**Tender for revised format Master Photography**

Icon Publications Ltd propose a continuation of the existing arrangement under which MPA pays a monthly zero rated block subscription, to include postage and all other VAT rated services charged to Icon, rechargeable to MPA within the zero rated subscription envelope.

*Frequency*

In the last three years we’ve encountered problems with the timing of MPA key events through the year, bi-monthly frequency, and the timing of conflicting industry events. Examining the loss of advertising revenue caused by this, we would like to propose **a new quarterly frequency for the magazine plus one extra Masters of Photography annual** (five issues a year).

**The charge made to MPA would therefore be reduced for 2017/18 to £30,000 net from £36,000 - an immediate saving of £6,000.**

We would expect to make this up through advertising, as a result of better timing of each issue.

This is the substance of the tender and anything else is in the following notes.

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Reasons for the change to 4X +1 per year: the end of the Graphistudio photo books given out at the awards forced us to bring the magazine Annual forward by 3-4 weeks, disrupting advertiser schedules. Instead of gaining extra support, this has actually lost us revenue and increased costs. It has saved MPA any payment to Graphistudio but we can not continue with it. Because the winners can not be revealed, and we have only 1-2 weeks in which to receive the information and prepare the issue, no support advertising or congratulations can be included. We want MPA to arrange a sponsor for photo books, as before, leaving the magazine free to include interviews with the winners, photographs from the awards event and trade show, and advertising related to the winners. Moving the timing of the magazine in the last three years has cost us the ‘bumper issue’ revenue which in the past used to compensate for the loss-making January/February issue.

We would **eliminate the Jan/Feb issue entirely**, as the SWPP Convention sucks up most available budget from our advertisers in a month which is traditionally a quiet time (we never used to publish in January). By making the Annual appear three to four weeks after the awards, we can allow full participation by the trade and a second wave of social media activity instead of the single burst which happens during the week after the awards. We will also be able to offer winners extra copies delivered directly.

The next issue to appear would then be mid February (still a difficult time) but allowing time for key trade to return from SWPP, PTO, CES Las Vegas etc and ideally timed to preview The Photography Show and WPPI both mid-March. The remaining three issues spaced from May to September would be timed to allow for key MPA events. Our early September issues have missed main A & F judging in the last two years due to changes in the timing of the judging, and it has only been possible to include ‘best’ title winners in the Annual. A late September issue should be able to catch A & F portfolios (and, in 2018, we could delay to allow inclusion of photokina reports - it is late, Sept 25-30th but press day should be 24th - I had to miss this show in 2016 for the second time only in 43 years because of MPA’s timing and deadlines).

*Timing and primary content:*

**No 1 (1st quarter 2017/18) - early May 2017.**

Content deadline April 26th, to press May 3rd, mailing before May 12th.

To include: the main Awards announcement and branding, with timeline and categories and possible support for some sponsors. New regional and national events programme with associated features and. Three photographer profiles, ideally new L/A/F but if no higher qualifications given, single pages for best L admissions. New member listing (77 joined at TPS will mean a half-page column of new members, looking much better than a short list of a dozen or so). Introduce a new regular spot with the We Train, We Mentor, We Qualify theme to report on a selected newly qualified photographer and their experience of the MPA process.

**No 2 (2nd quarter 2017/18) - mid July 2017.**

Content deadline June 30th, to press July 7th, mailing before July 14th.

Main final call for awards entry. Trade support for sponsors of all Awards categories and final event day. Early listing of guests or speakers. Profiles and listing of judges. Awards entry workflow and timeline for members, lab services etc. Photograph of trophy or medal designs.

**No 3 (3rd quarter 2017/18) - mid or late September 2017.**

Content deadline September 8th, to press September 15th, mailing before September 22nd.

Main promotion for Awards event, guest speaker/photographer, hotel and booking details. Main awards sponsor support. Winter events programme for regions. Special feature on MPA strapline We Train, We Mentor, We Qualify using development of this which is expected from the board during the year - with an emphasis on using the Awards day to make personal contact and get on board.

**Annual - late November 2017.**

Content deadline November 3rd, to press November 10th, mailed by November 17th.

On sale to the public, larger pagination, similar to last two annuals though hopefully with changes to winners and categories we will have a UK not overseas cover photo. The timing will allow the return of potential past content like Graphistudio’s special congratulations spread highlighting all the winners using their service, and other labs, equipment and materials suppliers to be able to make references.

**No 4 (4th quarter 2017-18) - mid February 2018.**

Content deadline February 2nd, print deadline February 9th, mailing by February 16th.

The Photography Show and WPPI previews, MPA and/or trade sponsored speaker profiles. Membership drive and trade partner drive (this is the time of year when the trade allocates budgets, though they are often decided in Dec-Jan to be allocated before March it’s possible to secure support - after WPPI/TPS funds are depleted and it’s not a good time to approach the market generally).

*Comments on key pojnts given in request to tender*

*These are the points sent to me (the point is in bold, my response in plain):*

**We are looking to deliver a membership communication that performs for the organisation and its members.**

Of course. This is stating the obvious. You would hardly stand up and say you wanted one which did not perform for the organisation and its members. Since the organisation in this case IS its members it is not comparable a government and its citizens, where the interests of both may be opposed - or a corporation and its employees (ditto), or a supplier and their customers (also may be in conflict). So this point is not trying to say the magazine should avoid being biased towards only serving the organisation, or only its members. The two are the same or there’s something seriously wrong with MPA.

We will continue to serve one master - MPA. Not any individual director, or any group, or the trade, or Cherubs as a priority (etc). That has always been my policy and it will continue, and I should not need to outline it.

**Share content on all channels that a member wants to engage**

This is not our responsibility and is so open-ended it means little. For many reasons it is not a good idea to cherry-pick articles and publish them through other media, as the BJP found out with the conflict between web pages and on-line versions, apps and print media. What we do is to allow any member (or trade) featured or mentioned in the magazine to publish this freely, subject to any conflicts of copyright which are rare. We provide PDFs, JPEGs etc on demand any we don’t charge the trade to quote from articles - provided MPA and the magazine are properly credited, and links published, we allow all beneficial uses.

**Increase membership retention and acquisition**

That is not our role. That is the job of the CEO working through the regions, trade partners and MPA activities. We already know the magazine is a primary factor in membership retention, and hope we take some credit for that.

Should we use the option to modify the magazine, either for special editions or generally, to go on public sale it could be a channel for membership acquisition over the long term by increasing awareness. This would not be a primary role, but a useful effect of wider exposure which would cost MPA nothing.

**Provide value offerings to our trade partners**

We already do. You can not, however, have something for nothing. When it was common for an advertiser to agree to a £10k annual spend it was appropriate to assign a team to visit their premises, do interviews, produce photographs. When £3k became more common I would do so myself (Loxley still use the photo of their front reception I took for the magazine after they moved to Cumbernauld - from the full feature showing the whole facility). But now that £1,200 to £1,800 has become a more common gross annual spend for a trade partner we simply can’t do this.

Instead we have to do what we can. I do not understand the full significance of the term ‘value offerings’ as we certainly never aim to offer ‘no-value’ or poor value. If you mean ‘added value’ over and above spend, we do. We are always putting in editorial, sometimes unwillingly, to support advertising which we would not get at all unless we agree to print such-and-such a news item or devote an entire feature to some project or photography associated with a lab, or whatever. Sometimes this is directly contrary to normal editorial control, especially when MPA itself is behind the pressure to do so.

It has to be clear that MPA can not give, to a trade partner, what that partner has in past spent on advertising space; nor should MPA attempt to give to a company which has not previously advertised, and does not intend to, space in the magazine by pressure on the editor. This is extremely unfair to those loyal long-term supporters and advertisers who see a new competitor given substantial free marketing. We have a principle to uphold - we treat, equally and fairly, all those who participate equally and fairly. We will always give a newcomer the benefit of the doubt with genuine news space, at no cost.

If they persist in trying to blag free space over a long period, without any economic benefit to the magazine, we simply ignore them. If they provide economic benefit to MPA but not to the magazine we give them editorial coverage in the context of that benefit, in line with assisting MPA.

**A redesign and content refresh to embody the MPA’s values**

Never encountered anyone, regardless of their experience in running a publication, who didn’t think they could redesign or refresh content. It usually lasts a couple of issues. I’ve done 30 years of magazines (company founded April 1987) with regular redesigns and updates to content of many titles, and also without the usual seasonal repetition, and without overlap, sometimes up to 30 editions per year in total.

If the MPA’s values (not defined) are expressed in We Train, We Mentor, We Qualify then we have a clear structure for future content which can add more features that are instructional (training), more that are critical and advisory (mentoring). We already print the results of qualifications.

**A comprehensive time line and flat plan for the magazine**

I have set out the plans above. We do not use flatplans as such now, as the production program creates a thumbnail version of the magazine as we go along. It is common to shuffle pages radically to avoid clashes of advertising or content positions, or even just bad juxtapositions of images. The final flatplan is often not known until the day before press.

I am happy to provide a typical flatplan showing how we position fixed pages like contents, masthead, news, regions and how we usually place other items, along with notes on the provision and value of cover positions, early pages, FMRHP, solus, spreads, following RHPs and other necessary planning. I am not sure who to, but it might help a non-professional understand how magazine production works and why certain things are undesirable or impractical, or result in lost revenue.

**Any added value on offer to the MPA**

We already provide Cameracraft printed copies free of charge to all Associates and Fellows in the UK. We did try to extend this to LMPA in mid-2016 but it was simply too expensive, so we only provide access to a digital edition.

MPA in the past regular used to organise meetings for which I would charge a PR client around £500 a day. These were entirely free and resulted in many events and activities, for example, the creation of the naming and identity for both the Ten-2-One and True Colours training. Those were my concepts for describing what MPA told me they wanted to do, along with the editorial and branding. This has never cost MPA anything, and helped me greatly by giving me a full understanding of how best to promote future activities.

However, the new management does not need any assistance or input and I’m happy with that. I have always offered added value.

**Keep within our £36k budget**

My proposal reduces the budget to £30k.

*Note on Trade Partners*

As a result of MPA policy or relationships with the trade, we have lost some previously committed advertisers. This has been one of the worst aspects of the last couple of years, losing advertisers any one of whom might be worth as much through the year as MPA’s entire support for one edition, across the board. Very few advertisers ever feel they have been let down or sidelined by Icon Publications Ltd. They may be disappointed in reader response and circulation figures, but they are hardly ever unhappy because they think we have favoured their rivals or have a closer relationship with them. However, this is how MPA has been viewed by some former advertisers, and it’s bad for me as they tend to pull out of Cameracraft (f2 as was) as well if they were in both, or occasionally crossed over. It’s really important that MPA spreads the love around a bit and tries to rebuild committed support from companies like Calumet, Colorworld, GF Smith, and Dunns - while avoiding risk to existing relationships, and taking up the opportunity to interact once again with the camera makers.

The Trade Partner scheme under which a payment of £1500 (+) secured specific magazine coverage, web space etc has now ended as far as we know, and we have not invoiced MPA for any further trade partner involvement, or allocated the £500 space for this (normally, two editorial support pages plus six 1/16th page horizontal strip header/footer page banners, through the year).

April 4th 2017

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