

The Canon AKTASHIF Program

Guidebook



A Step-by-Step Guide to Launching a Creative Business in Photography, Videography or Printing

AKTASHIF

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SECTION 1

Welcome

Welcome

Welcome to the Canon AKTASHIF Program!

The Canon AKTASHIF Program is an annual competition created by Canon to discover and develop the region's next generation of photographers, videographers, printers and creative professionals. The program helps youth launch creative careers and is open to participants ages 14-25 residing in the Middle East.

Our Mission

Creative careers are rewarding, and working for yourself is liberating. But it's hard to launch your own business, especially in a creative field.

Our mission is to support you as you embark on this exciting journey because we want you to be successful doing what you love! The exercises in this workbook are meant to help you think through the essential first steps in launching a creative business.

We're excited that you're here, and we're inspired by your passion. Let's get started!

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SECTION 2

The Canon

AKTASHIF

Program

The Canon AKTASHIF Program

How the Program Works

The Canon AKTASHIF Program is divided into four modules. Collectively, these modules lead you through the process of designing and launching a successful creative business. The first module challenges you to find your artistic voice. Modules 2-4 guide you through the process of developing a business concept, portfolio and website.

Prizes

Complete all four modules by the deadline for a chance to win the Grand Prize, which includes:

- 15,000 AED cash prize
- 15,000 AED worth of Canon products
- A year-long membership at a local entrepreneurship incubator where you can launch your business

In addition, Canon will select 12 module winners throughout the year who will each receive an award and an M50 Canon camera. Winners will also be featured on Canon's social media channels.

How to Participate

Simply complete the four modules in this workbook and submit your work through the [program website](#).

You can join the competition midway through. As long as you complete all four modules by the competition deadline, you will be eligible to compete for the Grand Prize. Please check the program website for this year's dates.

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SECTION 3

The
Modules

The Modules

This section includes the four modules as well as activities that will support you in completing the modules.

Module 1

Discover your creative voice! In this module, you explore the relationship between your culture and your creative aspirations.

Exercises include:

- Personal History
- Values Exploration
- Finding Your Passion
- Your Voice
- Pulling It All Together

Module 2

Start your creative journey! In this module, you develop a business plan.

Exercises include:

- Your Product or Service
- Your Market Size
- Your Marketing Plan
- Your Competition
- Your Operations
- Your Finances

Module 3

Pursue your passion! In this module, you put together a portfolio.

Exercises include:

- Building Your Portfolio
- Soliciting Feedback

Module 4

Unleash your creative career! In this module, you design and build a website.

Exercises include:

- Wireframe
- Web Copy
- Your Website

Module 1: Discover Your Creative Voice

Your Task

Artists of every medium - from photographers to videographers to printers - draw from their cultures when creating their work. At some point in time, every thoughtful, creative professional reflects on his or her heritage to understand where he or she came from. So the question is: What makes you, you?

This module challenges you to explore your cultural roots and develop your own creative voice. What stories, messages and lessons from your culture do you want to bring to your work and your creative career?

Module Rationale

Knowing who you are is an essential step in the process of launching your creative career.

Creative careers are rewarding. Those who are lucky enough to succeed at creative careers find their work meaningful and fulfilling. They will tell you that it is a privilege to support themselves by doing what they love.

Yet, creative paths aren't always easy to pursue. Every creative professional encounters challenges in his or her career, and you will too. Regardless of the specific challenges you face, knowing who you are, what your values are and why your work matters to you will help you overcome anything. Your cultural roots can serve as a compass if ever you feel lost and as fuel if ever you feel stuck.

Deliverables

Upload the following deliverable through the submission form on the [program website](#):

- Two-minute video in which you discuss the relationship between your culture and your creative aspirations and share examples of your creative work. (Video Format: YouTube link)

Submissions in both English and Arabic will be accepted.

Judging Criteria

A panel of photographers, printers and other creative professionals will assess the strength of your artistic voice and technical abilities based on the following criteria:

- **Content:** How well does the submission express the relationship between your culture and your creative aspirations?
- **Technical Quality and Craftsmanship:** How well does the submission demonstrate your mastery of photography, videography and/or printing techniques (e.g., proper exposure, burning, dodging, color, etc.)?
- **Design Quality:** How well does the submission demonstrate your mastery of the principles of design (e.g., composition, use of unusual angles, negative space, etc.)?
- **Communicative Properties and Emotional Impact:** How well does the submission demonstrate your visual storytelling abilities?
- **Artistic Voice:** How strong and unified is your story as a whole?

Personal History

This exercise will help you think about where you come from. Reflect on each question below to start writing the story of who you are.

Family

What stories or parts of your family history have influenced who you are?

Geography

Where do you live and how has your city, country or region shaped you?

Ethnicity and Religion

What role do your ethnicity and religion play in your worldview?

Intersectionality

How do these aspects of your personal history and identity come together to make your perspective and life experience unique?

Values Exploration

This exercise will help you think about what you care about. Explore the list of values below. Circle your top three values.

Values List

Adaptability

Freedom

Loyalty

Belonging

Forgiveness

Optimism

Community

Generosity

Peace

Compassion

Gratitude

Persistence

Cooperation

Grit

Playfulness

Courage

Growth

Service

Creativity

Health

Spirituality

Curiosity

Humility

Trustworthiness

Dependability

Inclusion

Other:

Discipline

Integrity

Energy

Kindness

Equity

Learning

Family

Love

Values at Work

How are these values reflected in your life and creative work?

Finding Your Passion

This set of questions will help you identify what you love doing.

Flow

When do get so lost in the flow of an activity that you lose track of time?

Gifts

What activities or skills come most naturally to you?

Conversation

When you're talking, what subjects or topics make you light up?

Dream Job

If you never had to think about how you would make money, how would you spend your time?

Your Voice

Artists and creative professionals have the power to change the world. This exercise will help you identify how you want to use your voice.

Issues

What issues do you care about? (Social, political, economic, etc.)

Changes

What change do you want to see in the world?

Perspective

What do you notice about the world that others sometimes miss or see differently?

Your Voice

What about your unique perspective do you want to share with others?

Pulling It All Together

Based on the four previous exercises in this section, think about where you come from, what you care about and how you want to use your voice. Then, create a representation of who you are as an artist. You can use words or imagery.

What makes you, you?

Module 2: Start Your Creative Journey

Your Task

If you want to become a successful photographer, videographer or printer, you'll need a business concept. What value, services or products will you offer your customers? How will you attract and retain customers? What will your expenses be, and where will your funding come from? How will your business be structured? In short, you need to show how your business will remain financially sustainable over time. This module challenges you to define your business' objectives and strategies for achieving them.

Your business concept should be two to three pages long. It should include the following seven sections:

- **Product:** The product or service that you will offer
- **Market:** The size and demographics of your target market
- **Marketing Plan:** Your plan for marketing your services and reaching customers
- **Competition:** Research on your competition's strengths and weaknesses
- **Operations:** What you will need in order to operate your business
- **Finances:** How you will track income and expenses
- **Validation:** Data suggesting that the business will be successful

Module Rationale

Having a business concept is an essential step in the process of launching your creative career.

A business concept is a document that describes the most basic parts of a business: what you're selling, who you're selling to and how you plan to achieve your business goals. Committing your ideas to paper is a clarifying process. Writing a business concept will help you make decisions, create an action plan and even come up with new ideas. But a business concept isn't just for you. Business concepts are also necessary if you want to pitch your business to investors or explain your business to future employees.

Deliverables

Upload the following deliverables through the submission form on the [program website](#):

- 2-3 page business concept for your creative career (File Format: PDF)
- Two-minute video pitch of your business (Video Format: mp4)

Submissions in both English and Arabic will be accepted.

Judging Criteria

A panel of photographers, printers and other creative professionals will assess the strength of your business concept based on the following criteria:

- **Product or Service:** How compelling is your mission statement and your description of the value you offer?
- **Market:** Have you documented your market size and demographics?
- **Marketing Strategy:** Do you have an effective plan for reaching customers and achieving your sales goals?
- **Competition:** Have you researched your competitors' strengths and weaknesses? Do you have a competitive advantage?
- **Operations:** Have you considered what you will need in order to operate your business (e.g., staffing, equipment, space, etc.)?
- **Finances:** Do you have an organized system for tracking expenses and income?
- **Validation:** What data, tests or other evidence have you collected suggesting that the business will be successful?
- **Usefulness:** Is your business concept going to help you launch your business?
- **Sustainability:** Does your business concept ensure that your business will achieve ongoing success?

Your Product or Service

Great products and services are desirable, feasible and profitable. This exercise will help you define your product or service.

One-Sentence Summary

How would you describe your product or service in one sentence?

Desirability

Do people actually want your product or service? What problem are you solving or need are you filling for people?

Feasibility

Do you have the skills and resources to turn your idea into a business? If so, what are they? If not, what do you need to learn or acquire first?

Profitability

How will your business make money?

Your Market Size

This exercise will help you identify the number people who are likely to buy your product or service and the potential value of that market.

Target Customer

Who is your product or service for? (e.g., age bracket, location, etc.)

Market Size and Market Share

How many target customers are there? Realistically, what percentage of the total market do you expect to reach?

Transactions Per Year

Approximately how often will they be purchasing your product?

Market Value

Given the market share and profit per transaction, what is the total value of your market?

Your Marketing Plan

This exercise will help you plan how you will reach your potential customers and what you will say to them.

Key Messages

What are the key messages that you want to convey to your target customers?

Channels

What channels will you use to reach them?

Your Competition

This exercise, called a SWOT analysis, will help you evaluate your competition.

Strengths

What does your product or service do better than competitors?

Weaknesses

What do competitors do better than you?

Opportunities

Can you provide more value, reach a new market or otherwise improve?

Threats

What could prevent you from achieving success?

Your Operations

This exercise will help you identify what it will take to operate your business.

Vision and Goals

What is your vision for your business in three years? How will you measure your progress toward that vision?

Tasks and Process

What will you need to do in order to reach your goals?

Resources

Identify the resources (people, equipment, space, knowledge) that you will need to achieve that goal.

Timeline

What are your intermediary goals? When do you expect to reach them?

Your Finances

This exercise will help you think about the financial side of your business.

Start-up Expenses

Brainstorm a list of all of the costs of starting your business (e.g., marketing, equipment, etc.). Calculate the total initial investment required.

Monthly Expenses

Brainstorm a list of all the ongoing costs of running your business.

Monthly Income

Brainstorm a list of all the ways your business will generate income.

Profitability

Subtract your monthly expenses from your monthly income. Do you expect your business to be profitable?

Module 3: Pursue Your Creative Passion

Your Task

The most successful entrepreneurs are innovative. They understand who their competitors are and what they do well. Then, they figure out how to meet their customers' needs even better than their competitors. What makes you unique? How will you keep pushing the boundaries of your chosen field? This module challenges you to demonstrate the ways in which the creative product or service that you offer is innovative. Potential customers have options; show us why they should hire you.

Module Rationale

Creating a portfolio is an essential step in the process of launching your creative career.

Lots of videographers shoot music videos. Lots of photographers take portraits of children. Lots of printers print business cards. When potential customers are deciding whether or not to hire you, they want to know what makes you different from your competitors. A stunning portfolio might be the thing that makes the difference. If you can show how your product or service is unique and valuable, then you'll be in a better position to sell your work.

Deliverables

Upload the following deliverables through the submission form on the [program website](#):

- Portfolio of your work that showcases what is innovative about your work (File Formats: PDF, image file or mp4)
- Two-minute video in which you communicate what is innovative about your business (Video Format: mp4)

Submissions in both English and Arabic will be accepted.

Judging Criteria

A panel of photographers, printers and other creative professionals will assess the innovativeness of your business based on the following criteria:

- **Uniqueness:** Is your product or service different from solutions that already exist?

- **Value:** Does your product or service fulfill a real need or solve a real problem?
- **Competitiveness:** Is your product or service better than what competitors offer?

Building Your Portfolio

These questions will help you build a powerful portfolio.

Goal

What key messages or skills do you want your portfolio to communicate or demonstrate?

Assess Current Work

Evaluate your current work. What work will you include in your portfolio?

Identify Gaps

Taken as a whole, do your existing pieces achieve the goal that you identified above? If not, what additional work do you need to create?

Create New Work

Come up with a plan for the new works that you intend to create.

Soliciting Feedback

It's hard to be objective about your own work. Share your portfolio with people you trust. Ask them for their honest feedback and record their answers below.

First Impression

How would you describe the work in my portfolio? Can you tell what my product or service is based on my portfolio?

Positives

What is working well about my portfolio? What should I keep?

Persuasiveness

Would you hire me based on this portfolio? Why or why not?

Changes

What could I improve? Are there pieces that I should add or remove?

Module 4: Unleash Your Creative Career

Your Task

This competition is about your dreams for your future career. What do you want to do? Who do you want to become? How will you tell that story to the world? This module challenges you to create a website for your creative business. Your website should describe your business, showcase your best work and entice customers to hire you.

Module Rationale

Creating a website for your business is an essential step in the process of launching your creative career.

What's the first thing you do when you hear about a new business? If you're like most people, you look it up online!

When people hear about your business and want to learn more, they'll search for you online too. If you don't have a professional web presence, you'll be losing out on a lot of opportunities. A great website can help you convert prospects into paying customers.

Deliverables

Upload the following deliverable through the submission form on the [program website](#):

- A website for your business (Submission Format: A URL)

Submissions in both English and Arabic will be accepted.

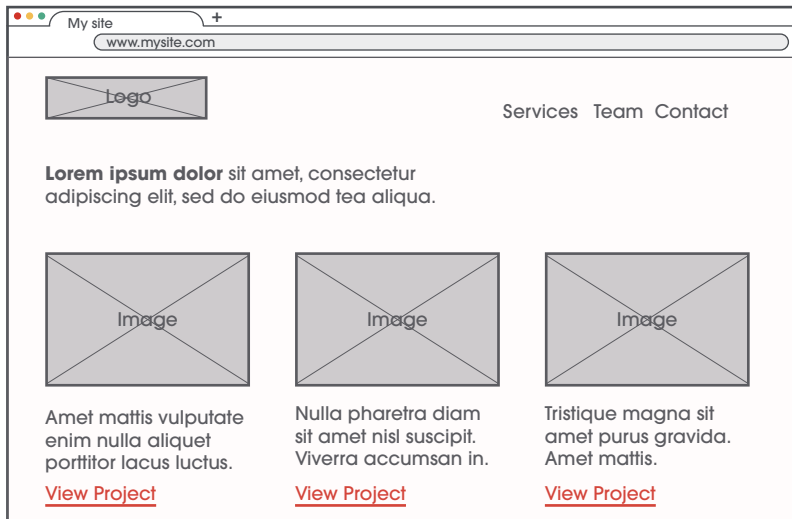
Judging Criteria

A panel of photographers, printers and other creative professionals will assess your business website based on the following criteria:

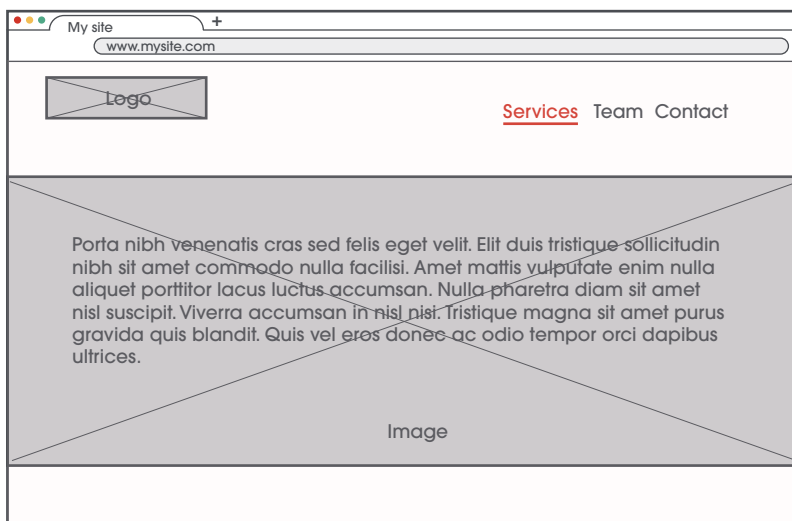
- **Professionalism:** Does the graphic design of the site (e.g., layout, font choices, color palette, etc.) communicate an overall message of expertise and authority?
- **Content:** Does the website showcase your product or service through images and language in a persuasive manner?
- **User Experience:** Is the website's navigation intuitive (e.g., working links, consistent layouts, etc.)?

Wireframe

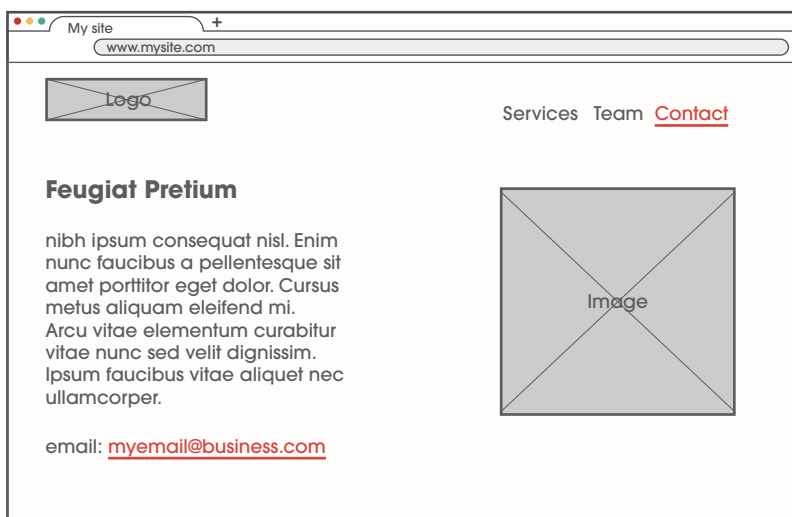
A wireframe is a two-dimensional representation of a website or digital program like the one below. The exercise on the following page will help you create one.



Home Page



Services



Contact

Wireframe

This exercise will help you plan out your website before you start building it.

Pages

Brainstorm a list of the pages that you will include on your website.

Goals

Identify the goal of each page from your perspective and from your customers' perspective. What is each page supposed to accomplish?

Flow

Outline how users will navigate from page to page.

Wireframe

Build a wireframe of your website. You can sketch this out by hand or use software such as [Balsamiq](#), [UXPin](#), [Wireframe.cc](#) or [InVision](#).

Ask yourself the following questions:

- What content is needed on each page to support my goals?
- What is the most intuitive way to organize this content?

Web Copy

Use this page to draft the text that you will include on each page of your website. Pages might include: "About Me," "Services," "Portfolio," etc.

Page 1 Title:

What text will you include on Page 1?

Page 2 Title:

What text will you include on Page 2?

Page 3 Title:

What text will you include on Page 3?

Page 4 Title:

What text will you include on Page 4?

Your Website

The final step is building your website. Many platforms for building websites exist. They make it very easy and affordable to build a website. Explore the options below and select the one that will work best for you.

Website Platforms

- [Pixpa](#)
- [Wix](#)
- [Squarespace](#)
- [WordPress](#)
- [Format](#)
- [Weebly](#)
- [SmugMug](#)
- [SITE123](#)

Features

When you compare your options, here are some of the factors that you might want to consider:

- Cost
- Storage space
- Number of image uploads allowed
- Maximum image size
- E-commerce features
- Commission and transaction fees
- Integrated workflow (client proofing)
- Scheduling
- Site analytics

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SECTION 4

Additional
Resources

Additional Resources

There are lots of resources available to help you with your career. This curated list can help you get started!

Books on Entrepreneurship

- [Rework](#) by Jason Fried and David Heinemeier Hansson
- [The Lean Startup](#) by Eric Ries
- [Start With Why](#) by Simon Sinek
- [The \\$100 Startup](#) by Chris Guillebeau
- [Hooked](#) by Nir Eyal
- [Zero to One](#) by Peter Thiel
- [The Hard Thing about Hard Things](#) by Ben Horowitz
- [The E-Myth Revisited](#) by Michael Gerber
- [Mind Your Business](#) by Ilana Griffo
- [In the Company of Women](#) by Grace Bonney
- [This is Marketing](#) by Seth Godin

Articles on Starting a Creative Business

- [A Creative's Guide to Starting a New Business](#) (Fast Company)
- [So You Want to Be an Entrepreneur?](#) (Harvard Business Review)
- [Startup Success Secrets](#) (Stanford Business Review Insights)

Podcasts and Videos on the Business Side of Photography

- [In the Studio With Canon](#)
- [The Business of Photography](#)
- [PhotoBiz Xposed](#)
- [Six Figure Photography](#)
- [Full Time Photographer](#)
- [Beyond the Image](#)
- [The Self Employed Life](#)
- [Canon AKTASHIF on YouTube](#)

Online Photography Forums and Social Networks

- [Flickr](#)
- [500px](#)
- [Instagram](#)
- [EyeEm](#)
- [Lattice](#)
- [Behance](#)
- [Reddit \(r/photography\)](#)
- [Talk Photography](#)
- [Photography Talk](#)
- [The Photo Forum](#)
- [Photo.net](#)
- [Photography on the Net](#)
- [DPRreview](#)