

*THE FOLLOWING ARE SHORT EXCERPTS
FROM SELECT CHAPTERS. THE TABLE OF CONTENTS WINDOW
LISTS ALL CHAPTERS IN THIS VOLUME. ART CREATED BY ME.*

VOLUME FOUR

THE PROFESSIONAL

WELCOME TO YOUR CREATIVE CAREER
AND THE PURSUIT OF PURPOSE AND PROSPERITY



As a professional Imagemaker with forty years' experience in the mind-blowing, heart-bursting, and at times soul-crushing world of making art to make a living, it's hard to know where to begin when exploring the challenges and opportunities that await all you ambitious souls on a journey that will demand decades of mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual effort.

I could begin by alerting you to the fact that you're about to venture into uncharted territory swarming with countless skilled and driven creative professionals—fearless competitors and future comrades who will demand your best and support you through your worst.

I could also begin with cautionary tales of the importance of being prepared for unavoidable obstacles, unintended mistakes, and unforeseen feelings that threaten even the loftiest of dreams.

And finally, on revealing the more thrilling and joyful reflections on life as a professional artist, I could start by divulging my own amazing artistic adventures. I have soared with Rock Gods on private jets and shared pricey film sets with Movie Stars. I have ventured into third-world slums, maximum-security prisons, abortion clinics, and an AIDS hospice to capture humanity's tragedies and travesties. I have wandered Parisian streets and Caribbean beaches seeking my next plein air painting. I have delivered my photographs to the Metropolitan Museum of Art to be included in the permanent collection, and premiered my film to a packed house at the Sundance Film Festival. I have seen my work plastered on billboards in Times Square and engraved on stamps in my local post office. My illustrations have been printed on the pages of many of the world's most respected books, magazines, and newspapers—and the music videos I've directed have racked up billions of views.

Although I'm tempted to revel in the thrills of success or wallow in the throes of struggle that await those embarking on such a daring creative quest, I've decided to begin the *story of success* by exploring the nuts and bolts of the business of the professional artist. The cool stories will come later.

It is imperative to understand how to manage the day-to-day operation of a professional imagemaking business—even if that business is you working alone in your home in your underwear.

The bottom line is that *only if* you are as determined and disciplined as those successful professional Imagemakers who have come before you, will it be possible for you to have a long and prosperous career of sharing your talent with the world.

The essential belief to hold at the beginning of your career is that regardless of whether or not you've been paid for your talent, the time to see yourself as a professional *is now*.

YOUR BUSINESS

The Nuts & Bolts of Creative Success



ACHIEVING A BALANCE IN BUSINESS

There are two sides to running a successful career—*The Practical* and *The Behavioral*.

The Practical is the often mundane, and to be honest, pain-in-the-ass grind of budgeting money, organizing data, and hiring number-crunching pros to keep the financial flow of your career moving toward greater and greater prosperity.

The Behavioral is the intellectual and emotional process of how you conduct yourself, from greeting clients to meeting deadlines. This balanced behavior requires discipline, objectivity, strategy, and commitment to fulfill your creative potential through professional excellence.

The great American painter Edward Hopper kept a lifetime's worth of tidy transactions in dime-store ledgers. Because of today's digital domain and corporate complexity, the independent Imagemaker has monthly bills to pay, tax rules to obey, job expenses to track, client accounts to balance, reference documents to file, transaction reports to archive, direct deposits to confirm, and legal contracts to resolve.

No matter how unnatural and overwhelming it can feel to deal with the logistical and financial responsibilities of launching a career—especially when all you want to do is make your mark in the creative world—the sooner you commit to gathering the knowledge and developing the discipline to handle your business and money, the sooner you'll become that success story you imagined.

Hopefully you will get so busy you won't have the time to count the spare change in your pocket.

YOUR BUSINESS EXPLORES:

- *Even the Most Visionary Artists Must Rely on Business to Succeed*
- *The Duty to Develop Business Skills Equal to Your Artistic Talents*
- *Overcoming the Anxiety and Boredom of Facing Business Tasks*
- *Finding, Hiring, and Trusting The Pros to Make Your Business Plan*
- *The Pride that Comes from Building a Successful Creative Business*
- *Realizing and Accepting Help to Produce Your Creative Product*
- *The Need to Make Your Business Grow as Your Success Evolves*
- *Achieving A Balance Between Being a Success and Having a Life*

THE PRESENTATION

Revealing Your Talent and Your Character



As a professional Imagemaker, there's no higher calling than summoning your passion and purpose to create a painting, photograph, or film that will be shared with the world to inform, inspire, incite, or innovate.

Before your artistic adventure can begin, *you must find the strategy and guts to prove your worth to those who can give you the opportunity to earn a living by making art.*

There are two components that'll determine the outcome of your encounter with clients.

1. The quality of your creative product.
2. The quality of your presentation.

You may produce amazing work, but if you lack the communication skills to present that work with consistency and confidence, you can diminish or even destroy your chances of getting the gig.

Since plenty of Imagemakers are technically and stylistically capable of pulling off a given project, the factor that will often determine which creative professional is hired depends on the character of the person behind the work.

The client can be swayed in their choice of whom to hire by the professionalism the prospective Imagemakers demonstrated during the *Presentation stage* of the project—that make-or-break event when Imagemakers showcase their creative product to the powers-that-be.

In addition to whatever positive impression your conceptual imagination and technical skills have in the potential client's hiring process, how you conduct yourself reveals to the potential client the value of your enthusiasm, adaptability, confidence, and finally, *their belief in trusting you to do the job*.

THE PRESENTATION EXPLORES:

- *Accepting the Essential Value of The Presentation in Your Success*
- *Welcoming the Human Connection of the Presentation*
- *Strategizing The Business Opportunity of The Presentation*
- *Just as Your Creative Work has Style, So Should Your Presentation*
- *No Two Presentations are the Same*
- *Overcoming the Client's Rejection of Your Presentation*
- *Good or Bad, Learning from Every Presentation*
- *Confidence is the Heart of Your Presentation*
- *Be Sure to Let in The Joy of a Successful Presentation*

THE PITCH

Selling Your Art... and Yourself



No matter the tally of the score, the number of the inning, or the roar of the crowd, every time a big league hurler steps on the mound, every fiber of their being is focused on the single goal of getting that next out. Countless hours of tweaking their wind-up and polishing their delivery has brought them to this moment where they put it all on the line.

The same holds true when the time comes for an Imagemaker to enter the working world to share the product of their talent and effort with those in a position to hire them.

Whether you're a filmmaker or graphic designer looking to be that next team member of a production company or design firm, or a self-employed photographer or illustrator seeking that next freelance gig, every creative professional must possess the skills and guts to hustle their creative product.

This process is known as *The Pitch*.

From the time I was fifteen, when my mom drove me to our city newspaper to show my political cartoons, to the music video concept I presented last week, I feel as if I've been in one long pitch meeting.

I've had a career beyond my wildest dreams, and those dreams began in my local newspaper editor's office as a teenager dead-set on seeing my political cartoons on the opinion page. Fifty years later, the video I pitched and scored last week will allow me to continue to live in my house, fill my refrigerator, and go for a run on the beach during rush hour.

What matters most is that five decades after I saw my political cartoons printed for thousands to see—and after billions have seen my illustrations, photographs, and filmwork—I still have the same joy and hope in presenting my creative product to the clients who are in the position to make my next dream come true.

THE PITCH EXPLORES:

- *The Power of The Pitch*
- *The Plan of The Pitch*
- *The Performance of The Pitch*
- *The Potential of The Pitch*
- *The Pressure of The Pitch*
- *The Persuasion of The Pitch*
- *The Profit of The Pitch*

THE NEGOTIATION

The Art of Fighting Fair



Studies have shown that more marriages are destroyed by disagreements over money than almost any other issue. Whether it's newlyweds having words in an appliance store over how much to spend on a dishwasher, or an Imagemaker sending their quote to a client—any financial negotiation can be deeply complex and fraught with all the pitfalls and pratfalls of the human condition.

Considering the precarious nature of negotiating, it's essential *to have a strong sense of the value of your talent beyond any dollar amount you seek*. This commitment to the worth of your technical skills, conceptual thinking, and work habits in meeting your client's needs will embolden you when it comes to the sliding scale of how much you'll be compensated for your talent.

In an ideal business world, the amount of money an Imagemaker is paid is an act of commerce that should be approached as such—an unemotional transaction that concludes with Imagemaker and client convinced they're both getting what they bargained for.

This is easier said than done.

It's not only the hard facts of the *going rate* or the *bottom line* of a client's budget that defines your sense of the monetary value of your creative product. The additional concerns of negotiating don't involve simple number-crunching.

These fiscal fisticuffs and contractual contortions are the inescapable mind games that can be played to undermine or overstate the value of your talent and time. Through the prism of a soaring ego or a sinking self-esteem, the clear thinking that's required to conduct a professional financial negotiation can become distorted—and even destroyed if common sense and mutual respect are overpowered by hubris and greed.

As a wide-eyed creative professional just starting out, you may tell yourself that the process of negotiating your fee is simply two people *talking a little business*—and you and your client will certainly act in good faith by exhibiting reasonable and respectful behavior that will result in a successful outcome for all.

However...

If your little chat doesn't go well, yet your goal is still to have a successful outcome, it'll be necessary to call upon a number of negotiating skills to navigate the treacherous shores of a complex or awkward business discussion.

In order to tip these scales into balance, you must enter financial discussions knowing how much you *deserve* to get paid. Being armed with a certain dollar amount doesn't guarantee you'll get it, but if you are confident in the amount you should be compensated, you'll have the confidence to counter any argument or amount that you feel is below a fair fee.

THE NEGOTIATION EXPLORES:

- *Am I Being Paid Enough?*
- *Do I Have the Courage To Ask for What I Believe I'm Worth?*
- *What Is My Creative Value to the Project?*
- *How Does My Degree of Success or Experience Affect My Fee?*
- *How Badly Do I Want the Gig?*

THE CONTRACT

The Fine Print Can Be Your Friend



In addition to *the compulsion to create* that's woven into every Imagemaker's DNA, another reason we choose to become expressive beings is to avoid having to spend the bulk of our working lives held captive in a cubicle or watching the years roll by on an assembly line.

As aspiring professionals who would rather get paid to play with paint and pixels, our creative brains are hardwired to resist a job that involves being buried under a never-ending pile of bureaucratic bullshit. Even though creative professionals may have found the secret to steer clear of more of this crap more than most working stiffs, the successful Imagemaker must endure their share of maddening yet mandatory chores.

The bottom line when dealing with contracts is that many of the projects you're offered will not continue if you do not sign on the dotted line.

Along with the fees, meetings, schedules, budgets, billing, taxes, deadlines, and other non-creative duties, *The Contract* is another necessary business tool that must be confronted, understood, accepted, and utilized to function and prosper as a professional artist.

THE CONTRACT EXPLORES:

- *A Contract Must be Received*
- *A Contract Must be Reviewed*
- *A Contract Must be Revised*
- *A Contract Must be Resolved*
- *A Contract Must be Returned*

THE NEW WORK

The Next Generation of Your Creative Product



As you transition from student to professional, your portfolio of school assignments gradually will be replaced with professional projects. You will build an entirely new body of work, which will generate an ever-evolving collection of your latest and greatest. These projects will serve as your calling card to secure future clients and greater opportunities.

For some Imagemakers at the beginning of their career, the work they're paid to do and the work they want to do is in sync. This harmony between *desire and destiny* may be attributed to good timing, as their creative product hits the right spot in the marketplace—or to great talent that generates demand based on a unique vision.

For others, the goal of accumulating a professional body of work that represents the type of projects they desire can be slow and troubling. Their skills and knowledge may lack experience, and their point of view, which determines style, may not have been fully formed, or isn't syncing up with the current creative culture.

After graduating from school, you may have to take on paying gigs that pay your bills, but don't elevate your lofty goals or express your true vision. Be careful not to cram every finished assignment into your portfolio or onto your website just because you got paid for it. If you have completed enough professional assignments to make up an entirely new body of work, *make sure it's a true representation of the type of projects you seek.*

THE NEW WORK EXPLORES:

- *The Goal is to Replace Your Student Work with Professional Gigs*
- *The Thrills and Paydays from Creating New Work Must be Earned*
- *It is Imperative to Recognize the Need for New Work*
- *New Work can Fuel New Energy to Revive a Stagnant Career*
- *Producing New Work can Bring Unexpected Clients and Projects*
- *New Work can Bestow the Healing Powers of Fun and Hope*
- *Creating a New Body of Work can be a Lifelong Journey*

REALITY ALWAYS WINS

Reality Is No Game, but it Does Have Winners and Losers

In life and career, *reality has a way of catching up to fantasy* by presenting an *inevitable truth* that must be faced in order to preserve professional accomplishment and protect personal fulfillment.

My Fantasy was being convinced I could continue to deliver my illustrations, photographs, and films on time no matter how many jobs I took on.

My Reality was that the demand for my creative product was outstripping the number of hours I had to meet that demand.

My Inevitable Truth was realizing that to successfully take on all the jobs coming my way, I had to get some support.

A career that I had believed would be powered by just one employee, *me*, had become a multitasking workforce as I had become my chief litigator when negotiating fees, my purchasing agent when buying supplies, my shipping agent when delivering jobs, my henchman when tracking down late payments, my salesman when promoting my work, my loan shark when juggling finances, my lackey when slogging through chores, and my cheerleader when on the verge of defeat.

When facing a great challenge, it is crucial to summon the courage *and humility* to see reality coming, grab it by the tail, and allow that reality to lead you through doubt, confusion, and worry to *your inevitable truth*.

Sometimes your inevitable truth is that you need help.

An ingrained mix of stubbornness, independence, and pride—combined with a fierce desire to be alone most of the time—kept me from accepting that fact that it was all becoming too much. Fortunately, my drive to overcome any obstacle to my future prosperity gave me the insight and guts to be honest with myself by accepting that I needed help to maintain my success... and my sanity.

Despite the obsession to do everything myself, through some primitive drive not just to survive, but to thrive, I was able to quiet my chorus of chaos long enough to realize that no matter how hard or long I worked, there weren't enough endless days or sleepless nights to keep up with the demand for my creative product.

My accomplishments as an illustrator, photographer, and filmmaker had indulged a pretty big ego, yet it was clear my ginormous head could not wear all the hats necessary to keep up with my success. I needed one more voice in my chorus of chaos to rise above all others—that was the grown-up in me, helping me to face the fact *I needed help*.

REALITY ALWAYS WINS EXPLORES:

- *Overcoming any Pride or Stress that could Prevent Getting Help*
- *Making the Decision the Time has Come to Get Help*
- *Finding the Support to Meet the Demand for Your Talent*
- *Your Helper's Skill Set, Experience Level, and Personality Type*
- *Whomever You Choose to Help, Choose Wisely*
- *2 types of Helpers, Those Who Want Your Job and Those Who Don't*
- *Even Though You're in Charge, You can Learn from Your Helpers*
- *Having the Ability to Let Go of a Helper if it isn't Working*
- *Determining Your Obligation to Impart Your Wisdom to Your Helper*
- *Recognizing the Time for Your Helper to Go Out on Their Own*
- *Never Lose Sight of the Gratitude for the Invaluable Support of Help*

THE DUTY OF THE SUCCESSFUL IMAGEMAKER

Paying Back for All You've Achieved and All You've Been Given

You've spent your education and career working your ass off to reap the rewards of success—whether that entails the personal fulfillment of emotionally and intellectually expressing yourself through your art, or the professional prosperity of supporting your livelihood with that art.

Despite the creative inspiration and financial compensation you've accumulated, there's another world of sharing your work that offers a bounty of experiences that's founded on the lessons you've learned and the praise you've earned.

The ultimate payoff of my success is to have created the art and acquired the information that holds a lasting value that transcends my needs and purposes, *and which now can serve the needs and purposes of others.*

If you have the talent and are willing to do the work that brings success and wisdom, you'll have the opportunity and the challenge to discover a new world of humility and generosity that can be experienced only by sharing all you've achieved.

There are endeavors you can pursue that offer an unmatched professional pride and personal joy when you devote the time and effort to give back through offering your knowledge, experience, and insight with passion, confidence, and gratitude—whether exhibiting your work on the other side of the planet, publishing a book of your finest work to inspire and inform, or sharing the secrets of your success with students eager to compete, evolve, and prosper.

THE DUTY OF *THE SUCCESSFUL IMAGEMAKER EXPLORES:*

- *Do You Possess The Experience, Passion, and Humanity to Teach?*
- *Sharing Your Wisdom through the Internet, Lectures, and Workshops*
- *Publishing a Collection of Your Finest Work to Inspire and Inform*
- *Summoning the Generosity to Mentor an Aspiring Imagemaker*