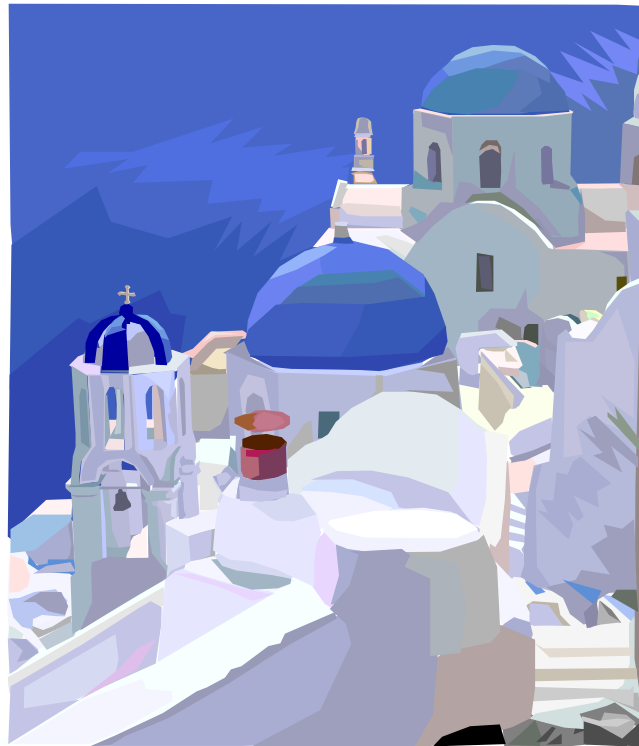


# **Selling Photos for Cash: A Quick-Start Guide to Becoming a Professional Photographer**



**By Rich Wagner**

**American Writers & Artists, Inc**

# About the Author

Rich Wagner began his photographic career in college as a freelance photographer for Pittsburgh newspapers. After graduation, photography remained a hobby during his 20-year career in retail, and in 1984, Rich opened a custom framing and fine art gallery. His current shop, Imagine It Framed, recently had the honor of being designated one of “America’s Top 100” custom framers by *Décor Magazine*.

While attending professional photography seminars in New York City, Rich shared his photographs with well-known professionals, who encouraged him to show his work. This led to several exhibits in the region. Currently, his work is in private and public collections all over the world. His images hang in public corporations and private foundations from San Diego to Boston and in homes from the Americas to the Far East. Rich began shooting digitally in the late '90s and since 2001 has worked almost exclusively in that format.

The beauty of the Farmington Valley, where Rich lives with his wife and five daughters, and the excitement of New York, his previous home, are the sources of most of his photography. Travel and workshops throughout the country have added to his collection of images. Everything from the rich colors and broad landscapes of the southwest to street studies in the Little Havana section of Miami has been captured by his lens.

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Published by:

American Writers & Artists Inc.  
245 NE 4th Ave., Ste. 102  
Delray Beach, FL 33483

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# Introduction

by Rich Wagner

Years ago, I would have laughed if you told me you were going to take a single course in photography and learn enough to quit your day job and make a full-time living selling photos.

Today, I still think you need more practice and time than a single book or program can offer, but I no longer balk at the idea of a complete novice selling his/her photos before he/she even finishes one of our programs.

I've been leading AWAI's photo workshops for over three years, and I now believe anything's possible.

My favorite Paris photograph was taken by an attendee with a simple point-and-shoot camera she likely bought at Wal-Mart the day before she left for the workshop. And several attendees have gone on to sell their photos for nearly double the price I claim on my own (and I've been doing this for 18 years).

My point is: It's easier now than ever before to break into this business. Whether you have modest equipment and little experience or you're an experienced photographer just looking for a resource to help you sell more photographs, you've come to the right place.

This step-by-step guide will help you get your feet off the ground. Then, hopefully, you'll move on to AWAI's Turn Your Pictures into Cash program, where you'll find additional, comprehensive instruction, and perhaps participate in one of AWAI's live workshops. There you'll get a chance to put what you learn into practice with feedback from me or another professional photographer.

But first things first...

Get started on the right track by taking some time to read the pages before you. And remember — when you're done reading this guide, you should consider submitting your photos to AWAI's \$2,000 Photo Challenge. You'll find details at: [www.thephotographerslife.com](http://www.thephotographerslife.com). It's a great way to test your new skills and earn cool prizes.



Rich Wagner  
Senior Advisor, AWAI's Photography Program

# Chapter 1

## What You Need and Don't Need to Be a Photographer

By now, you know all about the romantic appeal of photography. You understand the benefits it offers — the VIP treatment at both local events and far-flung destinations, the opportunity to meet new people, the chance to see the world in a whole new way... and the pleasure in doing all of that and getting paid for it, too.

Perhaps there's one question nagging at you, though. Do you really have what it takes to make a go of it in this business? If that's your worry, you're in good company. It's what most readers ask at this point.

My answer: I'm willing to bet you do.

You see, over the years, I've enjoyed a fair margin of success as a photographer and I think I've developed a pretty good idea — based on practical experience — about what it takes to “make it” in this field.

You don't need a previous background as a photographer or artist, and you don't need a college degree. You don't even need that fancy a camera to do well.

So what do you need?

### The Tools of Your Trade

The obvious first answer to what you need to be a photographer is a camera. This is the fundamental tool of your trade. Without a camera... well, you just can't take a lot of photographs.

When it comes to cameras, there truly is something for everyone. Whether you love gadgets, have a passion for the latest high-tech tools, are always on the go, or just want something that is streamlined and elegant, you can be sure there is a camera out there to match your needs.

Digital cameras really divide into two major categories:

**Point-and-Shoot:** These sleek little cameras are lightweight, compact and easy to take with you anywhere. You cannot switch this camera's lens; the one that's built in is all you get.

**Single Lens Reflex (SLR):** This kind of camera allows you to switch the lens to one with a range that best suits your needs. These cameras allow you to do most anything, from fully automatic to full manual for more creative effects. In addition, the quality of the digital files it produces will be much higher than that of a point-and-shoot. A point-and-shoot camera can limit the number of markets you'll find to buy your photographs. Shooting with an SLR is less restricting.

In the next chapter, I'll tell you how to choose the camera that will best suit your needs. For now, just know that

you will need a camera to be a photographer and that unless you already own a film camera and you're not in the market for a new camera at this time, you'll want to buy digital.

## **Do You Need a Computer?**

Yes, you'll need a computer to manage your photographs — to view them, store them and alter them if need be.

Again, you don't need anything cutting edge here. A computer that can run a photo-editing program like Photoshop or Adobe Lightroom is really all it takes.

## **A Nose for Research**

That a photographer needs a camera is obvious. But a photographer needs certain traits, too.

One thing amateur photographers often don't realize is just how many different markets exist in which to sell their photographs.

I'm going to tell you a little bit about each local market in the course of this guide. And I'll tell you a little bit about the best kinds of photos to sell to those markets.

But no matter how much information I give you, you will still have to get in the habit of researching your markets. I'm going to tell you all about why and how in the next chapter, but for now... remember, part of being a professional and published photographer is doing some of your own research both on the ground and before you leave home.

Think of this as reconnaissance. As a photographer you'll constantly look for the next great shot. This means exploring. Take the time to walk around your hometown, to poke around corners you haven't before, to watch for and notice things that happen often that might make a good photograph.

There's a nature photographer who is a classic example of why you should do this. He discovered a stream where a bear regularly fished. The bear would stand in the water at a small rock cascade. Fish would have to jump to get over the rocks and continue upstream. The bear would wait patiently and catch fish in her mouth as the fish made their jump.

The photographer thought, "Wouldn't it be great if I could catch the moment just before the fish went into the bear's mouth?" It took time and patience and several tries, but eventually he got the shot. And it launched his career.

Without doing the on-the-ground research, he would never have gotten that shot, and his career would likely be at a very different level today.

Of course, you don't have to uncover anything quite so dramatic on your research outings. But you might discover an older couple who takes a walk through the park each day... and you might be able to get a beautiful shot of them from behind as they walk under an archway of trees. Or you might discover a swimming hole

that the local kids frequent in the summer. You could capture any number of one-of-a-kind saleable shots in that location.

But if you don't explore, you'll never know what you're missing. It may be your career-launching photograph.

## **Your Most Important Asset**

Your most important tool as a photographer isn't your camera. It's your eyes.

Photographers see things differently than the average person. They see more detail. They see how the light plays on an object. They see how different angles change the look of a subject. They see how moving closer or farther way from an object tells its story differently. And they use these impressions to take photographs that are more than just interesting — they convey emotion and thought. They move the person looking at them.

You'll need to develop a photographer's eye. And there are lots of things you can do to improve your overall sense of the craft... to improve how well you see the world around you. You'll learn more about them in Chapter Three.

Really, the tools you need to be a photographer are quite simple... a camera, a computer, a photo program, the desire to explore and your very own eyes. Take these five elements — and you don't even need the computer and photo program right away — and you're ready to begin.

# Chapter 2

## How Do I Begin?

So you're ready to begin. Just how do you do that?

There are three components of photography.

First, there's the creative component — being able to recognize and frame a shot in a way that's intriguing and draws your viewer into the photo. Plenty of people think this is an innate trait, one that you either have or you don't. But that's just not true. You can learn creativity. In fact, we'll give you some pointers in this guide.

Next, there's the technological component. With the rise of digital photography technology, a lot of people are awestruck by the choices they have to make. They compare cameras and agonize over making the "right" camera purchase. The camera is important, but you, the photographer, are much more important when it comes to taking great pictures. I've seen incredibly bad pictures taken with great cameras and remarkably good photographs made with inexpensive point-and-shoots.

And finally, there's the marketing component. You can take pictures all day and all night, but if you don't know how or where to sell them, you won't ever make a living at it. And that's what this guide is about... learning to make a living from your photography skills.

Let's start with that middle component — technology. It's actually the least complex of the three.

### **How to Choose the Camera That's Best for You**

Now, just about every professional photographer I know has, at one time or another, boasted that he/she can take high quality photos with any camera that's put in his/her hands, from a disposable point-and-shoot on up.

And to some extent that's true.

When you put time and thought into your photos, you'll take better photographs no matter what camera you're using. If you just click away without any consideration for how your shot is arranged, for the lighting and the angles, or for how the camera is focusing, it won't matter what camera you have... your pictures won't sell.

Still, your camera will make a difference.

The great debate between film and digital has been laid to rest. If you're planning to buy a camera today, there is no reason in the world not to buy a digital one. You'll save money on film, you'll get immediate feedback on your photos and you'll be able to quickly and easily store your photographs on your computer. Plus, contrary to what a last few hold-outs say, you will not limit the markets you can sell your photos to.

You can get just as high quality photos with a digital camera as you can with film... provided you have a camera with the proper capabilities.

Never buy a camera that you haven't held in your hand. A camera that you won't use is useless. It has to feel comfortable in your hand, and it has to be light enough that you'll carry it with you.

So what should you look for in a camera? Well, the best way I can think of to point you in the right direction is to describe what I use...

## The Megapixel Myth

First, let's put to rest a common concern...

We're bombarded by megapixel mania these days. We've been led to believe camera quality is all about how many pixels you have. But in reality, the number of pixels you have is only half of the quality equation.

The other half is the size of the digital sensor. Larger sensors are made up of larger pixels. Larger pixels have qualities that are better than their smaller brothers. Qualities you may find you need to enter the market that's important to you.

Point-and-shoot cameras are almost always made with smaller sensors and thus smaller pixels (think: 1/10th the size of a 35mm negative). So while they may have a lot of pixels (8 million — or 8 megapixels — is not uncommon), each one of those pixels is extremely tiny.

SLRs, on the other hand, are always made with a larger sensor (anywhere from one half the size of, to equal to, a 35mm negative). They may even have fewer pixels than the point-and-shoots, but each one is significantly larger, so your image quality will be better.

## The Ideal Kit

The truth is there is no such thing as the "Ideal Kit." No more than there is an ideal mate or an ideal car. It's all subjective and dependent upon what your goals are.

While I always have at least one camera with me, I probably have a half-dozen "kits," depending on what kind of shooting I plan to do that day. So here are my camera preferences. You, of course, will develop your own as you progress in your career...

**Point-and-Shoot.** I always have a point-and-shoot with me. My favorite is an eight megapixel about the size of a deck of cards.

I can't make a 20"x30" fine art print with it, and most print stock agencies won't accept pictures from this kind of camera. But I can make beautiful 8"x10" fine art prints, online stock agencies will often accept my photos, and some magazines will accept the file for use up to about a half page photograph. (This is true for point-and-shoot cameras over five megapixels — anything less than that isn't considered saleable quality.)

Since there are a lot of different (and equally great) makes and camera models out there, I'm not going to tell you mine. It was simply the one that felt best in my hand when I was at the store that day.

If you have big fingers, consider the size of the buttons when you choose a camera. If you have other equipment like a PDA, printer or laptop that supports a certain type of memory card over others, look for cameras that use that type of memory card. If you travel a lot and want something you can put in your pocket, look at the smaller models.

I suggest you go to a store rather than ordering online because I think you need to hold the camera in your hand and flip through all the screens to see if you like it before you buy it.

SLR. In the past I've used Canon and Olympus. But now, I shoot with a Nikon.

All are considered professional grade, which means they are ruggedly built and have a fair amount of water resistance. I've shot with each of them in the rain, sleet and snow and never had a problem. While the heavier SLRs produce great quality digital files (and I've enlarged many shots to 30"x40"), they are very heavy and not much fun to lug around. Moreover, it is very hard to get a candid shot with one. If I put my telephoto lenses on, I look like the pros you see wandering the sidelines at sporting events.

For candid photography and my usual street shooting, I use a Leica digital rangefinder camera. It looks like something from 1950 and takes photos equal to or better than the SLRs. But no zoom lenses, and no autofocus.

I want to emphasize again how important it is to physically handle multiple cameras before you buy. It isn't enough to Google all the reviews and make your decision on the internet based on statistics. A camera is like a pair of jeans. You've got to try them on before you buy and make sure they fit. The camera needs to feel comfortable in your hand, and the buttons need to be easy to push with your fingers.

When you go to the store, here's a list of things you should look for...

### **Point-and-Shoot Cameras**

- 1) Is it small enough for you? Do you want to carry it in your shirt pocket or in a separate bag?
- 2) What kind of memory card does it use? Do you have anything else that uses a certain type of memory card or reads a certain type of memory card that will help you determine which camera brand you choose?
- 3) Is the LCD screen on the back large enough for you? If you're nearsighted, you might want a larger LCD screen.
- 4) Do you have large fingers? Are the buttons large enough to maneuver?
- 5) Do you plan to sell your photos or simply look at them on your computer and email them to family and friends? (Remember, if you want to sell your photographs, you need a point-and-shoot with at least five megapixels.)
- 6) Does the camera have the ability to change the following settings: white balance, ISO, and exposure?
- 7) What kind of zoom lens does it have? Ignore the digital zoom numbers and look only at optical zoom.

### **SLR**

- 1) What size is the image sensor? (The larger the better.)
- 2) If you already have a film camera with lenses, you might want to stick with the same camera brand. Either that or buy all new lenses.

- 3) Is the LCD screen large enough?
- 4) Are the camera settings you use most often on the camera body itself or do you have to search through a bunch of menu screens to change them?
- 5) Is the body durable and weatherproof?
- 6) Does the weight of the camera suit your lifestyle? (Travel photographers might not want a heavy camera to lug around all day.)

## **It's Time to Start Taking Photos**

Now that you have your camera (or cameras), it's time to start taking pictures.

You cannot be a photographer if you don't actually go out and take photographs. And the best place to start is right in your own neighborhood. Your hometown and surrounding areas are chock full of photo opportunities... and more importantly, your hometown harbors some of the most saleable photos you are likely to take.

Why do I say this?

Well, about 95% of the photographs I sell come from my hometown. I rarely travel more than five miles from home to take pictures. And these close-to-home images are usually the ones that sell.

I do sell photographs from other locations, too, like Paris and Greece. But my hometown photos are my bread and butter. In fact, they typically fund the photography trips I take to other destinations.

I recommend that you start with local photography for a number of reasons. I already mentioned the first... these kinds of photos sell really well.

The second reason is that these are infinitely more accessible to you than photo opportunities halfway around the world. You can wait months on end to take a limited number of photos for a limited number of days in some unfamiliar place... or you can start your photography career right now. It's as simple as walking out your door.

Which brings me to the third reason you should start locally. You are familiar with what's around you. Chances are if you sit down and think about it for five minutes, you have a good number of possible, saleable photos already waiting in your head. It's just a matter of going out to shoot them.

Finally, you should start locally because you can shoot the same shot in many different conditions — different times of day, different seasons, different weather, with people and without. You get multiple opportunities to photograph a scene, and this means you are more likely to get a photograph that you — and others — will really like. You won't have this kind of opportunity when you are on site for only a limited time.

## Chapter 3

# Seven Steps to Being a Successful Photographer

Before we get into the question of what makes a good photo and how you can go about selling your photographs, let's talk a little more in depth about what makes a good photographer.

There are habits that nearly every successful photographer lives by. Work to implement these habits in your own career, and you will greatly increase your chances of becoming a successful photographer. Ignore these habits and you can still be successful, but you'll have a much harder time getting there.

Let's take a look at what I think are seven habits crucial to becoming successful quickly in this field.

### **Habit Number One: Always Carry a Camera**

Photographic opportunities are fleeting. Light changes. People and animals move, changing the composition. In many cases, if you aren't prepared, you'll miss a good shot.

The way to avoid this is to always carry a camera. You never know when you'll be out shopping and catch one of those insightful life moments... a kid playing Frisbee or catch with his dog, a grandmother and grandchild sharing an ice cream cone, a storm casting an unusually beautiful light over the flag that stands in your town square. These are all great photo opportunities... but only if you have your camera at hand. If you have to run home to get your camera, you most surely will lose the shot.

A short time ago, I was on my way to a meeting when a hang glider appeared over a cliff near my home. In the background was a landmark tower that has been in photographs which represent over \$30,000 in local sales. I stopped the car, pulled my camera kit from the trunk and spent 15 minutes making the shot. I expect that 15 minutes will be worth thousands of dollars in the next few years and it was an opportunity I would never have been able to "set up."

Carry a camera with you all the time.

### **Habit Number Two: Look Around**

To become a good photographer, you must learn to see the world around you in new ways. You must take the time to look around you and see how different objects can come together to make a really outstanding image.

Wherever you are, stop now and then and look around. Ask yourself questions like:

- How would this look at a different time of day?
- How would it look in a different season?
- What if I were higher up looking down... how would that change the image?
- What if I were looking up at my subject?
- What splashes of color can I incorporate?
- How would things change if there were people in the frame? Or if there weren't?

Think about what is around you. What would you pick as the subject of a photo? How would you place the subject within your composition? How would you frame the shot?

By asking yourself these questions, even when you are not taking pictures, you'll begin to hone your creative eye.

I also recommend that you keep a little notebook with you, so you can jot down ideas, especially for those shots you'd like to get at a different time of day or during a different season.

## **Habit Number Three: Do Lots of Research**

As a photographer, there are three kinds of research you'll do...

First, you'll research your craft. You should spend time reading books or newsletters about photography. You'll learn a lot about techniques that will make your images stronger.

Second, you'll do visual research. Look at photos in magazines, books and galleries. Take notes about what you like and don't like. This will provide you with new ideas about your own photographs... things you'd like to try and shots you want to take.

Finally, you'll do research on the markets you want to sell to. If you begin locally, as I highly recommend, then take some time and visit galleries in your area and any souvenir shops. Take a look at the photos in the galleries and the postcards in the shops. These will give you an idea of the kinds of images people in your area buy.

Also, it never hurts to talk to people. Chat with folks in both locations (and anywhere else) about the kinds of photos they buy and what makes them choose the ones they do. You'll gain insight into your market and be better positioned to take photographs that will sell.

## **Habit Number Four: Don't Judge Yourself Behind the Camera**

I remember a conversation with an attendee at our Bahamas workshop. She'd been walking on the beach in the morning before the sun was up, camera in hand, searching for photo opportunities.

She found many, but she passed one up. She saw three men kneeling on the beach, praying in the pre-dawn

light. What a beautiful photo opportunity! But she froze. She didn't want to take the picture because she was worried about disturbing them, worried about what they might think, worried about being rude.

When talking with her I acknowledged that these were all perhaps legitimate concerns, but that she should have tried to find a way to take a shot that was still respectful. The problem was she immediately judged that the shot wouldn't work.

We all do this at one time or another. And you have to learn to put your inner critic on hold whenever you are holding the camera. The worst that can happen is that a shot won't work or that people will ask you not to photograph them. Be polite. Be respectful. But don't decide a shot won't work until you've tried taking it.

In any creative craft, your inner critic has to learn to wait his turn... otherwise he will hamstring your progress.

So whenever you go out shooting, leave your critic at home.

## **Habit Number Five: Be Merciless When Editing Your Photographs**

Your inner critic does have a place. Once you return home from taking photos, upload the images onto your computer and look them over.

Every photo needs to meet three criteria, and here is where your inner critic gets to shine.

Look at each photo.

It needs to have a composition that draws people in — that really stuns them into a moment of emotion and intrigue.

It needs to be properly focused. You may have your subject in sharp focus with a blurred background or you may have the photo sharply focused from the foreground to the background. Both styles can work. But your focus needs to show intent and to be well done.

Finally, your picture needs to be exposed properly. It can't be washed out or dark and blocky. Your subject needs to look true to life and your background can't be overwhelmingly bright or dark.

Be as objective as you can when examining each photo. Only choose the very best, the ones that meet all three of these criteria.

## **Habit Number Six: Practice, Practice, Practice**

I've met too many beginning photographers who fear making mistakes. I promise you right here and right now... you are going to make mistakes and plenty of them. At least you will if you want to hone your craft.

To become a successful photographer takes practice. Make mistakes. Look at them. Learn from them. Then try something new. Repeat this process over and over again, and you will begin to see that more and more of your photos become saleable.

## **Habit Number Seven: Submit and Show Your Photos**

Having the right tools and taking good photographs are only part of the equation. You'll never sell them if you don't show them to people who might be interested in buying.

You have to regularly show your photos in galleries, coffee shops... wherever the opportunity presents itself.

If you want to be published in magazines or newspapers, you have to regularly submit your work for review.

This step can feel like the most frightening one, but take a deep breath, jump in and do it two or three times. It gets to be really fun. You meet interesting people, they tell you nice things about your photographs, and often you make some money.

# Chapter 4

## Taking a Good Shot

In Chapter 2 I mentioned creativity. Creativity is what makes a photograph more than a snapshot. It's what makes someone look at a photo and think, "Hey, I want to buy that."

We imbue a lot of meaning to the word "creativity," but don't think for a second you can't become more creative than you are now. It's merely a matter of looking at life and objects from new angles.

To get started, let's look at four techniques you can use to improve any photograph you take.

### It's All in the Light

First, you need outstanding light to take an outstanding photograph. This is one advantage to starting locally, as I mentioned earlier. You can have a shot in mind and take it over and over again at different times of the day or different times of the year until you capture just the effect you're after.

The best times of the day to take photographs are in the early morning and right around sunset. The light is softer. It's at a low angle, so you get interesting shadows. There are a lot of golds and oranges in the light during these times of day, and these colors make for images that feel warmer to the viewer.

Sometimes light is fleeting. Storms provide great light for photography. Remember to always have a camera with you, so you can take advantage of moments like thunderstorms.

Look through your camera's menus for the "auto white balance" setting and turn it on. This will help to capture the light more realistically, making your photograph look more like what your eye sees.

Finally, experiment. Digital cameras provide you with immediate feedback. Take a picture, look at it on the camera's display, adjust the camera settings, take the picture again and see how it changes. By doing this you'll begin to develop a feel for what works and what doesn't in different conditions.

### The Rule of Thirds

Composition is often one of the most difficult elements of photography to teach. There are some guidelines, though, that can immediately improve any picture you take. The first is the Rule of Thirds.

What this means is that generally, you shouldn't center your subject in the photograph. The human eye much prefers images where the subject is off-center.

Imagine a tic-tac-toe grid in your viewfinder. The vertical lines run down the left and right thirds of the photograph. The horizontal lines run along the top and bottom thirds of the photograph.

Are you imagining it? Good. Then you can see — in your mind's eye — the four points of intersection that these lines create. These points are the best positions for your subject.

You should also place the horizon along either the top or bottom third of the photo.

This one step will take your photos from mundane to intriguing and put you on the path to saleable images.

## **Diagonal Lines**

Including Diagonal Lines in your composition is a good way to draw the viewer's eye into the photograph, and it adds interest as well.

You can turn any straight line into a Diagonal Line just by changing your angle a little bit. Streets, sidewalks, stairway railings, rows of crops... they all present the opportunity to add a Diagonal Line to your photographs.

## **S Curves**

S Curves are another element that adds immediate interest to a photograph and draws the eye in. Where you'll often find Diagonal Lines in manmade structures, you're more likely to find S Curves in nature.

Rivers and streams often wind in a way that creates an S Curve. Canyon lines can be s-shaped. So can the lines along the tops of sand dunes.

You can find manmade S Curves, too. Look for highways that arch and pathways that snake instead of going straight.

## Chapter 5

# What to Photograph Locally and Where to Show Your Work

By far the easiest way to make a start as a photographer is to begin taking local photographs, and then showing them and selling them locally.

Ninety-five percent of the photos I take are located within five miles of where I live. It's important to remember to take photos of where you are... do not wait to take photos of somewhere you'll be going.

There are two reasons for this.

One, you'll take more pictures if you keep this mindset.

Two, you'll sell more photos. If you think about it, when people visit somewhere, they buy pictures of that place... not of some other place they'd like to go.

People who live in an area will also buy photographs of that area. They develop a love for their hometown and are more apt to buy photographs of it than of some far-flung place.

This isn't to say there aren't markets for your destination photographs, but to get started quickly, to build a reputation and an income, begin locally.

Over the years, I've taken advantage of each of the following opportunities.

Town Hall

All the churches

Main Street

The interior of the bagel shop (where many people begin their day looking at the display case)

Local restaurants

The annual community fair

The ice cream shop

Two local farms during growing and harvest seasons

Scenic compositions of bridges, mountains, historic buildings, and parks

River scenes

The high school, including the football field

The cemetery

In short, everything in the town and the surrounding community is fair game for my lens.

It is particularly important to take multiple shots of all your subjects during each season of the year. The local cemetery is picturesque in spring, fall, and with a covering of fresh snow. Town Hall looks great in the spring and winter. River scenes are lovely in summer and fall. If you find a subject worth adding to your collection, you should have at least two seasons represented in your portfolio.

Many shots will need some Photoshop work. I find most of the touchups I do involve removing power lines and street signs in front of hundred-year-old churches. You get the idea. It's not difficult to do using the stamp tool in Photoshop Elements. It takes a bit of time, but it makes the difference between saleable and not.

Remember, these photos need to look like fine art. Pay attention to lighting, shadows, attractive skies, etc. I confess to having a few shots that took two years to get right. But once you have it, it's worth the wait. People recognize beauty.

## Where to Show Your Work

Every town has many opportunities for local artists to display their craft. Here are a few to consider and take advantage of:

**Local Library** — Ours has a meeting room where they display the works of local artists on a monthly basis. I framed and hung about 15 photos in a variety of sizes, none smaller than 18"x24". I got a lot of response to this show, and a developer who was remodeling an office building wound up buying \$12,000 worth for his project.

**Coffee Shops and Cafes** — I try to be careful here. Look for a place with the quality feel you want your art to convey. I don't leave pictures up for longer than 30 days. You should not provide free wall art to the shop on an indefinite basis. It should be a temporary show.

**Community Organizations** — We have a retirement residence that displays art in the lobby of its dining hall. I didn't expect to sell anything here because the residents were moving from larger homes to one-room apartments. I chose to display some of my "older" shots — the local barbershop that's been around for 40 years, for example. To my surprise, sales totaled over \$1,500! Later the retirement community added a new building and furnished the halls with over \$3,000 worth of my photos because they'd had such a great response to the earlier show.

**Local Art Shows** — Our town has a three-day outdoor show every fall sponsored by the local Junior Women's Club. Booth fees are minimal, and everyone in town turns out.

Any place that will hang your work should be considered. Just remember you're not in the business of providing free art for its walls. Anything you hang should be done on a temporary basis.

You can use this avenue one month every year, but I strongly advise against anything more.

## Chapter 6

# Organizing and Presenting Your Portfolio

Okay, in the previous chapter, I told you about what you should photograph and where you should show it. Now let's look at the details of how to get ready for a show—or to present your work to an interested buyer.

You'll need a portfolio of local scenes. I think you should have about 30 images before you begin to market your work. (You need to look like the headquarters for local photography, not just someone with a few good pictures.)

Bring all of your skills to bear on the project. Turn Your Pictures into Cash: A Comprehensive Program in Taking and Selling Amazing Photographs is a great way to hone your photography skills. If you aren't already enrolled, check it out at [www.thephotographerslife.com/phc/itwpa](http://www.thephotographerslife.com/phc/itwpa). Strong composition, the Rule of Thirds, good light—use all the techniques we discussed in Chapter 4.

No shortcuts!! These have to be professional shots. Your subjects should include everything that makes up your community. In my case, that means local buildings, nature scenes, people and even community events.

## Presentation

Before you can display or sell your work, it must be professionally presented. The first rule is all photos must be matted. The smallest photograph I'd suggest selling is 8"x12". Add a 3" mat, and you have a 14"x18" overall size. I always use a white or black mat (the latter often on black and white shots).

The matted photos are then backed with foam core and put in a clear plastic bag. (Try [www.clearbags.com](http://www.clearbags.com). This company has a great selection of high quality bags in many sizes.)

I'd suggest making several larger images part of your presentation. A few of your favorites blown up to 12"x18" plus a 3" mat brings the size up to 18"x24"—impressive. I have several shots that are 30"x44" overall. The larger the photograph, the more impressive. It separates you from the amateurs. I've sold thousands of dollars worth of these larger photographs for local office buildings. The scale of such rooms demands bigger art.

You probably don't have a setup that will allow you to do this matting and printing on your own. I've used an online shop to print, mat and supply the frame for digital photos — [www.americanframe.com](http://www.americanframe.com). I have no connection with the shop, but I've found their print quality to be first rate. The company's mat and frame prices are very reasonable as well, and they use high quality inks that will last a lifetime or more.

You can also explore a local picture framer and see how their pricing compares. The framer may also be interested in giving you a show or display space.

I recommend that you sign the mat, in pencil, in the lower right-hand corner. Also, give your images titles.

One of my best-selling photographs is of a local farm. It's a field of sunflowers just before a storm. The sky is

stormy looking, and all the sunflowers have flopped over—except one. It's standing up straight and tall. I titled the picture "The Optimist", and I know that the title is at least half the reason the picture sells as well as it does.

## Selling

You'd be amazed how many people want pictures of their town. There is a huge market for people who are leaving. Their friends love to give them something that will remind them of their old community. I've already mentioned office buildings, but I've also sold many pieces to medical offices and real estate offices as well.

Local art shows are a great vehicle for getting exposure. Follow up by visiting local gift shops, art galleries, Chambers of Commerce and any retail business that has a local following. There's no reason a local clothing store couldn't have a display of your work. The idea is to give people a place to go when they are looking for a gift or for décor for their own home.

## Pricing

You want to make a profit. Be sure you consider all your costs when establishing a retail price. You should make at least twice your total cost of materials, and I'd shoot for three times that amount.

Remember, you'll likely be the only one doing this. There is no competition! If people like what they see, they can't shop around or go online to find a cheaper price. You're selling your creativity and real art here. Act like it.

If you decide to wholesale to a retail gift shop, the store will want to double its cost as a selling price. If you are charging \$40 for a matted print to your customers, the gift shop will only want to pay you \$20 so it has the same retail as you. It won't work if your cost of materials is \$20. Contrary to the popular saying, you won't be able to "make it up on volume." Take this into consideration when establishing your prices.

Some shops will take your work only on a consignment basis. That's okay. Under those circumstances you should expect to keep 65-70% of the retail price. Settle up monthly with the gallery. Make sure it does a decent job of presenting your work.

Don't leave your art sitting in an unproductive location. If you're not generating enough business to make it worthwhile, explain that you appreciate the opportunity but the shop may not be the right fit for your art.

## Extras

Use your own creativity to figure out other ways to market your photography. I've made note card sets of local scenes, done postcards for the local visitors bureau, sold the rights to four shots for a local business's website, been hired to take annual report photos and sold photos to travel magazines writing articles on local sights. You don't know where it all will lead. The idea is to get the exposure.

# Chapter 7

## Model Releases — When You Need Them

Whenever you take a photograph that has someone in it, you need to decide whether or not you need a model release.

A model release is a signed permission from the person appearing in your photo to use the photo in a commercial setting.

Okay, so what does that mean?

Well, there are three categories of use for photography: fine art, editorial, and commercial. In commercial photography, you are using the photo for advertising purposes. You're using it to promote a product of some kind.

Editorial relates to photos published in a magazine or newspaper and used in a news or informative article — even if you are selling the photo for money.

Fine art photographs are like watercolors or oil paintings. The art is meant to be used as décor, not advertising. Photographs in this category have the widest possible freedom.

You need model releases for commercial photography. You do not need them for non-commercial photography, although it's good form to get them anyway. Think about it, you'll be profiting from someone's image — it's just polite to get his/her permission, if possible.

You only need to use a model release if you can identify the person's face in the photo. If you photograph someone from behind, you don't need a model release. If you photograph a person and there's an umbrella blocking his/her face, you don't need a model release. If you photograph the subject from far away, you do need a model release if you could identify his/her face by enlarging the photograph.

So the quick and easy guide goes like this...

Commercial photographs with an identifiable person need model releases.

Commercial photographs with an unidentifiable person do not need model releases.

Editorial or artistic photographs do not need model releases. My advice is to always take the photograph when the opportunity arises. Don't start thinking about model releases. First take the shot. If you feel you want to be able to use the photograph commercially, say by submitting it to a stock agency, ask for a model release. In any event, you'll be able to use it as fine art or editorial.

The exception is when you've set up a photo shoot with the specific intention to make commercial use photos. You can even hire models by the hour, or offer to take shots for their portfolio in exchange for a release.

# Chapter 8

## Steps to Getting Started in Four Local Markets

Okay, let's get down to action. Here are step-by-step guides to getting started in four local markets. You literally never have to leave your hometown, you'll meet new people and you could make really good money.

### Fine Art

These kinds of photos have been the focus of this Quick-Start Guide. They are photos that you can enlarge, mat, frame and sell as art.

**Step One:** Build your portfolio. Take photographs of at least 30 local scenes. Take them at different times of the day and at different times of the year. Once you have 30 saleable shots, move on to step two.

**Step Two:** Prepare your portfolio for presentation according to the instructions in Chapter 6.

**Step Three:** Find places to show and sell your photographs. Libraries, local art shows, local galleries — they all present the opportunity to get your art in front of buyers.

### Travel Photos

These kinds of photos give a sense of place. They are great for illustrating articles about your hometown. They almost always include people.

**Step One:** Get familiar with your local and regional publications. Look at the kinds of photos they run. Find out who the editor of photography or the managing editor is.

**Step Two:** Make contact. Either send a query with photo samples to the editor or go in and meet him/her personally. Take your portfolio to show.

**Step Three:** Regularly pitch photo ideas, make submissions and solicit assignments. Don't be a pest. Just maintain a level of regular, professional contact.

### Commercial Photography

These are photos that companies use in their advertising, annual reports and websites. Sometimes they are images of the people who work for the company; other times they are product shots.

**Step One:** Make contact with marketing directors or owners from local businesses. Let them know about your services — offer on-location photography services. It adds value to what you do and means you don't need to use a studio.

Step Two: Consider local advertising either in the Yellow Pages or the local newspaper.

Step Three: Deliver great photography on each and every project and watch your client base grow.

Step Four: Stock photography. Many online stock agencies will accept submissions from first time photographers. Check out iStock.com, for example. You'll see a complete explanation of their guidelines and directions on how to submit your work.

## **Portrait Photography**

These are images of people during the special moments of their lives — birthdays, holidays, weddings and sporting events.

Step One: Decide if you will work on location or have a studio in your home or office.

Step Two: Advertise in the Yellow Pages and the local newspaper.

Step Three: Network with wedding planners, high school yearbook editors and local Mom's groups.

Step Four: Deliver a high-quality service, and your clients will recommend you to others and come back to you again.

### **Bonus:**

## **Boost Your Income with a Package Deal — Article and Photos**

Well, we're almost done. You know everything you need to know to start taking great fine art photographs and to start selling them.

But I'm going to give you one more moneymaking idea. This is especially for those of you who want to sell your photos to publications rather than in galleries.

You can double (or better) your income by offering a package deal... an article plus photos.

You've already done half the research you need to do if you've been looking through local publications like newspapers and regional magazines to see what kinds of photos they use. You can do just a little more research to get a feel for the kinds of articles they publish, then start developing article/photo essay ideas they might like to publish.

Let's look at two ways you can do this.

The first way is to write the articles yourself. You can come up with article ideas on your own. You've done the research on the kinds of articles your local newspaper and regional magazines publish, so you know what their needs are.

Once you have your story idea, write a query letter to them to pitch your idea. Emphasize that you can include photographs as well.

The second way is to partner with a writer to take the same approach. You and the writer can brainstorm story ideas together. Then you can pitch them to local publications. The writer will of course write the article, and you can take the photos to illustrate it.

This technique takes practice. You want to present an article that delivers the same high quality as your photos, and if you are writing yourself you'll find that there's a learning curve. But it is certainly possible for a photographer to write publishable articles, and it can greatly expand the opportunities you have to get your photographs published.

# Appendix A

## Six Markets for Turning Your Photos into a Goldmine

Congratulations! You now know how to take professional-quality, saleable photographs. You really can take what you've learned here and start making money.

If, however, you're like most of our members, and you want it all — the perks, the freebies, the best possible prices for your photos, and to compete confidently with the pros—then I invite you to try our photography program, Turn Your Pictures into Cash: A Comprehensive Program in Taking and Selling Amazing Photographs.

In the photography program, you'll build upon what you've learned here. You'll find your knowledge is more advanced. With more advanced knowledge, you'll think more creatively. With more creativity, you'll take even more unique shots that you can sell. With more photos to sell, you'll open up a floodgate of selling opportunities. For example...

### **GOLDMINE MARKET #1: The Untapped Sports Market**

Sports photography captures the coolest shots — baseball's greatest hitters captured in mid-swing... Michael Jordan soaring through the air toward one of his famous slam-dunks... Muhammad Ali throwing a knockout punch.

This is a dog-eat-dog field. You'll need top-of-the-line, expensive equipment — and a willingness to get trampled on by other photographers and even the athletes.

There is, however, another area of sports that pays well and remains untapped. There's plenty of room for newbies, and you'll still capture all the action.

In Turn Your Pictures into Cash you'll learn what this untapped sports market is, including how to take the best, most dramatic sports shots — the types that appear in magazines and newspapers all the time... the types of shots editors pay big money for... and more.

### **GOLDMINE MARKET #2: How Does \$200 an Hour Sound for Portraits?**

Ward Thurman is a photographer I know who starts his fee at \$200 for an hour of studio time. That's just for general portraits. High school senior portraits start at \$500.

Photographs for businesses cost anywhere from \$200 to \$1,000 and even up to \$5,000 depending on his clients' needs. And his wedding packages start at \$1,999.

The good thing is you, too, could get started in your own portrait photography business. It's easy. Consider the portrait photographers at Sears and Wal-Mart. Most don't even know how to set up the lights. Yet they can still take decent photos. In *Turn Your Pictures into Cash* you'll learn how to take studio-quality portraits (without necessarily needing a studio).

All you need to know is where to position the lights (you can use lamps from the house) and a few basic composition tips. You'll learn that, and more. For example, this program will show you how to use Photoshop to edit portraits, and how to take stunning shots of pets — because pet photography is another market that's raking in big money.

### **GOLDMINE MARKET #3: Earn Super-Fast Cash for Images of Goldfish, Curtains and Old Records**

In stock photography, you can get paid up front or earn royalties for simple images—tissue paper, your dog, your nieces and nephews, the leaves in your backyard, your kitchen table and countless other images.

Stock photo agencies are always on the lookout for images to add to their libraries. However, these agencies are a challenge to break into. Most print stock agencies require over 200 perfect photos just to apply. But in *Turn Your Pictures into Cash*, you'll learn about new online stock agencies that'll take your photos today — and sell them for super-fast cash.

If you work on a royalty, you'll have passive income flowing your way. And it can add up. Think 20,000 images. That may seem like a lot to produce. But over time, it's realistic... and that's a lot of passive income!

### **GOLDMINE MARKET #4: Where to Find the \$20,000 Assignments**

There is one market where you can command super-high fees. It's known as commercial photography. It's where \$20,000 fees are not uncommon — and even that fee is a bargain to most clients.

What's more, you don't even need a studio. In commercial photography, you can travel to your client's place of business. Set up your equipment. Take the shots. Then return home to edit them and produce prints. With low overhead and huge profits, you could make a handsome income, fast!

### **GOLDMINE MARKET #5: Stop the Press! See Your Photos Published in Newspapers and Magazines**

Do you enjoy writing? If so, you'll love the newspaper and magazine market. In this market, you can submit

your photos along with articles, which means double the pay! Editors also prefer receiving these (photos and articles together) because it makes their job that much easier.

But how can you break into newspapers and magazines? Where do you start? Locally? Regionally? Or do you just jump into the big-time national publications? Or can you do all three at once?

Learn the answers to these questions and more in *Turn Your Pictures into Cash*. You'll discover where to find opportunities, the one big difference between newspapers and magazines, who to contact, how to approach an editor, what it means to work "on spec," whether you should (or shouldn't) work on spec and much, much more.

## **GOLDMINE MARKET #6: The Library is Packed with Them**

There's nothing quite like seeing your photos published in a book. The book market has two main needs: pictures for image books (sometimes called coffee table books) and pictures for illustration. How can you get publishers to recognize you? And how can you get published in the book market? You'll learn this and more in *Turn Your Pictures into Cash*.

Perhaps the best part is that *Turn Your Pictures into Cash* is truly affordable. You can get started for only \$49. Sell just one photo a month for \$50, and you're starting this program for free.

You don't even have to travel far to make this kind of money. *Turn Your Pictures into Cash* will not only open your eyes to the photographic opportunities around the world but also as close as your hometown and backyard! Everything from gorgeous landscape shots, images that you can turn into fine art photography, black and white shots and much, much more.

Your portfolio will fill up quickly, and so will your bank account. If I'm wrong, cancel within 30 days for a full refund. If you decide to continue on, you're still under no risk. You can cancel your installments at any time. Though I'm sure, once you have a taste of these goldmine secrets, you won't want to miss any of them. For example, you'll learn all kinds of advanced secrets, tricks and tips, including:

- The difference between a great shot and a \$5,000 photograph
- Classic principles from great artists, painters, sculptors and architects for capturing a real-life image and reproducing it in a way that moves people
- Double your income by staying efficient: how to organize your photos for faster profits
- Never take a bad picture again: three tips about exposure that will revolutionize your photos
- Perfectly exposed photos: a hands-on guide to working with your camera to ensure the best exposure possible—even under bad conditions
- Spice up your landscapes: five ways to be sure your landscapes will stand out and sell better
- Two completely different professional focusing techniques and when you should—and shouldn't—use them: choose the wrong one, and your picture won't sell
- How to present your work professionally: capture the interest of photo buyers and editors in the art and décor market, galleries, the book market, the newspaper and magazine market and the stock photo market
- Speed up your learning curve: 13 templates that'll turn any photographer into a pro, fast

- Learn how to capture a city's mood in your photographs and turn them into moneymaking postcards, posters and greeting cards
- Little-known secrets that photographers use to land free meals, vacations and other fun perks

And much, much more... all gleaned from a cadre of successful, globe-trotting photographers.

Use what you learn in this program, and with each passing month, you'll find your photos becoming more and more sophisticated... more professional... more creative. Twelve short months from now, you'll have the confidence to break into ANY market you wish. You don't have to wait that long to get started, though.

There are plenty of markets that are hungry for talent like yours, and will welcome your photos even as a beginning photographer. To learn what those paying markets are—and how you can start selling your photos for profit—get your risk-free copy of Turn Your Pictures into Cash TODAY.

Simply pick up the phone and call 1-866-879-2924 or visit [www.thephotographerslife.com/phc/itwpa](http://www.thephotographerslife.com/phc/itwpa).

Act now and we'll even throw in five exciting FREE PHOTOGRAPHY GIFTS! These free gifts are yours to keep, even if you return or cancel the installments of Turn Your Pictures into Cash. You can only win. ACT NOW!