

**SHOULD I TURN MY PASSION IN PHOTOGRAPHY INTO  
FULL-TIME LIVING**

# SHOULD I MONETIZE MY PASSION FOR PHOTOGRAPHY?

Dear friend,

In [Photography Entrepreneurship 101](#), we have covered *how* to make money from photography-- but we haven't quite covered *should* you try to make a full-time living from your photographic passion?

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## 1. "Why?" is always the first question we should ask ourselves

The reason why we should cover this topic:

*Before wasting many hours and years of your life before you try to monetize your photography -- be really honest with yourself and ask, "Do I really want to monetize my photography, and make it my full-time living?"*

Let me use myself as an example.

When I was in college, photography was my passion. However, I didn't realistically think I could make a living from it. Especially from street photography.

Thus, I took the 'barbell approach' from Nassim Taleb -- I opted for a secure job (online marketing) and did my photography and blogging on the side. But I still had the dream:

*"What if one day I could monetize my passion in street photography, and make a full-time living from it?"*

I did some searching around the web, yet couldn't find any information on the philosophical repercussions of turning your passion into a full-time living.

## 2. Does turning your passion into your living ruin your passion?

My primary concern:

*Would turning my passion of photography into a living cause me to love my passion less?*

Or in other words: Would doing photography full-time take the joy out of photography? Would my photography start feeling like a chore and a job, rather than my passion?

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To fast-forward about 10 years, I have finally been able to successfully turn my passion (photography, street photography, blogging) into a profitable online/offline business. I have been able to successfully monetize my photography through the following channels:

- Teaching workshops/photography travel experiences (about 80% of my income)
- Through selling products (Henri Neck Strap, Henri Wrist Strap) which was created via HAPTIC INDUSTRIES (the company of Cindy).
- Through selling books (STREET NOTES, PHOTO JOURNAL, FILM NOTES, MASTERS)
- Through art prints/portfolios (CITY OF ANGELS, DARK SKIES OVER TOKYO, LAUGHING LADY PRINT)
- Through commercial deals/sponsorships, paid workshops for companies
- Talks and speaking engagements

I can confidently say that **turning my passion into my profession hasn't removed my passion for photography**. In-fact, I have probably become *more* passionate about photography ever-since.

For example, now that I can focus on my photography, writing, research, and studies full-time, I was able to create one of my mini magnum-opuses (Learn From the Masters of Photography). No way in hell could I have found the hours to do countless hours of research, distillation, and writing.

Also I could say that turning my passion into a (profitable) business has helped me become more generous-- putting out more than 20+ free ebooks on photography, giving away my presets for free, and giving away all the articles, videos, and information on this blog for free-- and keeping it open source.

Of course this is just my personal experience, it will be different for you.

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### **3. Yes, it is possible.**

The reason why I am sharing this information with you is the following:

*Realize it is possible to monetize your passion and make a full-time living, and also not to lose your passion for your photography.*

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### **4. "Selling out"**

Now -- is monetizing your passion and making a living from it "selling out"? I don't think so.

To me-- "selling out" can and should only be judged by yourself. To me, I will only feel like a "sell out" if I do things that betray my inner-morals and ethics. The only things I ever ended up feeling trapped by was accepting free cameras from camera companies-- because I lose my freedom to give my truly truly honest thoughts on a certain camera. Thus I found for myself, **sponsorships are self-imposed slavery.**

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### **5. Personal motivations**

Ultimately, I have also discovered that the things I value the most in my life include:

1. Freedom of thought
2. Freedom of travel
3. Freedom of writing/publishing/sharing what I want, without being censored or prevented by a gatekeeper/editor.

That is pretty much it.

Thus, I have tried to optimize my business to allow me to have the **maximum amount of personal freedom, with the minimum amount of personal and business-related obligations**. I have HUGE HUGE appreciation for my manger Neil Ta who handles my business engagements, and coordinates my workshop. Also of course massive appreciation for Cindy for starting up HAPTIC INDUSTRIES - selling products online, and also helping me with travels, workshops, and other logistical details-- while also empowering me to stay true to my own inner-voice, and staying productive as a writer, photographer, and educator.

Starting my own business, and becoming an entrepreneur has afforded me this freedom.

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## 6. Being self-employed is better for myself

Now, I can certainly say (for myself) that it is far better to be a self-employed entrepreneur than having a 9-5 office job. I hated the following about my old job:

- Having to always go to work, every day, at the same time
- Not being able to leave work once I finished my work
- Not having the freedom to just take time off, and travel whenever I wanted to
- Having to answer hundreds of emails, instead of writing, researching, and just walking around
- Not having the opportunity to share my knowledge and information with others (me, being a lowly entry-level position, I was never invited to meetings to share my thoughts/opinions)

Now the biggest benefits of being self-employed include:

- Going to sleep and waking up whenever I feel like it, without the agency of an alarm clock
- Not feeling pressured to have to respond to an email within an hour (like my old job)
- Getting off the corporate 'rat race'/treadmill -- not valuing my self-esteem based on my title (I was a 'manager', but I wanted to become a 'director' in my title, to feel more self-important)
- Not having to play office-politics
- Being able to speak my mind and voice, without the fear of getting fired

## **7. Monetizing your passion won't solve all your life problems**

Now of course, being self-employed ain't all rainbows and angel whispers. I still suffer from:

- Anxiety about personal finances, that one day I will go broke, become homeless, and die on the streets, and have Cindy leave me because I become a financial failure
- Motivation: At times my motivation waxes and wanes-- some days I feel more inspired and motivated, other days I feel lost, overcome with ennui, and a general depressive-lethargy at times.
- Self-Questioning about my value towards myself and society: Not sure whether I'm using my talents, time, and skills to the fullest ability-- to help empower society and others.

Thus, it has seemed for me -- true happiness has been a bit of the following:

1. Self-liberation from office job
2. Moderate income to sustain my coffee intake, and pay for my eggs
3. Having freedom of speech/thought/expression
4. Helping empower others
5. Finding inspiration in ideas, that give me motivation to create new things (whether articles, books, videos, etc).

## 8. Ultimately what is my life purpose?

As of right now, I think it is:

*To discover truth(s) about life, art, and the world-- and to share these secrets with others.*

Thus, I spend a lot of time reading philosophy, reflecting on my personal life experiences, and also making art (through photography, poetry, film, etc). Ultimately, I am like a honey bee-- I exist for the sake of the hive and the collective, not for myself. And like any good honeybee-- I collect a lot of pollen to make my honey, but I want to share my honey with my hive.

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### **Conclusion: Never lose faith in yourself.**

If you want to learn how to monetize your photography and make a living from it, I encourage you to read my distilled primer: "[MODERN PHOTOGRAPHER](#)", or check out my free [Photography Entrepreneurship 101 series](#).

Also make sure to [subscribe to my newsletter](#) to stay updated when a Photography Entrepreneurship Seminar comes to your neighborhood.

Ultimately, it is possible to monetize your passion and make a living from it. It does require insane work ethic, a dash of luck, and the right opportunities and timing. I am still discovering what works for me, and hope to continue to share these secrets with you.

BE BOLD, ERIC