



Photography Marketing Cheat Sheet

4 Steps To Crafting a Competition-Free Zone Where You Are Perceived As "THE" Photographer To Hire Now - Regardless Of The Economy Or Cheap Competition

The Economy still sucks at the moment, doesn't it? But - and this is important - things WILL get better - and - there are still people out there who STILL want to have some really nice portraits created or really nice wedding photography.

So don't get caught up using the word "they." Don't say "they" aren't buying photography now. "They" are needing their money for other things right now. "They" are wanting to save every penny because we're in a Recession.

That's a very dangerous way to think. Because it's totally wrong.

Yes, SOME people need their money for other things. And SOME people are saving every penny they can. But not ALL people. Some people still want a really nice portrait to give to a loved one for the Holidays. SOME people still want really nice wedding photography created.

So the "trick" to this is to find those people, and capture a larger share of the market. Here's how:

In this "Marketing "Cheat Sheet" I want to help you create what I call a "**Competition Free Zone**" in these difficult times. It really helps your business become the success you dream of and work so hard for. It has worked like gang-busters for my photography business and will do the same for you! And it's even more critical during this Recession.

The "**Competition Free Zone**" is a wonderful place to put yourself and your photography business. And it is totally possible for you to achieve. It allows you to charge fees that others can't charge. It makes your telephone selling easier to close. It allows you to have policies which others can't have. It allows you to close sales for higher total amounts, and do it more quickly, and easily - even in this Recession.

But, if you aren't there now, how to you get there? Indeed, the rewards are great, but it takes smarts to get there - which is why so few photographers can do it!

What you need to do is place much more importance on your marketing, than on your photography. It's not that the quality of your work isn't important, it is, but the marketing is so very important, and far too many people in our profession spend way, way too much time on the photography, and nowhere near that amount of time on their marketing.

Frankly, things have really heated up in recent years. Welcome to the world of truly intense competition and lightning speed changes in marketing and advertising.

The competition for your prospective client's and present client's attention is fierce. They are relentlessly bombarded with an ever-increasing array of information, offers, and temptations, drawn to the web to comparison shop the world with click-click-click. Then emailed by every site they visit.

More choices, more convenience, more vying for their attention interest, trust, and dollars including both direct competitors and indirect competitors - new digital cameras they can buy and take their own photos - the ability to scan their images into their computer and email them to everyone, and on and on and on.

If you think you can run the same old Yellow Pages ad that is little more than a business card and a list of things you do, you are a dinosaur waiting for the fork to get stuck in. If you think you can get by with that tired, ordinary tri-fold photo brochure boringly headlined, "Our Services" and, "Our Policies" and, "About Our Studio" look out, you're about to be toast.

The fact is this: The speed of change is absolutely mind-blowing today - especially with this Recession.

If you think your clients will be loyal just because you do a great job and are friendly, guess again. You'd better be telling them, "What's new" very, very often to keep them from wandering off.

The fact of the matter is that the gap between the "haves" and the "have nots" in photography is widening every day. The successful are becoming more and more successful, while the "have nots" are losing more and more money and coming closer and closer to closing their doors.

Those photographers who resist or resent the need to become exceptional marketers will wind up working for wages for some other photographer - having closed their own studio because "things were too tough."

Now, you do have one choice about all that: the choice to grumble, groan, and resent it, thus doing it badly, or to embrace it with curiosity, optimism and enthusiasm - and thus be constantly improving your marketing skills.

One of the things I do as a Consultant/Coach, is to show my students the mechanics of creating their own **Competition Free Zone** for their studio to live in and do business in. This is a zone where what others charge is irrelevant and you can, if you wish, charge fees significantly higher than others do. I have done this for my studio, and I can show you how to do it for yours.

Here's how:

Step 1. Choose your target market - it must perceive you as one of a kind. Note the word, "Perceive." Consumer perception is manageable. You create and control it. (You don't accept what develops or stubbornly insist you deserve to be perceived in a certain way based on the quality that you provide. Instead, you manage how you are perceived.)

What I mean by this is targeting a very specific, well defined, niche market and being perceived as having particular expertise relevant only to that market or offering services customized to that group's unique needs - and note, every little group or sub-culture thinks it's needs are unique. I often refer to this as being a "Big fish in a small pond."

A few examples:

Pet owners. One of the "niches" I have always pursued are those who have pets. Dogs, cats, horses, etc. I have photographed many horse owners with their horses. I have a "unique factor" in that I understand and own horses. I know how to make them look their best. I know how to act around them. This is a very powerful perception in my market area, and allows me to charge higher fees than other photographers in my area. And how did I get this perception, and how do I keep it? Exhibits all over town, with images in those exhibits which have horses in them..

I also am very well known in my market area for photographing people with their dogs and cats. Many of my high school seniors, for example, come to me for their portraits because they know how much I love animals and want to create some of the images with

their dog or cat in the portraits. How do they know? By my exhibits and also my "Testimonials Brochure" - both of which have images in them with people and their dogs and cats.

Another niche I go after is people who play musical instruments - due mainly to my Symphony exhibit - which is seen all over town, and my ads which appear in each Symphony Program. This has made me "THE" photographer to create fine portraits of people who play musical instruments and want a portrait which is artistic, finely crafted, and has an air of creative dignity.

Another niche I pursue is that of ballet dancers - and other types of dancers - primarily due to my Ballet exhibit which is also seen all over town. People who have a daughter who is a dancer, strongly desire a portrait from me, as I am perceived in the area as the one photographer who really understands dancers, and creates carefully crafted images of them with artistic flair. (That's what's so powerful about "Specialty Exhibits" - they carry an implied endorsement from the group who the exhibit is about. In this case, the Civic Ballet of Grand Rapids.)

I could go on and on, but you get the idea.

Step 2. You must build a "presence" of exceptional expertise, credibility, even celebrity, either in general, or preferably linked to your selected niche markets.

You do this by exhibiting very carefully chosen images throughout the community, where your target market will see them as they go about their daily living. You need to select which of your photographs you exhibit very carefully, so your target market will get the message you are directing toward them. You also need to make your exhibits very "aesthetically pleasing" and "artistic" so the whole message your exhibits send to the community is one of artistic integrity, and success. You do this by including flowers and plants in with the photographs, as well as making sure each exhibit looks very artistically pleasing to the eye.

Step 3. Reject the "classic photographer personality" and become a fearless, confident, self-assured, silver-tongued communicator and influencer. Think about this very carefully. Think about the "classic photographer personality" in your area. Is it not true that most photographers have a very "average" or even worse than average personality? You must be better - far better at displaying a "successful, powerful yet artistic" personality. Especially during this Recession.

This includes your **professionalism** - how you create and nurture your image in the community. For example:

**** Your vocabulary** - how you speak about your craft, and how you speak to your prospects and clients.

****Your dress** - how you look when someone first meets you, as well as how you consistently look each and every time your prospects and clients see you, both in your studio, and in your community. .

****Your manners** - your politeness. Your way of treating people, day in and day out.

****Your character** - how you do not ever promise what you can not deliver, and you always deliver more than what you promise.

And make this note about "survival of the fittest" - In today's world, the "fittest" are those who sell, not those who don't. Selling is a skill, just like photography is. You **MUST** also develop your sales skills, as well as your marketing skills, to be successful in today's market place.

Step 4. You'll have to give all your advertising, marketing and even your in-studio environment a "make-over which is in harmony with the new niche target markets you choose and the new positioning you are determined to stake out, capture, and own. Out with the old, in with the new.

For example, you will need to learn about multi-step marketing, about marketing via being an information provider, advertising for the clients you want rather than advertising what you do, and a number of other strategies that are probably foreign to you right now. You will discover them in the many other entires in this Inner Circle Membership Site.

I know this sounds like a lot of work, but let me assure you it's well worth every bit of it. There's just no point in complaining about it being a lot of work. It is what it is. Do it. Do it now or parish in this Recession.

Ray Kroc was once asked if it annoyed him how quickly the other fast food companies copied and knocked off each new McDonalds promotion. "Of course," he answered, "but it just means we must invent faster than they can copy us." You see, he accepted the reality of his business situation, and then acted accordingly. He did not stick his head in the sand and hope things would somehow change for the better of their own accord nor did he waste time whining about how unfair the situation was.

Think about this: 12 months from today, will a responsive, supportive market, perceive you as a unique and indispensable asset in their lives or as just another photographer, an interchangeable commodity? The answer is totally up to you.

Lest you forget or missed an important point that I make in other areas of this Membership Site, let me repeat it here: **Relative quality as perceived by clients is the single most important factor in determining long-term profitability. The big dollars aren't so much in winning as in keeping clients. And you keep them by providing greater levels of quality service as they perceive it.**

All the best,

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