

7 tips for a photography career

How does a photographer make the leap from hobbyist to professional? Helen Thompson from photographers' agents Vue Represents has picked seven key tips for a fruitful photography career.



It's tough to edit your own portfolio, as you may have emotional ties to images that don't add anything to your final selection.

1. Assist, assist, assist

You can learn a lot from photographers who have been working in the industry for years, so assisting is a really important step to becoming a photographer.

This is true not only on the technical side, but also concerning the etiquette of how to deal with suppliers and clients, and how to run a business.

2. Narrow your expertise

We don't need to see 50 images of girls wearing hats, just as we don't need to see a jumble of genres.

In photography, it's no use being a 'jack of all trades, master of none'. As agents, we look at photography every day. This can be awe-inspiring, but also mind-frazzlingly mediocre – especially when we regularly receive emails from photographers who shoot a bit of fashion, some portraits and a few landscapes.

It's just confusing, so consistency is really important. We want to see that you can shoot really strong portraits, visually exciting still lifes or breathtaking landscapes, not a gaggle of the three and more.

3. Edit your portfolio

We don't need to see 50 images of girls wearing hats, just as we don't need to see a whole jumble of genres, from cars to fashion to drinks to landscapes.

It's tough to edit your own portfolio as you may have emotional or sentimental ties to certain images that, ultimately, don't add anything to your final image selection.

If you want to photograph for advertising, consider the kinds of ads you want to shoot and who your competitors would be. If you want to shoot for M&S Food, there's no point having a book full of images of greasy burgers.

4. Make contact wisely

Before you contact anyone, be it an agent, an agency or a magazine, think about who you are targeting and why.

We love to see personal work, and so do art buyers.

Crucially, when you do send that nerve-racking email, don't CC everyone in. Being able to see who else you've contacted means a black mark from the outset.

How is the agent or art buyer going to feel special if they are just a name on your list?

5. Photograph lots of personal work

We love to see personal work. Art buyers love to see personal work. It shows great ideas, passion for the subject matter and that you are able to collaborate and work with a team.

If a similar shoot then comes up and an agency is looking for a photographer, you'd be in a good position to get the job.

6. Update your website, blog and twitter

There's nothing worse than an out-of-date website, or one that doesn't work properly. With art buyers being such busy people, they don't always have the time to look at a printed portfolio, so a decent website makes their life easier.

It should be laid out clearly and images should load quickly. A regularly updated blog and twitter account are a bonus.

People love to see how the ‘magic’ happens, so behind the scenes pictures from shoots are great. Just don’t give away all your secrets!

Twitter is an excellent way to interact with creative people and can help you find an assistant last minute too.

7. Enter photography competitions

Competitions provide good publicity, as many will feature your work in the competition exhibition. If you’re lucky enough to win, you’ll get extra recognition.

Behind the scenes pictures are great, just don’t give away all your secrets.

These awards will also make excellent material for you to shout about on your blog and social media accounts.

Saying all this, it’s really important to shoot what you love. Working as a photographer can be a tough job, so loving what you do will make it that little bit easier.

Remember, everyone has a personal opinion and not everything one person says should be taken as gospel. If you’re not right for one commission, agent, or collaboration, you could be right for another.

Find out more about [Vue Represents](#), one of the UK's leading photo agents.

What are your photography tips?