

How to
Find and Keep Commercial Photography Clients

Part Four... *Staying in Touch*

Our Four Point Plan



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

The Portfolio
What We Do



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

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



Staying Connected
Build trust and credibility

Get in touch
We want to hear from you





Staying Connected

Finding them is hard, now we have to
keep them interested

Marketing doesn't have to be a scary, icky thing... it can be fun too

So many times I hear photographers say; "I hate marketing", or "I don't have enough time", or "It seems sleazy to me".

I understand hating marketing the way it is portrayed in so many "marketing" blogs and books and publications where they list tasks and tactics and stuff that is way out of your comfort zone. (Sometimes I wonder if some of those folks make it seem so advanced and difficult that you throw your hands in the air in frustration and then hire them to do it...)

And to be fair it isn't particularly easy. Or simple.

But it isn't rocket science either.

And if you approach it with the same enthusiasm as you approach your work, it can be integrated into your life so it doesn't feel like a big PIA... Putting the list together – THAT is a PIA – is the first step, now we take that list and have fun sharing and showing what we do to people we know want to see it.

Is your saw the sharpest in the shed?

A few weeks ago I got an email from someone I follow and admire, Chris Brogan, and he asked if we had the sharpest saws in the shed. The implication of course is that we are fastidious, detail oriented, and ready to get out there with our sharp saw.

But the problem is we have the sharpest saw because it is NOT CUTTING TREES.

What is our goal? To have the sharpest saw, or to trim the Palo Verde so it doesn't blow over in the next windstorm (we've lost two)? Having the sharpest saw means nothing if it is not put to work.

And now that you are ready to go, you must get out there and do the work of showing people what you can do, who you are, and how you can help them sell more stuff by making images that help people buy.

You have your portfolio sharp. You have a sharp list.

It is time to get to work.



Your Brand

You must establish a brand for your work
and your presentations

Finding Your Brand

We cannot spend much time in this program to speak to discovering and building your 'brand' but it is one of the most important things you can do when starting off.

There are brand coaches out there to help you discover and build a brand. Ask for recommendations, seek out those who understand the self employed artist. (In the full program, we do go into brand building).

But make sure they understand these simple truths:

Your brand is NOT your logo, although your logo should reflect your brand.

Your brand is NOT your color pallet, although the colors you choose should reflect your brand.

Your brand is NOT the kind of camera you shoot, or the types of subject matter you photograph or even whether you shoot film or digital.

Your brand is an overarching approach to your craft and your vision that is represented by the work you show and how you show it. Without that understanding, it is just graphic design – and you can get that for \$5 at Fiverr.



Method One

Direct Mail

Method One: Direct Mail

Sending out work to possible clients by direct mail can be an expensive and frustrating ordeal if you are looking for quid-pro-quo responses. In other words, if you expect to get a job from sending out a round of direct mail cards, you may find that it doesn't happen on your initial attempts.

It is easy to then throw up your hands and say "well, that doesn't work" and quit sending direct mail.

And that is the problem with this form of marketing... it is too easy to quit doing it because our expectations were not met. But it is not that our expectations were not getting met, it is that our expectations are simply wrong.

Direct mail keeps you in touch with the client. It is hopefully going to keep you at top of mind when a job comes in that they feel is right for you. It is a long term commitment (years, not weeks) to keeping the consistent pattern of letting them know you want to work with them.

You are simply sharing with them new images you have done, inviting them to see more, and reminding them that you are available for the next assignment they have.

Method One: Direct Mail

Direct mail can take many shapes: from simple post card pieces to elaborate, multi-page publications. From handmade books to pieces of art crafted by artisans to glossy publications printed on press, the direct mail method runs the gamut of creativity.

For examples of excellent and creative self promotion direct mail, visit “No Plastic Sleeves”.

http://blog.noplasticsleeves.com/category/print_portfolios/

When you are first starting out, it may be too costly to do a big, luscious direct mail campaign, but that doesn't mean that you can't do anything. Make it creative on a budget. Find someone to co-op with you. Look into ways you can make your promo campaign interesting, visually exciting and impactful without spending a lot of money.

And remember, your list initially may be quite small – a couple of hundred – so the delivery fees can be nominal. Find out what others are doing to promote themselves on websites that feature the best marketing programs. Visit graphic design websites as well, as there are many resources for photographers as well there.

Method One: Direct Mail

What should you show?

Show the work you want to do.

Show recent work that you loved producing.

Show iconic images or a series that is more of a story.

Show a sense of style: both in the imagery AND the piece itself.

Show personality.

CAUTION:

If you are not a graphic designer as well as a photographer, find someone who is and pay them or trade with them for the design. And make sure the design matches your brand. If you are a hardy outdoor sports and adventure photographer, precious fonts and curly-q's may not be your brand.

You do have a brand... right?



Method Two

Email Marketing

Method Two: Email Marketing

We hear that it is ineffective – mostly by people who are doing it wrong.

We hear how it is out of date – by people who want to sell us something else.

We hear how so-and-so sent out 10 million emails and got no response... so what?

Do we know what he sent?

Do we know who he sent it to?

Maybe if we sent 10 million emails with crap photos to people in the middle east and China we may find it not working either.

Email marketing for photographers works.

It simply does.

But you have to be smart about it... very smart.

Method Two: Email Marketing

Being smart means being courteous to your recipient when sending out the marketing email.

Don't send large files.

Don't send a lot of files.

Don't make them guess what the email is about.

Don't show them stuff they are not interested in.

Being smart means KNOWING what to do:

Send one or two images.

Use a design template for your email.

Use a subject line that is interesting and true.

Show the work that you know they should be interested in.

Send at an appropriate time span. Once per week is too often – once a year is forgettable.

Perhaps once per month or 4 times per quarter.

Method Two: Email Marketing

Follow the rules.

Make sure they can unsubscribe from your list. And if they do, MAKE SURE they are unsubscribed... and send them a few direct mail pieces to keep your name fresh... then ask them if it is OK to send email to them. You may find them happy to be added.

Sending too many emails to too many people can trigger spam flags at your server or ISP, so if you do not use a bulk email solution (like Constant Contact or Mailchimp) you can be shut down for spamming. I recommend using an email company for anything over a hundred names or so... and never send more than 20 or so at a time if you are using your own email.

Sending email to the same person through different email addresses can be really a bad play – so find out if [info@...](#) and [steve@...](#) and [inquiries@...](#) are all the same person. Staying on top of your list will prevent bounces (bad email addresses) or complaints.



Method Three

Personal Connections

Method Three: In-person Meetings

Get an interview.

There... that is as simple as it gets. You may have to send some direct mail pieces and a few email before you get the interview but that is what it is all about anyway.

You may get an interview on the first call. (At my ad agency, we set aside one Thursday per month to review portfolios of photographers and illustrators whether in-person or links from direct mail. I felt it was important to always be looking for fresh talent.)

In-person interviews can be very exciting, or – you know – terrifying, no matter what your level of progress. But they are also a time when the client can meet you, put a face with the images, get to know your personality and hear how you think about projects.

While difficult to get, in-person meetings can go a long way toward landing a gig with that designer or art director. To do an in-person meeting, you must be prepared to show them something they have not already seen on your website. Otherwise, what is the purpose of the interview?

Method Three: In-person Meetings

Getting in the door at graphic designers would be, in my estimation, the easiest, with ad agencies being the toughest. Direct clients and In-House Marketing can range from nearly impossible to “sure, come on down...”.

And it can be hard to get motivated after being rejected over the phone time and time again... but – it shouldn't be considered a bad thing...

We simply flip the script...

Studies show that it takes about 9 rejections to get to a yes. That is NINE NO's to get to a YES.

Cool...

So if we keep racking up the no's we are going to get closer to a yes? Great... let's start calling and getting those rejections so we can get to that “yes” as soon as possible. Don't be discouraged by the no's, be excited for the Yes!

Method Three: In-person Meetings

That brings us to what to show...

And that is a bit tricky if they have been to your website and seen all of the work there. What are you going to show them in person?

Personal project?

Self assigned work that hasn't gotten on to the website yet?

Images from the shoots on the website that are not on the website – additional takes etc...?

Big printed images – some from the website – and some from your archives picked explicitly for THIS portfolio showing?

Do you need a paper portfolio... a “book” or collection of images to show.

My belief is yes, you do. The jobs that may require that book are not low-paying gigs, and having something else – another platform – to show the work can be very powerful.



Method Four

Online and Social Media

Method Four: Online and Social Media

If we listen to some folks, all we need to do to market ourselves is to be on Instagram or Twitter. That sort of advice should fall into the BS bucket where it belongs.

Online and social media are a part of the process, but they are not a substitute for the process. Yes, yes, I know we would all love to have that easy button... put stuff on Facebook, wait for the RFP's to roll in.

But it simply doesn't work that way. At all.

Social media is a crowded, confusing, time-wasting marketing tool that has great promise as yet unfulfilled.

Tweeting won't get you assignments.

Instagramming won't get you work – until you have a million followers.

Bloviating on blogs telling other photographers how to make white backgrounds won't get you in the door at a design agency.

Facebook is fine for consumer shooters – a black hole of despair for commercial photographers.

Method Four: Online and Social Media

So what do you do?

It was really tempting to simply say “find the social media platforms that work for you and keep them updated”... and you should do that.

But I want to go a bit further and tell you MY opinion on what platforms work and which don't. And while there are many that people like, I am only going to tell you the ones I LIKE and see working for commercial photographers.

1. Behance: Graphic designers hang out there. Your work should be there too.
2. Tumblr. If you have a blog, blog on tumblr. Graphic designers, art directors and magazine AD's hang out there and so should you.
3. Instagram: create a portfolio site and keep it up, have a second site for fun, personality driven images that introduce your way of seeing to people who hang out there: AD's, CD's, Graphic Designers and Magazine editors.
4. Pinterest. Create a portfolio site on Pinterest. Make sure you keep adding images to it. Make your Pinterest a place for high creativity.

Pick two above and work them like crazy... choose anymore than that and you could actually GO crazy.



Stamina and Consistency

Once you start, you must continue the journey

Do the Work... every day.

"The only thing that I see that is distinctly different about me is I'm not afraid to die on a treadmill. I will not be out-worked, period. You might have more talent than me, you might be smarter than me, you might be sexier than me, you might be all of those things you got it on me in nine categories. But if we get on the treadmill together, there's two things: You're getting off first, or I'm going to die. It's really that simple, right?"

You're not going to out-work me. It's such a simple, basic concept. The guy who is willing to hustle the most is going to be the guy that just gets that loose ball. The majority of people who aren't getting the places they want or aren't achieving the things that they want in this business is strictly based on hustle. It's strictly based on being out-worked; it's strictly based on missing crucial opportunities. I say all the time if you stay ready, you ain't gotta get ready.

-- Will Smith, Actor, Producer, Director, Musician

3 Contacts Per Day...

So here is a thought...

What if you made three contacts a day. Doesn't matter what form they take, but somehow you reach out to 3 possible clients per day.

For instance Monday:

1 email to a possible client, one direct mail piece sent to another, and a successful call to get an appointment.

Tuesday:

2 emails to possible clients, and a direct mail piece to someone who has shown interest.

Wednesday:

2 direct mail pieces sent to prospects you found on Tuesday, and an email to a client to remind him you are around.

Get the idea... NOT a big deal... just three.

3 Contacts Per Day...

But look at the numbers:

3 per day is 15 per week.

15 per week is 60 per month.

60 per month is 180 contacts per quarter.

How many photographers do you know making 180 contacts a quarter? Recent surveys say that the vast majority of photographers starting out do none to very little marketing.

And you are making 60 contacts per month.

Double the contacts from three per day to six and you are making 120 contacts per month.

Pick a number you can start with and DO IT EVERY DAY. EVERY DAMN DAY.



Putting It All Together

This is an action plan... and it is an ongoing action

Putting It Together Makes It Real

You will constantly be working on your portfolio, but I hope you are doing it with fresh eyes and a look toward how the images can impact your clients work.

You will constantly be working on your Channels and Sub-Channels as you find new vision and create more and more images.

Adding to the list of clients is an ongoing process that will be with you till the end. New companies start up, creative people move from job to job and you have to keep up with those changes.

Marketing and sharing your work is something that will become ubiquitous as time goes along. You will never let up on contacting clients and staying in touch.

This is the planning that will lead to success. It is not easy – nothing in life that is worth doing is easy. And if it was easy, there would be so many people doing it that it would have no value.

So get prepared and sharpen your saw... it is time to get busy. Really busy.

A Word About the Program

This material is an introduction to the full program which will be offered this summer.

In it we take each of these areas apart and put them into a real, workable action plan that you can use to build your portfolio, channels, sub-channels, contact lists and marketing tools.

No BS... no 'easy buttons'.

Just a step-by-step planning program with downloadable documents that will be invaluable as you begin to work the plan you create. This program is being created to answer as many questions as possible, prepare you for working the plan and then creating something that is viable and workable for you.

Whether you are a part timer or a wanting to full time professional, this program will give you a solid basic plan for making stuff happen.

If you know me, you know I don't do BS programs. This one will be one of the best out there.

Copy this discount coupon down and hold on to it. It will give you half off (50%) off the course when it is announced. (Watch for it in July or very early August. Coupon: "FindingClientsNow")