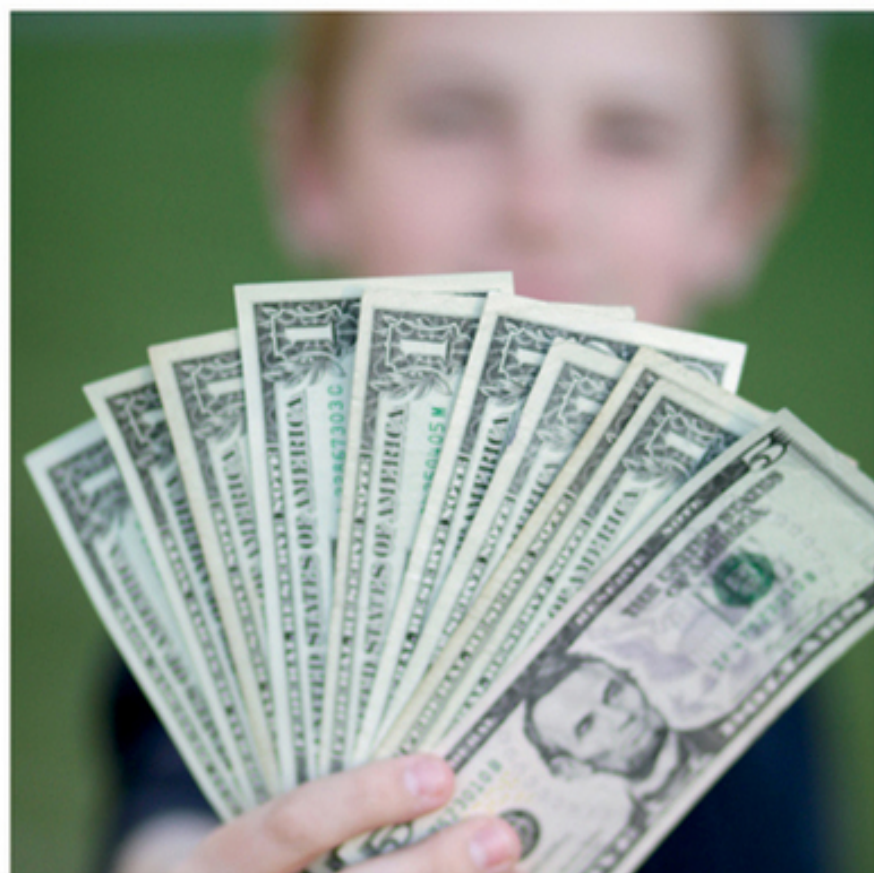


CREATIVE DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY WITH **ERIN MANNING**

make money with your digital photography



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CREATIVE DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY WITH **ERIN MANNING**

make money digital with your photography



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Make Money with Your Digital Photography

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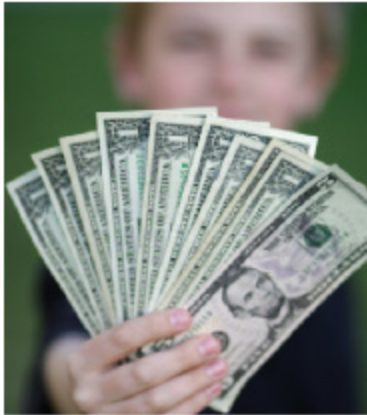
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Erin Manning



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About the Author



Erin Manning is a professional photographer, author, educator, and media personality. Television viewers know Erin best as the digital photography expert and host of DIY Network's Telly-award-winning TV series ***The Whole Picture***. Author of ***Portrait and Candid Photography***, published by Wiley, and various magazine and newspaper articles, Erin specializes in lifestyle imagery for clients such as AT&T, Bank of America, and Disney, among others. While completing her degree in Studio Art/Graphic Design from Loyola Marymount University, she spent several years working as a commercial, portrait, and stock photographer, as well as working for Getty Images. Erin's clear, friendly teaching style helps people understand photography by translating technical mumbo-jumbo into everyday words.

Erin serves on the Board of Directors for the Digital Imaging Marketing Association and is a member of the American Photographic Artists, Women in Photography International, and the Los Angeles Digital Imaging Group, whose purpose is dedicated to advancing the art and science of digital imaging.

For more information on Erin and upcoming projects, visit her Web site at www.erinmanning.com.

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Dedication

For my mother, who has inspired me and believed in me from the beginning.

Introduction

Is this book for you? I'm guessing that you've picked up this book because you have a strong interest in photography and the title speaks to your desire to earn money doing work you love. Whether you're a beginning photographer with a new dSLR or a more advanced enthusiast with a collection of beautiful images, this book is designed to give you an overview on how to assess your opportunities. From personal stories, to practical ideas, suggestions and resources you'll learn the big picture about various genres of photography and the details about ways to make money and handle the business aspects of your business.

This book is not designed as a beginning lesson on using your camera or taking photographs. It also does not cover the details of running a day-to-day business; instead, what is provided here is an overview of opportunities for making money with your photography. Once you've completed the book you should have a good idea as to what area you need to study for deeper knowledge and more confidence in knowing what you need to do in order to create an income.

Even as a young child, the entrepreneurial spirit has always been a driving force in my life. Years ago, I started on the path toward my career in photography and have found satisfaction and fulfillment in earning my living through creating imagery. My specific path may not be yours because our individuality works to define the directions we take in life; however, I am confident that the information and guidance you find here can help you in starting out as a part-time photographer.

In the spirit of collaboration and sharing the love, I have enlisted the knowledge and experience of other photographers and contributors who have been successful in their work. As you read these chapters, you will find a palette of opportunities opening to you and specific information about the types of photography businesses you might engage in — everything from travel to food and product photography, wedding and portrait to sports photography. These professionals share with you some of

the things they have learned along the way as they developed their business and refined their craft. It is my hope that you find what you need here to start your journey.

Chapter 1: Personal Discovery

Everyone is the child of his past.

— Edna G. Rostow

There is something in all of us that was there from the very beginning — a desire, an interest, a passion that makes us happy. Whether a vocation or avocation, to do what you love every day seems a luxury, yet it is possible. Through evaluating your current situation, interests, skills, and experience, you may begin to see a pattern emerge that helps guide you in your journey. Making money is fundamental for survival, but so is recognizing and clarifying your inspiration — this is what fuels our energy and success in any endeavor.



© Erin Manning

My journey

I cannot imagine anything more gratifying than dreaming up an idea, bringing it to life, and figuring out how to share it. As much as I enjoy expression and creativity in my photography, I am also thrilled whenever I

can make money by marketing and selling my work. This passion for art and commerce has driven much of my life, but it was not fully realized until I synthesized my experience, interests, skills, and desire.

In the beginning

As far back as I can remember, I have always been an artistic, enterprising sort of person — from making potholders on a loom and selling them door-to-door when I was five, to dragging a refrigerator box home at ten so I could turn it into a lemonade stand. I made love beads in the '70s (which I'm modeling in Figure 1.1) and sold them to my classmates, and created wooden rings in eighth-grade woodshop that I marketed as the hippest jewelry in homeroom. I was always trying to figure out what I could create, share, and sell, partly from a desire to express myself and partly because I wanted to make money.



1.1

Me in the seventh grade, wearing the love beads I made and sold to all my friends at school

I was also interested in photographs and photography. My parents had a book that was popular at the time entitled ***The Family of Man***. Looking through the images of people from all over the world touched me and inspired me to take notice of people's faces, their emotions and expressions. I also discovered an old family photo box at the top of the hall closet. I pored over every old black-and-white image of my relatives, mesmerized by

the stories and faces. I yearned to connect with these long-lost souls from my family history and invite them into my life. My grandmother heard about my interests and gave me an Instamatic camera for Christmas that year. I recall being delighted with the power and creativity to document life as I experienced it, from setting up imaginary scenarios to capturing authentic moments in my everyday life. I developed the film with money from my lemonade stands.

Progress

My foray into an adult education and career was full of experiments, jumps, and jolts. After a brief stint at a college in northern Wisconsin, I decided to make the jump and move to California, the land of fun in the sun and what I saw as opportunity. I arrived here without much money, or a job, or a car, or even any friends, but I did have a place to stay for a few weeks and despite family opinions, projections, and objections, I found work, made a life, and ended up staying. Over the course of the next ten years, I attended a few different colleges and had many different sales careers. Most sales jobs fed my desire to be independent, to connect with people, and to make some money, but none were ever creatively fulfilling. At a crossroads in my 30s, I took a battery of tests at a career counseling office in hopes of discovering what I was meant to do in my life. After much ado, I was informed that I was an AE, which stands for Artistic Enterprising. This validated what I knew from the very beginning and inspired me to begin the journey toward honoring my creativity in the world of work.

The journey was not a straight road that led immediately to my destination, but a process of self-evaluation, education (both formal and practical), testing business models, and working at different kinds of photography, while gradually refining my career path to take advantage of my talents and to discover the kinds of work I enjoyed doing most. Along the way, I made mistakes, experimented, took leaps of faith, and had some “luck” that never would have occurred had I not prepared the ground for it and responded with immediacy and enthusiasm. Here, I want to share elements of my process and the resulting lessons learned in order to help you take steps

toward reaching your goals. It helps to have some lessons before you go out and ride the trails, so to speak, as in Figure 1.2.



1.2

This image is a metaphor for beginning your journey as you forge a path to find your creative point of view. © Erin Manning

Self-evaluation

What motivates you to take a photograph? Is it a desire to create and express? To document? To control? To hide? To perform? To explore? To love? Maybe all of the above, or none of the above? It may seem a little unclear or even unnecessary, yet questioning ourselves and gaining an understanding of what makes us tick is an important process — it's a step toward the evolution of self- and life-purpose. If you discover one new thing about yourself in this chapter and apply it toward your photography, you are that much closer to the self-knowledge that can lead to achieving your goals.

Assessing interests, skills, and experience

We all share a common interest in making money with our photography, but every one of us comes from a different situation. In the spirit of kindling ideas and providing inspiration, I'm going to share my story. I

hope that my experience resonates with you and sends a motivating message: It is possible to find your passion and make money too.

When I decided to begin my photography business, I was in no position to drop everything else in my life and dive in head first. I was working in business development for a large corporation and was on the ten-year plan to finish a long-awaited college degree at night. I needed to survive, I had financial commitments, and I wasn't willing to live like a pauper in my adulthood. I had been photographing people, events, and landscapes for years as an amateur, but felt I needed more technical knowledge about lighting and the general photography business to be truly serious. I enrolled in weekend photography classes at the local university, attended workshops, joined photo associations, networked with other photographers, read every book I could find about photography, and practiced on anyone I could convince to be my model. I knew if I improved my photographic skills by learning and doing everything possible in the world of photography, things would work out. As I learned and gained more confidence, I opened up shop as a weekend family portrait photographer by printing up a business card and taking out an ad in the local newspaper. I had one camera and shot on location, the beach. It was fun photographing families and kids with my own journalistic style. People liked my images and referred me to other families. In a short period of time, I built up a portfolio that helped me land my first commercial photography job. It was exciting, but I felt I could do more and I needed to make more money in order to quit my day job. I just wasn't sure how to do it. I was frustrated.

As time went on, I thought my business development skills could be an asset at a stock imagery company in Los Angeles, so I continued to work in business development, but at a place that brought me closer to my passion. I learned a lot about the stock photography industry and was able to keep all my endeavors in balance until I was laid off a year later and my world came tumbling down. I was stunned, but viewed this as my opportunity to make major changes in my life, to slow down and evaluate my interests, skills, and experience, to ensure that I was investing my time and energy in the areas I truly felt passionate about, and to make money. Sometimes when

things go wrong, it's not all bad. It's an opportunity for growth and change that would not have happened otherwise.

Give yourself an honest assessment to start. As you go through an examination of your personality, your inspiration, your likes and dislikes, your strengths and weaknesses, and your skills and experience, listen to what comes up and don't reject anything. Just make a list. Everything evolves, and so will your photography business. You are going to be learning new things and changing within the context of your environment. Once you choose a path, it's not set in stone, but a place to begin.

What's your personality? Do you consider yourself an extrovert or introvert? Are you comfortable in large groups of people, or do you prefer to work alone? If you are very shy and feel awful about the thought of directing a large group of people in a photograph, you may want to either work through your shyness with directing techniques and be prepared to feel uncomfortable while you practice, or think about directing your efforts in areas that don't require an outgoing personality. I have a photographer friend who likes being around people, but prefers to design creative scenes with jewelry and food on her own time and in her own way. She's more comfortable photographing alone and feels that she produces her best work that way. I, on the other hand, prefer a mix of working with people and also working alone. Figure 1.3 is an image I created on a solitary Sunday afternoon, experimenting with objects around the house. I placed three pears on a black backdrop near window light and played around with positioning them. Once I chose my favorite shot, I created a Polaroid transfer on watercolor paper, added a unique effect with colored pencils, and turned this "art piece" into limited edition prints, selling them to local art galleries.



7/100

Erin

1.3

I took an original image of three pears and made it into a Polaroid transfer on watercolor paper, and then sketched it with colored pencil. © Erin Manning



NOTE A Polaroid transfer is a photographic image-transfer process, or printmaking technique, which uses Polaroid film. It enables you to place an image on textiles, cups, glass, and many other surfaces.

What is your experience? What skills have you built upon over the years? What do you do in your spare time? Is there something that you think you could only dream of doing? What do you like to do? What makes you happy? Write it down in a journal — it's going to come in handy. If your thoughts aren't flowing freely, try this exercise: For a week or more, list all the desirable qualities of the tasks, jobs, or processes of work you enjoy. Try to remember experiences where you felt the happiest and found the most reward. For example, prior to my photography career, I worked in sales where I designed sales strategies, built relationships, and gave presentations. In repositioning myself as a photographer, I drew upon my skills and experience in these areas and used them to my advantage in

designing my own sales strategies, forming relationships, and giving successful presentations to my clients.

You may feel that your vocation is very different from your avocation, your hobby or passion, but there may be more overlap than you think. Take the time to think about and list your skills, interests, and desires and you may see a pattern or recurring theme reveal itself. If you don't work, or you are not in the job market at this time, think about all the things you do that require your skill and talent, from volunteer work to church groups to community involvement to raising children. You have experience at something, and you can use your natural talents and abilities as a way to express yourself and support yourself economically and emotionally. You can make money doing what you like to do, if you are determined to try. I love to travel and make it a point to bring a camera with me everywhere, from the corner grocery store to faraway places, such as the Eiffel Tower (shown in Figure 1.4).



1.4

In this image, taken on a gray, stormy day in Paris, I decided to place the tower at an angle and use a selective focus lens to create an effect that elicits a sensation of movement. © Erin Manning

When I started out in photography, I had a roommate and no private space to set up my growing collection of photography equipment. Fortunately, I lived in a location with a temperate climate and access to the ocean, so I was able to shoot on location at the beach or the park most of the year, although if it rained, I was out of luck. I was able to expand my space once I began meeting more photographers in my classes and sharing my goal of finding a space to shoot. I had taken a class at UCLA Extension and, through contacts there, was able to rent space in a co-op environment in downtown Los Angeles. This space gave me room to conduct professional photo shoots, and I had access to additional equipment at a very affordable price — from backdrops to tripods and lights. The drawback was the one-hour drive time to get there, but it gave me time to think about what I was going to create before I arrived at the studio.

If you're busy with a family, school, and work, it can be overwhelming to consider making space in your life, let alone your home, for a photography business, but anything is possible if you really want it. Be creative in your problem solving and let go of any "coulda-shoulda-wouldas" in your vocabulary. Think about carving a solid hour or more out of a night or weekend every week to learn more about your craft, plan your studio and equipment purchases or usage (this includes borrowing and renting), and create and implement your marketing strategy. The hours quickly add up like sand in an hourglass, and suddenly you are ready for the next level, making money at what you like to do.

In a perfect world, it would be great to have the money and space needed to set up a professional photo studio. If you do, that's fantastic, but for those of you that require a more creative approach, I have a few ideas. First, it's not necessary to have top-of-the-line equipment and a huge space to get started. You can build up your equipment cache and evolve over time. Depending upon which photographic genre you choose, you may need to set up a temporary or permanent studio space to shoot. For example, if you decide to create a portrait business, you may want to allot a space in your garage or backyard for your photo shoots. If this space isn't an option, consider setting up temporarily in any room in your home. If you plan on using natural light, do what the great artists have done over centuries, and use

window light. Johannes Vermeer was a Dutch Baroque painter who is known for his beautifully illuminated subjects. Most of them are standing near a north-facing window with soft, directional light. Pay attention to the quality of light in different areas of your home during the day, and take advantage of this attractive and natural-looking light source. I often take portraits of people sitting in my living room. I have a large, sliding-glass door that faces northwest and a large sofa opposite the window. If the background seems cluttered, I can easily shoot against a backdrop and achieve a professional-looking portrait with very little setup time involved, as shown in Figure 1.5.



1.5

I shot this photo in my living room in front of a blue paper backdrop, using natural window light. © Erin Manning

Current photography work

I love looking at other photographers' work, especially the masters — Henri Cartier-Bresson, André Kertész, Dorothea Lange, and Ansel Adams.

Contemporary photographers are also a source of inspiration — Annie Leibovitz, Peggy Sirota, and Peter Lindbergh produce images that I find compelling. I'm also amazed by some of the images from beginners and enthusiasts that I see on Web sites such as Flickr and Photo.net. It's easier than ever before to search online and immediately find an abundance of