

Expanding your business potential as a Flip-Pal affiliate

By Mary Danielsen: Documented Legacy

Twenty months ago I had no idea how a portable scanner could help me grow my business, raise my visibility within the local business community, elevate my expertise in personal historian services and grow my business with a niche market. I'm still growing.

My love for the Flip-Pal® mobile scanner grew from two initial factors: its portability and ability to help reduce my business risk and liability.

As a personal historian I help families and companies document their legacy through storytelling and the organization of personal archives. Whether they want to get organized, write a book, compile family stories, start a foundation, prepare for an anniversary or begin a documentary project, one of first steps in the process is bringing photos, records, documents and old books out of hiding.

I've heard war stories from other personal historians and memoir writers about the risk factor of taking someone's personal photos with you to scan them at home. The client dies and the family is mad you have possession of all their favorite images. Something happens to you, your car, your home, etc. Name any worst case scenario and it's probably happened to a personal historian.

As a matter of habit I prefer to scan on location to reduce my risk and liability. Otherwise, I suggest a client buys a scanner and does that step themselves. They like having the option.

My clients appreciate seeing me work at their kitchen table for hours, sometimes stopping to write notes or ask questions. I also let them try using it and open that discussion of how easy it is to use for people with limited mobility or technological skills. I discuss how the Flip-Pal scanner can help with everything from craft projects, to downsizing, family preservation and, even, estate planning.

By introducing the scanners to clients in the beginning of the process, I not only introduce a product I resell up front, but I gain their trust by telling them that I will scan on location at their home or office to eliminate the risk factors. (What if something happens to me or the images on the way back to the office.) I also immediately discuss backup systems with them. If these images are so important to a project then they should be duplicated. They keep originals. I scan a set and upload it to Dropbox and a flash drive, suggesting the Picture Keeper 8.

Sometimes the Flip-Pal mobile scanner is just one tool in my toolbox of scanning and archiving equipment. It is, however, always the first tool I use. It's the piece of equipment I take with me on every business call and the one I always have in the car. Don't underestimate the value of bringing one with you to networking events.

I always ask clients what else can I do for them? I want them to think about what else they'll need down the road, whether they need my services or would like to buy a Flip-Pal scanners to start other projects in their extended family. Keep me in mind, I say.

Growing forward

By way of example, in 2012 some 15 percent of my business came from photography and scanning. I was happy. People who knew what I did called me to help them with a project.

I test drove my first Flip-Pal mobile scanners after Hurricane Sandy hit the East Coast in October 2012 and I volunteered for a few months rescuing washed-up images. I was hooked. I will talk to any one anywhere and at any time about these great devices. I simply enjoy working with it.

The more I talk about the product, the more enthused people become about how they could use the scanner in their home, even if they hire me to do the work.

In 2013 some 29 percent of my business came from people or companies that knew I also did scanning, archiving and photography. Half of that business was up selling on a current job. The other half was new business that came from people who heard about what I was doing. I became a reseller of Flip-Pal mobile scanners in the fall of 2013. These totals do not reflect my year-end sales.

Much of my business growth occurred as a result of adding personal archiving to my menu of services and promoting it through networking, public relations and social media updates.

By way of example, when I'm scanning old photos with a family and realize that they don't have a current group photo without someone missing, I'll offer up my photography services. If a family that is at the beginning stages of settling an estate and everyone is arguing over the scrapbooks and old photos, I often my scanning services, suggesting that we bring 2-4 scanners in and make it a family event. End of argument. When a business owner says he has a storage area filled with old newspaper clippings and awards, I'll suggest we show up with all the scanning gear to get it organized and duplicated. (Hint: Flip-Pal scanners can scan awards hung on the wall.)

My largest scanning job last year came from a client who read a status update on LinkedIn about Flip-Pal scanners and called me for what would be a seven-month project. I will be returning for smaller projects later this year.

Becoming an affiliate created a ripple effect on my business in that it enabled me to enhance my media relations outreach by creating timely topics on personal preservation issues, and created speaking engagements on disaster preparedness. Last month I was awarded the Voice of Business Award for a new or unique business by the Burlington County Regional Chamber of Commerce in New Jersey.

People appreciate when you can give them ideas on how to use a product in more than one way. I am still test driving all the ways I can use my Flip-Pal scanner, from genealogy to estate settlements to compiling stock photo scans. As I learn, I share these ideas with clients. If they purchased a scanner from me I want to empower them to use it, built their confidence, and ignite their creativity.

Happy clients tell other people.

If you're thinking about growing your own business by selling Flip-Pal scanners and accessories, think about your market. Ask yourself these questions:

- What else do you do?
- What else can you provide for people or businesses?
- How does scanning, preservation and creativity fold into your business?
- In the process of working with clients, how often do they need to look for something, copy something or create something? Can you help them do this by offering Flip-Pal mobile scanners?
- Are you providing your market with ideas? Show them how to use the product, grow their project and be creative.
- Is there a season for scanning in your area?
- Would a Flip-Pal scanner help streamline your own work-flow process? For instance, if you're out in the field and need to duplicate something, but are away from your office scanners, you can Flip it. (Hint: If you're terrible at shooting crisp smart phone images then the answer is yes.)

There is definitely a niche for selling Flip-Pal mobile scanners in your market area. You just have to create it.