

7. Special Report! Mitche's Twelve-Step Marketing Program

Would you like to reinvent the way your studio operates? Although you are searching for ways to take your business to the next level of success and profitability, are you met with frustration? If you truly devote yourself to accomplishing the following twelve steps over the next seven days, I guarantee you will re-energize and invigorate your creativity and give yourself a whole new perspective. It won't be easy, but if you are diligent with your follow-through, your life will change forever!

If being an entrepreneur were easy, everyone would be doing it. It takes a very special person to keep their nose to the grindstone each and every day, through good and bad times. Seven days is long enough to only begin to create new habits, so upon reviewing this chapter, your goal should be to make these steps part of your everyday routine. It's very easy for us to get caught up in the day-to-day details of running our businesses instead of designing our lives. I challenge you to take this project seriously; you will reap the rewards for doing so!

1. Make a List of Goals

Make a list of your personal and professional goals for the next twelve months. This is perhaps the easiest task on the entire list. Grab yourself a good cup of coffee and a notepad, and spend some quality time writing down what your goals are for the next twelve months. First, list your personal goals, then write down your professional goals. Once you figure out what you want out of your life, the rest will come easy.

Do you want to take a vacation—or two or three—this year? Do you have your eye on a special boat or a set of golf clubs? How about your garden? Would you like to spend more time cultivating it or working in the yard? What about other hobbies you may have, but haven't made time for recently? If it's important to you, then you

should make time in your schedule to read, or write, or paint, or play with the dog. Having a strong marketing plan will allow you to be more productive in your working hours, which will allow you to take more time off to do the things in life that are important to you. It all goes hand in hand.

2. Set Aside Brainstorming Time

Set aside fifteen minutes a day for the next seven days to study in the field of marketing and brainstorm about your

Attractive promotions, like this one created by Chatsworth Portrait Studio, can help take your business to the next level.

Tiny Treasures

Babies... You wish they would stay little forever, but time has other plans. Chatsworth Portrait Studio stops time, if just for a moment, capturing the miracle of your baby so that for years to come, you can enjoy images of a time that seems like only yesterday. Your child's portraits will be beautiful works of art that add special warmth and charm to your home.

With this plan we will photograph your child at the stages of 1, 3, 6, 9 & 12 months of age.

225.00
(savings \$100.00)



WE WANT YOU!!!



CHATSWORTH PORTRAIT STUDIO

706.695.1501

WHO DO YOU TRUST WITH YOUR SENIOR PORTRAITS??
We are your photographer of choice!



Adding a promotional piece to every item that leaves your studio is a good way to encourage additional purchases. This piece, from Chatsworth Portrait Studio, is a good example.

business. This is very simple. Grab a stack of 3x5-inch cards and spend some quality time with yourself getting the creative juices flowing. It's easy to get carried away with spending all of our time playing with our new toys or reading up on the latest digital camera, or fiddling with Photoshop. We call that the substance of the business. For this exercise, we are talking about the essence of your studio. Where do you want to be in six months? Twelve months? Two years? Five years?

We have so many resources available to us, whether it be videotapes, magazines, books, CDs, or newsletters, and the tips they contain are ours for the taking. Give yourself some time to work through the materials and to accomplish any other business-related tasks you've been putting off. Make sure that you are working in a place where you won't be interrupted or distracted. Power Marketers are not born, they are developed. By spending just fifteen

minutes a day immersed in learning and brainstorming, you will begin to create positive habits that will stick with you for the rest of your life. Once you come up with an idea, write it down. After you put it on paper, it will be much easier to expand the idea and develop it into creative breakthroughs.

3. Take the Five-Second Image Challenge

Take the Five-Second Image Challenge to learn how prospective clients see your business. (See pages 58–62.) Working on any problems you identify will only serve to strengthen your business.

4. Distribute Promotional Pieces

Add a sales flyer, coupon, and/or reorder form to every item that leaves your studio. Anything that leaves your studio—portrait orders, statements, bulk mail, dance

packages, sports team packages, wedding albums—should have some sort of promotional piece included. If we don't give our current customers the opportunity to make additional purchases, we are leaving a tremendous amount of money on the table.

The most neglected and underutilized market we have is comprised of our current clients. They already know about us, have done business with us, have written us a check, and more than likely have told their friends and families about us. Why not maximize this potential and make sure our studio is in the forefront of their minds? When you do, you will be surprised at the response you will get.

5. Track Your Results

Track each and every call, walk-in, and inquiry for the next seven days. This project can be done simply with a piece of notebook paper and a pen. First, create columns across the top of the page that list the prospective client's referral source, and then create a column along the left side of the page for the prospective customer's name and date of inquiry (see the chart on page 38). When somebody calls or walks into your studio for the first time, ask them how they heard about you. Was it via a referral from a satisfied customer, another photographer in town, or from the local florist, church, or yellow pages ad—or maybe an event facility, family member, or neighbor? This will do two things. First, you will find out what forms of marketing are working for you. Second, you will find out what is *not* working. Tracking your inquiries will show you which efforts are returning the best results and which need to be reworked—or dropped altogether.

6. Emphasize Add-On Sales

Make it a goal to add on at least one item onto each order for the next seven days. This doesn't have to be a big item, maybe even only one more 4x5-inch print, a two-way portfolio, or an additional unit of gift wallets. If you consistently work on adding just one more item to each of your orders, it will add up to a substantial amount of money over time.

This can be done in a couple of ways. You can either add some extra value into your packages that gives your customers the incentive to move up to the next package

on their own, or you can create a unique product that can be added on at the end of the sales process for a nominal amount. If you let the way your packages are built do most of the work for you, there will be little need for you to have to force-feed another item down your clients' throats. Since we are artists, it's sometimes difficult to sell our own work, so it makes sense to let your packages work for you.

7. Do Some Networking

Spend at least thirty minutes this week talking with at least two other photographers in your area. Most of us are friends with several other photographers in the industry, but how do you feel about sharing your knowledge and expertise with other photographers in your market? We need to realize that we all are charged with the responsibility of educating the general public about the benefits of having professional portraits done. To that extent, we are all on the same team.

Make it a goal to develop a stronger relationship with other photographers in your market.

You don't have to give away any trade secrets, and neither do they, but sharing ideas is one of the most powerful ways to educate ourselves. Whether you get together for a cup of coffee to talk about programs you are both working on, or make a plan to refer clients back and forth to each other, or play a round of golf at the local country club, make it a goal to invest some time in the next week to develop a stronger relationship with other photographers in your market.

8. Contact Your Existing Clients

Develop a direct mail piece. This should feature your hook, plus an offer. You will want to make sure that you (1) give them a compelling reason to do business with you again; (2) give them an offer they can't refuse; and (3) give them a short deadline in which to respond to the offer (no more than two weeks from the date of the promotional mailing).

Once you have created your piece, send it to your client database. These people already know the quality of your work and the level of your service, and will be more likely to respond to a promotion like this than someone who knows nothing about you. (*Note:* If you have been around for a number of years, you may want to scale your list down to include clients you've worked with in the last twelve to twenty-four months.)

Make sure that your web site is listed on every piece of literature that leaves your studio.

Whatever the response is on the first mailing, you will achieve approximately the same response with a second mailing, and a very similar result from a third mailing. Once is nice, twice is better, and three times is a charm! This will all depend on the time you want to commit to the promotion, the amount of dollars you want to invest, and the size of your customer base.

9. Meet Local Vendors

Spend thirty minutes this week talking with other vendors in your market. Whether you photograph weddings, seniors, families, children, or llamas, you have undoubtedly developed a network of relationships with other vendors in your industry. It could be the clothing store where your high-school seniors purchase their clothes, a tuxedo shop where the groomsmen from your weddings rent their tuxedos, a local hospital where babies are delivered, a florist, an event facility, a jeweler, or a llama farmer. In any case, it is vital that you have a good working relationship with each of them.

This is perhaps the single most powerful form of marketing you can develop and invest time in. If you make it a goal to have at least one sit-down meeting with one vendor per week, you will steadily grow your referral network.

10. Laugh

Take at least thirty minutes per day to take a walk on the lighter side of life. Did you know stress is the number one killer in the United States? When things get difficult in

life, we get overwhelmed with that feeling of uneasiness. Most stress is caused by change, and our world is overflowing with change every day.

Having a sense of humor is vital to our ability to overcome those feelings and to making sure we maintain a proper perspective of our life. It's easy to forget about the little things that make us happy—holding a baby, going for a walk, watching a good sitcom or movie, getting a letter from a good friend, hitting a great drive off the tee, or even something as simple as watching the sunset on a warm evening. If we can figure out a way to keep it light in the face of stress and change, it will keep us healthier, make us happier, and above all give a more fulfilling feeling about ourselves.

Did you know that when you laugh so hard your cheeks hurt and your stomach aches, your brain releases a natural painkiller called endorphin that gives you a general sense of well-being? Can you remember the last time you laughed so hard you had tears in your eyes? If not, it's time to search out some good laughter.

11. Promote Your Web Site

Make sure that your web site address is listed on each and every piece of literature that leaves your studio. Today, most of us are highly dependent on the Internet for getting information on the world around us, communicating with customers, and reaching potential customers. If you don't already have a web site, getting one should be a top priority. Your competitors are there, and you need to be there as well.

An Internet presence allows people to learn about you, see a gallery of your work, and communicate with you at their convenience—twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days per year. You can add staff bios on your web site, educate people on the importance on different aspects of photography, and even list your awards and accomplishments.

Perhaps the biggest reason for being on the Internet is it allows clients to view and purchase your work from the privacy of their homes. This creates additional sales from each wedding and session and exposes the entire world to our work. Families and friends are becoming increasingly spread out, and what better way to bring them together than with a personal web site of images?

Is your web site and e-mail address listed on every piece of literature that leaves your studio? Is it listed in small print at the bottom, or is it presented boldly and distinctively?

12. Send Out a Press Release

Keep your local papers up to date on the latest happenings in your business by sending out a press release to every newspaper within a hundred-mile radius of your studio. If you have recently won an award for your photography, hired a new employee (or promoted an existing one), expanded your camera room, attended a photography convention, or had an article published in a trade journal, you have a legitimate reason to write a press release. Editors are constantly searching for local news to publish, and there is no reason why your studio shouldn't get its fair share of column space.

One of the keys to a successful marketing plan is to keep your name in front of your market as often as possible. A well-written press release can accomplish this. Keep the fax numbers next to the fax machine and get into the habit of writing at least one release every four weeks. It doesn't have to be very long—only a couple paragraphs—but it should be structured to answer the basic questions of journalism: who, what, when, where, why, and how. If you apply this simple rule, you should see your name in print before the week is out!

Well, there you have it—Mitche's twelve-step program! Are you ready to make a commitment of this magnitude? Are you willing to make the changes necessary to ensure that you are successful with this program? I didn't say it would be easy, did I? I wish you luck!



A uniquely designed promotional card, like this one from Sarah Petty, is sure to attract a lot of attention.

Power Corner

Focus on . . .
Skip Cohen



Skip's career in the photo industry started at Polaroid in 1970 where, over the course of seventeen years, he held positions in research, personnel, and customer service, and was the U.S. marketing manager for Polaroid's photo-specialty dealers. In

1987, he left to take over Hasselblad USA as President/CEO and to pioneer Hasselblad University. In 1999 he helped launch an Internet photographic retail site as president of PhotoAlley.com.

Skip is now President/Chief Operating Officer of Rangefinder Publishing Inc. and has responsibility for Rangefinder magazine, the Wedding and Portrait Photographers International Association and Trade Show, as well as Focus on Imaging magazine. Two key industry fundraisers created by Skip include the sale of Ansel Adams's Cadillac to the Coastal Hotel Group in 1991 and the sale of Ansel's Hasselblad gear to shock jock Don Imus in 1997, raising \$100,000 for charity.

With Bambi Cantrell (see page 81), Skip has also written several instructional books for photographers. To contact Skip Cohen, please call (310) 451-0090.

Mitche: What do you feel is the biggest challenge facing our industry in the future?

Skip: Keeping up with technology and reaching our target audience. We are all competing, not just against ourselves, but other businesses. If it took three times for a consumer to remember your name years ago, today it's six to eight. Professional photographers are competing against companies like BMW or that "Zoom, Zoom, Zoom" commercial for Mazda, for example. Everyone is competing to get through the "noise" and build brand recognition in their target demographic.

Describe your marketing philosophy.

Education. It's all about being accessible to your customers and providing quality education.

What are the most important attributes of a Power Marketer?

Knowing your target market, without a doubt. There's a great line from a marketing consultant by the name of Ed Foreman. He said, "If I can see the world through Mitche's eyes, then I can sell Mitche what Mitche buys." In order to achieve success in any industry, you need to know your client.

What things are important to you in life, and how does your marketing come into play with those priorities?

If you love what you are doing, you tend to do it well. You tend to have more enthusiasm. People accuse me of being wound a little too tight sometimes, and I laugh about it. If you look around the industry, I have always believed that if you're not having fun with what you are doing, get out and change gears. I've been very fortunate in my life, and I love what I do! I love photography, I love what great photographers are able to do, I love the magic. I've always believed that with the exception of modern medicine, there is no industry that has given the world more than photography.

If you think about it, everything from capturing a wedding to documenting the violation of human rights is captured by a photographer. If it wasn't for photography, what would 9/11 look like? It would have been a bunch of pencil sketches. Or for someone's wedding we would have drawings of a wedding cake. Photographers tell the story, good or bad. If you don't love what you are doing, make a change. I happen to love what I do so much that people accuse me of having an overindulged zest for life! Basically, it's a "work hard, play hard" approach.

In order to achieve success in any industry, you need to know your client.

How do you balance your personal and professional life?

Sometimes very well, sometimes lousy! There's a very thin line between your personal and professional life if you love

what you are doing, because your professional life becomes your hobby.

When you are not working, what do you do for fun?

Scuba diving is probably my ultimate passion. I think it has a lot to do with sitting on the bottom of the ocean where no phones can ring, with no faxes to deal with. It's a total departure for me. In the first five years I was diving, I logged around three hundred dives. Both of my kids are certified, and we've had some pretty incredible adventures.

Tell me about your family.

I have two kids and I've always had an absolute ball with them. I'm very close to both of them. Debbie and I have been married for over thirty years. When I was a kid, if somebody asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up the answer was always "a Dad." Now I'm a third-generation "Papa"—and it just keeps getting better.

What do you feel has been most successful marketing program you have ever done?

The most current would be the growth of *Rangefinder* magazine and WPPI, but it's been a team effort. Our readers and photographers said they wanted more from an educational and programming standpoint. We've done our best to listen, and the growth of both has been tremendous. The most successful "solo" programs both involved Ansel Adams and were fund-raisers. The first was when Hasselblad sold his 1977 Cadillac to raise money for Photographers + Friends United Against AIDS, the second was selling his camera gear with the proceeds going to the Elizabeth Glazer Pediatric AIDS Foundation.

What about your least successful attempt?

Actually, the least successful became one of the most successful. I'm talking about Hasselblad University. I had an idea in the early 1990s for a four-day weekend with about ten different programs, and the student could pick six of those classes to attend. We had the best of the best when it came to the instructor team. The problem is, we didn't realize at the time that very few people could afford Santa Barbara, CA during the last weekend of the summer! You couldn't get a room for under \$300 a night right before Labor Day. The program was a total and dismal failure. We had to cancel it. We built it and nobody came, but the logo won an award!

We've done our best to listen, and the growth of both has been tremendous.

After that, I hired Tony Corbell to come to work at Hasselblad, and we decided to figure out a better way to launch Hasselblad University. The next year we went out with a full ten-city tour that was an absolute blowout. We had just done it the wrong way to begin with.

Who are your biggest inspirations?

My Dad, who was also best man at my wedding and is still my best buddy. I feel pretty lucky to be in my fifties and still be able to drag Dad off to a convention. On the public side of life, JFK and Bobby Kennedy are big inspirations. On the photographic side of life, I'm the luckiest guy in the industry—my friends keep me focused.