

## **ASSISTING AS A SECOND CAMERA ON A CORPORATE EVENT ASSIGNMENT – A PRIMER**

Dear Assistant (second camera),

Before you bill yourself as a “professional” and represent yourself as an experienced “event” photographer capable of working as an assistant/second camera on a “high end” (corporate) event, ask yourself the following questions:

- Do I have the people skills and demeanor to successfully interact as a photographer without being intrusive or annoying?
- Do I have at least two camera bodies, appropriate professional quality lenses, and two flash units?
- Do I thoroughly know my equipment and understand how to use it to obtain well-lit, properly exposed images that clearly define my work as professional?
- Do I completely understand the need to use on-camera flash as the “main” light source for event work—day and night, indoors and out. Do I understand “rear curtain/second curtain or slow synch flash?”
- Do I have a business license and liability insurance? While not essential to work as a second camera or assistant, a “professional” doing freelance should meet all the requirements for being in business, including licenses and insurance.

If you answered YES to all these questions, then I’m sure we will work well together. If you can’t, then it’s a “maybe.” We may have to do some training.

We all have differing degrees of experience with this type of work, but these are my expectations. Feel free to ask questions. Nothing is set in stone.

### **1. There are many important requirements for this type of work as a professional...**

- Dress appropriately for the setting and occasion; slacks and sport shirt (slacks or dress for women). No jeans or tennis shoes for receptions, dinners, etc. It is better to overdress than underdress. Black is always appropriate, but not essential. For casual outdoor activities, dress in a manner fitting the activity and your safety.
- Scout the area you are shooting when you arrive. Check for safety issues such as loose rock and terrain, snakes, bees, steep slopes, etc. Photographers sometimes get lost in the viewfinder, but need to be safe too. One of my old ASMP buddies died trying to get the "waterfall" shot ... over he went and that was the end.
- Maintain a friendly and helpful demeanor with the clients. Be responsive to their photo desires. However, do not allow yourself to get too close or to spend too much time with just a few individuals. You do not want to be intrusive. You do want to get shots of EVERYONE. If however, a participant does NOT want their photo taken, respect that.
- If you are given a name-tag, wear it. If you are not given a name-tag, but have one of your own (maybe from another event), consider using it.

- Always show up at the agreed upon time or before.

## 2. You are a sub-contractor working for me.

- This is not the setting to promote your own business. You are the second camera for Tony Bonanno Photography, LLC. You are not my employee, but you are functioning as my sub-contractor. If asked, it is fine to let folks know that you are also a free-lance professional photographer with your own business and that part of your business is assisting your colleagues. **But, it is not good form to pass out your business cards.**
- I'm pretty liberal about allowing you to use images you take for your website, your business promotion, etc. But those images should be created with metadata that reads "Copyright Tony Bonanno Photography/Jane Smith" or "photo by Jane Smith for Tony Bonanno Photography."
- Payment. I will pay you before you leave at the end of our shoot or within a day or two at most.
- All I want from you are good photos. RAW only (not RAW plus JPEG unless I say it is OK to shoot JPEGs for certain aspects of the job). Do a rough edit before putting the files on thumb drives or media for me. I WILL DO THE POST PROCESSING, CROPPING, CONVERSIONS TO TIFFS, ETC. DON'T WORRY ABOUT POST PROCESSING.
- Feel free to ask me any questions or seek my assistance with anything regarding your shooting or the details of what we are doing. Typically, this type of event is complicated. Things will change. We need to be flexible and we need to be a TEAM.

## 3. Your equipment.

- Any PROFESSIONAL shoot off-site (not in studio) REQUIRES YOU TO HAVE BACKUP GEAR. There are photographers representing themselves as professionals who do not adhere to professional standards, but that is not us. Anytime you shoot for me, you must have whatever it takes to keep working should you drop a camera, fall and break a lens, experience malfunctions, etc. The client expects you to produce images, If your equipment fails--for whatever reason—you have failed. The event isn't going to be repeated, you don't get paid and you don't get hired the next time around.
- Also, understand that you will not be paid more money because you have a second camera body. The term *second camera* is synonymous with *second shooter*--someone hired when activities occur at multiple venues or when the anticipated activity is more than a single photographer can handle.
- You need to have enough lenses and flash gear so that each camera is ready to go. Usually my main rig is a full frame body using a 24-70 or 24-105 pro glass. The second body is ready to go so that I can get in tighter from a greater working distance, typically with everything above, and a moderate telephoto zoom such as a 70-200 lens. *With a 24-70, 24-105 (or similar) and a 70-200 lens, you can shoot 99.9% of these kinds of events*

- Be well prepared. Use this check list of things to consider:
  - ✓ Two camera bodies
  - ✓ Two flash units
  - ✓ Two lenses
  - ✓ Charged batteries (including extra batteries) for cameras, flash units, and flash battery packs
  - ✓ Diffusers (Stoffen, Nikon, Gary Fong “fong dongs,” etc.)
  - ✓ Rubber air rocket (Giotto or similar to blow dust off the sensor, lens, etc.)
  - ✓ Extra memory cards
  - ✓ Cords/cables, if your gear requires them.
  - ✓ Sometimes an extra flash triggered wirelessly can come in handy, but is not required for most of these activities.
  - ✓ I will have light stands, umbrellas, and brackets available should we need them.
- Remember, EVENT work is not about being “artsy”. Leave your “natural lighting tendencies” for your personal work, scenic’s, or your environmental portraiture.
- Off-site, multi-day events will usually require that we do our edits, etc. on laptops in our hotel rooms or conference center press room. With local events you can wait until you are home, unless the client as arranged for on-site expedited delivery (corporate server or media for example). Sometimes I may need to download images off your card(s) before we leave the site at the end of the day.

#### **4. A Word About Your Camera Settings.**

- Make sure your camera displays the correct date and time for the location you are shooting. When working with multiple cameras (and multiple photographers), sequencing based on capture time will be a real mess if all the cameras are not set to the same date/time.
- You may have had photography instructors who taught that you should always shoot in manual mode so you can set the aperture and shutter speed to achieve the desired “correct” exposure. That is still good advice for the studio, for certain controlled settings when you have time to think through the effects you want to achieve and when you have the ability to control the power packs (lighting) when needed, etc.
- High-end (corporate) event work requires a different approach. IF you use MANUAL MODE for this kind of work, you will FAIL. You won’t be able to keep up with changing light conditions. High-end event work relies on electronic FLASH to light the subjects (indoors AND outdoors) and a mode to expose for the ambient light. With rapidly changing compositions, light sources, backlighting, and strong shadows, manual mode doesn’t work very well. No one is fast enough to meter and change the camera’s exposure settings.
- The modes of choice for this kind of work are APERTURE, PROGRAM, or SHUTTER priority modes (with the usual choice being Aperture or Program modes). These modes will generally work pretty well when using on-camera lighting.

- When using Aperture mode, watch the shutter speed to ensure that it is adequate to prevent blurring. You may want to crank up the ISO a good bit (which fortunately we can do with today's cameras). I use Aperture mode mainly to make sure I have an edge on depth of field when shooting the "grip and grins." Usually I don't go wider than f/5.6 or 6.3 unless I have plenty of light.
- Program Mode often does a good job overall. You can shoot a whole event in just this one mode, but the DOF may be a little shallow at times. ISO's should be high enough to allow some latitude in aperture and overall exposure. I prefer ISO 400 as the starting point with today's technology.
- One of the most important things you need to do when using on-camera flash is **CHECK YOUR HISTOGRAM!** Don't be reluctant to crank up the flash output if you need to. Never trust the view on the LCD.

That covers most of my concerns. If, after reading all this, you decide that you'd rather not shoot this one, no problem. Just let me know ASAP so I can line up someone to take your place. If you have concerns, give me a call.

My cell is 505-XXX-XXXX. Oh, be sure your cell phones are charged too.

Cheers and looking forward to seeing you soon...

Tony

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