



FLIPPED STUDIO “SUCCESSFUL INNOVATOR” - NOVA

Project No. 2020-1-LT01-KA227-ADU-094751

Sofia Photography School – Art beyond limitations

Creator of the good practice, country: The photographer Miroslav Marinov, who created the company with his colleague Todor Vasilev in January 2013, Bulgaria.

Sector: Audio-visual arts

Type of business / employment: Educational institution; VET; Private sector

Achievements in CCS before the Pandemic

In January 2013, after 15 years of work in the tourism industry, Miroslav Marinov left his managerial position in a big tour agency and turned his long-standing hobby – the photography into a "profession". Together with his friend Todor Vassilev he founded the first photo studio Station 45 Photography, and a few months later the Sofia Photography School.



Photo source: <https://pixabay.com>

His photographic journey began in connection with his many travels. He is currently working as a commercial photographer, while also working on numerous personal projects.



After they created the commercial photography studio and in the process of their work, Miroslav and Todor realized that many people want and need special training in photography - something they did for fun with their relatives and friends. This is how the idea for Sofia School of Photography was born - a training center for photography, where everything happens in a modern and interesting way and the students, in addition to useful knowledge, to get an interesting experience within the course they have enrolled in.

Currently, the portfolio of Sofia Photography School consists of photography courses, practical photography workshops and photo trips. SFS offers courses such as "Introduction to Photography", "Portrait Photography", "Outdoor Photography", "Psychology of Photography" and practical workshops "Culinary Photography", "Interior Photography", "Boudoir Photography", "Timelapse Photography", etc. So far they have also organized several educational photo trips to Indonesia, Thailand, Greece and Bulgaria.



Photo source: <https://pixabay.com>

Recently, SPS also started to organize photo studios for children aged 7-13 with the aim not only to immerse the children in the vast world of photography, but also to teach them how to be safe when publishing photos in Internet and social media and how to share if something is bothering them. The workshops are organized mainly during the summer vacation and are led by a child and adolescent psychologist, a consultant in family and art therapy with extensive experience in therapeutic work with children.



Challenges faced during the Pandemic and innovative solutions to overcome them

As many other businesses and educational centers, Sofia Photography School work and services were severely affected by the national state of emergency due to the worldwide Covid-19 pandemic, declared in March 2020. All photography courses were cancelled and even now, almost two years later, the founders are still struggling to continue their work despite all difficulties and to adapt to the constantly changing restrictive measures on national level.

One of the favourite mottos of the founder of SPS, Miroslav is “The most important thing for anyone involved in photography is to keep shooting, no matter what the circumstances are.” When the first lock-down was declared on 13th March 2020, he immediately decided not to stop working, but simply to find a way to continue to organize the courses, even in a distant way. So, all courses were moved to online environment, when possible, but Miroslav was convinced that there is more that he can do. This is how he decided to start broadcasting photography lectures using SPS’s Facebook and YouTube channels absolutely for free, available to anyone interested.

Just six days after the lock-down, on 19th March 2020, was aired the first episode of the free photography lessons, live on Facebook and YouTube, with a theme “A brief history of photography. What are the events that have given photography a chance to become such a popular activity.” The video lasted for a little bit more than an hour and had more than 5000 viewers.

Alongside to the lectures with theoretical material, the online photography classes include other various activities and workshops, for example: photo contests with different themes – art photography, outdoor photography, sunsets, nature, pets; Live photo processing – using different software to process pictures sent by viewers and explaining how the features can be used; discussing photos sent by viewers – strong and weak sides, improvements of technique; QA sessions; Quick 5-minute video tips, etc.

Conditions for the innovativeness and success

At the beginning, the free online live streams with lectures dedicated to photography were planned as a fun way for the founder of the Sofia Photography School to invest the time spent at home in something useful for both him and his company. With the first few lectures, which captivated many viewers in front of the screens, he realized how many people also want to use their time to improve their skills in an easy, fun and exciting way. He started planning the lectures to be aired in a convenient time – starting from 18:30-19:00 o’clock both during business days and weekends. Apart from being aired live, the classes were also recorded and uploaded on the official YouTube channel of SPS for anyone to watch later.

At the beginning of each week, an event in Facebook was created, presented the themes that will be discussed during the week and also to check how many people will be interested to attend. During the first weeks and months the lectures were held 4 times per week – Thursday, Friday



and the weekend. Nowadays, when the measures are not so strict and some classes can be held in person, the online lectures are organized 1-2 times per week.



Photo source: <https://pixabay.com>

During each class there is a constant connection with the viewers, they have the opportunity to comment and ask questions in the comment section in Facebook and YouTube and the lecturers try to answer all of them at the end of the class. Many times the viewers are asked to suggest themes for the following lectures, topics that they are most interested to talk about and learn more.

The YouTube channel of SPS has many subscribers and more than 200 useful videos divided in separate playlists.

Source(s): <https://sofia-photography.bg/>



Self-reflection questions

1. How can a company/educational institution in the sphere of arts survive during a pandemic?
2. How can VET courses be offered in an online format? What tools/equipment is needed for this?
3. Are all VET courses/services suitable to be provided in an online format?

This good practice story is prepared by Know and Can Association