

# CAREER ADVICE

Are you planning on going pro and want some tips on where to start?

Have you got a career query for the Digital Photographer team?

Whether you're just starting out as a pro or you need to give your business a boost, we're armed and ready for your questions!

Email the team with your question at [dphelp@dphotographer.co.uk](mailto:dphelp@dphotographer.co.uk) or mail us at the following address: Digital Photographer Career Advice, Imagine Publishing, Richmond House 33 Richmond Hill, Bournemouth BH2 6EZ

Go Pro **Recommend**  
Have a career question you need answering? Log on to our forum and post the details: [www.dphotographer.co.uk/forum](http://www.dphotographer.co.uk/forum)

Send us in your questions for some expert advice...

**THIS ISSUE:** Planning on going pro? Let expert photographer and filmmaker John Hicks guide you...



## Multimedia issues

**Q** I've been a professional photographer for ten years now and embraced the digital revolution as it surpassed film. But why should I now offer video as part of my photography package? I don't want to dilute my craft and I question the logistics of being able to produce photos and make a short film on the same assignment?  
**Thomas Boyt**

**A** As photographers we have to move with the times, and there's no doubt that video will be a force in the future. The ability to offer well-packaged moving images along with your stills will give you a commercial edge.

You will need to acquire a whole new set of skills, and operating as the photographer and videographer on the same day is a huge challenge. If you use flash lighting for stills this won't work for video, so you need to think about daylight or continuous lighting options. If you have an assistant or friend/student you may want to consider a 'behind the scenes' video as this is easier to achieve and goes down very well with the clients.

You'll need to learn how to film sequences from various angles, move the camera in a fluid way, make cuts and edit the clips. Ideally you'll need to be able to record sound to a pro level and there are now lots of photojournalists and commercial photographers offering this all in one package, so if you want to get on board then get 'moving' and enjoy! Don't think of video as an obstacle so much as an opportunity to be more creative with your vision.

## Student ambition

**Q** I'm in my final year of photography studies and really want to get fast-tracked into well-paid advertising work. Do you think this is realistic and what do I need to do to achieve my goal of earning a decent commercial wage within the next five years?  
**David Willis**

**A** Technology and the internet has moved so fast in recent years that advertising photography as was preserved by an elite band of professional shooters no longer exists.

There are no hard and fast rules for reaching your goal. I never assisted and worked my way up through trial and error and just getting myself noticed. Editorial photography is a great way to attract the attention of key art buyers and with so many online magazines it's easy to submit your digital files.

That said, getting on board assisting a commercial photographer is a great way to make contacts and learn the tricks of the trade so, even if you have to offer your services for nothing, try contacting as many as you can and get your foot in the door this way.

However you do it, it's as much about using your initiative as it is about getting your talent recognised.



## Lighting query

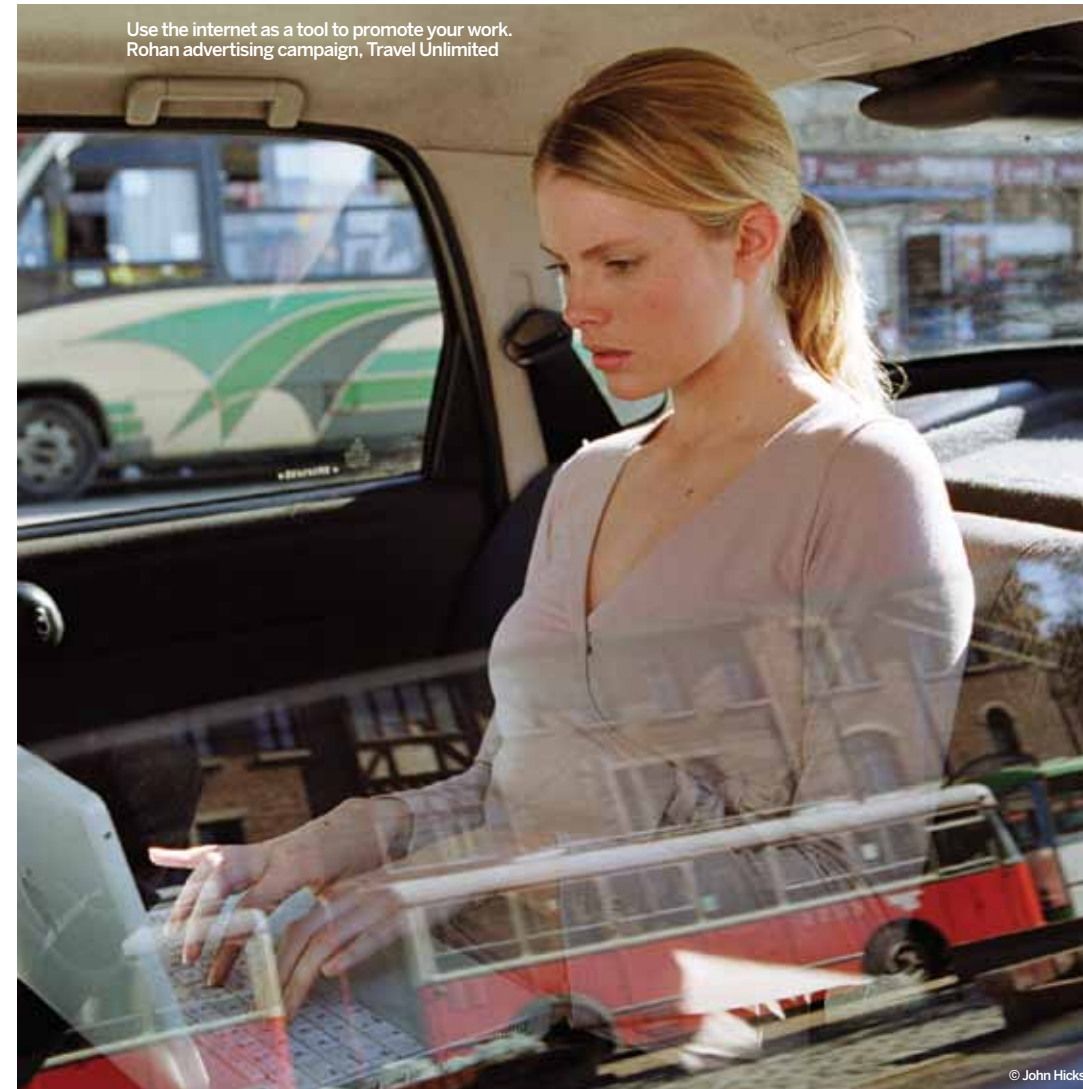


"A portable flash can produce a polished look with little fuss"

**Q** I'm overwhelmed by the choice of lighting options on the market and wondered if you could advise what I should buy for dramatic portraits every time I'm on location?  
**Jenny MacDonald**

**A** It depends on the brief, weather conditions, how much time and flexibility you have with the models and what style of lighting you want to achieve. For speed and flexibility you can use available light and a scrim or reflector. Unlike film, digital gives you the ability to up the ISO without any noticeable gain in grain/pixelation, so don't always bypass the ambient in favour of flash.

That said, working on your own with no one to hold the scrim/reflector and trying to keep a consistent light quality can be a struggle without lights, so a portable flash can produce a very polished look with little fuss. If you have time, budget and assistance then consider using external flash units like Profoto or Elinchrom. These heavy-duty flash lights give studio-style lighting on location but they take longer to put up and can limit you to a 'setup' rather than a spontaneous shot. The options are endless – don't be afraid to have fun and experiment!



## Building a portfolio

**Q** I'm a keen amateur photographer looking to go pro in the next year, but how do I even begin to build a profile and increase my chances of getting work with potential clients?  
**Caroline Rauff**

**A** Get yourself a simple blog and update it regularly. Make it personal and unique to you. Upload portfolio galleries of your work to e-magazines and photo-sharing sites like Flickr, Behance, Pelime and Tumblr. Get involved in social media forums like Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn, which are all free to join and

a great way to show off and promote your work. Try to stay active in online discussion groups and share your knowledge and feedback with others. Get yourself a YouTube account and make a slideshow of your work, do a 'behind the scenes' of one of your shoots and, if you are technically minded, consider doing some camera equipment reviews of anything you are using or trying out on a shoot.

Enter competitions and don't get disheartened if progress seems slow – just keep going. You have to really believe in yourself to get others to believe in you too.

## The BIG? Question

John discusses whether college is the only way to go when preparing to embark on a career in photography

I get asked all the time if young, would-be photographers should study photography at college or just dive head first into the business. Although I did a photography degree, my advice is to get stuck in as soon as you can because, in the new digital age, qualifications matter less than ever. The divide between professional and amateur photographers is getting narrower by the day. If you lack technical expertise, consider practical workshops that can fast-track you on the road to success.

If you can produce personal work that is true to you and get it noticed, then you can go from no one to someone without ever needing the validation of a certificate that says 'I am a photographer'.

Colleges are great for work experience placements and making contacts within the industry, but with the digital revolution it really doesn't matter if you are in New York or Timbuktu, as long as you have access to the internet you can share your photography with anyone anywhere.

And it doesn't matter how you do it – if it's a great shot it counts, whether you took it on your mobile phone or the latest HD DSLR. It's the 'just do it' mentality that counts; that you go out and try to take photographs that say what you want them to say about the world you see around you and why. That's what's more important than any photography course you care to study.

