



# CREATING

*a Successful Photography*

# PORTFOLIO



an educational guide by:



**PHOTOSHELTER**

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Africa, Kushi Wrestling, Water, Bhutan, Europe  
 Rickshaws, The Nature Conservancy, Africa, and Following  
 from the Niger, Guinea Bissau, Kashmir, Turkey  
 Afghanistan, India, Elephants, Nepal Maoist Revolution



## JAY GOODRICH

HOME PORTFOLIO METION ABOUT STOCK TOURS BLOG CONTACT



### WHO AM I

Formally trained as an architect, now utilizing my knowledge of design to produce compositions with strong graphic elements.

### ADVENTURE

Searching out some of the greatest locations our world has to offer via planes, trains, automobiles, seas, and through.

### PHOTO

Looking for new approaches and angles to produce images for editorial and commercial clients that attempt to rise above the mundane.

### JOURNALIST

Authoring the complete package from concept to execution with text and photographs for specific subjects, locations, and times.

craig stephen  
 photography

WEDDINGS PORTRAITS BLOG CONTACT



### LET ME TELL YOU A LITTLE BIT ABOUT ME



### PORTRAIT & FAMILY PHOTOGRAPHY

I have photography portraits & family groups. I approach them much like my wedding photography, using available light whenever possible and shooting on

### FILM WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHY

I'm one of a relatively small number of photographers in the UK photographing weddings & civil partnerships on traditional film. Photographing on film allows

### DAVID HEDDERLEY

DAVID HEDDERLEY  
 DAVID HEDDERLEY  
 DAVID HEDDERLEY

brian smale

MY ACCOUNT CART



MOtt MOtt MOtt

COMMERCIAL WEDDINGS EDITORIAL

HOME CHALLENGES SEARCH ABOUT MOtt VISUALS CENTRAL MOtt VISUALS WEDDINGS CONTACT BLOG LIGHTBOXES



ONIO PHOTOGRAPHY

## ALPINE NATURE & LANDSCAPE IMAGES BY NIO PHOTOGRAPHY



### PHOTOGRAPHY PORTFOLIO

PhotoShelter is a powerful platform for all of your creative and business photography. Our mission is to make it easy for you to share your work, build your brand, and grow your business. We offer a wide range of features and tools to help you succeed. From social media integration to advanced analytics, we have everything you need to take your photography to the next level. Contact us today to learn more.



## SPECIAL OFFER

# Try PhotoShelter FREE for 30 days!

Build a stronger photo business with a PhotoShelter website.

With PhotoShelter, you also get powerful features and resources to market your photos, such as SEO and social sharing capabilities, in addition to the most options for licensing photography, selling prints online and pro-strength file delivery tools to please your clients.

## GET STARTED

Learn more & [join PhotoShelter](#) today!  
 Or, visit [photoshelter.com/signup](https://photoshelter.com/signup) and enter

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Questions? Contact us anytime at 212-206-0808 or [support@photoshelter.com](mailto:support@photoshelter.com).

Offer only valid for new PhotoShelter users.

# Introduction

A portfolio is one of a photographer's most important tools. This is where you will not only showcase your work but also your work ethic, your commitment to the practice of photography and your market. Creating a really great online portfolio that knocks the socks off of prospective clients is an art form in of itself.

Many good photographers don't get hired simply because they haven't put their work in front of the right people in the right way. As Pulitzer Prize-winning photo editor and freelance consultant Stella Kramer says, "There are incredibly talented people in the world who no one knows about because they don't have the ability to put themselves out there. And there are many people, all over the world, who are not talented and yet successful because they do have that ability."

As you probably already know, putting together a successful portfolio isn't always as simple as it sounds. But it doesn't have to be that hard either.

Compiling a portfolio starts with a strong understanding of your brand and knowing how you want to show it off. Once you have this as a base you can select images that will speak for you and speak to the audience you want to target.

The images on your website should showcase your best work but also hook the audience whom you want your work to appeal to. [Jasmine DeFoore](#), a Texas-based art consultant, [says](#), "If you look at the stats, people are staying on websites for 30 or 40 seconds before they decide to leave." That means you have to ask yourself, "What kind of decision have they made about my work if they only stayed for a few seconds?" This is all about the edit.

When choosing images to include in your online portfolio ask yourself:

- » **WHAT IS YOUR BEST WORK?** Why do you think it's your best work? Make sure that you've gotten reliable feedback on the images—being objective about your own images is tough.
- » **WILL THESE IMAGES GET ME THE JOBS I WANT?** Show strong work that aligns with your goals as a photographer and the goals of whom you want as a client.
- » **HOW MANY GREAT IMAGES DO I HAVE?** Quality is not quantity. Many consultants advise keeping a portfolio between 25 to 40 images. [PhotoShelter's research](#) shows that 65% of image buyers won't look at more than three image galleries.

This guide can help you understand what goes into an exceptional online portfolio, how an online portfolio should fit into your marketing plan and how it should reflect the way you present yourself as a photographer. We'll start by giving you an overview of what an online portfolio does as well as what it should include, and then you can read how professional consultants and photographers recommend you go about making it your own. We'll also debunk a few myths about portfolio reviews, plus provide tips for pitching your work and closing the deal with potential clients.

# 8 Portfolio Do's and Don'ts

Featuring Jasmine DeFoore, Photo Editor & Marketing Consultant



[Jasmine DeFoore](#) is a consultant based in Texas. She has over 20 years of experience in the photo industry that she uses to help photographers make their work stand out to the clients they want to get hired by. In a [webinar with PhotoShelter](#), Jasmine described some key elements for a portfolio to include, best practices for curation workflow and how to create a narrative thread by being a good editor of your own work. Jasmine knows that not everyone can hire a consultant and offers tips that anyone can use to up the level their work, refine their presentation and hone their targeting. Here are a few do's and don'ts.

**1 DO DEFINE YOUR NICHE:** “Figuring out who you are and what you want to shoot for is the most challenging thing to do,” says Jasmine. But it’s also one of the most important things to do when creating a portfolio. You can start by looking back over your work, and as Jasmine said, think about which images got you excited and which jobs you liked doing. This will help narrow your focus based on what you’re genuinely interested in.

**2 DO THINK AHEAD:** Consider where you want to be in two years, and where you’d like to be in five. Now, how can you get there? One way of defining your career goals and setting your work on the path leading there is to consider the careers of photographers you admire. How did they start out? What choices did they make?

**3 DO FIGURE OUT WHAT'S MISSING:** As a photographer you have goals. Define them for yourself: the jobs you want to get, the publications you want to work for. In order to get those jobs and work for those publications ask yourself what images you need in your

portfolio to target that audience. Jasmine will often help photographers identify what key image types they are missing to target a particular audience (for example, a close up of someone eating; beautiful vegetables at a farmer’s market, etc.).

**4 DON'T SHOOT WHAT YOU THINK THE CLIENT WANTS:** You can target your audience and fill the gaps of your portfolio, but, advises Jasmine, don’t do this at the expense of your happiness and personal style. “You have to be true to yourself,” she says. “If what you really want to be doing is working for *Travel & Leisure* and you’re missing some of those pictures, then they need to be pictures that you would want to make. Don’t just go and check off all the checkboxes of things that they run. Make sure that it’s true to what you want to do, it fits your style, it fits the way that you like to shoot.”

**5 DON'T DO IT ALONE:** Collaboration can give you a “fresh perspective” on the images you’ve spent so much time with. “Get another photographer you trust, a graphic designer, anyone in the creative industry is very helpful,” says Jasmine. And when you’re looking to expand into a different market or make the transition from editorial to agency, it could be time to talk to a professional consultant. Says Jasmine, “get a consultant when you need industry intel.”

**6 DON'T WATER DOWN YOUR BRAND IDENTITY:** Jasmine recommends that most photographers maintain one URL and marketing strategy with different targeted online portfolios. The exception is unless you have work spanning very different sectors, in which case it’s time to split it apart.

**7 DON'T SHY AWAY FROM EXPERIMENTING AND STORYTELLING:** Gather your images before you start creating a portfolio. Jasmine suggests spreading the images out in one grid. Then you can see patterns and themes arise. She suggests grouping images to tell “mini

stories or mini narratives”—three to five images total. Include passion projects and be creative. This is a way to stand out from the hundreds of other photographers in the marketplace, but it’s also a built-in talking point when you do have a face-to-face meeting.

**8 DON'T INCLUDE EVERY PHOTO:** Once you have a narrative or a theme, you will see what images stand apart and should be “weeded.” Whether it’s the lighting or the subject matter that makes an image too different from the rest, if you notice it take it out.



*Credit: Kimberly Davis*



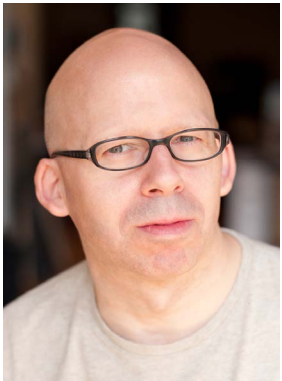
*Credit: Benjamin Spell*



*Credit: Dennis Burnett*

# The 11 Secrets to Creating a Successful Online Photo Portfolio

By Grover Sanschagrin, Co-founder of PhotoShelter



How is your portfolio website like a car door? Give up? At PhotoShelter, we like to use this analogy to explain how people perceive the experience of interacting with a website in ways that you may not realize or expect.

It is common for car shoppers to slam a car door and make judgments about the car based on the sound the door makes. In many cases, they have no idea that they are making a judgment when they hear that sound, but they are.

Similarly, people are judging you based on your portfolio website. Although you may expect to be judged on your images, you may not be expecting to be judged on the experience of using the website itself. Not paying attention to a few commonly overlooked details could result in fewer jobs for you.

What's below is a list of the 11 most important considerations for any photography portfolio website. This comes from lessons learned while working with photographers and photo buyers during the past 10 years.

## 1 CLEAN AND SIMPLE WINS. ALWAYS.

If people are constantly praising the design of your portfolio website, then you are probably doing something wrong. Your photos are supposed to be the star of the show, so don't clutter it up with useless design elements. If people notice the design of a site over the photography it contains, that's a problem. The design should fade into the background and not be noticed.



Credit: [Darren Carroll](#)

There is a trend among photographers who want to show their images at full screen. This is a departure from the past, where photographers were worried about image theft, so they intentionally made their images small. Today, it's all about impact and getting the assignment.



Credit: [Chris O'Young](#)

A clean website also takes things out of the way when they aren't being used. For example, “next” and “previous” buttons can fade away until the user wants to move to the next image. They would do this by moving their mouse pointer to the left or right edges of the photo.

Another way to decrease clutter on your website is to be careful about how you watermark your images. Protecting your images from being stolen is important for many photographers, but it's also important to realize the implications of going too far. If a watermark is so large that it obscures the image, destroying the experience of viewing it, the photographer may be doing more damage than they think.

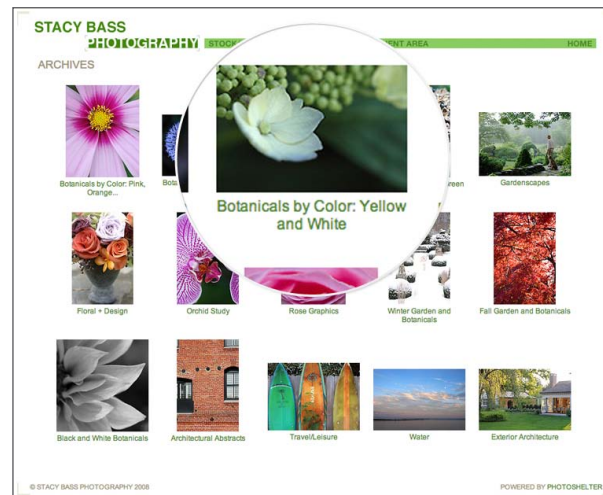
Keep in mind that there are people out there who want to buy or license your images, and you should make it as easy as possible for them to do it. An aggressive watermarking strategy could backfire on a photographer because it could result in the image not being selected for consideration based entirely on the watermark.

## 2 NAVIGATION, LINKS AND GALLERY TITLES MUST BE EASY TO UNDERSTAND.

Don't turn your portfolio into a game of mystery. Make sure that categories, sections, labels,

and navigation make sense to everyone. Getting clever with these things might seem like a fun idea and a way to be different, but it creates a frustrating experience for your users.

Instead, choose a word that tells a person exactly what's on the other side of that link without even clicking on it. You should stick to terminology and wording that is familiar to the industry you are targeting.



Credit: [Stacy Bass](#)

This, of course, means that you need to know your target audience. For example, if you specialize in shooting images of insects, you should include the scientific names and classifications of them because the audience most interested in them expects to see this level of detail.

If you are a wedding photographer, for example, stick to the terms and structure that brides are familiar with. “Cer-

emony” and “Reception” are better choices for a collection of images than “Commitment” and “Joy.” What you think of as “clever” may end up being vague or puzzling to your users.

## 3 BE “RESPONSIVE”

These days, there is more to life than a web browser. It's important that your portfolio website functions properly across all modern devices -- desktop computers; very small laptops; tablets; and mobile phones. To do this, your website should be “responsive.” This is a term that refers to a design approach where a website can adapt to the device being used to view it.

In other words, your website should look one way on a desktop computer, and entirely different on a mobile device. This is important because what works on a desktop computer, where there is plenty of space, will not necessarily work well on a mobile phone, where space is very limited.



A person who is visiting your website on a mobile device may have a different set of needs and expectations than a person using a desktop computer. They won't be expecting to see your images really large because this isn't possible. Instead, they may be looking for your contact information. Or, they may want to quickly scan your images from the comfort of their couch at home, with the intention of looking at your portfolio on a larger size screen using their computer at work the next day.

This trend toward responsive design will soon become a standard for all websites.

#### **4 EDIT TIGHTLY, AND CONSIDER HAVING SOMEONE ELSE DO IT FOR YOU.**

Photographers are their own worst editors. We bring all sorts of emotional baggage to the editing process, and we simply cannot be objective about our own images. I remember one photographer who insisted to me that a very mediocre image remain in his portfolio and was offended that I told him it should be removed.

“But, you have no idea how hard it was for me to make this image,” he said. “I nearly died making this picture!”

How difficult it was to create an image doesn't matter. The end result is what matters. That's why I encourage photographers to have someone else, preferably a client instead of another photographer, edit their portfolios. An objective perspective is valuable information. Keep in mind a line that was drilled in my head back when I was a college student: “Your portfolio is only as good as your worst picture.”

#### **5 CONTACT INFORMATION SHOULD BE EVERYWHERE.**

If the goal of your portfolio is to land you assignments, then make sure a client knows how to contact you so you can actually get one. The easiest way is to include your contact details on every page of your website—including your portfolio.

Contrary to common belief, most visitors to your website don't start their visit with your front page. Most visitors find you through search engines and end up on some inside page deep within the site.

I'm not suggesting that you make contact information so big and bold so that it distracts viewers from your images. Include something small and subtle at the bottom of the screen that doesn't take attention away from the images, but is there when a client decides to pick up the phone.

#### **6 DON'T JUST SHOW PICTURES; SHOW THAT YOU LOVE WHAT YOU SHOOT.**

Have you ever noticed that people with passion, energy, and drive are people whom everyone else wants to work with? They tend to be more optimistic and fun. Your portfolio should convey this. If you're not 100% into what you're shooting, then start shooting something else that is near and dear to your heart.

The general photographer population is growing larger and larger, and competition is fierce. Many photographers are able to succeed in this environment because they concentrate on a niche and carve out their own segment of the industry where there is very little competition.

Photographers often feel like they should be as general as possible with their portfolio website because they want any assignment that comes their way. They worry that someone will be scared away thinking that they aren't capable of a particular assignment. In this situation, I suggest creating multiple portfolio websites based on a single theme or niche. If you have multiple specialties, then create multiple portfolios.

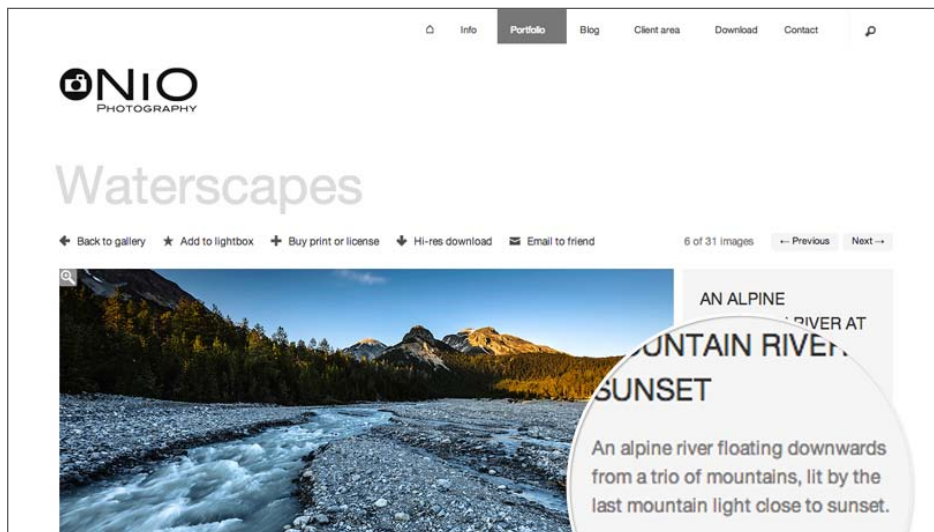
Your portfolio and your website should be able to show that you are a motivated expert in your chosen niche. You should be 100% authentic about your interest in the subject, have passion, energy, drive, and focus. Do what you love, and let that shine through in your work. If the subject doesn't motivate you, you shouldn't expect your viewers to be motivated either.

#### **7 MAKE SURE THE PORTFOLIO WORKS ON YOUR AUDIENCE'S TERMS.**

Who should be looking at your work, and what are they like? What monitor size is most common? Are they using mobile devices? What software are they using all day long, and what does their workflow process look like? Find this out, and then incorporate these things into your website design.

For example, many photo editors use software that allows them to edit images at a very quick pace using the keyboard. They are comfortable with this process. Therefore, it would be wise to make sure that they are able to advance through your portfolio by using the left and right arrow keys on a keyboard.

Photo editors and art directors have often told us that they don't like being forced to send an email through a web form in order to contact the photographer. Instead, they want to use their own company email system to send the email because they want to be able to keep track of what they sent you and when.



Credit: [NiO Photography](#)

Putting your email address on a website may increase the amount of spam you receive, but ask yourself what's more important—fighting spam or landing an assignment.

#### **8 USE CAPTIONS! TEXT IS YOUR FRIEND.**

Don't be afraid to put text next to your images. If you are a bad writer, ask someone for help, but do not avoid captions for your images.

For starters, text is critical for search engine optimization (SEO). Text is the foundation of all search engines. Without it, you cannot be found.

Captions can also give important factual information about an image and can be used to underscore the importance of the subject matter. If you can color in the facts for the viewer, they're more likely to understand and relate to the image.

A good caption can also contain useful information about how you work. If you've overcome obstacles, or were able to perform beyond expectations for a client, you can indicate this in your captions. From a client's perspective, photographers are either problem solvers or problem creators. Indicate that you solve problems and you're likely to attract more clients. Captions are the perfect place for this.

#### **9 PEOPLE ARE IMPATIENT—DON'T MAKE THEM WAIT.**

In a recent photo buyer survey we conducted, [What Buyers Want from Photographers: 2012 Survey](#), we learned that nobody likes to wait around for images to load. There is a general expectation that your website will be fast enough to keep up with whatever pace they normally maintain.

If they are forced to slow down and wait, even for 1 second, this is noticeable and it will count against you. Test things for yourself. How long does it take for images to load? Images should be snappy and show up immediately without delay. Your network and connection speed can affect this, but in general, your photos should load quickly. Consider pre-loading the next image in a sequence while the person is looking at an image. When they hit that "next" button, the new image loads instantly. That's a much better user experience.

#### **10 LET PEOPLE KNOW WHERE THEY ARE.**

People like to know where they are in any process or sequence. When they have this information, they feel more comfortable with the overall experience. That's why it is important to let them know where they are in your website and in your portfolio galleries. Your website navigation should also contain 'breadcrumbs,' which allow them to link directly back to the start of the portfolio gallery, or back several levels to a gallery index, or even to the front page of your website.

Likewise, they should know where they are in a sequence of images. If you have a portfolio gallery with 26 images, then you should let them know where they are in that sequence as they advance through it. (Example: Image 6 of 26; Image 7 of 26; Image 8 of 26; etc.)

#### **11 LET PEOPLE KNOW WHERE YOU ARE!**

Don't fall into the trap of not mentioning where you are based out of fear that you'll never get a sweet location travel assignment. Make your home base plainly obvious, and indicate to which places you commonly travel.

Your clients want to know this information because they need to be able to manage their budget. Sometimes a photographer who is local is required and you risk not being considered for a job simply because you didn't disclose your location.

Now take a look at your website with a fresh pair of eyes. Open and slam the door, and truly experience it. Figuring out what it's saying about you could make a difference in your bottom line.

# Setting the Tone and Refining an Audience

Featuring *Amanda Sosa Stone, Photography Consultant*

Amanda Sosa Stone has been working with award-winning photographers from around the world for over 10 years. Based in Florida, as a freelance consultant, she works with visual artists who span media and is the in-house marketing and industry consultant for Agency Access.

Amanda can approach photography with both the unbiased view of a marketer and the heart of a dedicated artist. That's why we asked her to give us tips on how photographers can refine their audience, set a solid tone for their portfolio and take their work to the next level.



*Amanda Sosa Stone, Photography Consultant*  
[www.sosastone.com](http://www.sosastone.com)

## *How does a photographer refine an audience and find a spot in the marketplace?*

First, a photographer needs to be able to clearly describe the client he wants to go after and the work he has to offer that client. I always ask a photographer: Where were you, where are you now, and where do you want to go?

Where they are now versus where they want to go becomes an equation that can show whether they're heading in the direction that they want. I check to see if a photographer has content to support what they want to do.

That's how you define your target audience. Is the work there, do you understand the dream versus the reality, and how does your location factor in? Once you can answer those questions you can refine.

## *How do you set the tone of your portfolio?*

I think that people often try to assume what they think their target audience wants. Whether it's someone who wants to shoot for ESPN or do wedding photography, it doesn't matter—photographers assume the bride wants X and that ESPN wants Y.

I actually do the opposite. At the end of the day, they're hiring you for your style. You have to really pull back from showing clients what you assume they want and instead show them what they want but in your own style. That's a hard distinction to make.

People will tell me that they're ready to gut their portfolio for an upcoming meeting with a potential client and turn it into something

they think that particular client wants to see. I think that's fine for an iPad portfolio, but I advise not to gut your primary portfolio because that portfolio embodies your style as a photographer. Of course, I've done "safe" edits too; sometimes you have to. But I always tell photographers to know the direction you want to go in and know how you will explain it using your own visual voice.

Photographers wear their hearts on their sleeves; their art is their life, and they want everyone to approve. There's no way every client can love you. You have to be bold enough to tailor your portfolio to yourself.

#### *How do you recommend going about the actual editing?*

I use Adobe Bridge because I really like to work in a hands-on way and also because I've just used it for so many years. But I do also use Aperture for building portfolios. I have lots of clients who use Lightroom. I think you have to use whatever you're comfortable with.

The software doesn't matter as much as the person doing the editing. You have to be emotionally removed from the process. I tell my clients to send me content that's edited down to what they love, what they like, and what they're not sure what to do with. That starts to remove the emotional filters. I then ask them to consider why they love an image—was it because of the experience of the shot (which doesn't translate to the viewer) or was it because it represents exactly where they want to go?

#### *How do photographers decide the number of photos to include in their portfolio?*

Because the number of photos you can include in your portfolio can be unlimited, photographers sometimes think that's an invitation to share everything. But they need to think when curating: What happens if I only have two minutes to connect with a potential client? What do they need to see?

For the person who has two minutes and wants to hire a photographer you've got to really sell them. And two minutes is generous. I would say it's more like selling someone in the first two to five clicks.

I remind photographers that they can't always verbally walk someone through an online portfolio. You can add a caption and information, but someone has to be able to look at an image and walk away with a story. They should feel like they know who you are. That's when you've done a great edit.

#### **Amanda's Case Study: Redefining Your Audience, with Photographer Jason Meyers**

Portrait and editorial photographer, [Jason Meyers](#) is really just starting out. He's based out of Florida, not in a prime location, but it could be used to his benefit. So we hired [Alexandru Vita](#), from PhotoShelter, to completely gut Jason's website portfolio. We went through the whole process of refining his target audience. When I highlighted the work he had, he said, "That's not what I want to be. I want to be a portrait photographer."

Over the span of six weeks, Jason shot about 80 portraits. Now that's serious dedication. He was determined to get what he wanted. And he just got picked for *PDN's* "The Shot" and landed his dream client, *Garden & Gun* Magazine.

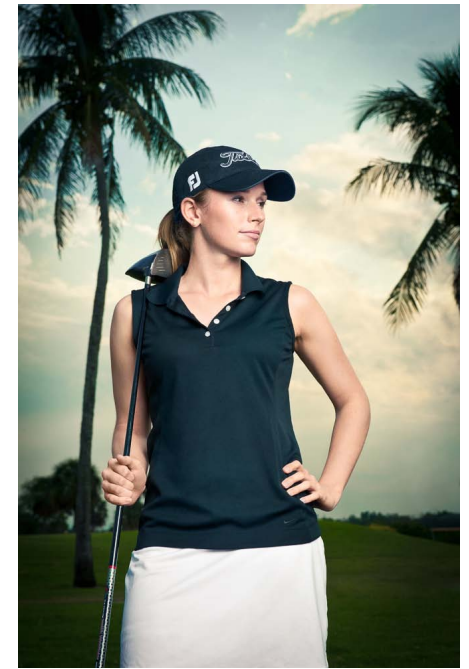


Photo Credit: [Jason Meyers](#)

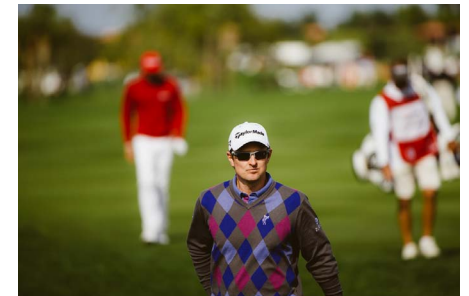


Photo Credit: [Jason Meyers](#)

# Attracting Your Dream Client With Your Portfolio

Featuring Neil Binkley, Photography Consultant

Neil Binkley is a photographer consultant and the co-founder of [Wonderful Machine](#). In 2010, he formed his own business helping photographers curate their portfolios and websites. His award-winning clients benefit from his years working with creative professionals, but also a sense of design honed during a previous career in the corporate design and advertising industry.

No matter how many portfolios Neil has seen, it still excites him when a photographer comes to him with images that clearly express their “creative DNA” or personality. His perspective on targeting clients is based on a strong belief that the best thing to do is shoot what you love and aim to inspire.

## *How does a photographer target a dream client with his or her portfolio?*

The best thing you can do is pretend that you are your dream client and think, What would I hire me to shoot? Every portfolio shoot that a photographer does is a chance to do the work they find most exciting.

I think that portfolio projects are the single most important things that photographers can do to propel their businesses forward. And when I say portfolio projects, I also mean personal projects—they’re the same thing to me. The portfolio project has the potential to make them more money but also provide more artistic satisfaction.

The more I consult the less orthodox I am about the one right approach. Whether it’s local or national, there’s room for you to tell a different story to a different audience. You just have to figure out which audience will like what you’re doing. And sometimes you have to train your audience to like something new. That’s where the orthodoxy gets confusing and where peoples’ entrepreneurial instincts have to kick in.

## *How do you recommend coming up with a project that’s portfolio-worthy?*

There are really two things that can help you come up with portfolio projects. One is practical: Think of what you need to fill in the gaps of your current work. The other is to think of what work would get you excited. Because when you’re excited about the work, it can be infectious.



Neil Binkley, Photography Consultant  
[wonderfulmachine.com](http://wonderfulmachine.com)

To brainstorm new ideas, I think that the more photographers can do to show off their personality the better—whether a subject matter or a style—it’s harder for others to replicate something that’s personal to you.

It happens more and more these days that a creative director will see some work on someone’s website, regardless of whether it was done for a client, and they will be inspired and want it re-created for a client of theirs. This is a win-win situation because the job becomes more of a collaboration. In this case they’re not coming to you to do the expected; they’re coming to you to enhance their presentation to the client. Your goal with your portfolio should be to inspire creative directors and art buyers.

### ***What are some specific go-to practices for a photographer who can’t come up with a portfolio project?***

I used to be a designer, and the hardest thing to do was to design for myself. There’s a lot of pressure to create something from nothing. Photographers are up against a blank canvas when starting a new portfolio project so themes can help them react to something.

Some tips:

Pick a color and run with it for six months. Do a portfolio shoot every week or two (this is the red project, etc.) and see what that means for you. Then on your website you can have one gallery that says, “latest project” or the “red project” or the “rainbow project.” That way a client can look at it and say, “This person did a really great job across these 10 images. There’s a thread that shows this is a cohesive work and yet it’s exciting because they’ve obviously tried to do something a little bit different.”

### ***How do you recommend thinking up a portfolio project that is both personal and can be targeted to a dream client?***

Think of 10 things that you enjoy doing the most and choose one of them to be a portfolio project. Say it’s a hobby or taking your dog for a walk. Think of how taking a dog for a walk is interesting, and interesting in a way that you haven’t seen done. Make it personal to you. Try to make it a story. Good marketing is good storytelling—everyone likes to hear stories. Maybe you just focus on the tail of the dog, which is something I’ve never seen. This also adds a limiting factor. A limiting factor helps you use your creative mind to execute the shoot. Maybe it’s through lighting, styling or the environment that the tail is photographed against. You can add irony or humor. All of those things tell an interesting story and give the images variety, but the theme of the tail will keep it all cohesive.

### ***How do you showcase a story online when you’re not in the room to walk the viewer through it?***

You walk a potential client through your portfolio by being a good editor. You have the structure: what each gallery is named and how many galleries you have. You’ve chosen relevant images and put them in order. These are all part of explaining your story and what you do.

This goes back to the question of whether it’s better to be a generalist or a specialist, and the answer is, ask the client you want to hire you.

Captions can also help tell your story. A lot of websites hide captions unless someone wants to see them, which makes the presentation really streamlined and clean for those who don't have a lot of time.

### *How do you keep your dream clients once you've got them?*

I never give people permission to stop marketing themselves. You have to sell yourself to people even if they've already hired you. If Coke and Pepsi have to advertise then why wouldn't a photographer whom no one has ever heard of have to do the same thing? It's just a reminder, that's all.

I try to hit home as much as possible with photographers that if they aren't shooting for GQ or Vanity Fair or Esquire it doesn't mean that they're not good. It's possible that they may never do work for those publications, and they should forgive themselves if they don't. Because there are only so many projects and only so many photographers in line for those projects. You can do work for many other clients. If you have five clients that hire you, with a few rotating in and out, you can have a very solid career.

### **Neil's Case Study: Why a photographer with a fast, intuitive portfolio comes out on top.**

I consult photographers foremost, but I was recently tapped by an ad agency to find a local photographer for a specific region in the country. It was really interesting to me because I became in effect a freelance art buyer and I had to use all the sourcebook sites and photographer websites out there to determine if someone would be good enough to create an estimate for this ad agency. The client was a regional chain, wanted high quality, and happened to have a really odd combination of specialty needs (food and lifestyle). I found several people who were good at one or the other, but it was hard to find someone good at both.

Every time I hit a website that wasn't quick and easy to use—if it didn't have thumbnails, for example—I was less patient. It was taking a day and a half to find a couple of good contenders to send to this ad agency, and I really saw the weaknesses and strengths of website designs.

When someone is trying to quickly assess your photographic value it's important to help her do her job. We're not in the beautiful, animation-rich, Flash era that we used to be. It's important not to get in the way of function.

It happens all the time that the best photographer is not the one that is found. And there are a lot of great photographers out there, but it's not always about finding the best. It's a combination of having a good edit and being able to have it found by the right clients.

### Neil's Case Study: Creating context with Dustin Fenstermacher

I had a client, photographer [Dustin Fenstermacher](#), approach me wanting to redo his website edit. Dustin is a documentary photographer who as a journalist shows the quirks of American subcultures.

Half of the images he showed me were new to his website. In general, rebooting, tweaking and adding new images every two months is a good idea if you're shooting frequently (and you should be).

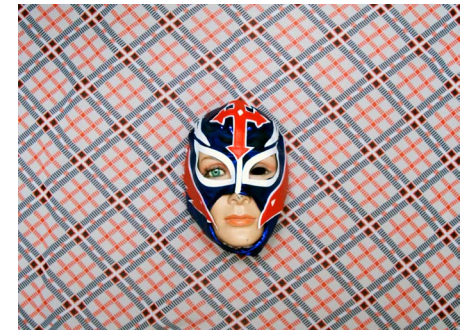
Dustin's issue was that he felt too close to the work and also thought that he was showing too many sides of his personality. He wanted to reach out to more national clients and wanted to retell his story through his portfolio.

I redid his web edit and placed text over the first image in each gallery, as if it was a magazine article or ad campaign. This is a nice way to show how the work looks with text and in a layout. It's also a way to take the work to the next level—from documentary to agency. If the photographer does things that can be very esoteric, glass and bottles, for example, a layout is a way to show how it looks in context. Context is a way of selling what you do. It's a way to say, "This is how my work makes a layout more exciting."

I did Dustin's edit a few months ago. I asked if he'd gotten any feedback. He said an old client of his saw his work in an email campaign. They commented on the new edit, said they liked the text, and then hired him for a new job.



Credit: [Dustin Fenstermacher](#)



Credit: [Dustin Fenstermacher](#)



Credit: [Dustin Fenstermacher](#)



# Feeling Stuck? How to Hit Refresh

Featuring Stella Kramer, Photo Editor

[Stella Kramer](#) is a Pulitzer Prize-winning photo editor who has done work for *The New York Times*, *Newsweek*, *People* and *Sports Illustrated*, among others. She is now a private creative consultant helping photographers to curate their portfolios. Based in New York City, Stella works with photographers from around the world and in many different stages of their careers.

As a consultant she brings both a fresh set of eyes and years of experience selecting images that will speak for a brand as well as target the audience consuming it. While consulting or giving lectures, Stella teaches photographers how best to represent who they are as photographers and business people.

## How do you help a photographer who comes to you “feeling stuck”?

When people say that they’re stuck it’s not always clear what it is that they mean. The first thing I want to understand is what their goals are.

Sometimes having somebody from the outside look at the work can be enough to make the photographer feel as though he can move forward. Sometimes it can be as simple as re-sequencing and editing. For me, the thought behind re-sequencing is that it can make a photographer see their own work in a different light, and hopefully re-energize them about their own work. As far as why one image goes before another, well that is impossible to explain since for each photographer it will be different.

It is always important to keep the client and potential client in mind when organizing your work on your website. You have to ask yourself: Who am I trying to reach? Who am I as a photographer? It is so very difficult for photographers to edit and sequence their own work because they are too close to it. Photographers are well served by having someone unconnected to them look at their work.

For others, feeling stuck means that they don’t know what to do creatively. If you’re a creative person it happens that you hit a wall. You might see it coming, but sometimes you wake up one day and think, “I’m not happy with the direction things are taking. I don’t



Stella Kramer, Photo Editor

[www.stellakramer.com](http://www.stellakramer.com)

know what to do next. I can't even look at my work anymore, I can't see whether it's even any good." In that case there are a variety of things that can be done to push the work forward.

The first step is to get away from it. Like anything else, if you're steeped in it you can't see it for what it is. I often recommend that people stop what they're doing for a couple days. It might take putting down the camera, going for a walk and looking at the world without seeing it through the lens of a camera. I tell people to go to a movie, read a book, talk to friends or go to an art show. There are all sorts of things that can re-energize a sense of creativity.

Not everybody is going to feel inspired. That's just sort of a given. But generally what somebody needs to hear is that it's OK, that they're not the only one who goes through this, that they're not the first to suddenly hate their own work or feel uninspired or depressed about what's going on. It's a common occurrence.

#### *How do you suggest photographers hit refresh on their portfolios?*

Often photographers don't add new work to their websites. They just keep moving forward and end up with a lot of backed up work. When they look at their websites they don't feel inspired to do anything about it. That's when an outside perspective can be the most helpful.

The first thing to do is to figure out what you're doing. Are you trying to get work, or are you using it as a platform to showcase what you do? Websites can be used in different ways. It can show a broader sampling while the portfolio can be more tailored. Sometimes you'll see a website with a ton of images on it and it's a very successful photographer, but the website is really more of an archive. It's not where people are going to hire them, so they can have more work there.

Photographers have a tendency to throw a massive amount of material on their portfolios. I think it's better to have less and make people want to see more. Photographers often include many different genres, thinking both that they're interested in them and also that the more types of work they do the better chance they have to get work. But editorial outlets in general already have someone to do all-around work. What they are generally looking for is someone with a very specific point of view.

In order to have a portfolio that shows a really specific point of view it takes confidence in your work, and being able to stand behind what you do, saying, "Yes, I can shoot food, children, landscapes and portraits, but what I really want to be doing are these two things." If you have too many categories with too much work in them then what you're saying to the prospective client is, "You figure out who I am."

When I suggest taking a picture out of a portfolio, people often tell me, "But everyone loves that one!" I say, "Well, who is everyone?" Your friends and loved ones will tell you things that may or may not be true because they love you. It's very hard for photographers to let go of their work. You can always rotate it back in. Take out a chunk, and then three to six months down the line, put it back. Then you have a reason to send out promotions that say, "Hey take a look at my redone website."

*"If you have too many categories with too much work in them then what you're saying to the prospective client is, 'You figure out who I am.'"*

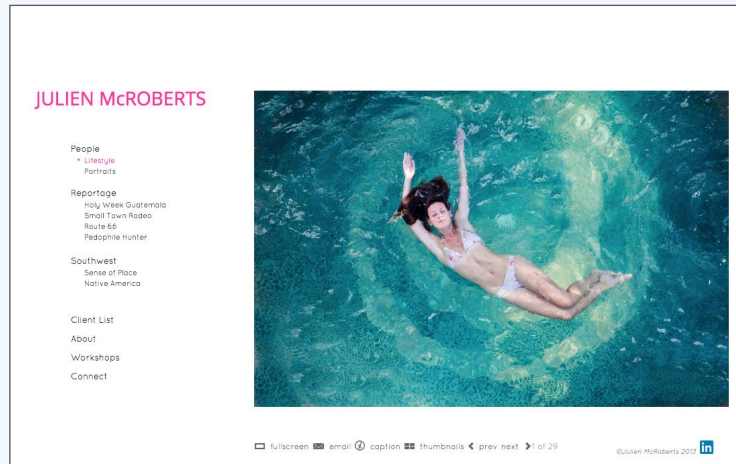
### How does a photographer know it's time to call in a professional to help improve his portfolio?

When you've shot all this work, edited it down, done your post-production and put it on your website, you've been living with it for so long that it just doesn't have the same meaning any more. It helps to find someone with the right background who can look at it in a way that's productive for you. If you're shooting landscape you don't want someone who only works with still-lives to look at it.

I got interested in working with photographers when I was a photo editor. I would constantly get portfolios, and I would flip to the back to take a card, and the image on it would be bad. I never understood it. I wondered why they would choose that image? I would look on their website and see a much better image to send people. Photographers are often not the best judges of their own work.

#### Stella's Case Study: Julien McRoberts

I have a client I have worked with periodically for about a year and a half. When we first worked together all I did was re-sequence the work on her website, and she started getting more work. Then she came back, and we started making small changes to her categories—taking work out and putting other work in and renaming it. And that started to bring her more work. Now we work together regularly. When she's been shooting a lot she comes to me and we take some stuff out and put some new things in and she keeps moving forward. It sounds simple, and it is, but it's often difficult for the creator of the work to do this on her own.



Credit: [Julien McRoberts](#)

# Tailoring to Client Needs and Showcasing a Brand: The Photographer Perspective

Featuring David Walter Banks and Kendrick Brinson, Commercial Photographers

[David Walter Banks](#) and [Kendrick Brinson](#), based in Atlanta, are commercial photographers. They are also happily married. Though they maintain separate websites for their personal and editorial work, as a team they manage [Brinson Banks](#) photography—their joint portfolio and company website.

With clients including Tiffany & Co., Vitamin Water, TIME, The New York Times Magazine, GQ, The FADER, Mother Jones, Forbes and others, Kendrick and David have a lot to share about what it takes to tailor portfolios, what types of images to share when, and how to prepare for an in-person meeting with portfolio in hand.

*How does an online portfolio showcase the photographer's brand while helping him land the jobs he wants?*

**KENDRICK:** An online portfolio is a photographer's chance to show off his or her style. It's his chance to showcase his favorite images from a shoot, which are often different from the buyer or client, who has different taste.

It's also a photographer's chance to show the client what he wants to do. You might be shooting nothing but headshots in the beginning, but if you want to shoot fashion, you should show fashion on your site. Your client can't read your mind.

**DAVID:** It all comes down to knowing your brand. Know what you're selling, why you are selling it, and why you're more desirable to a client than the next artist in line. We all have a range of photographs, shooting styles and types of images, but they're not all going to be relevant to your key audience.

Everything should be put through the filter of your brand identity. If you want to shoot edgy youth culture, you should not include photos of seniors laughing on the beach. But if you want to target drug companies, then your seniors laughing on the beach may be just perfect.



David Walter Banks and Kendrick Brinson,  
Commercial Photographers  
[brinsonbanks.com](http://brinsonbanks.com)

*What are the most important questions to ask yourself as you're putting together a portfolio?*

**KENDRICK:** First: Is this the type of work I want to keep shooting in the future? Second: Do these photos best represent my strengths? And third: Am I putting these photos in my portfolio because they're what I think the client wants to see or because they're what I shoot best and what I want to shoot in the future?

*Do you pick photos with stories that you can tell to potential clients as they scroll through your portfolio or pair photos to create interesting narratives?*

**KENDRICK:** We're lucky as photographers because there's almost always a good story every three photos or so. Our jobs are interesting. (That's why we're all so lucky to do what we do!)

It doesn't hurt to have a story or two to show off how you handle yourself on a shoot or how you saved the day or even just to make the client laugh. We've found that editorial clients are more interested in chatting, and commercial reps and art buyers are more interested in flipping through the images. We wouldn't pick photos based on the story though. Always show your best work.

*How do you develop the names of the categories you've chosen to include on your site (editorial, long-term, portraits, travel), and how important do you think these names are in terms of getting the type of work you want?*

**KENDRICK:** With everything on your website (and your in-person meetings, really) assume that the person reviewing is very busy and won't be spending much time on your site. You should assume they have one minute to look at your work, and if you don't wow them with the first five photos, they'll close the window and move on. That means they might only click on one gallery (or have time to flip through your book really quickly), so make sure they can find your work right away and don't have to guess what a category means. Save the artsy, poetic stuff for fine art and book projects.

*How do you decide whether or not to show your personal projects?*

**DAVID:** That's a tough question, and we have been advised toward each end of the spectrum. Again, this really depends on what your brand is and what you want clients taking away from your portfolio.

If your personal projects look exactly like your client work, then it's a no-brainer that you should show them. If they deviate greatly, then you have a tougher decision on your hands. We normally choose to include personal work in our portfolios. We feel that it shows clients another aspect of our work, provides a bit more depth, and gives them another level on which to connect with us and our photography.

Showing personal projects also indicates to a client that as a photographer you're inspired, constantly pushing yourself, and consequently continually growing and evolving. It's this last piece that might be the most important, as no one wants to work with a shooter who has grown stale and stagnant.



Credit: [Brinson Banks](#)

*Can you talk a little bit about your workflow (preparing portfolios for each client you meet with, etc.)?*

**DAVID:** This is one of those situations when you simply have to be flexible and willing to adapt. Personally, we choose to bring two portfolios to every meeting. One of client work that is similar to what we would be hired to shoot, and one for personal projects. While the personal projects remain somewhat consistent, the client work is based on the meetings we have. We show editorial clients different work than advertising clients because they are looking for different things.

We normally line up a week of meetings based on one or the other, but bring a spare set of images in case something else comes up. If the meeting is going to be over drinks instead of in the office, it's sometimes easier to bring an iPad instead of print books. The iPad is always great for making last-minute switches if we get new information about a client or have booked a meeting last-minute and need to tailor a custom portfolio.

Another important piece to remember is that you are a walking, breathing version of your brand. You have to not only think about the content of your book, but how it is put together and—just as important—how you yourself are put together and what you have to say.

*How much research do you do on a potential client before you meet and pitch?*

**DAVID:** We do everything we can to research our clients before a meeting. We find out what campaigns they have worked on, what awards they've won or, at very least, what type of work their company does and what they've recently worked on. There are a number of online resources that allow you to search specific campaigns. At the very least, Google can be your friend. If you're walking into someone's office, it's vital to know what he needs so that you can tell him exactly why you're the person to meet those needs.

*“We’ve found that editorial clients are more interested in chatting, and commercial reps and art buyers are more interested in flipping through the images. We wouldn’t pick photos based on the story though. Always show your best work.”*



Credit: [Brinson Banks](#)



Credit: [Brinson Banks](#)

# How Personal Projects Can Win Jobs

Featuring Jonathan Gayman, Editorial Photographer

[Jonathan Gayman](#) is an editorial photographer whose primary focus is food. Coming from a graphic design background (with lots of experience running a successful blog), Jonathan went full-time as a photographer in 2006. Based in St. Louis, it was during a meeting with a prospective client that he pulled out his portfolio and described for them a personal project he'd been working on: lunch trays. In the series of five images, shot from above, Jonathan re-imagined the classic hot lunch served on a tray. In one image, bright red crawfish, a massive po' boy and a glass of beer sit on a white tray set against a white background.

A few months after the meeting, the client called Jonathan and asked if he could recreate the lunch tray shoot for their magazine. By taking a gamble and investing the time in a project that could showcase his personal style and creativity, Jonathan was able to push his career in a new direction.

We talked to Jonathan about what it took to make this project happen, how he decided to include the work in his primary portfolio, and how he used his resources creatively to turn a personal project into exactly the kind of job he'd like to shoot.

## *How did it happen that you got a job from this personal project?*

*St. Louis Magazine* is not one of my main clients, but I've worked with them a couple of times. When I showed them the book that had the lunch trays, we were in a face-to-face meeting. As I was going through the book I explained that it was a personal project that I've been working on. They thought the images were eye-catching and different.

About a month or two later they called and said they had a new lunch tray project and wanted me to shoot for it. The job was for a local health-food chef who was doing lunches for one of the local charter schools. The concept wasn't exactly the same as what I'd done, but they wanted me to replicate the same style.



Jonathan Gayman, Editorial Photographer  
[jonathangayman.com](http://jonathangayman.com)

### *What was your goal in doing your lunch tray project?*

I always have a greater goal in mind when working on personal projects. Right now I'm doing a lot of editorial work. I've been shooting food just over two years now, and before that I was still doing a lot of corporate portraiture. One of the goals of this project was to broaden my scope to the more lucrative commercial area. I like to keep in mind when doing personal projects that I'm doing it not just for me but also to have work that can speak to the type of clients that I want to work with and show the type of work I want to be doing.

### *How did you decide to treat it as a professional shoot?*

The idea to do this lunch tray project was something that I had been batting around. I keep a notebook where I write down concepts and things that I want to shoot. I was getting into the idea of this project, and it crossed my mind that I could do it all myself, but the end product wouldn't be very shiny. So I decided to amp it up a little bit and I brought in a food stylist. She is new to the field and was looking for experience so it was a perfect excuse to try working together to see if we had chemistry. This is another big thing when working with a food stylist, because it has to be someone you can work with.

Together we walked through the project like it was a commercial shoot, as if we had this brief and wanted to do five shots (a number we got down from seven).

It turned into a good experience on a lot of different levels. The end product turned out well. I got to make the images I liked, and the food stylist ended up getting another commercial gig out of it, too.

### *Spending time and money on a personal project could seem like a gamble. Did you factor it into a marketing budget, and did you have a specific return on the investment that you were hoping for?*

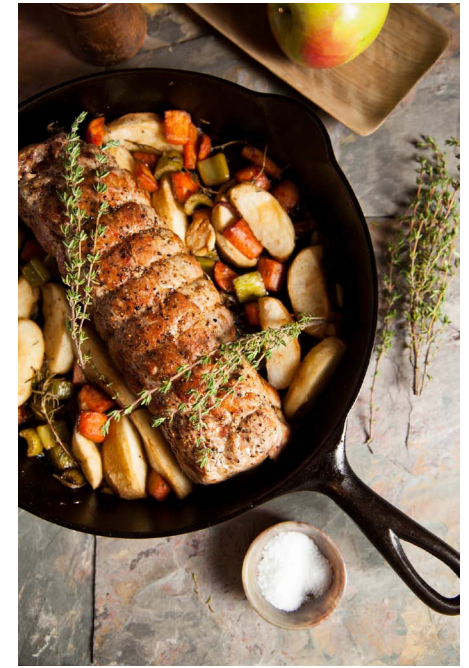
The investment was pretty minimal on this project. The food stylist agreed to work as a test, and the food wasn't a huge expense. I worked it all into my marketing budget.

I wasn't looking to gain a whole lot directly from the project. I wasn't expecting to get a job based specifically on those images. It just worked out that way. And that one job pretty much covered the cost of the whole project.

When I'm doing these personal projects the time investment is the biggest expense. It's always hard to block out time to do a personal project, so I treat them like regular assignments. I put them in my calendar and keep them in my database. If I don't, they just don't get done.

### *How did you decide to include the personal project in your main portfolio?*

The two books I usually bring are "food and lifestyle" and "corporate portraits." Sometimes people want to see how I do portraiture. So when they say 'do you only shoot food?' I can respond, "Well, I do portraiture; do you want to see it?" As far as personal projects go, though, I fit it in wherever it works.



Credit: [Jonathan Gayman](#)



### *How do you decide what personal projects to include in your portfolio?*

On my website I have personal projects and non-personal projects. I try to cycle images in and out. I have a scheduled monthly portfolio review on my to-do list. It doesn't always happen, but it's on my list, and I get an alert at the beginning of every month. I don't do a full refresh—I just like to be constantly thinking about what's working and making sure that the site is up to date. I do think that there should be some consistency on the site. If someone visits randomly and then comes again two months later and doesn't see anything that they recognize, it's like they're coming for the first time. Looking at the site once a month also helps me to see an image that's maybe not so strong. I can say to myself, "OK, you've been hanging onto this image too long. You put it up because you thought it was cool a long time ago, but maybe it's time to take that down and replace it with something better."



*“It’s always hard to block out time to do a personal project, so I treat them like regular assignments. I put them in my calendar and keep them in my database. If I don’t, they just don’t get done.”*

*Credit: [Jonathan Gayman](#)*

# 5 Myths About Portfolio Reviews Debunked

Portfolio reviews can be incredibly valuable for photographers at any stage of a career. If you have ever considered a review and then decided against it, it might be because of the myths that have been built up around the review process. Below are five of the most common misunderstandings about reviews.

**MYTH #1:** Reviewers aren't looking to hire new photographers.

Photo editor and marketing consultant [Jasmine DeFoore](#) suggests that photographers know exactly why they are going into a review and make that clear to the reviewer. If you want to get hired, she suggests saying so: "I've been following your magazine for years and feel my work would fit in. Do you think I'm ready to shoot for you, and if not, what needs improvement?"

**MYTH #2:** Even if reviewers are looking for talent, they get annoyed if you try to leave promos.

"Not doing this is a missed opportunity. I am still a believer in printed leave-behinds. Depending on the work the photographer does, it can be as simple as a postcard, but it could also be something like a book or a newspaper. If you are going into a situation where you're meeting potential clients and you don't have leave-behinds, you're making a huge mistake," says [Stella Kramer](#), creative consultant.

[Frank Meo](#) adds that photographers should send a signed print as a follow-up. "You have to treat portfolio reviews like a first date," he says. "You want to be a knockout and have them remember you."

**MYTH #3:** Electronic portfolios, like the iPad, are a must-have these days.

"Don't assume that an iPad or laptop presentation is enough," says Jasmine. "I am now convinced that the iPad is just not the best way to show still photography."

However, there are specific benefits to carrying an iPad. One is for making last-minute changes on the go and the other is for motion. "If you have motion you should work on a really good 30- to 60-second reel, and if you have a good editor it can look great," says [Amanda Sosa Stone](#). "But to distinguish, the printed portfolio represents who you are, and the iPad is a supplement."

**MYTH #4:** I don't need a portfolio review—I can edit/critique my own work.

The fact is that you've seen your work too many times and have too much invested in the images to be completely objective. Having a new, and professional, set of eyes on your work is guaranteed to bring something to light that you hadn't thought of before.

Beyond the unbiased opinion, a portfolio review is a chance to get a reaction from someone who resembles your ideal photo buyer or client. "Though it's great to be complimented on your work," says [Neil Binkley](#), "I think the value of portfolio reviews is to get a professional reaction to your photography."

**MYTH #5:** It's the responsibility of the reviewer to offer feedback so I won't have to speak.

A review can only be truly beneficial to you when you participate, because though the reviewer is the expert in the field, you are the expert in your career goals and personal brand. Jasmine says, "Come armed with one or two specific questions that are pertinent to your reviewer's area of expertise."

However, it's also crucial that you remain open to the reviewers' thoughts and constructive criticism. "The people who are looking at your work know what they are talking about," reminds Jasmine. "Don't argue with constructive criticism. You may not agree with someone, and that is OK, but don't tell them that they are wrong."

# 5 Tips for Going Beyond the Portfolio Review

Featuring Frank Meo



[The Photo Closer](#), also known as Frank Meo, has been representing an extensive list of successful photographers like Ron Haviv, Robert Ammirati, Joe McNally and Tim Mantoani for over 25 years. Recently Frank created [PhotoCloser.com](#), a search engine of photographers from around the world who benefit from the support of Frank's team of consultants and industry advisors (including Allegra Wilde, Aurelie Jezequel, Kayte Geldzahler, Louisa Curtis, Lucy Raimengia, Selina Maitreya and Tricia Moran). From standing out among thousands of talented photographers to leaving an impression on consultants and using portfolio reviews to gain access to your dream clients, Frank shared with us some valuable intel on ways to get more from portfolio reviews and client meetings.

## 1 DON'T JUST TALK ABOUT YOUR WORK. MAKE A PERSONAL CONNECTION WITH THE REVIEWER.

Whether it's talking about business, the Knicks or the Nets, you need to be personable. If you aren't, you're doomed. Long gone are the days when the rep does this for you. It's like I tell my kids—be interested and be interesting. You don't have to only discuss your work. Your work will take you just so far.

The one thing I would say is stay away from talking about somebody else's work or getting into gossip. It's like a date—if nothing else happens, you want to get a second date.

If someone's going to spend time with you on a shoot they want to know that their clients are going to be happy. You don't need to hear again that someone loves your work. Enough people have told you that, including your mother. You want to hear, "I may have a project for you." The key is to be really prepared.

## 2 KNOW AS MUCH AS YOU CAN ABOUT THE REVIEWER (OR, BE EVERYTHING SHORT OF CREEPY IN YOUR RESEARCH).

Reviews can be great for a few reasons, and one is getting to see someone you want to see, which can be really hard. If I'm sitting with an art buyer, I should really know everything about her ad agency and what accounts she has, if I can find out, so that when I'm sitting with her I can actually talk business.

Use LinkedIn or Twitter to get a little information without being a spy. You want to know whether so-and-so is always tough or whether so-and-so always gives good feedback. Reviewers have a following.

If you shoot animals you don't really want to talk to someone who is on airlines. You want to talk to someone on the Purina account. It's all part of that due diligence to find out.

## 3 BE ON THE JOB BEFORE YOU GET AN OFFER.

Ingratiate yourself. When you meet with an art buyer, you want to be able to say, "I know that your agency is up for such-and-such account. If you want to do some test work for the pitch, I'd be willing to do that." You're doing something that would make someone say, "Wow, that's an interesting idea." It's a way to let somebody know that you're in the business.

Know what an agency's pro bono work is. When you say, "I know you do things for the American Diabetes Association or Cancer Care," you're saying that you know those accounts don't have a lot of money but you're really dedicated to that cause. Now they know that you looked at their website, you took the time to know their business, and it impresses them on some level. At the end of the day you should be asking yourself if you left the impression that you are the photographer for the job.

**4 FOLLOW UP. SEND TARGETED, EXCEPTIONAL MAILERS.**

[Sivan Askayo](#) did a photo essay of [people hanging their laundry around the world](#). And you can imagine what they look like: a young girl's ballerina outfit hanging on a beautiful pink wall, etc. To set herself apart, she focused on the packaging of the photos themselves. She printed postcard-sized images, boxed them and wrapped the box with rope, swatches of clothes and tiny clothespins. What a beautiful mailer. It cost her \$15 to \$20 apiece with the prints, clips and the box, so she sent them only to select people.

You have to really target; don't send mailers to everybody. This shows that you peeled back the onion and you know who deserves it. It's all about whether or not you connected on that first date.



Credit: [Sivan Askayo](#)

**5 KNOW WHAT YOU CAN ADD TO A JOB, AND STAND OUT IN YOUR PITCH.**

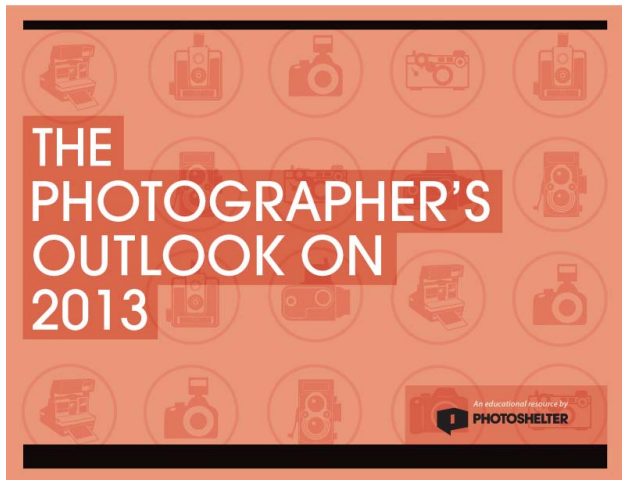
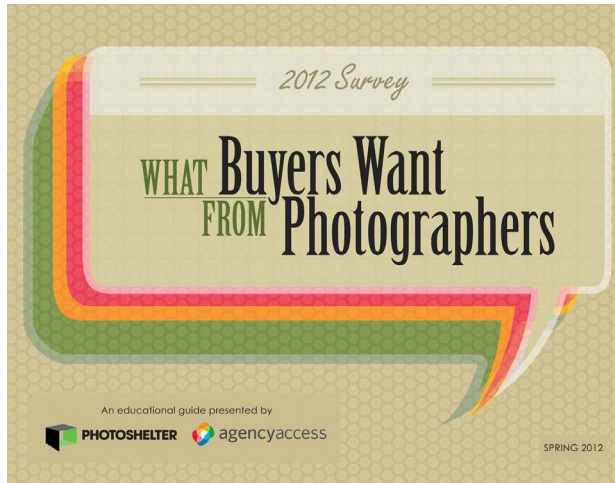
There are too many great photographers out there. You've got to think about how you can stand apart from the crowd.

Photographers tend to get lost in the numbers. When you do an estimate, your fee may be a little bit higher than someone else's, but at the end of the day you're not going to win that job because you're \$5,000 more. You're going to win that job because you've done something in that negotiation that leaves potential clients thinking that you know business and have great ideas. But how do you separate yourself in this situation? What do you say that nobody else is saying? It's got to be something that makes sense. I call it creative separation.

To set yourself apart when bidding against others for the gig, I recommend you write a creative brief about why you want the job. This is an unfiltered way of showing how dedicated you are. Going that extra mile will help you stand out and could even be the factor that lands you the job.



Credit: [Sivan Askayo](#)



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