

GETTING PUBLISHED IN EDITORIAL MARKETS

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPH BY CHARLIE BORLAND

Photographers are visual storytellers, and that makes their craft similar to other storytellers like filmmakers and writers. While many photographers looking to expand their business are choosing to put their HD DSLR to work by moving into video, others are choosing writing to tell their stories.

Photography and writing have always made sense for outdoor photographers. When you think about it, somewhere online there is a great photograph of just about every location of interest to travelers. Stock photography is no longer the means to an end that it once was. In our world of visual entertainment, pictures might not tell a complete story of the subject, while a written article without photographs might be passed over by the reader. Photographs sell magazines and convince readers that a story is worth reading—making writing and photography a perfect marriage.

Since photographers usually travel to photograph, they can broaden their customer base by expanding into editorial markets, both domestic and foreign, and offer photo/text packages. Editors have always been interested in working with qualified photographers who could provide the story along with the images.

To get started, you need an idea. More importantly, you need a series of ideas. By that I mean that no matter what you wish to do, you should plan to multitask your efforts into as many marketable products as you can from a single effort.

For example, let's say your idea is to visit Patagonia, specifically, Torres Del Paine National Park in Chile, to take pictures and shoot video clips for stock.

To capture the stunning scenery, your itinerary includes trekking, taking a short backpack trip and spending a couple days at an eco-lodge. In this short example are four story ideas:

1. photographing the national park
2. trekking around Patagonia
3. backpacking in Toro Del Paine and
4. staying at an eco-lodge.

You should give equal importance to great photography and the needed details to craft a solid story, including interviews and side stories.

Research is critical not only in determining what stock imagery is in demand, but to which editorial

markets your stories might be suitable. Prior to any trip, significant time is needed to ascertain where to go and what to photograph, and it is also important to establish potential markets for your editorial packages. Establishing who might publish your articles will give you direction on what to photograph.

Both North American and foreign publishers are suitable markets, and online research is the easiest way to find them. However, online can't replace legwork, and time spent perusing the magazine racks at airports, hotels and tourist sites, especially overseas, allows discovery of more potential publications and the kinds of topics they cover. There are several websites that also provide listings of markets such as membership site, www.worldwidefreelance.com, which maintains a database of 2,500 foreign publishers. The public library is a sometimes overlooked source. Obtain as many writer's guidelines as you can from websites, books like *Writer's Market* or, as a last resort, by writing to the publications requesting their guidelines (and enclosing SASEs).

Review each magazine and the writer's guidelines of each magazine that interest you. If the guidelines don't provide the name of the editor you should query, look up the name of the senior editor or managing editor in the masthead of the magazine.

Upon returning from your trip, it's time to start marketing your photo/text packages to the selected publications. Starting with your North American contacts, send queries by email to the specific editors you've found and address the editor by name. (Sometimes, the writer's guidelines may suggest another way, in which case you should do that.) If you send your query to the wrong editor, it will usually find its way to the correct editor.

The subject line should capture the editor's attention in as few words as possible. Avoid telling the editor who you are or that you are a freelance writer/photographer in the subject line.

Instead, make the story idea the center of attention, and keep it to about 150 words. Start with a sentence that demands attention. Then provide the focus and direction your story would take. Never send a full story until it is requested. Indeed, you might not want to write a complete story until you have

a publication interested, so you can tailor it to suit that publication's needs. You are querying only to establish interest.

If you do not hear back within three weeks, send a follow-up email asking if the publication is interested and attach the first email for convenience. If you still get no answer, consider going up the ladder to another editor or craft a new query with a different story angle.

If you are querying foreign markets and you do not receive a response, consider hiring a local college student to translate your query into the language of the country where the publication is located. Be sure to include a sentence asking if English language stories are acceptable. Many of the larger foreign publications have English versions on their websites and have staff to translate; others may not. If English versions are not accepted, you would then need to have the story you write translated as well.

Avoid sending email attachments with your queries. Without attachments, the email will likely be opened; with attachments, it may not if the recipient is concerned about viruses. Instead, provide your website address. Your website should have samples of your writing and a gallery of the photography available for your story proposal. Include links to these as well as your biography stating who you are and any awards and honors you have received or other career highlights.

Once a story is accepted or assigned, your ability to resell that article depends on who plans to publish it first. Generally, most publishers want rights specific to their country, such as First North American Serial Rights for the U.S. and Canada. This means you can sell the article to foreign markets without concern. The usual exception is in-flight magazines, which often have overlap between countries so extra caution is warranted here when submitting your query.

Many North American writer/photographers consider the North American markets their primary targets with the foreign markets being secondary due to the payment schedule. Foreign publishers generally pay less than their North American counterparts so a strategy of selling the package in North America first followed by as many foreign markets as possible results in a more profitable



Chichen Itza, Mayan Ruins, Yucatan, Mexico

story package. While it is common practice to query multiple foreign markets on the same story, craft each query specifically to that publisher.

Getting paid, or rather not getting paid, is a common concern when working in foreign markets. While it is easy to get paid for stock photography by insisting that payment be made before the image can be downloaded, editorial markets often pay on publication. This concern should not be enough to dissuade you from approaching foreign markets. The more stories you publish, the more income you earn and while it's possible to get "burned" on a payment, it is rare. To help avoid that, send the editor a confirmation email upon acceptance recapping the usage and price. Such as: "...just to recap, you are interested in my story on trekking in Nepal for one-time rights at \$350 U.S. ..." and spell out the agreement as you understand it.

With foreign markets, always insist on getting paid in U.S. dollars to avoid bank fees for currency conversion and the exchange rate. While a few publications may still send checks, some will do wire transfers to your bank. If that's the case, never give out your primary bank account numbers. Instead set up a separate bank account with minimal cash in it, and use this for all wire transfers to avoid the account being compromised. Even better, use PayPal for all transfers of funds.