



Marketing Your Skills

Operating a digital professional photography business in a transitional market is a challenge to do it right the first time. Some Photographers will go so far as to say that the 'professional market' is actually in a state of confusion because consumers are struggling with the term 'professional photographer.' Why so? Consumers are experiencing a vast array of skill levels possessed by those calling themselves 'professionals' combined with a wide range in pricing for what is perceived as the same product. Just perhaps the best marketing strategy is to market photographic and creative skills to consumers separate from price or product. That is to say customize the product based on the photographer's skill level, and price it accordingly.

When marketing professional skills, similarities and differences between competing photographers must be determined and evaluated exclusive of price and products. This step is important because consumers will compare price assuming that all photographers are of equal skill level and all products are the same. If consumers can be persuaded that some photographers are much better than others, then logically they will conclude that all products are not necessarily the same and prices should vary accordingly. That is say that consumers can and will accept an open market concept if value can be placed on varying levels of skills used to produce the product. Example: consumers are willing to pay more for a Lexus verses a Camry even if both are made by Toyota, but at different quality levels. In photography, it is not just Kodak paper, but the 'skilled image' placed on the photographic paper that creates value. This is the message that far too many photographers are failing to get across to the public at large.

Marketing one's skill level requires taking the time to conduct a thorough 'skill level profile' which is very similar to drafting a job resume. Your profile should include:

1. Past accomplishments in profession.
2. Advancements recently made in profession.
3. Skill level demonstrated in what manner.
4. Detailed description of strengths.
5. Why you are a professional photographer.

The main goal of a skills assessment is to begin the process of separating yourself from the competition in terms that consumers will easily understand. Determine which of your salient skills stand above the competition while keeping in mind the importance of both technical and non-technical skills. Example: far too many photographers overlook the power of their personality and attitude which facilitates the ease by which consumers will accept professed skills. As an illustration, research shows that a doctor's positive bedside manner will greatly improve or affect the patient's rate of recovery from illness. Successful photographers always have an 'I care for the customer' demeanor. So why overlook this very important business concept of influencing others.

Successful photographers of the past achieved their fame by first coming fanatics on rules of posing and lighting, then breaking those same rules just enough to create an 'art form.' Far too many photographers have searched high and low for the holy grail of photography called the 'million dollar pose' to no avail in the wrong places only to later learn that skills precede art not the other way around. Digital software, such as Painter and Photoshop, provides new tools to create professional art forms beyond the imaginations of most consumers. Morphology as an art form with the use of software gives a photographer the ability to develop or change the form of a 'subject.' Such skills are marketable to the public today and may over time become a staple product in portraiture. Use of software can clearly demonstrate that one's skills are certainly not generic.

Does your skill level profile set you apart from the competition enough to promote those skills to the public? The main theme here is that you and your level of skills alone can be marketable as a product that will give you a competitive edge while keeping your competition off balance and always playing catch up. When skills are niche properly to the public, your skills are inseparable from the end product whether it be a wedding coffee table book or a senior wall portrait.

As professional, digital photography plateaus over time, those photographers recognized for their marketable skills can command premium prices above their competitors and easily build sitting count. And always keep in mind that consumers can take images, but it takes a true professional to create images. Never forget that!

If you think a friend or studio would benefit from our newsletter, have them contact Pechman Imaging to sign up.

800-777-0221 or <http://www.pechmanimaging.com>

Let us know your thoughts. Email us at: marketing@pechmanimaging.com

Pechman Imaging Management
© Pechman Imaging 2008