

Photography as a Business

By Beth Witrogen

You may see her photography at
<http://www.witrogenphoto.com/>

Evolution from amateur to professional: what do people want?
Get stuff out there – point isn't to sell, but to build credibility and get the name out

HOW IS IT DIFFERENT WHEN YOU MAKE A LIVING AT IT?

- 1) focus – get out and practice skills
- 2) new skills photographically and in terms of marketing & networking
- 3) education – study the craft, the markets – use imagination a lot, research a lot, what the possibilities are.
- 4) willingness to shoot what the other people want – but know yourself well enough to know what you can do
- 5) the need to stretch, go outside your comfort zone
- 6) world moves a lot faster
- 7) learn about yourself – perfectionist? Impatient? Insecure? Unconfident? Do you listen to others well? Public speaking? What do you really have passion for? Commitment of time & energy & money?
- 8) equipment – you have to have good equipment, and know how to use what you have (I still have a lot to learn about strobes & studio lighting, for example; really know I lack that confidence even though I've done it)
- 9) game plan – don't quit your day job or retirement plan until you have other accounts on board
- 10) need updated skills in photography – and to shoot and shoot and shoot. I shot thousands of images to understand what my lighting was going to be – show the image – and learn what my equipment could do. Which is ongoing. Learn how to print, continual upgrading skills in CS3, color correction, etc.
- 11) mentor – meet people who can teach you, whether in class or workshops/field trips, or friends.
- 12) discover the problem you solve.

STEPS ALONG THE WAY:

- 1) Define your goals. One of my early mistakes ? was to try to do everything that came my way. I tried the weddings, the corporate portraits – and I did them but I didn't enjoy it. So I really did some soul-searching: what do I do best? What do I love most? I am not a corporate photographer; I am a nature photographer. That's what feeds my soul and evokes the most response
- 2) Focus your image. Create an identity for yourself – who do you want to be in this business and how do you want people to see you? What keywords define you?
- 3) create a portfolio. Best images, widest range. Edit them down. A stranger should be able to pick up your portfolio, know what he needs to know about your skill, and see a definite style and the

subjects you are passionate about. Structure as both a showpiece and a selling tool. Clean layout, books from shutterfly, Internet.

4) design your look – and carry that look across all of your materials and collateral. Logo, letterhead, marketing pieces.

5) Identify your market. Advertising agencies? Editorial? Fine art? Corporate art? Galleries? Print? Fairs & exhibits? Private collectors? Public art? Books? BASICALLY – commercial or consumer?

6) Marketing plan – budget for materials and promotions, mailings and mailing lists.

7) Pricing your goods – what market will bear. Check eBay, other photog groups & individuals, shows, galleries, etc.

8) Keep your passion & know that the cycle goes in and out – sometimes you're the bug and sometimes you're the windshield.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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The Photographer's Guide to Marketing & Self-Promotion. Maria Piscopo, Allworth Press.

Taking the Leap: Building a Career as a Visual Artist, The Insider's Guide to Exhibiting and Selling Your Art. Cay Lang, Chronicle Books.

Business and Legal Forms for Fine Artists. Tad Crawford, Allworth Press.

Successful Self-Promotion for Photographers. Elyse Weissberg, Amphoto Books.

The Guerrilla Marketing Handbook. Jay Levinson and Seth Godin, Houghton Mifflin.

ONLINE PORTFOLIO /SOCIAL NETWORKING

Software: www.flashpalette.com

Flickr
Facebook
MySpace
Twitter
Ning

Smugmug.com
Printroom.com
Kodakgallery.com
Shutterfly
Digg

GROUPS

www.meetup.com

San Francisco Bay Area Photography Group
www.dgrin.com/archive/index.php/t-3604.html

Bay Area Photographers
<http://www.bapc.info/>

Collective Lens for Social Change
www.collectivelens.com/

Camera Owners of the Bay Area
<http://coba.tow.com/>

groups for: sports, nature, birds, etc.

VENUES

Galleries
Contests (magazines, web sites, etc.)
Stock
Commercial
Weddings/events
Sports/prep
Local newspapers/freelancing

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TIPS/POINTERS

- 1) Define your goals: Do you want to do this full time? Part time? Why go pro? How hard do you want to work?
- 2) Identify your market: Corporate? Galleries? Online orders? Families?
- 3) Build a portfolio
- 4) Build a brand identity/tag
- 5) Self-promotion & marketing/social networking
- 6) Skills to develop (CS3, desktop publishing, HTML, lighting, learning equipment)

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