



Written by Gregory Cazillo, Photographer cazillo.com



Biography	2
1. Formal Education	3
2. Find Your Niche	4
3. Setup Your Business Correctly	4
4. Partnerships	4
5. Step Up with Your Own Website (It's Not Scary!).....	5
6. Start Your blog and social media	6
7. Local Marketing/Networking	6
8. Sell High Quality Prints & Products	7
9. Pricing Your Services Properly.....	7
10. Seek Advice	8
Conclusion.....	9

Biography

My name is Greg Cazillo, owner of Cazillo Photography and Web Design. With over 15 years of photography experience and a degree from Antonelli Institute of Photography, I have practical expertise in commercial and product photography as well as portraiture for small businesses and large corporations alike. My business, however, is primarily built on retail portraiture and wedding photography. I derive great pleasure from creating beautiful, timeless images for families and couples to treasure and share.

I've been told that I think like an artist. Better yet, that I SEE like an artist. Creating photographs is more than just taking a picture of a given subject. One must be able to think outside the box, to bend boring rules, and modify environments and technologies in order to exercise creative inspirations. I enjoy piquing everyone's curiosity with original and inventive ways of thinking, ways of seeing.

My staff and I are always available for your photography questions or if you would like to hire us for an upcoming photography need. [Contact Greg](#)

You may share this ebook with others only if it is done so in its entirety and for free.

Please take advantage of following Greg on social media with the links below.



1. Formal Education

I am a huge believer in formal education. Schools such as [Antonelli Institute](#) and [The Art Institute](#) are the best way to go from an amateur to professional assistant in just a couple of years. A professional assistant is someone who knows how to setup a light stand or a high key portrait. How to use Lightroom and a gray card. The only way to gain this knowledge is through experience and doing it. It took me 3 1/2 years to graduate from Antonelli while working 50-60 hours per week to pay for it. Antonelli honed my skills and made sure I was ready to get a job or start my own business. Here's the short list of acquired skills:

- Photo processes in color, B&W and digital
- All types of equipment from 35mm to 4x5 to all types of lighting equipment
- Pricing my work and having the confidence to charge a premium for it, then sticking to that price
- Posing, lighting and working with models/subjects
- Commercial and portrait photography

In addition to formal education studying photographers whose work you appreciate will help you to develop a photographic style. I attribute my style to a number of people. John, a coworker and dear friend, and I met while I was working in a large retail camera store during high school, and fortunately I still have his influence today. He pushed me to study the work of Ansel Adams & gain an understanding of the importance of light, shadow, proper printing and finishing techniques. On a regular basis still ask John's opinion on some idea I have or ask how can improve my photography.

My next style influence was my first assistant photo gig I had working with a local photographer whose name was Jim. His style was very traditional and I still, to this day, count 1 - 2 - 3 when I am shooting portraits the same way I learned over 15 years ago. The second thing I learned from Jim was attention to detail. He was fastidious about checking things like clothing for wrinkles and hand position. It drives me bonkers when I see a great photo with toes cut off or someone with tightly clenched hands, which are things that could have easily been improved upon if the photographer had taken a little more time to create the photograph.

At Antonelli I studied the work and style of [Yousuf Karsh](#). He is one of the great masters of light and posing of the 20th century. One of Yousuf's techniques to make sure his model was comfortable was talking with them for a few hours before the session. Maybe someday our society will get back to this point, enabling photographers to truly learn about their subject to create images that reflect their true beauty. I do my best to relax my subjects by talking to them and pay close attention to their visual cues to see if they are comfortable or need more time to relax. Yousuf's images are iconic, beautiful and inspiring.

His portraits include Winston Churchill, Pablo Picasso, Ernest Hemingway, Albert Einstein, General Dwight Eisenhower, Jacqueline Kennedy, Fidel Castro and Mother Teresa just to name a few.

Lastly are the teachers at Antonelli. I was able to pick my classes and teachers and apply myself to the style of photography I wanted. I am not an artsy fartsy photographer who tries to create abstract images for sale. Instead, I



create what people WANT TO BUY. I make a living with my camera and the idea of 'starving artist' doesn't really appeal to me (Is that a fat joke?).

2. Find Your Niche

Everyone has their own niche in photography, it can be hard to find it. Maybe you enjoy weddings, or kids, or babies. Maybe you especially enjoy sporting events and have a great knowledge of the game or sport you can apply to your photographs. Are animals your thing? Then spend more time photographing them and working toward specializing in that type of photography.

You do, however, need to know how to create photographs outside of your niche. I've often said that you need to say that you specialize but be able to do anything. I'll often get calls from people who say they loved my photo of a little girl or met me photographing at a local event but want to hire me to photograph their latest widget on a white background. If you want to succeed you need to be able to create many types of photographs especially when starting out. As I'm writing this I received an email to photograph a master bathroom remodel, what a coincidence!

Working outside of your comfort zone can also help you to find your niche. You may have applied a lighting technique to a product photo or bought a new piece of equipment for an architectural photograph but then apply it to a new series of pet photos. You really never know where the inspiration will come from so be open to new ideas and challenges.

3. Setup Your Business Correctly

If you want to be serious about being a Professional Photographer the first person you need to talk to is an accountant. They will set you up with the proper documents and educate you on being a business owner. Their experience will help you by leaps and bounds and keep you on the straight and narrow. I'm not going to go into specifics here, that's why you need to find a local professional to help you get the business end off the ground.

You may want to work from home at first which is a great way to keep costs down. Check with your municipality about any permits you need to run your business from home or office. Many times you will also need temporary permits to photograph in public or national parks, they are sticklers about that. In my opinion it is BS that we get charged to photograph there, but it's the law and we have to abide by it.

Last thing you need is branding. Logos, letterhead, website, business cards, etc are all very important parts of making your business look professional. If you can't spend a ton of money on designing a logo then I suggest finding a local graphic designer who will barter with you for photographs. Most of them have families and/or clients who need photographs for their business. This can be a good business relationship which will grow over time, allowing both of you to refer business back and forth.

4. Partnerships

Three words, DON'T DO IT. I've had too many failed partnerships to list and the dissolutions of which haven't been pretty. It might sound like a good idea to share equipment, marketing costs, etc., but almost never works out well for both parties; someone always gets the short end of the stick.



One idea that might work, if you must, is studio rental. Get the proper contract drawn up and share the rent and some expenses for the studio or office. That way you can own your own equipment and market your services the way you want without issue.

5. Step Up with Your Own Website (It's Not Scary!)

Please, please set up your OWN website rather than using a service like wix.com or smugmug.com which will give you an unprofessional address like myphotos.smugmug.com. Using such services seems like good option initially because it's inexpensive, easy and flashy, but you will outgrow it quickly and wish you did it right from the beginning.

Here's what will happen. You work your butt off promoting your photography, sending everyone to your "starter" website. As your popularity grows your raving fans will put back links on their blogs and social media outlets because they love your photos. At this point you realize you need more features (such as a blog) and are tired of sending someone else a percentage of your hard earned money and it's time to step up and play with the big boys/girls. Being a Big Boy or Girl on the web means stepping up your game with a real website that gives you a more professional image that fits your style and meets your expectations.

Remember that back link thing? When you change sites, they're gone! Anyone who follows any of those old links will be greeted by a blank page or an invite to view other photographer's work. Houston, we have a problem! Unless you can get each and every person to change their website, blogs, tweets or Facebook posts to point to your new Big Boy Digs those links are gone along with the traffic and potential profits associated with them.

Another issue with starter website services is mobile phone friendliness. That blank page gremlin could greet your clients again since its written in a language no longer supported on mobile devices. For example, Adobe just cancelled support for Mobile Flash and Apple never supported it in their iOS mobile operating system.

The best way to set up a photography website is with a CMS (Content Management System) platform like Joomla! or Wordpress. I recommend Joomla since it is a framework that allows you to build what you need with small package add-ons rather just blogging software like Wordpress. Want a blog with comments or want to add an e-commerce in a year, plus a photo gallery, reviews section or forum? Joomla! can do that. Joomla!'s learning curve can be challenging but totally worth it in the end. You could even partner with a local website designer trading photos for their time to setup your website. It never hurts to ask!

Professionalism goes for your email too. How easy is it to remember my email address greg@cazillo.com? A business coach advised me to use my Cazillo.com domain instead of other email accounts I had setup. Help yourself to stand out by setting up an email account that matches your domain name. Most reputable web hosts offer this service. An alternative is using free Outlook.com email hosting. This allows you to send and receive emails at your domain name and has additional features such as contact lists and calendaring to keep you more organized.

Shameless plug: if you can't find a local website designer you like I'll gladly help you out, but only because you are a valued #Cazillion ;0)



6. Start Your blog and social media

In my opinion, every serious photographer needs a blog. Even if you only post a photo every two weeks, that's 24 articles this year.

This gives you 24 more chances that someone will like a photo you put up and 24 more pieces of content that can help your site show up in the SERPs (Search Engine Results Pages, ie Google.com). Google continually releases changes to their algorithm; one of the more recent ones is a freshness update. Your Joomla! blog that is updated twice monthly could rank higher than your competition's website which has not been updated in three years.

Social media is a huge investment in time, but worth it in the long run. Set up your photo business as a PAGE on Facebook, not a Profile. Suggest it to your friends and ask them to comment on your blog as well as share your content with their friends. The key here is to ASK THEM TO SHARE not just expect that they will. SM also requires interaction. You may have noticed I comment and ask questions A LOT on social media, comments, etc which I take great pride in. Sometimes I'll even reply right away which makes the reader feel a part of the community. Other social media outlets like Instagram, Vine, Flickr, 500px etc are great outlets too. The main thing is that if you start a new profile, use it and stick with it! Don't start and it never upload or share on it again. Push yourself to post something at least once a month. Setup a blog/social media calendar which outlines when you want to post to each place and stick with it.

Your blog should not be on a separate service like Tumblr or Blogger because It won't allow your main website to accumulate more backlinks, which is the #1 way to have your website show up high on the SERPs.

As you may have noticed from my blog and/or social media posts, I also have been sharing my firefighting career with you. Being personal on your blog is a great way to develop a better connection with your readers and possible clients, influencing them to hire you.

7. Local Marketing/Networking

It's great to blog, tweet, and post your content to Facebook or Google+ but you still need to market your services locally. Get out in the community! Volunteer to help non-profit organizations such as fire companies, churches, etc. Shoot events for free to get your name out. Pass out some business cards or postcards. Ask for a link from the organization's website to yours.

Consider joining local business professional groups like LeTip or your local chamber of commerce. Participate in the events, go to business card exchanges and take your camera! Collect their business cards and send the photos to the people you met for free with an email introduction of your business. ASK FOR A REFERRAL from them; most people will be happy to refer their friends or family to another good businessperson.

I mentioned a [group called LeTip](#). I've been a member since 2007 and it's paid for itself at least 25 times. The cost is about \$1000 per year depending on the chapter's location. That may seem expensive, but has turned into at least \$10,000 in revenue each year. If you do choose to join LeTip, be sure to put my name on the application where it says 'referred by' ;0).



Other small stuff skip the Yellow Pages, postcard campaigns and newspaper ads. When was the last time you bought something because of any of those sources? Its been many years for me since I used a phone book for anything but a step stool for little Johnny during the portrait session. Word of mouth and recommendations are #1. Ask your friends and family for recommendations, give them business cards or brochures to hand out to potential clients. Lastly remind them to reshare that awesome new photo you put up on your business Facebook page and to retweet your latest blog article.

8. Sell High Quality Prints & Products

Ideally, you want to sell products and services that a consumer cannot get on their own. One example is high end photo albums and photo framing. Order your books from a company such as Renaissance or Zookbinders and find a local picture framer that will work with you and give you a discount for being a good customer and 'being in the business'.

I've been taking my prints to Bridget for about 7 or 8 years to be framed. Going to Michael's or WalMart for your frames doesn't give you any exclusivity or a reason for the client to buy from you. Real picture framers that have years of experience can suggest moldings, mats, and layouts, giving your images the final touch that clients don't mind paying for. The easy way to do this is to send your clients right to your new best friend the picture framer. You ask, how does that make me money? Set up a deal with them to give you 10% of the sale. All you have to do is drop off the prints to the framer and tell your client to expect a phone call. When the framer calls they say " Hi I am the local professional picture framer in the area. Joe Photographer asked me to call you so we can setup a time for you to stop by and pick out your framing." The framer does the work from there on and you collect a commission check.

As you may know I am not a fan of printing in house with an inkjet printer. It works for some people but I think it's a waste for many others. Buying the right printer then keeping it in ink and paper is expensive, not to mention all the time you spend learning how to do it. Wasted ink and paper are one thing but time is invaluable. There are only so many hours in the day, why do you want to waste hours and hours fixing printer issues? Do yourself a favor, get a Miller's account. Export your photos from Lightroom then upload them when done. They will be on your doorstep in 48 hours and you can concentrate on things that make you money like shooting photos or going to another networking event.

Printing in house takes time to learn the printer, profiles, minimize waste, etc. Only after 15 years in the business have I invested in my own Epson printers of which I use for event photos. They do have a great profit margin as long as you know what you are doing. Be warned they have a steep learning curve for professional, repeatable results especially if you are not computer savvy.

9. Pricing Your Services Properly

Cheap sells at WalMart, so if you want to compete with them go for cheap stuff. Do you think you can compete with them? I doubt it. You might last a year then give up.



The preferred method is to forget about your competition and set your own prices. Develop your own products for sale and charge a premium. How many \$10 8x10 prints do you have to sell each month to pay the mortgage? Probably a lot especially since your profit margin isn't very good. You have spent a lot of time, effort and money in equipment and know how to be able to create quality photographs, why are you giving it away for next to nothing?

I'm not saying setting prices is easy, but let's use the backwards method. Let's say you want to make \$300-\$500 on each family portrait sitting you have. Approximately 50% of that should be the sitting fee or \$250. Then make up some package pricing as well as ala carte prices for prints, DVD slideshows, albums, wall portraits, etc. Subtract the \$25 you will make for doing nothing from the picture framer and break down the rest to get your prices.

You don't want to be the low cost photographer; you want to be the low risk photographer. That means knowing exposure, your equipment, surroundings, client's expectations & trade better than most. This means having backup equipment, more training, or an extra call or meeting with the client to be sure you are crystal clear on what they want. If you can show to a potential client that your work and professionalism stands above the rest of the competition your price won't matter. People and companies will pay for quality and low risk especially if they are having a one time event that can't be redone.

When you work for yourself you wear many hats. Obvious ones are photographer, marketing department, blogger, and salesperson. Others you must wear are those of bookkeeper, photo printer, and photo editor. Those last three can very easily be outsourced, either to a photo lab such as [Miller's Professional Imaging](#) (my photo lab since 2002) or an intern who edits your photos for college credits.

10. Seek Advice

You have read all the way through this ebook so you are on the right path! Most photographers and other local business people are willing to help you succeed. There is a ton of work out there for everyone, its just a matter of finding it. I'll be here for your questions, don't be afraid to ask!

One great source of business advice is [SCORE](#) (Service Corps of Retired Executives). Most likely you won't find another photographer as a mentor at SCORE, but you will find someone with an outsider's perspective on the business world that can dramatically help you to grow and succeed.

From the [SCORE About us page](#):

SCORE is a nonprofit association dedicated to educating entrepreneurs and helping small businesses start, grow, and succeed nationwide. SCORE is a resource partner with the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), and has been mentoring small business owners for more than forty years.

SCORE is a valuable network of 13,000+ volunteers who offer small business entrepreneurs confidential business counseling services at no charge. SCORE volunteers have the knowledge and experience to help any small business owner get the help they need. Our dedicated volunteers represent over 270,000 years of experience across 62 industries.



SCORE also provides local workshops and events throughout the country to connect small business owners with the people and information they need to start, grow, and maintain their businesses, as well as online workshops available 24/7. SCORE provides resources, templates and tools to assist entrepreneurs in developing tools and plans they need to navigate their way to small business success.

Conclusion

Starting a photography business is a slow road driven by passion. You will make mistakes, miss photos that would have sold well, and have to reorder prints 2 or 3 times to get them right but those mistakes make us stronger. I hope you can benefit from the mistakes which I made early on and have lead to this Top 10 list. Dedicating yourself to this monumental undertaking of being a Professional Photographer requires a lot of dedication, hard work, long hours and a willingness to improve your craft. You can do it, just don't give up. At times you will be required to give 110% of yourself to make it happen.

Don't be afraid of making mistakes...everyone does it. Mistakes are the best way to learn. Keep shooting!

