

TEN HABITS OF SUCCESSFUL PHOTOGRAPHERS

Mark J. Lukes, for Equine Photographer's Network, May 2007

1. Visualize Succeeding at Your Goals

Creative visualization is the technique of using your imagination to create your ideal life. The principle is simply that whatever can be clearly created in the mind can be converted into reality. The goals that you desire to achieve are generally a concept rather than a physical item. Once defined, you can break goals into effective strategies and walk through them step-by-step in your mind. This will not only help you prepare for each step along the way, but will also guarantee arrival at your destination.

2. Review Your Goals On a Regular Basis

At least once a month, review your short-term goals to make them familiar, realistic, approachable and also reachable. Your goals will become something to achieve instead of something to avoid. They help you make small and large decisions, which are so important to achieving your success. Go back to your goals when you are having a tough time. If they are clear and honest, they will help you make wise career choices.

3. Get Regular Reviews on Your Work from Your Peers

Invite successful, professional photographers whom you respect to your studio to see your work. This should be done at least once a month, if not more often. These people have the experience and hands-on knowledge of what it takes to make it as an artist. An honest, sincere, accurate critique can be very important to your growth as a professional.

4. Maintain Your Support Material

Every three months, update your support material, including your resume, artist statement, biography, articles from the press, and prints of new work. Create an inventory sheet with retail prices. The best way to store most of this is on a computer. As you become more involved in your career, you incur situations where you need to supply support material quickly. With your inventory and files in good shape, you will be prepared to explore different opportunities.

5. Thank People Who Help You

Get into the habit of writing thank you notes to collectors who buy your work, visitors who show interest, editors who review your portfolio, arts writers who write about your work, and other people who intersect with your career. Always have a stack of postcards with your image on it ready to use for thank you notes. People will remember a thank you note, they will appreciate your thoughtfulness, and you will develop a wider group of supporters.

6. Be Prolific

Georgia O'Keeffe said serious artists always have three shows painted and ready to go. This advice is as important for photographers as it is for artists. To have three shows in your studio means you are prolific enough and creating consistent work, which is exactly what collectors, dealers, and museum curators want to see. Having three shows available also means that you can jump on opportunities that arise with little notice.

7. Research

Many photographers, especially nature photographers, feel isolated. Attending art festivals and visiting galleries can be a way for photographers to become re-energized. Look at what other photographers – and artists - are exhibiting. What are people buying? How does your work compare?

8. Donate Prints of Your Photography

Donating prints of your imagery can be very helpful to photographers whose uppermost need is to get their work into the community. Fund-raising events can be a useful way to show work to the public, build up your resume, and make important contacts in the community.

9. Know the Key Players

Be aware of the important collectors, influential gallery dealers, the current museum directors and curators, the magazine editors and the active arts critics and writers. Attend functions where these people are; yes, schmooze!

10. Read Trade Journals

These magazines bring an overview of the whole photo world right into your studio—and they are full of the kinds of facts, opinions, and analyses that will keep you up-to-date in your chosen profession. The editorials and feature articles keep you apprised of new opportunities and techniques, and the names of key players at various institutions.

Adapted from an article by Geoffrey Gorman: author, career coach, consultant, artist, gallery director and president of GG & A, career development firm for artists. To register for his newsletter go to his web site www.artistcube.com or contact him at Geoffrey Gorman & Associates, 2013 Kiva Road, Santa Fe, NM 87505 (505) 982-4016.