



Secrets of a Fashion Stylist

How to Break into the Business
and Learn from My Mistakes

By Alexandra Suzanne Greenawalt

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Dedication and special thanks.

This book was made possible thanks to the childhood inspirations from my Grandmother Patricia Blake, my Godmother Nina Roy, and my mother Susan Blake; all three are style icons in their own right.

Also, big props to my first fashion mentor Arthur Keller; my fashion fairy godfather Harold Koda; my writing mentor Mark Gauthier; Michael Walczak, who identified my wardrobe talent first; and Robin Narvaez, who gave me my first break with Vogue Nippon.

Why I wrote this book?

Each week I get many emails from young people asking me for advice on how to become a fashion stylist. Some of them are moving to New York City from other cities; some have no experience, while some have worked in public relations. I hope that all of them -- and you, the reader -- find these tips helpful.

My Story:

How I got started in the fashion industry.

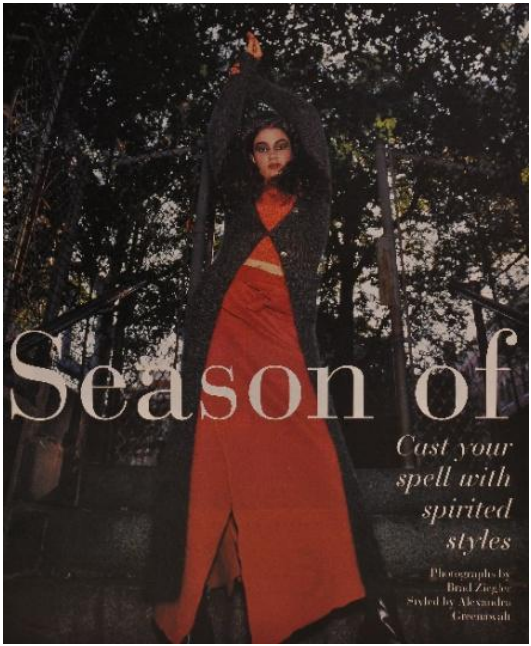
It was 1999 in Boston. I had graduated from BU with a French degree with no intentions of using except to speak to “French Fashionistas”. I’d been reading the Improper Bostonian, a local



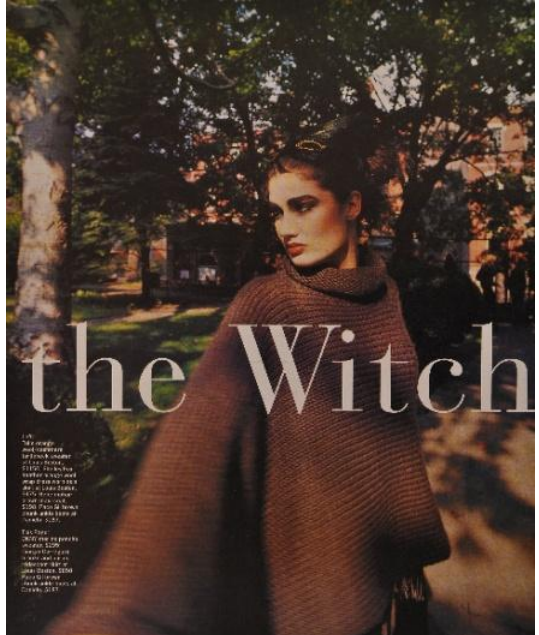
Boston, 1999

publication, for a few years and saw it grow from newspaper

to glossy magazine format, but noticed they had no fashion

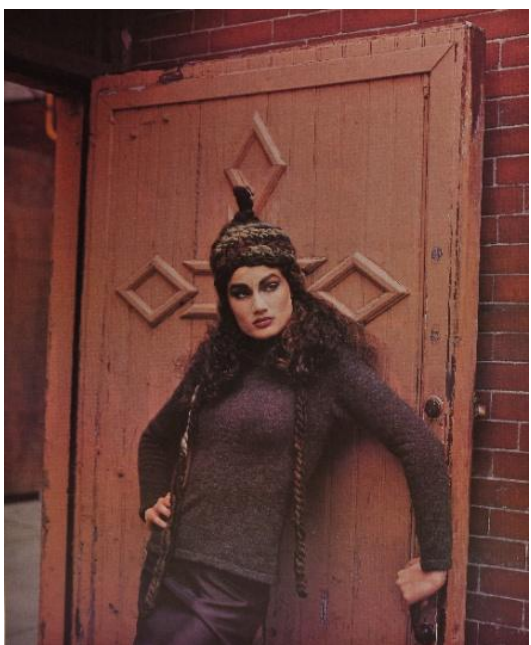


section. Somehow I managed to wrangle a meeting with the publisher, Mark Semonian, through a loose connection to his sister. I take the meeting wearing



a very cool outfit that shows off my personal style and in the meeting I tell

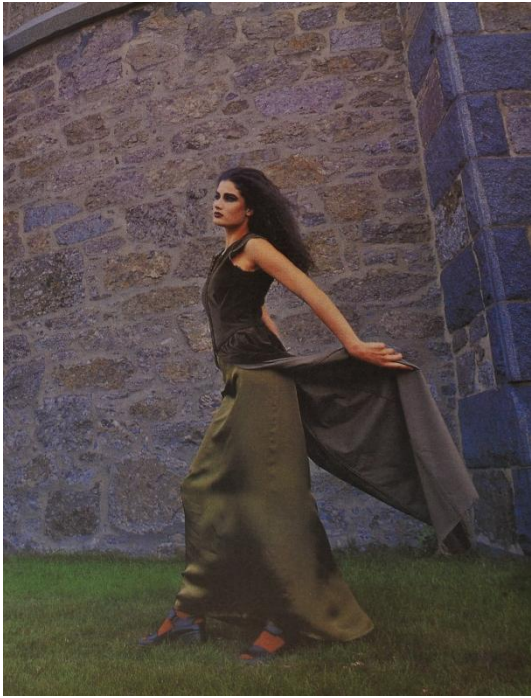
him of how I've been reading the publication for years, seen



it grow, but that it NEEDS a fashion section, which I can provide for him and he should pay me \$600 per shoot.

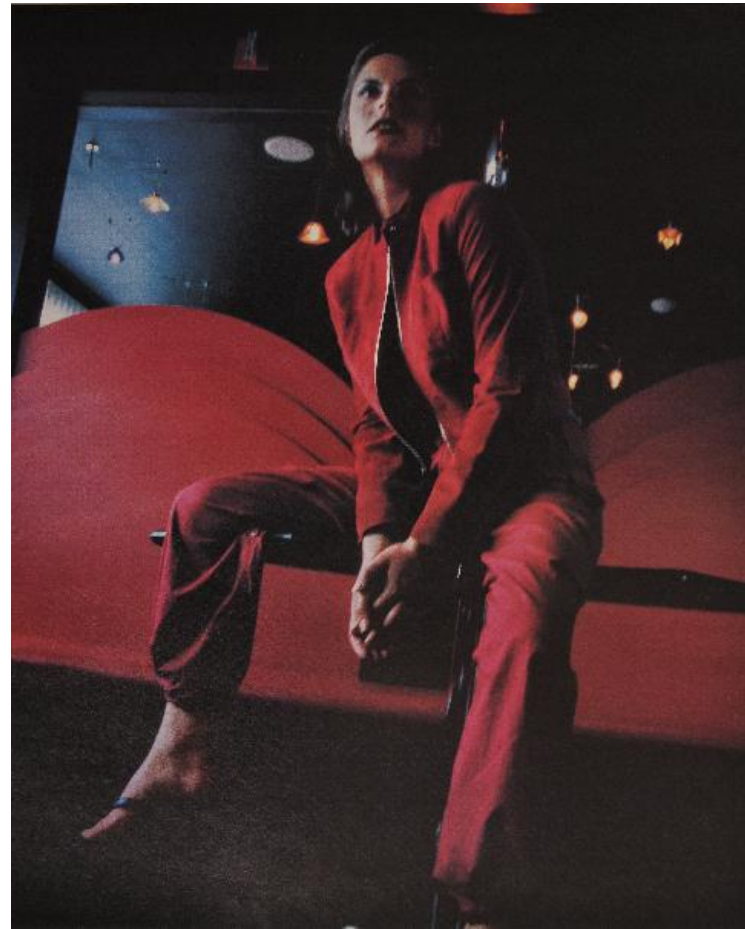
One of the first fashion editorials for the Inproper Bostonian; I took on the responsibility of the whole shoot to show the industry what I was made of

To my surprise, he says yes and hires me. This was my very first fashion editorial and up to



that point I had been styling for my friends, however, beyond

that, I had no formal experience except as an intern for a fashion showroom in Paris; another job I had talked my way into. To do the editorial I instinctively knew that to get this done and done right, I had to go to the top luxury fashion store, Louis, pull (borrow) the clothing, and put all the responsibility on my credit card. I had to hire the photographer, makeup artist, and model, find the location, and produce the shoot. Despite the awesome amount of pressure, it turns out great, so now all I had to do was repeat the process time and time again.



The lesson here is that I didn't wait for anyone to give me a job in this industry; I went out and pursued it. I demanded the world, and the publisher, see me as I wanted to be viewed. I later got the style and color training under my belt and years of experience - but as a start I jumped in. So make it happen for yourself.

As an artist, in the beginning, there may be people who may NOT see your worth. So you have to show them we don't fit into perfect boxes. There is really NO ONE clear path. Embrace that and ZAG when others ZIG.



Later when I brought my portfolio of Boston tearsheets ("tears") to New York City, I discovered that it carried very little weight. New Yorkers wanted to see tears from national and international publications. But at least I had jobs and styling work under my belt.

In my early days of styling in New York, after September 11, I took all sorts of fashion styling jobs; kids styling,

commercials, Sean John, table top, teen songwriters, glamour-maxim magazine type stuff, and even men's fashion. I could do all of them and found I was versatile, but deep down I learned what I WAS NOT. So I decided to really drill down and get into my niche.

"Nothing can stop anyone with the right mental attitude. Nothing on earth can help anyone with the wrong attitude"

- [twitter@fashionweekNYC](https://twitter.com/fashionweekNYC)

I explored specifically what designers turned me on and decided what kind of stylist I wanted to be and what standards I wanted to uphold. I witnessed a lot of dishonesty and really



Early on in my career, Bill Cunningham shot this photo of me at fashion week with Patrick 'Dandy' McDonald

wanted to uphold a **MORAL** code for my work. Starting a blog of my own and guest blogging was a great way to get a niche and express my style to the world. Essentially, I tried to focus on myself; sounds corny but be original; I focused on enhancing my unique qualities and not on copying others.

What is style? What is an eye? what is a stylist?

Designers create the garments - I translate them. My role as a stylist is to be an expert



in the relationship of the clothing and accessories to the person and the environment. A style is made up of different components of the outfit. It's a stylist's job to infuse their touches to make it **unique**.



There are so many different types of stylists these days; for example prop stylist, men's stylist, kid's stylist, editorial stylist, and many more. On

a photo shoot, a fashion stylist's job is to aid in the 'look' of the shoot.

That could mean collaborating on a theme with the whole team . . . but also gathering all the clothing and accessories, and making sure they fit properly and are ironed, pinned, and looking perfect.



Same role, different name.

Whether you're known as a Fashion Editor, Market Editor, Fashion Stylist, Wardrobe Stylist, Personal Stylist, or an Image Consultant . . . all bring essentially the same skills for different types of jobs. For example, a Wardrobe Stylist consults and works on films and videos in and around the movie and television industry, while a Personal Stylist will work in the private sector for a single individual, usually for either just special events or for an entire wardrobe makeover.

What courses do I need to take to become a fashion stylist?

When I started out it was really important to me to learn the science behind the art. I enrolled in color analysis and shape analysis training with **Julie Cunningham Color**. There are many who teach this system so shop around. I currently order

swatch books from **Sci-Art** because of their size and efficiency. There are courses at FIT (NYC Fashion Institute of Technology) and Parson's School of Design, but I haven't found them to be necessary, however, it's really up to you since there is no standardization in the field. If it will make you feel more confident and able to charge money for what you want to do, go ahead and explore it!

The book.

'You're only as good as your last job'

Stylists are selected based on their 'book' which is a large portfolio of photographs of their work. These photographs are selected from shoots that they have styled. The standard size for a book is 8x10 or 11x14. In the beginning get any book



I created a skirt for this small budget shoot out of fabric with no sewing, and it came out beautifully. Don't be afraid to take chances and try something

and start filling it.

As you get established you will want to order a custom book with your name stamped on it and a matching bag. Do not skimp on the bag as it **must** protect your book, and in a sense, your soul. Having a professional custom book will separate you from the newbies.

Select the photos for the book very carefully. This book is meant to show prospective clients what you



An example from my portfolio of shoot comprised into a vignette



Be creative; this shot features no model, but showcases the item perfectly

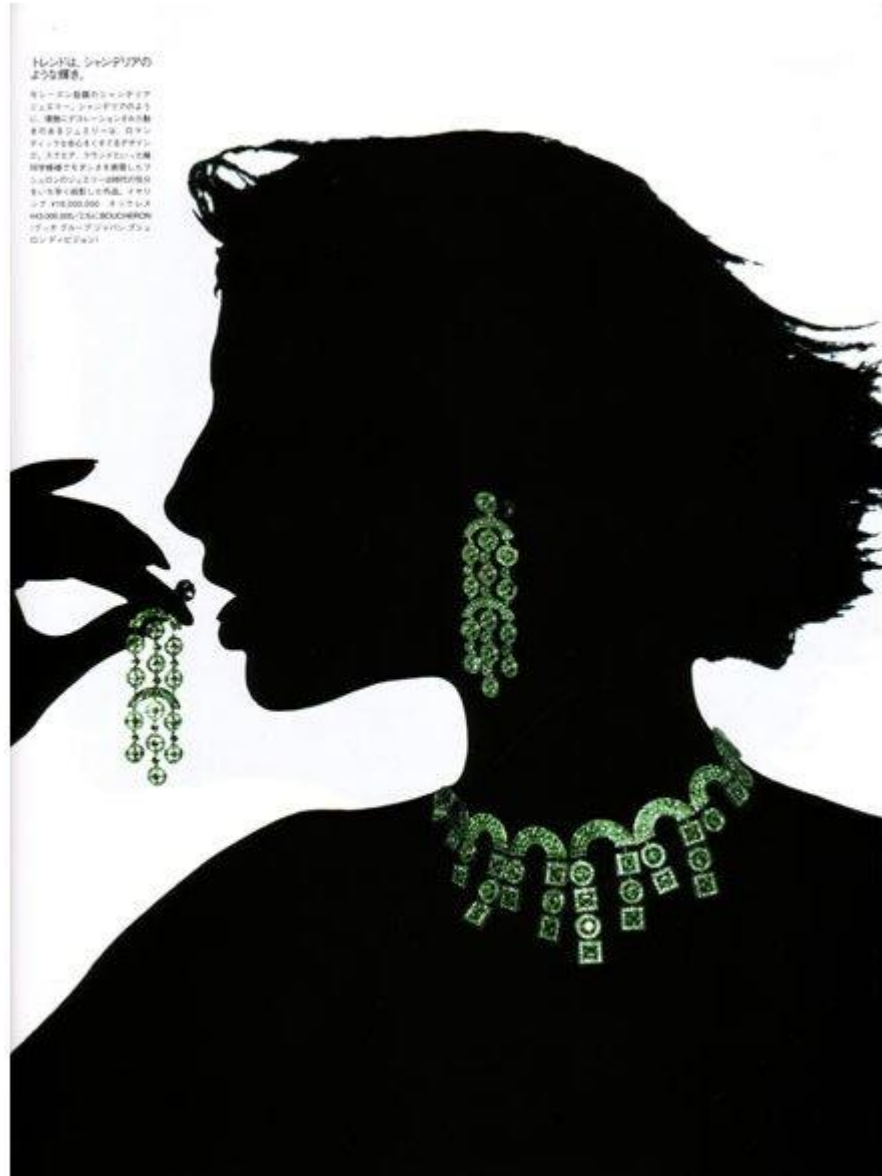
can do as a stylist. It should represent your unique style. It should show your styling. Close ups of beauty shots are not going to do much for you.

It is a good thing to group your photographs in little vignettes or stories. The book should flow well.

Make sure there is nothing 'off' about any selected shots. If the hair, makeup, photography, or model is substandard it will reflect badly on your work. When in doubt LESS is MORE. Omit any weak ones.

When I started in the business I was told by my agent to get four copies of my book. I would say in this day of online portfolios this is extraneous; especially when you are starting out and do not have an agent. I would get one or maybe two books, keep a third at home in a safe dry place if you must, but concentrate on building a killer website, SEO optimization, and Google presence.

One of my newer editorials



Shoot days on set.

As a stylist, you should always arrive on time for shoot days. If possible, you should be early. An easy way to do this is by allowing for extra time to get around; you will move slower



with more gear. Take into consideration your transportation methods, and ask yourself if there's even the remotest possibility of a delay. It's a good idea if you have

A typical behind the scenes look of a fashion shoot, as you can see, shoots can be hectic at times

a smartphone to

download an app that can assist you with traffic updates in your area. In New York, there's an app that tells you if subways are on time!

Be professional; remember this is a job, and one that relies on professionalism and reputation. With that said, don't be

afraid to be yourself either! Remember, that your fashion style and personality that got you there... relax, but don't lose your sense of professionalism.

Silence your cell phone ringer while on set; if possible, you might want to give it to your assistant to answer or monitor anything urgent. For example, having an assistant monitor your phone would be a good way not to miss any updates if you're getting a last minute delivery on set.

Pin the clothing in the back if needed to get a proper fit for the camera. Tape the bottom of any shoes to prevent wear and tear; you might consider carrying the



shoes onto the set and applying them to the model once they are positioned in the shot. Don't let models wear the clothing or shoes for extended periods of time unless the client is purchasing them. Remember, you are responsible for

the clothing and accessories, make sure nothing walks off the set.

Be sure to network by handing your business card out on the last day, unless you already have an agent. It's really important you don't give your card to anyone who would be considered 'the client'. This is a big no-no and could jeopardize your relationship with your agent.

Follow the lead when it comes to food on the set. If it's served at a certain time, do not be the first one to dive in, and certainly not before you make sure your duties are taken care of first. Remember to bring food and snacks with you for every shoot in case there is no food or you can't eat it.



fashion shoots can be fun and you never know where you're going to be

Always make sure to prepare so that you can take care of your own needs. Never chew gum or smoke on a set.

While shooting you will want to position yourself directly behind the

photographer so that you can see what he's shooting and catch any things in the shot you may want to fix. For example, a strap which has fallen down, or showing when it's not meant to, wrinkles or bunching in the clothing, an uneven hem, anything unflattering in your area that's fixable.

While working on a photo shoot, commercial or film, it's usually called 'on set'. There are a few tips everyone should be aware of;

- On your first day, introduce yourself to everyone.
- It's a good thing to be aware of who the clients, photographers, and important people are, but treat everyone with dignity and respect. You never know if that assistant ends up in a bigger job or 'making it' down the line. You also never know who can and will help you with your career. So it's good thing to play nice with all the players.
- It's very important that you keep your space organized and tidy. It will impress the clients and also make it easier for you to find what you need when you need it.

- Getting assistants can also help even if you have to get help from friends for a few hours for the set up and break-down of the set.
- It's a good thing to develop a system for taking pins, scissors, fashion tape, and any other tools with you on set. A hip bag, tool belt, pockets, or whatever works for you.
- Speaking of tools you're also going to want to bring with you a 'kit' or bag of tricks as I call it. Here are some things I bring in my bag of tricks. You can't really bill these items to the client they are an investment in your business. This will also depend on what is needed for the job:



It's always good to use accessories and jewelry that inspires you, and bring extras just in case

- Scissors - mine are on a ribbon and I wear them on set.

- Sewing kit with extensive thread and needle collection.
- Pins and safety pins.
- Double sided sticky tape (for example fashion tape).
- Packing tape.
- Hosiery.
- A selection of Bras.
- Nude thongs.
- Socks.
- Tape measure.
- Pen and paper or a notepad; this will come in handy if you have to segment or organize the clothing for multiple people.
- Accessories including:
 - Jewelry that inspires you.
 - Ribbons.
 - Relevant or inspired props to add to the shot.

Bring along anything else you foresee would come in handy. If for example, if you are doing prop styling you would need things like museum gel, blue tack, photography gloves to

avoid smudging jewelry and a whole other slew of things to aid in the process of making products shine.

Do Not Steal Tear Sheets!

A major no no, do not tear pages out of a magazine and try to claim it as your own. This will come back to haunt you. Do not build your business on deceit. There should be a good mix of 'tear sheets' i.e. published magazine pictures of your work and photographs from 'creatives'. 'Creatives,' 'tests,' or 'specs,' are



Various Tears of my work from various magazines

unpublished, collaborative, photographed projects. I would also suggest scanning tears and printing them on the same photo paper as the rest of the book for uniformity.

The website.

Don't fool yourself, you need one. You need your name as

ALEXANDRA
LOVE WHAT YOU WEAR

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welcome

I'm Alexandra Greenawalt, a New York-based style expert with over ten years experience on-set, styling for the world's top photographers, or on-call for popular celebrities and women and men looking to inject some serious style into their lives.

Whether you need a new look for a new job, an expert stylist for a [photo shoot](#), or simply want to amp up your wardrobe, my keen eye for style, natural instincts, and extensive experience are your ticket to loving what you wear.

In addition to my styling [services](#), I offer style tips, industry insights, and more in my exclusive web series [Confessions...](#)



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My Web Site located at www.alexandrastylist.com

your domain, or at the very least, a

combo of what you do and your name. Simple is

better, use a black or white

background. Do

not use flash; not

everyone wants to

wait around for

catchy gimmicks. You're not out to dazzle them with

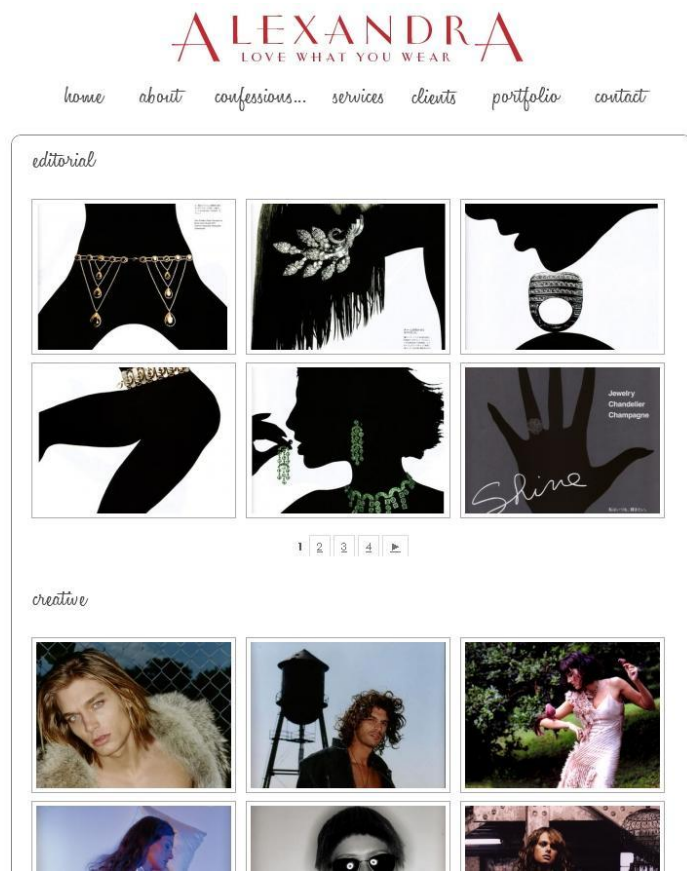
computer tricks, you want to wow them with your profile and

your pictures, so allow your users to view your photos as

efficiently as possible and Include a bio, contact page, and

a resume. If you are attractive I would also suggest posting a photograph of yourself as you never know when reality TV will come knocking. I would also suggest that your website be in line with your branding colors - so that your biz cards, mailers, and website all have the same colors/vibe/font.

The world is online now and so should you be. This is not to say that a telephone call and a hand written note do not have their



about
Alexandra Suzanne Greenwall is a fashion and style expert living and working in Manhattan New York City.

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LONG IS THE NEW SHORT
ALEXANDRA ON BLOG TALK RADIO
DOES YOUR IPAD NEED SOME BLING?

Love these links!

An online portfolio will allow potential clients to view your work

place. They are actually more valuable today and I suggest to everyone to implement personal touches into your business. For example when a potential client contacts me from my website I find that a telephone call is much more effective in closing the deal.

To blog, or not to blog.

When I built my website, I was not blogging but I soon figured out that if I didn't constantly update my website with fresh images or fresh content, it would become a web grave yard. Fashion is about change and renewal, so I found that blogging was a way to stay relevant, express my fashion opinion, and connect with viewers. *"Is it time consuming?"* YES. *"Do you have to know how to write well?"* Not particularly, either write well or just post images that inspire you.

Do not use the blog as your personal party diary if you want to target professional companies. Yes, the fashion company, Heatherette, made a name for themselves in the downtown east village party scene, but they lost their investor and Richie Rich had to start again. Chatter and gossip does not always lead to a good bottom line!

Your brand.



Your environment is a reflection of your personal style

EVERYTHING you do or produce **IS AN EXTENSION of YOUR BRAND.** Your business cards, your logo, if you throw an event, your website, your Twitter page, your Facebook page, your linked in page, what you say in social media., what you bookmark in social media, All of it is a reflection on you. Keeping a strong theme and focus will

help. Image is paramount in this business and sometimes first impressions can make or break you when dealing with new clients.

I found that investing in my materials paid off for me. **IMAGE** is my business, so when a client told me they hired me

BECAUSE of the beauty of business card or my website . . . I

knew that it was working. With all of the free and crowd-sourcing tools out there to convey your message we really have no excuse, because ultimately our image is in our

So **5**TH Avenue

My latest venture, a web based video style channel

own hands. We don't have to wait for a reporter to interview us; we we can create the media and set it free to go viral. That's why I co-founded my latest venture, a video style channel **So5thAvenue.com**. I started blogging, and subscribed to HARO to attract PR. I also highly recommend you Google and Twitter search yourself often. This is not to be egotistical, but it is your business to know what others are saying about you, good and bad. Cleaning up your Google image is important. If there is negative press you may lose clients because of drunken photos on Facebook - yes it could happen to you. Be very careful with social media. You may choose not to have party photos of yourself depending on your brand.

Every piece of marketing; postcard, business card, notecards, web site, they all reflect your image. I would

advise to pick your color scheme in the beginning and stick to it. Go simple and clean if you have to. Just be consistent.

Your materials.

When you are just starting out as a stylist the idea of dropping \$1,000 on letterpress business cards may seem a bit frivolous. It is perfectly acceptable to get some inexpensive cards, but that doesn't mean you should go with the cheapest. There are many cards and card companies to choose from; just because they are cheaper in price, doesn't mean they are cheaper in quality. Find a good balance. My advice to you is to avoid the free vista prints or cards with the perforated edges. They scream cheap, and what is \$30? Better to design something simple that says something about what look you represent. I've seen tailors use manila hang tags to make handwritten cards. I've made handwritten cards . . . this is an opportunity to think out of the box and make a first impression. Sometimes your business card is the only thing in a potential client's hand. KEY!

You also might want to consider postcards to do a quick mailing. It's a nice way to remind or announce your status as a stylist, and shows potential clients your work. Pick your strongest image that you think may appeal to the clients you are targeting.

Mass mailings can also be done through mass emails. I personally don't like really fancy graphically inclined emails because my Blackberry doesn't handle them well. Considering the day and age of technology, lots of potential clients are busy and on the go; consider how they may access the email. If there's a chance it may be from a smartphone, take that into consideration. Having some to-the-point text can be just as effective, but keep in mind when you are mass mailing you need to add value or have something important to say.

Building a newsletter list slowly over time is a great thing to do. Decide how often you will email your audience and stick to it -- just like blogging. Once a month, once a season, once a week; it's up to you but don't send too many updates or

some clients may tune you out. Images are very powerful, so you might want to include a shot from your last shoot.

Networking.

“Who has the power to hire you?” That is the question you should be constantly asking yourself. It could be a producer, a photographer, a photo agency, an actress, a band, a music company, a makeup artist; it could even be a neighbor. You never know where your next job is coming so networking is extremely important.

When I first moved to New York City, I asked everyone I know



Robin Narvaez and I (a makeup artist who was responsible for my big break with Vogue)

to introduce me to anyone in fashion. I didn't care who or what they did, I just wanted to get a feel for the business and see how it works. It paid off. One of the first makeup artists who

agreed to meet me in the beginning I ended up working a job with 3 years later.

In the beginning it took persistence to get people to meet with me - but it later became much easier as my name grew. Be persistent and meet as many people as you can.

Marketing.

Who should you be targeting? How do you find your potential clients? One excellent source book who lists every top person is **LE BOOK**. It is free to be listed with them, and everyone in the industry has a copy. There are also many online resources. I have used *rasource.com* and found that it was good



Halloween with designer/costumer to the stars and friend Malisa Masala of RED MASALA and Inhouse

for getting names and addresses for a mailing lists. You should send your postcard, mailing, or letter to the following types of companies/people:

- Photographers
- Agents
- Production Companies
- Freelance Photo Producers
- Ad Agencies
- Art Directors
- Fashion Designers and Fashion Companies for their look books

More so than with most businesses, this one often relies on whom you know. Because this business often works on a friend basis, I would also suggest befriending hair and makeup people. They may not have the power to hire you personally, but they may have the ear of someone who can. You never know when a production company may ask a makeup artist to recommend a good stylist. If you see work that inspires you, reach out to them via phone, email, or

personal letter. Do what it take to let yourself be known, but don't become a stalker type; Keep it professional.

What are the differences between private, commercial, and print clients?

Private clients are individuals looking for styling advice and guidance for their own wardrobe. Shopping with them, or for them, is standard practice. You would be dressing 'real women' or a 'real man' in the world; which is a bit more challenging since you are dealing with figure flaws and body imbalances.

With private clients work you could be hired by any individual who needs your services.

Some examples of private clients are;

- A mom who has no time to shop.
- A CEO who is too busy running a business.
- Any person who speaks in public regularly.
- A Celebrity who needs to be dressed for appearances and or their private/personal life.

- Someone experiencing some sort of change in their life.
 - New job.
 - Divorce.
 - Lost weight.
 - Gained weight.

Commercial and print clients are looking for a wardrobe stylist to bring the clothing and accessories to the shoot. You would be dressing models or celebrities. Most models are size 2-4. Celebrities can be of all sizes and can sometimes be as challenging as "real women or men" . . . not that everyone isn't a "real person."

DO NOT CONVINCING YOURSELF THAT THIS SERVICE IS ONLY FOR



My first paying Private client

‘RICH PEOPLE’. Sure, most people think of this service as a luxury service, but there are those who see it is a necessity. Your job is to find those who see and

understand the need and **VALUE** of what you bring to the table; an eye, effort, helping hand, ability to put things together, and much more. There are times when private client sessions can have a therapeutic feeling so studying a bit of psychology can't hurt in the long run. By no means should you see yourself as a therapist, but you will always come up against people's insecurities. It's your job to help them through the feelings; acknowledge them. You don't need to solve them, but just in recognizing them your client will feel heard. I've found that everyone, including models, have at least one part of their body they don't feel is perfect, and this is only normal.

How to promote yourself in the media.

Getting press mentions is a great way to promote who you are and what you do -- plus it feels good to be recognized for something you love. If you can get interviewed by the media, even if it's for online sources, that's valuable. Start small and subscribe to **HARO**. You can also reach out to style

blogs as everyone who writes one is always looking for more content.

Social media and Twitter.

They're wonderful but remember everything you put out there is permanent. Don't ever say something bad about a client, sources, designer or co-worker. Be direct when you have an issue. I've found that Twitter has been good for networking with those in the media and public relations. But don't spend your life on Twitter . . . you've got to move it offline fast to see results in reality.

Where do I access industry information?

Become a regular at New York's Universal News. This magazine store carries magazines from all around the world. Start to pick up and read the ones that interest or inspire you; read the credits. Be sure to write down the names of the

following people whose work sparks your attention: photographers, makeup artists, hair stylists, prop stylists. You never know who will be your next big contact.

This will help you start to learn who works with certain magazines. Magazine credit is gold in the fashion world; it may not pay well but it will lead to other opportunities down the road. It may be a slow payoff, so stay focused and determined. Don't forget to join online groups. In this day and age, more and more tips and leads can be found online.

Craigslist.org

A note about FREE vs PAID: "There is no such thing as free. There is always an exchange of energy" - Danielle LaPorte)

Your time is money. When you choose to work for free you are investing your time, money, eye, and expertise in photographs that are owned by the photographer. It is your choice as to who merits your talents for free, make sure you are going to get what you need out of the deal. That means

asking for Prints/CD's/Tears and the necessary proof that you worked on the job.

Don't be afraid to ask for money for your services in the event the photographer sells the photos to a magazine or client. Putting together short contracts can protect you. Also, making sure the photographs will show your work as a fashion stylist is important. I once worked on a 6-page spread that only showed an inch of clothing in each shot - virtually worthless for my book. Asking how close the photographer will crop in and if the shoot will show the fashions or not are important questions to pose in advance. Even with years of experience, others will ask you to work for free; you can choose to say no. Sadly we don't have anyone policing this industry for those who take advantage but we do have the choice to band together.

That being said, Craigslist and websites like it are wonderful for those looking to get their feet wet. You can easily find other people starting out looking for free stylists - ads are often worded as TFP (trade for prints). I would suggest however, as you look into ads, that you do a little research

about the style of work the potential photographer you've selected does. Not everyone who posts ads realistically has the ability to do what they would like to do; some just have no eye for it. Ask questions, look at their websites, and ask for image samples. I always ask lots of questions before accepting any job. I also always ask myself: based on the work that this photographer does, would he or she have a job in the future to hire me for pay? If there is something that doesn't work for me, I will decline the job. In the beginning of my career I was less picky, but as I got more work under my belt and had shoots that were not book-worthy, I began to be more discerning. Some questions to ask:

- Where is the shoot going to take place?
- Is there a theme or look you are going for?
- Who are the models? Ask for photos or links to their portfolio on their agent's work.
- Who are the hair and makeup stylists?
- How many shots are you planning?
- What type of shots are you planning?
 - Close ups, otherwise known as beauty shots?
 - From the shoulders up?

- Full length? (This will help you figure out exactly what is needed for the shoot. Shoes can be an un-needed expense if they will not be in the photo?)
- How many looks are you going for?
- What are the sizes of the models?
- Is there a budget for the clothing and accessories?
- Do you have any connections with some designers who may let us shoot their clothing or accessories?
- Are they complete looks from head to toe or are just tops necessary. (Often what is needed is interesting tops/necklines and some jewelry or accessories.)
- What are the approximate hours of the shoot?

Red flags and what to avoid.

Sometimes it's best to turn down work. I've found that in certain cases, it should be about quality, and not quantity. In such cases, remember to be professional, as situations may dictate a desire to work with this particular person in the

future, so be sure not to burn bridges unless you're certain you don't need to work with them in the future.

- If I find the model is really unattractive I will decline because an ugly model does nothing for a book.
- Always be weary of a photographer who is looking to copy other photographers. The fashion industry rewards individuals not copycats.

A photographer whose expectations are too high is a no-win; 25 different complete looks to be shot in one day, for 5 different models who are different sizes and the shoot has no budget for clothing . . . this kind of thing is not a setup for a successful shoot.

Compare and Despair.

I have a lot of fashion stylist friends and they are each unique. If I sat there and compared myself to them, I would never function. This is one head-spinning activity you must never engage in if you want to make it. Remember, self-confidence is the key; no one is going to put their reputation

in your hands if you're not confident in your own work. Each of my friends is very talented and unique in their chosen specialties. For example, Rene Garza, who works with celebrities like Alicia Keys, has a very dark, moody, and glamorous style and tends to do a lot of editorial. Sarah Shirley on the other hand, does a lot of television segments for Good Morning America and morning TV. She also does commercial jobs and her look is funky, colorful, and classic but with a touch of sass. Susan Redstone has made a calling doing segments for major department stores on television. Each is unique and has carved a niche out for herself based on what excites her. I invite you to think of yourself as 100% unique and infuse your work with you: follow your gut, and explore the type of work that excites you. There is no such thing as ONE type of fashion stylist . . . so the sky's the limit!

The clothes, the wardrobe, the closet.



Showing off my personal style in this photo taken by Craig Elliot Plezia

In the beginning, it was important to me to have items in the wardrobe closet that I wanted to shoot. They inspired me, but also, they were appropriate for 'tests'. Test shoots are not published so you can use whatever clothes you chose to. Editorials on the other hand, will often have requirements of the types of

designers you are to use. It is also important to shoot clothes for the correct season, as a big no-no is to submit photos of winter clothes to a summer editorial shoot. To get clothing in the right season you must borrow from showrooms. So that means no 'buying and returning.'

Transportation and the clothes.

You are responsible for physically gathering the clothing in



advance and getting them to the shoot or to the client. If you work in house at a magazine, there is usually a budget for messengers who pick up and drop them off. Managing this process is important because it is your responsibility to make sure nothing gets lost. I suggest using a spread sheet to track the progress and the sources

Keeping the clothes organized and in pristine condition is a big part of your job

used for your job. Each job is different so asking the client in advance if there is a messenger budget is a smart idea. Other ways to handle it is to get an intern, or hire someone for the day, to physically handle the pickups.

You can choose to lug the merchandise yourself. I certainly paid my dues by hauling stuff on the subway - living in Brooklyn or far-flung Manhattan neighborhoods further complicates the scenario. I know of a Parisian stylist who used a motorcycle for pickups, and I know of a few Brooklyn stylists who have cars; they get someone to ride in the front to jump out and do pickups. I used my car on many shoots before moving into the city. Once I moved into the city and into a doorman building, my life got way easier. It could be worth it to live in a small studio but with a doorman in Manhattan.

Supplies: What Sort of Investment, and What Should You Own?

The two big purchases that you simply must consider are a professional steamer and a quality rolling rack that folds up. This totally depends on how often you are shooting and what is generally supplied on set. These are items that are good to ask the production manager or client in advance about, so you can be prepared. You can rent these items in the

beginning, or see if you can borrow from other stylists when starting out.

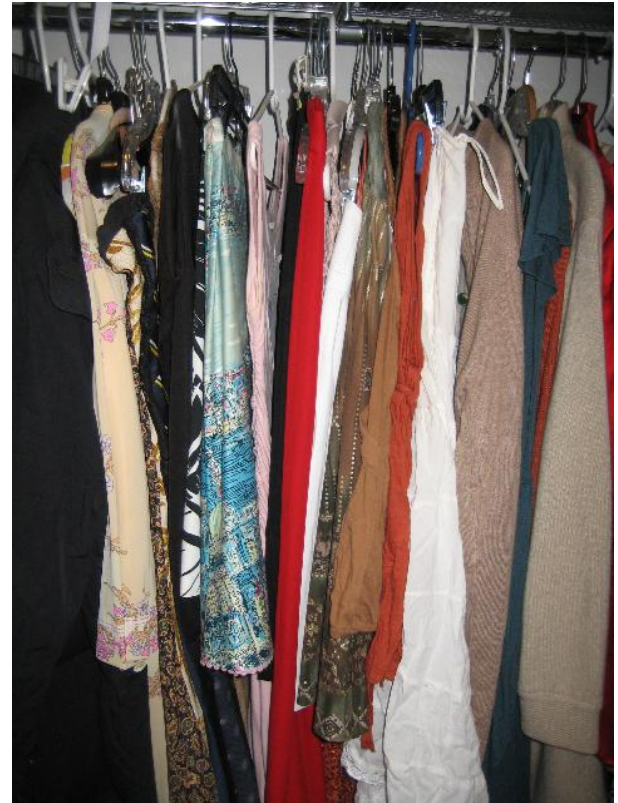
I have a hand-held steamer that works just fine that I found at MWS, but sometimes I rent a big professional one. I used to own racks, but not anymore. It also depends on how much space you have to work with.

Hangers from MWS are cheap and always good to have on hand. I like the white plastic ones simply because they're lightweight. Make sure you get some with clips for pants and skirts.

A rolling suitcase can save your life.

The cheap ones are fine. You can also pick one up at Century 21 for a

decent price. One of my favorite stylists, Rene Garza, uses large duffel bags for lugging stuff, but again this is a personal choice.



A collapsible clothes rack can be a life saver when it comes to keeping the outfits organized on set

Buying and returning? What is stealing?

Buying and returning is often asked of a stylist. It means you would buy clothing at department stores which have return



Local boutiques make their mark by remembering customers, they will certainly remember if you are apt to abuse the system

policies, put the items on your own personal credit card, shoot some of all of the clothes and then return them after the shoot.

No harm no foul right? **WRONG!**

Do not return 100% Ask your client or the photographer and insist that something be purchased and especially items that were used. I cannot tell you

how many times others asked me to abuse the system. Do you

want that mark on your reputation? **YES stores keep track.**

Some, like Century 21, have their black lists and they are not easy to get off. Trust me you want to represent integrity and

honesty. Why ruin your reputation when you're trying to make a name for yourself? It's just not worth it to limit your career options so early on.

Studio services.

Most of the large department stores like Bloomingdale's and Saks Fifth Avenue offer a wonderful service called Studio Services. It allows you to pull lots of merchandise, give them a credit card, and then bring back the items that were not shot. Now you have to pay attention to the prices because you can't return something that was worn on air or in a shot -- so don't go pulling Chanel thinking it will be free to shoot it.



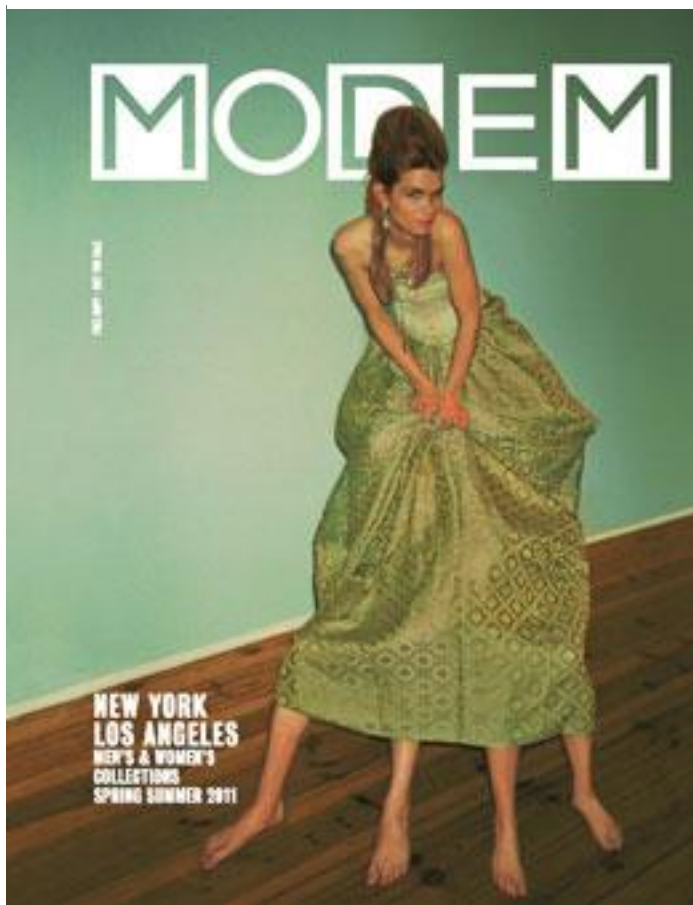
In the end they have a minimum of the total pulled which you must keep, but it's pretty reasonable, around 20%. This is

a great resource for television and shoots that you don't have a specific "pull letter" for the type of outfits to show.

Sources.

Designers and companies who loan or give you merchandise are known as sources, and without them, this business would be impossible. A good place to find sources and know which

Modem NY&LA Spring Summer 2011



PR firm represents each designer is a small guide called **Modem**; they distribute them at fashion week. I usually pick up two so that I can give one away to an assistant.

Your sources are just as important as your clients, and sometimes they **ARE** your clients. When shooting for every job, I have

used a system that is amazing and that the talented stylist Laurie Schechter taught me. On a spread sheet I would put

the info of each company I wished to pull merchandise from, with relevant info: contact person, phone number, and email. In the box to the right I would update progress. For example if I had called and left a message I would note that. This enables anyone on the team to know what needs to be done at a given moment, and what hasn't yet been done. I refer to this sheet during the entire process, and even after. For example, if I promised a source a copy of the magazine, I would note that and follow up after the fact. You can easily store this document on Google docs, and invite those working on the project to view the file as well.

Example Source List Sheet

Company Name: Company Address: Contact Person: Contact Phone: Contact Email:	What items or looks are we requesting	Results and tracking status
Betsey Johnson xxx7th Avenue 212-444-1111 Sara Gleeson sara@betseyjohnson	Poufy skirts: Runway look #7, 14,43	sent email they said yes we can pull shot look #14 promised to send them tear sheets all 3 looks returned- confirmation #

Making friends with independent designers.



Above: Wearing one of his creations, I'm with the designer Sergio Guadarrama of Celestino at his fashion presentation 2009. As a muse I inspired his 'Alexandra' bag

Right: Dressed by Sergio of Celestino for a Gala which I donated a package. We attended the event together

Most well-known designers who are worth something have a showroom or a public relations company who represents their clothing. On the fringes are smaller designers who have smaller budgets. These types are wonderful to network with because they are

starving for editorial tears and pictures, and some



day they may be the next Armani or Dolce. There's nothing like building a solid working relationship on the ground floor.

It is never a good idea to lie when borrowing clothes. I would recommend telling contacts exactly what clothes will be shot

for. Do not promise prints unless you can deliver, or the photographer has agreed to make prints. This is something that should be negotiated before the shoot.

Requesting looks.

Refer to **style.com** for runway looks and pick out which ones you would like to shoot. Keep in mind that just because you request it, it doesn't mean you will get it. With smaller designers, you might have to go in-person to see what they have. Most lines have the collection shot for your browsing online, or in the form of a line sheet emailed to you.

Forms are your friend.

When faxing and or emailing clothing requests to public relations people and designers, I like to use a following-form to keep my requests simple and in line, so that everyone is on the same page.

You will also need to provide a "pull letter," also known as a "Letter of Responsibility," provided to you from the magazine that has hired you for the shoot. This letter is from the magazine, and is a statement to the designer that they are accepting responsibility for the clothing on the shoot in case of loss or theft. The magazine has insurance for just such an occasion. The letter also names the stylist, identifies him or her as working on the project, and states what issue the editorial will be published in. Obviously, larger magazines are going to have more influence with designers than other, smaller publications, but do not discount professionalism. While they may not provide you with everything you request, make the best of what they do provide.

Obviously you would put in the appropriate information when sending in a form like the example on the next page -- but the point is, forms like this allow you to show in a clear and concise manner that you're organized and prepared.

EXAMPLE CLOTHING REQUEST FORM

Magazine: Vellum July Issue
8 page editorial

Photographer: Dimitri Hycianthe
Stylist: AlexandrA Greenawalt
917-674-8404
ag@alexandrastylist.com

Makeup: Deanna Melluso

Hair: Dennis

Shoot Date: March 17, 18

Pull dates: March 15, 16th

Return dates: March 19, 21

Concept: Velour
Two women are kidnapped and held captive in abandoned warehouse.
Main focus is using jewelry
Although the theme is dark the jewelry is bright

NEED: bright jewelry-broaches, big jewel necklaces, cocktail rings, lockets, long necklaces to wrap
nude mesh underwear
colorful underwear and garter belts
stockings, thigh highs- bright color sheers
deconstructed clothing
sexy high heels; open toe ok-color is good

Paperwork.

I highly suggest you get a system in place to stay organized. Shoeboxed.com is a wonderful online service which scans



your receipts and then puts them into an excel spreadsheet. You will always have to show proof of items purchased for the shoot, it's an absolute MUST. Having a separate envelope for each

Don't let your paperwork pile up on you. Stay ahead of it by having a system in place

job is one way or you can buy a small accordion file at just about any container store.

After a job wraps, you are expected to hand in your invoice and expenses as quickly as possible, so that you can get reimbursed and paid. I have asked for deposits and payments in advance; always remember it never hurts to ask.

Example Invoice

A STYLE
AlexandrA
110 Berry Street #2
Brooklyn, NY
11211

INVOICE:

NAME AND ADDRESS OF CLIENT

Sally Gordon
XX main street
New york, ny 10010

Freelance Fashion Styling: Lookbook for

November 10 th , 2010 Prep day	\$600
November 11 th 2010 Shoot day	\$1200
November 12 th 2010 Post production day	\$600

Total Due: \$2400.00

PLEASE NOTE!!!PLEASE MAKE CHECKS OUT TO 'A STYLE'
PAYMENT IS DUE UPON RECEIPT
THANK YOU FOR YOUR REPEAT BUSINESS

Thanking people.

Working in a showroom in PR is kind of a thankless job. I found



fatwitch.com offers excellent deals on gourmet brownies for everyone's tastes. Their gift packages are a perfect way to say thank you

that even just a simple thank you note with some cookies can go a long way, especially when working with them in the future. These PR peeps have the power to remove items from your pull, expedite things, and

extend your return days so a little sugar is much appreciated. Take the time to learn their names, make friends, and thank them when they come through for you.

Budgeting: Things to Think of When Pricing a Job

Transportation.

Shoes that need to be purchased.

Food for your staff.

Prep days to get you ready for the shoot (often billed at a lower rate than your day rate).

Clothing-bought, rented, or pulled.

Any accessories or added things the client has requested you purchase.

Assistants you may need.

Your day rate of \$0-\$5,000 (set by you based on experience and cojones, but the client may also specify).

My Rolodex for Styling

For Premade Portfolio Books

- Sam Flax

www.Samflax.com

Several locations in Midtown, Chelsea, and Flatiron District

Custom Portfolio Books

- House of Portfolios in New York

48 West 21st Street (6th Floor)

New York, N.Y. 10010

www.houseofportfolios.com

Tel. (212) 206-7323

For affordable prints of your work when starting out

- Manhattan Color Labs

4 West 20th Street

212-807-7373

For helpful Information about getting into a fashion show

- <http://www.lookonline.com/getin.html>

Great place to buy styling supplies like steamers, hangars, garment bags, and so much more.

- Manhattan Wardrobe Supply

245 W 29th St # 800

New York, NY 10001-5398

(212) 268-9993

To hire someone to build your website

- Elance.com
- Odesk

Car Services which are reasonable

- Northside (Williamsburg)
- Delancy Car Service
- Also try looking for independent drivers on Craigslist.

An agent.

To get an agent, you need a portfolio filled with amazing tears and photos proving that you have worked extensively on paid shoots. It's a bit of a Catch-22, because to get the higher-caliber jobs you need an agent. So a lot of hustle is required. My advice is to get in and develop relationships with agencies as an assistant and build from there. There are certainly a great number of stylists who are represented that

do very well. You just need to wear several hats and be a good negotiator, and a good networker on top of being an amazing stylist! I personally had an agent and it didn't work out for me, as I prefer to deal one-on-one with clients and promote myself.

Last words.

If there was one thing you take from this book it's to infuse everything you do with YOU. I heard recently 'do you' and it's very fitting in this business. There is a process and evolution to finding your style voice and embrace the journey. It will take you through many looks but trust it. The best stylists have been those who have forged their own path, found their own niche, been unique not a mere photo copy. I wish you the best of luck and see you at FASHION WEEK!

Alexandra Suzanne Greenawalt