

// Specialization’s Catch 22



A recent shoot by The Community Project, an agency with specialized expertise—and a worldview. Photo Bailey Speed

We frequently use this space to talk about the issues facing creatives. Most of those threats are external, or at least we like to think of them that way: generative AI, industry downturns, a society that’s nurturing shorter attention spans, add your fourth horseman here.

But some problems are self-inflicted. Specialization is perhaps the best example, and the most timely given the four horsemen above. It’s a nuanced deal. As we enter our careers, specialization is required of us. Getting into position to capture an image of a big wave surfer is no small feat. Having the camera skills to execute once you’re there isn’t either. Often written-word editors must let their writing languish as they dedicate themselves to the editing desk—and elevating the work of contributors. Athletes hone skills before they pitch their first films—or they should. There’s nothing wrong with that. There’s a zen-like joy to specialization when your career is your calling.

But specialization is not without risk. Take the dire wolf. That ancient canine outmuscled the gray wolf in North America. But the dire wolf was so successful at killing woodland bison that woodland bison was pretty much all it ate. That became an issue when the forests turned to prairie. The gray wolf, though, because it ate everything from fish to berries to massive ungulates, still eats today, while the dire wolf is part of the fossil record.

The moral of that Ranger Rick themed story? Specialists are exposed when environments change. Like right now for creatives and athletes. But we don’t have to starve like dire wolves and artists. As with a liberal arts education, the skills creatives and athletes earn transcend typecasts. A written word editor can bring the same knack for identifying a narrative arc to podcasts, film, and even brand positioning. The Hence Community is burgeoning with still photographers who are now also filmmakers. A mountaineer’s decision-making skills are invaluable to business.

Diversifying your portfolio doesn’t mean leaving your craft behind; it means bringing your craft-built brain to new ventures. Just because the future is growing automated does not mean the world needs more automatons.

// Show Us Something Real



THE COMMUNITY PROJECT MIGHT BE A ROADMAP FOR THE CREATIVE INDUSTRY

“Cutting marketing is a reflex reaction to a down market. That’s nothing new. But as with stocks, where smart investors spend more in tough times, investing in brand marketing during downturns sets you up for a faster and more sustainable recovery. Even if you think that conceit is up for debate, the larger reality is not: The battle for eyeballs and brand loyalty is only intensifying.” Read the rest of Marc Peruzzi’s “Only Solutions” column, which follows Scott Markewitz and Travis Tomczak’s startup [here](#).

// Meet a Creative

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After a decade guiding wilderness expeditions in the Rockies, Alaska, and Mexico’s Sea of Cortez, [Frederick Reimers](#) was looking for a less transient career. He’s been one of the top writers in the outdoors ever since.



Frederick Reimers Writer/Editor

// Meet an Athlete

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In 2019, [Cody Townsend](#) announced his intentions to ski every line in the book, “Fifty Classic Ski Descents of North America.” The multi-year project became his magnum opus. “I like a challenge,” Townsend says.



Photograph Bjarne Salen Courtesy Cody Townsend

// New in Hence Journal

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Trade Secrets: Commit to Your Style and Work Follows

Plenty of photographers build careers by meeting a client’s desires. Then there are the clients who are looking for a specific style from people like Mike Thurk. “It’s best to work with people who trust what you bring,” says Mike.



Trade Secrets: How to Be a Prepared Traveler

Elyse Saugstad is known for rolling into a foreign country for a ski film shoot with a well-organized bag of comfort items she’s brought from home. The point is that no matter where in the world she may be, she can feel a little more at ease.

MORE FROM THE BROADER CREATIVE WORLD

What We’re Reading Now

- 1. Vice Got Safe—Then it Died.** Former Vice staffer Michael Moynihan unloads on the pride, fiscal mismanagement, and failure to speak to the audience that brought down a \$6 billion media juggernaut. ([TFP](#))
- 2. Are Movie Studios Dead?** Francis Ford Coppola thinks so. “I fear that the film industry has become more of a matter of people being hired to meet their debt obligations because the studios are in great, great debt.”([Variety](#))
- 3. If The Atlantic Says the Internet is a Toilet, Then the Internet is a Toilet.** Charlie Warzel looks at how Google’s move to deliver quick and easy results (as opposed to quality results, apparently) just might break ... Google. His story, “The Toilet Theory of the Internet” is a must read. ([Atlantic](#))
- 4. Sam Altman Can Go to Hell.** We know it can be hard to believe Scarlett Johansson is real, but she certainly owns her voice. Sam Altman does not agree, says Scarlett: “When I heard the released demo (of SKY the voice of ChatGPT), I was shocked, angered and in disbelief that Mr. Altman would pursue a voice that sounded so eerily similar to mine that my closest friends and news outlets could not tell the difference. Mr. Altman even insinuated that the similarity was intentional, tweeting a single word, ‘her’ — a reference to the film in which I voiced a chat system, Samantha, who forms an intimate relationship with a tiger.” —Scarlett Johansson. ([Wired](#))
- 5. Joe Pesci Gets a Trigger Warning.** The best mob film of all time, *Goodfellas*, now has a trigger-warning about “language and/or cultural stereotypes that are inconsistent with today’s standards of inclusion and tolerance.” That doesn’t make us laugh. ([NYP](#))