

**PHOTOGRAPHY ENTREPRENEURSHIP MANUAL BY ERIC
KIM**

PREFACE. BRAVE NEW WORLD OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Dear friend,

I'm very afraid for the future of photography and humanity.

I'm also very hopeful.

Okay first of all, some trends I'm seeing:

Less creative freedom

So, there are really any more independent photography bloggers. Rather, we are all on Facebook, Instagram, Tumblr, Flickr, or some social media platform.

The problem: we have less creative freedom.

For example, on Instagram you cannot change the order of your images. New photos will always show up on top. You cannot add hyperlinks in your posts.

On Facebook: when people see your photos in their stream, they will also see advertisements. You cannot block advertisements on your Facebook photos.

I think photography blogs are the answer. Register on 1and1.com and install Wordpress.org. The benefit of using a wordpress photography blogging platform: you own your content. And you can control whether you put on advertisements or not. You can easily mass import and export content.

You can mix visuals with text, or audio or video.

Not only that, but realize-- Instagram is owned by Facebook, and Facebook/Instagram are advertising platforms. Facebook and Instagram, Snapchat and all these other "free" companies are companies. Their purpose is to

make money. And how do they make money? By delivering you content-tailored advertisements, based on your personal browsing behavior, what you "like", what you comment on, etc.

So on one hand I love social media-- it connects us. People who are poor and cannot afford to pay for their own website is empowered.

Yet, we are also trapped. To be honest, you are kind of at a slight disadvantage if you're not on Facebook or Instagram.

Even scarier: the only real photo sharing networks in existence now is Facebook and Instagram (same company). Which means, there is a monopoly of images on just one platform. Which means, Facebook can eventually manipulate the images we are being delivered through their "News feed algorithm". For further reading, read the book "The filter bubble"-- the basic concept that we are becoming tunnel-visioned in terms of what is being fed us in our news feeds. So liberals will only see pro-liberal news, and conservatives will only see pro-conservative news. It is a lot of navel-gazing, which prevents us from seeing a diversity of opinions, ideas, and thoughts.

SOMA

In Aldous Huxley's book "Brave New World"-- he envisioned a world where everyone was "happy", because everyone took "Soma"-- imagine a mix between ecstasy and weed, with no downsides. People wouldn't care that the world was going to shit, because everyone "felt good".

Today's world, our photography soma is the likes we get on Facebook, Instagram, and the "snaps" we get on Snapchat, and messages on What's app, Facebook Messenger, or anything else in our social media streams.

Above all, our soma is advertising. The only reason the capitalistic engine keeps running: we keep having desires to fulfill. We keep working at our shitty jobs, just so we can buy that new Range Rover, that new Hermes bag, or that new Giuseppe shoe.

As photographers, many of us have good jobs. Yet, we are stuck in golden cubicle prisons. We think if we just bought that new Leica or digital camera, we would have more freedom, to travel, wander, be a nomad, and make photos.

Sad reality: ain't no camera gonna buy your freedom.

Hedonic Treadmill

Hedonism: feeling good. Treadmill: something that keeps on going faster.

We buy a new Leica, and it is exciting for a week. Then the effect wears off. We buy a Hasselblad, and it is exciting for a week. Then the effect wears off. We buy a Phase One, and the same happens.

It happens with everything-- new phones, tablets, laptops, desktops, cars, pornography, movies, tv shows, YouTube shows, video games, etc.

Social media too: you can never have “enough” followers. Once you have a thousand followers, you want ten thousand, then a hundred thousand, then a million.

Same with money: \$40,000 a year, the. \$80,000 a year, \$100,000 a year, \$200,000 a year, \$500,000 a year, a million a year, ten million, a hundred million, a billion, ten billion, a hundred billion, a trillion, etc.

Trust me, when I say this, I'm not immune. I was spoon fed the virtues of American capitalism ever since I was a kid, watching Hot Rod commercials on tv, eating Hot Pockets from Costco, eating \$1 McChicken burgers from McDonald's, and more recently-- by buying expensive Apple products, expensive NIKE shoes, Leica cameras, etc.

Good news.

Good news: free unlimited photography storage from Google Photos.

Good news: you can buy a good iPhone for \$400, and make good photos.

Good news: free photography editing apps like VSCO and Snapseed.

Bad news.

Bad news: if one day Google becomes evil and refuses to give you your photos, you're fucked.

Bad news: one day Facebook or Instagram prevents you from sharing photos that it deems “inappropriate”. For example, I had a photograph/illustration I shared of a KKK (ku klux klan) which I photoshopped with a Nazi Swastika (as racial/political commentary/activism) removed from my Instagram, because it didn't follow “community guidelines.” In other words, the image of a KKK member might offend potential advertisers or people on Instagram, so it was removed.

How to fight back.

Okay, there is no real enemy. The only enemy is ourselves.

I cannot speak for yourself, but I can speak for myself.

My problems:

- I was always dissatisfied with myself and photography, because my camera wasn't “good enough” in my eyes. I fell victim to “Gear acquisition syndrome), aka GAS.
- I wanted more social media fame. No likes or followers were ever enough.
- I was desperate to become famous, and sold my freedom to camera companies, just to get more “branding” and free products.

- I focused so much on making better photos, rather than asking myself “*why*” I made photos.

I'm also afraid that the future of photography is gonna be made disgusting with advertisements. You can even see this on Instagram today, so many more advertisements creeping everywhere-- in your feed (once a sacred space), or now even in your “stories”.

Advertising isn't necessarily a bad thing. But for me, I just hate advertisements. Yet, we are all advertising ourselves. Like I'm the most shameless self-marketer, advertiser, and promoter of ERIC KIM and HAPTIC products, and my books and workshops.

So you gotta be wary of everything you read online, because everyone has a secret agenda, even including ERIC KIM. Like even in writing this article, I'm secretly hoping that you will like me, end attending one of my workshops one day, buying HAPTIC products, or joining STREET CLUB. So friend, even take everything I write on this blog with a (huge) grain of salt.

To be honest, I don't trust anything on the internet anymore, that is supported by advertising. The only thing I trust include books from dead philosophers, like Seneca, Montaigne, Epictetus, Nietzsche, and more contemporary philosophers like Nassim Taleb, or other rich independent opinion-makers and risk-takers like Ray Dalio.

Be skeptical.

Always be skeptical of ERIC KIM and other photography bloggers.

All photography bloggers with affiliate links to cameras receive a small percentage profit, including Eric Kim. Ask yourself:

If you wrote a camera review for a \$1,500 USD camera, and made \$30 off every camera you sold through your link-- is it really in your best interest to say something really bad about the camera?

Another idea:

If I am sponsored by camera company X, and I review their camera, am I going to be 100% truthful about what I think about it-- especially if I'm getting free cameras, free travel, and other goodies?

Be skeptical of everyone, including Eric Kim.

Solution: test out your own cameras and equipment, and see whether *you* like it.

Social media suggestions

I started to hate my addiction to social media, and how many likes I got on my photos, comments, followers, etc. So I deleted my Instagram with 60,000 followers.

I now feel free.

I feel clean. I make photos that please myself. Now, I honestly don't care what others think of my photos.

Now, I just ask myself:

Do I like my own photos?

My ideal camera

With cameras, I don't care about brands or labels anymore.

My only requirements now:

1. Is the camera light, compact, and can I carry it with me on a daily basis?
2. Are the ergonomics and feeling of the camera in my hand comfortable?
3. Are the menus simple and easy to use?

As of now, only cameras which fit that requirement for me:

- Digital RICOH GR
- Film Leica

Shoot in airplane mode

I'm a huge fan of phone photography. But I prefer not shooting only on a phone. Why? I'm addicted enough to technology, I want to spend *less* time being chained to a 5-inch black mirror. I want to rest my eyeballs, to let it wander like when I was 5 years old.

Simple suggestion for phone photographers: shoot your photos in airplane mode.

The photography trifecta

To me, photography isn't about making pretty photos. Rather, it is about finding meaning, purpose, and appreciation in life.

I endeavor to make beautiful photos of Cindy, strangers I meet, and myself-- to help me appreciate life more. I want less stress and anxiety in my life, and more words of thanksgiving and gratitude.

So for me, I currently practice the photography trifecta:

1. Street Photography
2. Personal Photography
3. Entrepreneurial Photography

Street photography makes me more confident and brave.

Personal photography makes me more appreciative of my loved ones.

Entrepreneurial photography makes me money, and helps me take more risks in life, and to build things that empower others.

Photography solutions for myself.

I don't got any answers for you. I'm sorry. But I figured out (some) answers for myself. Some lessons for myself:

1. Always optimize for the smallest, lightest camera.
2. Own your own photography blog (Wordpress.org) for maximum creative freedom.
3. Make your own photography products to feel cool (HAPTIC)
4. Share what you learn via teaching, workshops, books, blog posts, video, articles, letters, etc.
5. Only share photos that I like.
6. Photography is a good tool for self-empowerment, an excuse to walk more, and photography is studying philosophy in a practical sense.
7. I'm a sociologist-philosopher-photographer, not a photographer.

Make photos to uplift your soul.

I often feel a bit like a black sheep in this sea of white. But that's okay, I like to share my ideas, and hope it will help a few others.

If you want to find more meaning in your photography and life, buy PHOTO JOURNAL.

To conquer your fears in street photography, attend an ERIC KIM WORKSHOP, or buy STREET NOTES.

Buy lots of HAPTIC products, to make Cindy happy when she checks her email, which makes me happy, and a more productive blogger.

Lastly, make photos for yourself. Nobody else.

Have more creative freedom. You are already a photographer and artist. Don't doubt yourself. Make photos, don't take photos. And above all, shoot everyday like it were your last.

Photographic Memento Mori.

BE STRONG, ERIC

CHAPTER 1. GO AGAINST THE GRAIN

To succeed in life, Go against the grain.

Funny analogy of grain, eh? (Sorry for bad photo pun).

Anyways, in society we are told to follow the grain. To go with the flow. To take wherever the road leads us.

But to be a successful photographer and entrepreneur is to go *against* the grain. To be like an epic salmon, swimming upstream. Or to be like a black sheep,

refusing to go where the other white sheep go.

To go against the grain means to give the middle finger to convention. It means to be an individual, to follow your own heart and voice. To go where your gut leads you, rather than where your parents, your teachers, your boss, and the voices of the media and society tell you where to go.

For myself, I've always been a black sheep amongst white. In Korean, I'm told that I have no "noon-chi", which is "eye sense" – or better explained, "social sense."

Growing up, I was accused of not being able to "read the air" of a room. For example, I would do stuff that other kids didn't. I refused to sit down in class, I would always go to the bathroom every 15 minutes out of sheer boredom of school, and be mostly a trouble maker. I did pretty well in school, but always fooled around, passed notes in class, cracked jokes. I was a class clown.

In a sense, the public school system failed to match my own curiosity. I was an ambitious kid, yet my teachers spoon fed me the same curriculum that was fed to all my other (also bored) peers.

When I have a kid, I'll probably send them to a public school. But I'll certainly give them a personal "Montessori" style education at home. Or something like that.

Break yourself free from the bondage of societal rules

Anyways, I'm not encouraging you to be different for the sake of it. There are a lot of things that I agree with in terms of "societal rules." But a lot of stuff I think is bullshit.

I always thought it made no sense to get a job, that made you miserable, to get a lot of money, only to lose your personal freedom.

At age 16, I had more joy fixing up my \$1,2000 1991 Nissan Sentra SE-R than did my rich peers who drove BMW cars in high school. I knew from an early age that money didn't buy happiness. Freedom, tinkering, having fun, hanging out with friends, and screwing around was "happiness" for me.

I feel that in high school I was pretty rebellious. Same in college, I switched my major from Biology (originally was gonna be a doctor, to please my mom and family), but hated it, and switched to a major with the least amount of math and science– aha, Sociology!

Sociology was great, because I learned that societal rules were all constructed. I could break them if I wanted to. And I did. I would be that weird guy doing pushups in a public space, chin-ups on a tree, or flexing my muscles in inappropriate situations. Sociology taught me to follow my own personal interest and curiosity.

If anything, I could attribute my “success” in life as an entrepreneur from Sociology. Why? It taught me the importance of building community, the importance of communication, and how societal rules could be bent according to my will. I didn’t have to follow the traditional path of just getting a 9-5 job for the rest of my life. If I wanted to start my own business, that others considered crazy, I could.

After graduating college, I did get that office job. But I loved it (at first). I learned a lot from my bosses, coworkers, and I loved the upbeat startup work hustle, drive, and curiosity. I was growing a lot. But at about 8 months in, I became stagnant. I stopped learning, growing, and developing. It felt like hell.

So to be frank, it wasn’t necessarily my job that made me angry or frustrated. It was myself. Partly my job, because I wasn’t given any opportunities to grow. My ambition, drive, and vision was massive. But the glass ceiling of simply being an Online Community Manager held me back. I wanted more power, influence, and the chance to experiment. I wanted to be a director, project manager, or something higher up. Alas, no positions for growth existed.

Why be an entrepreneur?

The best part of being an entrepreneur is that I can experiment with crazy shit. I can move fast, and break stuff, like Mark Zuckerberg once said. I can create my own future. I can tinker with my blog, design stuff, without any approval of a manager. That's the thing I hated most being in a company, needing "approval" or a "check off" to do *anything*.

Now, I don't need to ask nobody for permission. I can just do it.

So I've learned that as an entrepreneur, the best benefits are:

1. Freedom to experiment.
2. Not needing to report to a boss.
3. Control over my time, mental energy, and space.

Above all, **freedom** was the sweetest nectar.

Information is everything.

Even now, I can honestly care less about money to buy expensive luxury goods. While I do admire cool sports cars like Lamborghini, and Porsche, I have no interest in luxury clothing, watches, or anything with the word "luxury" attaches

to it. I prefer simple, minimalist design, and non-gaudy aesthetics.

What do I need money for? Pay rent, server bills, food, coffee. And extra money to help support my family and Cindy.

As of now my focus is to empower other photographers to become the best versions of themselves. Why? I felt stunted in terms of my personal growth in photography and entrepreneurship, because I didn't have access or the keys to the right information.

And **information isn't just power. Information is everything.**

Today, money is just information. Digital 1s and 0s sitting in a network of

computers. Paper money is just a “fiat” (faith) currency in the power of government. “Real” money doesn’t theoretically exist anymore.

Social media followers is just information. Page views are just information. Blog posts, videos, books, articles, are just information.

Information has the ability to expand our mind. To help us grow more wise (philosophy), to help us fight cognitive biases (behavioral economics and psychology), or to dream big (entrepreneurship and business). Information has the power to unlock our jet pack potential.

Everything I write about or share is just information I wish I had access to. And it’s not gonna be right. It only works for me, probably not you. But it might. That is why I keep doing it.

How to go against the grain

So how do you go against the grain or the crowd in photography? Some ideas:

1. Don’t use social media: refuse to be a slave to Facebook or Instagram (both same company) and Snapchat. Honestly they’re nice to have, but ultimately make us addicted to this silly platform, which wastes our human potential. Instead of dressing how to make flying cars, we think about the next version of the iPhone, how to get more Instagram likes or followers, or what is happening in celebrity gossip or politics. I’ve deleted my Instagram, and I’m like a (former) crack addict who is now clean. I have fewer distractions, which means more focus to do the work which is meaningful to me.
2. Make photos you like: never ask others what kind of photos to make, and whether they like your own photos. Rather, always follow your own heart. True innovation happens in photography by you following your own artistic vision, and ignoring everyone else. If you do want feedback, only ask maybe 3 people in your inner-circle.
3. Go opposite: when you see everyone, jumping off the cliff like lemmings, go opposite. Or be the salmon that swims upstream.
4. Venture into new territory: everyone mostly knows me as a street photographer, certainly not a photography entrepreneur. But I’m interested in

entrepreneurship and photography. So I'm venturing into it. It's like a fun adventure. I had a lot of people upset that I was blogging about money (taboo subject), sharing personal finances (also taboo), and talking about a subject that's been relatively unexplored. I had some folks doubting that I was an entrepreneur. But I am, because I take risks. That's all entrepreneurship is—taking risks for the benefit of society and the collective and others. If I didn't have any other fellow human beings on planet earth, I would most likely commit seppuku (Japanese suicide).

How to ignore the cries of the sirens

In the *Odyssey*, Ulysses orders his men to tie him to the mast of the ship, and fill his ears with beeswax, *before* sailing by the Sirens. The Sirens (imagine beautiful mermaids) were man-eaters, who looked pretty on the outside, and their melodious singing and voices would cause men to jump into the water, only to be eaten.

Ignore the voices of the sirens. One practical way, don't read online comments. I don't read feedback anymore. Because it is like a Siren, which disrupts my focus and flow. For Safari, I have a "Shut up" extension which turns off comments on Youtube and other popular sites. I also have a News Feed Eradicator plugin for Facebook. Also, you can use "Adblock Ultimate" to block certain advertising and comment elements to create a more clean and less distracting internet experience.

How to ignore society

Some more controversial ideas:

1. Ignore your parents: I love my mom to death, but if I just followed her advice (be a doctor), I would have never met my personal potential. I'd never had started this blog. So your parents, they mean the best, but just ignore them.
2. Follow your curiosity, not the dollars: if you want to make a lot of money, just became an investment banker, plastic surgeon, or now perhaps computer programmer. I do believe, if you follow your curiosity, and get really fucking good at it, and you learn some business and entrepreneurial sense, you can (with luck) make a lot of money. So don't chase the money first. Chase your

passion.

3. Never regret: I often look in my rear view mirror of regrets or stuff I wish I did or didn't do. But you can't change the past. Rather, just look straight, and keep driving. Fuck regrets, shame, or "what if?"

Rather, just focus on being the best version of yourself today. What is the 1 thing you can do today to build up your own personal empire? Is it emailing a potential client, writing a blog post, going out and doing some free photos to build your portfolio, making your own website (1and1.com and Wordpress.org), or emailing magazine editors offering your services?

Your life is short. Follow your gut, heart, and intuition.

Go against the grain, even though you will feel pain, and others will think you're insane. Avoid the smartphone brain drain. Stay strong like a Paladin, and keep slaying. No need to explain what you're doing. Just do it. You got this.

BE STRONG, ERIC

CHAPTER 3. THE PHOTOGRAPHY BLUEPRINT FOR SUCCESS

Dear friend,

Realize: there is no "blueprint" for success in photography.

However, I want to share some things that has helped me become "successful". Of course this advice won't help you, not apply to you.

1. Love the hustle

I love working hard and hustling. For me, if things were too easy, they would be no fun.

I add resistance, weight, and difficulty to my workouts. I always try to improve myself, and take myself to the next level.

Why? Because it is fun. It is non-boring. Even the ancients said, "It is hard for even the Gods to avoid boredom" (therefore humans were created, to be the playthings of the (bored) Gods.

In photography, I try to innovate for the sake of improving my vision, and my visual acuity. I want to improve my skills and visual prowess.

Children shall inherit the earth. Why? They love to play.

When is the last time you just played for the hell of it? Just for fun?

Hustling ain't about forcing yourself to work when you don't wanna. To "hustle" isn't answering emails. To hustle is to make stuff. Make art. To believe in yourself.

For me, as a blogger I hustle by blogging and writing a lot.

If you're a photographer trying to make a living by making photos, **make more good photos. Innovate with your composition, color combinations, and emotions.**

Always be hungry to innovate by studying other artists whose work you love.

2. Onto the next one.

"I'm onto the next one." - Jay-Z

Don't rest on your success and laurels for too long. When you have any sort of

success, move onto the next one.

For example, if you land a big deal. Aim bigger.

Imagine yourself like an adventurous hiker. You climb higher and higher mountains. And when you climb Mount Everest, you build a new mountain to surmount.

So let's say you make a good photo. Don't be satisfied. Hustle harder to make better photos, that are more dynamic, have more emotion, more innovative color palettes, and are more interesting to look at.

3. Own your own platform.

I'm inspired by Jay-Z, who bought Tidal, and effectively owns his own platform. He owns the masters to his music, which means he doesn't have to sell on other platforms against his power.

For example, Magnum was founded, so the photographers could own their own copyright.

For myself, I don't work with other publishers, because I want 100% control of my content and information. Cindy has built HAPTICPRESS as a platform for publishing good art, still giving power and freedom to the artist.

Practical advice: you will never become successful as a photographer if you're a slave to Facebook, Instagram and other social media platforms. **Don't waste time building followers on someone else's platform. Build your own platform.**

To build your own platform, own your own website. Use 1and1.com and then install WordPress.org and I recommend buying and using the Genesis theme.

Just because you pay for the platform, doesn't mean you own it.

But be careful, not all paid platforms can be "owned" by you.

I even advise against using platforms like Square Space and other platforms you pay for. Why? You have less freedom to modify, export, or change things. And if

the platform decides to change something for you, you lose freedom.

For example, let's say there is a function or feature you like. The platform has the power to revoke that feature, against your will.

The benefit of using other platforms.

The benefit of using other platforms: **they just work**. For example, using Apple products work very well. You lose a little bit of control and freedom, but it is a "walled garden", or a "golden prison", however you see it. This is why I prefer to use an Android phone instead of an iPhone. I like to hack and modify my phone so Android is better for me.

So just ask yourself,

Do I like freedom, control, flexibility, hacking, or something that just works?

Why not just use Instagram?

Problem with Instagram: you're their slave.

Instagram (owned by Facebook) isn't an altruistic platform to make you become a great artist. No. Instagram (and Facebook) are advertising platforms. They want you to use Instagram and Facebook, and get addicted and dependent (like a cocaine or coffee dealer) so you *need* them.

For example, if you share something on Instagram, not 100% of your followers will see your post. Maybe only 5%. If you want a higher percentage of your followers to see your post, you gotta pay Instagram/Facebook money to "boost" your post.

On my Facebook fan page, I have around 100,000 fans. Yet, if I post something, only 1,000 people might see it. Do I want more of my fans to hear about my new workshops, products, or photos or posts? Well, I pay Facebook \$10-50 to "boost" my post for more of my fans to see my post.

Now this seems unfair. It isn't. You're using Facebook's "free" platform. How us Facebook gonna make money as a company? You betcha: charging money for you to access more of your own fans, or by selling you advertisements.

Facebook bought Instagram for \$1 billion. How do you think Facebook is going to

recoup their investment? Yeah, they're gonna get you addicted to using Instagram, analyze your user behavior, to annoy you with new advertisements.

Conclusion: Freedom is the key.

The key to success as a photographer or entrepreneur: have freedom.

Avoid anything that diminishes your personal freedom, even if it makes your life more difficult.

For example, I decided to work for myself, because I have more freedom. I have freedom over my time, focus, and attention. I don't have to go into a stuffy office everyday, for 8 hours a day, and dutifully answer my emails. I can decide when to work, or when *not* to work.

I have the freedom now to work where I want. I can work at my apartment, my hotel room, my favorite coffee shops or on a plane.

Now I'm my own boss, I'm self-owned. No more bullshit office politics, or sucking up to my boss or higher-ups.

I also make more money now that I'm an entrepreneur. I'm not hunting for small incremental "raises" at work. I'm shooting for the moon.

So friend, know that if you want to make your passion of photography for a living, it's gonna be fucking hard. You're gonna leave your golden cage, to the wildness. It is fucking scary. You're gonna stress out about finances. You will go to sleep at night, ridden with self-doubt and fear. You're going to worry about how to pay for health care, rent, and expenses.

But, you will control your own life, and own sweet sweet freedom.

And isn't that all we ultimately want, freedom? Freedom to do what you want to do, when you want to do it, without being forced or compulsion to do what you don't want to?

BE STRONG, ERIC

CHAPTER 4. HOW TO BUILD A TRUE FOLLOWING

To succeed you need a small yet focused “true” following.

Why have a following?

First question, why even have a following? Why bother? Isn't social media, blogging, and having someone just like and follow you overrated?

Yes and no.

A “like” on social media really doesn't mean much. It just means someone who was bored and looking at their phone in line at the grocery store, scrolled through their feed, and double-tapped or pressed the little heart icon on your photo.

A “follower” on social media is just someone who clicked “follow” on your social media account.

True followers

What we want are “true” followers.

A “true” follower to me is someone who is committed to the same mission statement as you. Someone who believes in what you do. Also, a true follower might buy your products (digital or physical), attend your workshop (online or offline), or spread the word about you.

A true follower is someone who is committed in terms of their time, attention, heart, and wallets.

Money isn't always important. Often, someone who zealously defends you, or spreads the word about you is as valuable as someone who pays money to you.

Why follow someone?

I can only diagnose my behavior, in terms of why ERIC KIM will follow someone.

1. I want more of their stuff: I will follow someone on social media or their blog or website, because I want to hear more from them, see more of their stuff, and I believe in what they believe in.
2. I want to support them with my dollars: I've bought books from authors I admire, because I wanna support them. Even though I know they don't really "need" my money, it still makes me feel good good about myself.
3. I want to be like them: I follow Elon Musk and Kanye West because I want to emulate them and be like them. I wanna help empower humanity like Elon, and I want to innovate in culture with Kanye.

So why would someone follow you? Do you actually have something of value, or do you make "dope" (good) stuff that people actually want? Do you have a compelling mission statement? Are you interesting?

A simple suggestion to build a following:

Avoid being boring.

Tactics to build a following

Practical tactics:

1. Cross-pollinate: promote yourself on different channels, and make your channels or accounts link to one another. Cross-pollination: imagine a bee going from one flower to the other, cross-pollinating all the flowers as it goes.

Everyone benefits.

2. Publish useful stuff: show your worth, knowledge, integrity, and intelligence as a photographer. Publish useful blog posts that empower your reader.
3. Find like-minded people: you want to build a following of people who believe in the same values as you do, and you want to empower them. You don't want

negative folks, haters, or random people following you. You want a small, yet focused following.

1,000 True Followers

I got this idea from Kevin Kelly: to survive and (eventually thrive) in your business as an entrepreneur:

Build 1,000 "true followers"

His definition of a true follower: someone who will pay real money for your products, services, or attend your workshop or event.

To think about it, you only need 1,000 paying customers to make a solid business.

Using ERIC KIM as an example: my bread and butter is teaching workshops and curating experiences.

When I get 16 students to invest \$2,000 USD to attend my workshop, after expenses, my profits will probably be around \$20,000 USD. That's a lot of money. All I need is \$40,000 USD a year to live "comfortably" in America. So for myself, I only need around 30 students (a year) for me to make a living.

Imagine now, if I had 1,000 students, each paying \$2,000 USD. This is where things get interesting from a business standpoint. In theory, that would be \$2,000,000 in income a year (\$2 million).

How to get people to invest in you

But how do you build enough trust to get a student to invest \$2,000 USD for your workshop?

1. Build trust over a long time:

Most of my students who attend my workshops have followed me for at least 2-3 years, and read my blog for a long time, watched my YouTube videos, downloaded my free presets, and read my books.

I've "been in the game" in the street photography world from 2011-2017, aka 6 years of building my brand of ERIC KIM. And to be frank, that's not even a long time.

Moral of the story: hustle hard for 5+ years, and you can make a good living from your passion.

2. Offer value

What value are you offering your customers?

For a workshop, I'm offering confidence. Courage. To help people become re-inspired. For them to "conquer their fears and meet new peers" (note how catchy rhyming mottos work well).

For a travel experience, I'm curating an unforgettable time in an exotic and foreign place. **I'm selling adventure and excitement.** That's what travel is all about.

So what are you *really* selling as a photographer?

If you're a wedding photographer, you ain't selling photos of the wedding. You're selling the *memories* of their special day.

If you do commercial work, you're not selling headshot photos. You're selling an image of *professionalism* and trust. The company will use the "professional" photos to also further sell themselves, their brand-image, and legitimacy--to have their clients give them money too.

3. Create insane value

To sum up,

Offer insane amounts of value to your customers. Offer more than you take.

For example, I'm selling confidence in my workshops, which will compound interest for the rest of a student's life. Additional confidence in their photography will also be additional confidence in their personal and business life.

If I teach a workshop on Photography Entrepreneurship for 10,000 USD, and my students can end up earning 200,000 USD, that's insane value.

To once again sum up:

Offer more value than you take.

BE STRONG, ERIC

CHAPTER 5. HOW TO SELL OUT

Dear friend,

If you don't want to make money with your photography, please don't read this.

Okay, you still here? Cool. Let's proceed.

What is selling vs "selling out"?

As a liberal, socialist who studied Sociology at UCLA (left leaning school), who told myself that I'd never "Sell out to the man", I've started my own capitalist enterprise. I've done pretty well for myself, and continue to grow, emotionally, spiritually, financially, and physically.

To me, **life is about growth. If you're not growing, you're dying.**

- To sell: make money from the work and labor you do.
- To sell out: betray your core values and ethics and morals, for profit.

For example, if I hate smoking (I do), selling out would mean that I would accept a \$1 million dollar payment (bribe) from Marlboro to shoot an advertisement campaign for them. Or to blog about how smoking cigarettes will make you more creative and inspired in your photography.

To sell yourself as a photographer: charge money for your services, and make a profit.

What are you trying to do?

So, as you read this, what are your goals? What are you really trying to do?

- Is photography your passion, and you have a day job, but you just wanna make extra bucks on the side?
- Are you trying to make a full time living from your photography?
- Are you seeking to get rich, and make a lot of money from your photography?
- Do you just want more people to see and appreciate your photos?

There is no "right" or wrong. Just know, brutally honestly, what your aims are.

What are your aims, Eric?

Okay this is my current mission statement:

I want to devote my life to creating open and free information, to empower the individual and humanity. Photography is just another channel or field I want to contribute to. Ultimately, my aim is to contribute to photography, art, culture, information, and society.

To reach my aims in this capitalist world, I want to accrue money, power, and influence. I see money as a tool, and a means to an end. Not the end in itself.

To clarify,

I want to use money as a tool to help more people.

To start, I gotta take care of my family. I gotta help myself, Cindy, my mom and sister, and Cindy's family. That's the first priority.

Then helping close friends, and others in my community.

Then all of humanity.

Barbell pricing: Free or Very Expensive

Okay, so this is the theory and practice I follow:

FREE or VERY EXPENSIVE.

For example, my information is free. My products, books, services, workshops, consulting, and experiences are very expensive.

To me, everyone wins.

- I win because I make good money.
- My family wins because I can help pay their rent, and buy their freedom. They don't gotta work shitty minimum wage jobs just to keep the lights on.
- I don't worry about my living expenses, so I can be *more generous* in producing more open-source information. I don't gotta "nickel and dime" and charge for everything I create.

So essentially,

The richer I am, the more generous I am.

Ancient wisdom from Publius Syrus:

Don't water the lawn of your neighbor, if your own plants are dying.

Another one:

Something is worth what the buyer is willing to pay for it.

Therefore,

1. I must be selfish in order to be generous.
2. If I charge a lot of money for my products and services, and if it sells, that is what it is "worth."

How to market yourself

To me, "marketing" is just another form of communication. You gotta get yourself and message in the public eye, ear, and heart.

There are many ways you can market yourself, the most ancient way was "word of mouth" and trust/reputation.

So essentially my idea is this:

1. Create valuable, interesting, or empowering things
2. Share it with others
3. If others like it, they will share it with their friends and circle.

Therefore, the important things to focus on:

1. Make high-quality things
2. Share it with others
3. Hope that others will share it.
4. Repeat.

The secret is taking a lot of risks. To publish a lot. The more you swing your bat, the more likely you are to hit a home run.

Yet many of us are too afraid to swing. Why? Because society and bitter people hold us back.

Why is selling or selling out bad?

A question to ask yourself,

Is it bad to sell yourself, or to "sell out?"

If so, why?

For example, I was taught money was the root of all evil. So if I made money I would be an evil person, and maybe go to hell.

Now, I've seen the light. I see money as a tool. Like fire. You can cook food, or kill people with fire.

Money, if used with wisdom, is useful (Seneca).

How to overcome your shame of making money

Apparently it is bad to sell your art, because it de-legitimizes your commitment to your artistic vision.

I disagree. I agree with Andy Warhol who said, "The art of business is one of the most beautiful forms of art."

I don't think you must sell yourself or art to be seen as "successful" in the eyes of society. However, I do believe that selling yourself, services, labor, and art is helpful.

Why do you need money?

You need to survive. You need to *not* starve to death, die of thirst, or die from the cold.

Money is a nice modern invention which prevents us from starving to death.

Money helps us pay rent (prevent freezing to death), pay for food (fight off starvation), and for water (and coffee) not to die of thirst.

And then we like having money for transportation, modern conveniences like our espresso machines, wifi, digital devices, cars, etc.

More money, more options.

The more money we have, the more options we have in life.

The more options you have, the more freedom you have.

You have the option where to live. What and where to eat. What kind of coffee to enjoy.

You have control over your time. Your schedule. Essentially, **having money allows you to have power and control over your life.**

But you can still be a billionaire and not control your own life.

Easy heuristic (rule of thumb) from Nassim Taleb whether you own yourself or not:

Can you take a nap when you want to?

How to sell yourself

It ain't bad to sell out. You gotta sell yourself and services to make money.

So how to sell yourself? Some ideas:

1. Promote yourself: share your stuff with friends, family, and your followers.
Don't be shy.
2. Produce things of value, and advertise your own products, services, and the things you sell.
3. Have confidence in yourself and what you sell by *not* being apologetic about it.
Never apologize for selling something.

These strategies are very morally sound to me.

How to sell out

This is how you sell out, and sell your soul:

Accept money, no matter what your personal ethics or morals.

Follow your gut.

If you wanna sell out to feed your family, that's totally cool with me. But if you sell out just to buy that new Mercedes, I would probably look down on you.

And at the end of the day, just trust your gut. I think the gut (stomach, intuition) is smarter than the brain.

Don't be too rational in life. That's boring.

Rather, harness the creative spontaneity and inspiration in your soul.

And know there is nothing wrong with charging money and accepting money for your photographic or artistic labor. Just try your best not to sell your soul. And **if you are gonna sell your soul, don't sell it for cheap.**

BE STRONG, ERIC

CHAPTER 6. PHOTOGRAPHY EXPERIENCE ECONOMY

Dear friend,

Let me share some ideas on this brave new world of the "Photography Experience Economy."

Basic concept:

In today's world, we are investing a lot of money to have memorable memories and experiences.

Teenagers no longer care to buy a car anymore. They want interesting and novel experiences-- like trying out a new coffee shop, camping in Portland or braving the ice in Greenland.

What are you really buying?

When I go into an Apple store, I'm actually not interested in the products. I'm interested in the experience-- how friendly the staff are, how the aesthetic sensibilities of the Apple store architecture will affect my emotions, and how being in an Apple store makes me *feel*.

Let me give you another example: most artists and musicians make a bulk of their money from touring, doing concerts, and live shows.

For example, I went to the YEEZUS concert, to see Kanye West in person, and have the *experience* of being at a concert. I'd rather have the experience of seeing Kanye live, instead of just watching YouTube videos at home, or listening to his music on my headphones in private.

I was impressed with the Kanye concert: he made the music a listening *experience*-- he made a mountain erupt with crimson-red LCD lava, the bass hit you heavy in the heart, and at one point, he put on a disco ball mask, where the green lasers would refract into the crowd.

In other words, it was a fucking cool experience, that I still remember.

Photography workshops.

So the reason I think my photography workshops are so successful is because people want an experience. We know how to make the photos, and we can download the free ebooks, read the articles, or watch the YouTube videos.

Yet, we want the experience of shooting with ERIC KIM on the streets. To see how ERIC KIM shoots in real life. To get practical 1:1 help, advice and encouragement. We want to feel the passion of ERIC KIM in person.

Experiences never die.

Experiences are everything.

For example, reading a book is often an *experience*. I love the *experience* of reading a paper back book, sitting on my couch. I love the texture and the haptic response of the crimson pages against my fingers. I love the smell of the book. And best of all, I love the solid “flap” sound when closing a book, when you finish the book experience, then put it back on the shelf in triumph. No ebook or kindle can give you that experience.

Cindy publishes HAPTIC books, which are compact, and live with you. You open them when you need inspiration. You write in the books, you interact with the book. The book is your friend, guide, and mentor. But you are also the book. You can fold the pages, highlight pages, and make it your own.

Even with leather products or raw denim, you have an experience with them. For example, my HAPTIC bag has lasted me 3 years. Her cognac leather has worn to my body over the years. The more I use it, the more I like it. The same with the patina and “brassing” of my film black paint Leica MP. The more rolls of film I put through my Leica, the more she shows her character. Her edges turn a bronze gold, and I feel proud. There is a sense of progress.

You are renting your experience privilege

Consider this: when you go to a fancy restaurant, you're not paying for the food. You're paying for the experience.

This is what struck me when Cindy and I went to a \$\$\$ Yelp restaurant in San Francisco. It was fucking expensive, like \$200 USD between both of us. Yet, we sat, chatted, and ruminated on life for around 4 hours. Therefore, if you think about it, we just rented the seats to have the privilege of experiencing the vibe of the place.

So to make myself feel better, we each spent \$100 for a 4-hour experience. That is around \$25 an hour. Which isn't horrible.

A movie at a theater: around \$10 a ticket for a 1.5 hour movie. Add popcorn or a drink, let's say another \$5. So \$15 a person for a 1.5 hour movie. That's around \$10 an hour for your movie watching experience.

If you spend \$500 a night at a hotel, you're not really paying for the room or the bed. You're paying for the hotel *experience*-- the courtesy of the staff, the experience of the nice architecture, and aesthetics. The experience of being treated like royalty.

We all want to show off

For myself, when I start to think about reality and the economy in terms of *experiences*, things make a lot more sense.

Why spend \$1,000 on a Gucci jacket? Not to own a \$1,000 piece of cow skin that was made in a factory in Italy by an immigrant. No, you're paying for the *experience* of hanging out in a Gucci store, feeling fancy, and the *experience* of feeling fancy, and showing off to your friends or other social acquaintances.

How to make money selling experiences in photography

So let's take this to photography:

1. Sell experiences

I realized: my workshops aren't workshops-- they're *experiences*.

The *experience* of shooting and hanging out with Eric. The *experience* of learning from Eric. The *experience* of being in a cool foreign city, and making new friends. The *experience* of drinking espresso, drinking beers at a loud pub, or partying in a Japanese Izakaya with smoked beef skewers with Eric.

What I realized was this:

*If I'm selling an experience, not just a workshop, I can charge more money.
Because I'm offering a greater service.*

For example, in my workshops, I hang out with the students after the workshop is over. I eat dinner with them, enjoy beers with them, and share my life with them. **I'm sharing my soul with them.**

And to be honest I fucking love my students. I see them as my peers, my fellow friends, and also my teachers. **I learn as much from my students, as much as they learn from me.**

I always loved and believed this saying on teaching:

When one teaches, two learn.

So when you're teaching a workshop-- rephrase it. Consider,

I'm curating an experience for the student.

What kind of experience are you creating? What I try to create:

- Openness: a non-pretentious learning experience and environment.
- Sharing: students share their experiences with others.
- Improvement: seeking to improve confidence, courage, and composition.
- Laughter: lots of laughing, joking, fist-bumping, and hugs.
- Food: good food, good experiences and relaxed dinner experiences.
- Coffee: good coffee, single origin espressos, almond milk cappuccinos, and good coffee shop aesthetics.
- Humility: Eric Kim as a humble teacher and guide, or facilitator. Not teacher who tries to fill the students head with his knowledge. Rather, to **facilitate the students to self-learn, and to empower themselves.**

In essence, **a workshop is a tool to self-empower the students.** To teach the students to help themselves. Before the time *after* the workshop is the most valuable.

You don't want your students to be dependent on you.

Kill the teacher.

I asked myself,

How can I make myself redundant?

The best teacher: a teacher who doesn't want the student to become dependent on them.

For example, ideally, a student would attend my workshop, and never need to attend another workshop again-- unless it is to share experiences, and to share our lives together.

50% of the students at my workshops are returning students. Which means, they love me and the experience enough to pay money, transportation, and accommodation to have *another* memorable experience together.

Don't be a Nespresso or Keurig machine: making you buy those stupid fucking pods to just enjoy a cup of coffee.

Rather, be a tool of empowerment for the students.

Be the shot of espresso.

When I listen to Kanye West's music, it is like having a shot of espresso.

A lot of people read this blog everyday with their cup of coffee. Ideally, nobody would read this blog. Rather, they would go out everyday, and make photos which excites and inspires them.

But unfortunately many of us lack daily inspiration. So **I wanna be that morning shot of espresso to get you going creatively as an artist and photographer.**

How can you create experiences to inspire, and empower your viewer?

Ways to consider this:

- How to inspire your viewers to make more photos.
- How to inspire your viewers to consider themselves not just photographers, but artists?
- How to inspire your followers to become the best artists they can?

For me, that means **not being negative**. I fucking hate negative people and negative energy. That is why I cut my dad out of my life, and that is why I no longer involve myself in petty online social media politics, commentary, or drama.

If you have something to say that isn't positive don't say it.

There is enough negative bullshit in the world. Do you want to add negative black energy, to this dump of online hate? Or do you want to spread a ultralight beam of positivity, positive vibes and energy, to encourage and uplift others?

Be positive.

When curating experiences for your clients, students, viewers, family, friend, partner, kids, whoever-- be positive.

Offer solutions rather than offering problems (what consultants *should* do).

Offer simple solutions, instead of trying to over-complicate things to justify your job. This is why I hate wine commentators or coffee “experts” who make things too complicated, to make you feel small and stupid.

Simplicity is the ultimate badge of confidence, knowledge, and self-assurance.

If you're offering complicated solutions, get another job, or simplify your solutions.

Conclusion. Sell experiences

Sorry friend, this got a bit random and ranty.

But the one thing I want you to take away:

To make money in photography, sell experiences, not photos or information.

BE STRONG, ERIC

CHAPTER 7. TO BE BOLD

The secret to failure is timidity.

Don't be a jellyfish

Kendrick Lamar has a good line, comparing other rappers like jellyfish, with no spine.

If you want to succeed, you need to be BOLD. Boldness, courage, strength, and infallible belief in yourself is the only way to win.

What is BOLDNESS?

To me, BOLDNESS is not fearing death.

To be BOLD: don't hesitate. Jump before you look.

Of course, you want to make "calculated risks." For example, don't just quit your job because photography is your passion. You gotta actually make money before quitting your day job.

To me a calculated risk is:

Know your maximum downside, and adjust accordingly.

For myself, I am able to be bold when blogging and sharing controversial ideas, because nothing can hurt me. Unfortunately, if there is anything I learned from the Trump election it is this:

As an entrepreneur or artist, there is no such thing as "bad press."

Essentially, **all press is good press.**

If you want to succeed, you need attention. The new movie "Okja" (great film) got all this free press, because the director released it on Netflix the same time it was released in theaters. Apparently it broke all these legal rules, but the controversy led to the popularity of the film.

Even Kanye West would post all this controversial shit on Twitter, and engaging in “Twitter wars” with other artists. But this helped him build all this hype for his “The Life of Pablo” album. And it became one of the most popular streamed albums of all time.

How to harness controversy

Some folks call me (ERIC KIM) one of the most controversial photographer bloggers out there. I agree.

Why am I controversial? I just say what’s on my mind, and cannot be controlled. People like to watch me, and read my stuff, because I go against the grain. I just say what’s on my brain.

Controversy has been good for me. Some controversial blog posts:

- why I shoot in P (program) mode
- why I gave up digital for film
- why I prefer jpeg over RAW
- how I earn over \$200,000+ a year from photography
- why I deleted my Instagram
- why I give away my photos for free

They have brought the name ERIC KIM in the face of millions. Even my YouTube videos of me shooting flash in Hollywood, and the video I did with Kaiman Wong on Digital REV got more than 80% hate. But 20% of people liked it. And 20% of thousands of people is better than nothing.

Of course all this negative hate got to me. There were days where I would lose my mojo, self esteem, or self belief. After people accused me of just biting off Bruce Gilden, I didn’t pick up my camera for almost a month. I did a lot of self questioning and felt really shitty about myself.

But like Nietzsche says, “What doesn’t kill me, only makes me stronger.”

Put on your Adamantine Armor

To be BOLD, put on adamantine armor. Adamantine is the mythical steel that powers Wolverine.

I like Wolverine as a symbol of strength, power, and inspiration because of this reason:

Wolverine feels pain, but doesn't die.

So when you get hated on, or when reality shoots bullets at you, you will feel the pain. But you have the strength to overcome and keep hustling forward.

So know that the more bold you are, the more chances you take, the more you are going to expose yourself to the hate of small men.

And like a Spartan warrior, you will laugh, and keep marching forward.

BE STRONG, ERIC

PHOTOGRAPHY ENTREPRENEURSHIP 101 by ERIC KIM

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