

MY FIRST BUSINESS IDEA TURNED INTO A REALITY

by (Name)

The Name of the Class (Course)

Professor (Tutor)

The Name of the School (University)

The City and State where it is located

The Date

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Everyone has a big dream that he or she wants to turn into a reality, and I am not an exception. From my early childhood, I liked to pose for cameras. My parents told me that I always asked them to take pictures of me in different locations, and then I scrutinized them, comparing and choosing the best shots. Later, the desire to pose transformed into a desire to make photographs on my own. My parents bought me my first film-type camera when I was 14. From that moment, this camera was with me all day and all night. I documented the moments of my life: from school times, happy events spent with my friends, to family meetings. However, I liked to take pictures of landscapes—the still nature of which embodies the power of things that are unseen by the human eye. As a result, I participated in different competitions for young photographers and even won one for the best picture of a raging sea. At that moment, I realized that photography should become something more than just a hobby. Therefore, I decided to earn money by taking pictures of my friends and other people.

To be honest, it was not an easy task. Many of my friends knew that they could always ask me to shoot several photos if they needed to change their profile picture on Facebook or to post a new one on Instagram. I did not charge them and frequently offered locations, poses, and even asked a friend of mine to do the makeup for the people I photographed. In this regard, it was challenging for me to start charging my friends as well as other people. At the same time, I understood that I applied a lot of effort which should be rewarded. Nonetheless, my film-type camera did not allow me to conduct paid photo sessions. That is why I worked hard at two different jobs during the whole summer to earn enough money to buy a digital camera. Of course, I could ask my parents to help me, but I decided that I wanted to do it myself. At the beginning of the previous September, I bought my first digital camera Nikon D3400. This

camera cost \$500 and was not fully professional, but for starting photographers like me. Still, the photos I took on the Nikon D3400 were amazing.

I thought if I upgraded my camera, I could start making great pictures and charging people for them. The problem was that I never used a digital camera before and, therefore, needed someone to teach me. Consequently, I was forced to attend photography courses as well as PhotoShop courses to prove my professionalism. Over three months of studying, I became a certificated specialist with a wide knowledge of camera settings, composition, and lighting. From this moment, I seriously thought about paid photo sessions. The competition on the market was stiff, as there were many different photographers, including wedding, portrait, and pet ones. Therefore, I started thinking about how to combine my passion for landscape shooting and taking photos of people. With the help of my friend, Kate, who was a makeup artist, I understood that conceptual photography was a great idea.

To realize this idea, I cooperated with Kate, and we placed announcements on our Facebook and Instagram profiles that we were looking for models for a free conceptual shooting session. As we expected, there were not many people who wanted to participate. However, we did a great job, and all our models were satisfied with the received pictures. We continued such shooting sessions for two months in order to gain experience and advertised ourselves among friends as well as on the Internet. To show our works, we created a separate Instagram account where all photographs of the models were represented. As the number of followers and appreciative comments were increasing, we realized that it was the right time to make paid photo sessions. We created a price list of the services we could offer, including dressing, makeup, and the general idea or concept of the photographs. Surprisingly, this step not only increased an interest in us, but also transformed our enthusiastic activity into a real business.

When the photo sessions became paid, we faced the fact that not all of our clients were satisfied with the photographs. As a result, we started doubting ourselves and thought about whether we were doing the right thing. It was the first time we received negative feedback or comments and experienced stress with clients. However, when it became clear that the vast majority of the comments were positive, we started learning from our failures, trying to improve customer satisfaction and the overall impression of the photo sessions. For example, when clients did not have any ideas of the style or concept of the photo session, we asked the client's preferences and the most obvious taboo in order to find something interesting, and at the same time, something suitable for the customer's personality.

Within a month from the date our account reached ten thousand subscribers, a local fashion web-based blog contacted us and offered a contract for one photo session for their media. Without any doubts, we agreed and took gorgeous pictures of three models. It was a marine style shooting with magnificent decorations of the sea. Moreover, it was our first experience in a professional studio and with a big team of the stylists, editors, makeup artists, and other staff. Besides, the sum of our fee for this shooting, which was \$300, impressed us a lot. After these photographs were published, referencing me as a photographer and Kate as a makeup artist, we got several more offerings from other online fashion blogs and magazines.

Today, I continue working with Kate. In addition, two more people joined our team who are responsible for the social media promotion of our Instagram page. For now, we perform 3-4 photo sessions per week, including individual as well as corporate orders. We have become deeply involved in conceptual fashion photography and primarily cooperate with fashion editions of various media. From time to time, I also work as a wedding photographer, finding it quite interesting and financially beneficial. Now, I am earning money for college, as I want to receive

a degree in graphic design. Overall, I am proud of myself and Kate that we have managed to turn our small business idea into a reality and make money from it, gaining priceless experience.