

6 Keys to a Successful Sales & Marketing Program

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Marketing strategies abound in our industry. We pour over them in magazines, pick them up at workshops, tune into them on audio books. I came across a marketing blueprint last year that intrigued me. It was spelled out in the 2007 book by Selina Maitreya, *How to Succeed in Commercial Photography: Insights From a Leading Consultant* (Allworth Press), a comprehensive and compelling, articulate and inspirational text. I recently spoke with Selina to find out why vision, value, team, tools, persistence and faith are the keys to an effective marketing plan, and how they are particularly significant to certain clients. If you are wrestling with your marketing-and-sales program, read on.

1. Vision tackles the big picture.

What kind of vision are you selling? What type of vision do you have for your company? What would you offer? Who are the buyers? How will you market? “Vision also speaks to whether you are looking to work with a major campaign, with fewer clients and major ticket items, or if you plan to develop relationships with many people, where your company earns a lot of accounts,” explains Selina.

Ed McCulloch (www.edshoots.com), a new lifestyle shooter based in Provo, UT, had a big vision for his sales-and-marketing program and made it happen, even without adequate funds up front. Explains Selina, “He worked with me on the portfolio, with a great digital artist on his prints, and with a top graphic designer to develop a brand. He put himself in debt to do this because he believed in it. During his first year, he won a \$40,000 account and got a great agent, who saw he had a vision as a photographer, a vision for his marketing program, and had put it all together.” Says Ed, “Vision is the backbone of your career. Without it, you

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GALLERY ONE GALLERY TWO TEST SHEETS RECENT WORK ABOUT & CONTACT



Top: Ed McCulloch: *Golfer on Dock*, personal project. Retoucher: Switchman Studio

Bottom: Thomas Warfield Hill Photography website homepage

fail. Having a clear vision and understanding of who I am as an artist and where I want to be, I am able to home my marketing efforts in the direction that will best help me achieve my goals.”

2. Each vision has a different value for different photographers and clients. Ask yourself, what is the value of your product to the client, what value does each marketing tool have in your marketing program, who are the clients that would value this vision, what markets are they in, and what value does each marketing tool have in your program? Adds Selina, “Photographers often look at sales and marketing as ‘I’m going to do a direct mail hit, an email hit.’ They need to look at the whole program, the value of each of concept, and how they work together.”

Thomas Hill (www.twhill.com), a new architectural shooter based in Atlanta, GA, discovered how his website, designed by Christopher Radliff (www.residualzen.com), would add value to his vision, building credibility and a visual brand for his business. Says Selina, “Thomas needed to establish himself as more than a new shooter and more than just a mansion shooter. His website had to address the value he brought as a new architecture photographer, but not a new entity. The results speak for themselves.” Explains Thomas, “I needed to strengthen my vision and add value to my brand. I hired Selina Maitreya and Christopher Radliff to help create an identity for my marketing program. Without their help and insight, my brand would have no value, and I feel that I wouldn’t stand out in the crowd. I would find it extremely difficult to survive in this industry.”

3. Once you’ve clarified your vision, know its value to your clients, and what tools you’ll need based on your budget. It’s time to determine the team you’ll need for your marketing campaign. “Do you need a graphic designer, an art director, a portfolio builder, a consultant?” asks Selina. “How would your team relate to clients on a sales call, how do you team with clients? The word ‘team’ has everything to do with developing a sales and marketing presentation.”

Scott Mullenberg (www.mullenbergd designs.com), a portfolio builder based in

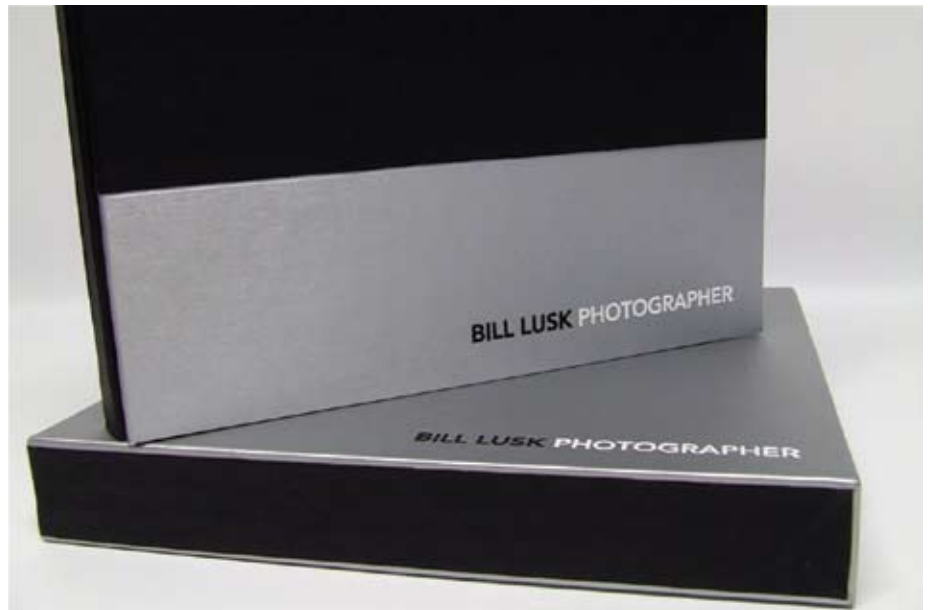
Top: Scott Mullenberg: Bill Lusk portfolio built and photographed by Scott Mullenberg

Bottom: Jonathan Hillyer: High Museum of Art

Biddeford, ME, is a versatile team player who creates exquisite showcases for photographers, including sports shooter Mike Powell (www.mikepowellphoto.com). With clients including *ESPN The Magazine* and *Sports Illustrated*, Powell creates elegant, dramatically lit images. Recalls Selina, “Scott blew me away when the book arrived. If there was anything more gorgeous than Mike’s images, it was the outside of this book. Together they were awesome.” Adds Scott, “Portfolio collaboration is an exciting one-on-one relationship between book builder and photographer. The portfolio creates a dynamic connection between the photographer and the art buyer, reflecting the shooter’s style, sensibility and aesthetic.”

4. Think about the visual tools you use to create your product, as well as your promotional choices—direct mail, email, website, the portals you select, the in-person sales calls. Says Selina, “While it’s much harder to get an appointment to show your book today, with so few photographers showing books in people’s offices, these visits are more important for you and the people you see. The selling paradigm has changed in some respects, but in-person visits remain a valuable tool.”

Jonathan Hillyer (www.hillyerphoto.com), an established architectural photographer based in Decatur, GA, has put the shine back on in-person sales calls. “I work with lots of photographers who go on sales calls.” Jonathan, who lines up six or seven



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Top: Lou Roole, *untitled*
Bottom: Normand Robert, *"Tango Passion"*

Brooklyn, NY, continues to pursue his dream of getting his business off the ground, notwithstanding limited funds. Recalls Selina, "In 2004, Lou and I put together a book; the next year we worked on postcards; the next year, email messages; and this year, he bought a database. Still building his tools, with no team except himself and me, Lou remains a UPS employee, and never gives up." Confirms Lou, "Thousands of photographers are out there, so if you're not persistent and consistent, you'll be forgotten. I know my goal and where I need to be and I don't let anything stop me."

6. Faith is critical, especially in the beginning of your program. "A year and a half into a program, when many photographers feel their efforts should have reaped results, some people lose it, start doubting me, themselves and their decisions," says Selina. "If they can allay their fears, they can continue. And all the tolls, team, value and vision will pay off. But if they don't have faith when persistence is about to run out, they're not going to be successful."

Normand Robert (www.normandrobert.com), a successful still life shooter from Montreal who wanted to switch to people subjects, worked on a new book for more than a year. He showed the new book to a stylist and an agent who told him it wasn't going anywhere. Recalls Selina, "I told him to have faith in me, faith in the vision. I brought the book to agents who are more national. Everyone loved it." As they worked to complete the book, he had faith and never questioned the work. Now Normand makes regular trips to New York to meet with top art buyers and agents who love the work. He adds, "Faith gives me the courage to express my originality and creativity, which come from the voice within. Faith is knowing that no matter how many obstacles are in the way, I'll ultimately find a solution where integrity, passion and emotion shine through."

These six concepts form a perfect roadmap for creating a successful business. **CC**

Alice B. Miller is the founder of Plum Communications (www.plumcomm.com), an editorial services resource for the photoimaging industry. Formerly editor of Studio Photography magazine, Alice has a clientele that includes photographers, manufacturers, publications and associations. She is a vice president and board member of the International Photographic Council.



calls whenever he goes to Boston on assignment, says his program's success—and the fact that he was so busy last year—is due to his sales calls. Adds Jonathan, "Selina is an integral partner in my marketing team, inspiring me to create the primary tools of my marketing efforts—a beautifully designed portfolio and website, striking postcard and email templates. Combining these four elements is a powerful fifth tool, in-person client meetings, where I present my portfolio. Together, these tools have helped me to create relationships with new clients and energize relationships with

existing clients."

5. Persistence is about staying the course. Develop your product, determine its value in your market, choose the team to build the tools that will bring your vision to the market that will value them, but without persistence you will fail. Says Selina, "The majority of people need two or three years to have enough time to make an impression on the market and have enough time to feel their efforts have reaped results. If you don't have the persistence it takes, it's all lost."

Lou Roole (www.louroolephotography.com), a portrait photographer based in