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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Photo District News magazine (PDN) interviews Stephen Austin Welch for not one, but two articles in their August 2006 issue.



"The Best Business Decision I Ever Made"

Photographers share their wisest—and, in some cases, toughest—decisions about their careers and investments. August 2006

excerpt from article:

Stephen Austin Welch, San Francisco, CA

"Our best investment has never been in gear, but instead the investment in people. Our team consists of a great agent, accountant, studio manager, producer, IT guy and lawyer! A job never just happens on the shoot day."

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story continued: Photo District News magazine (PDN) interviews Stephen Austin Welch for not one, but two articles in their August 2006 issue.

E-mail Promos: What Works

In the daily flood of e-mails, it's the simple, well-crafted promos that reach their targets. August 2006 • by Jason Skog

As head of the art buying department with the CPB Group, Jessica Hoffman's e-mail inbox is already crowded with regular correspondence from colleagues and clients. Add to that at least 15 unsolicited e-mails a day from photographers pitching their work, and Hoffman has about all she can handle. "And I have a junk filter," she says.

"If you send out a hard-copy promo, it's a lot of work for them to call you," says Welch. "With e-mail, it's very easy for them to click and give you kudos."



Art buyers, photo editors and designers say that e-mail is starting to surpass snail mail as the most popular way for photographers to reach potential clients. Hoffman, for one, says she has become increasingly reliant on e-mail to keep tabs on photographers' whereabouts. "It's been something I encourage people to do," she said. "I encourage certain people, if they're going into an area in a remote location or an interesting country, please say something. You never know what can happen."

To tap the burgeoning interest in e-mail promotions, many companies that specialize in bulk emails are providing help in personalizing mass e-mailings and offer more increasingly sophisticated ways to bypass so-called "Spam" blockers. These companies can also track how many people open your e-mails, respond to them or click

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through to your Web site. But photo buyers say that whether or not they respond to an e-mail depends less on technology than on how that e-mail is presented.

"If you start sending me files that are 5 megabytes, I'm going to kill you," Hoffman says.

She says she prefers to see an image immediately, rather than follow a link to a Web site. "If they put an image right in the body of the e-mail, I can say, 'Hey, that's something I can use. That's interesting,' and I can get an immediate read on it," Hoffman says. "It's all about the work. Throw your work up there. It's all that matters."

Holly Watson, photo editor at Modern Bride, says she gets at least a half-dozen of the unsolicited bulk e-mails in her inbox each day. She says she'll look at them all, but for her, simpler is better.

"I tend not to like the ones that are lengthy in words," Watson says. "And once I get to the Web site, it has to be easy to navigate."

Gail Goodman, CEO of Constant Contact, a mass e-mailer just outside Boston, tells clients they need to put less information in an e-mail than they would on their Web site. "E-mail is not designed to tell [clients] everything you ever wanted to tell them. E-mail is designed to direct people back to your business or your Web site."

Stephen Austin Welch, a San Francisco-based photographer, started sending a monthly e-mail newsletter as a promotional tool about five years ago. Now he can't imagine doing business without it. He likes the instant feedback.

"If you send out a hard-copy promo, it's a lot of work for them to call," he says. "With e-mail, it's very easy for them to click and give you kudos."

He still uses the regular mail to deliver postcards and other images, "but e-mail gave us the chance to tell a little bit more of a story." He also says it's impossible to know how many people are pinning your postcards up on their cubicle.

Welch recommends giving clients the opportunity to unsubscribe or "opt-out" of receiving the newsletter. "Also, make it personal enough so they feel that it's coming from a photographer and not a machine." And its design should be consistent with your brand. "Make sure it matches with your Web site, with your book, with your personality—instead of adding email as a random element."

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Welch handles his e-mail newsletter himself, but like the companies that provide bulk e-mail services, he tracks who opens the e-mails and whether they follow it through to the Web site.

E-mail newsletters can be "very effective to just sort of shake the tree and keep people aware of what's going on," says Gregg Lhotsky, an agent with Bernstein and Andriulli in New York. But while e-mails are fast and inexpensive, Lhotsky thinks they only work if they're not overused. "If somebody's recently shot a really great campaign or if they're going to be traveling or if we sign somebody new we'll send out something," he says.

Kim Wright, manager of sales and support for JangoMail, a Dayton, Ohio-based bulk e-mailer, said more small business owners and independent contractors are turning to companies like hers to keep up e-mail correspondence.

One of the key reasons is many Internet service providers (ISPs) will limit e-mail activity to a certain size or frequency. Using JangoMail, Email Express Direct, Constant Contact or similar companies won't tie up your computer, bog down your bandwidth or get you into trouble with your ISP.

For \$50 a month, JangoMail clients can send out up to 2,500 e-mails over a three- month period. Once you're ready to design your e-mail, JangoMail's program will walk you through steps to help make sure your subject lines, the size of your e-mail and the content of your message won't set off Spam alarms or e-mail filters when you send it.



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These companies can also track how many people open the e-mails (your "open rate"), respond to them or click through to a Web site (the "click through rate"). Tech-savvy photographers can use these statistics to find out which e-mail subject lines or messages got the most attention, and tailor future e-mails accordingly.

Brian McCarty, a photographer in Los Angeles, has been using mass e-mails to maintain client contacts since he opened his studio, McCarty PhotoWorks, in 2003. So far, he's been doing all the work himself. "As the list continues to expand, I'm going to have to move over to a mailing service, but the design, copy, and layout will remain here," McCarty explains via e-mail. "That way I can keep it personal."

McCarty says that he occasionally checks his Web site statistics to see whether the newsletters prompted a spike in visits, "but for me the success is measured more by talking with clients and hearing them recount how much they enjoyed the such-and-such shot they saw last month. I view it as a way to casually yet consistently stay on their mind."

McCarty, whose photos are light-hearted, mostly of toys inserted into interesting landscapes, says he avoids any hint of a hard-sell in his e-mails, and he never forgets the Golden Rule of e-mailing: "Imagine what you would want to see in your inbox."

While **Welch** says he's pleased with the success he's had with the e-mails, nothing replaces personal contact. "It's important to make friends and meet people," **Welch** said. "This just keeps up those relationships and friendships."

to view Stephen Austin Welch's photographs visit: SAW-ART.com

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