

# 8 STEPS ON HOW TO BUILD A SUCCESSFUL PHOTOGRAPHY BUSINESS



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# Introduction



Everyone dreams about making a living of their hobbies. With the rapid development of technology and equipments, photography has become accessible to a very large number of people. And we are not talking about the small, “soap like” cameras, but of semi-professional DSLRs, with which one can take great photos without being a photography expert. This is a great thing on one hand, because more and more people are discovering the beauty of the art of photography. On the other hand, it makes it more and more difficult for professional photographers to act on a market where the competition is expanding fast. Nowadays, the differentiation is no longer about the equipment (high level equipment becomes affordable), but in the style of the photographer and, very important, in the way he runs the business.

This shouldn't be discouraging. Quite the contrary, it is a great challenge that is meant to bring out the best of each of you. Just jump in and get started. However, business is not a playground, so no matter how familiar you are or not with the business world, you need to know some basics and to be organized.

This e-book is meant to give you a direction of how to start a photography business. It starts from the premise that you are at least an amateur photographer, so you know some photography basics.

You will learn about planning your business in advance, how to get started, some basics about branding, some examples of equipment you might need/want to start with, some technical pieces of advice, about mobile photography, some basics about how to run a business and what to pay attention to (especially the customers) and, finally, suggestions of what to look for to get better.

The bottom line is that you just need to be sure you want to start your own photography business, that you see yourself doing it. Dream it. Then, with the help of a little planning, you go and start it. Don't lose yourself in complicated business plans or other details that will only discourage you. Expect to do mistakes, learn from them and continue, by getting better at it. Just don't make the mistake of quitting. And, most important, don't make the mistake of not starting it if this is what you really want.

1:

## Plan It



You are a photographer and you are thinking about starting your own photography business. Or maybe you already have and now you are thinking how to maintain it on a market with such a strong competition.

Whether you are in one situation or another, planning the steps to take in the future is very important. Analyzing the situation gives you a clear idea of what you need to do next.

### Know What You Are Starting With

If you are about to open your photography business, you need to look over what you have and what you may need.

First of all, decide if you want to be a freelancer or to have your own studio. Each option has its advantages and disadvantages. For a freelancer, there are less costs and more flexibility. A freelancer can take photos of any kind of subjects (objects, landscapes, portraits) and sell them to magazines, advertising agencies or photo stock websites. Freelancer can also do wedding photography. The advantage is that a freelancer has less fixed costs (rent, salaries, utilities etc). The disadvantage is they are less known and have less power for promoting themselves and less resources for taking big projects. Being a studio photographer gives you a wider range of opportunities in terms of projects and is perceived as serious business. The weakness about this option is that there are higher costs (rent, utilities, studio equipment etc.). It is up to you to analyze your available budget and what you want to do next. You could start as freelancer and, by putting away some money, open a photography studio later on. Having a studio is also a good argument (proves that you are serious and you are committed to the business) for getting a start up loan.



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If you already own a photography business, you need to analyze what is working well and what is making you lose money. Think about developing. No matter how well things are going, you shouldn't stagnate, or you'll find yourself overtaken by newcomers who are more up to date. See which are the trends in the photography business and what new opportunities lay ahead.

For those who are about to start their photography business, an important part is assessing the equipment. You will need at least a good DSLR (will talk more about the equipment in chapter 4), a tripod, a good zoom lens and, ideally, a fix lens, flash and, of course, a good computer with good monitor to help you view, edit and store your photographs. Depending on what you already have, you know what you need to get. Make a budget so you have a clear idea of your investment need.

## Set Up Objectives

After having analyzed where you are standing and what you need to acquire, set up objectives for your new photography business or for the development of the existing one.

For a new business, don't rush into getting profit from the first year. This rarely happens. Depending on how much you need to invest and how high your costs are, you have to be prepared to support losses in the first years.

Your objectives should concern number of clients, type of projects you want to work on, turnover, getting known to a certain number of people and organizations, networking.

Objectives should be SMART, to ease your way





towards achieving them. SMART stands for Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and in Time. It means that when setting your objectives, you need to go into detail, specifying exact things you want to achieve, such as “I want to have at least one contract with an advertising agency on fashion photography” (not “I want to be great”).

Measurable means quantifying what you want to achieve (“getting my business known to 300 people”). Achievable and Realistic means exactly what it says: staying realistic about your objective and looking for something that is achievable. Becoming the favorite photographer of House of Dior in the first two months is neither of them (unless the Goddess of Fortune will play an important role). In Time refers to setting a time frame for achieving your goal. This will keep you focused on achieving it and will give you an idea of what to do next, how fast you can grow, what you can plan for the future.

## SWOT Analysis

It may sound like something scary or coming from the spy movies, but is a simple scheme that will give you a clear picture of where your photography business is standing and what strategy to adopt. It is very useful for both already business owners and for those who are about to start.

SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats and it helps you analyze your situation simultaneously with the business environment situation. Based on the SWOT analysis you can draw directions and make decisions for future development. Use the SWOT model below, by filling in the table in a crossed way: the strengths should help seizing opportunities and counteracting threats; identify those weaknesses which keep you from seizing opportunities and fighting against the threats on the market.

	<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
<b>Opportunities</b>	Your strengths which can help your business take advantage of the opportunities on the market.	Your business weaknesses which you need to overpass, so you can take advantage of the opportunities on the market.
<b>Threats</b>	Using your strengths to counteract the threats of the business environment.	Your weaknesses which detain you from fighting against the threats on the market (or which can transform into a threat for your business).

After having completed this table, you have a clear idea of what you can use to take advantage of opportunities and develop, without being taken by surprise by the threats. Knowing your weaknesses is very important; thus you know where you need to work more and what to avoid. Having all this information, you are better prepared for the future of your photography business.

## What Type Of Business To Choose

If you haven't already opened your photography business, an important element of your plan is choosing the type of business you want to adopt. There are several types you can choose from. Here are three which are better suited to a photography business:

Sole Proprietor is the easiest form because on what the IRS is concerned your personal tax return is where the taxes go, without the need of additional files. This form bears a risk, however, because you are responsible for anything you do and in front of the law you respond with your personal assets as well. It means that if someone sues you, your personal holdings will act as compensation.

Your personal belongings can be, however, protected if you choose another form of business: the LLC. If you are the sole member of the LLC, then your taxes will pass just like in the case of the Sole Proprietor. For multiple members of the LLC, the taxes apply for a partnership. On this situation, though, you will have some paper work to do, but you can rest assured about your personal assets.

Another way to open your photography business is as S-Corp or as C-Corp, but it is more costly and more difficult in terms of paper work. If you are a single photographer, with no employees, this is not a good choice for you, but in some cases it may prove more profitable.



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It is not easy to choose, but you can get the best pieces of advice from an accountant (which you will definitely need). Each form has its advantages and disadvantages, but a good accountant will advise you the best based on your situation and your business objectives. He/she is also the one who should help you with the paper work for registering the business. If not, you can always Google the Business Services website for your state and see more directions there.

## Know The Competition

Another important step in your planning the photography business is knowing your competition. This also applies for those who already have started their business. No matter how good or successful you are, never underestimate competition. Even if at the moment you can't find someone to match your skills and services, someone at least as good may always show up and take you by surprise and get a good part of your market share.

Therefore, take a look around you and see who offers similar services, who works with the same techniques and equipment as you do, who aims for the same clients. See what and how they are doing, where they are better than you and what they do wrong. Learn from their mistakes and from their strengths. This doesn't mean copying, but getting inspired and finding your own way of applying a successful strategy.

It is always advisable to connect with your competition. If you meet them at different events, don't avoid them, don't look down to them. Be friendly, talk to the other photographers, share ideas. Running a photography business is about having an open mind, being flexible, getting ideas from anywhere and anyone, even competition. And you'll have a better idea about them



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if you interact than by simply searching them on the Internet or asking others.

An old saying goes like this: "Keep your friends close and your enemies even closer". This doesn't mean you should treat your competition as your enemy, but you should keep a close eye on them, so you are not taken by surprise.



2:

## Focus and Get Started



Now that you know where you are standing, where you want to get, what you need to overpass and what you need to do, just do it! Get started. Don't lose too much time with your business plan and analysis. Don't get discouraged if your minuses seem more than your pluses.



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It is always like that. And having all analyzed in details won't prevent the unexpected. Running a successful photography business is something that you'll learn on the run. Don't be afraid of failure. The surest way to fail is not to get started at all. Be aware of your weaknesses and find ways to overpass them. Be aware of your strengths and find ways to make them work for you. Be aware of your competition, not scared; don't run away from it, but

learn from your competitors and use them as motivation factors: to get better than them.

## Find A Niche And Specialize

When you get started, you need to decide what you are going to specialize on. Don't think that you can do anything and everything, even if you actually could. It is not a winning strategy because you will divide your energy and resources to multiple directions and none of them will be as good as it would have been if you had focused only on that one.

Think what you like to do the most. Becoming really good at something involves loving what you do. If you feel very shy and uncomfortable photographing people, don't go into the portrait business or weddings. Focus on product photography, landscaping, food photography...there are many options out there.

If you like action and adventure, you can become a photo journalist or chose to make photo documentaries. Story telling is very up-to-date and will never get out of trend. People love stories and if they are supported by images, it goes straight to their hearts. This, however, requires some personal investment for travelling (unless you find some grants to fund your projects). The advantage is that they can turn into photo books later on, if you find an editor interested in that.

You can specialize on photographs that are looked for by stock photo companies, postcard companies or magazines. This means you need to do some research to find what subjects are the most looked for, what is missing (hasn't yet been covered) and focus on that.

Event photography is another niche, but competition is very strong. You can gain good money from event



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photography, but you need to have a very flexible schedule and be able to deliver the final photographs fast. Additionally, you will need a generous storage capacity for all the photographs. When shooting events, you will have to be fast and get as many pictures as you can with a lot of people and different situations, from different angles. No one will stop the wedding dance, for instance, to wait for you to set your camera or your focus. You'll have to shoot as many photos as possible, even blindly, store them and choose the best ones.

If you are already in the photography business, staying successful involves being up to date with the latest "trends", with what people require and expect and try to anticipate. Those who first came with air photography won a lot of clients and established a strong position. No matter that after there were more others who got the equipment to shoot from high angles, the first ones will always be better remembered and referred to. Even if you are what is called a "follower" (coming after the first ones), you can still impose yourself by applying a different approach. The important thing is not to lose the train of innovation.

## Studio Photographer Or Freelancer

After having decided on what you want to specialize, you'll have a better idea whether you need a studio or not. The ideal scenario is to grow your photography business in such a way that you can have a successful photo studio.

If you have the budget to start with, you can start with a studio and focus on product photography, fashion or magazine photography. Having a studio makes you more flexible in choosing the subjects (you don't depend on the weather, natural light, availability of location, approvals for shooting on location etc). It also provides an image



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of serious and successful business. But you have to be prepared to pay the price: monthly costs for rent, utilities, security, cost of equipment). Having your own studio can bring you earnings when there are no projects running by renting it further to other photographers.

Being a freelancer gives you more freedom of move, there are much less costs involved, but you are perceived as freelancer, not exactly as photography business. As there are many freelancers on the market, it will be harder to stand up and impose yourself. Not impossible, you'll just have to work harder. Even as freelancer you can rent a studio for some projects and get your job done. However, be prepared to pay. Studios are rented by hour with or without equipment; depending on what equipment you already have and can use in a studio, you may want to choose to rent only the studio or only some of the equipment, to reduce costs. You'll also have to plan your photo session very well, because all the delaying will cost you extra.

We'll talk more about the studio equipment in chapter 4.



3:

## Branding



Branding may sound like something complicated, or at least for those big companies which already got their place on the market. It is true that branding is done by most of such organizations, but this doesn't mean you couldn't or shouldn't as well. No matter how small or new you are on the market, distinguishing yourself (your business) in the mind of your client is the key to success.

### Brand Idea And Name

Whether you already started your photography business or your about to, branding should be on your mind. To start with, you need a brand idea, you need to define what is different about you, your business, your service. This is what you want to talk to people about through branding. It is a promise of what your clients will get if they buy your photography services. That difference may be about the photographs themselves, about you as photographer and how you interact with your clients, about a special way of editing, the delivery terms or about other additional services you offer. No matter what you decide to focus on, make sure it is something clear, simple and that will really make a difference for your clients.

It may sound very simple in theory, but practice is always full of surprises. How do you come up with that idea? It is not as difficult as it seems. You need, however, to do some research before. If you can afford a market research study to give you some directions about what customers are expecting from your type of services, what their needs are, what they would like to see different. However, don't spend too much money or time with such studies. They are very useful, but you risk losing yourself in details. You can spend some time by talking to people: friends, family and friends of friends. Ask about their experiences with photography services; note what they liked the most, what they disagreed with. Be a good listener. If you let



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people start with their stories, you'll be amazed how much useful information they will tell you, even if you didn't specifically ask for it. Sometimes you won't get a straight, clarifying answer to your questions. Sometimes people will hesitate to tell you what they really think or desire. So, you can use a little trick. When talking to people, try to introduce some projective exercises. It means you can describe an ideal situation; start with: "I sometimes imagine that.." or "I wonder how it would be like if..." and you start a story, introducing a situation related to photography. You'll see how the others will jump in to fill in the story with their own scenarios, wishes, expectations. You can get plenty of useful ideas from such stories, because people don't feel as intimidated about hypothetical situations as they do about their realities.

Another good way to get your brand idea is to look at your competition. Is what's working for them, how they position themselves and try to find a different way. Observe their strengths and learn from that. See what they are doing wrong and find a way for you to do it right.

Once you found your brand idea, your promise to your future clients, what differentiates you from your competition it is always a good thing to have a name which suggests that brand idea.

If you already have a name for your start up, it is ok. You don't need to change it. It would cost money and time. What you can do is to relate that name to your brand promise by using an appropriate visual identity, a slogan and other brand signals (package, customer services, website etc).

If you haven't yet decided upon a name, it is easier. At least it appears so. The advantage is that you can find that name which best expresses your brand idea. The difficult part is that you need to find that name. For this, don't feel shy to ask for ideas from others. Organize a brainstorming



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with your friends and family in a relaxed environment and atmosphere. Find words which you think best tell the message you want to send to you clients. From all the ideas that will come up, keep 5 of them. The next step will be to register your name and for that you need to check the availability (whether it is already taken or not). You need to have several backups if your first choices are rejected.

Once you have your name chosen and registered, you can get to the next step: the visual identity.

## Visual Identity

Visual identity involves creating your logo, choosing a color to represent you and other visual elements which you will use to signal your brand.

The logo can consist of your brand name written in a specific way and a graphic element as symbol. You can use only the name or together with the symbol. Usually a graphic symbol is easier to remember and it creates stronger mental connections. For this, it is advisable to work with a specialist, a graphic designer, who knows best how to do it. Being good with Photoshop is not enough to give you a good, professional visual identity. Sadly, many people are tempted to do all by themselves. Sometimes it works, but most of the times it doesn't. Of course you could save some money by doing it yourself or asking for your neighbor's kid who is good at Adobe Illustrator. However, be sure that there are some details that only professional knows how to employ. It is about the trends in the industry (you wouldn't want a visual identity looking like in the early '90s), which symbols mean what, which colors send what message, what use issues to anticipate and so on. Work closely with a graphic designer, explain you brand idea, what you want to tell people about your brand and let him/her do the job.



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When deciding upon a symbol for your logo, try to avoid clichés such as photo cameras, lenses, photo frames or other of this type. You want to be recognized as a professional photography business, but don't make it too obvious, or it will pass as not interesting in the eyes of your clients. Besides, this is what most photographers use and you want to be different. Think about a symbol that expresses your brand promise as well as your services (what you really offer to your clients) and work with that. Don't get too far from the subject, either or you'll get people confused.

Visual identity is not only about creating the logo. You need to think about where and how you will use it, which style you want to adopt (minimalist, high visibility etc). This is what you will implement on your business cards, package (Photo CD covers, photo envelopes, photo album styles, website etc), in your studio, on your car maybe. All your visual display needs to be coherent with your brand idea and with the style of your logo (playful, serious, minimalist, techno, vintage etc).

As you very well know, an image is worth a thousand words. It is your domain, so let your creativity work its best for you and find what visual style best suits you and your brand.

## Message

The message you want to send to your future clients stands in the name of your brand, in your logo, in your package, your visual identity in general. Still, you need to be more explicit and for that you need a slogan to accompany your visual identity.

Surely you remember slogans such as "Think different" (Apple Computers), "The United Colors of Benetton" (Benetton), "Always Coca-Cola" (Coca-Cola), "Good things



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come to those who wait" (Guinness), "Keep Walking." (Johnny Walker), "Because I'm worth it" (L'Oreal). They were created to summarize the brand promise, to send a specific message to their public. This is what you need to do.

Starting with your brand promise, with what you offer differently to your future clients, try to put it into words. Don't struggle to make the slogan from the first time. You need to get that clear message first. Even if it gets a little long, don't worry. It is important to have all the ideas on the paper. Then, loose all the words and ideas that repeat (say the same thing); continue with what doesn't sound right; see what you have left and rephrase. Make it sound like a promise or a call for action. You may even invent a new word by combining others or use a single word if you think it says it all.

The important thing is that you find a good way to say what you want to say to your public; just as important is that they get it. This is why, once you established your message and your slogan, you should use it. Make it visible: on your business cards, on your website, in your studio.

Branding is about coherence and sending the right message is not all about the slogan. Once you decided upon your brand message, make sure you send it with every occasion: when you speak to your clients, even to the competition, to the press if you get the occasion. Think about making presentation materials: flyers, brochures, newsletters, CDs etc. Offer them to your clients when you handle their photos, maybe they will pass it on to others. Distribute them in those places where you know your potential clients may be. Associate your brand with others, complementary. For instance, you can talk to a book shop that for every photo album or wedding related books they sell, to give your flyer along with the pack. Instead, you can give their flyers to your clients or promote them on your



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website. That is call cross-promotion. The partners you choose to cross-promote, their type of activity, their image also send a message about your own business, so choose them wisely and accordingly to your own message.

The message doesn't stand only in the words that you choose, but also in your attitude, your clothing, your entire appearance, the way your studio and equipment looks like. If you want to send the message that you are a professional, well organized, with a lot of discipline and this is why you deliver your photos fast and they all bare a logic, then you need to present yourself accordingly: tidy clothes, clean, looking like new equipment, well organized (no cables lying around or not being able to find batteries in a huge drawer full of stuff). Contrarily, if you want to send the message that your photos and services are "outside the box", creative, ingenious, surprising, then this is how you should look like, too (though you probably do already). Your studio can display examples of creative works that you admire or you can even improvise pieces of furniture from old equipment cases or other objects. However, don't get messy. Creativity doesn't exclude professionalism. If you run a photography business, you also need to send a message of trust, that you can handle things, that you are responsible and organized.

## Unique Selling Point

We talked about how branding helps you differentiate yourself in the minds of your public. It stands in the brand idea (what you promise to the customers), in the name, in the visual identity, in the message you send through the slogan and all the elements with which your public (clients, potential clients, competition, institutions, organizations) interacts.



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Now you need to define the way through which you are going to deliver the promise.

If you promise to your clients that they don't have to wait much to enjoy the memories of their happy moments, then your unique selling point will be speed. It means that either you work fast or you're well organized so you save a lot of time or you have people to work for you and you are more efficient.

Analyze what you already have in terms of skills, equipment, resources and what else you may need to deliver that brand promise. The name of unique selling point says it clearly: it has to be unique compared to the competition and it has to be a strong enough argument to convince people to buy your photography services.

Maybe you have the latest equipment on the market, so you can deliver incredible quality of photographs. Maybe you have some special skills and know-how that will give a different touch to your photographs or to the clients' experience when taking their photos. Maybe you have a degree in Arts and you know all it is to know about colors, so your photographs display the best and most beautiful balance of colors.

No matter what your unique selling point is, make sure people hear about it. Talk about it in your presentation materials, when speaking to clients; talk about it online or to the press. When you run your own photography business or any other business, learn how not to be modest. That doesn't mean you have to get self-conceited, but if you know you have something good and unique which will interest your public, don't keep it to yourself.

Even if don't already have (although we are all unique in our own way, that it is impossible not to find something), then think about how you can get it. Get specialized in something, get new equipment with which you can do things the others can't, develop a different way of working with clients. Be creative. And keep in mind that it should be something interesting to your future clients, not just unique for the sake of it.

## Portfolio

No matter how cool your name and visual identity are, how good your slogan is, how strong your unique selling point, how nice your presentation materials, you won't be able to convince clients unless you have some examples of your photographs. This means you need to build a portfolio.



Surely you already have plenty of photos you are very proud of which go back to your first years as a photographer. Building a portfolio doesn't mean grabbing all and putting them into a folder.

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You need to choose the best photos, those you are most proud of, which show your special skills. Then sort them into categories: portraits, landscapes, product photography etc. Make separate folders for each. Keep in mind that when you meet with a client who wants to hire you for a wedding, for instance, you need to convince them with other wedding photos and portraits you took; product photographs won't help them choose you over others. Same goes the other way: if you want to offer your services to an advertising agency or a company which wants to promote their products, don't show them your wedding photos portfolio, but photographs of objects and similar products.

Consider printing them at a large enough scale, so that you convince of the good quality (there aren't details that you want to hide). Large photos are always more spectacular and appealing. Use a dark background to stick your photo on, so that it stands out. Show both color and black and white photos, you never know what your client may prefer.

The same goes for your online portfolio, which should be well organized, easy to access and emphasis your photos without other distractions (useless messages, colors, flashing typography etc).

## Online: Website, Blog, Social Media

The business which is not online almost doesn't exist. Everything happens online nowadays, so if you want to have a strong position on the market, you need to be present and active online.

Having a website with your portfolio, services offer and contact information is compulsory. You need to treat it like your business card. It represents your business, your brand, so you need to build a website in harmony with your brand promise, message and identity.



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If you don't have the budget to have your website built from zero, you can use one of those thousands of portfolio themes on different platforms, such as WordPress. It does the job for a start. You don't have many options, but for a reasonable price you can have a good looking template.



When building your website, consider at least four sub-pages: about your business, your services offer, your portfolio and contact. Don't put too many words into descriptions; leave the images to speak for themselves.

If you want to position yourself as a professional and reference on the market, you may want to start a photography blog attached to your website. You can write different articles about photography techniques (doesn't mean you need to unveil your professional secrets), equipment, your photo sessions and other experiences as photographer. The advantage of a blog is that you can constantly update the content, show that you are active and talk to your public in a more relaxed way. It shows the human part behind the business and it gives the feeling of closeness.

Most people are using social media accounts. Facebook and Twitter are the most platforms with the most users. By having accounts for your business on these platforms, you are much closer to your potential clients. Communicating your brand is no longer a single-direction action, but a dialog between you and your public. Social media is the place where relaxed conversations are engaged, where you can keep up to date with the latest news and events and where you can also inform in real time about your activity. It is an excellent way to get to know your public, because you can see their preoccupations, what kind of pages they like, what kind of comments they leave, what interests them.

Being online asks for continuity, so you need to be ready to spend some time weekly to write on your blog and on the social media accounts. It may feel uncomfortable at first, if you are not already used to it, but you'll soon discover the benefits: being closer to your clients, getting feedback, having the word spread about your brand, being updated with the latest trends and news and, of course, having fun.





4:

## Equipment



Professional photography cannot be obtained without professional equipment. Running a photography business involves being able to stand up to clients' expectations and requests. No matter how good your photographer eye is or how creative you are, you still need an appropriate equipment to support all that and deliver high quality photos.

### Invest Smartly

When it comes to professional photography, investments can reach high amounts, due to the expensive equipment you need to work with. Depending on your budget, you can afford to start with more or less equipment. However, you shouldn't spend unnecessary money, either. Here are some "must have" pieces of equipment you need at the beginning.

You already are a photographer, so you probably own or at least you worked with a DSLR. It is vital to have at least one to start with. Technology is evolving very fast nowadays, so new better models appear every few months. There is no point in trying to get a new one every time it's on the market. For the beginning, there is a minimum you need and once you have your business up and running, you can get other newer models. Also don't forget to get several memory cards and at least one spare accumulator for the camera.

The feature you should use most of the times is the manual setting mode. Make sure your camera has one. It allows you to obtain unique photographs with your own style by setting the aperture and exposure time yourself, depending on what you are looking for to obtain. The sensor resolution should be high enough, but don't go chasing pixels. You can do your job perfectly well with 8 or 10 megapixels. As for the most used brands in professional



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photography, Canon and Nikon are top of list. Most models have adjustable ISO sensitivity and white balance. Look for models which have high enough ISO values; it comes handy when you shoot in low light conditions. If the ISO values go max up to 1200, then shooting with an 800 ISO will give you a lot of image noise. So go for cameras with higher maximum ISO. Also RAW format is a compulsory feature. If you don't have a camera already, before investing in on (which will prove rather expensive), you can rent one for a few weeks, get your work done and test it in the same time. This way you'll find out if it is the model that suits your needs and what else you are looking for. It is a good way to make sure you invested correctly.

While the camera body is very important, what really makes the difference is the lens that you use. For studio and wedding photography, you can start with two types of lenses: short-to-medium and wide-to-short telephoto zoom lenses. You will also need at least a flash, a meter for measuring light and one or two light reflectors.

Besides the photography equipment, you need a good computer with which you can view and edit your photos. A photo printer may come in very handy to help you see how your photos come on paper and to give samples to your clients. Consider buying an external hard drive where to store your backup files. You don't want thousands of photos to be gone forever; at least not before delivering them to the client.

## Types Of Equipment & Soft

As mentioned above, first of all you need the camera (which you probably already have) with some good lenses. It is important to invest in lenses, because they will allow you to diversify your photography projects and to shoot in different types of environments. For professional portraits



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you should use 85mm f/1.2 and 50mm f/1.4 lenses. Then a 24 – 70 mm f/2.8 will be very useful. Lenses which have VR are always good. When choosing a type of lens, check that it fits to your camera body and that you can autofocus.



If you are starting with a photography studio, then the investment will be significantly bigger. Chose a space large and high enough to allow you set the screen, the lights, a reception area, dressing area, deposit area and still have enough space to move around and take your shots without squeezing close to the wall. You will need a white/green screen with its support; also at least one sturdy tripod. You can add different accessories to it, to allow you to move your camera on various axes. You will need 2 or 3 strobes, umbrellas, soft boxes. If you don't have enough knowledge about setting studio lighting, then go to a workshop and learn everything about it, so you know exactly what to look for when buying the equipment.

For studio photography you also need some props and muslin to create different setting, based on the subject. Consider some basic pieces of furniture such as stools, a table, where people can sit and leave their things when coming to the photo session.

As for the flashlight, look for at least a Sb-600 or higher.

For the editing part, Adobe Photoshop is the most popular. You can also use Adobe Lightroom. You need to know how to work with Photoshop and get the latest version. If you feel a little insecure about it, there are many tutorials available on the Internet. If you don't have the budget to buy Adobe license (though you must consider doing this at some point), you can use Gimp, which is a free software, close enough to Photoshop and with which you can do your job, but it doesn't have many features.

For portraits, you can use PortraitPro Studio as a Photoshop plug in or as a standalone software. It is specially designed for portrait photography.

If you are more familiar with Corel, you can also use Corel PaintShop Pro. Another affordable alternative to Photoshop is Serif PhotoPlus.

## Buy Or Rent

It is always preferable to work with your own equipment. However, when starting a photography business one can expect not to rely on a very large budget, so one needs to adapt. Adapting means that you can consider renting as an option.

The main advantage of renting is that you can do your job without disposing of a large sum of money at once. Another advantage is that this way you can try different types of equipment, see how it works for you and thus decide what the best one you will eventually invest in is.

However, renting the same equipment on regular basis may prove more costly than if you bought it yourself. So analyze which one is more efficient to rent and which one to buy, in terms of costs. For buying the equipment you can look for a start up loan.

Renting a studio is a good option, at least for the beginning and if you can't afford having and supporting your own. If your photo projects don't always require a studio, you can rent the space (with or without equipment, depending on what you already have) for specific photo sessions, for a day or even a couple of hours. In time you can consider having your own permanent studio if you decide to focus on studio photography (otherwise it may not pay off).

There isn't one best way that works for everybody. It depends on each photography start up. What you can do to help you decide, is put it down on paper and see how much it costs buying, if you have the money and how fast you can have a return on your investment versus how much it costs you renting the equipment, how often you need to do it and how much it adds up monthly. Then compare the two amounts and see which one is more convenient. Also consider that now that you are running a business, cash flow has to be on your mind permanently. This means that you need to be careful to always have available cash to pay your monthly duties (salaries, taxes, utilities, consumable items etc).



5:

## Mobile Photography Apps



The XXIst century civilization has gone mobile. What at first seemed just a luxury object which very few had and used, it has become the modern individual's accessory, taken everywhere, anytime. Mobile devices have become an extension of the modern life. This gives professional photographers an unprecedented amount of opportunities to promote their business and services.

### Today's Client & Expectations

Nowadays clients are pretty much the same type of clients as twenty years ago, but with some different characteristics. The most important difference is that they do much more things in the same time frame than they used to, leading to a permanent lack of time. They are simply more busy and always on the go. The increasing speed of modern life, due to the development of technology, has triggered a different consumption habit. People don't spend much time in making decisions and choosing, in searching for information; they want the information to come to them, fast and targeted. They won't even pay attention to what is not of interest to them and won't bother much to do research.

A solution and, in the same time, a factor for this transformation is the use of mobile devices. They are already present in all aspects of the everyday life and they have become another medium for photographers to meet and satisfy their clients' expectations and needs.

Internet has made information available for everybody almost anywhere and people take full advantage of that. Nowadays, the first impulse when hearing about a company, service or offer is to search it on the Internet. And because nowadays mobile devices are smart devices, connected to the www world, the first contact with a photographer will happen through a mobile device.



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If you travel by subway, train or bus you have undoubtedly noticed that 90 % of people are using their mobile devices during their journey. In fact, consumers are always on their smartphone and their not always talking. Whether it is for playing games, reading an e-book, chatting, checking their social media accounts, browsing the Internet, most people have their eyes and mind on their mobile devices. Applications are the new “toys” for mobile devices. They can satisfy the needs of being informed, having fun, helping through the planning of the day and so many more. The use of apps is growing greatly because people discovered that this is a good way to get what information they want exactly when and where they want. Not only it saves a lot of time, but it anticipates needs. More and more photographers go for applications to target their clients and respond to their specific expectations. In the same time, a growing number of clients are expecting for more and more companies to develop apps and make their products and services available on mobile devices.

This tendency has grown for the past years and is still developing. It is an everyday life improvement, so people won't let it go. Thus, for the business environment, it becomes a race of who adapts faster and better to this new consumer habit. The winners are the ones who learn how to reach consumers' smart devices.

## The SMS Advantage

A quick way to contact your clients is via SMS. Consumers are very used to communicating through short messages. It is very comfortable, as they have their mobile device with them all the time.

By communicating through SMS, photographers can build a stronger relationship with their clients. They connect in a closer, more personal manner. It is a good way to send

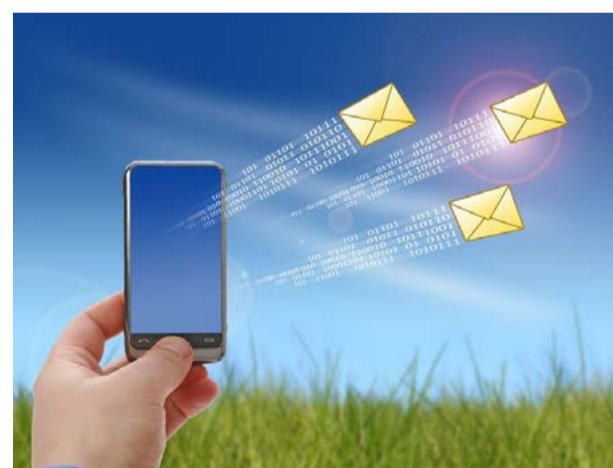


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reminders, offers or congratulation messages. It is a way to keep a close relationship with the consumer and win his loyalty.

SMS are received and read faster, engaging a faster response. Whether it is a call for action, a reminder, an offer, the fact that the client receives it on the mobile phone which he uses permanently, ensures a faster reaction.

SMS is regarded as a conversation with someone else, a person, not a business entity. Depending on the SMS content, your company may even engage the client into a dialog. Text messages are seen as more friendly and warmer than emails, which have a more formal look. Text messages are read almost immediately, while emails are usually read during certain time intervals. People are used to reading their emails either in the morning, or in the evening. The large number of emails people receive every day makes them want to plan when to manage them and also to consider them as “duties” rather than something enjoyable. On the other hand, SMS is about short messages, they don’t take much time to read and they have a more personal tone.

Nevertheless, you need to be careful when using SMS to communicate with your clients. Don’t abuse it. The same reason that makes it more acceptable – the personal nature of this communication method – can lead to rejection if it becomes too intrusive. Choose carefully your messages and the right moments to send them. Make them really relevant and your consumers will be closer to you.

## The Power Of Mobile Event Apps

Photographers are finding success with giving their clients their own mobile event app.



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It's a great way to have them show others photos and information of their event, for weddings, engagements, baby showers, anniversaries, sports events, you name it. By empowering your client to share their event information, details about your company's services will always be a click away.

For your business, having happy clients is a great gain and also a great mean of promoting your services. "Share" is almost as popular as "like". It is also a good way to have your portfolio with you all the time, when you need to present it to a client.

Having your own company mobile app is also essential and a great way to differentiate your business from the crowd. It may be that exact Unique Selling Point we were talking about. It means offering an special service to your client: the accessibility to their favorite photos. Even if people won't specifically ask for this, anticipating their need to be able to look, show and share these photos without depending on their computer at home, will increase your consumers' satisfaction and their loyalty, not to mention positive referrals.

Having your clients event apps connected to your company mobile app is also a great way to give people access to information about your company. It can work both ways: offering information about yourself, your services and your business offer to potential clients.

Here is another advantage of such an application: it can give you a target list automatically using a key word to attract new customers. Applications are designed to provide information about your users, which you can apply in your marketing strategy.

Mobile App technology in today's world makes it easy to market your photography company and delivers big results.



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## Getting New Business With Keywords

Word of mouth is still important in gaining new clients. A satisfied client is the best publicity one can get. In photography business, clients have a strong emotional perception of your services. It is about their precious memories they want to keep and share with the others. When you make your client happy, be sure he will be more than willing to recommend you to others. By sharing the event photos through the mobile application, others may become interested and ask for more information about your company.

To ease even more the information share about your photography business, you need to use keywords. Keywords make it extremely easy for your clients to share their mobile event app and your company information.

Using keywords dramatically increases the chances for people to contact you and book your business.

Another great thing about keywords is that you can create a target list which you can use to follow up with potential customer inquiries. Keeping your clients up to date with your activity, latest offerings and achievements, is essential. It maintains the relationship, showing that you are active and engaged in offering them the information they may need.

Keywords, also, are a good way to share multiple photography businesses. Consumers are used to having many options to choose from, each as adapted to their need as possible.

Keywords lead to a winning relationship and new business!



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## Promoting Your Brand With SMS

You can use SMS to let your clients know about new product announcements, and deals you may offer. Consider creating a loyalty program with perks for regular customers and send notices via SMS. You will be amazed how receptive customers are to this kind of promotions and it will increase orders. Plan your promotions carefully, not to get people too used to discounts or they will become reluctant to your full pricing.

SMS can be a good way to up-sell your clients. You can send offers to them to inform about additional options, complementary services or upgrades of packages. Once they are satisfied with your services, extra options will be appealing and may lead to extra income. You need to figure out extra services to provide your business with continuous income; relying only on the big contracts is not a good strategy. This is why up-selling is a useful technique and SMS a great medium.

Having established a close relationship with your clients, by the use of SMS, allows you to grow with your clients and their families. Their needs and expectations evolve, so you need to keep up with it. Noticing their responses and evolving consumer behavior will help you to adapt your offer, to keep your clients and to gain others on the way.

## Social Media Integration

Staying in touch with your clients through mobile devices means that you need to keep a constant activity on the social media. Running a photography business is time consuming. In order to gain more time so you can also manage your social media accounts, you should connect all your social channels to your mobile app.



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There are mobile applications which allow you this, so you can have a broad image of what happens in social media on different channels and manage your own activity. It is very important to stay active, to keep your followers interested in what you do or have to say.



Social Media is also a very good way to promote your Mobile company app. Consumers spend hours every day on reading social media news and looking for accounts they may be interested in. Your company mobile app will get a good visibility if you promote it in the social media. Word of mouth recommendations on pages or articles they like and consider useful.

You may feel overwhelmed about mobile marketing. Don't worry; it's super easy to get started!

A good place to find mobile applications with keywords and SMS features altogether is here: <http://www.ubookoo.com> This company has developed applications specifically for photographers, professional labs, as well as event applications for your clients, which they can share with family and friends. Matter of fact, while on topic, we recommend that you view the helpful video found on their home page here: <http://www.ubookoo.com>.

Ubookoo makes it easy for you to get started with mobile app templates for your company and events and affordable pricing.

All this is nothing but pure mobile marketing for your business.



6:

## Become a Businessman



Making a business out of your hobby is the ideal situation that everyone dreams of. However, it is not as easy as it seems like.

If beforehand your worries were about getting the right light, framing and colors, which are the latest cameras and what great features they come with, now your worries and preoccupations need to expand to the business world. It doesn't mean that you need to learn to speak "Wall Street" language, but there are some basic things you need to know and do: negotiation, marketing, basic accounting, some law knowledge and some soft skills.



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### Negotiation

As a new businessman (maybe you don't see yourself this way, but you become one when starting your photography business), your major concern is finding clients. You may not afford having someone especially for the sales part, so you need to do almost all by yourself. However, since you are the creator of the business and the

“brand champion”, it is you who needs to meet clients and negotiate contracts.

Two things you need to remember when negotiating: don't underestimate yourself and don't overestimate yourself. People who just started a business have the tendency of accepting no matter what contract with all the terms imposed by the client because they are just happy they got a contract. This can prove very inefficient businesswise and it can cause more loss than if the deal wasn't sealed at all. Another tendency is for people, especially artists (and photographers drop into this category), to see themselves as too good for other or for “ordinary” projects as they see it. This is also risky. It is good not to accept just anything for the sake of getting a contract, but being too picky may give you a bad reputation and scare off clients. You can become more and more selective while your business is growing and you can afford choosing only the projects that you feel like working for.

Before meeting the client, be sure you have your mind clear about some details (or which you need to clarify with the client): what the client needs, what his expectations are, how long the photo session should take (if it is an event, does the client want all the event's parts on photos, are there some you need to focus on etc), where and when it is going to be (studio, inside or outside, how much light you'll have), how fast the photos should be delivered. Having these details, you can think of a price quotation. Don't rush into giving a price from the first moment. Find out more about what you will need to do. This way you know what kind of equipment you need to use, how long it may take, which costs it involves for you. Then you can think of a price per hour or per event, which should cover your costs. When establishing a price, also be aware of how much the competition charges. You don't want to be too far from it. A very low price may attract clients, but it may prove inefficient for your business.

Also, if the client wants the photos really fast, then you can add an “emergency tax”; don't be shy in valuing your work.

Negotiation is the art of compromise. Always set in mind a value you won't go under and start your negotiation from a higher value. The client will ask for something lower, you can agree (if it isn't below your minimum sum) or you can try to get it a little higher, but lower than your first proposition. It is a game and people know that and are prepared for it.



Consider offering bonuses or service packages. As bonus, you can offer things that won't cost you much money or time, but that will make the client happy because he got something more than he paid for. This is a good method to create loyalty and generate referrals.



## Marketing

Marketing is about placing your product on the market. It involves the product, the price, the placement and the promotion.

No marketing can do wonders if the product is of poor quality. You need to be a good professional, to deliver high quality photos. You need a unique selling point (of which we talked about in chapter 3 – Branding), something to differentiate you from the others.

Consider packaging. Don't think of package as the soda cans or milk boxes in supermarkets. The way you "wrap" your photos and deliver them to clients is considered a package as well. You can make personalized envelopes and CDs. You can have personalized stickers with your visual identity and contact details which you can put on gift bags or CD covers or even envelopes; it may be less expensive than personalizing all these materials. The point is that when you deliver your photos, they should be nicely packed, using your visual identity. The package also sends a message about yourself and your business.

When establishing the pricing, look around at other photography businesses and see which the price range on the market is. Also you need to consider your monthly costs that you need to cover. Estimate a number of projects or working hours per month and see how much you should earn to cover your expenses and make profit.



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You cannot charge as a freelancer anymore, because you have a photography business: it involves different taxes, different costs and a different image.

Pricing can also set your position on the market: you can be either the cheapest (but this involves “mass production” and a very good cost control, so you don’t lose money) or the most expensive (you can enter the “luxury services” category). If you chose the latter, you will also need to provide services according to your high price; clients agree to pay more if they feel they get the best, the most creative photography, a sense of uniqueness and privilege.

Placement means placing your products (photo services) so they are well perceived by your clients. This means you need a website and other social media accounts to display your portfolio. Exhibitions are also a good way to display your photos and make people notice you.

Promotion is very important. In the photography world word of mouth is the most common way photographers get contracts. However, as a business, you need to promote your image more. This means you need to invest in promoting materials: brochures, flyers, banners depending on your budget and the available media around you. Don’t overspend you money. Think where your clients are, to what kind of media they are most exposed to and target that. You can go to event fares and present a nice catalog with your portfolio and some flyers with your services offer. You can do cross promotion (of which we talked in chapter 3 – Branding) and associate yourself with a complementary business (photo album editors, book shop, gift shop, event organizing companies etc).

Internet is a very good way to make you known. Use blog and social media accounts to attract people to your website. Use interactive banners on complementary websites (photography equipment websites, online book stores etc). Some you may need to pay, some may be as barter (you promote them and they promote you).

All this will take some of your photography time, but without it your business won’t survive more. So think of it as investing time in your own photography business.



## Basic Accounting

Don't worry; you don't need to study to become an accountant. However, you absolutely need to hire an accountant. It is a minimum condition for all businesses to run correctly.

However, you still need to know some basic principles so you won't make mistakes that cannot be fixed.

First of all, you need a tax ID, which you get when you officially register your photography business.

The basic idea is that, on the accounting documents, the expenses must match the revenues. That is called the Matching Principle. There always has to be a balance. This is the way to verify that all the money is dealt with correctly.

Revenues are recognized immediately, as soon as an invoice was issued, regardless of the moment when you cash in the money. This is why you need to negotiate not too long terms for payments, or you'll find yourself paying taxes for money which you didn't get.

Make sure that all expenses are covered by papers (receipts, invoices). Don't spend your company's money on personal shopping list: it will be difficult to record baby item expenses, for instance, in the accounting papers of a photography business.

Always check with your accountant what expenses you can and cannot make, so you don't get yourself uncovered in the cash flow. Cash flow problems are the most common reason for businesses to fail in their first years. Also check which are the taxes and declarations you need for your form of business. The accountant will deal with it, but you must know it as well.

## Knowing The Law

Running a business comes with responsibilities. Knowing the law of the state where your business is registered is very important.

As photographer, you enter under intellectual property set of laws, so you need to study them to know your rights and obligations. Some aspects you should include in contracts, so you are protected.





You also need to know which the limitations for taking photographs are. See what permissions you need to obtain and for which situations or locations. You wouldn't want to be sued just because you were taking the photo of something and a person who just happened to be there didn't want to have his/her photo taken. It is always advisable, when taking pictures of people, to have their written or recorded permission, so you are covered in front of the law.

It is also in your best interest to see how you can protect your photographs when displaying them online, how much of the use rights you have when selling them to stock photos websites. You may also need the permission of the persons you photograph to use their photos for your own portfolio.

It is advisable to have a specialized attorney to council you with your contracts and other legal things. Intellectual property and photography permissions are delicate issues which, if not treated properly, can cause you trouble.

Whether you have the help of an attorney or you write the contracts yourself, there are some compulsory elements you need to include in a contract: identification information for your photography business and your client (names, addresses, contact information etc); contract time frame – the starting and ending time of your contract; working time frame – working hours for that specific contract, so you avoid possible “abuses” (clients may think that by paying, you should shoot for them as long as they want); the total amount for the contract (you may detail the pricing, but the total amount should also be specified); terms of payment; deliverable items – minimum number of photos, format, support; delivery date – the moment when the client should expect to receive what he paid for; copyright terms – stating the rights for the use of the photos (it can be for both parties with limited use for the client); policies on other photographers – so you don't have the surprise of getting bothered in your work by other not hired photographers for the event; a clause for failure to comply – to have you covered in case something unexpected happens and you cannot fulfill your contractual duties; mutual protection – to have both you and your client protected in case something goes wrong. Don't forget to date the contract and have both yours and your client's signatures.



## Soft Skills

You don't need to reinvent yourself, but it is important to develop some soft skills if you want to get successful in the photography business.

Communication is extremely important. You have probably already worked with a lot of people. Getting them trust you is not only important for getting nice looking photographs, with people feeling at ease, but also for obtaining contract, for convincing people to hire your services.

Now that you are running your photography business it is even more important to be a good listener. By listening patiently, you'll discover fast enough what people really want, what they are expecting, what their needs are. This information you can use to find new ideas for your photos, find new ways to deliver them or to find clients (pay attention to what they like to do, where you can meet them, what they read or watch).

Public speaking is another skill you may find useful. You are probably not used to talking to many people at once; staying all the time behind the camera and your computer and interacting only with your photo subjects didn't give you the chance to develop public speaking skills. You may even think you don't need it at all. It may be so, but consider that you are no longer only a photographer, you run a photography business. You need to make it known to the public. There are opportunities to promote it and even earn some money by being a speaker at specialized conferences and seminars. For that, you need how to overcome your shyness (if you are shy) and how to maintain the public focused to your speech. You can find a public speaking workshop and get yourself trained. It will also help you better interact with potential clients, people you haven't met before.



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Networking is a very modern concept. It has been done for centuries, but it is only recently that it has been defined this way. For you as business man it is very important to connect to as many people as possible. This means attending events where people who may be interested in your services come, knowing how to introduce yourself and what you do. There are even specialized networking events you can attend. Get prepared with a lot of business cards and a short presentation of your business and go ahead! Make connections! Social media is another great way to expand your network.



7:

## Know and Understand Your Customers

For a photography business, as for any other business, it is vital to know who your customers are. This doesn't mean only to know some of your potential clients' names, whether they are businesses or individuals. You really need to know them from what is called "consumer's behavior" point of view.

As photographer, most of the times you interact with people as subjects to your photos. They are usually the ones who also buy the photos (unless it is about photo sessions of their children). So there are two different approaches you have to consider: what makes them comfortable and what they have best to express, what kind of setting best suits them as subjects to your photographs and how to adapt your services offer to what they need and expect, offering some little extra, in order to win their loyalty.

Generally, it will be a business to consumer kind of relationship and sometimes a business to business. In both cases, there are some things to consider:

What they are going to use the photos for: is it for personal use, as a gift, for selling a product? Depending on that end use of your photos, you can adapt your artistic approach: make it emotional, make it "glamorous", enhance certain features, make it funny or serious, romantic or rational. It all depends on the intention of your client.

What is their lifestyle or business style? The more information you have about your customers, the better you can adapt your photography offer and approach. It doesn't mean you need to hire a private detective to investigate them, but some common sense observation can give you enough useful clues. Observe them as category, their social status, their habits, what matters to them, where they like to spend their time, what kind of jobs they have and so on.



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Let's say you are targeting upper class people who want photos of their special life events. You need to adapt your offer to their expectations; and their expectations will be according to their life style. If they like to spend their time in high class places and attend glamorous events, then you need to show them how your photos will make them look great, feel in the spot lights on the red carpet; prove them that you have a refined style. Some may prefer flashy things (you can notice that by the way they dress and the accessories they use); your photos should have this kind of approach as well. If they are elegant, sophisticated people, your approach should be the same. Design your services offer so they feel they get the best services possible, which not everybody gets. When delivering the photos, make sure the "package" looks accordingly: gift bag, high quality paper and covers etc.

If you are targeting businesses, check their position on the market, their competition, get to know their products or services, their strengths, their weaknesses, who their clients are and how people receive their products. This you may find out by simply asking direct questions when meeting with a client. But it is always useful to do some research on your own in advance, so that at the business meeting you can surprise your potential client by anticipating what they need and what could be useful to them. Let's say that you are meeting a restaurant owner who wants to better promote his place to attract more clients. Visit the restaurant some days before, order something to eat, observe how the food looks like, how it is served and observe the place and the entire atmosphere. You may notice that the place actually looks great, it has some remarkable pieces of furniture and the entire atmosphere is great. However, this somehow is not what they promote to their customers, being focused on the food instead. You can offer to take some pictures to emphasize that particular atmosphere, make up a



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scenario to tell the story of that place in something like photo reportage. Don't forget that businessmen look for efficiency and not spending their money on things they don't need. Limit your offer to what they need, don't offer them unnecessary features and they will appreciate it. In the business world discounts and bonuses are regular practice, so build your offer so that you can give some discounts or bonuses.

When meeting with either an already client or a potential one, be a good listener. Let them tell you what they expect, let them tell you stories about themselves. People feel relaxed and more confident with those who listen to them and don't ask too many questions. They will start telling you things on their own. Don't let them pass by your years. You may learn interesting details about what your potential future clients expect, how they like to work (from their stories you can learn what went wrong with other photographers or business partners, for example), so you what you should or should not do when approaching them with an offer. People also love to talk about their hobbies; listening to them may give you good ideas for photo session scenarios.

Clients also need to trust you, to rely on your business. For them it is very important to have their photos delivered as promised. For this you have to make sure that you do everything possible to deliver the photos on time. If you are already charged with projects, don't take extra work because it will keep you from doing things right and on time. You need to think about your clients first. Make sure that if you work with third parties, they also do their job properly. The final product will bare your signature and if something goes wrong (even if it wasn't directly your fault), clients will blame you for that. It is your responsibility to make sure they get what they paid for and even a little extra.



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You may consider working with event planners, so they will become, also, your clients. Learn about their working style, their expectations and see if you fit or if they fit with your working style. It is very important to have a partnership that goes smoothly. This will also be reflected on the relationship with the final client. If you and the event planner don't get along and you frustrate each other, you won't be able to feel relaxed and creative and this will show in your photos.

Keep an open mind to what people need and expect. There is not a one good way. There are many different good ways, depending on the person and the context. Don't reject ideas just because you are not used to them. Try it and put yourself in your client's shoes. The result may be surprisingly good and you may want to use the idea again.

Another thing you need to consider is that most people are price sensitive. This doesn't mean that they are looking only for the lowest prices, but that they want a fair balance between price and quality. Before even getting to talk to you, people first search for your portfolio and pricing. Make sure you have your best photos displayed on your website/blog/Facebook page. As for the pricing, design your offers so that they suggest flexibility. Also be flexible when negotiating. Don't stick to offering a certain package if you see your client doesn't really need everything that you included in it. Personalize packages according to what your clients expect. They will feel taken into consideration, listened to and that they will pay for what they actually need.



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[http://www.123rf.com/photo\\_20199895\\_young-couple-meeting-construction-planner.html?term=client%20meeting](http://www.123rf.com/photo_20199895_young-couple-meeting-construction-planner.html?term=client%20meeting)

8:

## Get Better: Techniques, Tips And Tricks



Once you have your business up and going, you have to pay attention to keep up with the latest techniques, to get to know some photography tricks that will help you improve the quality of your photos.

There are plenty of photographers out there and competition is fierce. This should keep you alert. Don't think that if you won clients and made a name for yourself, clients will just keep coming and things will just go by themselves. The secret for staying present in the mind of your clients is to always get better, to prove your interest for better quality, to differentiate yourself. Whether it is about your shooting technique, a different perspective, your subjects or your different approach to the same subject, you just need to create a difference in the mind of your client.

*Image ID: 5781488 ([http://www.123rf.com/photo\\_5781488\\_photographer-taking-a-shoot-with-a-digital-camera-and-a-zoom-lens.html?term=shooting%20with%20a%20professional%20camera](http://www.123rf.com/photo_5781488_photographer-taking-a-shoot-with-a-digital-camera-and-a-zoom-lens.html?term=shooting%20with%20a%20professional%20camera))*



Here are a few examples of techniques, tips and tricks which can help you create a unique style. Use them together or separately, depending on what you want to achieve. And, very important, allow your inspiration to run freely. Keep an open mind to everything around you. New ideas may show up where you least expect.

## RAW Processing

Maybe you already know it and you are using it, but if not, you should start right with your next picture.

As the name suggests it, RAW means a photography that was not yet processed/ interpreted by the camera. It means that it gives you the luxury to edit the photography according to your own interpretation; it allows to make changes that you wouldn't be able to with a normal jpg or tiff format. A good example of how useful a RAW photography proves to be is when you take the picture of a subject in the shadow. Normally, you adapt the settings in order to have a clear image of what lays in the shadow. A greater aperture, a longer exposure time. If it is a sunny day, you surely got most of the times an over exposed sky. If you try to obtain a nice, blue sky where puffy white clouds, then your subject in the shadow will be as dark as the night. Here is where RAW format plays an important role. You can two different RAW photos, one with a clear, blue sky, the other with your shadowed subject. Once you edit it, you can easily crop the over exposed sky from your capture of the subject and replace it with the blue sky from your other photo.

This is only one example of the "magic" you can do when editing RAW images. Shooting in RAW format allows the camera to capture a wider range of image information than in the other formats. You get a wider range of colors, shadows, details.



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[http://www.123rf.com/photo\\_15140285\\_interesting-side-by-side-comparison-of-an-unprocessed-raw-file-and-the-same-image-after-being-proces.html?term=raw%20image%20processing](http://www.123rf.com/photo_15140285_interesting-side-by-side-comparison-of-an-unprocessed-raw-file-and-the-same-image-after-being-proces.html?term=raw%20image%20processing)

A good excuse for not using the RAW format is if you are really short of time and cannot edit the images on your computer. Sports photographers, for instance, usually work with jpeg images because they need to take a lot of pictures in a very short time and deliver them in an even shorter time. Jpeg images are already edited by the camera, so they don't need to adjust them much any longer. However, it is always better to get the full information of a picture, allowing you to correct it or interpret it the way you wish to.

Another thing you should know about the RAW format is that it takes more memory space than regular jpeg images. This is why, when you are shooting in RAW, be sure to have some spare empty memory cards.

## Black & White Photography

Black and white photography makes us think about the first photographs ever made. They have a special charm and most people associate black & white images with art photography.

Even in digital photography one can say that the real representation of the image is black and white. Why? Because the sensor captures the image in the monochrome register and the color is added by the Bayer filter. Whether everyone agrees on that or not, is irrelevant. But surely everyone agrees that black&white images are spectacular and they have a special charm.

The impact of such an image is given by the lack of color. Surprising, isn't it? The very thing that we perceive as giving quality and beauty to an image – the color- by missing it can make an image even more charming. The reason is simple: our focus is no longer kept by hundreds of tones of color, but rather on shapes, contours, textures, contrasts. You can shoot directly in monochrome mode or



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*[http://www.123rf.com/photo\\_20415525\\_lonely-boat-with-reflection-of-clouds-and-sky-taken-at-borneo-sabah-malaysia.html?term=black%20and%20white](http://www.123rf.com/photo_20415525_lonely-boat-with-reflection-of-clouds-and-sky-taken-at-borneo-sabah-malaysia.html?term=black%20and%20white)*

edit the image afterwards, with the help of Photoshop or other editing software.

No matter your choice, there are some things you should know when you decide for black and white images. First, considering that shapes, texture and contours become the focus of the image, you need to choose your subject accordingly. If it is a landscape, look for something with irregular shapes or strong contrasts (such as a tree in a snowy field or carved staircases). Also, to give more dynamic to your black and white landscape, choose a day with a nice sky with beautifully shaped clouds. They will appear more obvious, while their shape and texture will add some extra beauty to your photo.

If you decide upon a portrait, make sure the light you set will give you good contrasts. You can use make up to emphasize eyes and lips. Dark clothes or accessorizes make a beautiful contrast with a white skin.

When shooting, set the camera for the lowest ISO possible. In black and white images the noise is even more visible than in color photos, because of more dark surfaces.

## Macro Photography

Macro photography is spectacular by itself, when done right. The secret of spectacular images, in general, is to show something that the eye cannot normally see: whether it is an atypical angle, a different view or details that escape the naked eye.

What you need for macro photography is, of course, macro lenses which are best attached to single-lens reflex cameras. When looking for macro lenses, you should look for a focus down to 1:1 or life size, so it allows you a working distance of about 100 mm.

However, macro lenses are quite expensive, so there are



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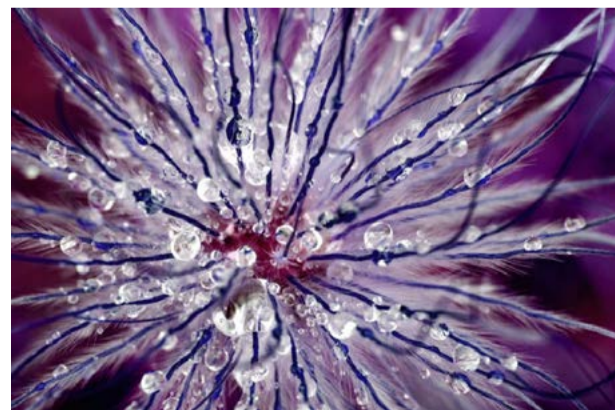


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some other solutions that will help you get beautiful close ups. There are different gadgets and accessories which can do a great job: bellows, extension tubes, coupling rings and reversing adaptors.

No matter the subject (flowers, insects, small objects etc), make sure you put your focus on the center of interest. Think that the tiny thing you are shooting will occupy the entire image, so you'd better think in advance on which point you want to focus the eyes of the viewer.

Reversing lenses is another way you can get good close ups without spending a fortune on macro lenses. For this you just need a reverse ring (coupler), a step up ring a zoom lens and two lenses: a fixed 50 mm and a zoom lens of 70 – 300 mm, for instance. Attach the two lenses by using the coupler and the set up ring and you are ready to do close ups.

You absolutely need a tripod and a remote cable release (or use the self timer of the camera). The aperture should be as wide as possible, use manual focus, set the exposure and click!

## Tilt-Shift Photography

Tilt-shift photography is a technique using the movements of the camera on medium and small-format cameras.

The two movements of the camera are suggested by the name: a tilt movement, meaning rotation relative to the plane image and a shift movement, meaning parallel to the plane image.

With the tilt movement you will obtain the sharp part of the image, as it allows to control where the plane of focus (PoF) is oriented. By using the shift movement, you change the sight line and avoid parallel lines to converge.

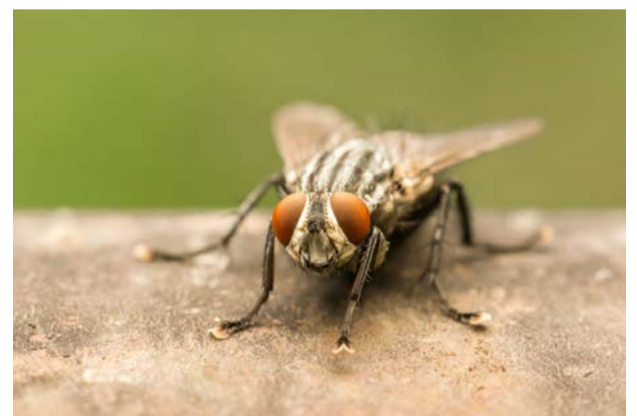
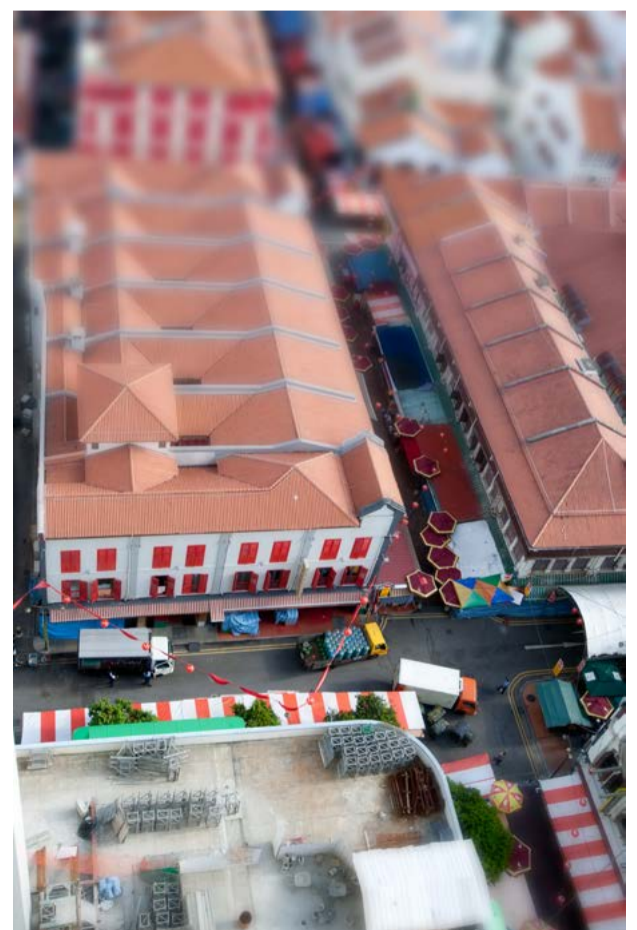


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For tilt-shift photography you usually need some special lenses which can be very expensive, so there is also a technique of faking the tilt-shift. By manipulating a life size image, you can obtain miniature like images. You just need to take a picture from a high angle (so that the idea of looking at a miniature is suggested) and then blur it in an editing program. The blurring goes from center to the margins of the image. Keep sharp a chosen point of interest in the center and start blurring around it. The idea is to simulate the depth of field which would fade away if you were taking the picture of a miniature (only one part of it would be focused).

Without investing much money, you can get interesting tilt-shift like photos which will intrigue the eye of anyone who looks at them. This could be the different approach of a subject you need to differentiate.

## Motion Blur

Motion blur is a technique which suggests movement and speed. Dancing or sports scenes are the most common to be shot in motion blur.

The way to obtain this with your camera is by using a slow shutter speed. You can obtain the same effect by using Photoshop, as well, by using the Radial Blur filter on a copy of the original layer; then just erase parts of the copy layer, so the original one appears from beneath. You are looking to get a sharp image in the center and keep the radial blur towards the edges. But unless you are very good at it, you risk getting an unprofessional looking picture.



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*[http://www.123rf.com/photo\\_5840991\\_young-athlete-running-down-the-track-with-motion-blur-added.html?term=motion%20blur](http://www.123rf.com/photo_5840991_young-athlete-running-down-the-track-with-motion-blur-added.html?term=motion%20blur)*



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*[http://www.123rf.com/photo\\_6675219\\_waterfall-rushing-down-the-rocks-blue-toning.html?term=motion%20blur%20water](http://www.123rf.com/photo_6675219_waterfall-rushing-down-the-rocks-blue-toning.html?term=motion%20blur%20water)*

Slow shutter speed stays the best way to get beautiful motion blur images. You can use them to capture the smooth flow of a ballerina's dress, a milky water flow, or the lights of the traffic at night. Just play with the shutter speed and you'll get different degrees of motion blur. It also depends on the quantity of light. A longer shutter speed will allow more light to reach to the sensor. This means you risk having over exposed images. To avoid that, if there is bright light on your subject, you can reduce the aperture and the ISO value to compensate the low shutter speed. You also need a fixed object for your framing so that the motion can be related to it (otherwise it will all be a blurry image).

## Night Photography

Night photography is really spectacular, but not easy to obtain. You need to master the exposure so that you can catch all the beauty of a night landscape.

One difficulty of the night photography is that there are different sources of light, with different intensities and temperatures. You won't be able to capture all of them equally, so you need to decide which ones interest you the most, which parts of the landscape you want more visible.

To make sure you capture enough light and details, you will need a long shutter speed of several seconds up to minutes, balanced by a not too wide to a narrow aperture. At such a long shutter speed, you definitely need a tripod and think about using a self timer or a remote cable release. If you want to capture star or moonlight, think of setting the shutter speed to 300 seconds. For the cities you can use 30 seconds, while fireworks are well captured at speeds of 4 to 12 seconds. Always adjust the aperture to balance the amount of the other sources of light.



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## Smoke Art Photography

If you are more into artistic photography, or just looking to expand your photography skills, you can consider Smoke Art photography. It is a technique through which you create pictures of smoke made shapes. It is intriguing and you can explore infinite possibilities.

The sculpture like images are obtained in post processing, but it is very important to have a good photo of the smoke to start with.

Smoke photos are obtained by using a tripod and a strong source of light. You also need a dark room and a dark background, so you can capture the smoke in contrast. As for the smoke, you can use incense sticks or matches. The artistic effects depend also of the use of light. You need to figure the angle, the intensity, even the color of the light, based on what you want to obtain. You will figure it out by experimenting and discovering what you like the most.

You need to use a high shutter speed to capture the smoke as clearly as possible, so you can have enough details to “sculpt” afterwards. To make sure you have a good focus of the area where the smoke will be, you can set the focus with the lights on, before lighting the stick and turn it to manual focus, so it is kept on that specific area.

Once you have some good shots of smoke, you can “play” with them in Photoshop and obtain truly artistic sculptures.

## Portrait Photography

Portrait photography may seem the most used type of photography, but it is one of the most difficult to obtain (talking about high quality, professional photography). Why? Because you need to deal with people. Photographic



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people is not the same with photographing a landscape or an object (what you see is what you get), but about capturing emotions. Some people are not comfortable in front of a camera, others may not show any sign of emotion. For a good portrait, you need to capture more than a face. It has to say something, to tell a story, to raise emotions.

As people say, the eyes are the mirror of the soul. If you want to capture feelings, this is where you need to focus. Looking straight into the camera is not recommended in portrait photography; the subject should look at something or someone next to the camera. However, it is important to set the focus on the eyes, so that they appear clear.

Portrait photography is best done with fixed lenses (50 mm or 85 mm). You will also need some reflectors to ensure proper lighting on the face of your subject (and to open up the shadows). If you don't want to invest much in lighting, you can always use a window and a reflector (for the shadows). But you will depend much on the quantity and type of light you have.

You can use over exposure to give a more delicate look to children and feminine portraits.

Children portraits are something great (they rarely look bad and all parents want their children photographed, so there's a good client potential there). However, it is also rather difficult. Working with children in general involves a lot of patience and diplomacy. When photographing them, you want them to stay still so you can adjust your camera, set the lights etc. Right when you're about to shoot, they start moving or worse, crying. To avoid that,



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[http://www.123rf.com/photo\\_9228700\\_happy-phone-girl.html?term=portrait](http://www.123rf.com/photo_9228700_happy-phone-girl.html?term=portrait)



Image ID : 7207037

[http://www.123rf.com/photo\\_7207037\\_girl-smiling.html?term=children%20portrait](http://www.123rf.com/photo_7207037_girl-smiling.html?term=children%20portrait)



make sure you have some toys or interesting objects with you to attract their attention (even towards the point you want them to look). Also keep the photo session short, because they lose their patience really fast. Try to use natural light, because flash lights may scare them. Always take the pictures from the height of the child, even if it is a portrait or an entire image.

Spontaneous images are the best. As some people may get rigid in front of a camera, set a multi shot mode, so you can take several shots in a short time. This increases the chances to capture unique expressions of the faces, when people aren't focused on the camera or aware that they are being photographed.

When taking family portraits, you may want to find different frames and positions than the classic ones. Try to discover what they like to do together, put them in a context, focus on the relations between them and show that. You will obtain original photos that will truly reflect the image of that particular family.



Image ID : 20861353  
[http://www.123rf.com/photo\\_20861353\\_happy-family-on-green-grass-outdoor.html?term=family%20portrait](http://www.123rf.com/photo_20861353_happy-family-on-green-grass-outdoor.html?term=family%20portrait)

# Chapter Action Steps



To sum up, you can start a successful photography business by following 8 steps:

**Plan it.** Everything starts with a good plan. Assess your current situation, so you know what needs to be done next.

**Focus and get started.** Identify niche opportunities, decide upon one and get started as a studio photographer or a freelancer.

**Branding.** Differentiate your photography business and strongly position it in the mind of your consumers.

**Acquire the equipment you need and don't spend money on the latest technology if you don't have a good plan on using it.**

**Learn more about Mobile Marketing at [www.ubookoo.com](http://www.ubookoo.com) and view video on their home page. Get a mobile photography application for your business and get closer to your clients.**

**Become a businessman.** Learn how to negotiate, do marketing, understand basic accounting principles and learn about the photography related laws.

**Know and understand your clients,** so you can anticipate their needs and expectations and respond accordingly.

**Get better.** Once you are up and running, don't lay back and get too comfortable, but try to constantly improve.

**Now that you have the knowledge, all you need is a deep breath and get started. Success will come in time and with work. Think big and always struggle to get better. Most important, love what you do and turn your business photography into a passion instead of a job.**

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