

DEVELOPING CONTACTS

How do you approach a potential editorial client?

In today's markets, photographers have to be more proactive than ever before. With competition, an overabundance of stock imagery and diminished markets are some of the challenges we face, to stay competitive, photographers need to study their markets and fully understand how they work.

Since editorial publishers are a target market for many outdoor photographers, I contacted photo editors from a handful of leading magazines to ask for their advice on how best to approach and market to them. Those editors included Amy Teitelberg, photography director at *Outside* magazine; Bob Loggott, former director of photography at *Men's Journal* and current publisher of *PhotoEditing.com*; Scott Kirkwood, editor of *National Parks* magazine; and John Nuhn, photography director of *National Wildlife*. Below are my questions in bold and a summary of their responses.

Are you open to receiving promotions/proposals from photographers you have never worked with?

In each case, it was clear that even in our glutted markets with so much imagery, photo editors are always on the lookout for new talent and/or exceptional work.

"Absolutely! I'm always on the lookout for new and exciting photographers," says *Outside's* photography director Amy Teitelberg. "Direct mail and email are the very best ways to do that. No phone calls please."

Photography director John Nuhn adds, "We have always been open to new photographers, though with more good images now available and fewer pages to fill, it's increasingly more difficult to break into *National Wildlife*. My advice remains the same as it was 20 years ago—study the magazine, be sure your images are as good as those in print, and get some publishing credits from smaller publications before jumping to national magazines. If you're new to marketing your images, the latter also gives you some experience in the business and so you can be professional in your dealings. Realize that most editors are doing more today than they were years ago and are jammed for time."

Is there a self-promotion or type of self-promotion from a photographer that really jumped out at you?

"Yes, I once received a metal first aid kit like you would find in a Range Rover. Even an advertising photographer," photoeditor.com publisher Bob Haggart recalls. "I never hired the guy, so let that be a lesson: standing out is different from getting hired, you can stand out all you want, but unless I like/need your photography, it doesn't matter a whit."

National Parks magazine editor Scott Kirkwood sees self-promotion in simple terms: "The most extravagant thing we've ever received is postcards. And I'm hiring a photographer, not a marketing guru, so I think most of those packages are overkill."

We all know the old adage: study the magazine you want to contribute to. In a nutshell, what to you is a perfect photo submission/proposal?

"Doing your homework is really important," says Nuhn. "For example we close each issue about three months before it hits newsstands, so if you're proposing something that needs to run in a December issue and you're letting me know in December, it's too late. I'm already working on March, so if you're proposing we do a story on Cuba but we just ran a story on Cuba, it's important to know that. The best proposals are well researched, have ideas where secondary financing comes in if it's a really expensive project, know exactly what it will entail and, finally, have the ability to execute at a high level."

Kirkwood reiterates the need to do research. "Great photos (even if they are from previous work), a story to tell (e.g., "balcons" is not a story; "Tolcan reintroduction at Acadia National Park" is a story), drawing parallels between your pitch and an article we did in the last year or two is always helpful—shows that you read our magazine and know our style. I can't tell you how many people come to us with stories about national forests—the name of the magazine is *National Parks*, but only did they not read the magazine, they didn't even get to the end of our title."

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Can you describe a successful assignment or photo-heavy feature that you were particularly proud of and why.

Teitelberg recalls: "In the December 2009 issue, photojournalist Marco DiLuca shot a story on Darter for *Outside*. There were lots of obstacles getting him there with the writer for multiple reasons, but it the end of the day, Marco returned with some of the most powerful images we had run all year. I think it was a case of an amazing, dedicated photographer not letting the difficulties of the assignment get in his way and, instead, going about making the best images he could. I'm very proud of that story and grateful for the chance to work with him."

Kirkwood reveals: "A recent piece on civ. rights sites in the South was really well executed by Jeff and Meggin Haller with Keyhole Photography. We'd met them a couple years ago when they were passing through SC. They showed us some of their work, and we liked it but never had anything in their neck of the woods. When we did, we called them, and they devoted themselves to getting the shots we wanted—dive-ups, water shots, colorful images, plenty of people—and then they got many shots we hadn't expected, e.g., groups of people reenacting a march from years earlier. They made at least two trips to the region, where some photographers wouldn't do it in one to save time and money; they were in touch with the writer to know what she was going to talk about—they really went the extra mile. We got a great product. They ended up with a great text story, and we would work with them again or recommend them in a minute. If you're starting off as a photographer you can do the bare minimum, but it shows. Always try to impress an editor—it may require you to invest more, but, thank it, always pays off."

When you need to find a photographer, do you prefer to look at portfolios or websites?

"It is incredibly important for a working photographer today to have a well-designed, easy-to-use website. The photos should be big. Captions are great," says Teitelberg. "And it must move and load quickly—a lot of loading and waiting for animation, music or flash just gets in the way."

Haggart echoes the same, "Always websites and why not? The cost is a fraction of a portfolio."

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A direct mail marketing effort led to an assignment for the former *American West* Airlines magazine to photograph the people and places of Oregon's Siuslaw National Forest, and photographed this forest and his wife during the shoot.

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No matter your markets, these editors all have the same message: do the research, show only superb work, and target your promotions to the intended publication.

To assist you in researching photo editor preferences, obtain a copy of the 2011 *Photographer's Market* from Writers Digest books. It contains listings for thousands of books, magazines, newspapers, galleries and other businesses that purchase photography. Each listing provides important marketing information for your potential clients, such as the current photo buyer and how the picture buyer prefers to be contacted. www.writersdigest.com is the online version of both the *Artist's & Graphic Designer's Market* and *Photographer's Market* books.

Other books they may help you in crafting your marketing strategy include *The New Visual Marketing and PR* by David Hartman Scott, *Art Marketing 101* by Constance Scott, *Selling Your Photography* by Richard Weisgrau, and *Sellphotos.com* by Robn Long.

Charlie Borland has been a professional photographer for 30 years. His images have been used in many major magazines, including *National Geographic*, *Architecture*, *Newsweek*, *Outdoor Photographer*, *Outside*, *Women's Sport and Fitness* and others. Charlie is vice president and co-owner of www.fogphoto.com, an online picture agency. He teaches an online course, *The Business of Outdoor and Nature Photography*, at the Perfect Picture School, www.pppschool.com and is publisher of www.primetimephotographer.com.



By Robert Langford