

## Reinvent, Reimagine, Reinvigorate

Inspiration! That was the overpowering feeling that people walked away with at the Reinvention Weekend in Boston this spring of 2010. Sponsored by the American Society of Picture Professionals (aspp.com) and the Picture Archive Council of America (pacaoffice.org), the event offered top industry leaders as keynote speakers, allowing everyone to acquire new ways to run their businesses and new goals for success in this constantly changing digital world. The age of ‘crowdsourcing’ has forever changed the industry, but change brings opportunities. These opportunities require the professionals to differentiate themselves from the crowd and perform on an “epic” scale. Now the demand for quality and uniqueness is scaled up and media producers must meet the challenge. Enjoy a Two Part Series of speakers from the event.

### Part I

**Lou Jones** (fotojones.com), Boston’s long time top commercial photographer, tells us that, “We have to surprise people.” Lou has been surprising people for years, with his imagery, books, lectures, gallery shows and workshops. Through his famous books on death row, *Final Exposure* and *Exiled Voices*, he reminds us of the tenacity and passion that is required to produce great works. The first book took six years to create, as access was a huge challenge. However, the new marketplace that exists today, allows him to “reuse” and “repurpose” his works making them available in formerly non-traditional formats.

Lou is a blogger extraordinaire, and claims that the blog is his company’s personality, while the website is his resume or brochure. His RSS feed and the new technologies – “allow us to reach out far beyond our old client base.” He claims, “Repurposing is my mantra.” The industry used to be very linear, but technology allows creativity to come full circle. A new concept can inspire new clients and attract new grants, traveling virally through the internet and the blogosphere, bringing back new interest and new sales. Well known for his twenty years of photographing the Olympics and for his unusual images of Cuba, Lou now uses still photographs in a cinematic fashion, adding sound and original music. The lesson learned – take advantage of our modern opportunities with renewed passion and creativity.

**Ilise Benun** (marketing-mentor.com), is a prolific book author, national speaker, and co-founder of Marketing Mentor. She’s in business to “help creative professionals get serious about their business.” Her comments on the “myths of doing business” are a wake-up call for all creatives to take seriously:

*“Do what you love and money will follow.”* – There has to be a market for your work or nothing will follow.

*“Word of mouth is the best way to get work.”* – You can’t build a business on whatever comes along. Go after the work that you really want.

*“I’m not a business person; I’m a creative.”* – There is no such thing as a business person or a creative person. There are business skills that can be learned.

Ilise insists that there are “realities” of business that have to be faced:

*“Self promotion is not about you, and it never will be.”* - You must describe yourself by the way you help other people solve their problems.

*“Everything flows from the market.”* – Listen first to how your client describes a need.

That becomes the answer to the question of how to describe yourself. “Becoming the go-to guy for that market is the way to proceed, and you can charge a premium for that specialty.”

Ilise offers three steps to succeed:

Step 1. *“Identify your market.”* – Excuses like “I just can’t decide; I can’t afford to specialize; I need all the work I can get; I don’t want to alienate anyone” will all keep you from the type of work you want to pursue.

Step 2. *“Locate your market.”* – Narrowing your market tells you what marketing tools to use. What groups do they belong to? Where do they hang out online? Can you use an email campaign, publish or write articles?

Step 3. *“Networking.”* – Go to where people gather. Meet people in person. Describe the “effect of what you do,” not who you are.

The final major piece of advice - *“Follow up or die!”* The opportunity dies if you don’t follow up. In six months you won’t remember who that person was. Employ cold calling, email, snail mail, Twitter, newsletters – what ever it takes to keep that person’s trust and attention.

Ilise has offered the tools to be the best professional you can be. There is no room for less than 110% effort in today’s market.

**Allen Murabayashi** adds excitement and fun to the technical demands of running a business in today’s environment. His opening mantra says it all: “Taking good pictures isn’t enough to succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.” As CEO and Founder of the online website service, Photoshelter (photoshelter.com), Allen know search engine optimization (SEO) and analytics. He was a founding employee of hotjobs.com and knows the potential of the internet first hand. He won’t accept the typical excuse: “I’m not technical; I’m just a photographer.”

The internet is not scary technology, but an amazing marketing tool with global reach. The goal of SEO is unsolicited website traffic, so searching for your name and finding your own website is not SEO. Google has done a lot of the work for you by an amalgamation of the components that allow you to match your expectations. The goal of SEO is to get on the first page of a Google search. If you can’t get on the first page, you are using words that are too competitive. Have your description be your advertising copy. Links to anchor text on your website have to be descriptive and unique. Also each link from another company is an endorsement, and if you are not building links, you will never show up in the search engine. Links and anchor text account for 74% of the important factors affecting SEO. Captioning and keywording images are all signals to the search engine.

“Avoid Flash,” is the rule of the day. It won’t optimize on the relevant material and attracts far fewer links. Also update your website regularly and show signs of life. Google knows if your website is not updated, and frequent blogs will help in this respect.

The final key is to “measure and analyze.” Your website is a marketing tool, so you have to understand the return on investment. Know where your traffic comes from, and be on Twitter for brand enhancement. Allen’s famous quote – “Don’t be the needle in the haystack; be the haystack.”

**Caitlin Jewell** (silverscape.com) is a “catalyst for change.” As the Principal and Creative Director at Silverscape in Boston, she knows interactive marketing solutions and web applications with clients as big as Nokia

To state it clearly, “creative professionals/photographers have the most challenging industry and the ugliest glass ceiling out there.” It consists of the economy, the stock companies and every prosumer shooter. At 35, she is the oldest at her firm in today’s creative youth culture. This year alone she was approached by over 100 very talented photographers. She is likely to hire people over and over again because she has gotten to know them. If it’s impossible to get in touch by phone, get in front of people through Linked In, Facebook and Twitter. Show up, go to parties, get involved, send a consumable like a picture, wall paper or hand written thank you note.

Personality is everything, but it’s important to have a good and searchable website and to stay in constant contact. Last year she did shoots for clients as diverse as an apparel company, a chocolate maker, a brewery and a VIP event. If you want to stand out you have to be unique, to present the best in quality and have an appeal that gets you noticed. Be a part of the youth culture and be available.

**Jerry Monkman** (ecophotography.com) fosters “creative collaboration on the world and local stage.” With a passion for conservation, Jerry has partnered with NGO’s and non-profit organizations, to create over 100 land conservation projects in New England. He has co-authored six books with his wife, Marcy, including Wild Acadia, the top book of its kind in 2007. Jerry’s two focuses in life are protecting wild places and staying home near his children.

Jerry is an example of what can be accomplished in the photography field today when you give over 100% and try to become the best in your industry. Typical of his projects are his images of Mount Katadin Lake in Baxter State Park in Maine. The images served to raise money to secure more land for the park and demonstrated the importance of conservation on the land. Most important were the images of people enjoying recreation on the land. The images were used for fund raising in brochures, Power Point demonstrations and grant applications. Building a relationship with non-profits is no different than any commercial shoot. It requires building a relationship and an image archive that can have future uses.

One of the most dynamic projects of Jerry’s career has been the Connecticut River Watershed Project, which lasted over two years and 100 days of shooting. He partnered with the Trust for Public Lands and the Nature Conservancy to document the ecology of the longest river in New England. For 400 miles, it starts at the Canadian border and ends at Long Island Sound. The importance of the project lies in getting the word out

about the geographic diversity, the cultural history of the towns, the agricultural resources, and the endangered species. Also, it's important how people interact with the river. These kinds of educational projects that serve the future of New England can only be tackled by dedicated professionals like Jerry.

**Ian Ginsberg** (viipphoto.com) truly inspires an audience with human stories spanning the world, including those in The Congo, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Haiti. As Director of Projects and Partnerships at VII, he brings together stories of conflict and world events from the agency's top photojournalists - Marcus Bleasdale, Alexandra Boulat, Ron Haviv, Gary Knight, Antonin Kratochvil, Joachim Ladefoged, Christopher Morris, James Nachtwey, Franco Pagetti, and John Stanmeyer. The agency best describes its own vision on the website:

“While the stark realities of the battlefield loom large, **VII** turns its gaze with equal intensity to more subtle forms of conflict and documenting the changes and development of society and culture worldwide. But this is not merely artfully captured, neutral observation; nor is it the doctrinaire elaboration of a political or social position. Each photographer is inspired by an array of often very different motivations, and it is from this breadth of reference that the agency draws its originality and strength. What unites **VII**'s work is a sense that, in the act of communication at the very least, all is not lost; the seeds of hope and resolution inform even the darkest records of inhumanity; reparation is always possible; despair is never absolute.”

Raising awareness of major world issues is what keeps their photojournalists in the field. Working with NGO's, magazines, and all types of media, it's not just about the photographs that make VII's talent so important, but about their ability to consistently make the best choices in the field. Planning assignments, getting your equipment there, getting across borders and checkpoints, turning down a wrong road, being in a war zone – handling these issues is key to keeping the project from being derailed.

Distribution is important for keeping this type of talent in the field, from magazines, exhibitions, and books to films and video. Workshops, seminars and internet outreach keep the public aware of the news and human stories it needs to know.

**Part II** will bring telling dialog on the publishing industry, moderated by Towny Dickinson, a multi media production extravaganza by Brian Storm, and a panel of experts at “Predicting the Unpredictable,” by Jose Azel, Nancy Andrews and Dane Howard. Rick Smolan brings his history of the famous *The Day in the Life* books, and stock agency leaders will offer their predictions for the future.

Postscript:

**(Pat Hunt is a writer and workshop leader for the stock photo industry, and Managing Director of *Huntstock.com* in Boston, in partnership with Mark Hunt, Creative Director. Huntstock is a lifestyle image production company specializing in People with Disabilities, Hispanic Lifestyle, Industry/Technology and Boston Lifestyle. Mark has been featured in magazines for his iconic travel photography, and for the community being built around Positive Lifestyle with Disabilities. [pat@huntstock.com](mailto:pat@huntstock.com).)**

**Sidebar:**

**The sponsoring organizations describe themselves:**

**“The American Society of Picture Professionals is a nationwide organization of image experts committed to sharing our experience and knowledge throughout the industry. Our members are photographers, photo researchers and editors, stock agents, museum curators, librarians, archivists, image licensors, designers and writers. We work for major book publishers, national magazines, photo agencies and collections, government agencies, museum and libraries.”**

**“The Picture Archive Council of America, is the trade organization in North America that represents the vital interests of stock archives of every size, from individual photographers to large corporations, who license images for commercial reproduction. Founded in 1951, its membership includes over 100 companies in North America an over 50 international members.”**