

If you have a passion for photography and a head for business, starting a studio could be your perfect venture. We show you how...

Whether you're a working photographer looking to run a permanent space or an amateur looking for a business opportunity, starting your own photography studio requires a strong constitution, a focused mind and a lot of know-how.

Creative industries are notoriously tough when it comes to competition and studio photography is no different. As technology and information become steadily more accessible the number of people able to offer photographic services increases, so it comes down to your skill and fortitude as a photographer and a businessperson to make your studio stand out from the rest.

When considering starting a studio, the most important question you can ask yourself is 'Why?'. If you can honestly

whittle down the reasons for wanting to take the plunge of running your own space then you're off to a good start.

It could be that your studio will serve as a personal space to develop yourself as a photographer, or you might have your sights set on A-list clientele. Your motivation will determine your approach to your studio and it will affect your choice of space, selection of equipment and even the way you handle the day-to-day running of your business.

Over the next ten pages we'll bring you our complete guide to everything you should know before you get started. We've got tips and advice from the business sector right through to pro photographers at the helm of successful studios. We've also spoken to experts about the essential studio kit you'll need. **8**

IN-DEPTH
FEATURE SPECIAL

Starting a studio

**10-PAGE
GUIDE**

We go through what you need to consider when starting up a studio, with advice from industry professionals

GUIDE TO STARTING

In association
with Jessops



►► **IMAGINE**

Approaching each aspect of a new studio with fresh imagination was the key for Kellianne Chandler



© Kellianne Photographer

A STUDIO

8 Find your focus

There are many reasons to start a studio, but knowing what your reason is will form the basis of the choices that you'll make. Studio photography branches off into many exciting areas – you should think further than family portraits and model portfolios.

Be clear whether your studio is mainly for your own creative advancement or whether it will be a directed commercial endeavour from which you will need to make a profit. Making this distinction early will drastically change the way you approach your studio's start-up.

While the thought of a professional space may bring to mind images of magnificent high-ceiling rooms, natural light and a host of kit to choose from, this may not be possible for everyone. Knowing what you will be shooting and who will make up your client base is vital.

If family photography and portraits are your focus then you can get away with a smaller space or a room

conversion and your equipment list can remain focused and specific. Keep in mind the dimensions that you'll need to make your clients comfortable and leave room to work around them. Product photography may require less or more space, as the choice of products varies from jewellery right through to supercars. Each option will require a varying kit list and skills.

If you're planning to use the studio to improve your own skills and want to rent it out to subsidise yourself, it may be worth focusing your choice of location and equipment to make it appealing to as many different groups as possible. Rented studios often have other photographers, film crews and even events in the studio. With your motivation and subject focus clear, you are ready to move on to finding a location and get kitting out your space.

We recommend

The Pentax 645D is an attractive option for professionals looking to invest in a new studio camera. At 40 megapixels the medium format camera has a lot to offer at its fairly modest price tag compared to others at the same level. Designed like a DSLR, the 645D is easy to navigate, and thanks to its size it performs well in the studio and on location. The large file format requires high-speed memory cards to keep up, as well as a decent computer system to handle the files, but the image quality it produces is well worth it.



“Know what you will be shooting and who will make up your client base”



SPACING
Successful studios give practical spaces an inspirational and professional feel by their intelligent use of space

Focus-specific products



40" EZcube

Price: £132.95 (via tabletopstudio.co.uk)

Web: www.ezcube.com

Essential for product photography – The EZ Cube is designed to soften hard lighting and eliminate glare and unwanted reflections. The light tents come in a range of sizes to photograph objects from suspended jewellery all the way up to furniture. It works in natural and artificial light and is lightweight, easy to use and store in your studio. A range of ready-made backgrounds make for a professional finish.

Interfit Titan Pro Receiver

Price: £89.99 (via morrisphoto.co.uk)

Web: www.interfitphotographic.com

Essential for family photography – Get the best facial expressions in your child and baby portraits by coming out from behind the camera and interacting with them while you shoot. With four channels, the two-in-one transmitter and receiver allows you to control four different cameras or flashguns up to 320 feet from the main camera position. Additional cables are required to connect compatible cameras to trigger the shutter or studio strobes, however.



Fresnel 200

Price: £634.62 (via bowensdirect.com)

Web: www.bowens.co.uk

Essential for beauty work – The 200mm lens produces that classic Hollywood-style lighting, which gives your beauty images a professional and glamorous edge. The built-in iris gives you a very tight control of the light pool, enabling precise control during setup and shooting. While it's perfect for beauty work, it's also very handy to use for portraits and commercial shoots. The S-Type mount of the Fresnel 200 makes it compatible with all S-Type Bowens moonlights and strobes.



Manfrotto Still Life Table

Price: £779.95

Web: www.manfrotto.co.uk

Essential for still life photography – Weighing almost 30kg, this Manfrotto table is a solid bet for still-life photography. The cover is white translucent Perspex, which allows for back or front lighting. This piece of kit makes a valuable addition to any studio focusing on still lifes. The table can take a weight of 15 kilograms, rendering it unsuitable for anything other than fairly lightweight objects.

Choose a space

Choosing a studio space can be a daunting task with so many options available, from a room conversion in your house to an empty space to renovate. However, the choice of space becomes easier once you have found a focus for your work.

If you have decided that a room conversion fits your budget, think about what your clients will want and whether a home environment will be suitable to their experience. Remember that everything they see about you will add to how they view your business and your service. A cosy feel may add to the ambience if you are shooting family portraits or working with children; if you're after commercial clients then it probably won't fit the bill.

Estate agents are good places to start if you're going to rent or invest in a purpose-built studio. A large number of studios make use of some unusual

locations, from old factories and warehouses to barns and basements. The feel and character of a space is often what sets it apart. Again, keep in mind your clients when viewing spaces. Take note of everything from the natural light in a studio to the facilities that it offers and how easy it is to access.

Think outside the box in terms of what a location can offer you. Don't discount outside areas, stairwells and elevators as interesting options for shoots. Be aware of who you need to speak to to access the spaces and what risks they come with. Also ask yourself whether you have the equipment to correctly light these spaces and play around with test shots before you start a project. Prepare a list of all possible elements you have to work with and have a clear picture in your head of what your space, your kit and you as a photographer are capable of.

“The choice of space becomes easier once you've found a focus for your work”



It was love

Art photographer Sarah Peace found herself the owner of a studio business after scouting a location for a classical music shoot and stumbling upon a 100-year-old Victorian Fire Grate factory in London which she fell in love with. Available only on a long-term lease she decided to take it. “It was a no-brainer,” she tells us. “I needed somewhere to work and this place had the potential of being a commercial studio.” After a lot of grit and determination, Peace and Light Studio is not only a profitable enterprise, it also serves as a creative hub for young people to learn and experiment through various charitable programs.



Backgrounds and backdrops

Interfit Background Support System

Price: £102.07 (via fotosense.co.uk)

Web: www.interphotographic.co.uk



A sturdy and interchangeable background support is essential for any studio setting. Measuring 2.6m high and 3.15m wide, this system is designed to support either textile or paper roll backgrounds and

Interfit's range of Master backgrounds. The product box contains two stands, the crossbar and a carry bag to pack it away for easy storage or to move to another location.

Lastolite Studio Vinyls

Price: £178.99 (via 1stcameras.com)

Web: www.lastolite.com



Lastolite offers white vinyl backgrounds that can be wiped clean after a shoot and reused. We like that this is an alternative to continuously buying paper

rolls, especially if you use white backgrounds as your default. The vinyl is supplied on a roll the same width as the company's standard paper backgrounds and can be suspended using the 1108 support system. A roll is 6m long.

Background Paper Triple Hooks

Price: £34.95

Web: www.manfrotto.co.uk



For a more permanent background solution Manfrotto offers triple hooks that can be screwed into the wall or to one of the clamps. The hooks have space to hold three paper rolls; we recommend the

white, grey and black paper as standard option. If you regularly use more than three different backgrounds the upgrade offers six holders for six different papers. Both systems are designed to hold the Expan 046 sets.

Lastolite Wide Curtain Support

Price: £180 (via studiokitdirect.co.uk)

Web: www.lastolite.com



If you prefer using curtain backgrounds over paper options then Lastolite offers this curtain support. The specs call for cloths that measure three metres

wide. With an ever-expanding range of curtain and muslins backgrounds available, this support is sure to become a studio staple. The support is presented in an easy-to-carry bag that makes it ideal to store away and take on location if needed.

Lighting kits

Bowens Gemini 500R

Price: £1,615 (via bowensdirect.com)

Web: www.bowens.co.uk



This kit is a good investment if you're starting from scratch and want a kit to build up from. It features three Gemini 500R moonlights, which prove great value for money when bought as part of a kit. Along

with the moonlights you get two umbrellas, a softbox and a wide-angle reflector along with stands, a trolley case and all you need for setting up in terms of lamps, cables and sync cord.

Interfit INT491 Twin Head Softbox/Umbrella Kit

Price: £626

Web: www.interfitphotographic.com



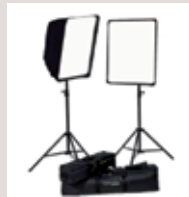
If you're after a small kit to start off with, the Interfit Twin Head is something to look at. It features two EXD400 heads which combine all the features of the multiple award-

winning EX150 MKII with fan cooling and a larger polycarbonate body. Along with a 100cm softbox and a translucent umbrella, the kit offers good value for money and all you need if you're starting small.

Westcott Spiderlite TD5 Window Light Kit Plus

Price: £1,799

Web: www.fjwestcott.com



For continuous lighting options, have a look at this kit that offers the equivalent output of 1800W. Three separate switches allow you to run from 1-5 lamps with no shift in colour temperature, and a handle allows for rotation of a

softbox from a vertical to horizontal position. The shallow depth softbox and 1/4-stop front diffusion panel offers a greater punch of light that's ideal for obtaining spectacular highlights.

Lastolite RayD8 Two Head Tungsten Kit

Price: £241.02

Web: www.lastolite.com



Lastolite offers an entry-level option that is best suited to product and portrait photography. While the kit is very basic it is robustly built and features an easy-to-use swivel-and-tilt mechanism. The box

contains two heads and reflectors, two lamps and section stands and two 80cm white reflective umbrellas to diffuse light. The kit uses a continuous tungsten 3200K light source.

Kitting out the studio

Kitting out your studio can range from a few

shrewd purchases to a free-for-all of the most exciting gadgets and innovations that the industry currently has to offer. This depends largely on budget and on your personal needs.

Getting a basic studio setup right requires a fundamental understanding of the functions of each piece of equipment. It'll help you to decide whether something has to be a staple in your kit list or whether it can be added to the ever-growing wish list that every studio surely sits on.

The first decision to make is whether you need continuous lighting heads or whether you require flash heads. Each comes with its own set of advantages and disadvantages. Continuous lighting costs a lot less than flash heads and offers a good option for those starting on a small budget. As the light is constantly on you can better assess a scene and see where the shadows and highlights are and adjust your setup accordingly.

Continuous lighting's biggest disadvantage is that it produces more heat than flash systems and can severely heat up your studio and the models you may be working with. As you move up the range of systems available you'll find that more expensive kits offer solutions to minimise this problem.

Opting for a flash system offers you a greater amount of power and a higher level of control over your lighting; it also offers greater consistency as the colour from a flashtube is balanced to daylight each time the flash is fired.

A lighting kit is a good place to start if you're building up your equipment from scratch. Most kits come with one or two heads, stands and accessories, as well as a couple of umbrellas and reflectors to aid you in controlling the light. We've picked a range of studio kits

in our boxout – both flash and continuous – to give you an idea of what's available.

Being realistic about your kit is vital throughout each stage of studio setup. Space is an important consideration, especially if you're working from a room conversion or have chosen a smaller studio to start with. Do your homework and check product specification in terms of reach of light and power supply needed to ensure that you take home kit that complements your space and enables you to tackle shoots fully prepared.

When mixing kit with clients, safety becomes an issue. A well-planned and meticulously maintained space can minimise this risk. Photography gear by its nature creates a variety of trip hazards and electrical equipment that may pose a risk if not correctly handled. If you plan to have a full studio, think about investing in wireless options where you can.

As you purchase equipment, check that your current computer and editing programs are compatible. This becomes particularly important when investing in a professional camera that offers mind-blowing resolutions but requires fast and up-to-date technology to download and process images.

If you are planning to rent your studio space to other photographers, kit is often included in the package deal. If this is the case, the gear you offer them is just as important as the space they are renting. Choose kit that may attract photographers to your space and make sure the range you offer can cover any scenario.

While keeping to your budget is certainly important, it's also a good thing to keep in mind that buying good-quality, long-lasting and sturdy equipment often proves more cost effective than continuously replacing sub-standard gear.

“Being realistic about your kit is vital throughout each stage of studio setup”



Pick just one

It's easy to get lost in the vast and varied choices of kit available. Each kit addition will bring new options to your photography but it's important to get the basics right. We asked Bowens marketing executive David Hollingsworth what one piece of kit no studio should be without. Here's what he said:

“Quite simply, a Gemini Monolight. Possibly the most versatile studio flash unit ever produced. The Gemini covers all aspects of high-end photographic lighting; whether you're shooting in the studio or even if you want to take your lighting on location, the Gemini is a must-have for any studio”



SHOOT IT
A model poses under the
hot lights of Pro Image
Studio in London



Caring for your kit

A lot of capital will be invested into your studio equipment and taking care of it should be a top priority. Spending a little more on well built and sturdy kit is worth it if you look after it properly and it becomes cost effective in the long run.

Product manager at Calumet, Jeremy Ruggles, recommends making an effort to put equipment away after each shoot:

“Days in the studio can be long and it’s tempting to leave things out. If you keep them in a clean and dry environment, it will improve the condition and longevity of your studio kit”

Recommended add-ons

Proline Beauty Dish 40cm

Price: £52.16

Web: www.prolinestudio.co.uk



Adding a beauty dish to your kit list is a must if you plan to shoot portraits or get involved in fashion work. The large-diameter reflector can be used with or without a central reflector that covers the flash tube and modelling bulb. If you use the included hairnet diffuser you can exercise even greater lighting control. The dish gives the scene a lovely quality and makes a huge difference to the overall feel of the image.

Mini LED Panel Light

Price: From £70

Web: www.awooza.com



This is a lightweight continuous lighting solution. The panel features a swivel bracket to allow for flexible light angle control. It has a variable dimmer control that is detachable from the rear of the unit and that can also be tethered by a connecting cable for remote control. The panel can be powered by a variety of sources, including an AC adapter and various battery adapters. It's a great creative addition to your lighting kit.

Prophoto Widezoom Reflector

Price: £313.99 (via calumetphoto.co.uk)

Web: www.prophoto.com/uk



A more modern and zoomable version of the classic Magnum reflector, this Widezoom offering from Prophoto gives balanced illumination even at short distances. It's great as a main light source for people and fashion photography or for effective background light. It's compatible with all Prophoto heads including the Pro Tungsten Air and ProDaylight Air and offers a light spread of between 40 and 70 degrees.

Bowens Octo150 Softbox

Price: £671.98

Web: www.bowensdirect.co.uk



Bowens has redesigned its award-winning Octo150 softbox to include a 'zip and lock' design for super fast, easy assembly. A unique feature to the Bowens range of Octo softboxes is a perfectly round front diffuser to create pleasing and natural round catch lights. Another benefit is that the light is mounted inside the softbox facing the rear, away from the subject, which creates an enormous reflected soft light and eliminates hot spots completely.

8 The business bit

A successful photography studio merges creativity with good business sense. If you are coming from a purely photographic background it's vital to get your business know-how up to speed and understand the issues that come along with running a studio. We spoke to the QCL Group, a small business consultancy, about the advice it gives to new business owners as they take the plunge into the business world.

The most important piece of advice, according to QCL, is to do your homework. If you're going to be leaving a secure job you should know whether you can afford to live without a regular income until you're established. If you're already a recognised photographer but looking to work out of your own studio, you need to justify the additional cost and headaches that having your own premises brings. Once you've answered these questions you should consider issues such as: whether to operate as a sole trader or a limited company; the types of insurance you'll need to cover yourself in case things go wrong; how to raise the capital you need to buy equipment; and how you're going to market your services to potential clients.

QCL tells us that most companies fail because their owners are either not honest with themselves about what

can be achieved or they're too optimistic with their figures. Being realistic with your targets and a bit pessimistic with your financial forecasts is the best policy – if everything still adds up, you should be off to the best possible start.

You need to get your studio in the public eye to attract clients and draw in business, so having a marketing plan is vital. The key, according to the experts, is to get people onto your website to see what you do and how you do it.

As your business becomes your livelihood, having adequate insurance becomes a very important consideration. There are various aspects of your business that need to be properly insured to protect yourself, your income, and also your staff and clients. You should make sure your business can continue in any event and see that you've run through various scenarios that could affect trade. At the basic level you should cover your equipment and premises from damage. A specialist photography insurance company is a good option as it will understand the particulars of your business and can give you direct advice.

When insuring equipment, check that you are insured for the value of replacing your equipment, rather than at the value that you paid for it.

Should anything happen to your gear years down the line, you may find that the payout you receive falls short of the amount you need to replace your gear at the current level and price.

A key responsibility for any business, according to Towergate Camerasure, is the safety and wellbeing of

Do you need a business consultant?

Mick Johnson, managing director at QCL, weighs it up

"Whether or not it's worth having consultants to help you along the way depends a lot on what you already know. If you've got no experience of running a business, then the answer is probably yes. The biggest and most expensive mistakes people make are usually in the early stages. The important thing to remember is that in the long term, a consultant of any kind shouldn't cost you anything. Of course, you'll have to pay their fees at the time, but if they've done their job properly, they should be saving or earning you more than their fees over the next few years."

www.qclgroup.com



its customers and staff. As most studios work with clients you will more than likely need insurance that goes beyond the basic kit and property packages. Studios should make sure they are adequately covered for any incidents or injuries that may happen during a shoot or on the studio premises. Public liability insurance covers any awards of damages given to a member of the public because of an injury or damage to their property caused by you or your business. If you are dealing directly with an insurer it's worthwhile checking that they are members of the Association of British Insurers (ABI).

Government websites and business advice groups are a good source for information about insurance and business issues.



“If you are coming from a purely photographic background it's vital that you get your business know-how up to speed”

Umbrellas and reflectors

Interfit 60" black/white Umbrella

Price: £30.98

Web: www.interfitphotographic.com



The umbrella features a white satin-textured reflexive fabric positioned under the umbrella's rib structure. It comes

with a black cover that prevents light from penetrating the white fabric and contaminating the colour balance. For high-key lighting the cover can be easily removed to allow light to pass through and bounce around the studio.

Lastolite 1m Umbrella Box

Price: £45 (via calumetphoto.co.uk)

Web: www.lastolite.com



If you're looking for more than a simple umbrella, the Umbrella Box gives a unique lighting effect by first bouncing light

off the back of the box and then diffusing it through the coated diffuser panel. The universal fitting means that it can accommodate most flash heads but it's always worth a check to see if it's compatible with yours. It's quick to set up and fairly simple to use.

Westcott 6-in-1 Reflector Kit – 52"

Price: £189

Web: www.fjwestcott.com



This kit offers you a variety of options in one purchase. Illuminator reflectors are ideal for shooting portraits and nature if

you want to take them out the studio. The two separate panels allow you to diffuse and reflect light in tandem. The reflectors collapse to a third of their size, which makes them compact for easy carrying and handling.

Proline Gold and Silver Reflector

Price: £20.86 (via fotosense.co.uk)

Web: www.prolinestudio.co.uk



This large-diameter collapsible reflector has a gold side to warm the tone of an image and a silver side to cool it. It is well

made and extremely portable – it folds down from its 80mm size into an easy-to-carry 30mm case. It is an extremely cost effective and convenient staple to add to your kit list – an addition that's sure to come in handy in any studio.

“Studios should make sure they are adequately covered for any incidents or injuries that may happen during a shoot”



© Karen McBride

Minimise your business risk

Daniel Smith handles new businesses at Towergate Camerasure. He gives us his thoughts on minimising business risks in your studio:



“Insurance itself is the simplest and easiest form of risk management available to any business, so a quality insurance package should be the first step. In addition to this I would recommend carrying out risk assessments and speaking with photographic associations and business advisors to ensure that there is no exposure in terms of health & safety, terms & conditions or employment contracts. To minimise material risk, speak to your advisor about fitting adequate security features to your premises and vehicle”

Snoots and honeycombs

Bowens 15” Snoot

Price: £80.88 (via bowensdirect.com)

Web: www.bowensdirect.com



Snoots are designed to create a very tight pool of light around an area of the subject you are shooting without spilling light into the entire frame. Designed to create a simple spot effect, it can also be used as a

hairlight if you are shooting portraits; you can direct a pool of illumination on the hair of your subject without spilling onto the face or background.

Interfit STR107 Honeycomb 20 Degree

Price: £20.86

Web: www.interfitphotographic.com



The Honeycomb is a versatile tool for photographers who like to create a stylised lighting setup; it can be used to add a fill light on the side of the face or to provide you with background lighting. The Honeycomb 20

Degree gives a soft uniform light source and is ideal when combined with a reflector or other Strobes products to add a fill light.

Interfit EX Snoot

Price: £32

Web: www.jessops.co.uk

Designed to be used with the EX and EXD ranges (Interfit’s affordable range of lighting solutions), this

cone comes with a detachable quarter-inch honeycomb grid as well as a range of gels which alter the colour of the light as it shines through the snoot. Gels are a great way to add warmth and ambience to an image. This set of four

will allow you to play around with various moods in your studio shots.



Chimera Fabric Grid – 50 degrees

Price: £429

Web: www.chimeralighting.com



Chimera’s Soft Fabric Egg Crate Grids are a revolutionary way to provide a controlled beam spread. They don’t have a supporting frame; instead they hook and loop onto the front of Chimera’s lighting units. The fabric folds down to pocket size and provides great

results. The only downside is that it can only be used with the range of Chimera’s Lightbanks. The fabric is available in a range of sizes and degrees.

Lighting kits

Sekonic Flashmate L-308S

Price: £140.99 (via 1stcameras.com)

Web: www.sekonic.co.uk



Having a light meter in the studio is vital to calculate your exposure, especially if you have constantly changing lighting setups. The small design of the Flashmate means it fits perfectly in the palm of your hand with easy one-hand operation. Utilising the latest in component technology and precise calibration, the L-308S offers accurate exposure data for film or digital.

Lastolite RF Flash Trigger

Price: £41.99

Web: www.lastolite.com



A wireless flash trigger can help you to keep your studio floor clear and avoid unnecessary trip hazards. The RF Trigger is battery operated and designed to trigger flash guns and studio flashes. The transmitter attaches to

the hotshoe on your camera and the receiver unit to the flash gun, which can be mounted onto a stand or other similar support brackets. The trigger system has a range of 10 metres.

Manfrotto 475 Digital Pro Geared Tripod

Price: £269.95

Web: www.manfrotto.co.uk



The ability to change the vertical and horizontal camera position without anything moving can make studio life a lot easier. Part of the Manfrotto Studio range, this tripod incorporates a unique centre brace structure system and reliable quick-action leg locks, spirit level and rubber/metal

spiked feet. Invest in a head like the 808RC4 3-way to get maximum movement and flexibility out of your studio tripod.

Hotshoe/PC Adapter

Price: £9.95 (via jessops.com)

Web: Jessops



It's a small and cheap piece of kit, but it's very useful in the studio. This small adapter clips into the hotshoe of your camera and allows flashguns without a PC connection cable to be fitted to a PC sync socket. This is ideal for

off-camera flash, in conjunction with a flash bracket. While large kit usually takes the limelight, it's often the small pieces of equipment that make life easier.

Case studies

It's a truism that if you want to know how to do

something you should study someone who is doing that thing well. Running a studio business is no different. Doing research on successful studios and taking note of how they operate is a great way to measure if you're on the right track, and is also a good way to get ideas.

If you're lucky enough to know a studio owner who is willing to talk to you about your business, taking them up on an offer to have a look at your plans might prove to be an invaluable experience.

“Always know what the competition is doing and don't be fazed when a contract goes somewhere else”

One theme that has come up consistently among studio owners that we've spoken to is innovation. The studio market is steadily growing and clients have a lot of options when it comes to choosing a studio to work with.

Sarah Peace at Peace and Light Studios (www.londonstudiohire.com) thinks this is particularly true in the London area. “The studio market in London is saturated already and for anyone who is just looking to break into this, I would encourage them to offer more than just a studio space, which is already available aplenty.”

Looking beyond the vast amount of work that a studio requires, photographers also find that running a studio comes with a variety of pleasures in itself.

Kellianne Chandler (www.kelliannephotographer.co.uk) has been running her studio in Manchester for five years. For her, the freedom that comes with running her own business is right up with the perk of constantly being in a creative environment. “I work a lot of weekends and evenings as that is often when clients want to have photos taken. I pretty much will work whenever and wherever I have to, but having my own studio just makes life so much easier.”



What it takes www.slaughterhousestudios.co.uk

Ian F Simpson is the executive director of the very successful Slaughterhouse Studios. He tells us what he believes it takes to make a photo studio work:



“Being personable and caring for each client in the manner you would expect people to care for you is a must, as is having the knowledge and expertise in the industry. Always know what the competition is doing and do not be fazed when a contract goes somewhere else; there are plenty of jobs out there. In our case it is the experience at Slaughterhouse Studios that makes people keep coming back for more”



© Gareth Davies

Building on kit

As your studio progresses you may find yourself in a position to build on your basic equipment and want to get in some specialist kit. Once you have found your focus and a section of the industry that brings you regular clients you'll be able to see which way to look in terms of building up your kit. Any studio website will offer you a number of gadgets and gear to improve your images, your workflow and your experience.

The trick is to be realistic about what improving your kit will actually do for you. It might not be cost effective to invest in a piece of expensive equipment if having it does not significantly improve your income. On the other hand, a piece of equipment may be what is standing between you and a new batch of clients looking for the service you are going to offer. Some equipment that fits into this list may be something like an infinity cove for product photography and model shoots.

INVENTORY
Gareth Davies Studio lays out the kit to let interested photographers know what's on hire

Another aspect to look at when improving your studio is the facilities you offer. You might have a standalone studio, but looking to make partnerships with other business sectors and offer complementary services is a good way to branch out into other areas. A hair and make-up stylist can be brought in to offer clients value added service. Look further than photography to see what you can offer prospective clients. You should do some market research to see that you're offering people what they want and giving them the very best service you can.

We recommend

We absolutely love the Phase One range of digital backs. The new IQ series offers resolutions of 80, 60.5 and 40 megapixels. The backs give you the power to capture images of stunning quality with extreme detail reproduction. The IQ180 and IQ160 both capture in full-frame 645 format. The high resolution gives you maximum versatility with your images, ensuring high quality and usage, even when you work with cropped images. Adding one of these digital backs to your kit list is a definite step to saying you are a professional through and through. The performance that these backs offers make them well worth every penny.



Be prepared to pay a lot of money for Phase One digital backs

“Do some market research to see that you're offering people what they want”

High-end kit

Bowens Jetstream Wind Machine

Price: £956.05

Web: www.bowensdirect.com



A useful piece of kit for beauty and glamour shoots or to control smoke effects, the Jetstream Wind Machine is designed to allow precision control over the direction and speed of airflow on set. At full power the fan runs up to 2500rpm, creating 940 cubic feet per minute of controllable wind. Its extra-long remote operating cable enables you to control speed/power levels from up to three metres away.

Chimera F2X Lightbank

Price: TBC

Web: www.chimeralighting.com



If you need lighting in a big way, the Chimera F2X Lightbank is the thing for you. Designed with automotive photography in mind, the lightbank produces long, beautiful and continuous highlights for large subjects. The walls are crafted with thin aluminium tubing and the unit, despite its size, can be assembled by two people. If you're not ready to commit to a unit of your own, hiring one is a popular option.

Manfrotto Sky Track Telescopic Post

Price: £229.95

Web: www.manfrotto.co.uk



Manfrotto's Sky Track system is designed to use ceiling suspenders for lighting and lighting systems with the aim to keep the entire studio floor free. The telescopic extendable post goes from 85cm to 203cm and is adjustable in height at the desired position. It can handle a load of between 1.5kg through to a maximum of 12kg. A step towards a chic and unique studio space.

Bowens QUADX Studio Set

Price: £4,262.84

Web: www.bowensdirect.com



For those looking to invest in a studio generator, the QUADX set is a high-powered studio lighting system perfect for commercial and fashion photography. The multi-voltage system runs off the 3000W generator and comes with 2 QUADX studio heads. Also included in the set are two flash tubes, two modelling lamps, a power cord and a sync cord. While it is expensive, this set is sure to be part of your studio for years.