

How to Master Marketing in Photography

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To be a successful photographer, you need to be *both* a great photographer *AND* a great marketer. To me, these two are integral (like the yin-yang).

Why does marketing get such a bad rep?

This is my theory:

In modern society, we are taught to be 'humble'. If we try to "show off", we are seen as doing something "evil"-- because when we are exceptional, we will make less exceptional people feel "bad" about themselves.

Much of this is rooted in Christian morality. The idea that the "meek shall inherit the world". The idea that flexing, bragging, or "showing off" is synonymous with evil.

But yet innately-- we all desire to be different. We desire to be more influential. We all desire to have more powerful.

So this puts us in a tricky situation:

*How can we both humble **AND** successful?*

This was the simple idea:

Put out good work, and cross your fingers and get "discovered".

Furthermore, to "self-promote yourself" was considered illegitimate-- because to be 'discovered' by someone else was the only "legitimate" way of success (perhaps this notion arose from the Paris salons, and art world, from the 'Romantic' era).

Do you believe in yourself and your own artwork?

To be frank, I think **90% of marketing is courage**. Courage in yourself. Courage to put yourself out there; the possibility that others might hate on you, judge you negatively, etc.

Modern society is strange-- it has become a spectator society. It is easy to stand from the side-lines and criticize athletes, musicians, rappers, business people, entrepreneurs, and artists.

But to market yourself means to put your personal "skin in the game" -- to put yourself on the spotlight; the chance of getting attacked by others.

Marketing mindset

So to start off, to master marketing-- you first teach yourself:

Marketing isn't evil; marketing is good.

When we think of marketing, we still have the negative view of a 'sleazy used car salesman'. Yet society *NEEDS* used car salesmen-- or else how can we sell used cars (in fact, more people *should* buy used cars-- better for our wallets, and better for the environment).

Anyways, the reason why marketing has such a bad reputation is because we see marketers as liars, dishonest, conniving, etc.

But this is my view on marketing:

Marketing is putting your skin on the line, and saying, 'I am of high worth' and 'My artwork has high worth.'

Because the notion of "value" or the notion of "worth" is all relative and subjective. Thus, **marketing is the art of conveying your value to others.**

How to convey your value to others

This is where the art of language is essential.

For example, as an assignment-- go to the Rolls Royce website, and read their marketing language. Then go to the Lamborghini website, and read their marketing language. What kind of emotion, mood, or attitude do they convey about their product and brand through the language, words, and visual imagery they use?

Basic ideas:

1. **Convey EMOTIONS:** You want to empower your client. You have to convey how your product or service will benefit your client. You must determine what their emotional desires are. How do you want them to feel? Empowered? Confident? Sexy? Powerful?
2. **Follow your gut:** I am anti-data. I am more interested in you following your own gut, and creating marketing language that aligns with your own attitude, and your own worldview. For example, Steve Jobs was big on Zen minimalism -- and his products and marketing message/imagery/wording reflects this. JAY Z came from the hood and became a billionaire. His marketing lyrics (his raps) reflect his own attitude. Thus the basic idea is this: **be authentic in what you believe in (whether you become rich or not, isn't something you can control 100%).**
3. Think of yourself as high-class, luxury: To be frank, this is my theory: the future of the economy will bifurcate into two ends-- super-low end (poor) and super high-end (hyper-rich). I go to the mall, and the companies that are thriving in today's modern economy are high-end brands. The middle-end brands are dying off. So perhaps the practical idea is this: **if you want to thrive as a photographer, either market yourself as a super-cheap photographer, or a super high-class expensive photographer.** AVOID THE MIDDLE! But I still think that if you want to be more profitable, best to go high-class.

What can Ulysses teach us about marketing?

I read the Odyssey -- and Ulysses is probably the master marketer, because he is the ultimate 'cunning', 'clever', 'trickster'. But these virtues are seen as positive in Ancient Greek philosophy.

If you think about the animal kingdom, the strongest, most fierce, and the most cunning/lying animals succeed.

Consider a chameleon -- when it blends in with the environment, is it telling the "truth"? Or is it "lying"?

If you are peacock, do you get a sexual partner by being dull and boring? Or do you strut, and have ridiculously bright colors?

My point is this:

Marketing is amoral.

Which means: **there is no morality in marketing. Just follow your own heart, and do what feels right to you.**

Don't feel guilty in marketing that you are "misleading" people. **All morality and ethics is subjective; there is no "ultimate" right or wrong forms of marketing.**

Just follow your own personal code of ethics.

NEXT

1. Build up your own website, blog, and brand. Pay for your own domain and platform.
2. Use your first and last name to market and brand yourself
3. AVOID THE MIDDLE at all costs. Either go super-cheap (free) or super-expensive.

More thoughts on marketing to come.

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