

DREAMS ARE NEVER SMALL

Starting a business is one of the most courageous things a person can do in their life. It is an undertaking that literally defines the words dedication, time, blood, sweat and tears. Years ago, before I was a filmmaker, I owned a small art gallery in New York. I'll never forget the elation and fear I felt when I got the keys to my first storefront. I wasn't thinking about money, I was thinking about dreams coming true.

In a word, I was *thrilled*.

But I soon realized that hanging that first painting on the stark white wall was only Act I of a rapidly unfolding emotional narrative that would draw me into the heart of my own personal darkness.

Anxious.

In Act II the stakes rose quickly. It was no longer about me spending forty-five minutes leveling each painting. My goal was to pursue the artists that would define my brand while advancing theirs. I now had an employee that I was paying to hang the artwork. Unbeknownst to her, the commission check from that sale was going to be her salary.

Sold.

It took a grit that I, nor the occasional naysayer didn't realize that I had. But over time, Alleged Gallery became successful. As my private narrative arced into its third victorious act, I knew that I had accomplished far more than building a successful business. I had become someone for whom I and the naysayers felt deep,

Respect.

It is this heartfelt journey from self-doubt to self-respect and everything in between that forms the undercurrent to all dreams being realized, that I want to capture in this spot.

I believe that we have an amazing opportunity with each of our protagonists to capture a deeply saturated snapshot of their personal experience as business owners. Loosely working within the cinematic three-act structure, I want to draw our viewers into the inner thoughts and perceptions of our business owners.

Each shot, when combined with our sole proprietor's singular word, must feel like a visual haiku – testifying to volumes in intimate nanoseconds. I want our audience, all dreamers, goal-makers, hard workers in their own right, to literally feel what our owners are feeling – to see their own highs, lows and struggles reflected in our on screen heroes.

We must convey these larger than life emotions, in simple highly descriptive shots that convey the sense of personal joy, frustration and ultimately profound sense of personal empowerment that these business owners have taken command of. Supporting them along this process? MetLife – a company that is both big and intimate enough to embrace all business sizes, hopes and aspirations.

MetLife is there by your side, because dreams are never small.

OUR HEROES

I envision our business owners to come across as the lead character in their own unscripted theatres. These slightly quirky, unabashed truth-tellers would tend to fall within the 25-45 year-old range.

Peppered in there would be the occasional veteran business owner. I imagine Joe, a contractor, 67. The wizened crags on his personable face communicating as much as the word that encapsulates his life story.

Forming a stark contrast to Joe would be Eliza and Sophie, early 20something, recent Oberlin grad, Millennials. These two start-ups/upstarts decided to take their love of fashion out of the pages of Vogue. They actually crowdfunded the seed money to open their own boutique. These two are so relatable and engaging that they actually got far more than the 15k originally asked for.

Then we have Margot, an honest and charismatic African-American 33 year-old. After NYU Law School, she spent five years doing discovery work for a Wall Street mega-firm. Around 2:27am about seven years ago, she realized that if she was going to be surrounded by legal documents for the rest of her life, it better be her name on the letterhead.

Of course, these archetypes are just a starting point. At this stage, we don't know which human treasures we will discover. What they all will have in common however, will be an accessibility of spirit. Our audience will be able to say, "*oh yeah... I know that one...*"; "*Honey, he's just like...*"

APPROACH & TONE

Clearly our key execution challenge is that we have a sparse amount of time to deliver a whopping narrative punch. The solution? To craft simple, beautifully composed shots that convey as much information as possible in the shortest time frame. All props and set dressing must directly support the narrative. Nothing can be wasted or frivolous. Our framings must be works of art that literally document the “sweet spot” of these diverse stories.

Take for example when we meet Buzz, our diner owner. Our lens would push into the battered, metallic order wheel as he grabs a lunch ticket, eyes to camera. Over the lunch rush din, he emotes “*sizzling*” and turns back to flip that impatient hamburger patty. We immediately get the sense that he barely has time to even say that one word.

We also need to work with pacing to compress and expand time wherever possible. Our first act’s ten seconds should be uplifting but accented with realities of hard work. Our subjects would be speaking to camera, addressing the interviewer’s question. This would then propel us into and past our midpoint, with certain key comedic moments. We would then culminate centering on crafting a true emotional connection.

Tonally, I was particularly inspired by this Verizon spot:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uQlxBKagLcw>

Clearly, this work tells a completely different story, but what carries over to MetLife, is the notion that we can express a massive amount of narrative data with in a few small bites of information. Watching this Verizon piece, you have an immediate understanding of the personalities and lifestyles of each of these car owners.

In the same manner, I would like to craft this MetLife spot as a series of living, vibrant, vocal snapshots.

“ANYTHING BUT SMALL”

Over the buzz of Chicago’s business district, we see:

On April 12th Metlife asked 100 Small Business Owners One Question....

As the urban noise drifts out of our consciousness, we hear:

Interviewer: Give us one word to describe your business...

Tsssz...Pop! We hear bacon sizzling on a nearby grill.

Buzz’s weathered left hand whips a ticket off a spinning order wheel. His right hand never breaks stride chopping a head of Romaine. Towel over one shoulder, he glances up at us for a second and says with a half a smile...

“Stressful.”

In Pasadena, peering through the opposite side of a row of basketballs, we find Russ, a Filipino sporting goods storeowner. As he meticulously arranges the display, making sure that all the curved lines and brand labels line up exactly, with a sense of approval at his handiwork, he nods...

“Precise.”

As Eliza arranges a rack of clothing and Sophie swipes up a sale on an iPad, eyes lit up, they both simultaneously yell to lens.

“Awesome.”

It’s 12:05am, and from our overhead perspective, we find attorney Margot on her 16th hour. She is completely cramped in by banker’s boxes and legal briefs, but she’s grown accustomed to the claustrophobia. Around 8pm she got tired of walking over to the coffee pot. Now it just sits next to her half-empty coffee cup. She absently reaches for a sip, as she looks up to our lens.

“24-7!”

Contractor Joe stands center frame in a hardhat on a construction site. He suddenly has to yell over the tractor that follows him into the shot.

“Heavy.”

We kick into a rapidly moving time lapse as we enter Heidi’s green architecture firm. First we see her and two assistants, then hang on, *whoa*, the number of employees, desks, and laptops quickly populate.

We can't tell if Heidi is slightly dizzy or thoroughly elated, as she tosses over her shoulder, before tending to the next fire,

"Growing."

Luis comes from a long line of Latino dental hygienists, who dreamed of him opening his own dental practice. Right now, we peek around his overhead light to see him look up at us, gleaming metal instrument in hand. With an amused smile,

"Open."

In Wichita, Chris a late 40s mechanic, pops the hood on a dusty sedan. In close up we see his oil-stained nailbeds.

"Dirty."

We match cut from Chris hands to those of Tony, a Seattle fishmonger. He proudly holds a stunning sea bass up for our inspection.

"Flawless."

Our score shifts into a more upbeat, staccato tempo.

In Tyrone's tiny, one-man recording studio, we find him adjusting the levels on a soundboard. The young artist who's paying for the session with her waitressing tips, looks on expectantly.

"Jammin' "

In Kim's private OB/GYN practice, with one hand she runs a scanner over a 5 months pregnant belly. Her other hand is on the screen which shows the fetus. She smiles and turns to us.

"Boy"

Buzzzzz... we hear a nail salon's drill, as it skillfully shapes a filled nail tip.

Helen, our Vietnamese manicurist pulls her facemask away.

"Color."

Milton, an older African-American grocer's head appears over a stack of bright oranges. He places the last one atop the pyramid.

"Fresh."

Jared buffs a pair of worn boots up to a brilliant shine, in his old-fashioned shoe repair shop. Over the sound of the buffer, he yells.

"New."

Over blue-haired Roxanne's shoulder, we watch on her desktop as a 3-D wireframe monster roars to life. One mouse click and the monster turns a scaly lime-green.

We push in to an intense close up of her quirky expression.

"Unreal."

Pulling back to take in her tiny office space, we hear our narrator, once more.

Narrator: Of all the things you may call your business.

We cut back to Eliza and Sophie. Standing in the doorway of their tiny boutique, they are part-naïve, part heroic, but 100% inspirational.

Narrator: Small isn't one of them. The right benefits package at the right price for your anything-but-small business.

We close on the title card:

MetLife

Metlife.com/anythingbutsmall

CINEMATOGRAPHY

In keeping with the overall human, emotionally connected feel of these protagonists' stories, our cinematic palette should be awash in warm tones. Given time, the vast majority of our tableau will be straightforward push ins from mediums to medium close ups.

Here and there, we would take advantage of the best opportunities to discover strong camera angles, all of which would serve to propel the drama forward. As I mentioned above, I really like the idea of having a bird's eye view of Margot, deluged with litigation documents. Or we could find ourselves looking up at Helen, our Vietnamese manicurist from the perspective of her nail drill.

As we cycle through our heroes, we would become increasingly intimate, shifting from wider mediums to tighter shots, in which we could clearly see that combination of laugh and worry lines on our dreamers' amazing faces.

THANK YOU

Thank you so much for the opportunity to present my ideas. As someone who knows first hand what it is to own their own business, every time I walk into a restaurant or swing by the corner store, I feel an immediate empathy with the person behind the counter. I would love to translate this first hand knowledge in this spot.

These are just some of my first thoughts. I'd love to sit down with you guys and chat a bit more about how we can make this spot truly incredible.