

GATEKEEPING THE SECRETS TO SUCCESS

# BUILDING THE DREAM LIFE

AS A CONTENT CREATOR.



*THIS IS HOW YOU GET PAID TO HAVE FUN.*

BY: JUSTIN CHOQUETTE

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Wrapping up the e-book, we go over a few tips I wish someone had told me when I started out: improve your life and find success on this new journey.



# Hello!

I want to take a moment to thank you for downloading my e-book. I'm super stoked to see that you are interested in making your dream life become a reality and that you want to learn how you can turn taking simple pictures into a profitable business and use that skill to travel for free.

Throughout the course of this e-book, I will be sharing my own personal methods on how I was able to quit my full-time job and make my dream life a reality. I will show you how to grow your following across a variety of social media, leverage those platforms to make your first few dollars, and then turn that into a profitable business. Yes, you can get paid to go on hikes! I will open your eyes up to a whole new world and give you a behind-the-scenes look at the "dream life." I'll let you in on a little secret... once you've mastered some basic skills, it's easy to turn your dreams into reality!

# CHAPTER 01

## The Story of Justin

**“Why not take a risk and do something you absolutely love?**

**If you can do something you hate every day just for money, why  
can't you do something you absolutely love every day just  
for your own happiness?”**

For those of you that I haven't had the honour of meeting, my name is Justin. I'm writing this while sitting at the top of a mountain watching the sunset, but I wasn't always able to do this. Let's start at the beginning. I fell in love with photography when I was about 12 years old. I couldn't tell you why, but it was something that I absolutely loved. It was an escape from reality; I could be in my own little world, focusing on nothing other than the subject that I was shooting. The first camera I ever bought was the GoPro Hero 3 Black, and I was obsessed with that thing from the moment I laid hands on it. Every day I was out into the mountains shooting photos and videos of my friends and I shredding down the local mountain bike trails. Back then, I would often dream of buying a van and travelling around the country, shooting photos of mountains I could only dream of. I'd watch GoPro videos on YouTube and imagine myself hiking and biking in some of the far-off places that these videos were filmed.

But that was just a dream. I had no idea people made money from shooting photos, let alone enough money to actually live off of. However, when I was 15 years old, I received a DM from GoPro. They wanted to know if I would be interested in selling one of my photos to them. I was in complete shock. A few days later, after sending them the photo, I received a cheque for more money than I could've ever hoped for. I couldn't believe it.

This is where everything changed. I knew I wanted to make this my career, but I had no clue how to start. Fast forward a few years, and I graduated early from high school when I was in grade eleven and went straight into trades school to become an electrician. I spent the following four years working in the trades. It was a job that I didn't hate, but I knew it wasn't something I wanted to do for the rest of my life.

It also started to take its toll on my body which scared me. Looking around at my coworkers' physical conditions I could see what I was destined for, and it was not a pleasant thought. I had job security and made a relatively good wage, but I was scared of becoming too comfortable. I knew that complacency was a trap and that I didn't want to get stuck in society's rat race. No one wants to die with regrets, and I knew if I never tried pursuing my dreams of becoming a professional adventure photographer, I would regret it for the rest of my life.

I always used the excuse that I didn't have any money, or that I had no one to teach me, or even that I wasn't smart enough. For years I had watched YouTubers talk about building up a multi-source income, becoming financially free and so on. It never really clicked in my brain that I could do this. We fall into the trap of believing that people online are different from us, when in reality they really aren't. I needed a change in mindset. I needed to stop thinking that I could never afford that and start asking how can I afford that? How can I go on that trip, how can I go climb that mountain? Better yet, how can I do all that and get paid for it?

Fast forward to today, and the years that I spent teaching myself how to turn my passion into a successful business have paid off - I am now living my dream life. I'm being paid to travel, hike, and explore some of the most beautiful places in North America, using my content to help inspire others to do the same (which still blows my mind). I'm writing this e-book to share with you how I was able to do it, because deep down I know we're all capable of living out our dreams.

Since I never had anyone to help me get started, and I know how hard it is to find information on building a successful business and making money from social media, I wanted to change that. I want to teach you how to leverage social media and photography to live your dream life. I am sharing this with you because you can do it too, and quickly! Trust me on this... the only thing you need to do is to take the time to learn the necessary skills and then put them into practice!

Before we get into all the good stuff, I want to be very clear. To make your dream life a reality, you have to put in the work and time. It won't happen overnight. I wish that were true, but that's not the reality of life. It took me almost ten years to get to where I am now, but with this e-book, I can help you reach your goals a lot faster. It really only depends on how bad you want it. I don't want to give you the impression that you suddenly get to sit back and relax once you get this new journey started. You will be spending every day working on your business: building, learning, failing and growing each and every day. When people say they quit the 9-5, they actually mean that they traded in the 9-5 for a job that never ends.

But trust me on this... if you're doing something you love, you'll never feel like you work a day in your life. You will be wishing that the days were longer and you didn't have to sleep because you love doing this so much. Just take this e-book as an example. I am currently sitting at my desk writing this book for you, and I have been sitting here since 5 am, minus a few breaks for food. It's currently 11:49 pm, and I wish I could keep writing all night. The moral of the story is this; you're going to have to sacrifice a lot to make your dream life become a reality, but it will all be worth it.



CANON 5D MK IV ~ 24-70MM F2.8

If you're still reading this, congratulations. I didn't scare you away. You may think that you're not cut out for this... don't worry. That's completely normal. Even I still sometimes think this! You are miles ahead of everyone else by downloading this e-book. Having the desire to learn is the first step to becoming successful in anything you do. I have 100% confidence that you will succeed, and you will learn something new in this e-book. You have no idea how excited I am to share this with you and help you on your journey!

# CHAPTER 02

## The Dream Job

***“ If you don’t like your situation,  
hustle your way out of it.”***



One of the most commonly-asked questions I get is, “what do you do?” The basic answer is that I’m a content creator. What the heck does that mean? Well, a content creator is someone who tells a story or delivers information through visual representation such as a photograph, a piece of art, or a film. It’s an industry that you are so immersed in that most people don’t even realize that people make a living from creating the content you see on your social media every day.

I want you to take a step back and look at your surroundings. Everything you see right now had to have visual content created to sell and market that product. If you open your phone and scroll through Instagram, every other post you see is an advertisement selling a product or service, and someone (soon to be you) was paid to create the content for that ad.

How much do content creators make?

Starting out, content creators usually don’t make that much money. Unfortunately, many companies like to take advantage of novice content creators and pay them little to nothing due to their lack of experience. But once you have the knowledge and skills necessary, you can be making anything from \$50,000 a year to well over six figures a year. If you couple your content-creating skills with marketing knowledge, you can even make over seven figures a year, which requires a lot of time, work, and dedication. Hard? Yes. But it’s possible.

In chapter four, we will go over how you can be a content creator and not worry about money.

CHAPTER

# 03

The Tools of the Trade

*Current Vibe:*

*Working for the lifestyle I promised myself.*

This is one of the things that holds most people back. I hear the excuse all the time, "I can't shoot photos like that because I don't have a camera," and my response is always "what about the one you're holding?" In our modern world, phone cameras are insanely good. It's almost unnerving thinking about the fact that an iPhone camera is almost as good as my expensive, professional-grade camera. When I started shooting photos, I had a GoPro Hero 3 Black and my iPod touch. I couldn't afford a camera until I was nineteen years old.

For seven years before that, I taught myself how to replicate the work of professional photographers... how they would capture light, frame their subjects, use camera settings to their advantage, and so on. With this knowledge, I would go out into the field and try to mimic similar shots using my action cam. This is how I taught myself to capture light, and over time, I unknowingly trained my eye to see the image I wanted. I'd choose the exact settings, lens and focal length to capture that precise photo, turning what I saw in my mind into reality.

I know what you're thinking. "Just tell me what gear I need so I can do what you do!" Below you'll find everything you need to get started. But remember, owning a fancy camera doesn't mean you will suddenly be able to capture jaw-dropping images. To do that, you need to practice, practice, and practice some more. Shoot as much as you can and spend all your spare time watching videos and courses on capturing light and train your eye to see and capture that image.

# Gear you need to get started

(price low to high)

## Budget-friendly

- Cell phone and/or computer. *You will need this to send emails, edit photos, film reels and TikToks, etc.*
- A camera. *A phone will work if a camera isn't in your budget.*
- Lightroom Desktop or Mobile *You will need this to edit your photos.*

## Mid-range:

- Canon 6Ds or 70Ds are great starter cameras. *You can purchase used ones for a little as a couple of hundred dollars on Facebook Marketplace.*
- Any kit lens will work.
- A computer for editing photos
- Lightroom Desktop

**Pro Gear:** *This is all the camera gear I use.*

- Camera Body: Canon 5D MK IV & Canon EOS R
- Lens: Canon 24-70mm f/2.8 L series, 70-200mm f/2.8 L series, 2x Teleconverter (*makes my 70-200mm a 140-400mm, helps cut down the with of carrying two telephoto lenses*), RF24-105mm F/4-7.1, RF35mm F/1.8 Macro IS STM.
- DJI Mavic Air 2 Fly More Package
- GoPro hero 10 + the mouth mount and a head strap
- Hoya CIR-PL filter
- Peak Design Camera strap
- Peak Design Shell cover
- Manfrotto Element Traveller Small Tripod
- Extra SD Cards

## My post-processing equipment:

- 2020 Apple MacBook Pro (15-inch)
- Dell 27-inch 4k minority
- Adobe Lightroom Classic 2021 (desktop)
- Adobe Photoshop 2021 *This is what I use to crop & export my photos.*



CANON 5D MK IV ~ 16-35 MM F2.8



DJI MAVIC AIR 2



CANON 5D MK IV ~ 70-200 MM F2.8

CHAPTER

# 04

Building Your Brand

*"Getting paid 26 times in 365 days  
is not my destiny"*



# Building Your Brand

CANON 5D MK IV ~ 24-70MM F2.8

When you start building your brand the biggest tips I can give you are to be yourself, be authentic and don't try to fake it. One of my biggest pet peeves is when I see someone trying to fake it on social media and portray a life that they aren't really living. This never works; it's so easy to see through those who pretend to be something that they aren't. Moral of the story? Be authentic and honest. When you're authentic your audience and future clients will see that in your content. So create content that is genuine to you and focus on what you love and are passionate about. If you don't know where to start, ask yourself these questions:

If you don't know where to start as yourself these questions:

- *What are you passionate about?*
- *Who is your target audience?*
- *How do you want to inspire your audience?*
- *What is your style?*

Remember content is key, so make sure your content is aesthetically pleasing. I recommend trying to develop your own style. A great way to start out developing your own style is by taking little bits of their people's styles and combining them together to create your own.



## **Choose a colour palette.**

This will be something that will change as you grow over time, or even based on the season you are shooting in. For example, I love to have bright photos in the warmer seasons and then as winter comes I like to shift my colour palette to colder blues that reflect the Canadian winter.

## **What sets you apart (from amateur to pro)?**

Now it's time to choose your editing style. Are your photos going to be highly saturated, moody, full of dark tones or using lots of natural colours? Personally, I try to make my photos look as natural as possible. Upload your photos into Lightroom and play around with all the settings. A great way to learn how to edit is using presets as the base edit and then building on the foundation of those presets, tweaking as you see fit.

## **The tools you need to edit.**

Post-processing and editing is the final step in the creative process. This is where you will spend your time tweaking that photo and developing your style. There are a few free editing programs such as VSCO, Snapseed, Lightroom Mobile (free version) but none of those can compare to Adobe Lightroom. This is the most common editing software out there on the market and if you have Lightroom, you will have access to all the post-processing tools that any professional photographer uses.

## **Learning how to edit.**

This is one of the most important things that you need to learn if you want to set yourself apart from the competition. Editing is where you take your RAW photos and shape them to create your signature look. It plays a huge role in tying your feed together. It's at this stage where you choose your style. Do you want your photos to be vibrant or muted? Full of action or more minimalist? If you are new to editing, I highly recommend using presets to get yourself started. You can check out my presets here. I use these presets on all of my photos and then tweak them to fit the scene and lighting conditions. A great way to learn what each setting does is to play around with them and study how I arranged each toggle to achieve my style. Use code "PRO" to get 15% off the [preset pack!](#)

## Plan your feed.

As you build up your audience, one of the things you should start to consider is designing your feed so that all the photos mesh together well. It's far easier to convert a profile viewer to a follower if your feed is visually attractive. A great example of this is @karl\_shakur's Instagram account. All of his photos flow together in a very organic and natural way. If you study his account you'll notice each photo has a similar colour scheme and the colours he chose to include in his photo all flow together.

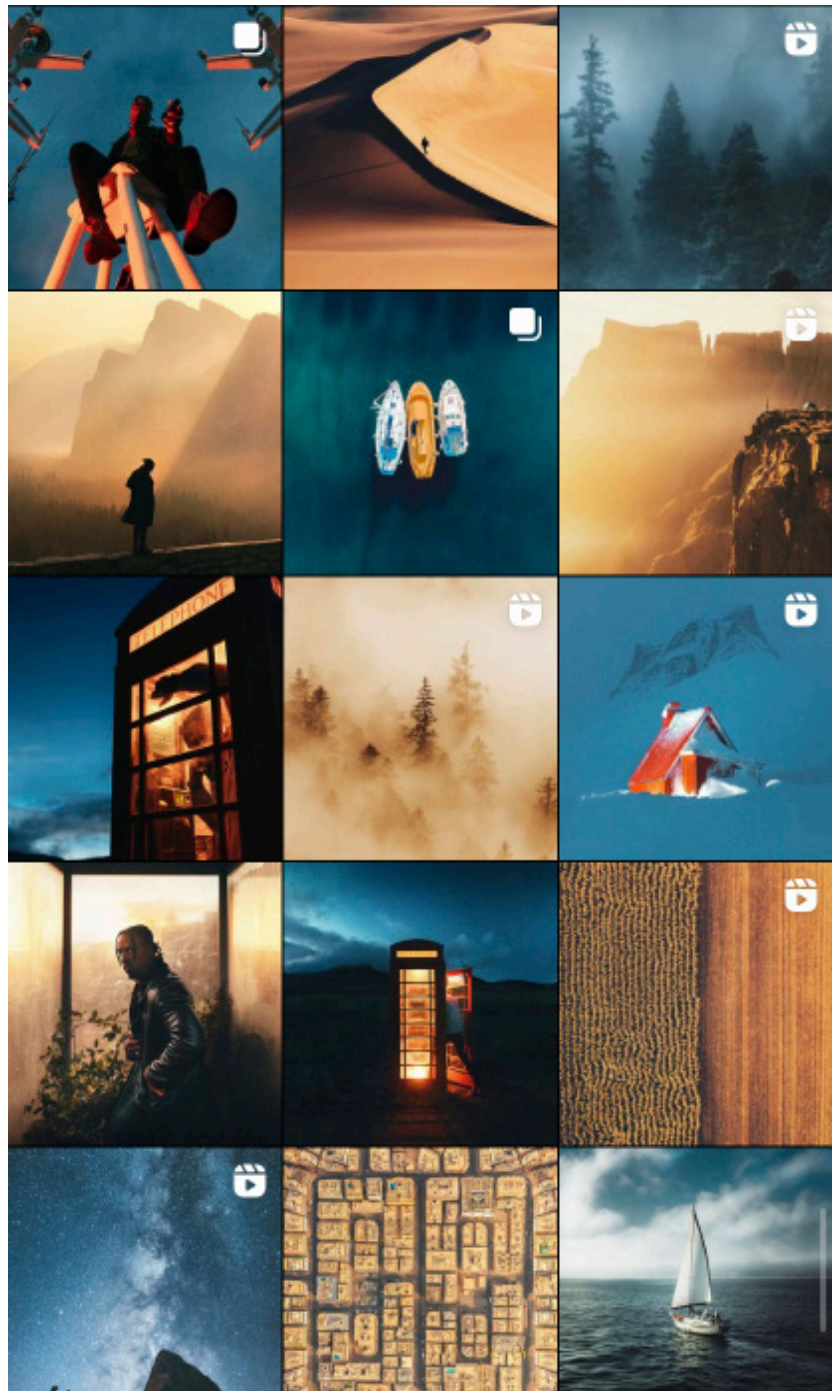
You can even use apps to help plan your feed. I've used UNUM and Unfold in the past, but you can even use a dedicated folder in your Photos app to plan and design your feed.

## Studying your audience.

Pay attention to what types of content perform the best. Once you determine what works well, replicate that style over and over to the best of your ability.

## Be part of the community.

Engage, engage, engage. Respond to every DM and comment you receive. Interact with other creators' posts and stories.





CANON 5D MK IV ~ 70-200 MM F2.8

## **Provide value.**

This is one of the most important things you can do. 99% of the people on Instagram do not provide value. No one wants to see a beautiful photo of a sunset with a corny caption that says "home is where the heart is".

I cringe at the thought of that.

Tell your audience about the process of taking that photo. Share the story of how you got that shot. Share your process, the gear you used, how you edited, etc.

Be genuine! Share any advice, tips, or tricks you may have with your audience. Your goal should be that you become a valuable source of information and inspiration. Make sure you are someone that you would want to follow.



CANON 5D MK IV ~ 24-70MM F2.8

//  
Your goal as a brand is to be the supporting character and go win best supporting actor/actress and let the creator win best actor/actress.

- SHARDUL GOLWALKAR, FOUNDER OF CREATORS DIGEST

### **Be active and Interactive.**

Instagram is a community. That's why it was created. When posting stories, utilize polls, questions, quizzes and even emoji sliders. Social media apps love when you use all their features. This is a very important step in the process of growing an audience.

### **Ask for feedback/criticism.**

When I first started out I would ask random people on Instagram (other photographers) to tell me everything they hated about my content and I used that feedback to improve my work. To this day, I still love hearing harsh feedback about my work because I believe that's the only way you can grow in your skills.



CANON 5D MK IV ~ 24-70MM F2.8

“  
Consistency  
always leads  
to excellence.  
Whatever you do in  
life, always be  
consistent.”



CANON 5D MK IV ~ 24-70MM F2.8

## **Use the platform.**

Show up every day on the platform. Consistency is key to growth. What does this mean? Post! Post anything. Make sure it's relevant to your style and provides value, but this can come as a story post, a reel, an image, or so on. A constant flow of content will do wonders for your account.

BE AWARE, when you start posting daily content you might not see any engagement improvements for many months. Don't let this discourage you. If your content is engaging and offers value to the viewer it will blow up. Trust me on this.

When I first put this to the test, I posted every day for about 4 months and I barely saw any growth. This can get discouraging! However, remember... you aren't doing this for the views, you're doing it to grow as a creator and demonstrate your ability to create content for brands. I stopped caring about the numbers and just kept on posting. One day, I had my first reel break ten thousand views. Since then, I have from gaining one to two followers a week to over 2000 followers a week and since that day the growth hasn't stopped.

You can do the exact same thing and receive similar if not better results.

***Remember, consistency is key.***

# CHAPTER 05

BUT I HAVE NO  
MONEY.

*"Imagine your life in three  
years from now..."*

@JUSTIN.CHOQUETTE



Now let's talk about the business side of things. Starting a business isn't cheap. There are only two ways to go about it. Starting a business will either take a lot of money and a little time or a lot of time and a smaller investment.

For me, it took a long time and a bit of money. In this chapter, I'll go over everything I did financially to afford to quit my job.

I'll be frank with you. In 2018 when I started working full time, I wasn't the smartest with my money. I had started a new job, and I was making what I thought at the time was a lot of money. I had always been good at saving and not spending my money. But with this new job and all the money coming in, I forgot about saving my money, and I started spending a lot. I got off work Fridays at 3 pm, and almost every week I would jump in my car and drive 10 hours south to California to watch the sunrise and shoot photos. I would spend the

next 24 hours driving up the west coast, stopping at dozens of photogenic locations along the way. I was having the time of my life, but unfortunately, these weekend trips down south were beginning to add up. In my estimation, I was spending around \$500 every weekend. It was beginning to cause my bank account to plateau, which is definitely not ideal when I should be saving money as a young employee in the trades.

CANON 5D MK IV ~ 24-70MM F2.8



If I hadn't gone on these trips, I would have quit working in the trades sooner, but I have no regrets about spending that money. I believe it's because of those trips I was able to quit my job eventually.

Fast forward to March of 2020. I worked as an electrician for the last two years and spent my weekends travelling around North America. But that was all about to come to a halt. The World Health Organization declared the coronavirus officially a global pandemic, and the world locked down. Borders were shut down, flights were grounded, travel restrictions were put in place, and I was stuck.

I went from travelling across the continent every weekend to staying at home and exploring my local mountain ranges; I was forced once again to explore my backyard. Although this was a painful reality check, in the long run, it helped me start saving money again and gave me a new perspective on the beauty of my home province. Around this same time, I began to despise my job. I was starting to experience those moments where I'd be driving to work at four o'clock in the morning and screaming because I wanted to be doing anything else other than spending an hour and a half stuck in traffic heading to a job I hated. All I wanted was to quit my job and become a full-time photographer. But at the time, I knew that wasn't possible due to the lack of money.

I told myself that I would never step foot on a construction site again when I quit. Before I was prepared to quit, I knew I would have to build up my photography skills and business to a point where I am making at least double my monthly electrical paycheck.

From reading books and hundreds of hours of research, I knew building up a successful business was going to be extremely hard, and I needed to learn a lot. It was going to take some money to acquire the tools I needed to run my business, such as camera gear, a computer, editing software, financial programs, a website and a dozen other monthly payment to various programs.

I knew from previous experiences that the photography jobs I was getting weren't paying me enough to allow me to quit my job. I had to gain the knowledge and skills to secure higher-paying contracts!

This was my two-year plan and all the thing I needed to do to escape the 9 to 5:

## **Knowledge**

From 2020 to the beginning of 2021, I spent every moment of my spare time learning how to run a business and looking back at the previous contracts that I had lots and trying to figure out what I had done wrong, what I can learn from them and how I can make my work process flow smoothly with no hiccups. This involved lots of trial and error until I was able to find a method that worked consistently. ([The Creator collection e-book](#) series will cover everything regarding the business side of photography.)

## **Practice**

I knew my photography skills were pretty good by 2020 - I had been a photographer for about nine years - but they weren't good enough. I need to practice, practice and practice even more.

## **Money**

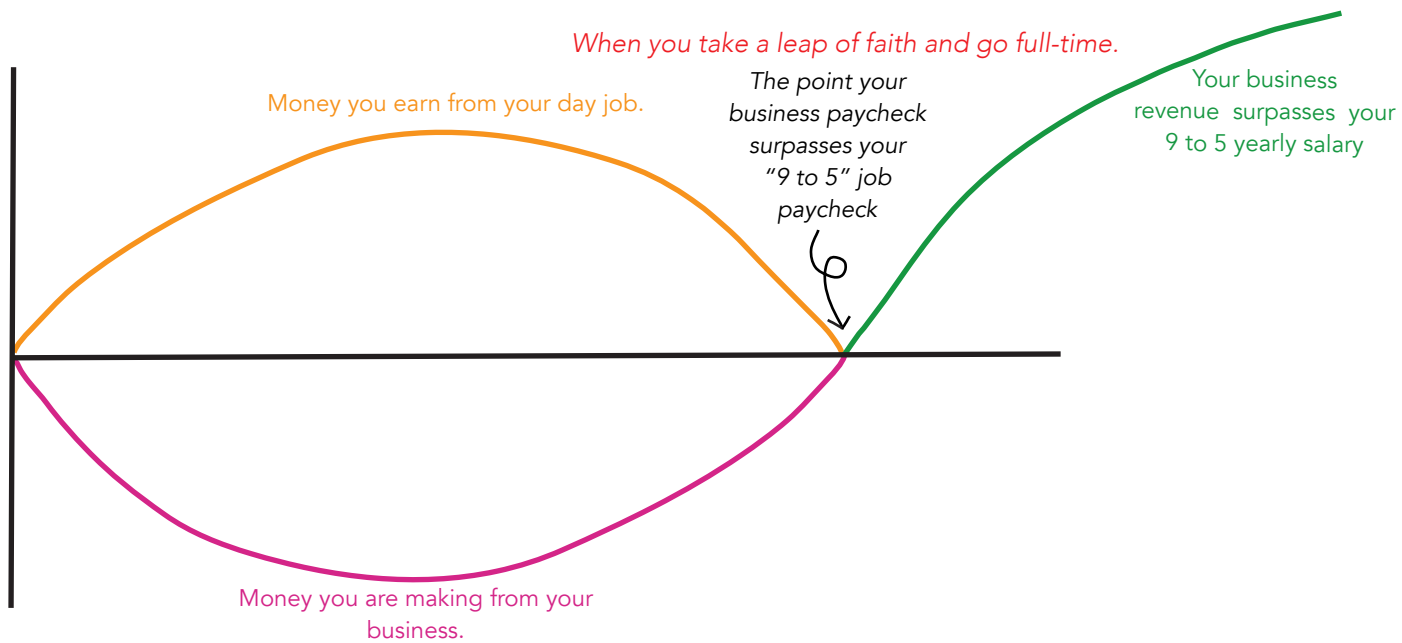
As discussed above, starting a business requires funding. I could afford to become a full-time content creator because my electrical paycheck would initially pay for my business expenses, and I didn't have to worry about money.

This means meant only spending money on essential things such as your monthly bills and maybe dinner dates. I recommend only spending money during this time on something that will help you achieve your future goals. And yes, that's a no to \$5 Starbucks coffees.

Any money you have leftover, put that towards your business.



CANON 5D MK IV ~ 24-70MM F2.8



The chart below demonstrates how this method works. The upper graph is the money you make while working the 9-5, and the lower graph is the cash flow from your business. As you can see, once you do this for a while, you will get to a point where the money you are making from your business will eventually surpass the money you are making from your 9-5 job.

It took me over two years to get to this point. With the help of this e-book and the future e-books and courses that will be released, I will do my very best to help you bring that two-year time down to just a couple of months!

Many content creators will hate me for doing this, but I will be giving you guys everything I know and guiding you along your journey to making your dream life a reality!

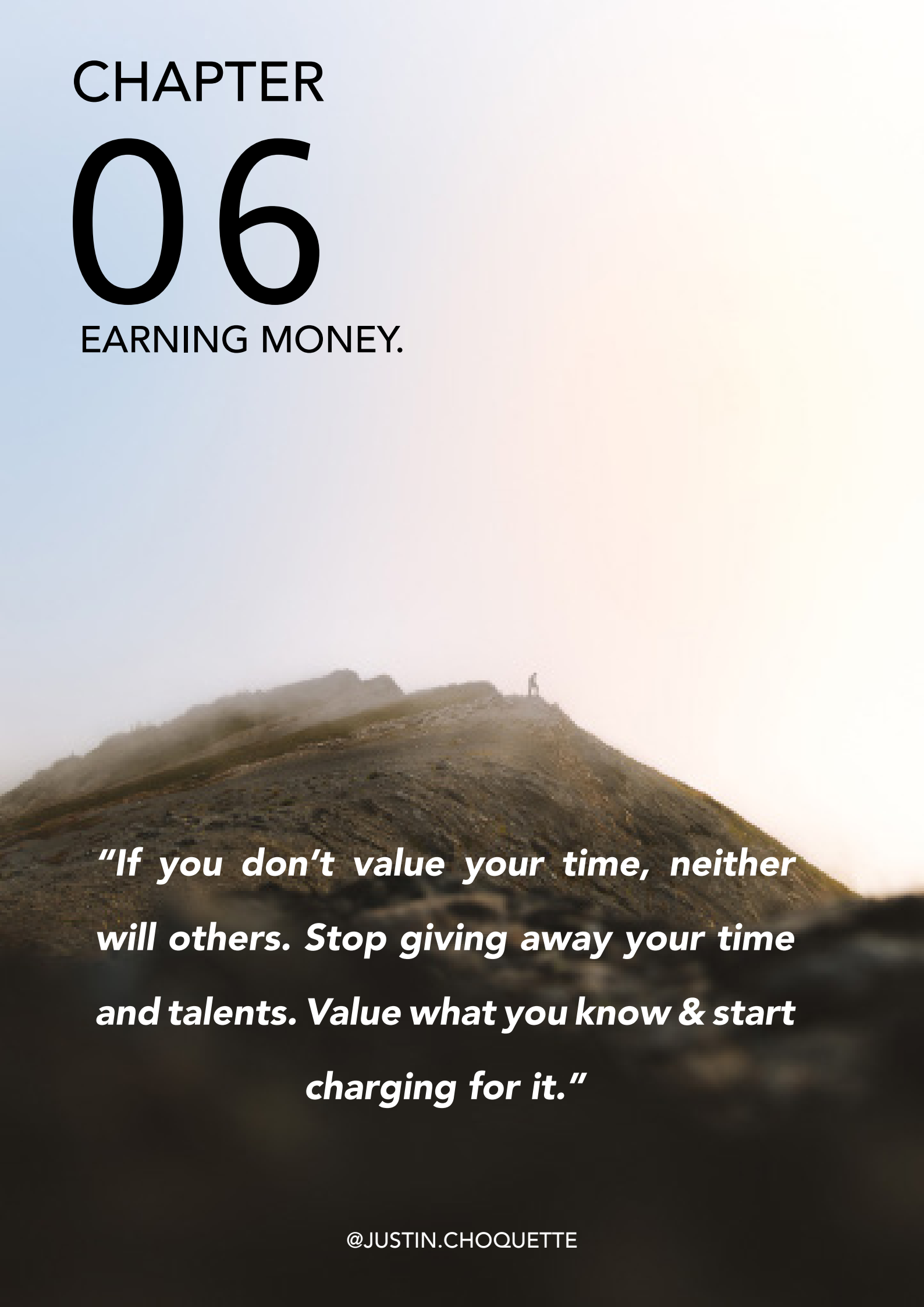


Mount Shuksan. Captured using the Canon 5D mk Iv, 70-200mm F2.8 III

CHAPTER

# 06

EARNING MONEY.

A person is standing on the peak of a mountain, silhouetted against a bright, hazy sky. The mountain is covered in sparse vegetation and appears to be made of dark rock. The overall scene is atmospheric and motivational.

***"If you don't value your time, neither will others. Stop giving away your time and talents. Value what you know & start charging for it."***

# EARNING MONEY.

## **How to get noticed by brands?**

One of the best ways to get noticed by a brand is to tag and interact with these brands that you love and want to work with. By doing this, you will have a more organic approach towards the brand as opposed to a cold call.

Don't tag the brand on the image/post. Tag them in the description of the post. This shows them that you're an even bigger fan of the brand.

Make sure to comment, like and follow them. Always make sure to be genuine when taking this approach. **DO NOT SPAM!**

Remember, there is a person behind the screen of that account. I have gotten jobs with brands that I had been engaging with for years and the person that was in charge of that account noticed that I was their number one fan. At the time I didn't realize that doing something as simple as engaging with the brand would help me build a relationship with that brand.



CANON 5D MK IV ~ 24-70MM F2.8

## **Choosing brands to work with.**

When choosing brands to work with, choose a brand that is a reflection of your personal brand. It should be a brand that you know and love and is something that you can confidently recommend to your audience.

These are some of the things that I look for when looking for a partner:

- Has a product you believe in and can stand behind
- Is a product you would spend your own money on
- Aligns with your personal values
- Respects you as a creator

When looking for a brand to work with make sure they:

- Fit with your niche
- They offer something you stand behind
- They are a trustworthy brand (DO YOUR RESEARCH)
- They are offering you payment and/or free products (more about this later in the book)
- They value relationships not transactions





CANON 5D MK IV ~ 16-35MM F2.8



## **How to find a brand to work with?**

When you first start out, you're going to have to reach out to brands to get work. This can be very intimidating and you might not know how to do this, but trust me... it's really simple. It just takes time and perseverance. This is something I use to struggle with, so I know the feeling. I promise you though... once you figure it out, it's one of the easiest parts of this job.

The first way you can find a brand is through social media. If you see a brand running ads or working with other creators on social media this means they most likely have a budget and a program for working with creators. Once you see this, reach out by shooting them a DM or sending out an email.

One of the other ways I like to find brands is by going to the store and searching for brands products that might apply to my niche.

Another great platform to utilize is LinkedIn. You can connect with some of the biggest brands here and send them a message asking if you can get the contact to their marketing department.

And of course, don't forget to include your contact information in your bio so if a brand does find you they have a way of getting in contact with you.

## Contacting

Now that you have found a brand that fits your niche and you have their contact info, it's time to send the pitch. Before you send a pitch make sure you've done your research.

### Some things to look for:

- What is their mission
- What is their history/story
- What is their target audience ( age, gender, interests)
- Where are they located

Once you've found these things write them down and include them in your pitch!

### Side Note:

*Before you start pitching make sure you have a functioning website showcasing your work, professional media kit, a suitable email address, treatment, mood board, Pitch Deck and signature set up.*

## Should you take an unpaid campaign?

Yes and no. Preferably NO. This really depends on the brand and what they're offering. For example, if a brand reached out to me requesting photos of their new, \$10,000 mountain bike but they don't have a budget to pay me and are offering the bike as compensation, I would most likely say yes. Because that bike is something I would buy, it still provides a return on my investment and compensates me well for my work. Another possible advantage to taking an unpaid campaign, especially in your beginning stages, is that it could present an opportunity in the future for a paid gig.

Only take a free campaign if there will be a return on investment for you.

However, if you are asked to shoot free content for a small company (especially if it's a product you don't need) I wouldn't recommend agreeing, since there is no ROI for you. Don't assume that everyone has your best interests in mind! Many companies profit off of smaller creators and pay them little to nothing simply because the creators agree to it. Know your worth!

# CHAPTER 07

FINAL REMARKS



@JUSTIN.CHOQUETTE

# FINAL REMARKS

Remember, if an opportunity is not presented to you, go out and create it. It's the only way you are going to achieve your goals, both in this process and in any other undertaking in life.

As you begin your journey to becoming a full-time content creator, it might take a while to see results - that's okay. Good things don't happen overnight. It might take time for the results to show, but I promise you... they will show. Practice patience and it will come.

## **A few tips I can give you that I wish someone had told me years ago:**

- Be patient
- Learn to love failure; strive to fail and get back up again, don't stop trying until you reach that goal
- Be authentic
- Be kind
- Never stop learning no matter how successful you are
- Don't be afraid to try new styles of art
- Set goals to accomplish in the short and goals you can achieve in the long term



Email Justin at [justin@justinchoquette.com](mailto:justin@justinchoquette.com) to find out about:

- [The Art of Never Working Again eBook](#) to help you boost your content creator career.
- [Email, Pitch Deck and media kit templates.](#)
- [Masterclasses](#), perfect for those who are wanting to learn the business side of photography, how to shoot campaigns, and how to shoot jaw-dropping content in the backcountry.
- [Golden Blue Master Collection Preset Pack](#)



Editor [Lukas Mann](#).