

### **Some Ideas for Creating Work and Getting Clients for Your New Photography Business**

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My name is Don Giannatti and I have been a commercial photographer for over 30 years. You can see some of my work at [www.dongiannatti.com](http://www.dongiannatti.com). I have been a general commercial photographer, but my specialties were women, beauty and still life. I am now a photographer / designer and work to create web sites and web application design. My partner, Daniel Magallanes, and I are very big believers in web marketing and online proofing for photographers, and believe it to be a fantastic way to jump start your photo business.

When I started my photography business long, loooong, ago, I had a niche market that intrigued me and I went after it with full enthusiasm. I loved to shoot pictures of girls and found that I had a good eye and personality for working with young models. I studied every fashion magazine I could find. I tried to do work that looked like the editorial pages of Vogue and Bazaar.

It paid off. I started working with some of the modeling agencies in the area and doing "Model Composites" became a huge revenue source for me. I bought equipment and studio space from shooting 4 – 6 looks per model... in only a few hours. I learned to shoot fast and direct the model with ease. Locations and the challenge of finding the best shot became second nature to me.

This experience led to my ability as an advertising shooter to find and direct a situation with ease. When you were used to doing 10 – 16 shots a day, doing one or two became much easier.

Model composite work is a fantastic way to get some revenue into your studio. You will need to understand the posing of models and what types of images their agents are wanting for them. It will also be important to locate a couple of locations that will allow for a diverse set of images to be produced quickly. I had several areas that would work in morning and several for afternoon shoots. Pre-scouted and with the necessary amenities available: rest rooms and changing areas, food, beverage and friendly owners.

These days I shoot fewer models (we really do need another day or so per week... call your congressman!), but make more money per model with online proofing. They can order their images and pay online. Agents, family, boyfriends and others can order the images. I also offer a large "poster" of the model at an affordable price and can usually sell a couple of those as well. In addition, they share the password with their model friends and that leads to more referrals.

And today, I shoot digital. Digital imaging lets photographers enter the business so much faster and with less cost for film and processing, they can learn faster. It is important that you keep digital in mind as you read the ideas below. Traditional film shooting can slow you down here. That being said, there are many situations that film may be the best choice, and a good film camera is never far from my grasp.

Here is a list of ideas that I would use to grow my business and gain a diverse client list if I were starting my photo business today:

### 1. **Pet photos**

Advertise a Pet Photography business to photograph pets with their owners. Most owners cannot take a good photograph with their pet all by themselves. You are the one who makes it easy for them to get a great portrait of them and their pet. Charge for the service and your time, and offer online proofing. They come to your site and choose the images that they want. You can send them prints created by your own photo printer or by a photo processing service. Many services also offer to print the photos on T-shirts, mugs, pillows and greeting cards. These gift services are often welcome by pet owners. Online ordering also allows them to show the images to family and friends and you can sell more prints.

Careful lighting and attention to background will be important selling points. It may be a good idea to have a set of backgrounds that can easily be transported.

### 2. **Sporting Contests**

Be around at the beginning and end of sporting contests to take photographs of the contestants who didn't even think of bringing a camera. Most contestants are more concerned about their performance than carrying cameras, but they want a picture of them at the meet or event, no matter where they place. Some areas that are very lucrative:

Weight Lifting Events  
Marathons / Running Events  
Softball Games  
High School Football / Basketball  
Skateboard Meets  
Amateur Racing

lots more... think about what is available in your area.

Make sure you get great images with controlled backgrounds. Hand out cards with your site info on it, and the login for the event, and they will visit and buy the images. The word of mouth will travel quickly and you will get assignment and commission work as well.

You must be quick to get them online, though, as the participants will want to see the images as fast as possible. You should use an online proofing system (like the PHOTool) that allows you to get the work online as easily and fast as possible.

### 3. **Parades / Community Events**

Be in position to get great shots of people and floats in parades and sell the prints back to the individuals or to their family members. The folks who take part in parades and other community events are often way too busy to take pictures before or after, so someone who captures them in action might really be doing them a favor - and a profitable service. With online proofing, you can sell the images to a lot of the participants as well as the local papers. In addition, the increased visibility and perceived expertise that you gain is invaluable.

### 4. **Landmark and tourist photographer**

If there is a famous landmark in your area, offer your photography services to tourists who want their photo taken in front of it. Even if the tourists are carrying a camera and get someone else to take their photo, often the camera won't be digital with a display so it means the tourists won't know how the picture turns out until they're long gone. With your digital camera, you should be able to show them it is a great picture.

My daughter and I spent an hour near Four Corners in northern Arizona. We started shooting the visitors there as something to do to amuse ourselves. After an hour, we had shot about 25 families standing on the four corners monument. We gave them a login and told them the images would not be available for a couple of days.

After the images were up, we started to get orders. Most ordered multiple 5x7's and four families ordered 16 x 20 images that netted me a profit of \$160 each.

**5. Graduations**

Preschool, high school, or college graduations offer dozens, if not hundreds of opportunities to capture a significant moment in someone's life. If the family members of the graduate aren't located in as good a location or don't have as good a camera as yourself - you'll have even greater opportunity to get the shots they can't. Give them your card and invite them to visit your site to see the images. You will be surprised at the interest and sales that will follow.

**6. Holiday Family Postcards**

Offer your services to families that want their picture taken for a greeting card to send to their extended family and friends. By using your digital camera you can not only get photo-postcards through online photo-processors, but you can make the prints available in your online gallery and have the customers refer their extended friends and family there to purchase a larger print if they desire it. Be very careful in posing the images and make sure you use a tripod if you are at all concerned about sharpness.

**7. Photo Novelty Items**

Take photographs of people who want pictures of themselves, their loved ones or pets imprinted on coffee mugs, mouse pads, keychains, tee-shirts, and other items. Usually you can find suppliers of such photo-transfer merchandise and equipment in business opportunity publications, such as *Mind Your Business 101: How to Select & Start Your Own Business*.

These folks are usually small business owners who need to 'Brand' themselves. These types of clients will need additional work down the road. Do a set of coffee mug images for a realtor and you could end up doing all the images of their listings as well.

**8. Promotional slideshow production**

Taking digital photos of a convention, church, business, college campus, or other conference locations - you can create a digital slideshow on Video CD or DVD for your customers to promote their business, organization, or event. Place the images on your online proofing site and sell the usage or prints to multiple organizations.

**9. Newborn photo service**

Parents of newborns are some of the busiest people in the world. Advertise your services on an on-call basis. Be available to take informal snapshots for the growing family either before they leave the hospital, or after they get home. This way both parents and the children can be in more of the pictures all together, and the parents have one less thing to try to figure out. Putting the images on your online proofing site will allow the parents to share the password with extended family and you make more sales.

**10. Brochures**

Brochures are everywhere. Businesses offer them, churches, and especially Real Estate offices. They all include photos. Since they are usually working on a limited budget, they are often willing to work with beginners. You can work cheaper than a professional can, since you don't have the high overhead that they have to figure into their fees. You will get exposure through word of mouth, which could eventually lead to much more lucrative work.

### 11. Post Cards

When you have mastered the basic photography techniques, you may be ready to try your hand at selling your own post cards. Local tourist attractions are the most popular subjects for postcards, but don't forget other possibilities, such as parades, festivals, schools, hospitals, and businesses. The more varied your subjects are, the more places you can find buyers for your postcards. Also, consider selling them directly to businesses to give away as promotional items and advertising.

With a good printer, you can produce many hundred postcards in your own studio. I have a friend that creates about 400 postcards per week in her studio. She sells every single one of them at the dozen or so outlets that carry them in her hometown. At \$2.50 per card, she gets \$1.25, and it costs her .28 to make. Profit enough to pay her studio rent.

### 12. Informal Senior Photos

Senior Photos have always been a major expense for families who have a child about to graduate. In the past, this meant one set of formal photos, taken at a photography studio. These photos can usually run several hundreds of dollars. Now, the common practice is to have two sets of photos; one formal and one casual. While most will choose to have their formal shots done in a studio, some may cut costs by having another photographer take their casual shots. As a location photographer, you may be able to do this for much less than the established studio photographer. You can make these shots on location at sights that your subject feels comfortable with, such as his own back yard, with their favorite pet or even their car or truck. These photos are great when taken outdoors, at parks or other natural attractions such as lakes, streams or waterfalls.

Get the images on to your online proofing system and the orders will follow quickly. Mom, dad, sisters, aunts and uncles, and friends will order images. Be creative in your pricing and offer a free 11x14 if the orders exceed 'X' dollars. Be generous. Getting the referrals is the name of this game.

### 13. Calendars

Calendars are another great selling item. People snatch hundreds of them off the shelves every year. Most of the time, though, all they have to choose from are ones with no connection to their area whatsoever. If you are lucky enough to find one that covers your particular state, it is unlikely that your town will be included. If you have a calendar of your area to sell, with some strikingly beautiful photos, you will have filled a void in the market. Yours will be the favorite among all those others and will jump off the shelves in no time. You can also contact the banks, funeral homes and other businesses in your area for the possibility of taking the shots for their calendars that they give away every year for advertisements. Local shots will be more likely to sell to local customers.

### 14. Creative Candids

Take photos of people and couples at events that you are attending. Always have your cards available to hand to someone you have photographed. (Of course your style in doing this kind of work is your own. I recommend asking first or acknowledging that you have shot them and would be ready to share your image with them.)

One of my friends here in Phoenix takes his camera everywhere. When he sees someone he thinks would make an interesting portrait, he introduces himself and offers to take a photograph of them. He will give them a free 4x6 if they come to pick it out on his online proofing system. They come and pick out their 4x6... and often they grab a couple of 5x7's or 8x10's as well. That is lucrative for a few minutes of photography.

He has made hundreds of dollars per month and it as led to dozens of commissions to shoot extended family portraits and more.

The key to taking your interest in photography to making money in photography is enthusiasm, talent and marketing. Online proofing is one of the easiest tools for a beginning photographer to use to increase sales, find new markets and create a 'Buzz' about their work. Work hard, learn your craft and take many, many pictures.

I hope you found the above information informative. For more information on starting a career in photography, visit some of these sites:

[www.thephototool.com](http://www.thephototool.com)  
[www.total-control-site.com](http://www.total-control-site.com)  
[www.apogeephoto.com](http://www.apogeephoto.com)  
[www.photosource.com](http://www.photosource.com)  
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