



By Kristina Urquhart

Find great value from investing—in yourself

Gig a Little, Gig a Lot

A REWARDING THING ABOUT WORKING IN THE CREATIVE INDUSTRY is that you can easily see, and often measure, the impact of your art in the world. But when it comes to the appraising the creativity itself? That's a little more intangible.

There's no punch clock for creativity (okay, so you need to keep track of a project's billable hours, but we're talking the cerebral stuff here). Ideas aren't quantifiable. They don't necessarily arrive between the hours of 9:00 am and 5:00 pm. In fact, they're kind of inconvenient that way.

For a non-salaried creative supplier, like a photographer or illustrator who hustles from job to job, that's part of what makes determining (and defending) the monetary value of what you do one of the biggest challenges of the business.

As a freelancer, it's not just the creative output that you need to account for, but all of the overhead, too—stuff that's not necessarily visible to the client like medical insurance, taxes and studio space. Then there's your education and experience—how do you even begin to put a value on that? Price yourself too low, and you undervalue your own work and time. Price yourself too high, and the clients will surely knock on someone else's door.

It's a tenuous link between getting it right and getting it wrong—and between opportunity and competition. The well-documented rise of the “gig economy” means things are only going to get more saturated, so expressing your value proposition is paramount. The “gig economy” buzzword has been around since apps like Uber, Airbnb and TaskRabbit have made the temporary job market more open source. But the concept is nothing new—freelancers have long been part of the workforce. As of February 2017, self-employed and temporary workers comprised more than 24 per cent of the Canadian workforce. In the US, there are more concrete numbers available on bonafide freelancers, who make up 34 per cent of the overall workforce. And Intuit, a company that develops financial and accounting software, estimates by 2020 that gig workers will comprise 40 per cent of the total working population in the US.

As the world becomes untethered from the concept of the 9-to-5 office job and the workforce marches toward the freedom of freelance, there are a few things you can do to strengthen your position in the creative market, whether you are new or established. 1) Keep up with professional development. Know how to use the latest technology and you'll quickly stand out from those who don't. 2) Put yourself out there. On portfolio sites, yes, but also Behance, Instagram, awards programs and any other applicable space. In today's market, the more you are visible, the more you are credible. Make sure you know what shows up when people Google you. 3) Be informed and ready to negotiate. You should know the ins and outs of what you are agreeing to in addition to what you are providing.

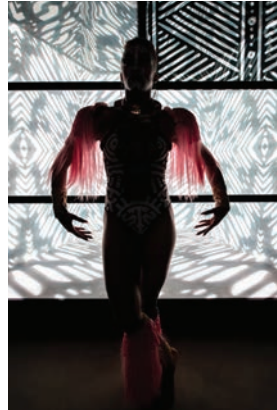
“The best thing you can do is be as knowledgeable as you can about your art—what goes into it, the cost, what each usage demands in the market,” agent and CAPIC board member Djanka Gajdel tells writer Jessica Wynne Lockhart in “Terms and Conditions” (p. 26). In addition to insights from Gajdel, we've gathered intel from other industry sources so you can familiarize yourself with what you need to know as a freelancer.

There's one more thing you can do to ensure you're at the top of your game, and that is to stay inspired. Turn to p. P1, after the thick awards tab in the middle of the book, to peruse the winners of the 2017 Photography & Illustration Awards. This year marks the 25th anniversary of our first-ever photo and illustration contest and once again we have no shortage of thoughtful work to challenge, excite and provoke you—or maybe to convince you that now's finally the time to strike out on your own.

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The latest tools of the trade to support your creative career

Resources



Commerce + Creativity Converge C2 Montreal, May 24-26, 2017

When an ad agency (Sid Lee) and a theatrical production company (Cirque du Soleil) get together to stage a conference, it's guaranteed to be out of the ordinary. The sixth annual C2 Montreal takes place this month—and there won't be a typical trade show vendor in sight. The 2017 theme is "Ecosystems," with workshops and talks focusing on the interconnected world—from cities to new business environments to the complex networks that link us all together. Top creative minds from around the world gather under big tents to lecture on innovation, disruption and commerce (this year's speakers include Steve Wozniak of Apple, Jade Raymond of Electronic Arts and industrial designer Karim Rashid). Expect hands-on workshops exploring and challenging the latest technologies, live art performances, and start-up pitches. "Brainstorming" labs will be set up in unusual places like greenhouses or sensory deprivation chambers. And 2017 marks the inaugural AI Forum, running concurrently with the C2 festival. Artificial intelligence experts will be on hand to demonstrate new equipment, predict trends and discuss key ethical issues. c2montreal.com



On-the-Go Gear

The next time you're shooting outside the studio, check out the EV-1 StrapShot Holster (\$99; pictured) from Cotton Carrier Systems, which allows you to attach your camera to a bag, backpack or belt so you can stay hands-free. A safety tether and locking mechanism keep the camera stationary and secure. Veteran special effects supervisor Andy Cotton, who worked for more than two decades on TV series including *21 Jump Street*, *Psych* and *Battlestar Galactica*, founded the Cotton line of accessories in 2011 after he was unable to find a durable camera carrier that would stand up to the kinds of situations he was used to from his years in SFX. Also available: hand straps, harnesses and stabilizers. For stockists and more products, visit cottoncarrier.com.

Win Your Next Pitch

Smaller agencies looking to nail their next RFP or client presentation may want to entertain The PitchMen, a new creative consultancy comprised of senior-level professionals in advertising, marketing, media and public relations. The Toronto-based initiative is an offshoot of Old Ad Guys, an international network of advertising thought leaders founded by local creative director Peter Cooke. The PitchMen offers access to creatives, strategists and planners across a network of locations in Canada and the US—just fill out a form with your project requirements, and you'll be connected with a partner. (The same goes for senior-level pros who want to join the team.) Consultants, all of whom are required to sign NDAs, work behind-the-scenes in non-client-facing roles to beef up your concepts or outreach strategies. thepitchmen.club