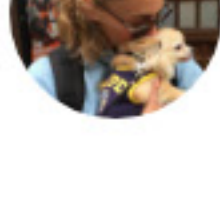


How FilterGrade Use WooCommerce to Sell Photoshop Actions For Creatives



CUSTOMER STORIES WRITTEN BY MARINA PAPE

One of the first hassles people associate with online stores is shipping and, while there are now ways to make it pain-free one surefire approach is to go with a digital product: no storage, no breakage and instantly shippable worldwide.

Mike Moloney lives in Boston, MA and started [FilterGrade](#) after having way too much fun editing photos. The idea? To sell 'high quality Photoshop actions for creatives' and a good (if abstract) idea it was. We hope you enjoy the story.



You describe FilterGrade as 'Instagram-style filters for professionals to use in Photoshop' – how did you happen upon the idea?

When starting FilterGrade I was a seller on Envato. I sold digital assets ranging from powerpoint templates to flyer designs. It was more of an exploratory period as I began to learn more about entrepreneurship and design.

Of those assets, Photoshop actions were my most popular and I loved making them. A friend suggested I try to go it on my own. Reluctant, but curious, I decided to try it.

Are you one of those serial entrepreneurs or was this a first time thing?

Before FilterGrade I worked at a few design blogs and freelanced in my free time. This is my first big entrepreneurial project though.

Post lightbulb moment, in terms of assessing need for your offering you wrote about how you established your MVP using marketplaces and without spending a dime? Tell us about this.

After the initial concepts, I just started creating products. It took around a month, but monetarily speaking there was no investment up front. I already had Photoshop and the skills necessary to create the actions.

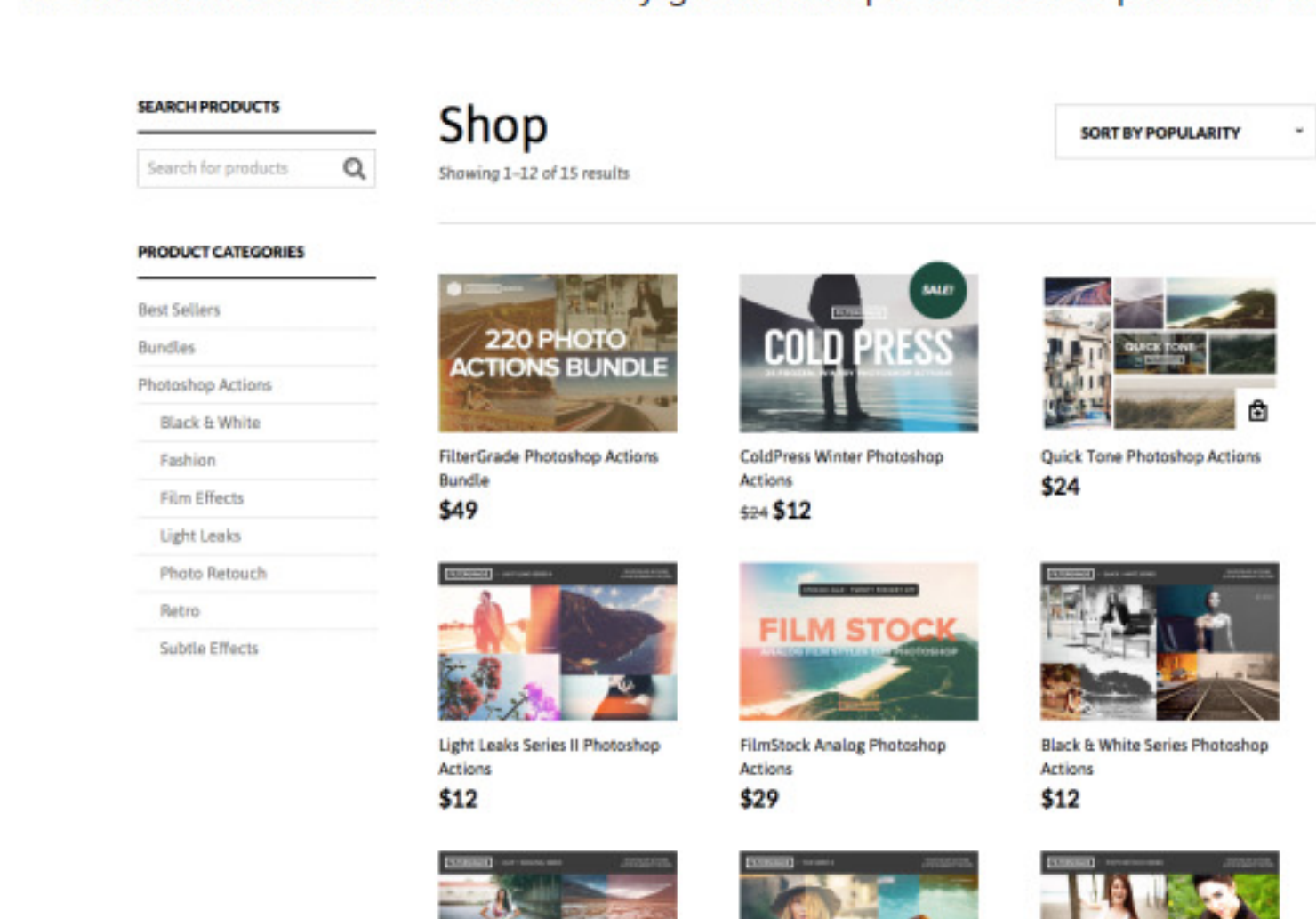
From that point I soft-launched on [CreativeMarket](#), a phenomenal marketplace, and began learning more of how I could improve our products.

The ability to get feedback fast is what I love about [marketplaces](#). In 3 days we had our first customer. After a month we had 20-30 customers and valuable feedback. With customer input I learned what filters to build next and how to make them more efficient.

Take for example our Play-All feature. This enables you to play an entire set of actions in all of 1-2 minutes. You can see it briefly in [this video demo](#). After a few emails from customers saying it was hard to find the right effect, the idea for it popped into my head.

Rather than playing 20 actions individually and trying to find the perfect effect, why not play them all at once?

This early feedback would've been harder to garner from a new site without an audience. CreativeMarket was crucial to our early growth and product development for that reason.



It sounds like you were pretty much a one-man band, did you build the website yourself? Did you have much experience with WordPress?

While I did mainly undertake FilterGrade by myself, I had a ton of amazing mentors who helped me along the way. The friend who started it all was [Adam](#) from [FlyerHeroes](#). He gave me the push to start and has helped me on a weekly, sometimes daily basis, since.

There were also plenty of other people who helped. If I could name all of them I would. Here are a few though: [Tapha Ngum](#), [Derek Stevenson](#), [Tomas Laurinavicius](#), [Ian Barnard](#), [Dustin Lee](#). Thanks to all the other unnamed heroes who helped me get started.

The site itself is a combination of a WordPress theme, some customizations, and several plugins. I don't have the technical knowledge it takes to build a site from scratch.

Why WooCommerce?

Good question. I spent a few weeks searching for the right eCommerce solution to fit my needs. There are so many options!

Ultimately it came down to EasyDigitalDownloads and WooCommerce. Both great choices. WooCommerce had more themes available and was easier for me to implement, so I went with it.

And may we say what a great choice. Tell us about the building of FilterGrade, any specific challenges?

The challenge I faced starting out was discovering the right types of filters to develop. I knew that a good amount of people seemed to enjoy retro and vintage styles, but I wanted to create a broad range of effects for a broad range of uses. As we've grown, it's been easier to figure this out.

Now the challenge comes down to increasing the efficiency of our products. Keeping them up to date with Photoshop, speeding up processes, and improving the effects.

The Play-All feature helps with the speed and usability side. I'm now working on improving documentation to make the products easier to understand.

Which extensions are you using? And if you could take only one extension with you to a desert island...

For WordPress I enjoy using [WooCommerce](#) (obviously), [Jetpack](#) for stats, [SumoMe](#) and [OptinMonster](#) for email, and recently [AffiliateWP](#) for our affiliate program. Coincidentally, that is made by the guys from EasyDigitalDownloads. 🙄

For WooCommerce extensions I am only using one or two. My absolute favorite that just launched by someone you guys may be familiar with here at WooCommerce, is [Receiptful](#). Great little extension to make your receipts more beautiful and effective, created by [Adji](#).

Where is your key market? Have you been (or will you be) affected by VATMOSS in EU?

Our key market is only limited by their ownership of Photoshop. I've seen customers from Australia, Italy, Germany, Mexico, Canada, the United States, and plenty of other countries.

Anyone with a passion for editing their photos can benefit from our products.

I am meeting with a lawyer soon to discuss issues with VATMOSS as well as other legal details. We will most likely be affected though.

Your first hire was someone to help with your Instagram account, why?

Instagram is used by a ton of photographers and designers, so it was a no-brainer. Being the need to manually upload photos and post them (without scheduling capabilities), I struggled to keep up with it.

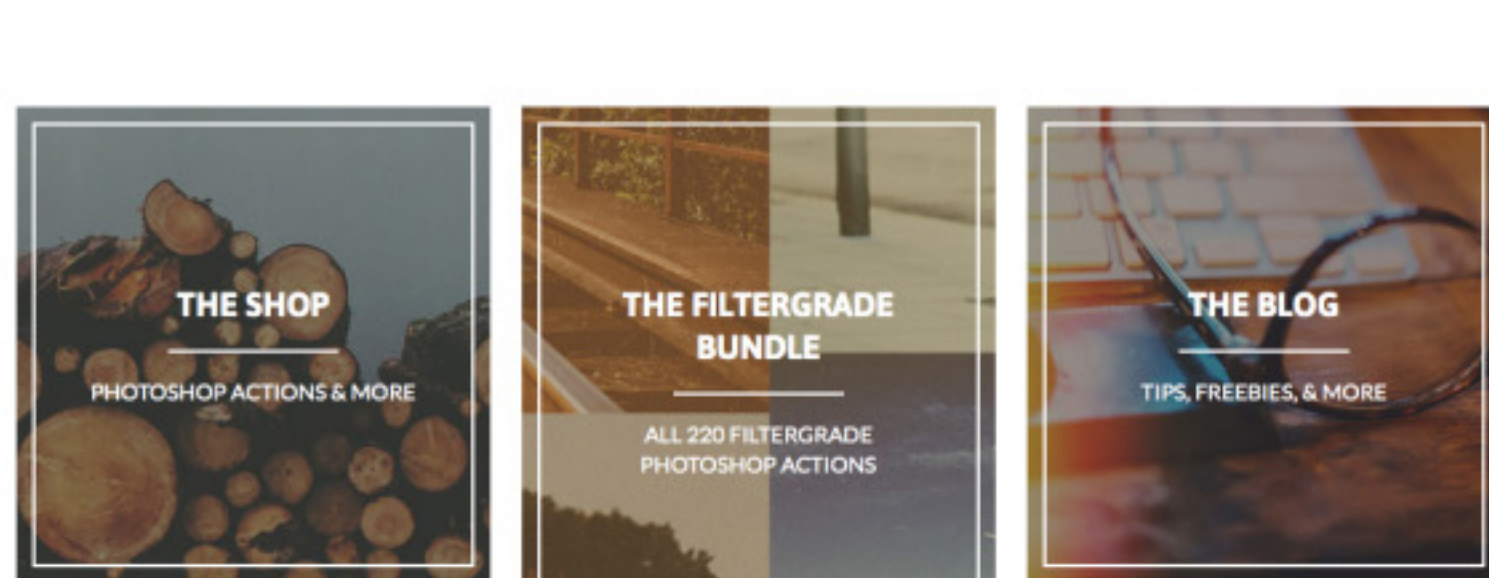
I hired Sean to help with that and he has done an incredible job. He puts in the time to understand our audience and has improved engagement along with overall growth of the account.

Talk to us about the traffic you get from social media, good conversions? Do you spend on advertising?

Social media is our fourth largest referral. It works better for engaging existing customers and users, than attracting new ones. Regardless, we have seen quite a bit of success with Facebook, specifically when we launch new products.

I frequently share customer photos and articles because I love seeing how people use the products. I think this is why we see such a high engagement there. It is more of a community for FilterGrade users, rather than another avenue of promotion.

Advertising is in the pipeline for 2015. I've dabbled with Facebook ads in the past, but haven't seen a ton of success. It is something that requires quite a bit of time, money, and focus to really succeed with. Initially at least.



FEATURED PRODUCTS & BEST SELLERS

You guys also have a newsletter and blog, how integral are they to your offering?

I can confidently say that they are the most significant aspects of the community. With our social presence coming in at a close second. The newsletter is where we share important information about FilterGrade. Not just product launches or exclusive deals. It is a place to showcase our customer's best photos, introduce new blog posts and content, and even share a freebie completely at random.

The blog is important for both growth and engagement. A large portion of our success up to this point on the site can be attributed to traffic, press, and mentions generated by content that originally appeared on the blog. I also find it a great way to further show the benefits of our products.

What's one feature you wish WooCommerce could do?

That's a tough one. I honestly haven't found any feature I don't like yet.

Being the analytics addict that I am, I would probably ask for more detailed and advanced analytics. Better information about customers and their orders would be helpful.

I also would love to make the checkout process easier for the customer. We don't really need a physical address for digital products. If WC made it easier to customize checkout for digital product based stores, that would be awesome.

And finally, picking favourites is like choosing children but which of the FilterGrade products gets pride of place in your heart?

I'm a huge fan of light leaks and analog photography, so I have to go with FilmStock. No question.

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Thanks to Mike for taking the time to chat to us! Reach out to marina@woocommerce.com if you've got a WooCommerce story worth telling.