

The Freelance Photographer

Lesson 8 - Business Practices



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As we enter our final lesson we've covered a lot of ground in the pursuit of becoming a freelance photographer, but we have still hardly scratched the surface of it all. And I assume since you have taken this course, your intentions are to become a professional photographer, or to some degree make money from your photography. Being a professional photographer is one part photography, one part business, and you need to be good at both. And no course can prepare you for the unexpected situations that you will encounter, but hopefully you are a bit more prepared than you would be without the course. And no photography business course is complete without discussing business practices which is what we'll focus on in this final lesson.

Opening Your Business

Your business can be as simple or as complex as you want it to be. It really depends on what markets you want to photograph for. The investment is also dependent on what markets you want to enter. Regardless, there are considerations for you in opening your business. The considerations I mention are relevant to business in the United States as this is where I operate my businesses.

Sole Proprietor - You can become a Sole Proprietor and work for yourself using your name and personal checking account for business expenses. This is the simplest thing to do, and the business is recognized by the IRS by your Social Security number. You may want to open up a separate checking account to keep cash flow and expenses separate from your personal expenses which I would recommend doing. Check with your Accountant or State or Government to see what tax implications there are for being a Sole Proprietor, such as tax percentage you have to pay. But when it comes to filing your taxes, they are filed on a Schedule C along with your personal tax information so you are only taxed once.

The downside of being a Sole Proprietor are all business transactions are tied directly to you, Mr. or Mrs. John Doe. So if someone files suit against you, your personal assets are at risk. Additionally, creditors will attach all risk to you personally so you have no separation of business and personal.

Corporation - There are two types of Corporations for tax purposes such as an "S" Corp and a "C" Corporation. Corporations are made up of three parties - shareholders, directors and officers. The rules you have to abide by are stringent, and you as the photographer are not working as Joe Photographer, you are working and operating as ABC Photography Company. Unless you plan on hiring employees for your business, it really is not relevant to the freelance photographer so we won't discuss it further.

LLC - An LLC or Limited Liability Company may be an attractive option for the freelance photographer. The benefit of an LLC is you are protected from personal liability and are limited to the assets of the LLC only. This means if a client attempts to file suit against you for an image you didn't have model released and licensed under a commercial use, the client may win, but they can only attach your business savings to this suit, not your personal. So your business may go broke, but your personal assets are secure.

Tax regulations state that LLCs with one person will be taxed as a Sole Proprietor while an LLC with

more than one member will be taxed as a partnership unless it elects to be taxed as a corporation. When you apply for an LLC, the application will ask what form of business will you be operating under. Of course it is a photography business, so make sure this is all you operate within the LLC, and don't try to operate a plumbing business or anything else in it. Your intentions as a business owner need to be honest and real, and keep separation between business and personal. And any business relevant to the business should be conducted under the business, otherwise known as a "trade" name with all relating paperwork titled with the business name as well. This is just good business practice.

In my State, the LLC costs about \$100.00 per year to renew and register. In order to start one, you'll have to contact your Secretary of States office. You will fill out an application for a business or "trade" name and apply for the business "entity", which is what your business will be doing. The Secretary of States office will do a search to make sure there is no other person or business operating under the same entity you desire for your business. You then fill out the application for the LLC and it is usually approved right away or at least within the next few days. Each year I have to file my Annual Report which is to pay my annual fee of about \$100.00 US to the State of NH and that's it. I also have separate checking accounts for my LLCs to manage finances.

Insurance

You may want to consider insurance. If not for your business protection, at least for your equipment protection. Especially if you plan on shooting on location quite a bit. Let's say one of your light stands falls over and breaks a valuable sculpture or puts a tear in an important oil painting. How are you going to pay for the repair without depleting your assets? You'll need to make sure you are covered in the event of an accident such as this.

You may also have clients that require COIs, or Certificates of Insurance. When I photographed at some of the State Parks in Arizona, I was required to provide a COI. By visiting the website of these State Parks, they will advise you of the criteria you need to meet to photograph. To be a professional, it is not as easy as showing up with a camera in hand expecting to photograph everything in the park and then have rights to license the images to whomever you desire. There are legal considerations and requirements for this so check with any organization before you plan to shoot.

For this particular project, I called my insurance agency in advance, gave them the information and dates and locations of when I would be shooting at the parks and they faxed the COI directly to the State Park which they kept on file for my arrival.

You can have as much or as little on your annual policy. It should really suit the type of business you are operating. If you are selling prints and stock photography only, I don't recommend insurance, other than your equipment which you should be able to put on your home owners or renters policy as Business Personal Property. If you are shooting assignment work, you may want general liability and equipment coverage. If you are running photo workshops, you won't only need general liability and equipment coverage, you'll need automotive in addition to your general liability which increases the cost of your annual

premiums. But find an insurance policy that is right for your business.

But before you purchase an insurance policy (other than equipment), make sure your business is making enough money to support your insurance policy. Meaning, your insurance policy may cost you \$600 - \$1000 US per year. If you only intend to sell \$5,000.00 US working as a part time freelancer, take your chances without the insurance because your business isn't selling enough to support the policy. You need to be making money for others to profit from your efforts. And this applies to more than just insurance.

Selling

In Lesson 1, I gave you some things to consider when trying to build your work and find markets to call on and photograph for. We're going to expand a bit upon that here. I can tell you that selling is the number 1 single, hardest thing to do in any business. And to be a successful photographer, you need to sell yourself and services. Markets you may consider selling to are these.

- Portraits - You will need a studio space and portrait equipment such as strobes, backgrounds, props and of course a computer and editing software. Since you'll be selling to a consumer market, the location of your studio will be important such as a Main Street location, but remember the rent will be higher here. This isn't a market you get on the phone and start calling people. Phone book and internet advertising will be necessary, but exposure may be the best selling tool for your business. And certainly word of mouth. Start with your friends and colleagues and market yourself to them. Offer discounts and incentives for referrals to keep the momentum of your business going.

You can also choose to open up a studio in your home providing you have the space to do so. For a studio, I recommend a space of no less than a 15x15 foot room. And this is quite tight, so if you have a finish basement with heat, this may be a good solution. My studio space is 32x24 feet. It's plenty enough room for all I do such as product, art and portrait, but it also stores all of my equipment and computer processing center, so it does get tight at times. More is better, but when you're first starting out, use what you have available. I do however advise against using a garage, unless you can finish it and heat it so it doesn't look like a garage. You need your portrait clients to feel comfortable.

- Editorial - This is a market that you will get on the phone and call the Editor, Art Director or Photo Editor. Pickup magazines in your local bookstore and find the website and contact information of the magazine. Quite often either the magazine or the website will include Submission Guidelines for articles and photographs and will often provide the contact name. You will generate email marketing and mailing lists of your work. Perhaps you want to print out postcards from your inkjet printer with a card you designed in Photoshop. Or submit PDF files of cards you designed to printing companies such as Modern Postcard. Their work is probably the best I've seen for postcard mailers and the best price.

You may find a magazine that has national circulation, but you may have limitations on your travel. That's ok. Contact the magazine anyway and let them know you are a regional photographer and can

provide them with regional coverage in your state, or cover a few states providing your proximity to other states. Put yourself on their photographers list, and of course attempt to license them conceptual, seasonal or regional stock.

- Commercial - This is where the benefit of a professional organization may help or a local creative club, business and mentor club where you rub shoulders with other business people, Chamber of Commerce and having a listing in the local phone book or internet directory and market your ad as Commercial Photography. I don't think many people are even referring to traditional phone books any more so save yourself the \$600.00 US per year to run an ad. And of course, look at local magazines and catalogues of businesses and find opportunity with these clients. If you go to a local florist, see if they produce a catalogue. Or a local butcher shop, or potter and glassware company, or local furniture store, or artisans and see if these businesses do catalogues. If they do catalogues, they need photography. Try to get a website address or email address and any contact name. You may want to start by calling the receptionist and asking who is responsible for the marketing of the company. Once you get the name or email address, you can try and contact them to see what they might need for photography and ask if you can be considered for their next project.

Contact Graphic Designers, Web Designers, Marketing Firms and Ad Agencies. This is the source where many businesses turn to advertise their business. The B2B or Business to Business approach is effective, but if you find you're not having luck because the businesses you have called have their catalogues designed and produced by a graphic designer or marketing firm, you'll need to work this approach. And depending on where you live, you may have many potential clients to choose from. So for this approach, hit the online yellow pages and get some phone numbers and email addresses.

- Fine Art - You have many options of selling here. You can make prints yourself to sell as corporate fine art direct to businesses or you can contact an art gallery that will represent and sell your work. You can contact local interior designers and offer them a commission to sell your work as well. As I mentioned in Lesson 6, look at your doctors office, your dentist office or basically any business you enter and speak to the office manager. Many attorneys will look for art to display in their board room and they will have evolving exhibitions of different artists. Look at public libraries or state libraries to hang your work, or even look at the local bagel shop on Main Street.

Art & Craft fairs may be your best approach early on. Look in the magazine rack for Arts and Crafts fair publications. Here you can find schedules of fairs nationwide and the criteria necessary to become an artist at one of these fairs. The publications will include phone numbers, email addresses, contact names and any information you need to submit your work for approval. Registration for the fairs can cost between \$100 - \$300 and will require some up front investment of a 10'x10' EZ-UP fair tent, some tables and card racks, and an easel to display your work and of course the cost of your prints or frames.

This is where owning an inkjet printer and learning how to print will save you money. Offer your potential buyers at these fairs more than prints. Offer book marks, greeting cards, small framed prints, prints with mattes, prints with frames. Bring an array of work. The more you bring, the more you sell. But price your work reasonably because most buyers at these shows are not big spenders, which is why

you want a product for all price ranges. And be sociable at these shows. Don't just sit in your tent and wait for someone to come in, because they probably won't. Stand outside the tent and greet everyone that walks by. Eye contact and a quick hello may go a long way and could be the introduction to a sale. Scenic work such as winter scenes, landscapes, city-states, wildlife and nature usually sell best. Abstracts and fine art not so much.

Look for places within your community to hang your art. When first starting out, any place to hang art is usually a good place. If you're a nature photographer and have exceptional work, look at stock agencies specializing in nature stock. If you have a local outdoor club, or anyone like the Sierra Club, Appalachian Mountain Club, AMC; or the World Wildlife Federation, WWF, they can often use nature work in their publications. Even nature and scenic magazines may be a place to license your nature stock.

Perhaps you can find a company online that specializes in litho prints or greeting cards. Use the internet to your advantage. Search engines are a very effective way to target your audience and locate potential buyers of your art. It may even benefit you to join local art associations to collaborate with other artists. You often get the benefit of their experiences and you get to meet artists that might need photography of their own art.

- Stock Photography - This is probably one of the toughest and most saturated markets there is. You can find many stock agencies online and they often tell you somewhere within the website if they are accepting new photographers or not. Your work doesn't only need to be exceptional, it needs to be creative, conceptual and of impeccable quality. People, lifestyle and conceptual photography usually does best here. But even if you are accepted to a stock agency, don't get your hopes up. Chances of your work selling enough to make a profit are pretty slim. But it's good to try, as the more opportunity you present for yourself, the more money you will eventually make.

I do feel that selling stock direct to clients and businesses is more profitable than trying to compete within a stock agency. Be your own stock agency. Create work that businesses may need. Real Estate agents may want landscapes or waterscapes. Editorial clients need geographic covers of locations, events and holidays. Work the stock angle on your own and sell direct.

When it comes to selling, your best opportunity is getting on the phone and introducing yourself. Just make sure to qualify your client as a photo buyer before you call them. Your time is valuable and if you're calling clients just for the sake of calling clients, you're wasting your time, and the time of the person on the other end of the phone.

I usually start with an email to a potential client (if I can find an email address). I'll introduce myself in the email usually something like this. "Dear Client. My name is Aaron Constant and I am a commercial and editorial photographer. I noticed your catalog as I was in the store the other day and was impressed at how well it was done. If at all possible I would like to have the opportunity to speak with you to see if our services would be suitable for each other. I would welcome a conversation at some point when you have a moment". This is often what I'll say on the phone as well. But by complimenting what you have seen, you have given recognition of someone's efforts and also boosted their ego. This makes them much

more willing to speak with you.

Secondly, if you're "cold calling" a client, you may want to start off by asking for help. Under most circumstances human nature wants to be helpful. This is one of the first things discussed at customer service seminars. So I may start a conversation like this. "Good afternoon. My name is Aaron Constant and I'm hoping I can get a bit of help from you. I'm a fine art photographer and I noticed the nice scenic art on the walls when I was in your office the other day. I was hoping I could speak to the person responsible for the art. Is this possible? If not, could I get their name or email address and call back at a time that is more convenient?". Polite and charming may win you a five minute conversation.

If it's an regional editorial client I am calling on, my introduction in an email may go something like this. "Dear Mr. Client. My name is Aaron Constant and I'm an editorial photographer from so and so. I do a fair amount of work for regional magazines and I was at the local bookstore the other day and I noticed your magazine in the rack. I was pleased with how well the magazine is produced. I guess I'm embarrassed that I wasn't aware of your magazine until now, but I feel my work may be a good fit. Is there a time that we can speak to discuss the possibility of working together? I would be happy to show my portfolio at any time. If I don't hear from you by such and such a date, I'll follow up with a phone call. Thanks for your time and I look forward to hearing from you".

When calling on clients, be polite, be respectful and be quick. Their time is busy and so is yours. There may come a point that you have been having dialog with a client for sometime and they continue to promise you an assignment that never comes. Yes, I have had this happen. If this is happening, you may just have to come out and ask, "what's the holdup? We've been speaking over a year now and you know my work is good. What is it going to take to shoot for you?" Ask them right then and there, and expect an answer and don't be afraid to put them on the spot. In your mind they've been wasting your time when you could be calling other clients that can use your services. And if you know your work is better than what they are publishing, tell them so and speak with confidence.

When I know my work is better than the images in some of the magazines I look at, I tout myself. It's that simple. When I know that I can produce a better image in print, I speak up and tell them they can have better with me, in a polite manner of course. I never criticize another photographers work, I just point out what I would do differently, such as bring strobes to a shoot. I can tell when a photo is shot without strobes when it should have been, or enough care taken to produce a good image. And this is the edge that I look for. So should you. So remember, pre-qualify your client and KNOW they have a need for photography. And lastly, the one thing you need to remember about selling, is that half of selling is just showing up.

Business Practices

As a current photographer, you probably have most of the equipment to get you going, but you'll need more than your photography equipment. You will need some basic business software for estimates and invoices, letters and methods of keeping track of estimates, invoices and sales dollars.

I use Fotobiz and Fotoquote for my business management software. It does a good job of keeping track of my assignment estimates and invoices but it also tracks my stock sales and tells me how much an image has earned me over its longevity. It maintains my client database and can generate mailing labels and email mailings with generic letters to save me time. I can run statements to see how many clients have outstanding balances and who pays within 0-30 Days; 30-60 Days, 60-90 Days etc. This is important for your cash flow, and is important for you to know who is slow to pay and who is fast to pay. For about \$300.00 US, it is an essential tool for your photo business. Word and Excel are also quite important for generating letters and mailings or creating spreadsheets of your business activity. You can also use Quickbooks or some other accounting program, but I like Fotobiz because it is specific to my needs.

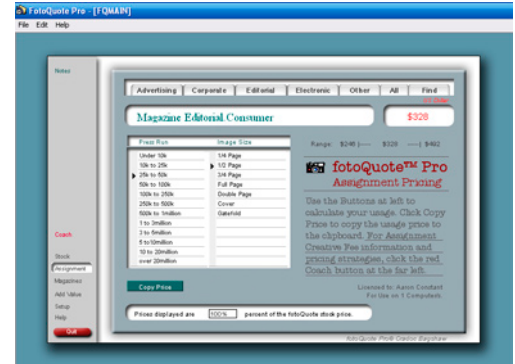
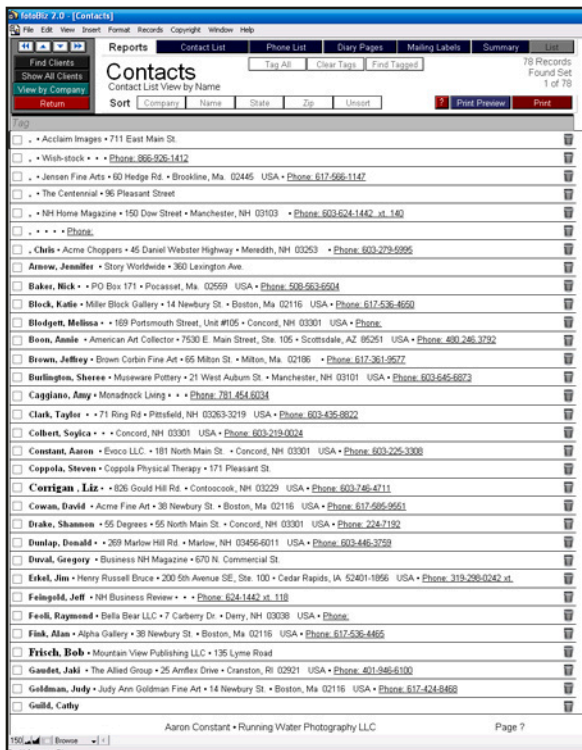


Figure 1: Interface and Contact listing in Fotobiz on the left. Interface and Magazine Editorial pricing of Fotoquote on the right.

Stationary - Your business correspondence will include a Business Card, Letterhead and Envelopes. Your letterhead can be as simple as something created in Word and printed on a standard letter size sheet of paper with a hand written envelope to your client. Or, you can have an identity created with a logo and have stationary professionally printed with multiple colors, but you start getting into expense. As you're first starting, don't worry about these things right away. As your start to establish yourself as a business, you will begin to have to make investments in items such as this.

All of your business correspondence should include your business name, address, phone number, email and website address. Your clients and prospects will need to contact you so make it easy for them to do so. But the correspondence will also divide you between what's professional and personal. And all activity pertaining to your business should be done through your business correspondence.

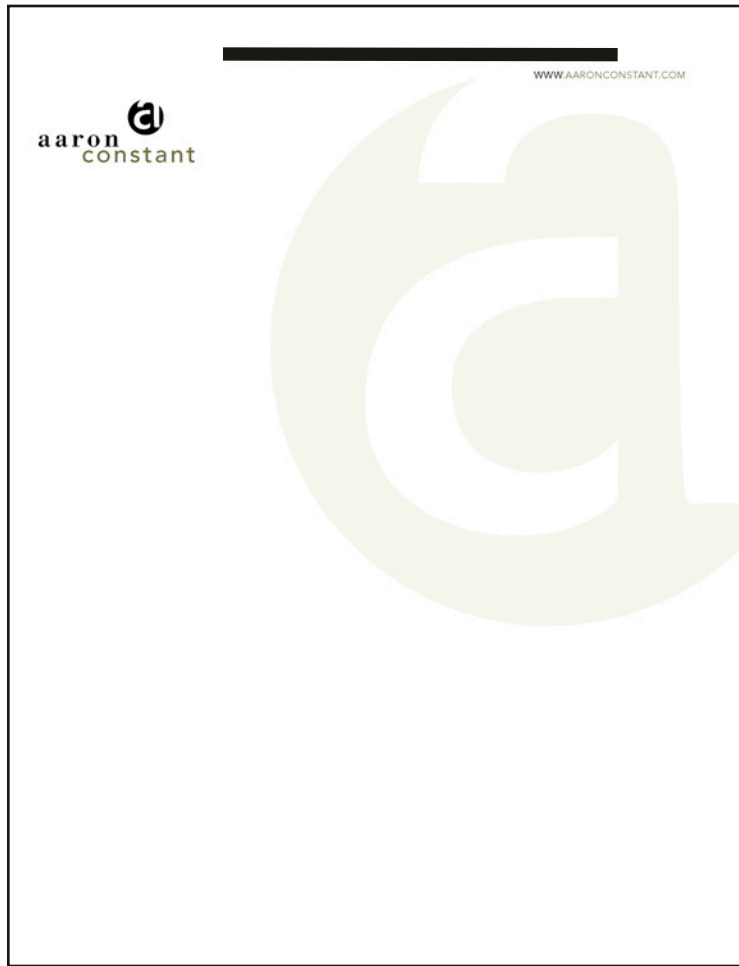



Figure 2: Stationary Letterhead.



Figure 3: The front and back side to my business card.

Estimates - Anytime I am contacted for a potential assignment, I generate an estimate based on the clients specifications which I title as an Assignment Confirmation, assuming of course I am not photographing an editorial assignment for a fee that is dictated by the magazine. Once the estimate is created in Fotobiz, I create a PDF of it, email it to the client on my digital letterhead and print a hardcopy for my files. I put the hardcopy in a folder titled “Estimates”, and it resides there until the assignment is awarded to me, or after a year of no action with this estimate. I figure a year is long enough to keep a hard copy of an estimate, unless some major correspondence has transpired that I might need to remember later on, but for the majority of my clients, even six months is too long to keep paperwork of a “potential assign-


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ASSIGNMENT CONFIRMATION


Assignment No: 1058


[Redacted]
 [Redacted]
 [Redacted]

This Assignment Estimate is based on the following job description:

[Redacted] Pencil Sketch to photograph. Original [Redacted] art furnished on tracing paper as separated Black and Non Regro Blue sketches.

AC to photograph two sketches at 100% size to make composite in processing. DNG files to be furnished with bracketed exposures.

Signature  Client Signature _____ Date _____
 Signature Confirms all Pages and Terms of this Document
 Subject to Terms and Conditions on Reverse Page 1


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ASSIGNMENT CONFIRMATION

Assignment No: 1058

[Redacted]
 [Redacted]
 [Redacted]

Detail of Photography Fees	Each	
1 Art Capture - Single	\$100.00	\$100.00
TOTAL PHOTOGRAPHY FEES		\$100.00
Subtotal of Expenses and Fees		\$100.00
Sales Tax		
Total Estimate		\$100.00

Initial _____ Page 2

Figure 4: Estimates

ment”. Most assignments in my world are often awarded within a week to two weeks time frame.

An estimate should contain your creative fee or day rate as a line item. Any material expenses such as background paper or props for product shots if needed and requested by the client should be marked up 15% and added as a line item. If the client prefers to buy direct, than they can save themselves 15%. You need to remember your money is worth something and the longer you extend your cash, the tighter your cash flow. And make it your policy that you take advances up front when it comes to purchasing materials.

With editorial work, you don’t have to worry much about purchasing anything, but in product work, commercial work or advertising, you may have to purchase something. And if you have travel expenses, you should add a line item for that as well on your estimate. If you have to pay for airfare, mark it up 15%. All expenses to you should be marked up no less than 15%. Margin is quite standard and expected. The formula for pricing is quite simple. Cost + Material + Markup = Price.

I should however mention there is a difference between an Estimate and a Quote. A Quote is a set price (and basically a contract) that you, the consumer will pay. An Estimate is exactly that, an estimate of what it MAY cost. Chances are when you go to an auto mechanic, they will give you an Estimate. It may be more or it may be less when the work is finished, but you at least have some idea of what it will cost. Well, this is how I chose to price my work as well. I provide clients with Estimates, which allow room for variances in a shoot or processing requirements. It is perfectly ok to charge either way, just make sure your

clients are aware of the difference.

Stock Estimates - When estimating stock usage for magazines or businesses, I use Fotobiz for my basis and negotiate from there. There are online stock calculators you can use if you Google the name “Stock Photo Calculators”. When asked to submit an image for stock you need to ask your client a few questions such as usage, circulation, duration of use, size such as a cover or 1/2 page etc. Once you have this information you can begin your stock estimate. I often license web resolution images for \$50.00 US each. This is a Non Exclusive, Electronic Use with no Duration license. And all the client receives from me is a 72 DPI file at 500 pixels in the longest dimension. This way, they will be very hard pressed to use it in print or any other higher resolution purposes such as an art print.

Terms and Conditions - Make sure your standard Terms and Conditions of Sale are included on your Estimates. Standard terms in the business world are usually Net 30 Days, meaning payment is due within 30 Days of the date of invoice. However, I use terms of Net 10 for my work. Most of my clients are much bigger than I, and have a much larger cash reserve than I do, so my business relies on getting paid quickly. And make sure your clients sign and accept your Terms and Conditions and return them to you by mail, as they are now under a binding contract that they have acknowledged and accepted.

Invoices - Invoices should mimic your estimates. All cost centers such as creative fees, processing or post production fees, material fees and travel expenses should all be line itemed on your invoice so your

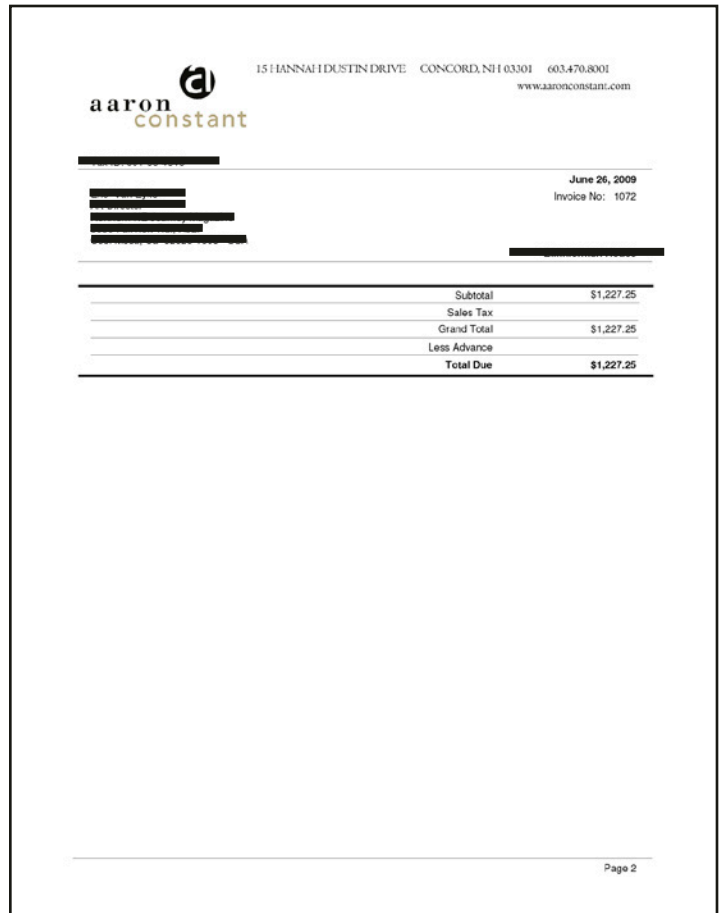


Figure 5: Invoices

client can break out your expenses. I know I mentioned earlier in the lessons that I prefer not to “nickel and dime” my clients, but that is in portrait work with sitting fees, location fees etc. With editorial and commercial work, I line item my cost centers because I have different rates for my work. I’m not charging my camera time the same as my processing time or commercial proofing, and since I often try to win the processing and proofing of images, I make it a line item and title it “as additional if desired” so the client has enough information to consider my additional services without impacting the services I really want to sell which is photography.

Delivery Memos - A Delivery Memo is nothing more than an itemized list of what you have delivered to your client. It should clearly state “Delivery Memo” on it and should accompany every project you deliver on disk or digitally. I make my Delivery Memos in Microsoft Word and save it as PDF, this way I can either print two copies (one for my client and one for myself) to deliver with a disk, or email to the client if I am delivering images via FTP. The PDF file remains in my electronic job folder that I have on my computer. A Delivery Memo avoids the conflict of what you may or may not have sent your client.

Corresponding with Clients - All of my estimates, invoices, letters and follow-ups are submitted by email today. Even most of my assignments are delivered digitally via FTP. But anytime an estimate is sent, I follow up within 3 or 4 days. It is best to not wait too long as an eager photographer that you are competing against may beat you to it.

But when cold calling or following up on work and assignments, I find email the best way to correspond because we can manage our business correspondence on our time. I consider it a polite gesture as you are not interrupting your client’s busy schedule for something they may feel is menial to what they are doing. It permits them to get back to you when they have a convenient moment for them, not you, and this is important.

Lastly, the most important thing in business, even more important than good photography is being responsive to your clients needs. If they call you, call them back right away. Don’t wait a day or two because it is bad business. If you’re not there for your clients, they won’t be there for you, and make sure to be polite and courteous. If you’re a jerk, forget it! Make your relationship with them an experience, not just a business transaction.

Job Folders - All assignments and stock sales should be given a job folder. Once you been awarded an assignment, you should create a job number and apply it with the client name. Or you can create a folder of a specific client and file all jobs you produce for that client under that folder. The reason you create folders is so you can file your paperwork and keep track of the information specific to the project. I use both electronic and hard copy job folders.

I use a simple manila folder system with a file cabinet for all my hard copy paper work, and I use a digital job folder that I keep on my computer that is created of PDF files. My job numbers are numerical and are identified at the end by the year. So an example would be 0162_10. The Prefix is continuous year after year, but the Suffix changes as each year progresses. All folders are titled with the job number and client name and filed in numerical order for easy lookup and reference.

I make PDF files of every electronic piece of correspondence I have and I save them in my electronic job folder. PDF files are nothing more than electronic versions of my hard copy paper work. Everything pertaining to the particular project is filed in the job folder. This includes signed contracts, estimates, invoices, model releases, contact prints, back up disk that includes all photos and all email correspondences for future reference. Everything I need for that particular project is filed in one place.

Generating PDFs - A PDF is a Portable Document Format and can be generated with expensive software by Adobe called Acrobat. Creating a PDF is just like printing a document to a printer, but you print to PDF. The benefit of a PDF is it can't be edited and it is universal. You can also download free PDF generators. One that I use on my PC (which is my business operating computer) is Cute PDF and does a good job of making PDFs. It doesn't have the functionality of Acrobat, but you don't need it. All you need is a PDF which is universal assuming you have Acrobat Reader which is a free download, and you can rest assured that most, if not all of your clients will work with PDFs for document deliveries.

Record Keeping - All business correspondence should be properly recorded and filed. This includes saving all receipts and mileage and filing it with your job folders. As a business you can deduct your business expenses and mileage so keep accurate track of your business expenses. And if the G-man, aka IRS decides to audit you, you have all available paperwork ready.

I use Microsoft Excel to generate spreadsheets and track and record expenses along with Profits and Loss Statements, otherwise known as P/L's. I record expenses monthly and balance them against my Checking Account Statement. I also record my sales and sales by category so I can look at history and see what markets are earning me the most money over the course of a year. Once I "close the books" for a year, this three page P/L or COGS (Cost of Goods Sold) gets submitted to my CPA for proper Income Tax filing. Running your business is really just like balancing the checkbook at home. The principal is the same.

Equipment Purchases - To have a business you need to have a Basis for your business. Capital is basically your investment in the business. Cameras, lenses, software, computers or any large purchases are considered Capital investments and are part of the business. Your Capital helps determine what your business is worth. When you purchase equipment, the IRS doesn't allow you the full deduction of your investments in the first year to go against sales, but the IRS will allow you to take the deductions over a series of years. Your equipment may often be depreciated on a schedule over three or five years, but depreciation is an IRS / Accounting thing which is something you really need to discuss with your CPA.

Smaller ticket items such as office supplies like paper, pencils, staplers or perhaps even lens filters can be expensed and charged as an expense to the business. Also make sure to keep track of household or studio expenses too. Since you are using a portion of house to operate your business (providing your town or city permits you to do this) you may be able to deduct portions of your household expenses for your business. But be careful here and give thought to this because when it comes time to sell your property, you may be liable for Capital Gains if deducting household expenses. Adversely, if you don't take the household deductions and it comes time to sell, you may still be hit with Capital Gains because the IRS will tell you that you could have taken these deductions and it's your fault that you didn't.

But I urge you to not take my word for it and speak to a qualified CPA or business consultant before you setup shop. I'm a photographer that runs a business, not a CPA. There may be many options for how you establish and setup your business so make sure to ask many questions, and especially ask the right questions. And the number one question you need to ask is "what are the tax implications"? You need to look out for your better interests.

Brand Identity

By this point you have a body of work, portfolio, website and perhaps even some published images that you can show "Tears" of to your prospective clients. As your business builds momentum (even if it's part time), you may want to think about a logo or brand identity for your business marketing efforts. A brand identity identifies you and your trademark that ties your brand to you. I don't recommend doing this yourself unless you are already a graphic designer or visual /artistic person.

When thinking of a logo or brand identity, I highly advise against using icons or logos that have camera lenses in them or any type of clip art as it just plain looks cheesy. If I were a photo buyer, I would prefer you to just use your name with an elegant font and forget the cheesy clip art photos. This is a sure way to tell your clients that you're an amateur. You may have good work, but the presentation of your brand may not be so hot. So if you're thinking of a logo and your creative, either design one yourself in Adobe Indesign or Illustrator, or even better, pay someone (or trade work) to design it for you.



So if you know a designer friend that has creativity, talk to them about trading work. Perhaps trade portraits of their children to create your logo. The logo you see here is one I had created in trade for work. Since I'm also in the printing business, I have quite a few friends that are designers. The logo would have cost about \$2500.00 US to have created, but since I shot a few projects for my friend, it was easier for me to make the decision to have the logo done. I know, this sounds like a lot of money, and it is. But it is hard to put a quantifiable value on brand identity, and since there was no exchange of cash, the decision was easy for me to brand myself with a logo.

My thoughts when having the logo done was on something simple and modern. I chose two colors, as you see, green and black and I wanted a modern font. If you notice the black logo, it contains my initials "a", "c" and they are tied together so it will stand on its own without my name under it, but the name is part of the logo and brand identity. I just want my clients and prospects to remember my name,

not a crazy, whacked out logo. And this is where a designer can help you see your own vision of how you should brand yourself.

Mailings & Marketing

Mailings are a very effective way to keep your clients current with your work. Generate mailings lists of your contacts and run labels. If you have Microsoft Word, there is an Envelopes and Labels function that have pre made Avery Label templates that make mailings lists easy. By creating a database and saving your labels, you can print labels at any time to mail cards to your prospects, and you can add to your client list over time.

By creating postcard mailers in Photoshop you can add text on one side and a photo on the outside. Your postcard mailers really need to be nothing more than showing clients your new work. Postcard mailers can be 7x5 inches or 6x4 inches. You can choose to mail them in standard size envelopes which are A-7 or A-6, or you can mail them as a postcard self mailer. But if you choose to mail them as a postcard, you will have to allow room for a label and a return address. Check with your Postal Service to learn about mailing requirements. The postcard that I show in this example is meant to be mailed in a mailing sleeve that I had printed as part of my identity, but it could easily be mailed in an envelope.

Providing you have an inkjet printer at home, you can easily create these postcards on it. I use Hahnemuhle Natural Art Duo paper for my postcards. The Duo means that you can print on both sides of the paper, as you will need to print a photo on one side and text on the other. Once you get a template setup in Photoshop, you can save it and just change out the photo each time you do a mailer. I print my 7x5 inch cards two up on an 8-1/2 x 11 inch sheet of paper because it has room for two cards.



Figure 6: Outside of a postcard mailer

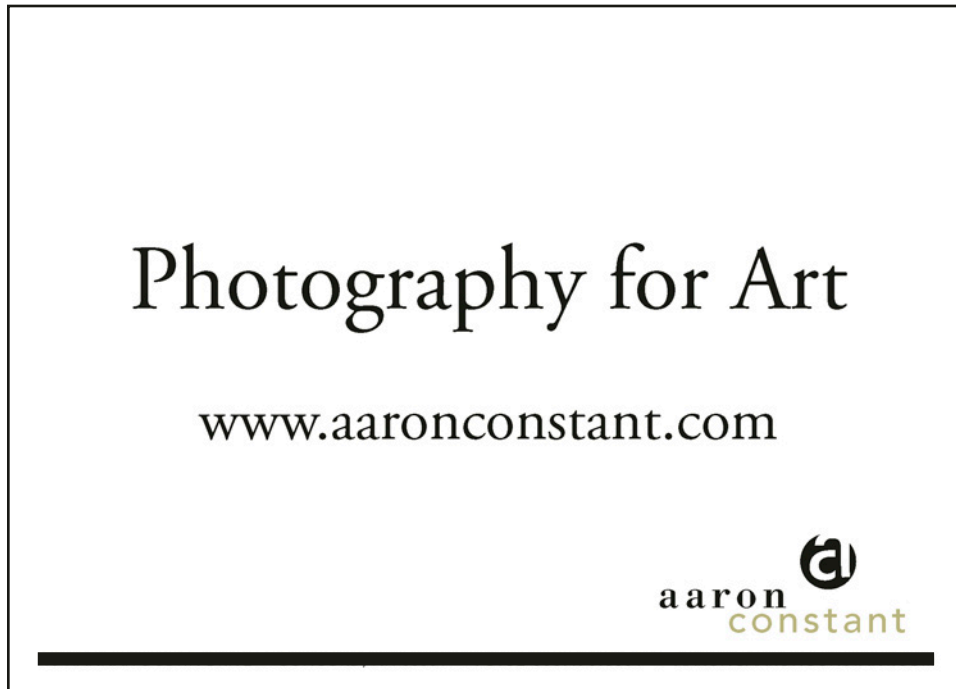


Figure 7: Inside of a postcard mailer

My mailings are very specific to my audiences. When I do a mailing, I will create a card for a list that contains my Editorial clients; I'll create a list for my Fine Art clients; and I'll generate a list for my Commercial clients. Each card will have an image pertaining to the market I am mailing to and the back will say what type of photography I am marketing, as seen in *Figure 7*.

If you don't have an inkjet printer, you can also go the more expensive route of having cards professionally printed at Modern Postcard for example. They specialize in cards and will print a few hundred cards for not much money. The benefit here is it saves a bunch of time, but it costs money. So you need to figure out where your time and resources are best spent.

Lastly, you can also produce a photo book, which is something called Print on Demand. There are many sites out there like Blurb or Asuka Books that specialize in one off books. Book production can range in page sizes and page counts, but a book can be purchased for prices ranging from a few dollars to a few hundred dollars. These sites have a web interface that allow you to download software specific to their book making process and you get to design a book at home, then upload the pages to their website. I have never used these services as I manage my own books, but this is a very effective way to reach your target audience in a professional manner, or print a special project for your portfolio.

Perhaps you want to get into fine art photography. Well, you can print a limited edition series of books to accompany your prints and sell your work as a package. This is actually what many fine art photographers do to market their work. They will make their prints and have a short run book produced for the exhibition opening. It is expensive, but if a gallery is showing your work, they may pickup the cost of the book.

Summary

I think we have shown throughout this course there are many markets to photograph for, and many ways to present your work to the markets. And photography is bigger than photography itself when you think about how to market yourself, brand yourself and properly process images for delivery to your clients. There is a lot to becoming a photographer, and not all things are photography.

But if there is one thing to be taken from this course, it is to give yourself as much opportunity to shoot and sell your work as possible. Look at every available market and get on the phone and call people. Magazines are not a hard sell when it comes to photography. You just need to have decent work and a lot of persistence. Don't be discouraged if sales don't come right away. Photography is a journey, not a means to an end. And you probably began shooting because of your love for it, not to make money. Making money is the by-product of what we do as photographers.

Lesson 8 - Final Assignment

Corporate fine art. I want you all to show me three photos of fine art or scenic work that you may want to have exhibited in an art gallery, at an arts and crafts fair or sell as corporate fine art. This can be color or black and white, landscape, abstract, still life, scenic or whatever it is you feel compelled to shoot. I would like to see and feel something photographically you are passionate about.