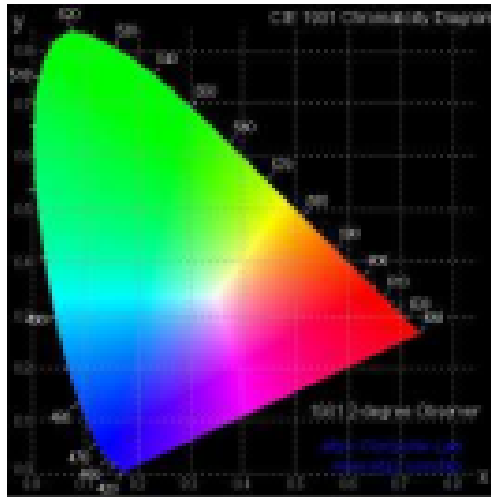


# *Monitor*



**EDID Newsletter**  
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**Digital Division**  
[www.a-p-s.org.au/digital.html](http://www.a-p-s.org.au/digital.html)  
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## **Do you really want to be a professional photographer?**

Since the arrival of the digital era photography has become a popular hobby and interest to many people once again. How nice would it be if someone pays us to take photographs? I am quite sure this dream is in almost every photographer's mind. However, running a professional photography business is not as easy or enjoyable as most people hope.

As a professional photographer you always worry when you don't have a customer. When a few customers are at your door you are excited and want more. When there are customers lining up at your front gate you start to believe yourself - your skill and your attractiveness. Like weather, a good business never stays the same unless you work hard on it. When a business starts to go down, you worry again. How to keep yourself at the top of the hill is always a two -million-dollar question. Is an answer really out there? I am not sure.



**Can you find your right customers from a large city like Melbourne?**

I met Dr Greg Chapman, a leading advisor of emerging businesses at a business meeting recently. I took the opportunity and threw all my questions to him. Let's hear the advice from a professional business person.

**Q: What would you recommend if someone is passionate in photography and want to take his/her dream further as a part-time or even full-time business?**

**Dr Chapman:**

A new professional photographer should attempt to define what is their niche. Is it wedding photography, family photographs, commercial etc.. This is important as each niche is a totally different market. Having defined their niche, they must decide what their points of difference are. In other words, why you? Have you won awards? Is it your knowledge and experience of the niche very impressive even before you become a professional photographer? Do you have special qualifications? Do you use special equipment? Once you know the answer to such questions, you can answer the question, why you?

**Q: My peer Fred Smith is already a professional photographer - yes he has an ABN, that's all. He would like to know how to make his business sustainable. Although potential customers appear to be everywhere, he just couldn't get them in as his customers. What do you recommend to Fred?**

**Dr Chapman:**

In order for Fred to have a sustainable business he needs a stream of enquiries from qualified buyers in his niche. To achieve this he requires a marketing system that generates the enquiries he seeks. This usually does not depend on a single strategy, but rather a portfolio of strategies. The four key lead generating strategies are advertising, public relations, word of mouth and cold calling. Fred needs to develop strategies in some or all these four areas.

**Q: Mary Jones, another peer of mine, is already a professional wedding photographer with an average customer base. Mary doesn't need to worry about paying her bills but she wants to do more for a better living quality. Any thoughts?**

**Dr Chapman:**

If Mary has a fairly full book, she should consider some more advanced marketing strategies that will allow her to increase her prices and make more money by working less. She could do this by being able to demonstrate a higher value than her competitors, potentially being more selective of her clients, and have a structured sales pipeline that she has tested and which produces a high conversion rate of leads to clients.

**Q: Harry Peterson is a well established corporate photographer but he lost a significant number of customers due to the downturn of economy. He is thinking of shrinking his team to cut costs because he believes the market won't be back up again for at least a few years. Do you think shrinking his business is the best option he should take?**

**Dr Chapman:**

As most photographers have quite weak marketing systems, before shrinking his business Harry might want to invest in a marketing audit to determine what opportunities he has to increase his business even in a weak economy. Most photographers won't invest in this and many will leave the field to those who are prepared to make such an investment. It is ironic that a photographer will be the first to say you should use a professional to get the best photographs for a corporate image, rather than an amateur, but refuse to hire a professional marketer to get the best marketing outcomes for their business. A good marketing strategist will come up with ideas that will generate many times their fees, and yet most photographers won't hire one. The smart ones will, and will grow their business, whilst others allow theirs to shrink.

Dr Greg Chapman is a business adviser and marketing strategist. He is also the author of the top selling, internationally recognised book: "The Five Pillars of Guaranteed Business Success". Visit [www.FivePillarsBusinessSuccess.com](http://www.FivePillarsBusinessSuccess.com) and download a free copy of Dr Chapman's Mission Statements Made Easy Tool.

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