

# #introduction

Photographers are visual storytellers. Sometimes our stories are true, real-life depictions of what's before us. And sometimes they represent a version of reality that we want to convey. Not exactly *lies*, but ... oh, c'mon. An artist must be free to interpret his/her world, right?

Well, there's a fine line, requiring careful balance, between entertaining storytelling and genuine transparency. Today's consumers are painfully savvy and their tolerance for trickery is scarce. But don't let this scare you.

In this book, we'll cover the importance of earning trust in your marketplace and how to handle the process of strategic planning. We'll also explore how to target and attract the right audience and develop content that engages and motivates them in ways that benefit your business.

Successful marketers have learned to play the high-stakes communications game with finesse and market insights. During my recent travels in Australia, for instance, I discovered Weis Bars in Gold Coast. They're fantastic. And I loved them even more after a local told me a story about how the bars came to be.

*Grandfather Weis tried to coax his grandchildren to eat fruits. They refused. So Weis chopped up the fruits and froze the mixture into what looked like an ice cream bar, and he added a strip of cream in the center. The kids gobbled up the treat. And now, Weis Bars have become Aussies' most popular non-dairy, non-ice cream, ice cream-like bar.*



While photographers project their world, Austin Power's nemesis, Dr. Evil, tries to take over the world. A comedic self-portrait by Lawrence Chan taken at 50mm f/3.5 for 1/200 second.

I learned later that the story is untrue, but it's catchy. And hidden within this story are proactive answers to possible concerns or objections consumers may have to the product. The creative and caring grandfather softens mistrust among consumers, whose typical default perception is that companies are more concerned with making high profits than providing a quality product.

The story also positions the snack as an alternative to ice cream ... for lactose intolerant individuals and/or those with other health-related concerns. So while wholly untrue, the brand's story conveys important elements of Weis Bars, and it helped me bond with the product.

I bring up this important issue of storytelling, because one of the coolest things about social media, I think, is that this set of online tools are making it possible for small businesses to broadcast their stories and engage their marketplace in ways that've never been possible before. It no longer matters if your marketing budget is nil and your PR contact list doesn't exist. What matters most to a successful social media marketing program is your time and a genuine willingness to connect with your audience.

Throughout this book, we'll examine various social media tools and explore why they're worth the effort. We'll discover how much fun and rewarding social media marketing can



Weis Bar is known as the "no stick" fruit bar, which is particularly convenient for kids. Self-portrait photograph by Lawrence Chan enjoying a Weis Bar taken at 35mm f/2.8 for 1/100 second.

be. We'll even talk about why it's really no longer even a serious option to not participate in the social media sphere. It's quickly becoming a cost of entry—the ante in a highly competitive photography market.

Long gone are the days when a photographer could make a living with just a camera, an eye for composition, and a flair for developing great

images. When Canon and Nikon launched digital cameras that *everyone* could use, good photography alone as a selling point became moot. Now, social media raises the bar again, and it goes far beyond staying connected with friends.



Participating in social media is just as important as visiting the Colosseum when in Rome. Photo taken by Lawrence Chan at 35mm f/2.8 for 1/100 second.

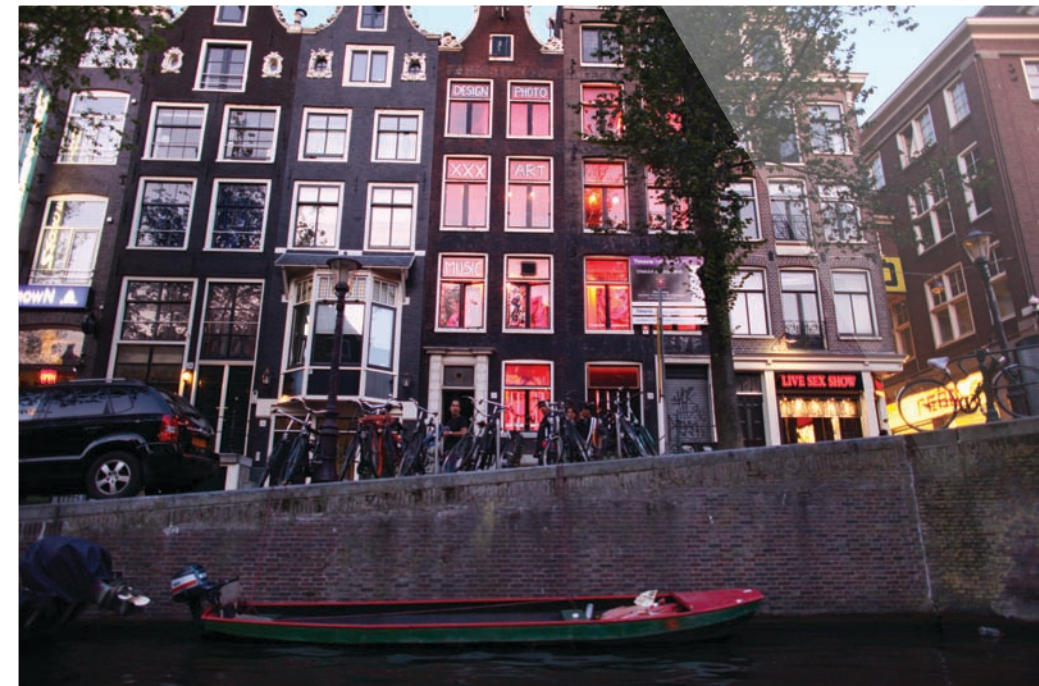
Online engagement tools (like Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, and YouTube) are making it easier than ever to find out what your audience wants and how they're responding to what you're putting out there. It's the communication platforms our fathers and grandfathers could only dream about. So don't let self-doubt intimidate you out of the game.

If you're thinking things like:

- Social media is too complicated.
- I can't keep up; social media keeps changing.
- Forget it. I don't know where to begin or what's even out there.
- What could I possibly say to interest an audience?
- I have a Facebook page and Twitter account, but have no idea what to do with them.

... then this book is for you.

Find out how to launch a social media marketing program, because there's just no way around it: people make decisions based on who and what they know. Hiring a familiar name/face/voice is simply a comfortable way to filter the options. It's an emotional market, so you need to ensure that yours—and not your competitor's—is the business people call when looking for a product or service you provide.



Unlike Amsterdam's Red Light District, serious photographers need to build substantial credibility. Photo taken by Lawrence Chan at 24mm f/1.4 for 1/100 second.

And when you're ready to take it even further, find out how and why to market your business as a social luxury and even how to earn brand evangelists, who will tout your brand messages voluntarily and with genuine gusto. Sounds exciting, right? It is!

Digital photographers who want to gain exposure and build credibility throughout a target niche ... and sustain ownership of a desired market position over the long haul ... need social media as part of their marketing program. But don't make the mistake of thinking that mind-blowing social media content can keep your photography business alive if you take terrible photographs. Ultimately you have to deliver.

In other words, at the core of your social media work, as with any other kind of marketing effort, is a quality product. Like with dating, looks attract and flirting engages. But it's the live, real-world behavior that makes 'em fall in love ... or vanish.

Got it? Well, let's get started. ★★★★★