



CAN CONSULTANCY WORK FOR YOU?

Photographer member David Partner appraises the services offered by UK and US photo consultants.



There are many choices to be made by every working photographer and very often these decisions are more difficult the more time there is to make them. The nature of the profession is such that career development often takes a back seat to the everyday necessity of looking for, and fulfilling, commissions.

In the precarious economic environment we are still in, and particularly at the beginning of the year, I believe it is essential that we review the tools

available to help us create and maintain a successful business. In this, the first of what I hope will be an occasional series of articles spotlighting such services, I have talked with two photo consultants and two photographers who have benefited from their advice.

Selina Maitreya, based near Boston, Massachusetts is the doyenne of US consultants. A 30-year career has seen her advice enhance the careers of hundreds of photographers. She is the author of *Portfolios that Sell*, "a

must have for any pro photographer", and her latest book *How to succeed in Commercial Photography*. She has lectured extensively, and more recently, created and hosted *Clarion Call 2011*, a webinar which brought together 21 top industry experts and 3000 photographers worldwide. Her latest learning tool for photographers is *The Photographers Path* a 12-month membership programme using videos and mp3s available online.

I asked for her top tips on the most important ways in which a consultant



can benefit photographers. "There are two main approaches I take... one-on-one consultations where I discuss the photographer's needs, preferably in person, but increasingly via Skype. These can focus on building a new visual direction for the photographer, or on a refinement and strengthening of an existing direction, defining markets for the photography, and building dedicated sales and marketing programmes. The other way is via an online programme, such as *The Photographers Path*, where the same principles I use in my one-on-

one consultations are explained in detail. Because this approach is not a bespoke service it is low cost."

Selina continued to explain her philosophy with a keen sense of what is happening in today's, and tomorrow's, rapidly changing market.

As buyers of photography now have access to everything everywhere, photographers in the UK and elsewhere need to promote their services around their visual approach more than ever,

defining who they are as visual artists, in order to differentiate themselves. She sees this as critical to those buyers who increasingly have a less different and larger talent pool.

The advice she gives to photographers considering consulting is to think about your needs and why you might need help. What are you looking to accomplish and what is your ultimate goal? Is it just information that you need, in which case an online programme can be appropriate, or do you need a partner,



somebody to work with as a team, in which case a one-on-one relationship would be most helpful.

You should also consider your budget, in the US there are about 70 consultants who typically charge between \$150 and \$350 an hour. This is not cheap but the long term benefits can be considerable. In Selina's experience many photographers don't know what they need, so she offers a free 20

minute introductory consultation via Skype in order to assess this, then she will make a proposal based on the time the photographer is willing to spend on her programme together with what he or she will take away, and, of course, the cost obligation.

Nick Thomas, a New Hampshire based still life photographer has consulted with Selina. He has been a photographer since 1989 but three or so years ago

realised that he was going to have to completely overhaul his photographic practice, which with Selina's help he achieved. Nick refined his vision and repositioned his work in 2009 and as a result was awarded two still life campaigns for nationally branded clients in 2010. His studio has since been booked solid with accounts from clients from the advertising, corporate and design communities. "Selina can focus you and will tell you

what you need to know – she is to the point; when you are used to running your own business and doing your own thing it's a bit like having a boss come in and tell you what to do, however, this is done after looking at you very closely, who you are, what you want to be, and she then helps you get there. I am now focussed on getting large national accounts when three years ago I would not have been as comfortable dealing with these kinds of people."

Zoe Wishaw is a London based consultant working with photographers with wide-ranging needs, who may be doing quite nicely now but are looking for motivation to find new creative direction. She makes a visual assessment of their website and a thorough review of their work, and follows up with guidance for marketing both to advertising/design agencies and for best practice with photo agencies; discussing personal project ideas to further develop their portfolio, and developing high-end ideas-driven photography with the emphasis on great commercial viability that can tap into her extensive area of expertise in the arena of licensing imagery through photo agencies.

Following a degree at Cambridge University and post graduate research with a keen personal interest in taking pictures and printing, Zoe started her career in photography as a picture editor with Tony Stone Images progressing to European Director of Photography at Getty Images by the time she left that organisation 17 years later. Whilst there she was responsible, amongst other achievements, for discovering and developing new photographic talent and worked closely with, some very well known and respected photographers at an early stage in their careers including Julia Fullerton Batten, Tim Flach, Betsie van der Meer and Clarissa Leahy.

Her approach is similar to Selina's whereby she will have an initial no commitment consultation to establish what kind of help the photographer actually needs and what end result is achievable. She will then invite the photographer for an initial two hour consultation, having asked for some "homework" to be done, so that she can then contribute a realistic assessment and action plan aimed at achieving a new motivation to develop photographic projects that generate an income. Her guidance can help bring an awareness of opportunities for the photographer's work that they may have been unaware of.

She sees her clients leaving the consultation feeling different about their photography, excited and with a new openness. She gives herself a personal challenge with each new photographer to help them market their photography, to understand how their pictures have relevance to prospective clients and to keep them moving forward with the business of photography.

One of Zoe's clients is Hertfordshire based AOP Member Darrin Jenkins. He is well known for his food and still life photography and last year consulted with Zoe. She put together a course for him, involving visits to his studio for brainstorming sessions as well as advice on creative thought processes that can lead to more imaginative and challenging photography. "The whole experience has been an eye-opener and very productive, both with her course work and with other photography that has spun off from it. I intend to continue with Zoe this year to further enhance my photography," says Darrin.

"I have already reaped the rewards of the course, picking up some major new

clients last year as a direct result of my new images!"

Both consultants offer distinctly different programmes, including portfolio and website editing and development, this being one of the keys to effectively sell your photography, and both seek to achieve the same end result – a more confident, successful photographer.

Selina has been doing this for longer than anyone else, with all the knowledge and experience that brings, has worked with many UK based photographers in the past and has edited portfolios for photographers such as Snowdon. Zoe is one of the first UK based consultants and is rapidly gaining a clientele for her extensive services. With the independent, objective eye that she casts over photography she is able to offer global coverage for her expertise, and is currently working with photographers in Japan and South Africa via Skype.

Contact details

Selina Maitreya
www.selinamaitreya.com
thephotographerspath.com
Selina is hosting her latest Clarion Call III webinar, Steps to Success on 20 April, for more information go to:
www.professionalphotographyteleseminar.com

Zoe Wishaw
www.zoewishaw.com
 Please contact Zoe directly for details of her one-to-one sessions and her upcoming seminars.

Nick Thomas
www.ntphoto.com

Darrin Jenkins
www.dj-photo.com
www.dj-foodphotos.com