

MPH
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SERIES

KID CHAN'S

Guide to the Business
of Photography



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Dedication

This book is dedicated to God,
from whom all blessings flow and
without whom anything I ever did
would not be possible.

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Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank Shirlyn – my wife, confidante and best friend – who has supported me all this while. I must also thank my in-laws, Vincent and Alice, for their faith in me. And of course, I wouldn't be where I am today without my mother Anne Law and my dad Yow Chan.

I've been extremely lucky to have had awesome mentors in the form of Spencer Wing, Tan Sri MS Tan, Simon Thompson, CK Low, Terry Leong, Datin Frieda Mohd Pilus and TS Lim.

A shout-out goes to TEAM KIDCHAN for taking this long journey with me. A special note of appreciation to Y Wong, whom I'm convinced is my long-lost brother.

I'm always thankful to have had the best corporate and wedding clients who have entrusted me with capturing their most cherished moments.

I'm grateful to Michelle Yoon for her assistance in drafting the manuscript.

Lastly, I want to thank you, the reader, for picking up this book.

Introduction

Following the first book in the MPH Masterclass Series, which was on the topic of modelling, we had quite a few choices on which topic to go for in the second book of the series. When we finally decided to go with the topic of photography business, we knew immediately who to look for: Kid Chan.

Kid is arguably the most well-known local photographer of our time. It's no wonder he was commissioned to photograph Malaysian pop darling Siti Nurhaliza's wedding. He has achieved a status that's almost similar to those of his celebrity clients.

Kid's photography skills are undeniably good, but that's not the only reason why he is where he is today. Even he will tell you that there are many good photographers out there. What sets him apart is his keen business sense and very good people and communication skills.

Since he came into the limelight as the wedding photographer to the stars, Kid's brand of photography has continued to grow. Today, his brand name extends beyond our shores as he continues to gain recognition by overseas publications and clients.

His success in an industry as competitive as this one did not come by chance. As he climbed up the value chain, he consciously made bold strategic decisions, with his eyes fully trained on his goals.

In this book, Kid shares his thoughts and tips on building a successful career in photography—stuff that he has learned through experience. We at MPH Publishing are confident that this book records some of the best practices that will boost the career prospects of any aspiring photographer.

Oon Yeoh

MPH Masterclass Editor

May 2013

Foreword

I first got to know Kid Chan when he was a university student at Metropolitan College in Subang Jaya where I served as the chairman. I always made it a point to get to know student leaders and Kid struck me as someone who was not only outspoken but who spoke well and displayed good manners.

This impressed me, so I offered him a job in my organisation as my personal assistant. I felt he had the personality and qualities I needed in a PA.

I liked the fact that he had a good command of English, something that is not so common anymore amongst young people. And he was also very fast in doing things. He could achieve a lot in a little time.

Such qualities made him ideal to be my PA, so I was very sad to see him go when he decided to strike it out on his own as a photographer and a businessman.

But I understood that, as a talented and creative person, he felt stifled by a PA job. He wanted to try his hand at running a business.

I wished him all the best but had no doubt that he would make it. He had the determination and will to succeed in this line. The fact that he was taking over his sister's business also gave me confidence that things would work out in the long run, as he was not starting from scratch. Plus, he has great interpersonal skills, so crucial in this line.

Now, many years later, I'm delighted to see that my estimation of his business acumen has proven to be correct. I feel proud that he's grown to become a successful businessman in photography.

I always believe it's vitally important to train the younger generation. I must congratulate him for coming out with this book on how to build a photography business. Many young people want to take their photography skills to another level. This book will give them a better chance at success.

Tan Sri Dato' MS Tan
May 2013

Preface

These days, it's no longer odd to see people, young and old, carrying around digital SLR cameras. Photography has become easier and more accessible than ever before. While most might treat photography as a hobby, some hobbyists might want to make that leap into the world of professional photography.

When I first started out as a photographer, the industry was still running on film. We had to carefully calculate the number of rolls of film we would use for each event, and factor that into our bills. Equipment, too, was quite costly. Today, thanks to technology, film is no longer needed and high-quality cameras are no longer prohibitively costly. In fact, they are very affordable.

Given all that, it's not surprising that the photography market has become a very competitive and saturated one. A photographer's skills, eye for detail and creativity—while all still necessary, are no longer enough. To become a successful professional photographer, one has to have a firm grip on both the creative side and the business side of the industry.

I'm delighted to be writing this book for the MPH Masterclass Series. This is an opportunity for me to share the knowledge and experiences that I've accumulated over the years.

As its title suggests, this is a business book, not a technical one. So, you won't find lessons on how to shoot better photos. There are plenty of books out there for that and the principles of good photography are the same everywhere, whether in the East or the West.

But business practices are not the same everywhere, which is why this book is unique. It's a book about how to successfully run a photography business in Malaysia. What you will find in here are best practices that will give you a leg up in this competitive industry.

I had to learn my way around the photography business from the school of hard knocks. But you don't have to. You have this book, which is written with the Malaysian photographer in mind.

INTRODUCTION

If you've chosen to pick up this book, I'm sure you're someone who's serious about stepping into the world of professional photography. I hope that you will find the tips in here useful and I wish you all the best in launching a successful photography business.

Kid Chan

May 2013



Chapter 1

KID CHAN'S

Guide to the Business of Photography



The MPH Masterclass Series is a new line of how-to books written by top Malaysian names who are experts in their respective fields. Following the successful first volume on modelling by Amber Chia is this book on the business of photography by Kid Chan.

In Malaysia, perhaps no photographer is more well-known than Kid Chan, who's something of a celebrity himself. The Kid Chan brand is internationally renowned and regularly receives accolades from publications and private clients across Southeast Asia and beyond.

But he didn't get to where he is today by chance. Kid Chan reached the pinnacle of success because he also understands and accepts the fact that as a professional photographer he has to be as much a businessman as an artist or a technician.

In this single volume, Kid Chan shares his thoughts and offers tips on what it takes to build a successful photography business.



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