some photos to the officials and the team. It's rare, because they will, most of the time, want it for free. That's when you can barter.

COMPETITION

Almost none when you are starting at the peewee level. As the kids grow older and school is involved, there may be some contracts already in place preventing you from reselling the photos.

PORTFOLIO

No much of a requirement, since people will be seeing the sports photos before buying.

WHAT TO SELL

Usually prints, but often you can barter for access to the other parents. "Raise your profile" and/or "credit" is not good enough. Access is far more important, such as access to the sidelines...

STOCK / MICROSTOCK

Many people will kill me for putting the two together. For me there's not much difference now. Microstock used to be so cheap, but prices have gone up significantly. So significantly in the last couple of years, that now a "decent" photo that's exclusive to iStockPhoto, extra small for web display only now cost \$9.10 and a half decent size to insert in your ad... \$40. The price of stock has significantly crashed due the overwhelming volume of microstock photos. You can get some stock photos in the low \$100, depending on which one.

SLICE AND DICE

How narrowly can you slice and dice your photo specialty? Apparently, extremely fine. Have you ever heard of Park City, Utah? I have not, but David Kirkland, a Park City photographer, earns a good living by licensing his stock photos of Park City, Utah.

I do not mean to be impolite or belittle the people of Park City, but living only a few hundred miles from there, I had never heard of Park City, Utah.

David Kirkland uses his own website: Park City Stock

<http://archive.parkcitystock.com/> to sell his photos: The minimum charge is

\$225/photo. He does NOT use any microstock agency. He sells his photos from his website with PhotoShelter.com as a backend for the lightbox/billings...

Randy Santos of <http://www.dcstockimages.com/> does the same thing but about Washington, DC. He sells his photos of Washington, DC to book publishers, interior designers... He's been doing it since 2004, with his own website tied to <http://photoshelter.com> .

Dan Heller of <http://www.danheller.com> sells his travel photos from his website.

Quang-Tuan Luong of <http://www.terragalleria.com/> is the first photographer to have photographed all the US national park. He's built a very good income from his website.

Rolf Hicker of <http://www.hickerphoto.com/> earns a very good living by selling wildlife photos from his website.

SMALLER MARKET SIZE

The smaller the market, the easier to sell. There is so little competition. Taking photos from a specific area and using a website to promote them is nothing new, just the execution is. By specializing with such a "small place," David Kirkland has little or no competition. His photos from Park City, Utah sell around the world.

DIFFERENCES WITH REGULAR PHOTOS

Most "regular" photos do not work in the stock/microstock environment. Stock/microstock photos need large "negative space." That's the space around the photo. That's the space used by the designer to write **in** the photo and/or crop to fit their requirements.

January 2011 interview of Yuri Arcurs:

Is it too late to get into the microstock game now?

The short answer would be yes. If you plan to be successful in this industry, it'll cost you an enormous amount of money, you will have to work 24 hours a day for several years, and you will have to be exceptionally skilled. You will also have to be more than just an extraordinary photographer, and you will have to know the industry of stock photography very well. Of course, I won't say that it's impossible, but the industry is very competitive.

– Yuri Arcurs

Go to Arcurs' website and read the following article:

<http://www.arcurs.com/microstock-agencies-an-overview-for-beginners>

It's a few years old, but most of the basic principles still apply.

THE BOOKS TO GET

- **Microstock money shots**: Ellen Boughn. This book gets the full 5 stars. It's very different from what I said, but her world is the iStockPhoto/Crestock of the world.
- **Taking Stock: Make money in microstock creating photos that sell**: by Rob Sylvan. Different point of view with interviews of "successful" iStockPhoto photographers.

AGENCIES

The big monster is Getty Images with Getty, iStockPhoto for the microstock, Tony stone, AllPort, Keystone...

A few other stock companies still compete with Getty:

- Corbis
- Crestock

- Alamy
- Fotolia
- ...

First, you need to apply and your images²⁴ will be reviewed before you are accepted. Each agency has its own criteria. The criteria are published.

Follow them to the letter. 100%, no variation allowed. Any variation, even if it's an improvement, and you will be rejected.

Any variation to the guidelines = rejection. Why?

It's like the brown M&M of Van Halen's band. "There will be no brown M&Ms in the backstage area, upon pain of forfeiture of the show, with full compensation."

Why? This was clause #126 of the contract. There were so many other requirements for their own safety, security... that if you can't get the bowl of M&M right, the rest will not be correct.

You need to realize that it costs them between \$10 to \$100 to review and decide to accept a photographer or not. Not cheap. Then you can submit your photos for approval.

The major problem facing the agencies is the huge number of photos that they have. They have too many photos! Photo buyers want to see images, but not too many images. The quantity overwhelms them, so they use "RECENT" or "NEW."

iStockPhoto doesn't accept any more wildlife photos²⁵. iStockPhoto doesn't accept any more travel photos from many popular destinations unless the photos are outstanding, fantastic, and unique like space aliens landing next the Eiffel Tower in Paris. 30,000 photos of New York. 3,400 photos of just

²⁴ The agencies usually want 3 different photos.

²⁵ That's unless you have a special dispensation.

the San Francisco Golden Gate Bridge! It's too much for the buyers, therefore it's too much for iStockPhoto.

Their collections have many holes. The problem is to find out if they want to fill these holes or not. Once you are registered and start to upload photos, you can get access to their "business intelligence." They post regularly which photos they need or anticipate to need in the near future. They do this by looking through their stats about the photos viewed, the photos purchased and not bought... Then they ask their own analysts...

Your commission will vary from as low as 10% to a high of 50% of the sales. Your commission level will depend on:

- How many of your photos do they sell per year
- Do you have an exclusive contract with them or not

THEATER / ENTERTAINMENT

Theater photography used to be big up to the 1960s. However, there's still good money to be done but not from theater itself but from the opportunities that it opens.

EQUIPMENT

A good camera with a standard lens. Some flashes...

TECHNICAL

Learn how to concentrate on the lighting of the theater. You will do most of the photos during rehearsals where you can be on the stage itself...

CUSTOMERS

The theater of course, but they will buy only a couple sets of photos at a very low and cheap price. So where's the money? The actors, the set builders...

ACTORS

1. They'll want prints of their roles in the play and that should help you recover your expenses
2. The big \$\$\$ is from the head & shoulders photos for the actors. They need them for their rep, for their promos, for their friends and families.

WORKERS

If you do not ignore the "underlings" like the workers that make everything happen, they will buy your photos of their work and their portraits. They will also recommend you for other things.

MANAGEMENT/DIRECTION

If you can document their work, they will also need you for their funding, fundraising... That's your entrance into the corporate world.

COMPETITION

Now very little, unless you are in New York and Los Angeles where it's "protected territory." They already have contracts with existing agencies.

PORTFOLIO

At least half of your portfolio must be Black & Whites. You can build your portfolio with amateur theaters as trade-in.

TRAVEL

Everybody, with a camera, dreams of becoming a travel photographer. Free trips to exotic places in the sun with the camera in one hand and a martini in the other. Doesn't happen anymore! It's hard even as stock photography. iStockPhoto has placed restrictions on what travel photos they will accept. They have too many travel photos.

EQUIPMENT

At least two bodies with a few zoom and maybe a tripod.

CUSTOMERS

That's where the problems start.

- The customers used to be magazines that would pay you to go... Now you will have to get a few magazines and the tourism bureau to pay for your travel expenses.
- The tour operators that need current photos for their promos. Usually you can trade with them. You exchange the photos for the tour...
- Individuals that want to buy photos/prints of their "favorite" place.

COMPETITION

Plenty and very little. Take a look at Dan Heller of <http://www.danheller.com> who sells his travel photos from his website. Or <http://blog.kenkaminesky.com> that sells many HDR prints/limited editions.

PORTFOLIO

You do not need a portfolio. Your website will do the work.

WHAT TO SELL

- Mostly files. So you sell rights for times and media.
- Prints, usually very large prints

WEB PHOTOGRAPHY

How does it sound? Travelling around the world, around Paris, New York, Rome... Yellowstone... Antarctica, posting the photos on your website and people buy your photos from your website.

No commission, no microstock, no boss, just do what you want, what you like and the \$\$\$ come in.

Could happen! Yes it can. The problem is that this will not happen overnight. All reply on the traffic, or what people in the "good old times" called eyeballs.

Many people earn a very good living from their websites. These people have been doing it for many years and have huge traffic from 10,000 to 100,000 people coming to their website on a daily basis.

Why do it yourself, when you can get Getty/iStockPhoto, Fotolia, Alamy... do the work for you. Most stock agencies have 70% – 30% split, with the 70% going to the stock agency. Depending on your sales volume, iStockPhoto will take an 80% commission, leaving you only 20% of the sale. You can sell 5 times less and still make the same amount of money.

WHO

- Trey Ratcliff of <http://stuckincustoms.com>
- Dan Heller of <http://www.danheller.com>
- Randy Santos of <http://www.dcstockimages.com>
- QT Luong of <http://terrageria.com/blog>

- Rolf Hicker of <http://www.hickerphoto.com>

There are many others.

HOW TO GET THE USER TRAFFIC TO YOUR WEBSITE

1. **Be one the web for a long time.** Count 4 to 10 years! Usually, traffic increases in plateau. This is when you are in a range, then eventually the next range... Then one day, somebody with a very active blog will "discover" your website and recommend it.
2. Have bazillions of links pointing to your website. This only happens by participate in "conversations"...
3. Follow the Google recommendations on how to set your web pages.
4. Follow my instructions for SEO on my "Internet" booklet.
5. **Be one the web for a long time.**

WHAT TO SELL?

- Almost everybody, that I know of, sell commercial licenses, usually as Royalty Free.
- Everybody tries to sell prints. Trey Ratcliff, of <http://StuckInCustoms.com> of HDR fame, only sells limited edition prints.

Some people try to do the selling of the licenses and the prints by themselves, but the vast majority of photographers that sell photos on their websites use:

- <http://photoshelter.com>
- <http://smugmug.com>
- <http://zenfolio.com>

There are a few others websites to run the back-end, accepting the credit card payments, setting the prices... like <http://www.ExposureManager.com>, [http:// www.photorelect.com](http://www.photorelect.com) ...

WEB MAGAZINES / FEATURES

Don't waste your time. They rarely pay. **"This will raise your profile!"**
Yeah! I have a bridge to sell, unless this offer comes from Playboy, Maxim, Vogue, National Geographic, or Geo...

I still have to see somebody that translated the web magazines into actual paid jobs. If you can get it as part of the contract that your photos will be published in the printed newspaper/magazine, then it's worth investigating. If not, it's just for vanity. You are better off publishing it on your own blog. At least you will get the credit for it.

WEDDINGS

That's where the big \$\$\$ are today. Many people spent upwards of \$100,000 on a wedding so they will spend from a few thousands to tens of thousands on the photography. The average wedding cost \$26,984²⁶ with \$2,320 on average to hire a wedding photographer, and \$1,463 on average to hire a videographer. The larger the wedding, the more profitable it becomes. How many wedding can you do in a year? 20 to 50 weddings? How many people get married in North America? 3 million couples per year! That's 120,000 photographers with an average of 25 weddings per year.

However, being the big \$\$\$, it's also becoming much more competitive.

Wedding photographers, right now, they run a hit and run operation: They try to get the most money out of a client they will see once and move on.

²⁶ 2010 study done by <http://TheKnot.com>

– Paul Melcher <http://blog.melchersystem.com>

WEDDING BUSINESS BASED ON CRAIG'S LIST

Every photographer with a website and or a blog will tell you, to stay in business, you need to charge full price to make a profit, the overhead... The NPPA has an overhead calculator.

I was talking to a guy. He does weddings and only advertises on Craig's List. He's one of those "cheap" photographers that are killing the clueless photographers that try to compete with him and he makes an excellent profit. I'm not quoting but here's the gist of it:

WEDDING:

- *\$250 per wedding*
- *1½ hour for photography*
- *All the photos, hi-res, delivered by the next day on a CD*
- *Prepaid*

Then he went on explaining that he can do it so cheaply because he works during the week and it's to pay for his photography hobby. It's that simple.

- No advertising cost: Craig's List is free
- Doesn't even meet with the client
- He just shows up, takes his photos as JPEGs
- Goes back home, copies his photos directly from the camera to a CD. That's it, no editing... no nothing.
- Next day, he couriers the CD

Total time spent: 2 hours for \$250, that's \$125 per hour. No headache dealing with the customer, selecting the photos for printing... He made his money, next...

So how much money does he make? Usually in the winter month, he does one wedding per week. In the spring, it's usually three weddings per week. In the summer, it's usually between six and eight wedding per week. In the fall, he goes back to a couple of weddings per week. In 2009, he did over fifty thousands, for just working weekends! 2010 was even better. As a wedding photographer, you can't compete with him. He'll "kill" you. He has a system and it works for him.

In the other hand David Ziser of <http://digitalprotalk.blogspot.com> has a "huge" wedding business and studio in Cincinnati, Ohio and charges thousands upon thousands for "his" weddings.

Lito Sy of <http://www.litosy.com/index2.php> charges even more. His business model is to bend backward as much as possible and charge the full price.

EQUIPMENT

The vast majority use the Canon 5DMk2 with the 24-105L f/4. There are also some Canon 7Ds and some Nikons.

TECHNICAL

It's mostly a matter of lighting. Flash is king. You should investigate the Quantum flashes with their battery packs. They can take high volume of continuous flashes without shutting down to cool.

CUSTOMERS

1. The bride, the mother and the mother in law
2. The wedding planners. Many more brides are getting wedding planners to do the legwork for them. Some photographers bill and get paid by the wedding planner.
3. The flower shops that do the bouquets

4. The catering companies
5. ...

COMPETITION

Not all the other wedding photographers, but the wedding photographers in your price range and in your area. You compete by offering a better value and not by offering lower prices:

- All images on CD once they reach a certain \$\$\$, value for e.g.: \$4,000
- Engagement session included once they reach a certain \$\$\$, value for e.g.: \$2,000
- Better book / album once they reach a certain \$\$\$, value for e.g.: \$3,000
- Include a good make-up artist and a great hair stylist
- ...

PORTFOLIO

Of course, your website, but you need to show the large prints, 16" by 20" and 20" by 30". Your customers do not know what a large print looks like. They've never been to a museum to see large paintings.

WHAT TO SELL

Books, albums, prints, Facebook photos, slideshows on digital frames...

WILDLIFE

Wild life for stock photography is so overcrowded that iStockPhoto has stopped accepting them²⁷. They have too many photos and not enough buyers. Does this mean that you should quit while you are still ahead of the

²⁷ That's as of Jan-2011. But they have special dispensation for some exclusive photographers with a long history of good sales.

game? No, plenty of people still make good money, but the game has changed.

Moose Petersen is one of the most famous and does great. Rolf and Michelle Hicker of Vancouver Island, Canada make an excellent living at it...

People seem to go to the specialized stock websites for wildlife.

EQUIPMENT

Canon dominates. The Canon 7D is becoming the standard camera because of the 18 megapixels and the 1.6 cropping factor.

The bigger the lens, the better. The bigger the lens, the more \$\$\$\$. Do you need a 500mm f/4? Can you start with a 500mm f/5.6 zoom?

Tripods/monopods are indispensable. Can you handhold a Sigmonster? The 200-500mm f/2.8 weighs 35 pounds and only cost \$26,000 for the Canon mount!

CUSTOMERS

- Other photographers that want to learn or to be directed to the right place at the right time. **Be aware that when doing workshops with other photographers, you may need some permits.**
- The general public with greeting cards and large prints at retail stores, craft fairs...
- Publishers...

COMPETITION

Not as much competition as you would think. Your competition is local and on the same topic, so it will be limited. Photographers in another area of the country do not compete with you. You know your spots.

PORTFOLIO

None needed, people buy your photos after the fact, unless National Geographic or Geo hires you, then will want to see your published work.

WHAT TO SELL

- Large prints: Joe Zammit-Lucia charges \$14,000 for his 40" by 50". And, yes, he sells them through art galleries.
- Files for stock
- Workshops

YOUNG CHILDREN

For women only! I know it's sexist and not correct. In today's world, a man making photos of babies, children, or teenagers is a sexual abuse lawsuit waiting to happen.

People take billions of photos of their kids. Hundreds of millions of them have red eyes. Hundreds of millions have the dreaded "say cheese" grin. Good children photos are hard to get and fantastic to look at.

EQUIPMENT

That will depend on your type. Are you the "wide angle" or the "tele" type? Again, the Canon 5DMk2 is pretty much the standard and why Canon is making a mint with it.

Will you be using flash?

TECHNICAL

It's not so much a technical matter but much more a matter of how you interact with the children. In the old days, I knew Steven, a first class

“klutz.” However, within seconds he could relate to children to well! They completely forgot his camera.

CUSTOMERS

- Of course the parents, the grandparents...
- Stock
- Head and shoulders of “modeling kids”
- Beauty children contests...

COMPETITION

Little competition. Almost every photographer has a large portrait of a baby in her portfolio. How many photographers have portfolios of 4 to 10 years old kids? It’s too difficult, you have to care about the kids, and you must be able to relate to them.

PORTFOLIO

The bigger the prints, the better. Make sure to include a couple of black and whites and a couple of posed photos. For the rest, the children should be doing ...

WHAT TO SELL

Prints and digital frames with slideshows to offer to the grandparents.

INTERNET

Today we can't imagine or trust a professional photographer without a website. The website is "a must" to show your photos. The Internet is much more than a website. All the latest buzzwords are tied to the Internet from Tweet to Social Media. People now take email and photo galleries for granted.

According to the agency, Merkle, 87 percent of Internet users checked personal e-mail daily in 2010. This rate has been consistent the last four years. Another reminder that e-mail is not dead.

PURPOSE OF WEBSITE

As a photographer, you need to have a website. Would you use the services of a photographer that doesn't have a website? Would hire a photographer that only does outdoor photos because she doesn't have flashes?

Every photographer is expected to have a website. The questions is what's the purpose? Is it to:

- Show your portfolio?
- Get new "potential" customers to call?
- Be highly ranked on Google to get traffic?
- Sell photos?

If you answer everything, then I've got news for you. Can't be done! It doesn't matter what they tell you, can't be done. Different purposes, different technologies, different people.

PORTFOLIO

The portfolio is to show off a few images. It's often part of a Flash gallery. Portraits, weddings...

Don't overdo the Flash part. People, including me, do not like the too long "loading 10%, 20%..." Do make them press enter to enter.

The portfolio will do very poorly on Google's ranking. As a matter fact, you will be penalized by Google. But people want to see the portfolio to convince themselves, to reassure themselves that they've done the "right" choice.

NEW POTENTIAL CUSTOMERS

New potential customers usually come from a Google/Bing search. This means that they will come from a highly ranked web page for ...

The only way to rank well on Google/Bing is to either have a blog or a wiki²⁸.

People also come from AdWords²⁹. According to Google, a quarter, 1/4, of all clicks on the Google results page are on the AdWords. That's the snippets in the right column. The one that people/company pay. The nice thing about Adwords is that you can limit how much money you will pay per month.

- Using AdWords for Photographer or Photography is useless. It's around \$20 per click³⁰. How many of the people coming to your website will book your services? 1 in 20, 1 in 100 or 1 in 1000?
- Using AdWords for Photographer or Photography and your city is almost as useless as just using photography.
- What about Portrait Photography and your city? Not much better.

²⁸ A wiki is a web site that allows people to add, delete, or revise content by using a web browser. Wiki means "quick" in Hawaiian.

²⁹ Adwords are Google paid ads, in the right column of the Google search page.

³⁰ The \$20 price is as of Jan-2011.

- What about Portrait Photography and the name of park from your city? We are starting to get somewhere. Prices are dropping below the \$1 and the likelihood that they will click on your ad improves. Will they buy? Maybe.
- What about Portrait Photography Wheelchairs and the name of your city? The AdWords prices are in the \$0.25 and lower per click! Yes, less people are asking for that, but a higher number of people will click on your AdWord link.

GOOGLE RANKING

You must write many blogs posts. The posts should be the how-tos. How to do this, how to do that, flash, Lightroom, camera settings...

Google likes steps, bullet points and numbering... Text, text and text. Of course, you can display photos, but the photos must have:

- Titles
- Alternate text
- Description, explanation near the photo

SELL PHOTOS

If you try to sell photos directly on the web, you should look at Photoshelter, SmugMug Pro or Zenfolio Pro... They have built the infrastructure to store, backup, credit card payment... Not cheap, but very difficult and expensive to do yourself.

Items to take in consideration:

- Make it easy for people to contact you when they have questions.
- Show your prices.
- Don't make people register, just to browse around.
- Consider offering some kind of money back guarantee.

SOCIAL MEDIA / FACEBOOK

Twitter and Facebook are the new poster children of the Internet. Do you have to do both on top of your blog? If you do not do both or do not have a few thousand followers, then you are not hip.

I don't have a Facebook account. I don't use Twitter. This makes me an old "foggy." I may be old, but I'm not a "foggy." Obviously, some photographers are very successful, in part due to their Facebook work.

Forrester Research did a Facebook study in the spring of 2010 to analyze the Facebook users. The average user is a 16½ years old girl! How did they come up with it? In collaboration with Facebook! So much for your privacy on Facebook.

Now the most important question:

Is the 16½ years old girl your target market?

- If you do seniors photos? Yes.
- If you do pet photography? No. The customer is the mother. She rarely has a Facebook account.
- If you do architectural, industrial photography? No.
- If you do actors headshots? Yes
- If you do theater photography? Yes
- If you do music/rock concerts? Yes, but more importantly you should have an account on MySpace. MySpace is the hub of "indie music."

Are your customers on Facebook?

- If your customers are companies, mostly no. Many companies have Facebook pages, but that's for their own retail customers.
- If your customers are mostly adults, baby boomers... rarely
- If your customers are mostly teenagers, younger adults... yes

What are your demographics?

PROS

- Facebook is huge, 600+ million users with 180+ million daily users and 400 million weekly users.
- Facebook is free! You can create your own pages, and then it's just a matter of creating your own following.

CONS

- Facebook is a closed environment. You cannot tie to Google, AdWords...
- "Limited" audience. 600 million users and limited audience? Because of the demographic of that audience. If you are photographing seniors in the US, then great... If you are trying to create a seniors' photography business in New Zealand³¹.

BLOGS

I like blogs. I prefer blogs to any of the other Internet Medias. I have <http://www.foto-biz.com>, which is a mixture of a blog and a wiki.

A blog is made of posts, while a wiki is a repository of information. I think that <http://www.foto-biz.com> does both.

Today, almost all photographers are expected to have both a website and a blog. If you don't have a website, you aren't a "real" photographer.

I think the most important thing to a wedding photographer's brand is to have a blog and blog regularly, at least once a week or twice a week.

— Rebecca Crumley, Wedding Photo Director, The Knot

³¹ Teenagers in New Zealand graduating from high school do not get their photo done for graduating like they do in Canada and the US.

BLOGGING AND THE WEB

During a computer presentation, one of the speaker mentioned that there are 22+ billion blogs. That's billions with a B. Planet Earth has only 7+ billion people. That's three blogs per person, child, baby, and elders.

Does the world need another blog?

- Googling for "blog photography" returns 225 million results. How many websites? Paging down to the last one³², we get: 803 websites³³.
- Googling for "blog photographers" returns 16+ million results. How many websites? Paging down to the last one, we get: 840 websites³⁴.
- Googling for "photography website" returns 27+ million results. How many websites? Paging down to the last one, we get: 619 websites³⁵.
- Googling for "photo websites" returns 157 million results. How many websites? Paging down to the last one, we get: 666 websites³⁶.

Where are all the missing photography websites? Google knows about them, but doesn't have them indexed or doesn't think that they are important. See the chapter: "How to be indexed by google." It doesn't matter how many photography websites are out there. What matters is how many websites does Google presents. Not that many!

HOW MANY BLOGS?

According to many people commenting on the Internet, less than 1% of the existing blogs are updated 5 days per week. From 22+ billion blogs, we are down to 220 millions!

³² The simple way of paging to the last page shown by Google, is to set the preferences to display 100 listings per page, then paginating to the last one.

³³ This was done in Feb-2011.

³⁴ This was done in Mar-2011.

³⁵ This was done in Feb-2011.

³⁶ This was done in Jan-2011.

How many of these blogs are in English? In 2009, less than 30% of the Internet is in English, with Chinese and Indian now accounting for 30% of the Internet. That's 220 millions divided by 3 and we are down to 73 million blogs.

How many of these blogs are about the topic that interests you? 0.1% or 0.2%? There are not that many blogs about photography related topics. That's at the most 73,000 blogs.

73,000 blogs is still a very large number, but a much more manageable number than the 22+ billion of blogs. Now if you specialize even further like architectural photography with only a couple hundreds of blogs or Lightroom with also a few of hundreds of websites... Now it's not so bad after all.

PROS OF BLOGS

- You are in charge. You control the show
- The blog posts can be long. The blog posts can be short. It's your choice
- Low cost way of communicating
- Good business platform. You can sell anything. From your photos to books/DVDs, even other companies' goods
- You can update your blog at your "leisure"

CONS OF BLOGS

- The relentless pressure of regularly updating your blog. **If you are not going to update it at least once per week, don't bother having a blog**
- The format is fairly fixed

I CAN'T WRITE!

Many people say "I can't write!" or "I'm a photographer, I don't want to write!"

Writing is the number one way of raising your profile for the average photographer. Super-stars can get away without it. Nevertheless, even super-stars benefit from blogging.

My personal writing was extremely poor when I started <http://foto-biz.com>. Over the years with some work, it has greatly improved. Tennessee Williams quality, definitely not, but it's improving and there's plenty of room for further improvements.

At the beginning, to save yourself, you can write short blog posts every second day.

YOUTUBE

Since I don't want to write or I can't write what about YouTube? A 10 minutes video takes only half an hour to do and post.

1. The first thing is the topic. Many topics that work on blogs, do not work on YouTube.
2. Google doesn't index a YouTube video in the same way as a web article. Google doesn't understand what's inside the video. The video title is not enough to indicate what's inside the video. The two line description is not enough either.
3. Funny, musical... videos do well on YouTube. How-to videos **usually** do poorly on YouTube.

GOING VIRAL

"I want to go viral!"

According to Google, people upload on average 500,000 new videos daily (that's ½ million videos). YouTube is closing on the 3 billion videos mark. I was at a Google presentation and the lady³⁷ said that they usually get 1 to 2 video that goes viral, daily. That's a less than 0.0004% chance of going viral. You have the same chance of going as wining the "big prizes" at one the major lottery.

Actually, it's much less than that, since most videos going viral involve pets or young kids doing "grown-up stuff." The same lady said that there are millions of videos with 0, zero, zip views, not even viewed by the person posting the video.

So how do you go viral?

1. You are lucky. Oprah or Lady Gaga sees your video, likes it and mentions it on her TV network.
2. You are best friend with the editor of a big TV network, and she gets you on the news.
3. The premier, the prime minister, or the president of your country saw your video, loves/hates it, and comments on it. That's how Tom Clancy became famous, because Ronal Reagan was reading the Hunt for the Red October and mentioned that he liked it.

WHICH TOPIC TO BLOG ON

You have two choices:

1. Write on photography. Your target audience is photographers.
2. Write on the topic of your choice, with photos. Your target audience is the people interested on your chosen topic. This will give you the largest audience and the largest market.

³⁷ Sorry, but I forgot her name

BLOG SECRETS

1. Provide quotes on your topic. It's quick and it's simple. You can do complete posts as quotes.
2. Provide photos on your topic and explain the circumstances in which you took the photo.
3. Never criticize your competition in a blog post. You can criticize large companies, but always give accurate examples with documented quotes.
4. You can criticize the competition if you keep their name anonymous aka Anonymous. I've done it a few times³⁸.

WHAT SHOULD YOU WRITE ABOUT?

1. Find the right forums. See the "Forum Marketing" chapter.
2. Head to "Google AdWords". Their website changes regularly, so far twice in the last year.
3. Look down the page and click on the link: "Get keyword ideas." Their current link is
<https://AdWords.google.com/select/KeywordToolExternal?defaultView=2>
4. Enter the various topics, and Google will give you its suggestions. Google will show you the AdWords. These AdWords are also the keywords you should be looking at. By clicking on the keyword links, you can also see the websites.

³⁸ I've done it too many times. I'm very weak and it's hard to resist.

Search

Sign in with your AdWords login information to see the full set of ideas for this search. [About this data ?](#)

Download View as text More like these Sorted by Relevance Columns

<input type="checkbox"/> Keyword	Competition	Global Monthly Searches ?	Local Monthly Searches ?	Local Search Trends
<input type="checkbox"/> ☆ canon 60d vs canon 7d	<div style="width: 20%;"></div>	5,400	1,900	
<input type="checkbox"/> ☆ canon 7d vs canon 60d	<div style="width: 20%;"></div>	5,400	1,900	
<input type="checkbox"/> ☆ canon 7d new	<div style="width: 30%;"></div>	1,000	480	
<input type="checkbox"/> ☆ 7d vs nikon	<div style="width: 20%;"></div>	14,800	5,400	
<input type="checkbox"/> ☆ nikon d7000 vs 60d	<div style="width: 20%;"></div>	2,900	880	
<input type="checkbox"/> ☆ canon 60d vs nikon	<div style="width: 20%;"></div>	6,600	1,900	
<input type="checkbox"/> ☆ canon 7d new firmware	<div style="width: 20%;"></div>	110	28	
<input type="checkbox"/> ☆ canon 7d or 60d	<div style="width: 20%;"></div>	8,100	2,900	
<input type="checkbox"/> ☆ canon 7d vs 60d	<div style="width: 20%;"></div>	4,400	1,900	
<input type="checkbox"/> ☆ ettl ii flash	<div style="width: 30%;"></div>	1,600	720	
<input type="checkbox"/> ☆ canon 60d vs d7000	<div style="width: 20%;"></div>	2,900	880	

Go to page: 1 Show rows: 50 1 - 50 of 100

Internet | Protected Mode: On

HOW TO BE A GOOD BUDDY OF GOOGLE

To be indexed and returned in web results, you have to follow the Google rules. Google is not there to "screw you." Google wants you to be successful! The more successful you are, the more money Google makes.

Google has published the "what" and the "how" to be indexed and be ranked high. It's a PDF publication, free from Google, available at

<http://www.google.com/webmasters/docs/search-engine-optimization-starter-guide.pdf>. I discuss it in more details at: Search engine optimization

-- seo

TECHNICAL

The most common platform for blogging is WordPress. WordPress is free. Either your Internet Service Provider has it already configure or you can go to <http://WordPress.com>, sign-up and you can have your own blog in 5 minutes.

You can do the same with <http://blogger.com>.

There are many others available, just Google for “free blogging.” So why am I, and millions of other bloggers, running their own blog on their own server?

WORDPRESS

WordPress is the most popular platform for blogging. According to WordPress themselves, 2009, WordPress was used in 87% of all blogs.

- WordPress has the most themes available. That’s what the blog will look like.
- WordPress has the most plug-in available. You can add to the basic blogging capabilities, like showing slide shows, selling your photos...

So, it must be the best! No. There are many problems with WordPress. The number 1 problem with WordPress is the security. In 2010, hundreds of thousands of people and thousands of photographers lost their blogs. Especially the people using GoDaddy as their website ISP. A year later, and it’s still not fixed. The security holes are so big that you can drive a whole convoy of semi-trailers through it.

Not only there are many security problems with WordPress itself, there are even more security problems in the themes (yes, the themes). However, the biggest security problems are in the various plug-ins³⁹. The plug-ins are what makes WordPress so flexible and powerful.

Can you afford to run your business on WordPress? I can’t.

ALTERNATIVES TO WORDPRESS

³⁹ The plug-ins in WordPress are the add-ons.

- I do not use WordPress. I use Drupal from <http://www.drupal.org>, not an easy program. It's powerful, flexible, but complicated. You will need a "techie" to make things work.
- B2Evolution: <http://b2evolution.net/> The closest blogging platform to WordPress.
- TypePad: <http://typepad.com>
- Blogger: <http://blogger.com>
- Serendipity: <http://www.s9y.org/>

There are hundreds of others.

COMMON MISTAKES

One of the most common mistakes that photographers do with their blog is to post their photos. Not one photo per post, but a whole photo shoot per post, and in each post 10 to 20 photos. It takes "forever" to load their web page. I usually leave at the 10 seconds mark. I'm not the only one. This means that:

1. I don't see all these photos
2. I don't come back to see more

Want to show your photos?

1. One, may be two, photo per post.
2. Want to show more photos? Do more posts, spread around the day.
This will indicate to the search engines that your website is often updated, and you will rank higher.

WHERE TO HOST YOUR BLOG?

Many companies, ISPs offer free blogging/hosting. We all want to save money but:

1. These free alternative are the Uncle Harry, the Girl With Camera of the Internet.
2. You get what you pay for. Free or very, very cheap means no support when you will have problems, like GoDaddy when hundreds of thousands of people lost their blogs. GoDaddy is infested by virus/worms... that target WordPress and GoDaddy doesn't have "proper" backups.
3. You also have to agree to their terms/conditions...

*By displaying or publishing ("posting") any Content on or through the Services, **you hereby grant to Webs a limited license to use, modify, publicly perform, publicly display, publish, reproduce, distribute, list information regarding, edit, translate, and make derivative works of such Content**, in whole or in part, and in any form, media or technology, whether now known or hereafter developed for use solely in connection with the Services. (Their words, my emphasis)*

There are many good ISPs that will offer you "proper" supports like:

- Exposure Manager
- Photoshelter
- ZenFolio
- Smug Mug
- ...

Count on spending between \$100 to \$500 per year, but many of these options include e-commerce, credit card processing...

What do I do? Like many people with broadband access, I do my own hosting. Can you do it yourself?

1. If you need to ask how, you can't. It's way above your knowledge.

2. You can hire a "techie" to do the basic set-ups, but it will be much more expensive than \$500/year.

GOOGLE

Google, the beast! The Internet is a giant battle between Google and Microsoft/Facebook. BTW, Microsoft owns almost 5% of Facebook. Facebook is a closed environment. Facebook goal is to keep the people inside its own borders. That's why there's a war between Facebook and Google.

HOW TO READ THE SEARCH RESULTS

Everybody knows how to search on Google, and what it means. Right? Are you sure? What about the consequences for your own website? If you are doing your job right, your website will go right up there, but only after Google has indexed and added your website to its database.



1. The title you have set for your web page. That's why **each web page must have a proper title that relates to the content of the page.**

It's set with the HTML tag. It's supposed to be the best short description of that web page. The title of your web page should be unique for your website or you will be penalized.

2. The snippet: A small description of the web page. **Either the description comes from the HTML description tag** or if it's not properly set or relevant to the web page⁴⁰, Google will generate one for you, but it will not be the one that you want and you will be penalized. The description of your web page should be unique for your website or you will be penalized.
3. The URL: **The web page's address.**
4. Cached link: A link to the web page, without any of the graphics/photos/images/videos that Google has in its database.

HOW PEOPLE SEARCH ON THE INTERNET

Here are some actual searches

- *car window decals*
- *ghost hunting equipment*
- *impact on debilitating health for elders*
- *holidays of observance for city of Spokane garbage collection*
- *orange county therapeutic health services*
- *my access point is compatible with b & g. I'm starting to wonder about my network password. why would it work on the desktop but not the laptop after attempting to use the network password i get the following error*
- *dvdr disk wont play in my dvds or computer why*
- *why does a guinea pig squeak*
- *hairstyles*

Those are actual searches from real people, including the spelling mistakes.

⁴⁰ That's according to Google

The more people are familiar with the Internet the more likely they will use keywords. The “newbie,” aka people significantly less familiar with the Internet, will use full sentences.

There are two types of people that search on Google:

1. The people using full sentences
2. The people using keywords

- *Don't ask question on how I got these*
- *Notice that all punctuation has been removed*
- *Notice that everything has been transformed into lowercase*

BIGGEST MISCONCEPTION

The biggest misconception is that Google indexes websites. **Google does NOT index websites.** Repeat after me, Google does NOT index websites. Again, repeat, again, and again. That's to make sure that you don't forget it.

What? Yes that's right, Google does not index websites. Google only index web pages. There's a huge difference between a website and many web pages.

- A website » All the web pages and how they relate to each others.
- A Web page » One single web page, independently of any other web page on your website

To see it in action, go to Google's webmaster tools. Log in. You do have an account. Right? Go to the sitemap section and look at the two columns: URLs submitted versus Indexed URLs. The URLs submitted come from your sitemap.

Google may have indexed only a few pages from your website and you can still be ranked very highly on specific searches.

Google doesn't rank your website, but Google ranks your web page in relation to the end-user query.

This is not only for Google but also for Microsoft's Bing.

HOW TO BE INDEXED BY GOOGLE

Before Google will include your web pages in its index, you will need:

1. Register with Google
2. Go the webmaster tools: <https://www.google.com/webmasters/tools>
3. Follow the instructions to register your website
4. Submit your sitemap

You should do this yourself and not have your "techie" do it. You can ask your "techie" help you. I have seen people lose their website after a "fight" between themselves and their "techie."

You should be registered with Google and with your domain name registry, not your "techie."

COMMENTING ON OTHER BLOGS

Everybody tells you that to drive traffic to your beloved blog and your masterful website, that you should comment on other websites and other blogs. Aren't the steps simple?

1. Go to the website
2. Post the comment
3. Link to your website/blog through your signature
4. Done!

Wrong! Go to the blog you want to comment on and look around.

- What type of traffic does this website/blog gets. Commenting on a blog that rarely gets people doesn't get you anywhere unless you want to have the attention of the blog owner. "But", the famous but, many people that operate low volume websites/blogs do not update often and do not check their comments.
- What kind of comments are already there on that post and the other posts? Do they shoot down everybody that doesn't agree with the blog post?
- How many comments do they usually get? Only one, two, or many dozens of comments?

TIMELINESS

- How quickly are you responding to the post? If the thread is stale, don't bother. Nobody, including the blog owner, will see your answer/reply.
- If there are already more than a dozen of replies, don't bother. Your reply will be buried and almost nobody will notice it. Then wait for another opportunity, it will come.
- Usually people post blog entries at around the same time, early morning in their time zone..., then wait for the new post.

TOPIC

- Does this irk you? You can comment but always be polite and "somewhat" diplomatic. You don't want to be known as the jerk!
- Do you agree? Comment only if you have something to add. Just saying wonderful or great won't contribute to anything. "Great! I just had the same... happen... at... It was...".
- Why get involved?
- Will this drive people to your website? Only good and thoughtful comments will. Screaming, ranting and raving will not.

- Will this increase your rankings? Often links from your website to their blog will increase your ranking higher than commenting on their website and linking back to yours. This shouldn't be the only purpose of your comment or it will make more damage than help.
- Do you already have a post on the same topic but a different angle? Give a short summary and point to your blog/post for more details.
- Is this about the topic or about you? I'm the best, I'm the greatest, I know everything... often equals jerk⁴¹.

SEARCH ENGINE OPTIMIZATION -- SEO

Ask anybody and 120% of the people asked will want to know the Google secrets. Knowing the Google Secrets will make you:

- Rank high up on their index
- Rich beyond belief
- Famous beyond belief
- ...

Turns out that Google has published its SEO secrets, the search engine optimization secrets. Bing, Microsoft's search engine, returns very similar results to search requests or the exactly same results. See: <http://www.mattcutts.com/blog/google-bing/> to see Google's complaint with screen captures of the identical results. The only real difference between Bing and Google is the frequency and the breadth of the indexing spiders. Google is still winning that war, but Microsoft's Bing is improving.

By the way, Yahoo is out of the picture, since they are farming out their search to Microsoft's Bing.

So back to the secrets. Google had published them in the late 2008. In 2010 Google has updated its Search Engine Optimization Starter Guide in PDF

⁴¹ Except for me of course since I'm the one writing.

format. It's available at: <http://www.google.com/webmasters/docs/search-engine-optimization-starter-guide.pdf>

It's the same guide as before but repackaged and improved in the clarity and simplicity. The most important topics for photographers are:

- The page titles: page 4 and 5
- The page description: page 6 and 7
- The use of images: page 18 and 19

What's so important of these topics? See the "How To Read The Search Results" section. It's what people will use to decide if they want to click on the link offered by Google to your website. Get them wrong and even if Google places you on top of the index, people will not click on your link.

I'm not saying that the rest is unimportant, but get these three things right and you are ahead of bazillions of other websites.

Make sure that you ONLY download the Search Engine Optimization Starter Guide from Google itself. <http://www.google.com/webmasters/docs/search-engine-optimization-starter-guide.pdf>

But, I'm a photographer; I'm not a website designer! I don't know web design. Too bad, grow up; you'll have to learn some.

1. In your web browser, usually under View » Page Source, you will see what makes your web page.
2. Toward the beginning, there's a section that starts with <head> and ends with </head>. It should include:
 - a. <title>foto-biz.com | the business of being a photographer – lightroom Q&A – canon 7d</title>
 - b. <meta name="description" content="The business of being a photographer -- Lightroom questions and answers -- Canon 7D and Canon Flashes" />

In addition, for your photos it should look like this:

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It must have both the alt and the title.

You see, it's not that difficult. If those things are missing, get your web techie to fix it.

What's so important about them for both Google and the Internet users?

1. The title is used as the primary link. That's what people click on in Google. Create unique, accurate page titles. Think about it, how do you feel when you've been "conned" into clicking a link that you thought would interest you.
2. The description is what Google uses after the title. This means that the title **must** be unique for each page of your website. Create a good description of your web page. The description doesn't have to be a summary of what's in your web page. The description could be a question, a teaser to entice the user to come and visit. However, don't lie, don't make it up and make sure that your web page will deliver. The description of a web page could be: "3 easy, simple, and cheap ways of improving your rankings and the user experience without spending much time or money!"
3. Make sure that the web page name, the URL, matches the title. So for example instead of this web page having a URL of: <http://www.foto-biz.com/node/823>, the name is: <http://www.foto-biz.com/Seo/Seo-on-the-cheap>. The category is SEO and the title is: SEO On The Cheap. **I use "-" and not "_"**. The URL is related to the title. When people see this URL, they will have a good idea if they are interested in clicking on the link.

4. Google doesn't understand images, so it uses both the alt and the title to index your images.

GOOGLE WEBMASTER TOOLS

Google wants you to succeed! Why? Because the better you are doing, the more money Google will make. Google has created some tools to tell you how Google views your website. The technical end of the webmaster tools is beyond the scope here.

Google has created a blog dedicated to the webmaster tools:

<http://googlewebmastercentral.blogspot.com/> It has many interesting posts. Some of the posts have videos. Start with the posts with video, they are the easiest. You will have to learn.

Many of the posts are "above your head." However, you can ask your "techie": What about...?

BING AND OTHERS

Google is not the only game in town. There's also Bing, Yahoo!, MyWebSearch, and many other specialized search engines. Google and Bing are 96% of all the Internet web searches – Jan 2011. I've only discussed Google. Most of what I've said about Google on how to be indexed, ranked, titles, descriptions... also applies to Bing.

Microsoft has reversed engineered Google. Most results are very close and often match one each other with different rankings but the same results. Some of the results are so identical, that Google is suing Microsoft's Bing for spying and stealing proprietary information.

TRAFFIC

<http://foto-biz.com> gets traffic from search engines, from bookmarks/direct access, and from links.

Traffic	Percentage
Google	31%
Bing/Yahoo	2%
Bookmarks or direct links	37%
External links or other web pages	30%

DRIVING TRAFFIC TO YOUR NEW WEBSITE / BLOG

FORUM MARKETING

What's a forum? It's a website or a section of a website, where people ask questions and other participants answer these questions. There are millions of forums. Name a topic and there are dozens, hundreds of forums. Here's a quick sample:

Forum	Number
Weddings	40,000+
Babies	112,000+
Pets	36,000+

Some forums have hundreds of thousands of users. Some forums have nobody!

1. Do a search on Google for "your topic" and the word "forum" (without the quotes). If you are a baby photographer search for "baby OR babies forum". The OR must be capitalized. To Google, this means that you want to view "baby forum or babies forum or forum baby or forum babies".
2. Find the top 4 or 5 forums. Explore them. Usually these forums are the more active. Spend a few days exploring them. View the various boards on these forums.
 - How active is the forum? Dozens of questions per day? Hundreds of questions per day?
 - How active is the forum? Are the questions always from the same people?
 - Who answers the questions? Experts in the field? The girl next door? ...
 - Is it only commercial or is there "real" content? Some forums are much stricter than others are. Some forums allow you to post in the answers that links back to specific web pages. If they are too strict, don't bother.
 - Check not only the current first page, also go back dozens or hundreds of pages back. Has the forum changed for the better, for the worst?
 - How do they treat the people?
 - Are you interested? Would like these people as friends? Would like these people as customers?
3. Join the forum and become a member. When registering for your membership, you will be given the opportunity to setup your profile and your signature. You should make a link to your own blog and/or your website.

4. Most people just ask a question, even if the same question and the answers were posted the week before.
5. Don't post, don't answer, just look and read. It's called in computer geek language "lurking." You will see that there are questions that get regularly asked.
6. Create a web page or a blog post for each of these often-asked questions.
7. Now you are ready to participate in the forums. When somebody ask one of these often asked question:
 - a. Give a summary answer. It should be a couple of lines.
 - b. Point to your web page or blog entry for the details.

FACEBOOK

If your customers are Facebook users, like high school seniors, you should regularly update both your blog and your Facebook page. Then link each other. Your Facebook page points to your blog and your blog to Facebook.

PING

You've spent hours, days, and months creating material for your website. You are constantly updating it. Now that you have some material, it's time to let the world know about your website.

Nothing worth than going to a website and see that there are only 2 postings. (Actually there is, but not in the blogging world.)

You need to have enough content on the website.

*Where's the beef?
– Extremely popular Burger King ad from the 1980s*

People need to see that:

1. There's something that interest them
2. You are updating the website regularly

Or, people will not come back.

I update my site 5 to 6 times per week. I notify people and Google by "Pinging" them. Do a Google search with: "blog pinging services" without the quotes and you will find:

- Pingomatic
- Autopinger
- Pingoat

And many others. Go their website and select which search engine to notify.

Warning: Do not overdo it. Only use them when you are actually updating your website. **If not, you will be blacklisted.**

Many people use these updates to come to your website.

ALLTOP

<http://alltop.com> is an aggregator website from Guy Kawasaki of Apple fame. They have hundreds of category. They go from A for addiction to Z for Zoology with Yoga and Needle Craft in the middle.

1. Find your category
2. Register your website in the appropriate category
3. Your website must:
 - a. Be updated regularly, at least 2 to 3 times per week. Anything less, don't bother
 - b. Support RSS. RSS is Real Simple News. Ask your "techie" to configure it. It allows people or other website to know when you have created new content or updated your content.

I get around 5% of <http://foto-biz.com> traffic from <http://alltop.com>.

EMAIL

15 years later and email is still the number 1 killer application on the Internet. It's not Facebook, it's not Google... it's email. Many businesses can be without web, they just can't be without email. I have an 88 years old neighbor who uses her email daily. That's how she keeps in contact with her kids, grandkids and the great grandkids.

Emails are very important, especially for business.

ACCOUNT

1. You should use your own email with your domain. It should be the same name as your website. i.e. syv@foto-biz.com
2. You should have many email aliases to point to you, such as info@foto-biz.com, sales@foto-biz.com, rma@foto-biz.com, prints@foto-biz.com, stock@foto-biz.com and so on. You can only do that if you control your own domain.
3. You should ditch any @hotmail and @yahoo email accounts. At least switch to a Gmail account. Hotmail and Yahoo are used by home users and do not show any professionalism. You can forward these accounts to your own or to a Gmail account.

RULES

Although everybody has an email address and an email provider, very few know how to use email properly.

1. Do not send emails to people that you do not know and have not contacted you. It's called spamming. A vast majority of business

people, editors... have set that if you are not in their address book, the emails goes to the spam folder i.e. oblivion.

2. Do not send attachments with your emails unless the person specifically allows you. Many mail servers are configured to reject any zip files, word documents, jpeg and tiff images... If you need to show images: make a page on your website with your attachment and send the link.
3. The email must be short. Before the Blackberry and the iPhones, you could send an email with 20 lines or so and people would read it. Most people read only the first screen, now it is only 12 short lines on a BlackBerry and 7 short lines on an iPhone, but that will depend on the font used.

EMAIL PROGRAMS

Email has become a critical part of the photography business. You can be in business without a website⁴² but you cannot be in business without email.

My email has currently 95,000+ emails in 104 folders. That's 6 years of emails and growing. No archiving or storing off-line. Everything is available and it's blindingly fast. I can search for anything in less than 15 seconds and search for a subject or to address is almost instantaneous⁴³.

MAC

I don't like the Mail program from Apple. It's sexy, looks great, and does the basic functionality of an email client. It integrates well with iCal but... It's not industrial strength. Mail chokes on large mailboxes. You will need to keep your emails for years. My suggestion is that you start switching to Mozilla Thunderbird. You will lose some of integration with iCal but it works, day in day out and has many "apps."

⁴² It's very debatable that you can be a photographer without a website.

⁴³ It takes less than one second, aka instantaneous.

WINDOWS

Outlook and Outlook express used to be the laughing stock of all the hackers and virus writers. Microsoft has plugged most of the holes. But...

Outlook/Outlook express like Mail on the Mac cannot deal with large volumes of emails.

There are two very good alternatives:

1. The Bat! You have to pay. It's not free, but a fantastic program, regularly updated. It's very easy to use and extremely capable. You can even run you own mailing lists.
2. Mozilla Thunderbird. It's free with lots of "apps." Flexible and does a good job, especially in the filtering department.

There used to be many more programs, but Microsoft Outlook at the business end and Mozilla Thunderbird at the consumer end, have killed the market for paid email programs.

SUBJECT LINES

This is according to chimp mail, a mass mailing company.

BEST SUBJECT LINES: 60%-87% OPEN RATE

- [COMPANYNAME] Sales & Marketing Newsletter
- Eye on the [COMPANYNAME] Update (Oct 31 - Nov 4)
- [COMPANYNAME] Staff Shirts & Photos
- [COMPANYNAME] May 20xx News Bulletin!
- [COMPANYNAME] Newsletter - February 20xx
- [COMPANYNAME] Newsletter - January 20xx [FNAME LNAME]
- [COMPANYNAME] and [other COMPANYNAME] Invites You!
- Happy Holidays from [COMPANYNAME]
- ATTENTION [COMPANYNAME] Staff!

-
- ATTENTION [COMPANYNAME] West Staff!!
 - Invitation from [COMPANYNAME]
 - [COMPANYNAME] Jan/Feb 20xx Newsletter
 - Website news - Issue 3
 - Upcoming Events at [COMPANYNAME]
 - [COMPANYNAME] Councils: Letter of Interest
 - We're Throwing a Party
 - October 20xx Newsletter
 - [COMPANYNAME]: 02.10.xx
 - [COMPANYNAME] Racing Newsletter

BAD SUBJECT LINES: 1%-14% OPEN RATE

- Last Minute Gift - We Have The Answer
- Valentines - Shop Early & Save 10%
- Give a Gift Certificate this Holiday
- Valentine's Day Salon and Spa Specials!
- Gift Certificates - Easy & Elegant Giving - Let Them Choose
- Need More Advertising Value From Your Marketing Partner?
- [COMPANYNAME] Pioneers in Banana Technology
- [COMPANYNAME] Moves You Home for the Holidays
- Renewal
- Technology Company Works with [COMPANYNAME] on Bananas Efforts
- [COMPANYNAME] Update - A Summary of Security and Emergency Preparedness News
- Now Offering Banana Services!
- It's still summer in Tahoe!
- [COMPANYNAME] endorses [COMPANYNAME] as successor
- [COMPANYNAME] Holiday Sales Event
- The Future of International Trade
- [COMPANYNAME] for your next dream home.

- True automation of your Banana Research
- [COMPANYNAME] Resort - Spring into May Savings
- You Asked For More...

The subject line should describe the subject of your email. Don't write your subject lines like advertisements. The best subject lines **tell** what's inside. The worst subject lines **sell** what's inside.

SPAM

RECEIVING

It comes with the territory. You don't like it, too bad! I receive on average between a thousand to fifteen hundred spam emails per day! Between the server and my email client, it takes me a couple of minutes per week.

1. Learn how to use the delete key
2. Set a proper anti-spam system
3. Always review the spam before deleting. You may have some important email that was caught inadvertently.

SENDING

Whether you like it or not, when you send email, some people will consider it as spam. I used to send a weekly newsletter. Only people that subscribed did receive it. There was always a link at the bottom on how to unsubscribe. Every so often, some "turkey" complained, insulted me about the "spam." To which I replied to them:

1. Please be polite... you can unsubscribe with ...link...
2. Here's the email you send me to subscribe to...

Always be polite, but be firm.

HITS VS. PAGES VS. PEOPLE

How good and successful is your website? Many website owners will gloat and claim:

I have 300,000 hits per month!

to make sure that their numbers are high. There is big confusion between:

- Hits
- Pages
- People

HITS

A hit happens whenever a web browser, Internet Explorer, Safari, Firefox, and Opera... issues a "GET". The web browser may issue dozens of GETs per page, including one for each graphic, for each photo, for each "div container"... Hits will always be the highest number. **When somebody gloats, including the media, about the huge numbers of hits, do NOT trust them.** It's snow job. If they misrepresent their website, what about the rest?

PAGES

A page is what you think, a web page. Therefore, it must be true and reliable. Yes? No! When is a web page a web page and is not a web page? It depends on who asks for the web page.

"Served 250,000 web pages this month." Yes, it's true but the more important question is: "was it done by humans or by robots whose job is to steal your content, harvest emails, names, and photos?" Robots will go through every page every time.

PEOPLE

People must be real, with eyes, brains... Shouldn't that be the correct number? Almost! It's a better indication.

You can get this information from Google Analytics or from some software such as AwStats. Even with people, you will get different answers depending on what or who does the analysis.

Even Google Analytics is often wrong. Google Analytics underreports the number of humans. It does not include anybody behind a "proxy server."

What's a proxy server?

Companies pay for Internet traffic.

- 1. It's expensive.*
- 2. Many people go to see the same web page. If you send an email to a colleague to check a cartoon, a web page, or a website, you've already been there. The proxy server will remember that you went there not long ago, so instead of letting them go to that cartoon, web page, or website, and re-downloading it, the proxy server will show them the cartoon, the web page, or the website.*

This is a simplified explanation. The proxy server also provides some security by cleanup some of the viruses/malware...

Nobody can give you an accurate number of people that came to a website. Everybody tries to differentiate between robots and people, but it's very difficult. Robots change regularly their behavior to stay anonymous.

FLASH VS. HTML

In today's world, almost every photographer has a website, even my dog has decided to be Internet savvy and put up his own website. In a fully unscientific research, my own experience, I found that the majority of photographers use Flash.

I hate Flash. Actually, I retract, I strongly dislike Flash:

- For security reasons, I have disabled Flash on my web browsers.
 - For convenience reasons, I have disabled Flash on my web browsers.
- Flash is too slow. Takes forever to load: 10%, 20%, 30%...

Why do most "artsy" type of people use Flash on the Internet? In my opinion:

- They think Flash is cool.
- The "me too" syndrome. She has it, so I must have it.
- "See how sexy" my website is.
- The techie did the demo on a fast server over a local network. And they were the only one on the website. So there was no problem with either the speed or the bandwidth.

Every year, PhotoShelter interviews photo buyers. One of their questions was:

Flash based introduction to your website: % tolerate/like flash based introductions and % hate flash based introductions

	Tolerate/Like this feature	Hate this feature
Flash-based introduction to your website	4%	96%
Textured or graphical backgrounds	6%	94%

MIND YOUR FLASH SLIDESHOWS

77%

Buyers who **won't** often watch a flash slideshow in a photographer's website. And FYI 96% get livid when they need to watch a website intro before seeing your images.

50%

Buyers who will **give up** if your site takes longer than 10 seconds to load. Take 15 seconds and you'll lose 71% of your visitors.

Buyers emphasized the need for speed. They're busy people. Flash slideshows tend to eat up time loading. If you provide one, let the user control it, to start/stop/speed up as they choose.

Buyers usually know what they're looking for. They want a quick glance at as many thumbnails as possible, or the ability to search by keyword.

What do I look for when going to a photographer's website? See the photos. I want to see them large and at my own speed.

The more you annoy your potential customers, the less you sell!

As much as we would hate to think, we, photographers, are a dime a dozen. The photo buyers will move to the next website.

We felt it was important to provide this guidance - quite frankly we were surprised by how deep the negative feelings run! On the page with the comment snippets - we provided but a tiny fraction of what we actually saw. It was a free form field and I swear, of more than 500 comments, so many were trashing uncontrollable flash slideshows, flash intros, or music.

— Andrew Fingerman, VP Marketing of PhotoShelter

PRO PHOTO HOSTING

SMUGMUG AND ZENFOLIO

They mostly do galleries for printing services.

Why do I put them together when they are direct competitors? Because they are the same. Different companies but similar services. If you are going to use them, pay your money and use the PRO. The service level will allow you to integrate them into your website. The others service levels do not. Many people will leave thinking they've screwed up and left your website.

PHOTOSHELTER

<http://photoshelter.com>. Almost exclusively used by professional photographers. It also does printing but is much more directed toward portfolio and stock.

Their claim to fame is that they have the best SEO with your photos. It's more expensive than many other companies providing photo hosting.

FLICKR

<http://flickr.com> is one of the web most popular photo-sharing websites. In 2005, Yahoo! Purchased Flickr.

- Millions of photographers use Flickr
- Thousands and thousands of professional photographers use Flickr

For \$25 per year, you can get the "Pro" account, that gives you unlimited uploads, unlimited sets and collections and most importantly ad-free browsing.

There are two major problems with Flickr that makes it a "No-No."

1. They delete accounts without any warning, notification, or any explanation. See <http://thomashawk.com/> Thomas Hawk's Digital Connection. He's a big critic of Flickr and I agree with most of it.
2. Uncle Harry also uses Flickr to show and share his photos.

OTHERS

There are plenty of other companies doing something similar, like Exposure Manager...

If you are adventurous enough, meaning willing to spend some time and money, especially if you share the cost with other photographers, you can do it yourself with Drupal and UberCart and use PayPal as the credit card processor.

SELLING

It's very simple, no selling means no business and no income. Zero.

But, I don't want to sell!

Or

I never sell, people come to me.

Even if this was true, you still have to sell her the "package", the "upgrade", the larger print...

CONFIDENCE

Confidence is the belief in oneself. Confidence is build over time. Confidence is built on various wins. The more you win, the confident you will get. The wins do not have to be big. Many small wins are more important than one big win and many small losses.

To sell, you will need some confidence. Some people have it from their childhood, some people have to develop it.

To sell to your customer, you must show confidence. When was the last time you went to a hairdresser that was afraid of giving you a haircut? Would you trust a hairdresser that every minute would change her scissors? Would you trust a hairdresser that would keep on mumbling and talking to herself?

Fake it until you make it.

– common say

Most of the times, it will work.

HIRING A SALES PERSON

You can always hire a sales person, if you don't want to do your own selling.

COMMISSIONS

Almost all sales people, except at Best Buy, are on commission. They are paid on performance.

Your goal is to **pay the highest commission possible!** A "poor" sales person would get in the 10% range commission for the transaction. A "good" sales person would get in the 33% range commission for the transaction.

Why pay the highest commission possible? A "good" sales person will bring you the business. If they are good, stay with you and can keep you busy, it's best to make it as 50-50 partnership.

PARTNERS

Partnership is like a marriage. You need to work at it. It's never perfect and there are always problems.

Partnerships usually work best when:

1. Skills do not overlap
2. The partner values your work
3. You value your partner's work

PRESS RELEASES

One of the "best" way and surely one of the "cheapest" way of getting "free" advertising is to get the press to mention you, your photography, your subjects...

The purpose of the media, printed or broadcast, is to sell advertising. That's who pays. The product that the media sells is "eye balls." When the 2008 recession struck, almost all the businesses cut their advertising to the bone. The printed media was almost killed from it. They still have not recovered in 2011. The broadcast media did a little better and survived by better concentrating and cutting redundant services. Only one newsroom...

The press needs to have a balance of local topics, national topics and even sometimes international topics, think Iraq, Afghanistan, nuclear... Your press release will help them fill the local portion.

The press has very busy days and slow days. They still need to fill the slow days. The 10 o'clock news is always 1 hour long, on busy days and on slow days. On the slow days, they need to fill the space. That's when the press release comes in.

WRITING THE PRESS RELEASE

1. You need something local.
2. You need something interesting.
 - Saying that you are available for weddings is not interesting to the regular public.
 - Having done a wedding ceremony while sky diving is interesting.
 - Having a personal project like documenting kids at the beach for the last 3 years can be interesting.
 - ...
3. You need to start writing.
 - Take a look at "How to Write a Press Release":
<http://www.wikihow.com/Write-a-Press-Release>
 - "6 Steps to Free Publicity" by Marcia Yudkin

SENDING THE PRESS RELEASE

1. Select a slow media week. That's a week of public holidays, no election campaign...
2. Send it on an early Thursday morning. Mondays are too busy, your press release will be buried in all the others from the weekend. Too much is happening on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. Friday afternoons are "take out the trash days", that when all the various levels of government release all the bad news so it will not be reported.

The question is where and to who do send the press release? It's actually pretty easy. The number of local media is small.

Usually at the bottom of their main page, there will be:

1. Contact us
2. About us

First check the "About us" web page. It will usually have something like:

If you're looking for ways to get in touch with people and departments at The Vancouver Sun newspaper, here is a phone and e-mail directory that includes newsroom contacts.

To contact the staff who run this website, please click here ...

If you cannot find the person or department you need in the directories above, then you can use these general numbers:

- *Main switchboard: xxx-xxx-xxxx*
- *Administrative fax: xxx-xxx-xxxx*
- *Administrative e-mail*

It's usually best to contact the people/department. Or, you failing that, you can cut and paste your release in the "Contact us" web page.

MAKE SURE

Make sure that you include:

1. Your full name
2. Your phone number
3. Your address to prove to them that you are local
4. Your website

It's always useful to include some background information.

KNOWN QUANTITY

Sometimes there are iconic photos that "pop up" in the news. It's always from just one photographer. You can always contact the press to explain how that photographer got that photo when nobody else saw it.

My favorite example is during the 2008 US election of Obama vs. McCain. At the end of the 3rd debate, McCain did the "Iguana Walk." You can see it at <http://blogs.reuters.com/photo/files/2008/10/mccainpicture.jpg>⁴⁴. Jim Bourg for Reuters was the only photographer, out of 75 other photographers, to take the photo of McCain doing the "Iguana Walk" as both were walking out from the stage.

Just contacting the press and explaining who and what will get your name in the press. When reporters get useful information, they remember. You become a "known quantity" and the same reporters will contact you when they will have questions related to photography.

INTERNET

There are hundreds of companies that will offer you to create a gallery, the people will view the gallery, and will be able to buy the prints from your

⁴⁴ I'm not showing the actual photo due to the outrageous licensing fees from Reuters.

photos. Many of these companies have a deal with some printing company. They will take the order, charge the customer, send the prints, and eventually send you some \$.

So what's wrong with that picture? You just post your photos, wait..., wait..., and wait... and nothing happens, almost no money comes in. Why? Because they took all the money on commissions? No, not really.

So why? Because the people didn't go to the website, they didn't look at the photos, and they didn't buy.

Have you ever gone on a cruise? On your first night, they take the "snapshot" at dinnertime at the entrance of the dining room. Within a couple of hours, the photos are on a large board until the next day. Oooh! Aaah! \$12.50 later, you have your photo.

Most people do not go to a website to select the photos and buy them. The photo is right here, right now, they buy now. It's an impulse buying. You lose all the impulse buying with the Internet.

*I've been in this business for quite a few years. And, I was lucky enough to learn early on that proof viewing, whether paper proof's or Internet proofs were sales killers. Ever since 1980, I have been proactively involved in the presentation/sales process with my clients. **Putting the photographs up online neuters any input and influence that the photographer may have in the presentation/sale.** (His words, my emphasis)*

— David Ziser, *Digital Pro Talk*: <http://digitalprotalk.blogspot.com>

Most of the photos bought on the Internet are photos for publications. They are mostly bought by editors, professional editors, or otherwise.

Most of the prints bought on the Internet are prints of either local areas or from a place they have visited, are fond of and have great memories.

- ***You do not sell on the Internet***
- ***People buy on the Internet***

It's a huge difference! You cannot entice people to buy. Your website is passive. People look, people decide, there's nothing you can do convert them from browser to buyer.

You need to build the enthusiasm, the pride in owning your photos.

- Look how she looks at the ...
- The shoes goes well with the dress...
- ...

You can only point to the details in person. These small steps make the sale. These small steps catapult you into the "profitable zone."

PHOTO SIZES

What are you selling? 8" by 10"? 11" by 14"? 16" by 20"? Why? If you ask anybody else, friends or family what's an 11 by 14? Will they immediately show you the size with their hands? No. You and I can do it because we deal with it on a regular basis, but Jane Public doesn't.

- Medium and you point at the 8" by 10"
- Large and you point at the 16" by 20"
- Wall size and you point at the 20" by 30"

That's what people understand, that's what people relate to, that's what people buy.

You will sell more that way.

WHAT ABOUT THE 4" BY 6"?

Stay away from the 4" by 6". In the last two years, I've stopped selling the 4" by 6" photos. Why? Because that's what people buy at the drugstore, at

Walmart... They know that the price is between \$0.15 for Costco⁴⁵ to \$0.49 for London Drugs.

Anything more and you are "ripping them off."

However, they still want their 4" by 6" prints! If they buy enough, **I give them for free**, as a complement with all my thanks. I think, that this year will year that I will sell 5" by 7"s.

THEY WANT THE FILES TO PRINT THEMSELVES

People do not know or understand printing. Why should an 8" by 10" print cost \$2.49 at Costco and you charge \$69.95? A print is a print! Right? Custom, color match... They don't know, they don't care.

Show them the difference! Show them a 1-hour photo 8" by 10" print and a custom 8" by 10". Show them the difference on an 8" by 10" and 11" by 14" prints.

Offer the lifetime print guarantee. If the print fades, you will replace it for free with the original color...⁴⁶

By the way, what about Costco? They cannot compete with custom printing. But, for machine-automated printing, they are very good. Perfect? Far from it but really good.

Confession time: I do use Costco. It's not because of the price (I do appreciate that it's cheap), but because of their "quality" and their consistency as a next day service.

- *I have downloaded the printer/paper profiles for my Costco at <http://www.drycreekphoto.com/icc>*
- *Setting the photos to: "Do Not Change"*

⁴⁵ That's the price in Canada

⁴⁶ It doesn't matter if the print was in the sun. It's an unconditional guarantee. The purpose is to differentiate myself from the other photographers and inspire trust.

Is it better than any good custom lab? No, but that's not the point. They offer, me and my customers, consistent prints up to 11" by 14" at a speed that I can't get from my custom lab.

MEETING THE CUSTOMER

If you have a studio, perfect, then you have an area of your studio to meet the customer, to show your prints... The only problem is that having a studio is expensive, very expensive. You have to pay the rent/lease, you have to pay the business taxes, and you have to pay the property taxes...

If you do not have a studio, you either:

1. Rent a studio by the hour, the half day or by the day. You can meet the client there, make your photos there, but they will know that it's not your place. It's not your photos on the walls...
2. Rent office space to meet the clients, do the sales presentation... It's lot cheaper and gives you a business address...
3. Meet at the coffee shop, usually a specialty coffee shop. I usually say:

I generally meet my clients at Coco & Cherry on Main @ 21st. I'm available Monday at 11 am, or Wednesday at 2 pm. Which one's better for you?

By stating a date, time, and location, they'll rarely ask questions.

CAN YOU HELP ME JUSTIFY SPENDING THIS MUCH?

The Saddleback Leather Company sells leather bags. Everybody sells leather bags. The Saddleback leather bags are expensive, tough and look great. Did I say that these leather bags are expensive? Not expensive, very expensive! So how do they compete with Prada or Tumi? Their bags are also expensive and look great. In addition, they have the name, the brand. They have

massive advertising. The Saddleback Leather Company is small without the millions of dollars in advertising.

Somehow, they still manage in being noticed by the right people. How? They are doing things right. One of them is a great website and being cheeky. They answer the questions that will be asked before they are asked. One of the problems is the high price of their leather handbags, when they are not a well-known brand like Prada, Tumi, Coach...

Can you help me justify spending this much on a piece of leather?

Buy the best, cry once. *It's all about the cost per year. In college, I bought a pair of very expensive shoes for my job as a waiter. I couldn't afford them, but I bought them anyhow. They were really light and comfortable and took me through two years of waiting tables and one year as a limo driver and another year of occasional use. And then they still looked good for a month of Sundays. Cost per year was about \$25. Most of the other waiters bought a new pair of \$55 heavy and uncomfortable shoes every 6 months because theirs wore out and looked ratty by then. One of the principles the successful in the world understand is this: If one buys quality from the start they save money. Don't be penny wise and dollar foolish. This will be one of the most savvy investments and inexpensive leather pieces you'll ever have. And remember, you must truly love yourself before you can love others. A couple of other things to think about you'll be more popular. **Everybody isn't buying one. I'll invite you to my birthday party. What's wrong, you chicken?** (Their words, my emphasis)*

Isn't it great?

- Why are we so expensive when Uncle Harry with his camera... will do it for free?
- This is not a photo of ... This is a memory and a souvenir of ...
- We will match the color of your eyes, the color of your ...
- Expensive custom prints? We work hours to make the print, including at least 3 tests. We are using paper that will last for least 100 years

before fading. When you will re-order the print, the colors will be identical ...

- ...

MONEY

BANKS

You must have a separate bank account for your photographic business. No if, no but... You must! The FBI is investigating Christine O'Donnell, of the Tea Party fame, for not keeping her political finances separate from her personal finances. It doesn't matter if it's true or not, it's always messy and extremely painful!

1. It will simplify your life. It's simple to separate your personal finances from your photographic business.
2. Whenever the tax people audit you, IRS, CRA... you are guilty and you will have to prove that you didn't cheat. It's not an "if" but a "when" you will be audited by the tax people.
3. Banking is a taxable expense.

CREDIT CARDS

If you deal with retail customers, you will need to accept credit cards. In the "good old days," everybody had a checkbook with them. Now? Check your own pockets... Many younger people do not even have a checkbook or a checking account.

There are dozens of credit card processing companies from PayPal, the most famous, to Google and Amazon...

PAYPAL

PayPal is the simplest and easiest way of accepting credit cards. That's what I'm using. You apply for the [PayPal.com/business](https://www.paypal.com/business). You can accept credit card

payments within a week, not in the 15 minutes that they claim. You must become a verified account that is tied to your bank account.

With PayPal, people do not need to have an account with PayPal. They just enter their credit card info... With Amazon, your customer must have an Amazon account.

Many people hate PayPal. PayPal is ruthless. You are guilty and you can't prove your innocence. This is not only PayPal, that's the way all the credit card processing companies, including the banks, will treat you. In addition, people do not like their charges.

INTUIT

If you are in the US, Intuit has a nice credit card system that ties up with your iPhone 4. Expensive but nice.

MERCHANT ACCOUNT

The lowest charges for credit card processing, especially from the credit card payment processors that are tied with Costco like Moneris...

When I tried to apply for a credit card merchant account, the bank wanted me to post a \$200,000 collateral! No way, José!

You can get lower cost credit card merchant account through places like the "Downtown Merchant Association", or the "Board of Trade"...

These merchant accounts make sense when you are both high volume and high amounts. In my opinion, it's not worth going through the hoops and loops for a few transactions per month.

PRICES

Setting your prices. A huge topic! I regularly get asked that question, in person or via email.

How much should I charge?

The cocky answer: "As much as you can get" and definitely the wrong answer is "Nothing"

– Adam Scorey

Wrong. I completely disagree with this advice.

1. Nothing is set in stone
2. Everybody will tell you something different
3. I'm right because:
 - a. I'm creating the course material
 - b. I have experience, meaning that I've made so many mistakes, that eventually I've learned, voluntarily or involuntarily.

What to charge? That depends on what you are selling and on your outlook/attitude. Here are the standard strategies.

THE STANDARD ADVICE

- Calculate your cost, overhead, equipment
- Calculate your time
- Calculate your expenses
- Calculate what you want your salary to be
- Estimate how many jobs you will have

Bingo, here's the number. The National Press Photographers Association: NPPA has a cost of doing business calculator where you just plug in your figures at

http://www.nppa.org/professional_development/business_practices/cdb/cdb_calc.cfm. It even has suggestions that are a good starting point.

That's not how it works in the "real world."

DON'T LEAVE ANY MONEY ON THE TABLE

- Charge as much as possible.
- Find how much they are willing to pay and charge a little bit more.

My problem with this approach is that you are not giving anything of value to the customer. What will be the customer's mood when she will find out that she paid twice more than Jane Bloe did because her budget was bigger?

It's often illegal in many jurisdictions to charge more depending on your customer. You can charge more by providing more/different services/products.

MATCH YOUR COMPETITION

Check the website of your competitors and match their prices.

1. Make sure that your competitor is really at "your level." Wedding photos range from \$250 to \$25,000
2. You rely on your competitor having done "their job right."

If you are selling "standard photos", such as a panorama of the Grand Canyon, or the Eiffel Tower at night⁴⁷... you will have to be in the price range of your competition.

⁴⁷ Photography the Eiffel tower at night is illegal! The lights are copyrighted. Photos of the Eiffel tower during daytime are OK!

WHAT ARE YOU SELLING?

In fact, what you charge will depend on what you are selling! I'm selling photos, you say. To which I reply NO! A big NO! A bold **NO!**

You are either:

1. Selling a product
2. Selling a service
3. Selling expertise
4. Selling a brand

SELLING A PRODUCT

You are selling photos that are already finished. The buyer can already see the finished photos before deciding to buy or not.

- When you have an art gallery and sell panoramas of the Grand Canyon, the Egyptian Pyramids, the French Eiffel Tower, you are not selling photos. You are selling a product, the prints. That product is similar to all the other "competing" products. It's like computers. There's no real difference between Dell, Toshiba, Lenovo... Even Apple has to be in the price range, at the top of the range, but within the range.

The real difference is between a 4" by 6" and a canvas vs. the panorama...

You have to charge a similar price based on the size and the material with your direct competition.

- Selling stock. It's called stock for a reason. It's called stock because the photo is lying in a drawer physical or logical⁴⁸.

You can charge a little bit more than iStockPhoto because they don't have it, you do. But, within reason. Hundred times more is not within reason. Exclusivity can be a reason for charging more. Exclusivity because of the subject like a celebrity, is why paparazzi make so much more money than regular photographers do.

SELLING A SERVICE

If you make portraits of people, children, babies, pets... weddings... You are not selling a product. You are not selling photos. You are selling memories. You are selling a point in time, and you are selling your services.

Now it's more difficult to set the prices.

- You can check your direct competition in town either through a friend or through their website.
- You can check the photographers at the other end of the country. They are not your competition.

SELLING EXPERTISE

Photography is one of the few fields that are not about itself. It's always about something else, about somebody else, about a situation... What do you know about it?

- Do you know and understand the medical technical jargon?
- Do you understand the world of non-profits? Do you know how to raise awareness, funding...?

⁴⁸ Your hard drive is the logical equivalent of a set of drawers.

- Do you understand the animal behaviors? Do you understand their breeding, their feeding...? Your wildlife photos will become extraordinary...
- Do you understand the plants, microclimates...?
- Do you understand the sport, what the player will do next...?

Then you have almost no competition. The customer will not have the choice, they will have to come to you, and pay your price, because they don't have that expertise. Your ex-competition doesn't have that expertise. I don't have that knowledge in your field. In your field, I'm the Uncle Harry, you are not.

SELLING A BRAND

Annie Leibovitz sells a brand. Celebrities clear their calendar to be photographed by Annie Leibovitz.

Steve McCurry sells a brand. People register to his workshops because of his name and his long time association with National Geographic.

They can charge whatever they want, there's only one of them.

THE TRUTH ABOUT PRICING YOUR SERVICES

My answer is that you can charge whatever you want! What? Yes that's right, **you should charge whatever you want**. If you want to charge \$1 per photo for a wedding, you will find people that will pay that. If you want to charge \$100 per wedding and all photos on CD, you will find people that will pay that. If you want to charge \$10,000 per wedding, you will find people that will pay that.

The important part is the \$1/photo customers are different from the \$10,000 per wedding customers. **They expect different level of services and deliverables.**

The price has nothing to do with the technical or artistic quality/vision of the photos.

FRIENDS AND FAMILY

Usually friends and family are your first customers. They will continue to ask you for photos for the rest of your life. The question is what do you do about it?

Do you give them a discount? How much of a discount? 25% off your regular rate? 33% off your regular rate? 50% off?

Then the question is what about the friend of your brother, sister or mom? What about the friend of your best friend? How much discount do you give them?

You know that no matter what discount you give, they will think that you are "gouging" them and taking advantage of them, even with a 75% discount and they will think that you are taking advantage of them.

After years of bad feelings, I settled for:

- The discount is 100% on my labor. The actual cost of the prints with me showing them the receipts even if they don't want to see them.

Or

- Full price, no discount, zero, nothing. Then if I choose, I will give a "beautiful" present at the end, such as a 16" by 20" canvas mounted photo for free.

What about the company where your best friend works? Do you extend the discount to them?

What about the company where your brother/sister/mother/father works? Do you extend the discount to them?

WORKING ON SPECULATION

There are occasions where the "could be" customer may be interested, but they don't know, they don't want to take the risk, they are not sure, may be...

You have to take the risk, happens all the time. The standard, the "official line" is always: "Don't do that. You must have a signed contract or..." That's not the way it works in real life, especially when you start without any experience and without a portfolio.

It's called working "on spec", on speculation. There's no contract, there's no obligation on either party.

- If I feel that the job is big enough, I will make a couple of large prints to impress the "could be" customer.
- We always do the review, together, on my laptop.
- The customer selects which photos she wants.
- I charge for usage.
- If the order is big enough then I will give them the couple of prints that I did, as a "freebie".

It's always full price for the usage. No discount, zero, zip, nada. I took the risk, they didn't. They buy after seeing the finished photos!

- If they buy and pay the price. It's "double" great. You get photos for your portfolio and you are paid.
- If they don't buy, it's OK too. You have some new photos for your portfolio.

There's no downside, you are always ahead.

BUSINESS / LEGAL

GOVERNMENT

I'm here to help!
– Your friendly bureaucrat

Sometimes there are government programs that you can use from your own benefits. In the “good old days,” like in the early 1980s, the government guaranteed my loan to purchase equipment. Now, it’s mostly tax breaks. You should still investigate.

Go to your friendly government “advice bureau.” Ask for their small business workshops and see what they offer. It’s usually worthwhile to go these workshops. You will get enough of an education to be able to ask intelligent questions to your accountant or your lawyer.

ACCOUNTING

Many people don’t want to have anything to do with accounting. “I’m not a numbers person,” “I don’t like number,” “I’m not here to get stuck behind a desk”...

Like it or not, you will need to learn about accounting.

1. Accounting will tell you how money much you’ve made.
2. Accounting will tell you how money much you’ve lost.
3. Accounting will tell you how money they owe you.
4. Accounting will tell you how money you owe.
5. **Accounting will keep you out of jail.** The governments want their share. The taxes, the fees... If you don’t, first, there are penalties, more money to pay, and then there are fines. Then they size your

house, your car, your photo equipment, and finally there's jail when the government is really "pissed off" at you.

You can do your own accounting, use some bookkeeping service, or use an accountant for the accounting.

I used a bookkeeper that was very aggressive with the taxes. She took pride in how much taxes she saved me. That was until the day of reckoning, the audit. That's when I started doing my own accounting. It's not that complicated. If you can figure out the relationship between aperture, shutter speed, and ISO then you can understand the accounting.

There are many easy accounting software available. From QuickBooks to Sage... Once you have selected an accountant, they will tell you their preferred accounting software. You do the accounting and at the end of the year, you send them a copy of your accounting and they do the year-end work.

TAXES

Didn't somebody say?

There are only two things certain, death, and taxes.

Please note that in Canada, where I live, the income tax was a temporary measure brought in 1916 to pay for World War I. Somehow, the temporary measure is still in place. I'm sure that there must be a mistake somewhere. They must have forgotten to repeal the income tax. Would they lie to us?

Al Capone, remember the mobster in Chicago, he never went to prison for any of the murders, the bootlegging, the racketeering, the prostitution... He went to jail, and died in jail for fiscal evasion! He went to jail for not collecting and not paying taxes on his "earnings."

Manuel Noriega, for those of you not old enough, was the “president and dear leader” of Nicaragua, in Central America, who was helping the US in the 1970s and the 1980s. Then the US invaded Nicaragua and arrested him. He was convicted of racketeering and money laundering for Columbian drug dealers. He’s still in jail. He’ll die in jail. Yes, I know that these are extreme cases.

It doesn't matter what your status, your country or your location, you must collect taxes for the government. You must remit these taxes. You must pay your own taxes.

Don't mess around. They have the big stick. Eventually, they'll catch you. Either because another photographer that you undercut turned you in or because of computers and cross-references...

20 years ago, in the mist of my divorce, suddenly I was audited. Why? Take a guess. The result of the audit was:

1. Year before audit: I overpaid by \$17. Yes, seventeen dollars.
2. Year of the audit: I underpaid by \$31. Yes, thirty-one dollars, and some pennies.

I owed them \$15. That's was it. It took me a full month to prepare for the audit, and worries... It took me at least 150 hours to get all the paperwork... I spent \$3,300 for the accountant. All that for \$15!

That’s why:

1. By having a corporation, it forces me to keep my finance and my business’ finances separate.
2. I almost never deal with cash. Sometimes checks, but mostly credit card/PayPal. Then there's an easy audit trail.

INCORPORATION

Please note that I am 100% unqualified to give any legal or any accounting advice. I'm not a lawyer or an accountant. I'm not even studying to become one.

There are many ways of operating your business from the sole proprietor, to a Limited Liability Company, to a Limited Liability Partnership, Sub-S Corporation... The names vary but the concepts are the same. Officially, it was for limiting the risk of lawsuits to the principals and the shareholders.

The main reason that lawyers, and accountants will give you for incorporating is to limit your liability. When somebody sues your company, they are not going after you own assets, your wife's, your common law partner's assets or even your kids'.

That's where they are wrong! That was then. Now, when they sue, they not only sue your company but will also sue you personally, and your wife and your in-laws. If it moves, they will sue. Irving H. Picard, the trustee in charge of recovering the Bernie Madoff "Ponzi scheme", is not only suing Bernie Madoff, Bernie Madoff's children, but he is also suing even Bernie Madoff's grandchildren, who are less than 3 years old!

1. It doesn't cost more to suing you, personally, and the corporation than just suing the corporation, or the LLC, or the LLP.
2. The cost of defending two or three lawsuits is two to three times more expensive than just one lawsuit. You will have a serious incentive into settling...

So should you incorporate, LLC, or LLP or...? I think so. The major benefit, for me, of incorporating is that it forces me to separate my personal finances from the business finances. Now, I have to file two separate income taxes...

That's why you should:

1. Go to your friendly government "advice bureau." Like the SBA, the Small Business Administration and ask for their workshops, so you have a general idea and a decent understanding.
2. After learning and understanding, then you can go to a corporate lawyer that will give you some recommendations that apply to your specific case. The purpose of the workshops is so you can learn enough to ask "good/pertinent" questions.

Do not forget that accountants and lawyers are like taxis, the meter runs whether it moves or not. The good ones are expensive, so don't waste your time and get your money's worth.

CONTRACTS

Please note that I am 100% unqualified to give any legal advice. I'm not a lawyer. I'm not even studying to become a lawyer.

When you deal with any contract, you need to ask yourself and/or your lawyer the following questions:

1. Does your photo contract make sense?
2. Would your photo contract stand-up with a collection agency?
3. Would your photo contract stand-up in a small claim court?
4. Would your photo contract stand-up in a regular court?

Whatever you do, it's **unlikely** for you to go to a "regular" court. The amounts involved are usually not large enough to justify the lawyers and the court costs. Most of the lawsuits are settled out of court.

CONTRACT MUST COVER

The contracts must cover the 5 W + the money

1. What:

- What are you delivering? Prints, files, how many of what...
- What's included and not included: post processing...
- Copyrights and ownership: "**who owns what?**" and in what form such as prints, proofs, ownership
- Rights: what are/could be the other uses of the photos. Prints vs. web...

2. When: When are the photos to be made, delivered...?

3. How:

- Just you
- Assistant...

4. Where:

- Location: indoor, outdoors
- Weather: rescheduling...

5. Who:

- Who will be involved
- Who will make the final decisions
- Model releases: are they needed?

6. Money:

- Deposits: refundable or nonrefundable. Deposits are refundable and what are the factors involved in the refund. Usually, retainers are not refundable. You should use retainers if possible.
- Charges for cancellations, no-shows, rescheduling...
- Payments: returned checks, charge-backs...
- What for? For usage, for physical photos...
- Arbitration: If there's a dispute, the amounts are too low to go to court. That's when you will likely use arbitration whether it's binding or not. Which jurisdiction? Different jurisdictions have different case law. If it's not local for you, you will have to travel at your expenses...

- Liabilities: Maximums in case of ...
 - Your responsibilities
 - Your customer's responsibilities?
- What if the client does not pay? Are you still obliged to deliver the photos, can they still use the photos... Any penalties like interest...

There are many photo contract templates on the web. You can Google for:

1. free photography contract templates
2. free photography contract forms
3. free photography contract samples

Watch out for:

1. What's valid in one country/state/province is not valid in another.
2. Who own the copyrights of your photos depends on which country you live in!
3. Whatever you do, run it through a "good" lawyer and or a "good accountant." A "good" lawyer or a "good" accountant is one that will save you much more than her costs.

Many contracts are not worth the paper they written on and signed. There has been many cases both in Canada and the US where the courts have ruled that the contract is invalid because it's too much one-sided, and imposed changes to reflect a more balanced contract.

A "good" lawyer will tell you if the contract will stand in court.

SCOPE CREEP

The customer always asks for more than what was originally agreed. I have yet to find one customer that asked for less. There are three types of requests:

1. The small request. A few other shots, a slightly different setup... They are minor. It will be just a few more minutes or even an hour. Usually, I agree with:

Sounds good, let's try

2. The "major" request:

Oh, by the way, we also need a multimedia...

Then my answer is:

Yes, I'd love to do that, but it will significantly change the budget. If you give me the details, I'll present you with an updated budget.

That way they know that I am a "yes" man. It can be done, but it's not free.

3. Trying to save money. She's "on my back" during the entire photo shoot trying to cut corners here and there to save money. My usual answer is:

If we do it this way, it will not look the way you intended

Then she can decide to go ahead or not with the "saving of the money."

FORMS

I use the "**Business and Legal Forms for Photographers (with CD-ROM)**" by Tad Crawford. I have adapted them to my use. They are a good starting point. You could even use them straight out of the box if you live and operate in the US.

The forms are also on the CD in both PDF and Microsoft Word format, so you can modify them.

If you modify the forms, run them through a “good” lawyer that knows what she’s talking about. This will cost a few hundreds, but going to the lawyer will save you many headaches and thousands of dollars later.

READ THE DARN CONTRACT

I used to do construction photography. I had a few customers. It was well paid and very little competition. That was before the recession. Now all of my construction/development customers closed. They went bankrupt, or they are doing nothing at all.

I got a phone call from Cherryl. Cherryl used to work at a large firm that owns a big patch of land. They were a customer of mine. They were developing the land by building offices/high tech buildings as needed. With the cutbacks, Cherryl went to work at another construction company. That construction company was very special, it was still working and building two towers in the middle of the recession/depression.

My usual terms for companies are 33% to start, 33% on delivery and the rest usually 30 or 60 days later, but they must pay before they have the right to use the photos. I know Cherryl quite well, but this was a new customer for me, so when they emailed me their contract, I read it carefully. Buried in the contract, on page 3 in the terms, I found:

Even if payment is not received, all work must be completed and delivered.

This wasn't in the fine print. This was in the payment terms.

1. They knew that they would not be paying. Is it just for my contract or all contracts? I don't know.
2. Now I know why these guys were still building. They didn't plan to pay their suppliers.

I didn't go to a lawyer. Why pay for a lawyer? I knew everything I needed about these guys. I emailed back, that my terms were 50% to start, the rest due on delivery of the photos and they had no right to use the photos until I was paid in full. I never heard from them again.

Read your contracts, especially the first contract with a new customer / supplier.

QUOTES & INVOICES

QUOTES

I only do quotes for business customers. My private customers usually pick a package with some extras that are clearly explained before they book the photo session.

The quote includes the:

The quote must cover the 5 W + the money

1. What:

- What are you delivering? Prints, files, albums, sizes. How many of what...
- What's included and **not included** like post processing...
- Copyrights and ownership: "**who owns what?**" and in what form such as prints, proofs, ownership
- Rights: what are/could be the other uses of the photos. Prints vs. web...

1. When:

- When is the photo shoot
- When the photos are delivered...
- Weather and rescheduling...

2. How:

- Just you
 - Assistant...
3. Where:
- Locations: indoor, outdoors
4. Who:
- Who will be involved, their side
 - Who will make the final decisions
 - Model releases: are they needed?
5. Money:
- Deposits: refundable or nonrefundable. Deposits are refundable and what are the factors involved. Usually, retainers are not refundable. You should use retainers if possible.
 - Charges for cancellations, no-shows, rescheduling...
 - Payments: returned checks, charge-backs...
 - What for? For usage, for physical photos...
 - Arbitration: If there's a dispute, the amounts are too low for going to court. That's when you will likely use arbitration whether it's binding or not. Which jurisdiction? Different jurisdictions, different case law. If it's not local for you, you will have to travel at your expenses...
 - Liabilities: Maximums in case of ... What are your responsibilities, what are your customer's responsibilities?
 - What if the client does not pay? Collection agency...
 - Interest charges...

- *All quotes must be dated.*
- **All quotes must have an expiry date**, usually 30 days, but it can be extended under special circumstances.
- *You must keep your quotes "forever."*

I've had customers that came back to me a couple of years later with "slight" changes asking me to be bound by the quote I gave them years ago.

Once the quote is accepted, it usually becomes the contract.

- *You must have a quote/contract especially when "working for free"*
- *You need to know what you have to do*
- *They need to know what they get*

INVOICES

You must always issue invoices. Usually, no invoice means no payment. Not just for businesses, also for private people.

The invoice should have:

- Your legal company name and maybe a "operating as"
- Whom you are invoicing, company name, and person in the company if you are invoicing a company
- The date of the invoice
- Details of the invoice
 - What
 - When
- **If you are invoicing a company, you must include their PO number, in bold, if they have issued one. It's your job to request it.**
- Details of the taxes
- Your Tax number
- At the bottom of my invoices I have the following:

Interest rate of 1.9% per month [24% per annum] will be charged if payment is not received within 15 days

Charges not yet recorded will be charged on future invoices

If you do not include this sentence or something similar, you are not allowed to charge interest on overdue accounts. Set your own interest rate, but it cannot be “usurious.”

In the UK, the interest charges are regulated. In Canada, where I live, and in the US, you can charge almost any interest rate or any form of interest⁴⁹ as long as it is clearly posted on the contract/invoice.

And

You are not allowed to use any of the photos for any purpose until we have received payment in full.

PO

Whenever you deal with a company as your customer, you **must** ask for their PO. The PO is the Purchase Order. Usually, the accounting department pays your invoice. The accounting department can only pay your invoice if they can tie your invoice to their own PO. If not, as far as they are concerned, the invoice is invalid.

Their PO number must appear in BIG and BOLDED on your invoice.

PERMITS

In North America, there are three levels of government.

1. Federal
2. State or Provincial
3. Municipal

⁴⁹ The interest can either be a rate like percentage or a flat fee per time period, like \$250 per month.

Each level of government has its own regulations and sometimes you may need permits/registration will all of them. Some local governments allow you to work from your home while some others do not.

Make sure that you do comply with them. The alternative is very bloody and messy. Usually, it will be your blood in the mess, not theirs.

Many permits require liability insurance of a **few** million dollars.

INSURANCE

Depending on where you live, which municipality, state/province, and country, you will need more or less insurance.

LIABILITY/THEFT...

You can either get a stand-alone business insurance. Right now, here in Vancouver BC, Canada after shopping around I found a \$1,200 insurance policy for a 5 million dollars liability, theft, flood... You may be able to get something cheaper depending on your circumstances.

Alternatively, you can get some liability insurance, theft... and attach it to your house insurance policy. It is much cheaper. However, the liability is much lower, usually around 2 million dollars, but the cost is around \$200. The price depends on the insurance, the riders...

HEALTH

Almost everywhere in the developed world, health insurance is government funded or at least partially government funded.

Not in the US, especially with the new changes... you will need to buy your own health insurance. You can't afford it by yourself. That why you will need

to join some photo association, they have a group health care insurance at a much, much more reasonable cost.

COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Gene Amdahl first defined FUD after he left IBM to found his own company, Amdahl Corp. a large mainframe manufacturer, in the 1960s:

Fear, Uncertainty and the Doubts that IBM sales people instill in the minds of potential customers who might be considering Amdahl products.

You can use FUD by asking your potential customer if your competitors have liability insurance and how much do they have?

- Is the amount of their liability insurance enough in today's world?
- Does the customer has liability insurance if the photographer doesn't.

MODEL RELEASES

Everybody will tell you that to take the photo, you need a model release or a property release. **FALSE!** You need property and model release **for some usages of the photos**. It's for when and where the photos are used, not for taking the photos.

Many businesses flourish without any model releases.

DAN HELLER

Dan Heller of <http://www.danheller.com> fame has written a whole book on model releases. However, when he sells his photos, they are without model releases under the following agreement:

- *Images must be licensed, even for non-profit, non-commercial uses.**

- *Images are provided at 300 dpi in JPG format.*
- *Prices listed are for one image on a single-use basis. (For multiple uses, email me.)*
- ***You are responsible for how images are used and whether other permissions may be needed.*** (His words, my emphasis)
- *Photo credit: "Photo © danheller.com" must be used.*
- *Permission to use images is not required for in-classroom projects for non-profit educational institutions. This is called, "Fair Use", and you should read more about this important aspect of Copyright Law.*

And with

- ***You are responsible for liability of use.*** (His words, my emphasis)
- *I cannot warrant whether your final use of the image requires additional permissions.*
- ***It is your sole responsibility to assure that the photo you are licensing is suitable for the use in which you intend to publish it.*** (His words, my emphasis)

Most stock agencies require that you upload the model release or property release for them to accept your photos. It's their requirements. Their goal is to transfer the burden of liability from their customers to the photographer. It's a business decision, not a legal requirement.

Some stock agencies, like iStockPhoto, are starting to allow photographers to upload photos for editorial use. These agencies do not require model/property releases for these photos.

Editorial is finally coming to iStockPhoto. Early in 2011, iStock will begin offering images under a new Editorial Use Only license. We are accepting images for this new category in early 2011.

Editorial Use means that the image will be used as a descriptive visual reference. Technically, every image at iStock right now is already 'editorial', in that the standard content license agreement allows for editorial use. For the first time now, we will be licensing images that can only be used this way. The Editorial Use Only license means that you cannot use the content for commercial advertising purposes.

and

iStockPhoto went live with the editorial license on 19-Feb-2011 with 7,000 images.

COPYRIGHTS

The copyright laws depend on which country you live in. Join some "good" professional photo organization. They will teach you the "local" copyrights.

WHO OWNS YOUR PHOTOS?

You make photos, be it portraits, wedding, landscapes... You sell them, now who own these photos. Simple, you took them and are not an employee of the company, you own them, right? That's only for the US, sometimes... In Canada, the person or the company, that contracted you, owns the photos.

Let's change the subject from photos to software. We all bought software and you had to, you are using the computer to read this article. If you didn't pirate the software, then you bought it. Then you must have seen on the screen or on the software itself that you didn't buy the software but you only bought a license to use the software, you are not allowed to make copies..., and you are not allowed to resell that software.

MediaPost reports that US District Court Judge Richard Jones ruled that: **if you bought it, you have the right to resell it!**

A guy bought AutoCAD, a very expensive software for engineering, architecture... and resold it. Autodesk, the company that makes AutoCAD, sued in court that the person doesn't own the software, only licensed it. Therefore, he can't resell their software. They lost.

The judge wrote in his ruling:

The transfer of AutoCAD copies via the license is a transfer of ownership.

The end user owns what she buys!

This is a US District Court ruling. I live in Canada, what's that got to do with me? 124 countries, including the US, Canada, the EU... belong to GATT, that's the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and WTO the World Trade Organization. It's a set of common rules for trade. All countries must follow these rules. This means that many US rulings affect other countries, especially over Intellectual Property.

Customers who bought prints always had the right to resell them. Now if you provide your customer with a CD or the electronic image, they will have the right to make prints and resell them, or resell the CD or the electronic file.

There are differences between software and photos:

1. Software uses the "shrink wrap" acknowledgement of the software license.
2. Photo contracts are usually agreed and signed by both parties.

I'm no lawyer, but I can see the business changes coming...

On the other hand, if you bought a print, you have the right to resale it, you do not have the right to copy it or scan it and then resale the prints from the scan.

LIMITED PRINT EDITIONS

As part of diversifying my business, I was looking at limited print edition. What's a limited printed edition? Many photographers on the web have limited print editions with some 250 prints, some 100 prints, or some 50 prints.

I started to investigate: it turns out that there is a definition of the Limited Print Edition: Limited Print Edition was defined in Basle, Switzerland in 1896 at the convention that defined the international copyright laws. Did you know that all the basics of copyrights were done in 1896?

A "work of visual art":

(1) a painting, drawing, print, or sculpture, existing in a single copy, in a limited edition of 200 copies or fewer that are signed and consecutively numbered by the author, or, in the case of a sculpture, in multiple cast, carved, or fabricated sculptures of 200 or fewer that are consecutively numbered by the author and bear the signature or other identifying mark of the author; or

*(2) a still photographic image produced for exhibition purposes only, existing in a single copy that is signed by the author, **or in a limited edition of 200 copies or fewer that are signed and consecutively numbered by the author** (their words, my emphasis). A work of visual art does not include:*

(A)

(i) any poster, map, globe, chart, technical drawing, diagram, model, applied art, motion picture or other audiovisual work, book, magazine, newspaper, periodical, data base, electronic information service, electronic publication, or similar publication;

(ii) any merchandising item or advertising, promotional, descriptive, covering, or packaging material or container;

(iii) any portion or part of any item described in clause (i) or (ii);

(B) any work made for hire; or

(C) any work not subject to copyright protection under this title.

The rules are very simple:

3. Less than 201 prints
4. Must be numbered, giving the print number and the total number of prints
5. Signed by the author

These are the US laws. I live in Canada with a different law but very similar law, but I do go by the US law, even when I don't like it, since it's my largest market. The electronic information services were not included in the original 1896 agreement. The 1896 agreement has been amended many times. All countries belonging to the WTO, the World Trade Organization, have very similar copyright laws and had to adhere to the 1896 Basle Copyright Treaty. They do not always enforce it, but that's another story...

I see many people advertising Limited Print Editions of 250 prints. These are false representations. They have to be 200 prints or less!

BOOKS**PHOTO BOOKS**

This is not an “all-inclusive” list. It’s just a list of books that is not on everybody’s list, yet very useful to “pros.”

- 2011 Photographer's Market - Mary Burzlaff Bostic (updated yearly)
- 2011 Writer's Market - Robert Lee Brewer (updated yearly)
- Best Business Practices for Photographers - John Harrington
- Christian Writers' Market Guide 2011 - Sally E. Stuart (updated yearly)
- Microstock Money Shots: Turning Downloads into Dollars with Microstock Photography - Ellen Boughn and Andres Rodriguez
- Sell & Re-Sell Your Photos - Rohn Engh⁵⁰
- Successful Self-Promotion for Photographers - Elyse Weissberg and Amanda Sosa Stone
- Taking Stock: Make money in microstock creating photos that sell - Rob Sylvan

NON-PHOTO BOOKS

- How to Be Rich by J. Paul Getty
- How to Get Rich by Felix Dennis

What makes these two books special when there are over 100,000 books listed at Amazon on “how to get rich”? Because these two books are the only books written by the “guys that did it” on how to become rich.

- Paul Getty created “Getty Oil” and was the richest American in the 1950s, the 1960s, and the beginning of the 1970s.

⁵⁰ It’s an old book. Ignore the technical part of the Internet and film. The business side is excellent.

-
- Felix Dennis created “Dennis Publishing”, the publishing empire, and MicroWarehouse. He is the publisher of the popular magazine Maxim.

These books also apply to becoming a professional photographer.

MAGAZINES

You have the usual suspects, but the important ones are:

- PDN: The Photo District News. Every issue has promos used by other professional photographers. They also have a yearly self-promotion issue.
- RangeFinder
- Applied Arts
- Communication Arts

There are a few British magazines for pro. My problem with these magazines is: “Where’s the beef?” There are hundreds of articles on lighting, on testing and recommending photo hardware, but “Where’s the beef?” Where’s the promos, advertising, marketing, bookkeeping, dealing with lawyers, insurances, taxes...

WEBSITES

THE BUSINESS SIDE OF PHOTOGRAPHY

- <http://www.foto-biz.com> (my website)
- <http://www.crestock.com/blog/ellen-boughn>
- <http://www.digitalprotalk.blogspot.com>
- <http://goingpro2010.com>
- <http://photobusinessforum.blogspot.com>

PHOTOGRAPHERS LIVING FROM THEIR WEBSITE

These photographers earn their primary income from sales from their website. Look at their websites. Analyze them. A few common points:

1. Good photos. Some of the photos are excellent and extraordinary.
2. Simple websites than can easily be navigated.
3. Do not "piss off" the visitors with long flash loading...
4. Text that relates to the photos.
5. Excellent keywording, IPTC...

Many other photographers sell through the Internet and their website. These photographers earn the majority of their income from their own website/blog, not from Alamy, not from iStockPhoto, not from Getty...

- <http://blog.kenkaminesky.com>
- <http://www.danheller.com>
- <http://www.parkcitystock.com/index.htm>
- <http://www.dcstockimages.com>
- <http://terrageria.com/blog>
- <http://www.hickerphoto.com>
- <http://killboy.blogspot.com>

- <http://www.stuckincustoms.com>