

This tip is slightly off the usual stuff we cover in this DIY newsletter. But I've so many people asking me this in the past few weeks, I thought it might be pertinent to bring this up as it is very relevant to what we do here:

You need bucks to buy equipment to make bucks. Sounds like a classic Catch 22, not so?

Some jobs you just cannot do comfortably without the right equipment, so at some point, you will have to start generating cash to do so. My rules for this are quite simple:

1. Don't advertise
2. Do work for free
3. Depend on your first clients to do your advertising.

I know it sounds weird, but it works. This is how you do it:

As with all things, you need to identify a market first. These are all around you: mothers with children, pet owners and their animals, people getting married. They are mostly people with not a lot of money, but as a market, two things count in your favour:

they are a captive audience, and
they are your ticket to experience.

But how do you get people to use you? You offer your services at a price they cannot refuse, because they carry no risk.

For instance: when you see a beautiful child with its parents, go up to them, introduce yourself and offer to take pictures for free. Tell them that you're doing this for an assignment and they should be present when you do this. Make it clear that this is above board.

Then do the shoot at your own cost. This is a small price to pay for experience. When you get your prints back from the lab, look at them critically, and decide where you can improve.

Give the parents their photographs, with your contact details. If they're happy with the photographs, they'll show their friends, and give them your number.

If people then ASK you to do the work through such a referral, naturally they will be prepared to pay for the job. So you ask a small price - tell them you'll do it for the price of processing and film cost. Labour is free. Then do the job, as above, and hope they refer you to THEIR friends. And so on.

Word of mouth is and always has been the strongest means of advertising. People would far rather buy from someone recommended by someone they know and trust. Capitalise on that!

Happy shooting till next time.
Jaco Wolmarans