Pre-shoot communication with photographers

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London/UK (RPRN) 04/12/11 — As a fashion photographer I get to see a lot of pre-shoot communication. This is generally quite poor; and in fact only around 5% of models know exactly or roughly what they want from the shoot. A typical exchange of communication would be something like:

Photographer – “yes I’m happy to shoot with you, what subjects would you like to shoot? Do you have a particular genre or style you prefer?

Model – “no, not really, I’m just happy to go with what you want to do”

I’m so tempted at this point to make a point by asking the model to stand on one leg on top of a donkey with a lampshade on the head. It sounds ridiculous, but seriously, as a model you need to be to control your own destiny. Photographers need you as much as you need them, so it’s a partnership.

Before you do that you need to figure out what you want out of modelling, and we are about to release some courses to help models with this pre-shoot, during shoot and post-shoot communication.

First of all, be clear on what you want to do in your modelling career. You may only want to do for fun, which is fine, or you might be more serious and

want to become a glamour or a fashion model. As soon as you know this it will help you control the whole experience of working with photographers much easier.

If you choose a certain style, then look for photographers who are good at that style. Just because they are a photographer doesn't mean that they are a good photographer, and a good photographer can make an image looks so much better. A beautiful model can look poor with a poor photographer. On the flip-side, an average model can look beautiful with a great photographer.

There are model forums out there where photographers and models join and get together. I would say around 80% of the photographers on most of these forums are not of the required standard, and subsequently your portfolio starts to become a weak one whether it's a fun or a career. Don't think that because you are a young, inexperienced, or not that confident that you should be grateful for anybody taking your photograph. Use it as a negotiation between you and the photographer to get what you want and what the photographer wants from the shoot.

My key advice:

- Join somewhere like your Purestorm.com for free as a model
- Look for photographers you want to work with
- Set your sights high
- A good way to start communication is by telling them how much you like their work, even photographers need their egos massaged!
- Ask them their availability for shoots.
- In the same e-mail tell them what you would like to do and asked them what they would like to do. An example would be, "hi John, I really like your work especially shot number seven on your portfolio. I am looking for a photographer to shoot with but don't really have an experience, but I do appreciate I want to work with a top photographer, hence my e-mail! I would really love to shoot fashion, mainly High Street, and maybe some lingerie too. Would you consider shooting with me? I would also be happy to look at anything that you would want to shoot

for your portfolio."

- If the response comes back negative, then ask for feedback on your potential as a model.

Once you get more confident, and get a couple of good shoots and your belt, you can start being a little bit more pushy without being rude. For example, you can ask to do specific themes with hair and make up artists.

The better quality your portfolio, the better quality photographers you will attract and eventually they will start coming to you rather than you going to them. That's a very good feeling. I have around 10 requests per week from models to shoot them, I had to beg when I first started. I make sure that my photos are the best they can be. Unfortunately, I just don't have the time so have to turn many down, but I do try and give feedback on their portfolio and any bad habits that they may be getting into.

In the next post, I will discuss what to expect during the shoot, how to maximise your time and how to create a team with the photographer in the studio or location.

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