



“It takes more than pretty pictures to run a successful business.

Success starts with organization.”

–Sal Cincotta
Editor-in-Chief, Shutter Magazine
& 17hats Member

april 2019

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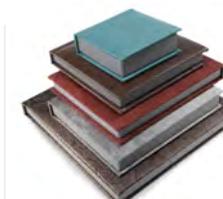
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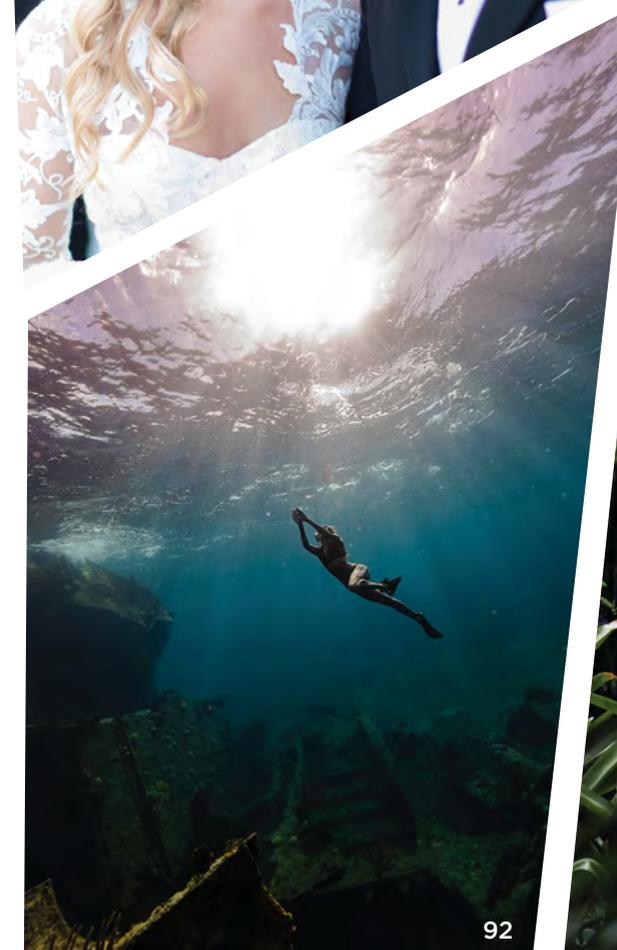
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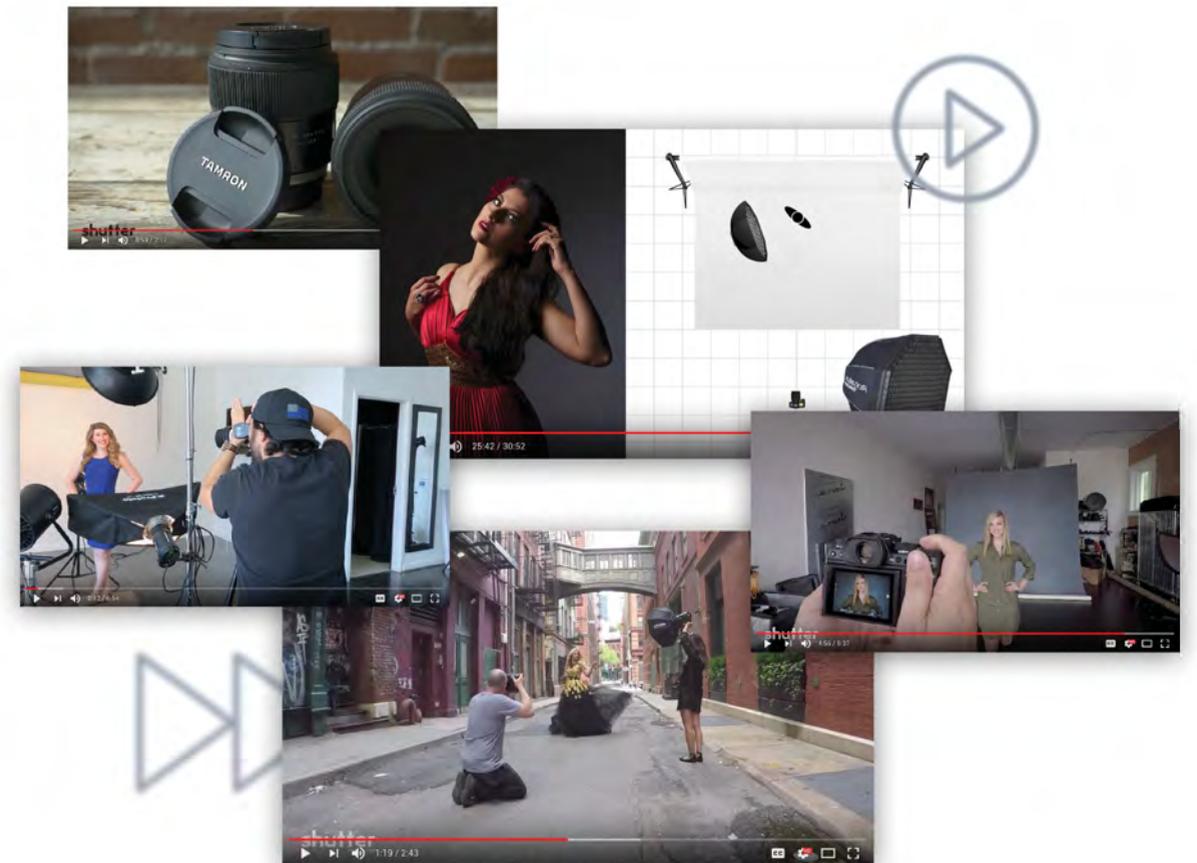
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MISSION STATEMENT

Shutter Magazine's focus is on photography education. Our goal is to provide current, insightful and in-depth educational content for today's professional wedding and portrait photographer. *Shutter* uses the latest technologies to deliver information in a way that is relevant to our audience. Our experienced contributors help us create a sense of community, and have established the magazine as one of the leading photography publications in the world.

Shutter Magazine: By photographers, for photographers.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF / PUBLISHER
Sal Cincotta

CREATIVE DIRECTOR
Alissa Zimmerman

LEAD DESIGNER
Alicia Simpson

JR. DESIGNER
Ellie Plotkin

ACCOUNT SPECIALIST
Christine Gill

COPY EDITOR
Tom O'Connell

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS
Vanessa Joy, Michael Anthony, Sal Cincotta, Skip Cohen,
Jeff & Lori Poole, Christine Yodsukar, Alissa Zimmerman,
Michael Corsentino, Andy Strong, Casey Dittmer, Karen Bagley,
Dustin Lucas and Phillip Blume



THE COVER

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HMUA: Ilaria Giada Andrezzi

LAUNCH POINT

A message from the editor-in-chief

Get out. See the world.

Make something great.

- Sal Cincotta





LIGHTING ACADEMY 101: SEEING THE LIGHT

with Michael Anthony



01

DIRECTION

Today’s photographers are becoming more and more skilled with lighting. But before you can become a wizard with off-camera flash, you need to understand precisely how to recognize and manipulate light. Our studio has a team of multiple wedding photographers. We promise our clients that they are all trained in the recognition and manipulation of light. To fulfill that promise, we developed a system our photographers use to recognize light. Today I share that system with you.

We train our team in four technical elements: lighting, composition, posing and storytelling. Light is the first thing our photographers must become proficient in before moving on to the next subject. Lighting is essential because without it, we don’t have a picture. The word *photography* literally means “the study of light,” so to understand lighting, the first thing you need to understand is how to recognize it.

Many photographers look for open shade because it gives them a comfortable place to take photos free of unwanted contrast or shadows, but it’s important to understand that even in the softest lighting, light has a direction. Light direction is essential because photography is a two-dimensional medium. Directional lighting emphasizes two of the most important things we need for storytelling and composition: highlight and shadow.

Use highlights and shadows to create texture on your subjects—that gives a sense of realism and three-dimensionality to our subjects. Since we live in a 3D world, showing three-dimensionality on a two-dimensional medium makes an image more interesting.

To achieve this, directional lighting needs to create texture. Portrait photographers need to be aware of this because if we are photographing a closer portrait, we need to use a reflector to minimize contrast on the areas like the face where texture can be harmful to your overall aesthetic.

To recognize light, I want you to find a white foam sphere. Go outside and spend 10 minutes a day for the next week finding light direction. Stand in a different area, under a roof, or out under the open sky, next to a wall, etc. Ask yourself what the lighting direction is, and then use the sphere to check your accuracy.

After the first week, start looking for areas with high contrast, such as indoors, under overpasses or in an urban center. Find sources of reflective light and use your sphere to check your accuracy. These sources can be harder to find, but often produce the best results.

02

SHAPING LIGHT ON YOUR SUBJECTS

There are three basic types of light you can use to shape your subjects. Short light emphasizes texture and is obtained by turning the face into the source of light. Broad light is precisely the opposite. Flat light fills in shadows and is often the easiest way to use light—but that also makes it the most boring.

Short light can be used to create a slimming effect on your subjects because by lighting the short side of the body in relationship to the camera angle, we minimize the amount of the body in light, making it appear smaller. Then, by turning the nose into the light, we create a three-dimensional illusion on the face.

We use short light on 99% of our female subjects in posed portraits.

Broad lighting can be used to make something appear larger and works exactly the opposite way that short lighting does. This light can be useful on male subjects or can be used to emphasize areas such as the hips on female subjects.

Once you understand how to recognize the direction of light and how to craft it to your subjects, you need to learn to use light as a communicative tool. Then you can move on to posing and storytelling.





03

COMMUNICATING WITH LIGHT

Lighting can influence the mood of your image, making it a storytelling element in your compositions. An image that is darker with more shadow communicates mystery, depth, anticipation or even anxiety, depending on your subject matter.

An image filled with light can communicate purity, serenity and a sense of calm or excitement—again, depending on your subject matter.

For wedding photography, brighter, lighter images are a better choice. But the problem with associating a lighting style with a genre of photography is that you shut the door for the stories that happen on the day of a wedding.

Is there anticipation on a wedding day? Nerves? What about anxiety? These are all parts of telling a wedding story that people understand, feel and remember. A wedding day shouldn't be a photo shoot. It should be a documentary of the most important day of your clients' lives. Good photographers understand this. This knowledge allows you to use your skillset to tell better stories.



04

MANIPULATING LIGHT

Good light is easier to find than you might think. A problem I see is photographers trying to emulate a lighting technique they saw another photographer do during a workshop, but they failed to understand the mindset behind the photographer.

So instead of remembering what the photographer was doing, remember why they were doing it. Think outside the box when using lighting for better results. The best images are a result of the impact on the viewer, and impact comes from thinking outside the box, trying new things, challenging yourself to look beyond the obvious to make better imagery.

To manipulate light, first decide why you need to manipulate it. Is the light on the subject's face not good? Is the contrast between highlight and shadow too high or too low? Is the background boring?

Diagnose a composition and make your lighting choices based on that. We are just as likely to manipulate the light in the background as we are on the subjects, and if a reception hall is dark or uninteresting, we add colored gels to give the images a sense of depth. Finding that balance between interest and realism is essential—you don't want to manipulate a scene into something that it is not.

In this image, my groom wanted a shot in the room he grew up in. I was determined to make something different for him, something unique, but something that communicated precisely what he was feeling: mystery, anticipation, self-reflection.



Image © Studio 23 Photography

05

CHOOSE THE RIGHT TOOLS

This is the part of lighting that too many photographers focus on. I put it last on my list because as long as your gear is reliable, easy to use and can perform well, it doesn't matter what you use.

I tell photographers that they need both high-powered and small low-powered lights. Larger light sources like the Profoto B10 can be used to combat midday sun, and lesser lights like the Profoto A1 can be used throughout the day for most applications.

You should have two types of modifiers with you at most times: a larger softbox, somewhere around 2 to 3 feet, and a hard reflector. Use the modifier to match the environment. If you are shooting in overcast or open shade, you will have soft ambient light, so use a smooth modifier. If you are out firing against the sun, then harder light is preferred. Use what works to make the most believable result. Off-camera flash is not a style, it's a tool, so use flash with a purpose, not because it looks good.

That will help your imagery stand the test of time and make visual sense to the viewer.

Remember, the goal with lighting is to make imagery that achieves your vision for the overall story. Light is essential for capturing imagery that communicates your message, and is the first step in creating the necessary emotional connection your viewers want. ■

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Michael Anthony is the owner of Michael Anthony Studios, a wedding photography studio based in Los Angeles. He has won multiple awards in international image competition for his creative use of light, storytelling and environmental portraiture. The five-member team at Michael Anthony Studios photographs around 60 weddings and over 200 portrait sessions a year.

michaelanthonystudio.com

THE ART OF *Movement*

with Judy Host



Image © Judy Host

With each new assignment I receive, the first thought that goes through my mind is, “What lens will I use?” Yes, the location, styling, lighting, and composition are all on my mind as well and are equally important to my creative process, but the lens perspective is also a primary concern. Knowing what lens to use for the different assignments I work on is imperative.

I photograph dancers, inside and outside, with studio lights and with natural light. What goes through my mind when I previsualize the session is in fact the lens perspective. What do I want to capture in this image? How can I best tell my story?

Sigma’s new Art lens, the 40mm F1.4 DG HSM is the latest in it’s Global Vision Collection and its perfect for creating dynamic images of my dancers. It’s amazingly sharp and fast, two extremely important elements when capturing the acrobatic and delicate movements of dancers. To be able to photograph in low light while your subject is moving and still have a very sharp image is quite a feat and quite an asset to a working photographer who loves capturing movement.

Inside with studio lighting, I’m amazed at how quickly I’m able to focus and lock on to my moving subject to capture and freeze a specific position with lighting speed. I have a fraction of a second to capture these beautiful positions. My process with my dancers is for them to show me the actual position I’m aiming to capture—what it should look like and where their arms and legs should be. I’m also looking for where their head, their feet, and even the flow of the fabric will be at that perfect moment. My single point of focusing must be quick and accurate in order to capture a sharp image. My focusing point is always aimed at their head or their eye.

The 40mm F1.4 DG HSM has become my new favorite lens for capturing the beautiful and graceful movement of my dancers. I love the flexibility of being able to photograph close up, waist high, as well as creating a wide-angle look with this very versatile lens. When I’m in the field, I need a lens that I can count on to perform for me and this one meets the mark.



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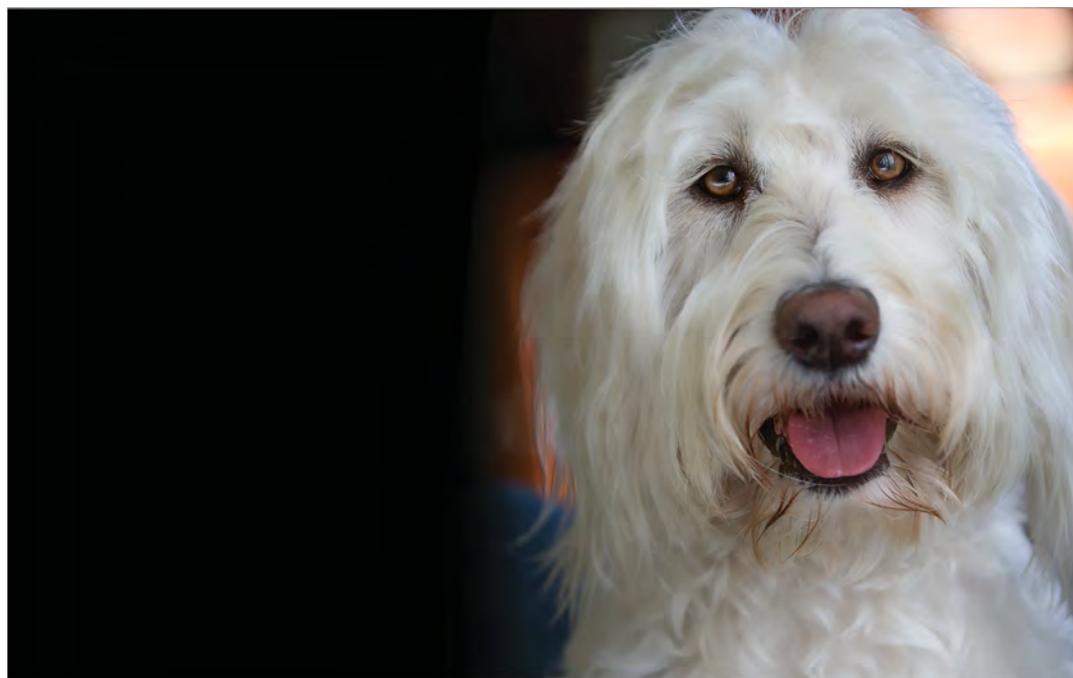
THE VALUE OF A
PHOTOGRAPH

with Skip Cohen

Over the past few years, every article I've written for *Shutter Magazine* has covered the essential building blocks for your business. While I've often referred to the importance of quality and always exceeding client expectations, I've never really shared the insight I've gained into the essential value of great photographs.

Of all the articles and information I've shared to help you build a stronger business and a reputation you're proud of, nothing tops the importance of understanding the value and responsibility of the career field you've chosen. No other career field—except areas like medicine—has given the world what photography has. It carries with it a huge responsibility to every client, and it all starts with your mindset, followed by your skillset.

I can't help you with your technical skills, but I certainly can help with the importance of delivering a quality product and follow-through with the commitment you make to each client every time you click the shutter. I can think of no better example than my own experience with two good friends over the years and a very special member of my family, Molly the Wonder Dog.



MOLLY THE WONDER DOG

Molly became my partner in crime at eight weeks old. From November 2005 to February 15, 2019, Molly was by my side every day except when I was traveling. She went to work with me every day and became the company mascot. When I headed out on my own, she slept at my feet in my home office.

She chased tennis balls everywhere we went, including the ocean when I lived in California. When we left the West Coast in 2009, she shared the front seat with me as we drove cross-country and she chased tennis balls at rest stops. She was a fur ball of energy for almost 13 years.

In December, I noticed her slowing down a little, and eventually learned she had cancer. Two months after diagnosis, we had to put her down. It's the hardest thing I've ever had to do, but I'd made a promise to Molly to never let her suffer.

With her head in my hands and my nose nuzzling her neck, just like she had done to me thousands of times over the years, she was euthanized on February 15. Sadness doesn't begin to describe the pain and the hole in my heart that only recently has started to subside.

I have hundreds of photographs of Molly. She was one of the most photographed pups in the industry, captured on film and digital over the years by Bambi Cantrell, Judy Host, Carey Schumacher, Nicole Begley (and her entire pet photography class here in Sarasota), Helen Yancy, Suzette Allen and, most recently, Robert Vanelli. Those photographs have become a collection of memories that are priceless to me.

Three portraits became the cornerstone for keeping her memory alive thanks to Bambi Cantrell and Robert Vanelli. Bambi's responsible for the headshot of Molly that she took around 2007. If the eyes are indeed the gateway to the soul, then Bambi caught the love Molly had for everybody.

Last August, Robert came over to this side of the state, and we hung out for the weekend. While I have a lot of images of Molly and me together, I wanted something that captured more than just a boy and his dog.

Robert spent the weekend watching me and Molly interact. When she wasn't at my side, she was by his, and that Sunday morning, he shot us doing our morning routine in my office. I never said a word about what I wanted him to capture. He listened to us, watched how we each responded to the other and then just clicked away.

Image © Robert Vanelli



These two portraits of Molly and me have become two of the most important pictures of my career...of my life. But my point is this: What if Robert and Bambi had had a “that’s good enough” attitude and just clicked the shutter?

I’ve heard so many stories of photographers learning that their portrait of a client was the last image ever captured of them. That’s what happened with Robert’s two portraits of us.

Image © Robert Vanelli



Molly will always be in my head and heart. There’s a beautiful quote by author Jodi Picoult I’ve shared many times in blog posts. It’s so appropriate here: “This is what I like about photographs. They’re proof that once, even if just for a heartbeat, everything was perfect.”



My good buddy Scott Bourne once encouraged a group of photographers to capture every image as if it was the last one people would ever see of their work. He also referred to our role in the industry as the “high priests of memory protection.”

The next time you’re working with a client, keep these pearls of hard-won wisdom in mind:

- Don’t just capture images. Put your heart and soul into every click of the shutter—that’s what your clients trust you to do.
- Never compromise on the quality of a photograph. It’s okay to experiment and change things around so you can grow as an artist. But when a client is in front of your camera, they are your most important subject. You never know how that image might be used in the future as lives change.
- Deliver on time and keep your promises.
- Exceed expectations and make yourself habit-forming.
- Capture images that tell each client’s story. Even a simple headshot can reveal the personality of the subject.

In the hierarchy of why people hire a photographer in the portrait/social categories, the priorities go brides, babies, pets, in that order. Between the work of Bambi, Robert and my circle of incredible friends, I've got one of the greatest collections of memory-retaining images.

Photography is a career whose success is built on a foundation of trust and relationships. You've got to be willing to share a little piece of your heart with every image, especially portraits. And as I've written before, you can't create images that tug at people's heartstrings if your own heart isn't in it.

You've committed to being a magician. You stop time for people, give them tangible objects that capture their most special moments.

Photography is a career field that carries with it incredible pride and requires an unstoppable love for the human spirit and even the puppy world now and then. If you think of your photography as just a job, then it's time to find a new career. Remember Scott Bourne's description and the role we all play as "high priests of memory protection." It's a huge responsibility that requires a heart that's filled with love and compassion for every client.

It's hard to find the words to thank Bambi and Robert for what their photographs mean to me. Hopefully you'll have a client tell you one day how your photographs touched their life. ■

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Skip Cohen is president and founder of Marketing Essentials International, a consulting firm specializing in projects dedicated to photographic education, marketing and social media support across a variety of marketing and business platforms. He founded SkipCohenUniversity.com in January 2013. He's been actively involved in the photo industry his entire career, and previously served as president of Rangefinder/WPPI and Hasselblad USA. He has coauthored six books on photography and is involved in several popular podcasts, including *Weekend Wisdom*.

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THE
BUSINESS CORNER

YOUR SALES SYSTEM IN ACTION:
**INQUIRIES &
CONSULTATIONS**
with Jeff & Lori Poole



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PUTTING YOUR SALES SYSTEM INTO ACTION

For the past several months in The Business Corner, we've been building your sales system from the ground up in order to get you to your target sales average (see the Business Corner article from August 2018 for a discussion on determining your target average). We started with cost-based pricing (October), then demand-based pricing (November), then strategies for digital files (December). Next, we built your sales system using your à la carte list (January), your bundled options (February) and your upselling strategies (March). Now it's time to put all your hard work into action. It's time to craft your client experience workflow to maximize your sales potential. That workflow starts the moment a potential client inquires.

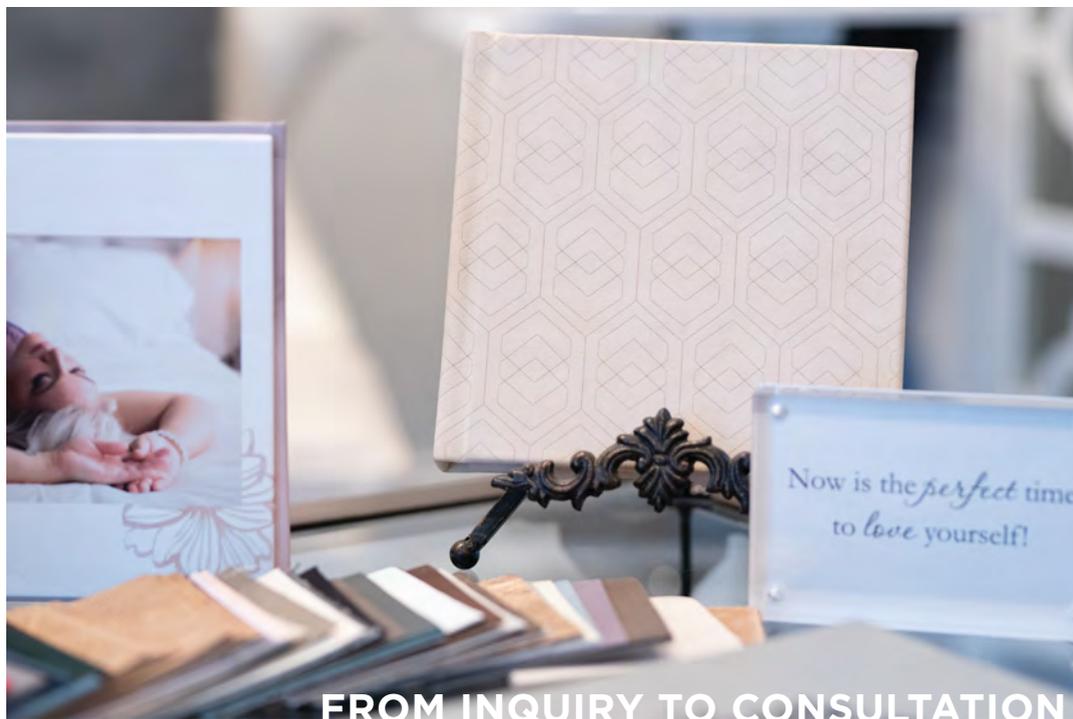


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FROM INQUIRY TO CONSULTATION

RESPONDING TO INQUIRIES

Your prospective client, or lead, will often inquire with something along the lines of, “I love your work! How much?” You must respond as quickly as possible. No one likes to be kept waiting. I know my leads are going to ask about price, so I have an autoresponder that sends them starting pricing information via MailChimp. I then follow up with a personal response as soon as I can.

WHEN THEY ASK FOR PRICING

We should not be offended when our leads ask for our pricing. I often see a Facebook topic along the lines of, “My lead asked for my pricing before agreeing to meet with me. They are obviously so not my client.” This is just silly. Photography can cost anything from \$50 for shoot-and-burn all the way up to tens of thousands for a single portrait. It is not unreasonable for leads to want to know where you fall along that spectrum before wasting their time or yours.

SHOULD YOU PUT YOUR PRICES ONLINE?

In most purchasing scenarios, the shopper can find basic pricing information online before speaking to a human. I hate going to a website for information and being unable to find any pricing without speaking to a sales rep. Likewise, today’s leads appreciate photographers who list either a starting price or an average spend on their websites.

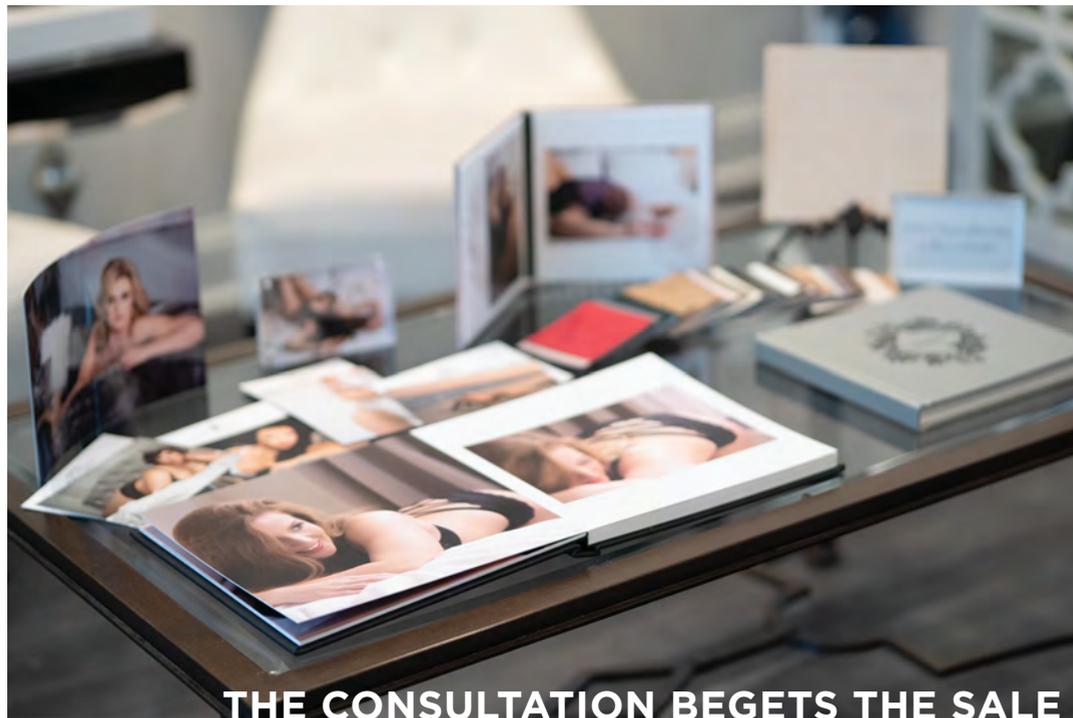
I do not recommend listing your entire price menu on your site or sending your full price menu as soon as a client inquires. For one, you want your leads to contact you so you can follow up. Two, you need to control your lead’s experience with your brand. Three, your lead will not likely understand everything on your menu. If at all possible, get your lead on the phone. Begin a conversation in which you establish rapport and control the brand message. Many creatives panic at this stage. I have actually seen a post in a Facebook group for photographers saying, “Help! My client wants to talk on the phone. What should I do?” You should call, that’s what.

FROM INQUIRY TO CONSULTATION

In our studio, Jeff and I strive to bring serious leads in for a consultation. We achieve the best sales results when the client is willing to commit the time to come in, when we can build a rapport and when we can demonstrate the value and quality of our products and services. For us, this is more difficult (though not impossible) to do over the phone. This year, we’ve also been experimenting with live video chats for long-distance clients. We know of other photographers who do well with phone consultations alone, but it hasn’t been our experience. Therefore, the aim of our correspondence with the lead is to schedule that consultation.

Generally, we start the inquiry conversation by asking the lead lots of questions. Direct your questions in a way that encourages the lead to consider why a portrait session would be valuable to them. “Tell me why you’d like to have a portrait session.” Grab onto and elaborate on emotional connections. “I love that you’re doing this as an anniversary gift! He’s going to absolutely love this. Seriously, you win Wife of the Year.” Get them to envision the results of the session. Offer ideas and inspiration based in the information they tell you.

When they inevitably ask about pricing, the conversation can be summarized as: “Our session fee is \$X, with products starting at \$X. Some of our most popular products are [product 1] and [product 2]. The next step would be for us to get together and plan your session at a complimentary consultation. You’ll be able to see/touch/feel all of our products, and of course I will go over pricing, we’ll talk outfits, locations, etc. When can you come in?” Notice I didn’t ask *if* they wanted to come in, I simply informed them that coming in is the next step. This is called an assumptive close.



THE CONSULTATION BEGETS THE SALE

Up until now, the goal of the conversation with your lead has been to give them enough information to decide if they like you. Do they get a good feeling from talking to you? Can they afford you? If you did your job during the inquiry stage, they should already know they can afford you on a basic level, and are now coming to find out the details. The nitty-gritty information is divulged at the consultation. But not without a little foreplay, so to speak.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

This is likely the first time your lead will be meeting you and visiting your studio (or sales space/showroom). First impressions count. The place you are meeting should reflect your brand. If meeting at your studio, make sure it is clean, neat and appropriately decorated. If you're meeting in a public place, choose a venue that reflects the right vibe. Starbucks is not your only option. Dress according to your brand. Look good, smell good. You get the idea.

If at all possible, attempt to touch all five of your lead's senses. Use an air freshener or scent warmer. Play music. Display beautiful samples and decorate well. Offer refreshments, comfy seating, textures and samples to touch. Keeping all five senses engaged makes the consultation an immersive experience.

All in all, your lead should feel that there is a match between your website, your presence, your branding, your vibe, your value. They should subconsciously understand you're worth the prices you're about to throw at them.

TALK ABOUT THEM

People respond well when you let them talk about themselves. Use the same techniques you did over the phone to let your client speak. They want to tell their story; they want to make sure you understand what they are looking for. Ask questions. Listen.

EXPLAIN YOUR PROCESS

Gradually segue the conversation into how you can meet their needs. Explain your process. The consultation is for planning the shoot, answering their questions, getting to know one another and reviewing pricing. Explain that your next step would be the shoot, and then in-person sales. Make sure they understand that you will provide the best service by meeting with them to help them choose their products. In other words, the images aren't going online and you aren't giving files away.

BRAINSTORM

Clients love this portion of the session. Discuss location, wardrobe, unique ways to reflect their story in the images. This is your chance to make sure clients don't show up in unflattering, mismatched, wrinkled clothing. It is also when you will give advice on time of day, the best location, whether you prefer props, address whether you're open to working from a shot list/Pinterest board. Tell them all the things you want them to know in order to shape them into your ideal client. Take the reins here. They are hiring you for your expertise.

AND FINALLY, PRICING

Throughout the inquiry stage, and up until this point in the consultation, you've been demonstrating your value. From your website, they see you take great photos. Over the phone, they've begun to trust you and like you, and they learned you're within their budget. Now they see your professionalism and expertise. Somehow, you just "get" them. Your products are beautiful. They want you. It's time to reel them in.

Start with your session fee. What does it include? What doesn't it include? How much is it?

Now the à la carte list. For those clients wanting only the basics, here they are. Show-and-tell each product on this list. Let them touch it. Without getting too deep in techno jargon, explain the features. Does it have leather? What sizes does it come in? What do you as the artist love about this product? How much does it cost? See our January 2019 article for more information on à la carte lists.

Once they fully understand the à la carte offerings, move into your bundles. Remember that a bundle can be a package, a create-your-own-collection or any other system that encourages the purchase of multiple products. If built correctly (see February), your bundle system will sell itself and your client will quickly gravitate toward a bundled option.

ASSUME THE CLOSE

The easiest way to move from price list explanation to booking is to assume they are going to book. Instead of (awkwardly) asking if they want to book, ask which product option they are going to go with. This puts them into decision-making mode.

Allow them to ask questions. Make sure nothing is misunderstood. Keep no secrets. Be genuine and forthcoming, and guide your clients into the options you think best fit their desires. Do not try to push products onto your clients simply because they are the most expensive. Maintain the trust your clients have placed in you.

You want your clients to do the majority of the number-crunching and left-brain activity now. I am perfectly happy to scratch out on paper various combinations of products and tell my clients a total price. Get sticker shock out of the way. Give them time between now and the actual sale to get comfortable with the big number.



Image © Indigosilver studio

BONUS POINTS FOR PREPURCHASING

Once I've asked my clients which products they're interested in, I throw them a sweetener. This encourages the client to make a minimum product purchase up front (in addition to the session fee) in exchange for a session upgrade.

The minimum product purchase doesn't have to be huge. Mine is half of my target sale. There are several ways you can encourage the purchase:

"If you prepurchase a product credit of \$X or more..."

"If you prepurchase Package B or higher..."

"If you prepurchase an 8-inch or larger album..."

Assume they are booking today: "If you prepurchase X when you book today, you'll receive..."

The carrot you dangle should be low cost to you and high value to the client, and something that won't cannibalize the product sale. I offer an upgraded session. That way I'm not giving away a product my client might have purchased otherwise. And if I shoot longer, I'm going to have more images that the client will want, which will also help my sales: "You'll receive an extra 30 minutes in your shoot, which will give you time for one more outfit. This upgrade is a \$150 value."

Note: The upgrade you offer should be listed on your price menu and discussed as one of the options when you review your session fees. By discussing it early, odds are, your client secretly wants the upgrade already. You've given them just the excuse they need to prepurchase their products.

Why have prepurchase incentives? Money spent is money forgotten. By the time of their actual sales appointment, their bank account will have replenished and they will be more willing to spend on upsales. You can offer a pre-session payment plan. Allow your clients to break up their product payments over the weeks leading up to their session. This may allow them to purchase more than they would have been able to afford in only one payment. Clients are much less likely to cancel their session or their sales appointment when they've paid up front.





Image © Indigosilver studio

IT'S ALL DOWNHILL FROM HERE

If you follow this style of inquiry management, you're doing the majority of the sales work before the actual sale. Use the inquiry and pre-session consultation to establish your value and explain your sales system. Your sessions become easier with preplanning because your clients trust your judgment and follow directions better. But best of all, when it comes to the in-person sales appointment, the hard work is already done. The only thing left to do is help the client choose their images and ring up their final purchase.

Join us in a future issue as we discuss how to conduct the in-person sale. ■

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Just a few years after Jeff and Lori found themselves struggling to survive while living in the basement of their studio, back in 2012, they are the proud owners of a brand-new home on the coast of North Carolina. The owners of Wilmington's Indigosilver Studio offer boutique boudoir portraiture and wedding photography. They are also the founders of The Shoot Space, their educational resource for photographers. Their *Shutter Magazine* column, The Business Corner, is dedicated to helping you grow your photography business.

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Focal Length: 70mm Exposure: F/4.0 1/200sec ISO: 2000 ©André Costantini

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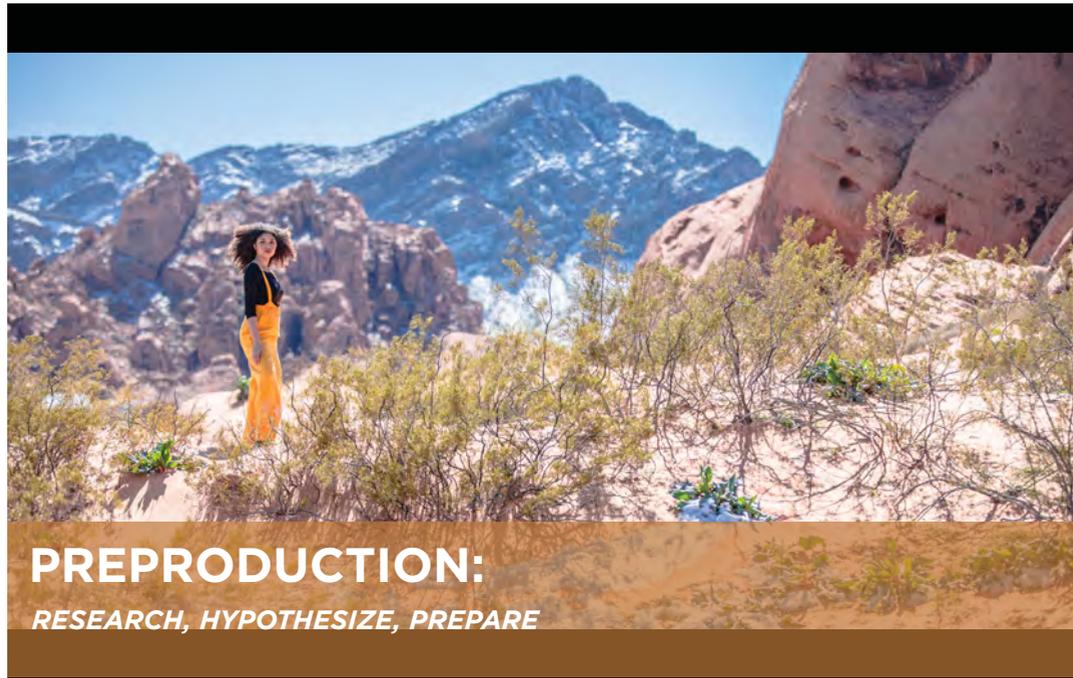
VIDEO & VISION

with Andy Strong

I love how traveling to a new location gives the brain a creative jolt. There are new problems to solve, new scenarios to uncover, new pathways to forge with our feet and in our brains. It can be challenging to reach outside comfort zones, but once we wander off the well-worn path, the thirst for thrills sticks with us. We are doing things we've never done before, and it's exciting.

A storyboard makes the final product tangible. When working with a script, storyboards are a roadmap on which your film is built. But what happens when the script is being written in real time, as in a documentary-style capturing of live events?

Working without a storyboard has pitfalls, but with a few simple tips, you'll be able to better manage the tradeoffs and maximize the rewards to develop your instinctual response to live storytelling.



Know your length and use

How long do you want the final product to be? Who is the target audience? Where will they watch the video? Why are you creating this? Style guidelines emerge when you add frames to your project. For Project Obscura—the epic, free and totally badass two-day photography conference in Las Vegas sponsored by H&H Color Labs and N-Vu—I created a 90-second video promo spot about the event that appeared on Facebook and YouTube.



Set benchmarks:

Number of Shots: For 90 seconds of video, I worked with a 45-shot benchmark, knowing that a two-second average shot length is a sweet spot for the upbeat post-production style I wanted.



THE ANCHOR SHOT:

Could you tell your story in a single shot? For Project Obscura, I wanted to showcase the energy of the experience while highlighting the location, models and clothes. I visualized my anchor shot as turning the camera on the photographers in a moving 60fps shot while they clicked away paparazzi style at a model during the hands-on desert workshop.

Choose Gear Wisely

To maximize coverage, it helps to minimize the number of decisions that have to be made.

The new generation of touchscreen auto-focus cameras has been a game changer for DSLR video. I love my Canon 5D Mark iv. Being able to shift focus with a fingertip allows a single camera op to rack focus on a moving shot. No matter your brand preference, once you try the touchscreen autofocus, there is no going back.

For video, I kept it simple with a two-lens setup that gave me combined coverage from 24–200mm. For live shoots, I prefer zoom lenses, which give me more flexibility to grab both close-ups and wider shots without having to switch lenses and miss the action. For Project Obscura, a Canon 24–105 F4 was my main lens for handheld and gimbal shots, and I used a Canon 70–200 f2.8 for close-ups and tripod panning shots.

Recent advances in gimbal technology have led to a paradigm shift for filmmakers. I use a Zhiyun Crane 2 with a monopod extension that allows me to capture reliable, smooth motion at a cost and weight unthinkable even five years ago.



I love that current technology allows me to pull focus with one finger while I am capturing a smooth shot with a single hand on a lightweight gimbal at an approachable price point while stumbling around the rocky desert in one take.



Image © Andy Strong

Assess the Scene

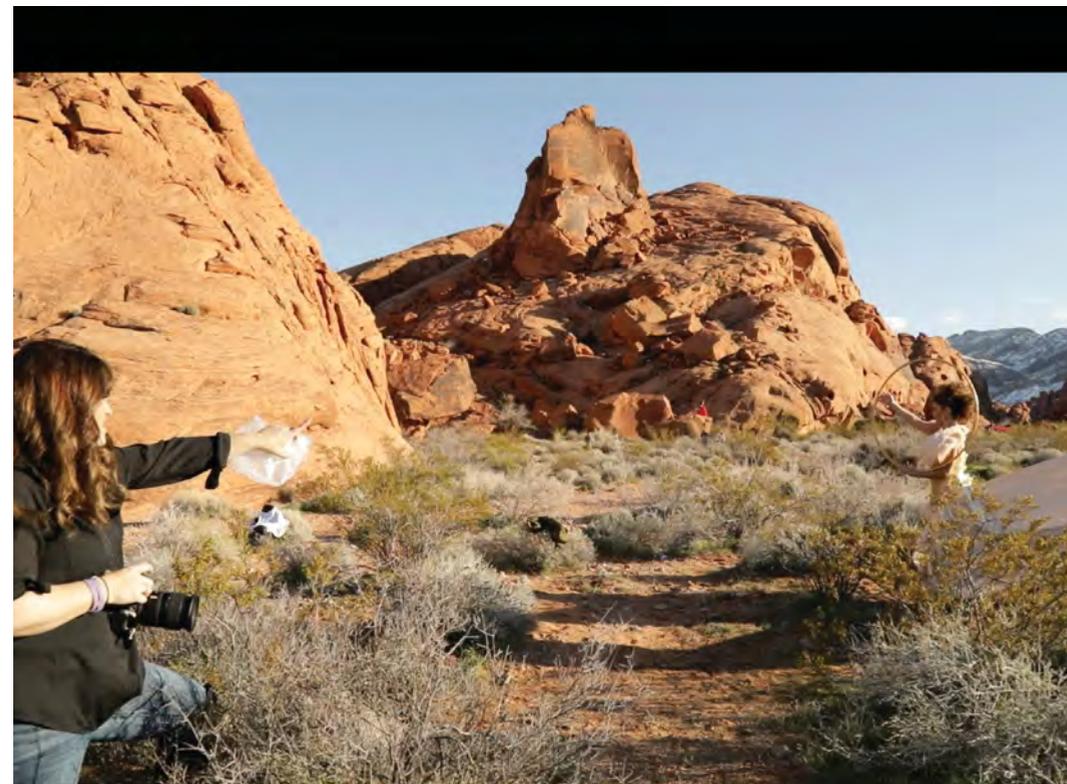
Where is the most compelling action taking place? Do I have enough time to capture the action from multiple angles and/or with multiple focal lengths? Do I need to move now and capture a safe wide? The moments you spend planning and observing will be reflected in the quality of your shot. Don't overthink it. Stay active.

Shoot for the stars, land on the moon.

I breathe a cautious sigh of relief when I check the back of my camera and see that I've hit my target number of shots. Because I also know that simply pressing Record does not guarantee final product footage, I err on the side of overshooting. For the Project Obscura video, I ended up with nearly two hours of video—the me who logged this footage whined, but the me who edited was comforted by the coverage.

Think Like an Editor. Hold Your Shot.

From an editor's perspective, I can never think of holding a shot for too long. When I am filming, I have the urge to grab and go on to the next thing as soon as I can. How do you reconcile the two? I've hit a compromise by singing the refrain of "Celebrate" once I've framed my shot. Take a few seconds and sing it now. It may sound silly, but I find it easier to keep time with a song than counting. It's also great to have a mini celebration every time I frame up a shot I like. The refrain of "Celebrate" is seven seconds long, long enough for me to be grateful for the wiggle room when I sit down to edit. Remember, my average editing sweet spot is a two-second cut. Yours may be longer. You might need to double or triple the refrain. Whatever works.



Assess the situation. Hold your shot.



Take the opportunity to "Celebrate."

Images © Andy Strong

La variété plaît. Variety, please.

Emphasize variety and create juxtaposition in your shots. Here are five instant ways to serve up a smörgåsbord to your editor.

Camera Movement: One of the simplest ways to vary your visual vocabulary is with different camera movements. Try a combination of these or learn a couple of favorites. Just don't be too predictable and let your audience get ahead of you.

Still Shot - no movement

Tilt - camera angle moves up or down; nod your head "yes"

Pan - camera angle moves left or right; scan the horizon

Whip Pan - pan fast enough to blur

Dolly - camera moving in and out or side to side; think railroad tracks

Pedestal - camera moving vertically; think elevator

Zoom - in-lens movement; getting closer

Speed of Motion: How fast or slow is your movement? A slow dolly movement evokes a feeling of tension, like in a horror film. A whip pan is a common technique used for commercial and sitcom transitions. Try getting coverage with multiple options, one shot more steady on your subject and another with a couple of attempts at movement.

Frame Rate: Choose either 24fps or 30fps for your main look, but don't mix these. Add shots at 60fps to allow for slow motion. I use 60fps when filming on a gimbal for versatility. No matter your frame rate, make sure your shutter speed is roughly double the frame rate in order to capture realistic motion (24fps = 1/50 second, 60fps = 1/125).

TRY IT: THE DOLLY/PEDESTAL COMBO



*First, dolly in from a wide shot to a medium shot near your subject's feet to reveal detail in the dress**



Then pedestal up to reveal your subject in more detail by moving vertically while keeping the same camera angle.



**Dress by Casey Dittmer*

Type of Shot: Are you going wide or close-up? Wide shots reveal the location, mediums reveal relationships, close-ups reveal intimate emotions. If you can afford the luxury of shooting the same action with coverage of a wide, medium and close-up, you'll make your editor happy. This is a great time to use multiple lenses and experiment with variation in angle, depth of focus and focal length if you have time.

Using multiple shot angles to enhance variety



Images © Andy Strong



Images © Andy Strong

Framing: How much of the frame does your subject fill? Where and how much negative space are you allowing? Visualize a still medium wide shot framed with your subject camera left, silhouetted in profile. Cut to a close-up dolly and zoom into their eyes in full light. How does this mental attention to detail inform you? Exercise your visualization muscle.



Image © Andy Strong

Count the number of cuts in the next commercial you see. The average 30-second Super Bowl commercial this year had more than a dozen cuts, and for 60-second spots, some are working with 40 or more. With a pricetag of over \$5 million, you can be sure they've done their research in consumer response. Look at some common themes; how long are shots held in the edit? Are they close, medium or wide? In what order? How do they juxtapose angles? Hypothesize how you might use a similar cinematography style to tell your story. Work backward to build your awareness. What can you learn from creating a detailed storyboard from an existing video, commercial or film scene you love? How can you apply the lessons to your next shoot?

Working with video can seem like traveling to another dimension. Introducing novel techniques works wonders in improving our cognitive abilities. So you're not only making art, you're building gray matter. Now get out there and have fun. ■

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Andy Strong believes in dancing in public and smiling at strangers and conquering vertigo via exposure. He loves to explore jubilant storytelling in several media. He loves working with his partner, Ariel Hansen Strong, on their photo and video business, A Strong Photo. They live in San Francisco with their dog, Bowie.

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LAPTOP LIVING

with **Sal Cincotta**



Have you heard the rage? Laptop living is the new business model. Travel the world with your laptop and work from a beach somewhere and surf all day with your GoPro making your friends and family jealous. If I see one more Instagram story encouraging me to buy into this lifestyle, I might kill myself.

I call bullshit on this. It is the most ridiculous thing you could ever aspire to do. It's not a real business and it's not sustainable. Sure, you might get some short-term hits, but is it something you can do for the rest of your life? Can you build a retirement nest egg? Someone is selling you a pipedream.



Wake up.

If you want to build something real and long-term, stop looking for ways to hack the system. It is about hard work. That is how you will build the life of your dreams. You've heard it from me countless times: If it were easy, everyone would do it.

It is not easy, especially when you consider that a majority of businesses fail within the first few years. It is easy when it's a hobby, but things become tough when you have to run an actual business with real customers who expect results from you.

Want to build the life of your dreams? Want to travel? Want to spend more time doing the things you love with the people you love? As someone who has built a business over the past 12 years, affording myself the luxuries in life I could have only dreamed of 10 years ago, I feel uniquely qualified to show you the path.

What do you love doing?

It seems like an easy enough question to answer. What do you love doing so much that you would be happy doing it 50-plus hours a week for 52 weeks a year?

"I love children," you may say. I am sure you do. Loving children and working with them 50-plus hours a week as a job are two different things. Career or hobby? Read on.

Let's get specific. I love photography, but that's too broad a statement. What kind of photography do I love? I love wedding and senior photography. That is my passion and my focus.

Is there a business opportunity there?

Great, you love cats. Now what? You believe you are going to be lying on a beach somewhere playing with kittens all day and someone is going to pay you for it? Who? That is the \$1 million question.

Who is paying you for your services? Is there a market for it? How large is that market? How will you connect with that market? Is anyone else servicing this market?

If there is no opportunity there, chances are you will not be the first to break through. You have to be realistic.

I have often dreamed of spending the summers in Paris. I love travel, photography and croissants. The obvious answer is to live in Paris two months out of the year, right?

How? And is there a business opportunity? I thought there might be. Americans travel to Europe on family vacations every year. Do you think they might want a professional portrait taken of their family with Parisian landmarks in the picture? I say yes.

This is a perfect example of doing something you love and combining it with a real business opportunity.



What is the minimum viable audience?

I bet you read that and were like, “huh?” Yeah, they are not teaching you that in your Laptop Life course, are they? This is the real world. You want to run a business, and it costs money to run that business. You need gear, you need to travel, you need food. How many clients do you need to support that hobby of yours and pay all the bills?

This represents the smallest possible audience you can serve and sustain your business.

Do you need 10 customers a month? Five? And how realistic is it for you to connect with that many clients?

You must include all your expenses, including marketing. Almost every business I meet with completely ignores the cost of marketing. And if you are chasing laptop life, you must include living expenses.

Where to begin?

Begin with a healthy appreciation for what goes into running a successful business and the fact that most people would love to make more and work less. So, you might have some competition on being lazy for a living.

Instead of looking for ways to hack life and half-ass things, find a way to build something that is sustainable and allows you to stand out from all the noise in the market.

I don't have a laptop life, but I travel the world, eat at some of the best restaurants and wake up every day doing what I love. I did that through hard work and commitment and providing my clients a superior product and service.

There is no substitute for hard work. Push yourself and challenge yourself every day, and I promise you, whatever life you are dreaming of is within reach. ■



Sal Cincotta is an international award-winning photographer, educator, author and the publisher of *Shutter Magazine*. Sal's success is directly tied to the education he received in business school. He graduated from Binghamton University, a Top 20 business school, and has worked for Fortune 50 companies like Procter & Gamble and Microsoft. After spending 10 years in corporate America, Sal left to pursue a career in photography and has never looked back.

salcincotta.com

westcott RAPIDBOX SWITCH

“Having the right tool for the job is critical to creating the perfect image. Knowing that I can easily switch between light sources and modifiers by simply changing inserts, now that's true power and control!”

SAL CINCOTTA



PHOTO © SAL CINCOTTA

How does Sal Switch?

Sal Cincotta switches light inserts on his Rapid Box Switch between studio strobe when he wants more power and speedlights when on location.

The new Switch Series for Rapid Box and Beauty Dish offers 13 interchangeable light mount inserts for 9 versatile light modifiers. Pair with new egg crate grids for total lighting control like never before.

When will you make the Switch?



SAL CINCOTTA
TOP PRO PHOTOGRAPHER

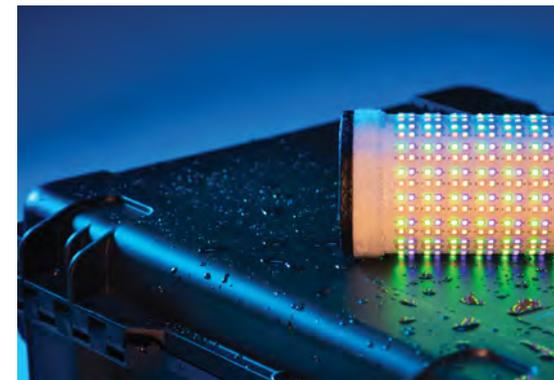
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product
spotlight

with *Salvatore Cincotta*



Why the Westcott Flex Cine System?

Power and flexibility are the strengths of the Westcott Flex system. It's useable with both AC and DC power. With these lightweight powerhouses, you can work on location without a power generator. The lights are available when and where you need them.

This is a complete modular system. The Flex mats can be modified to fit your needs or they can be used bare. Best of all, they can be controlled wired or wirelessly through DMX.

The new Flex Cine LED mats are ideal for travel and lighting in compact spaces. They are available with full-color spectrum RGBW, 2880K to 6000K bicolor or 5600k daylight output in sizes ranging from 1' x 1' to 2' x 2'. These powerful lights offer pristine flicker-free lighting up to 960fps for any situation.

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Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

5

TIPS FOR FASTER CREATIVE EDITING FROM PHOTOSHOP TO LIGHTROOM

with Dustin Lucas

The difference between spending hours in Photoshop on a single image versus working with multiple images at a time for just a few minutes in Lightroom can be frustrating, to say the least. Avoiding this massive loss of time requires knowledge of the limitations of Lightroom and what you want to do to an image. If an image needs heavy composite work to swap a sky or clip out a subject, of course it's Photoshop to the rescue. But what about the creative editing of tones, color grades, dodge and burn, HDR, sharpening, etc.? Can we really work in Photoshop to prep and go back into Lightroom and get good results?

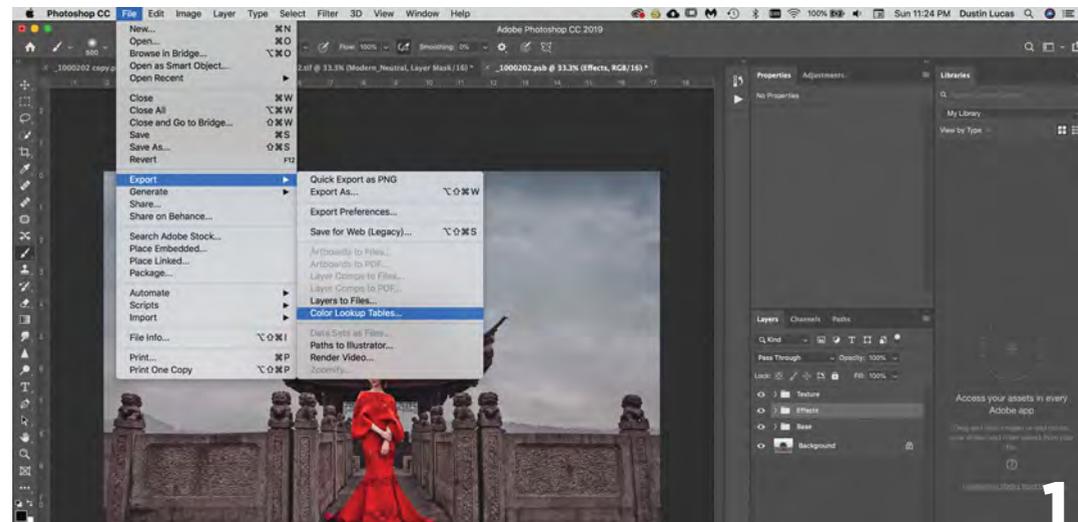
I know this sounds insane for anyone with a Wacom tablet who swears by the countless hours of perfecting masks with pressure sensitivity—trust me, I get easily annoyed by the fact that you have to rely on clicking a mouse in Lightroom. Remove that mindset from your editing workflow. We need fast results that are precise enough to show off to the client. Once they are sold on a print, we can get back to perfecting the image for printing. Think about what you do to a creative edit and how Lightroom can replace these tasks quickly.

Color Profiles should be where you start every edit so you can quickly push the boundaries of your creativity. After you find the right style, fine-tune it with Target Adjustments Tools. Once you are happy with color, we can burn down the background and make your subject pop. This is a crucial part of editing that gets the viewer stuck on the subject. Then it's all about attention to details, from intensifying the sky to sharpening your subject, which makes all the difference in a good image versus a great one.

Let's jump into Color Profiles and apply the right style to this image.

CREATIVE TONING FIRST: USE COLOR PROFILES

In previous articles, I touched on how to export LUTs from Photoshop and create a Color Profile to use in Lightroom. This has dramatically changed my workflow for applying toning to multiple images at once with a click of a mouse. (1) No more batch processing in Photoshop to see if I even like the results. After applying the profile I want, I dial back this effect with an Amount slider at the top of the Basic Panel. Notice how this is completely different from a preset in that the adjustment sliders don't move. Also, keep in mind you can apply only one profile to an image. (2)



1



2

For most creative edits, I like to pull down saturation, shift the entire image with a nice color grade and flatten the tonal range. This sets me up for less work in terms of burning down the background, and I can quickly bring back the whites/highlights to help make the subject pop. With that in mind, I already am seeing issues with her dress getting lost and the bright sky taking most of my attention. It always helps to close your eyes, open them and notice that your eye always goes to the brightest part of an image. If that's not where you want the viewer's eye looking, we have to burn it down.

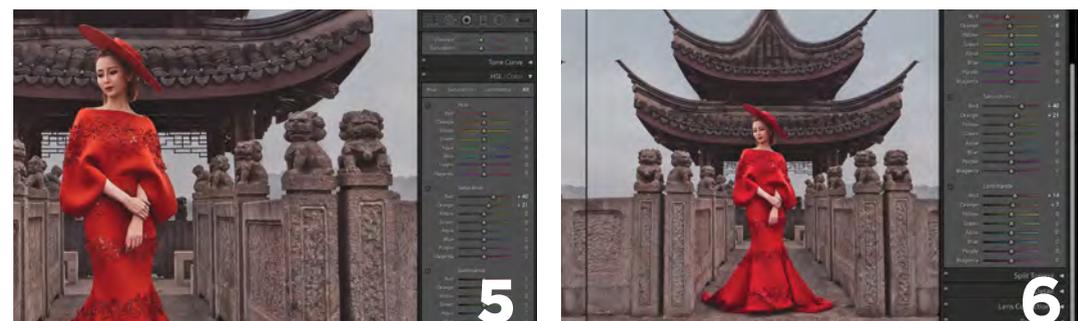
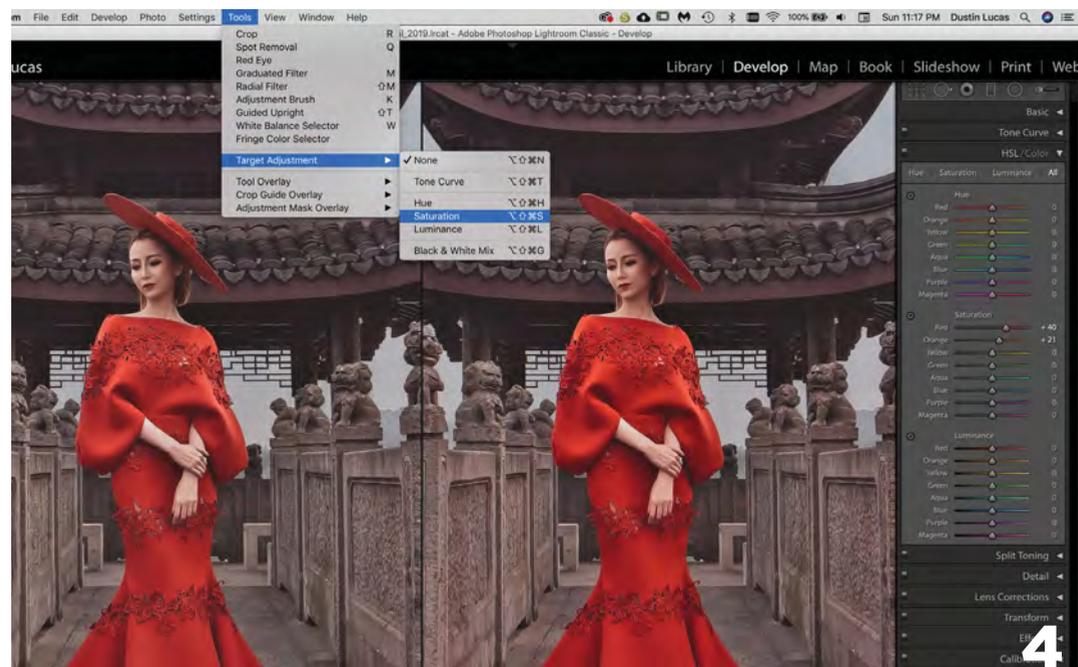
Targeting areas to adjust for these distractions is our next step. (3)



3

FINE-TUNE COLOR/TONES: TARGET ADJUSTMENT TOOLS

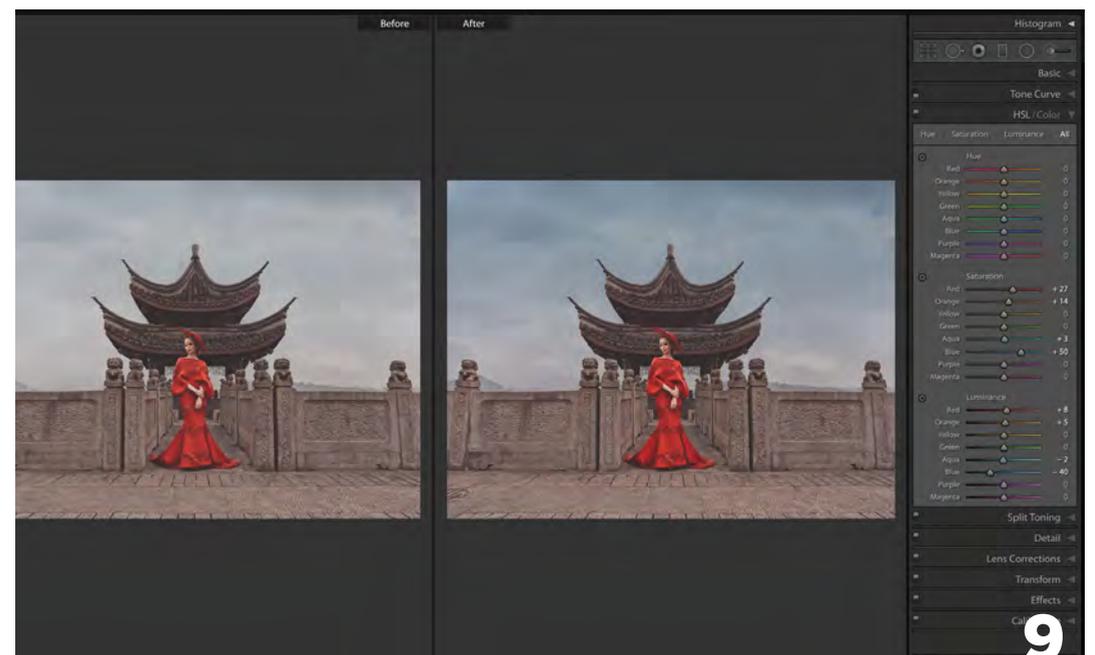
Target Adjustment Tools make editing faster while letting Lightroom control what precise parts of an image are affected. Hold Shift, Option and Command while striking the “H”, “S”, “L” or “T” key. The HSL panel controls specific colors, while Tone Curve is all about enhancing tonal range. If I want the dress to pop, I start by holding Shift, Option and Command and striking the “S” key. Then click on the dress and drag the cursor upward. (4) Instantly you see the red and orange sliders moving to the right. (5) Next, if we want to brighten the dress, we can do the same thing by striking the “L” key. That took less than 10 seconds to dial in. (6)



Moving on to the sky, we want to bring back some blues and darken it. We can drag the saturation upward and the luminance downward. (7) It's really that simple and can be synced to multiple images in the same sequence. For the tonal adjustments, we activate the Tone Curve target adjustment tool by holding Shift, Option and Command and striking the “T” key. Since the Color Profile controls the tonal density, tweak the dark tones to be less flat simply by clicking in the shadows of the structure and dragging downward. (8)



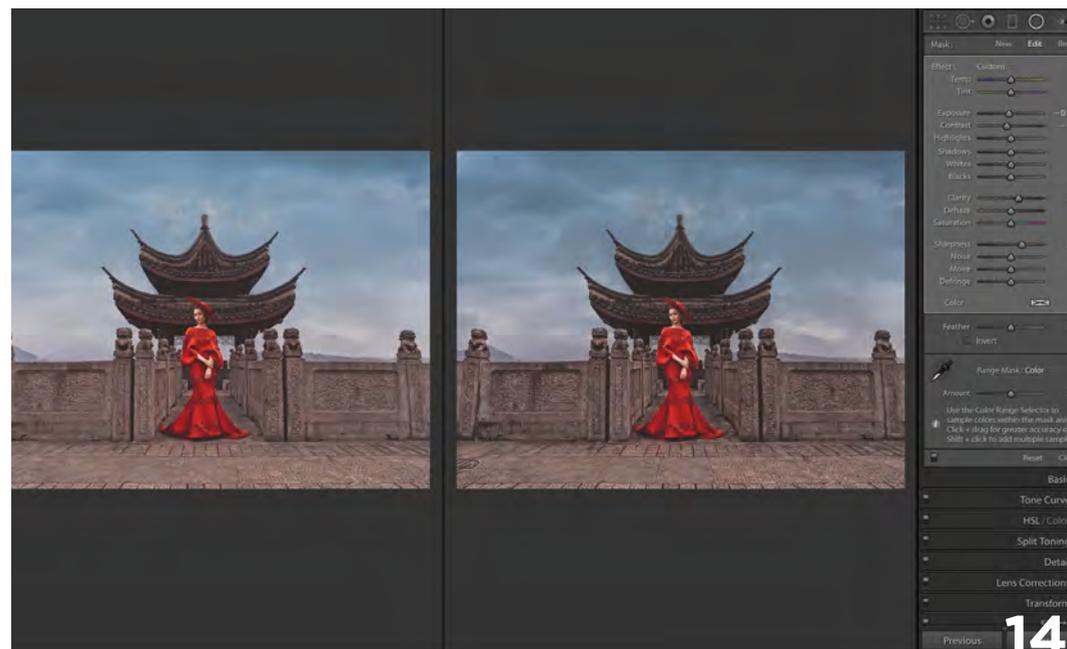
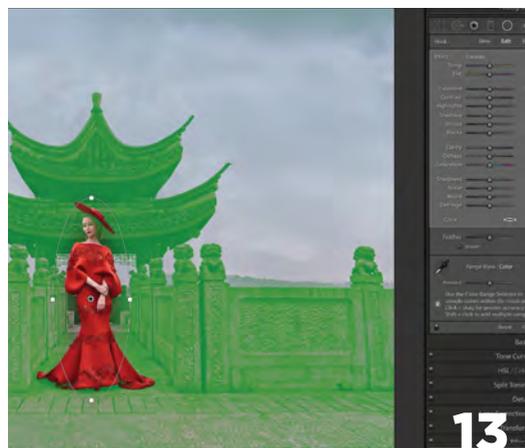
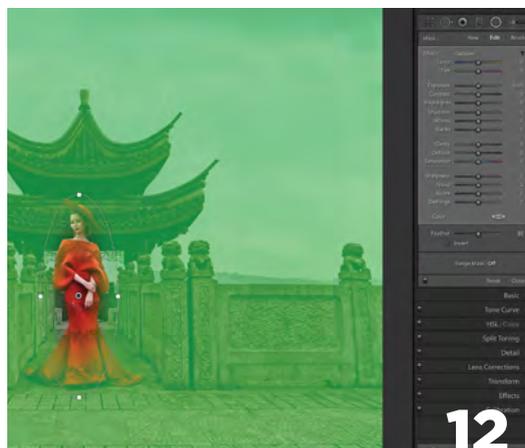
As we work through the image, you'll notice the effect of the color profile seems to disappear. Not to worry: We increase the Amount slider to bring back the color-graded effect. Now we want to make the subject pop even more by using the Radial Filter inverted. (9)



MAKE YOUR SUBJECT POP: RADIAL FILTER INVERTED

The quickest way to burn down the background in Lightroom is to invert the Radial Filter, draw an oval over the subject and drop exposure. It doesn't stop there because you will have a massive halo around your subject that looks almost as bad as an out-of-focus image. (10) Since this did most of the heavy lifting, we need to limit the range of the mask with either color or luminance. With a deep red dress and her lighter complexion, I would choose Range Mask: Color. Then grab the selector tool, hold Shift and click in the sky and the structure behind. (11)

To perfect this mask, we will add/remove areas with a brush. Only the colors included in our selected areas will be added when painting with a brush. (12) If you need to widen the range, drag the range mask Amount slider to the right or add the selected area with the dropper tool. (13) Next, erase the mask from the skin tones and where the mask is on the subject. If you want to apply different adjustments on a new pin, duplicate the pin. This is likely the most time-intensive part, but these three steps help save time. (14)



Other useful options for dodging the client are using the Adjustment Brush with Auto Mask to keep the hard edges of the dress and paint in highlights on the dress. To separate adjustments from the subject, architecture and sky, use the Graduated Filter. (15)

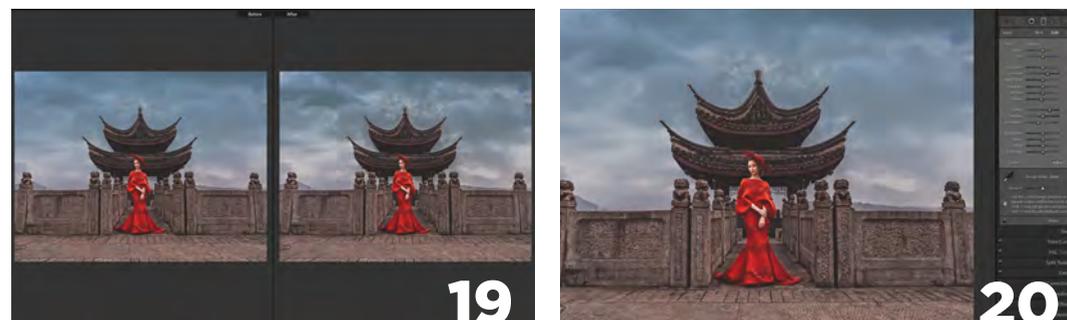
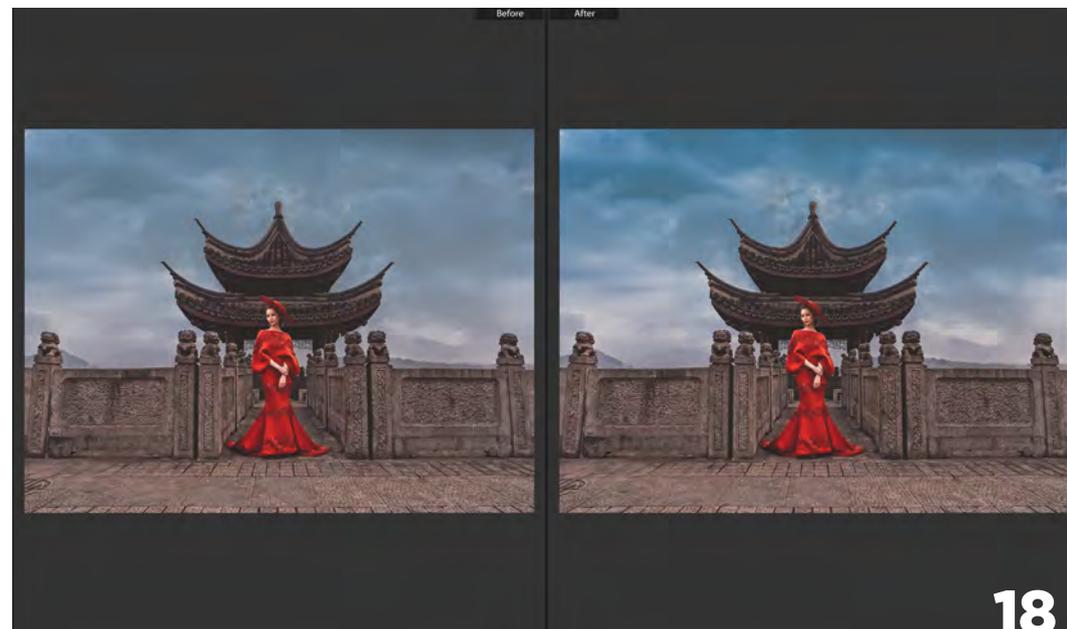


INTENSIFY YOUR SKY: GRADUATED FILTER

Striking the “M” key opens the Graduated Filter, allowing you to click and drag downward so the mask applies to the top horizon line. Everything above the filter is automatically added and the gradient is determined by how far you spread the bottom bar. (16) To adjust the bottom bar only, hold the Command key while dragging it down. Then we can quickly mask out everything but the sky with the color range mask. Using the selector tool and clicking in the sky was helped by the fact that we added some blue tones earlier. Now we can start to add effects to add intensity to the soft sky. (17)



After adding contrast, the sky starts to get too blue for my liking. This is easily fixed by lowering saturation. (18) For a more HDR effect, I add clarity to start adding intensity to the softness. (19) The same process can be done for the architecture as we add a new filter and drag upward. Then we can use the color range mask to remove the sky and subject. If some areas overlap, lower the Amount slider. Now our image is ready for some detail work. (20)





ATTENTION TO DETAILS: MASKED SHARPENING AND NOISE REDUCTION

We can attack this last step multiple ways with masking tools to precisely dial in our sharpening and noise-reduction adjustments. Start in the Details panel and zoom into your image to 1:1. Lift the Amount slider under Sharpening to bring out the details in our background. This sharpens her face too much, even after lifting the Masking tool. A fix would be to go into the Adjustment Brush, paint over her face and lift Noise to soften this sharpening. (21)

If we focus on her face for a moment to try to even out the lighting, we can enhance this image. Notice that if we try to lower the sharpening slider, her face goes out of focus. (22) Instead, we can use the skin softening technique of lowering contrast, highlights, clarity and dehaze subtly. (23) Then we add back in any sharpness to fix overly soft skin tones. (24) This image is starting to look client-ready, something I'd be happy to put in front of them to preview.



THE RESULTS

At the end of the day, it's all about the results, learning new techniques and knowing where to invest your time. Lightroom has some impressive tools, and if it can save me hours of processing dozens of images to this level, I will do what I can to stay out of Photoshop. My goal is to not slap on a preset or profile and call it a day. This edit took real time to mask in the right look and feel. Knowing how to use Lightroom and its limitations, I can edit creatives efficiently. That's the key to editing faster and better.

Try out these tips on your next edit, and tell me what you'd rather spend your time doing: spending all day perfecting an image or editing in a fraction of the time. Your clients will appreciate their preview session sooner and likely won't bat an eye at the difference. ■



Dustin Lucas is a full-time photographer and educator focused on the wedding industry and the academic world. After achieving his master of fine arts degree, a career opportunity opened once he began working with Evolve Edits. Through teaching photography classes and writing about photography, Dustin continues to expand his influence on art and business throughout the industry.

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MAKE MORE MONEY WHILE TRAVELING:

Destination Portraits
with Karen Bagley



Image © Karen Bagley



Image © Karen Bagley

I love to travel. I love learning about different cultures, tasting new food and seeing new things. It seems we all have a bit of the travel bug, which is awesome. I don't know a single photographer who wouldn't love to make money while traveling.

But how? You need a business plan outlining how you will pay for your travel. This month, I tell you how I got started and how I run the traveling portion of my business. I will never forget the endless hours I spent on social media, Instagram in particular, looking at women and couples traveling. I would sit there racking my brain, trying to figure out the perfect way to be that person, with nothing but my camera bag and a backpack of clothes, a tumbleweed blowing in the wind around these amazing locations. After talking with a fellow photographer, I realized that staring at social media was getting me nowhere—I needed to just plan a trip.

My very first attempt as a destination portrait photographer was when I went to Portland, Oregon. I asked the family members we were going to see to tell anyone and everyone that I was offering discounts on maternity and newborn sessions. I made a post on Instagram hyping myself up, and was certain everyone would see it and book me. How do you think that went? Not so great. I booked no one, didn't even get a single lead. Why? I learned rather quickly that posting one or two times on social media and having family members spread the word about you is not enough. There is much more planning and thought needed to be a destination photographer. Let's break it down.



Image © Karen Bagley

START SMALL

I live right outside of Atlanta, so I focused on a state that was near me that had a completely different look so people would clearly see I was out of state. I chose Florida. If you try to create a business across the country right out of the gate, you are making things more difficult for yourself. It is much easier to travel and communicate with clients when you are just a few hours from home. Rome wasn't built in a day, and this part of your business will not be either. Your first few sessions will be a hit to your pocket and you will probably not even break even. You just started doing this; you don't know what to charge or how you want to run this part of your business. That brings me to my next point.

KEEP EXCELLENT RECORDS

Document your spending. Traveling isn't cheap. Keep a detailed record of your outgoing costs. That gives you an idea of your revenue from the shoot. You will realize whether or not it is feasible for you and your business. If you are charging appropriately, it will be. Your record is your key to understanding what you must get out of every session. Keep in mind that money is different everywhere. If you travel to New York, things cost more, so you need to charge more. Expect a trial-and-error period. The great part about that is: more traveling. Now you have a fabulous reason to pack those bags and visit new places so you can do research. I am always looking for excuses to travel.



Image © Karen Bagley



Image © Karen Bagley

DON'T TRAVEL IN VAIN

If you have a trip planned but do not have a model or two ready and waiting for your arrival, you've already lost. You can do all of the above, but without some proof that you actually travel, do you really think someone is going to hire you for it? No way. So, when you are on these trips, shoot, shoot, shoot. I do not care what type of photographer you are. Family portraits, get a family. Senior portraits, get a senior or someone who can pass as a senior. You get the picture. If a maternity and underwater portrait photographer like me can do this, you can too. Do not go home empty-handed. I have had everything planned to a tee on a trip only to have every single model flake on me. It happens. But that did not stop me. I asked around, I found a model and I got my shots.



Image © Karen Bagley

MARKETING WILL FOREVER BE THE KEY

If you are expecting people to pay good money to either have you fly out or book you while you are on an excursion, you need images that prove you do destination photography. You can't market yourself if you don't have any images to support what you want to accomplish. The reason I was unsuccessful with my trip to Oregon is because I didn't plan far enough ahead. You can't expect to plan a spontaneous trip and book enough people to pay for it. You must have a plan in place. Your clients need time to plan too. This is a business, not a hobby. Have a plan.

My marketing was terrible. You have to communicate multiple times to as many eyes as possible that you are traveling. Making a post once or twice on social media does not cut it. If you are running ads, target people in the location you are going to. I know that may seem obvious, but it gets overlooked a lot.

I didn't have any eye-grabbing photos that even remotely looked like I traveled. That's where the test travels with models comes into play.

So you have done everything I've described above. You have three planned trips for the year, you're posting like mad, giving everyone plenty of notice, and you even have a model in case everything goes wrong and no one books you. Do we leave it at that? No. There are other things you need to start doing immediately if you want to make money while traveling.



Image © Karen Bagley



Image © Karen Bagley

TAG PEOPLE AND PLACES IN YOUR PHOTOS

As soon as you have photos to share, tag them like crazy. When you are posting on social media, use the resources available to you. Tag travel pages and pages in your niche field. Use both hashtags and account tagging for the most effective combo. For an underwater portrait gig, I used the hashtags #bahamas, #livetoeexplore and #underwaterwednesday. Tagging people and places in your photos puts you in front of more and more eyes. Besides hashtags, I would actually tag the Bahamas' official Instagram account in my post. It's an underused tactic to get noticed by bigger accounts, and it works great. They may even share your work with their followers.

There is a hashtag for every traveling photographer, regardless of what you photograph. Tagging is especially important for those who do landscapes or real estate photography, and those who work with modeling agencies. As your traveling business grows, because you are hashtagging and marketing appropriately, businesses will start to notice you and they will be calling you to take pictures of people and places around the world. Can you imagine being paid to travel? I can tell you from experience it is pretty freaking amazing. It is very worth all the effort you put in. ■



Karen Bagley is an award-winning photographer and the owner of Significant Moments Photography who specializes in maternity and underwater portraiture. She is a wife and a mother to two girls, and enjoys sharing her knowledge with other photo professionals. Karen's a high-energy artist who constantly creates new ways to make everything she does fun.
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LOCATION TIPS FOR PHOTOGRAPHERS

with Alissa Zimmerman

Locations can make or break an entire shoot. There are a lot of factors that go into finding the perfect location, whether you're shooting locally or traveling. Here are my top tips for finding locations and managing the process, and some of the variables involved.

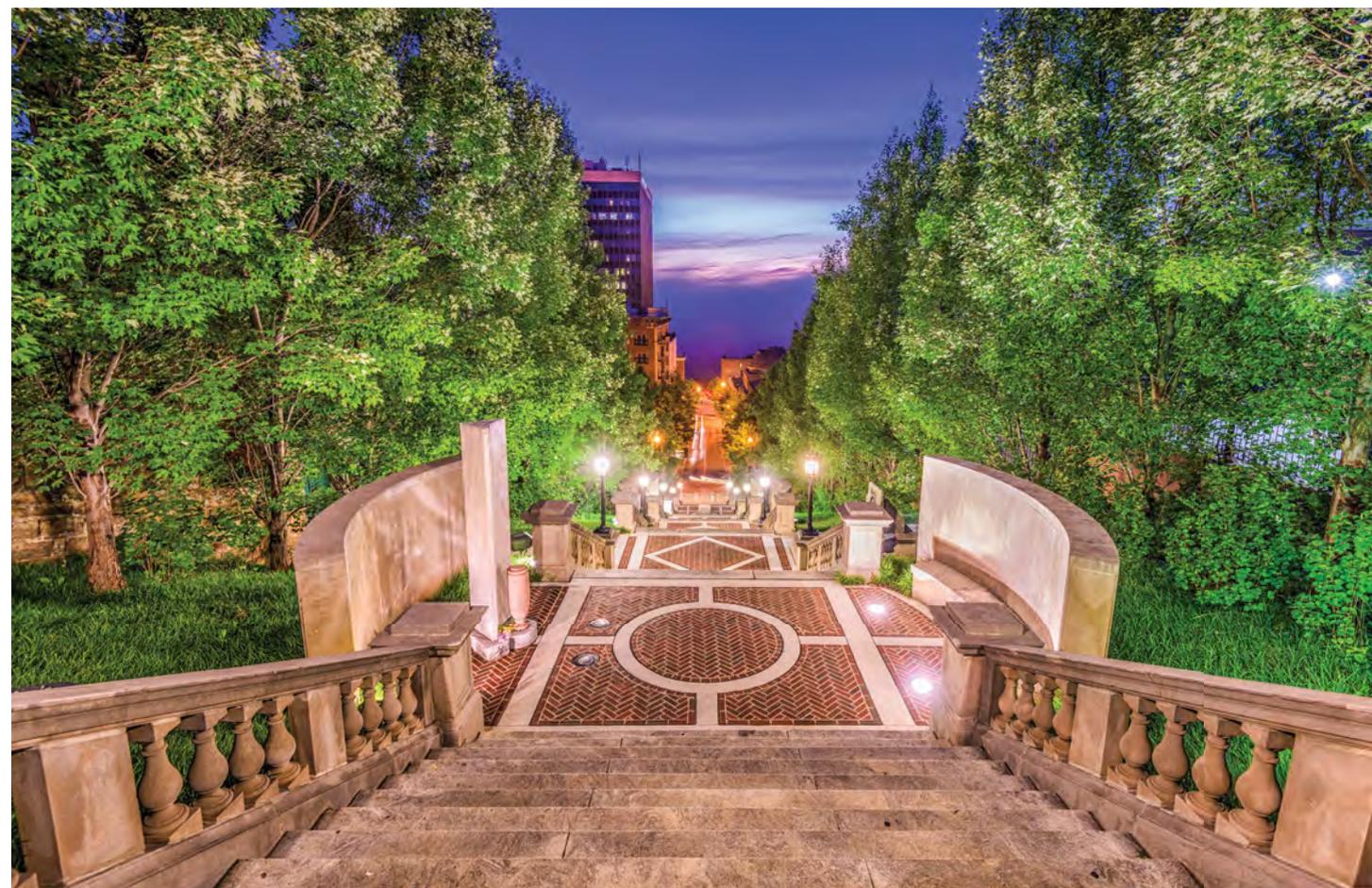
Whether you're looking for a handful of go-to spots for local photo sessions (which I highly recommend) or trying to find one epic spot for a destination session, doing the proper legwork ahead of time ensures you don't run into too many bumps the day of the shoot—and if you do hit any bumps, you will be prepared for them.

GO-TO LOCAL SPOTS

For go-to local spots, you have the luxury of scouting in person. Go-to local spots are those locations you have in your arsenal when a client says they want a park or urban backdrop. We don't let our clients pick the exact location for their photo shoot. Instead, we ask them if they want a park, urban setting or a combo. We arrange a meeting spot, then have them follow us to one of the locations in our pre-scouted arsenal. Keep it simple.

Search on Google for 10 to 15 urban and green settings. Take a day and drive to each spot. See how many unique shots you can get out of this one location. Is the location good for just one angle? Are there multiple angles and looks? If it's the former, nix it. Use that spot for a one-off shot if you have time.

Local locations are all about speed and efficiency. Be smart about building your arsenal. You need to be able to shoot there at any time of the day. We use the app TPE (The Photographer's Ephemeris) to measure the direction of light throughout the day at all of our locations when we are scouting.





DESTINATION SESSIONS

This is where things start to get tricky because you don't have the luxury of hopping in your car to scout whenever you'd like.

Schedule a day before the shoot to scout the locations you've already mapped out online. So many times over the years when mapping out locations online and getting all excited about them, we showed up only to realize they'd been completely altered in Photoshop or didn't exist at all. Do your legwork upfront. I use Google Maps religiously for destination sessions. I start my process by going to Pinterest and typing, "unique locations in austin." I create a board and call it Austin Locations, then pin anything to the board that piques my interest.

Next, research each spot you find interesting. Figure out which ones are realistic (some may be three hours outside the city you're traveling to), put the locations in Google Maps and look at each in Street View to get an idea of what's around.

Now start to put together a mood board. Keep it simple. Use a few pictures for inspiration and potential shot ideas. Put the name of the location with the distance from wherever you're staying at the top of the page.

PERMITS

Don't underestimate the power—and legal requirement—of a permit. Photographers are notorious for believing they can do whatever they want whenever they want. Permits are a necessary part of every shoot we do.

Want to look like a complete idiot in front of your clients? Here's how:

Step 1: Send the mood board to your client and get them all excited about the super cool locations you found for their session.

Step 2: Show up to said super cool location with your client for their session.

Step 3: Once you have the shot set up and you're ready to shoot, Ranger Bob approaches and asks if you have a permit. You don't.

Step 4: Ranger Bob kicks you out of the location and you have no backup spot.

Congratulations. You look like a total idiot in front of your client—the client who paid you lots and lots of money to be a professional and provide a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Always get a permit.



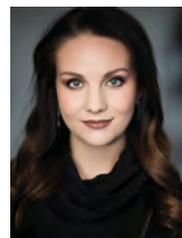


UNDERSTAND TIME

There's this beautiful and rare thing in life called time. Most people don't understand time, especially when organizing travel and photo sessions. Give yourself wiggle room. It's always better to have too much time than to scramble to get the shot.

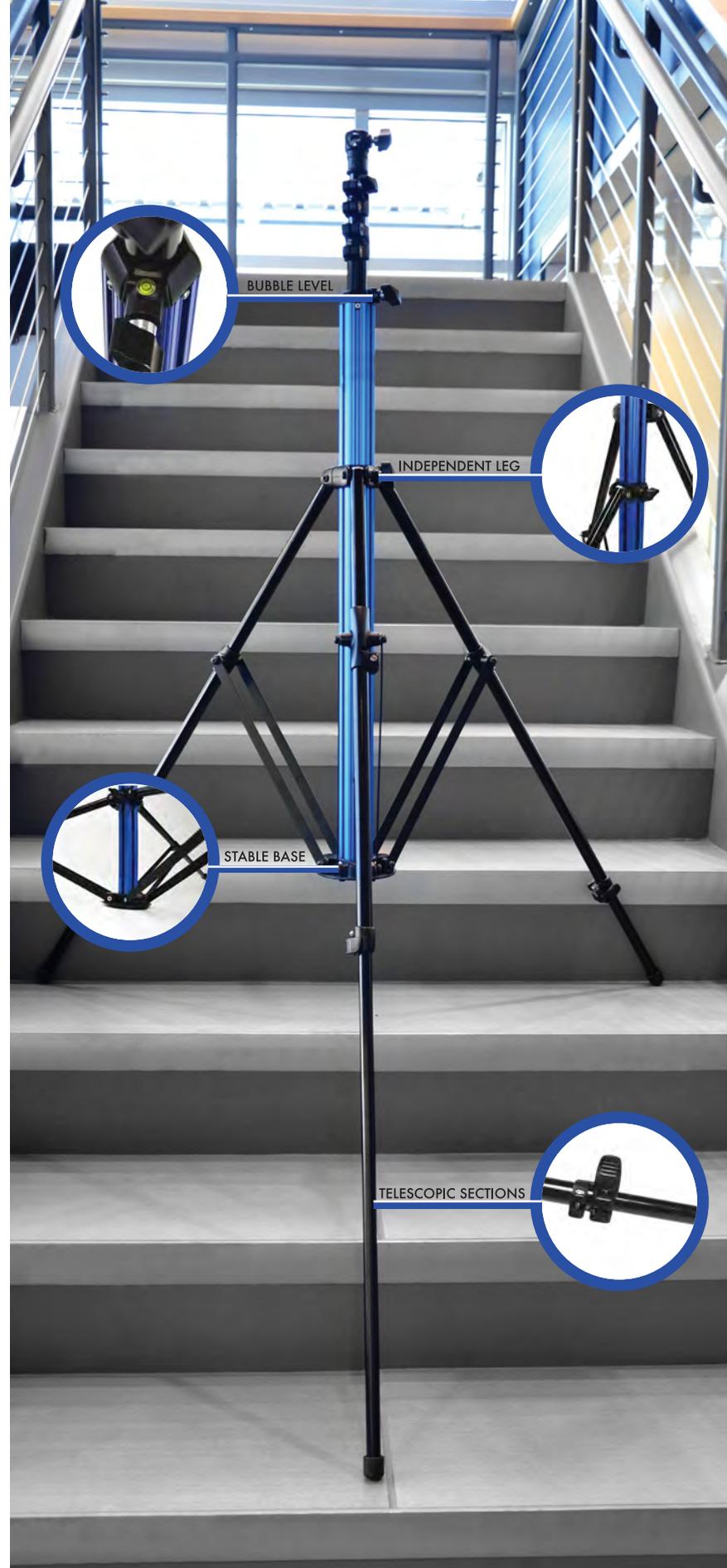
If Google Maps says it takes 45 minutes to get from point A to point B, allow at least an hour of drive time. Always factor in additional time for traffic or running behind on hair and makeup.

If you are rushing through your shoot because of an unrealistic timeline, you could walk away from your shoot with few useable images. Give yourself enough time to focus on all the little details that go into creating the perfect image. ■



Alissa Zimmerman graduated with a degree in television production and has been a part of the Salvatore Cincotta team since 2011. Today she is behind the camera regularly as Sal's second shooter and as the executive producer and camera operator for Salvatore Cincotta Films, Behind the Shutter and Sal Cincotta's School of Photography. Alissa is the creative director for *Shutter Magazine* and serves as Sal's right hand, managing daily operations within the family of Salvatore Cincotta brands.

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HOW TO PACK LIGHTER FOR TRAVEL PHOTOGRAPHY

with Phillip Blume



Image © Blume Photography

After one long travel month in 2017, my wife Eileen and I felt utterly pooped. And I don't use the word *pooped* lightly, mostly because it triggers endless fits of giggling from our kids. (Oh, and did I mention our career includes traveling the world with three children under age nine?)

On that trip through Europe, our Blume trio were just three, four and six years old. Imagine the luggage. Aside from clothes, toys and emergency diapers, Eileen and I hauled three cases of photo gear for fashion and wedding shoots. Navigating airport security was a nightmare. Our kids, exhausted beyond reason, would drop boneless to the floor while our name echoed over an intercom: "Paging the Blume family. Last boarding call before departure." Yes, we've missed a flight due to a bathroom emergency. Not good.

Where was the old thrill we'd experienced as destination photographers? It was buried under a mountain of luggage and stress. But our kids weren't the problem. If you know us, you know how strongly we believe that business/family balance are achievable and stronger together. We had to find a new packing system that brought joy back into our on-the-go lifestyle.

Let's look at our five essential categories we use to save space, the gear we bring and, finally, Peak Design's new Travel Backpack that lets us access everything in one bag.

CATEGORY 1: CORE GEAR

Your camera and light options are the core of your gear. Without them, you can't draw with light, so make sure you have exactly what you need.

You can't sacrifice these items on the altar of minimalism, but you can make space-efficient choices. Last year we made the jump to the Sony mirrorless system. I heard the early concerns from some—that mirrorless cameras felt too small, like toys. I chuckled, imagining a 19th century photographer saying the same thing when the first handheld camera replaced the giant camera obscura. Ansel Adams would've been thrilled if he didn't have to haul his camera across the Grand Canyon on a wagon.

I'm thrilled because I can fit two Sony a7iii camera bodies in the same space where I fit just one DSLR before. And they weigh just 1.4 pounds each, not 4. We'll go into the lighter lens options in a minute.



Off-camera lighting is the same story. Just over a year ago, I carried a customized suitcase just for my strobe and its battery. Now I toss two tiny Godox AD200 flashes into my carry-on as an afterthought. They're affordable and powerful. They can work together or be each other's backup. You can already imagine why a shoot-through umbrella is my favorite travel modifier—it's so compact. But here's a secret every traveler should know: Only the Westcott 43-inch White Satin Diffusion umbrella (neither the larger nor smaller option) has a shaft that telescopes to half its length. When I cannot fit a softbox, I carry an extra large silver-side reflector cover. Drape the fabric around the open umbrella for a makeshift softbox that pushes light forward and prevents spill.



CATEGORY 2: LENSES

I love prime lenses, especially for travel. They're sharp, fast-focusing and have fewer moving parts to break when they're being jostled around in my backpack. I especially love the lightweight lenses of the Sony mirrorless system. That was the bright promise of mirrorless: a small camera that paired with equally small yet uncompromised glass. In practice, most lens makers found it easier to continue producing enormous, heavy lenses fitted for the new mirrorless mounts, which made the whole idea pointless.

After a lot of testing, I've found three very lightweight prime lenses I love: the Sony FE 28mm f/2, the Sony FE 85mm f/1.8 and the Sony Sonnar FE 55mm f/1.8 ZA. I don't put much stock in a "luxury lens" just because of its brand name, and don't shy away from inexpensive lenses I've tried and loved. These lenses perform better overall than some much more expensive lenses.

But the most important consideration in lens choice is variety: Choose both a wide-angle lens and a longer portrait lens to cover both ends of the range. A pairing of either a wide 24mm or 35mm along with a telephoto 85mm or 135mm is very popular among wedding and portrait photographers. My oddball 28mm gets me right in the middle with a great lightweight lens, and I still prefer the 85mm f/1.8 for its smaller form factor and amazing bokeh (over the trendy 135mm, which is massive and pushes me back farther from my subject).

What about your favorite 70–200mm f/2.8 that's the size of a Scud missile? Unless you have a dedicated sherpa to tote it for you, leave it at home. Throw your 85mm on a crop-sensor camera or use a higher-pixel camera (like the Sony a7Riii) and crop in. The compromise is worth the ease of travel I gain.



CATEGORY 3: BACKUP GEAR

Backups are even more important when you're a thousand miles from a camera shop. I carry a small, versatile 24–70mm f/4 backup lens for worst-case scenarios. In addition to my AD200's, I pack a couple Godox Mini TT350's. This flash fits in the palm of your hand, syncs with the Godox/Flashpoint systems and performs in a pinch. It's also a backup trigger for my strobes, and is almost as small as the XPro Trigger.





Image © Blume Photography

CATEGORY 4: ACCESSORIES

Accessories are fun and can save you a lot of room. Even if you use the super compact 5001B Nano light stand from Manfrotto, have you considered how much weight it adds? Now I make my light stands appear out of thin air. How? Easy. I pack only the head of the stand. Wherever I go, I look for a broom handle/rebar/stick and mount the head to my new makeshift “monopod.” I can even whittle down a fallen branch using my travel-safe pocket saw, giving an assistant full control over the light.

A full-size Joby GorillaPod is a brilliant replacement for your tripod. But if you just need pods to give tactical footing to your flashes, consider the much smaller GripTight GorillaPod. It’s perfect for light setups with any small flash, and its magnetic feet stick to metal.

Your best space-saving accessories are flat and cheap. Always carry your flash’s cold shoe (the little plastic foot that came with it that you almost threw away). It’s useful on the go, as are MagMod’s small lightning-fast light modifiers, in place of large Velcro grids and gels. Grab a bag of generic ball bungees from Amazon while you’re at it; use them to strap wet clothes and jackets to the outside of your backpack and to fasten strobes securely together into one unit. No expensive, bulky speed ring required.

We’ve replaced our specialized macro lens with a simple plastic extension tube adapter, and we’ve replaced our oversize camera strap system with the almost invisibly small SpiderLight holsters from SpiderHolster. So many ways to save space.



CATEGORY 5: APPAREL

You want to look professional for your clients, feel comfortable traveling and have a variety of clothes to choose from. Here are some tips on packing clothes.

For any length of trip, I pack two pants (plus a third pair I wear in flight), three pairs of shorts, three t-shirts and/or button-ups, and just enough socks and underwear. The quantity allows me time to wash (or at least air out) along the way.

The real trick is to pack colors that complement each other. Think white balance. Just pack cool or warmer tones. Stick to one. Then you can mix and match pieces for variety along the way. If you've seen Marie Kondo's *Tidying Up*, you've seen her now famous rolling method for clothes. Hikers have been doing this for centuries. Instead of folding wrinkles into clothes, roll them up into large freezer bags and push the air out. You save so much room and get fewer wrinkles.

On our family's recent month-long trip to Asia, we traveled in both cold and tropical climates. The solution was not to pack winter clothes, but to layer. Buy a compressible down coat and a separate waterproof shell. They can disappear into a side pocket on your backpack when not in use.



THE TRAVEL PACK: 45L PEAK DESIGN TRAVEL BACKPACK

Whether you plan to solo-trek or lead a family of five, there's something liberating about traveling with just one bag. But is it really possible for photographers?

I think I've found a perfect solution with the Peak Design Travel Backpack. It's a true photographer's travel pack, not a camera bag, for daily workflow. It's packed with such innovative features that it's streamlined how we travel. Stress gone, thrill back. Let's look at some of those features.



It expands into three sizes, which allowed me to adapt on the spot for different needs in Asia—as a substitute smaller camera bag during shoots, to maximize space as a carry-on and for heavy overland hauls. It might not be Mary Poppins' magical carpetbag, but with its secret compartments, anti-theft features and magnetic enclosures that close themselves to hide excess straps, it feels pretty darn close.

The best feature are the killer Camera Cubes. Choose from three of these proprietary inserts for its three-layer packing system. Each uses origami-style dividers for safer, fuller packing. The large Camera Cube fills the entire Travel Backpack if you're packing only gear. The medium Cube fills two-thirds of the pack. Smaller cubes don't slide around since they mount securely to the bag's interior (real clips, not Velcro). As a gear minimalist, I was thrilled to be able to fit my complete travel kit into the small Camera Cube with my AD200 at its side.



Nothing beats Peak Design's customization for photographers. This photographer's company makes equipment that regular travelers love too. These hand-in-glove accessories make my job 10 times easier. You have many ways to enter the Travel Backpack's main compartment. As deceptively simple as its surface appears, in reality it's a mosaic of endless openings strung together by zippers—an engineering wonder that lets you access specific pieces of gear without unpacking a thing. I swing the pack onto my shoulder and open just the right-side panel to slide out my camera or flash without putting down my bag.

Check out my video to see me unpack my kit. I found it on Amazon for \$299. Save \$35 at B&H now for the Travel Backpack + Small Camera Cube combo (available in Sage).

CONCLUSION

Coming home after four weeks abroad, where all my possessions lived on my back, it's funny how attached I became to this pack. I have only one or two minor complaints, which I go over in the video, but they're not problems as long as you're aware of them. I can see myself keeping this bag forever, and I can't wait for the next trip. ■



Phillip and Eileen Blume are award-winning photographers just crazy enough to believe art can change the world. Having transformed their small-town home studio into a top brand, they now work with clients worldwide. The Blumes specialize in wedding and fashion photography, and continue to focus on what matters most to them: charitable projects that include adoption advocacy and documentary filmmaking to benefit children living in extreme poverty. Phillip is a monthly contributor to *Shutter Magazine*, and together the Blumes speak at numerous top industry events, have appeared on CreativeLIVE and have shared their inspiring vision of more meaningful photography from the TEDx stage. They are owners of three photography brands, including a newborn studio, and are the proud founders of ComeUnity Workshops for photographers who seek balance. They live with their children in rural Georgia.

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So, you are ready to take things up a notch. Travel the world. Get those high-impact shots. Set yourself apart. I'm excited for you! Nothing feeds the creative soul like new locations and exciting concepts. But not all destinations are the same. The best places to shoot are difficult to access, loaded with tourists or bring unexpected curve balls. Planning is the only way to make sure your photographic travel adventure is a success. Here are some things you need to do no matter your destination.

YOU CAN'T WING IT. DON'T EVEN TRY.

Getting all your details in order for a destination shoot is much more involved than your regular local spots. I use planning boards. These boards have color swatches, drawings of concepts and gowns, model/client info, fees, printed images of possible shoot spots and anything else pertaining to each shoot. This is extremely helpful when you are doing multiple shoots in one trip. Keeping things organized is key. It is easy to get overwhelmed when trying to organize things from afar.

We put everything for one shoot into a designated bag. Each bag was like a session kit containing accessories, info, attire and anything else we may need, all in one place. It's easy to pack, and we know we have all the elements needed. We also have a "shoot kit," which is like a travel tacklebox. We use a plastic storage box for crafting that has dividers. In it you will find: needle, thread, bobby pins, safety pins, super glue, scissors, lotion, Chapstick, wipes, hairspray and a comb. Depending on where we are going and what we are shooting, we add things. This kit is so handy. It fits in a backpack and is easy to grab. It keeps us prepared for anything that may come up in a quick and efficient way.

Research where you are going to shoot. Check regulations, permit requirements and fees. Most can be found online. The last thing you want to do is get jailed in a foreign country for trespassing. Never underestimate the power of using nontraditional sources for your planning. Official websites and guides are always good as a starting point, but travel blogs, Instagram and Reddit can provide more diverse details like secret locations with less tourist traffic, best times of day for certain light or access, and even up-to-date info regarding access. It's crazy how large locations can be closed for construction or unexpected work, and it's never mentioned on official sites. Planning a shoot around a location you can't access can be devastating. Be respectful of posted signs. I know it's hard when you see the perfect place just outside of where you are allowed to be, but if we don't respect boundaries and guidelines, more places will stop allowing photographers altogether, and we don't want that.



KNOW IF YOU ARE GOING TO NEED HELP.

When we went to Europe to do five shoots, we knew that a few of the spots were going to be trickier and require a few extra hands. Brief your team. Make sure everyone knows the plan ahead of time. A great team can help make the seemingly impossible possible. Planning ahead told us how to divide gear, plan our attack to shoot and be the least intrusive we could be to the other visitors. If a location requires more help, gear and planning than what you have done, visit it as just a guest, do recon work and save it for next time. Half-assing does you no good.

With even the best-laid plans, things can go wrong. It's just the way the universe works. When I started planning a shoot in London, I had one shot with Big Ben that was at the top of my priority list. We researched, hired models, created a gown and knew exactly what we had to do to get it. It was going to be one of the cornerstone images from my Europe trip. The day before, we did a dry run to check access of the shoot spot before we had a paid model on the clock. So we jumped in a taxi and headed down toward the Parliament Building. As our taxi came closer, we noticed scaffolding and cranes near Big Ben. My heart started pounding, and as we arrived, we saw that Big Ben was completely covered in scaffolding for a multi-year renovation. All the planning, all the research, and we hadn't a clue that our shot was not possible.

After giving myself a minute to mourn the plan we had made, we started walking. We quickly landed at a park near Parliament that gave us amazing views with a stunning gazebo. The end result was a stellar shot. Sometimes plan B can be even better than plan A. Don't get so focused on what you thought was going to happen that you can't see all the wonderful possibilities around you.





HAVE A GAME PLAN.

Reserved location or not, you need to know what you are going to do. When working around crowded areas, you need to get in and get out. The more time you spend disrupting the peace, the more likely you will be asked to leave. Again, I don't advocate breaking rules or being disrespectful, but take advantage of gray areas. No rules posted? Fair game. What's the worst they can do? Ask you to stop or leave?

While in Ireland, we relished in the excitement of spontaneous shoots. Our van was like a mini session closet. All the gowns we brought were in the back. Accessories, bumps and gear ready to go at all times. Some of the most insane spots were places we just happened upon. It became a game for our crew. Castles were our favorites. I wore a backpack at all times. In it was a gown, a bump and one light. My husband wore a backpack that carried my camera and other goodies. We would go on the normal tours, get ideas for where we wanted to shoot and then it was game time. In a matter of minutes, we would slip one of our travel partners into a bump and gown, add a wig to make sure we had a maximum variety of looks and then shoot as quickly, efficiently and quietly as we could.

We had specific shots that were our goals. We would get what we needed and then either leave or change her back and continue being regular tourists. We had at least one person who was in charge of interference. If someone started asking what we were doing or asked us to stop, someone in our group (usually my hubby since he is a smooth talker) would intercept and speak with them. We never argued. Never put up a fight. The whole purpose of this person was to simply buy me a few minutes. Westminster Abby Courtyard was the only place we had to implement this plan. Holy cow, they were on us fast. They started coming over as soon as we started setting up. We didn't even know photography wasn't allowed in this area. It looked like an alley to us. I managed to get two shots before we were sternly escorted out of the area. But I got what I needed and a fun story too. (Keep in mind we also towed a 10-year-old, 12-year-old and 3-month-old to all of these shoots. The older boys got really good at carrying gear, watching the baby and being lookouts.)







Images © Casey Dittmer



KEEP IT SIMPLE

There are already so many factors outside your control. Do not make things harder on yourself. Keep gear simple. Think about what can be carried on your person, what can be assembled and then stowed quickly. Know how everything works. Don't try to figure out new systems as you go. Overcomplicating it causes added stress and then you won't even enjoy yourself.

What's the point of all of this if you can't have a good time? Roll with it. Breathe. Enjoy the ride and make some memories. ■



Casey Dittmer is an award-winning published photographer from western Colorado. As a 17-year veteran of the photographic industry, Casey has seen trends, economies and businesses come and go. She loves traveling and sharing her knowledge in the hope that it will help other photographers build a strong base for their business and avoid some of the roadblocks she has encountered.

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INSPIRATIONS

Inspiration can come when you least expect it. As photographers, we are visual artists. We express ourselves through our camera and the images we create. Inspirations represents a sampling of our industry and the vision of professional photographers from around the world.

Congratulations to all our featured artists. Be inspired and create something that is *you*.

Sal Cincotta, *Editor-in-chief*

BEST TRAVEL IMAGE

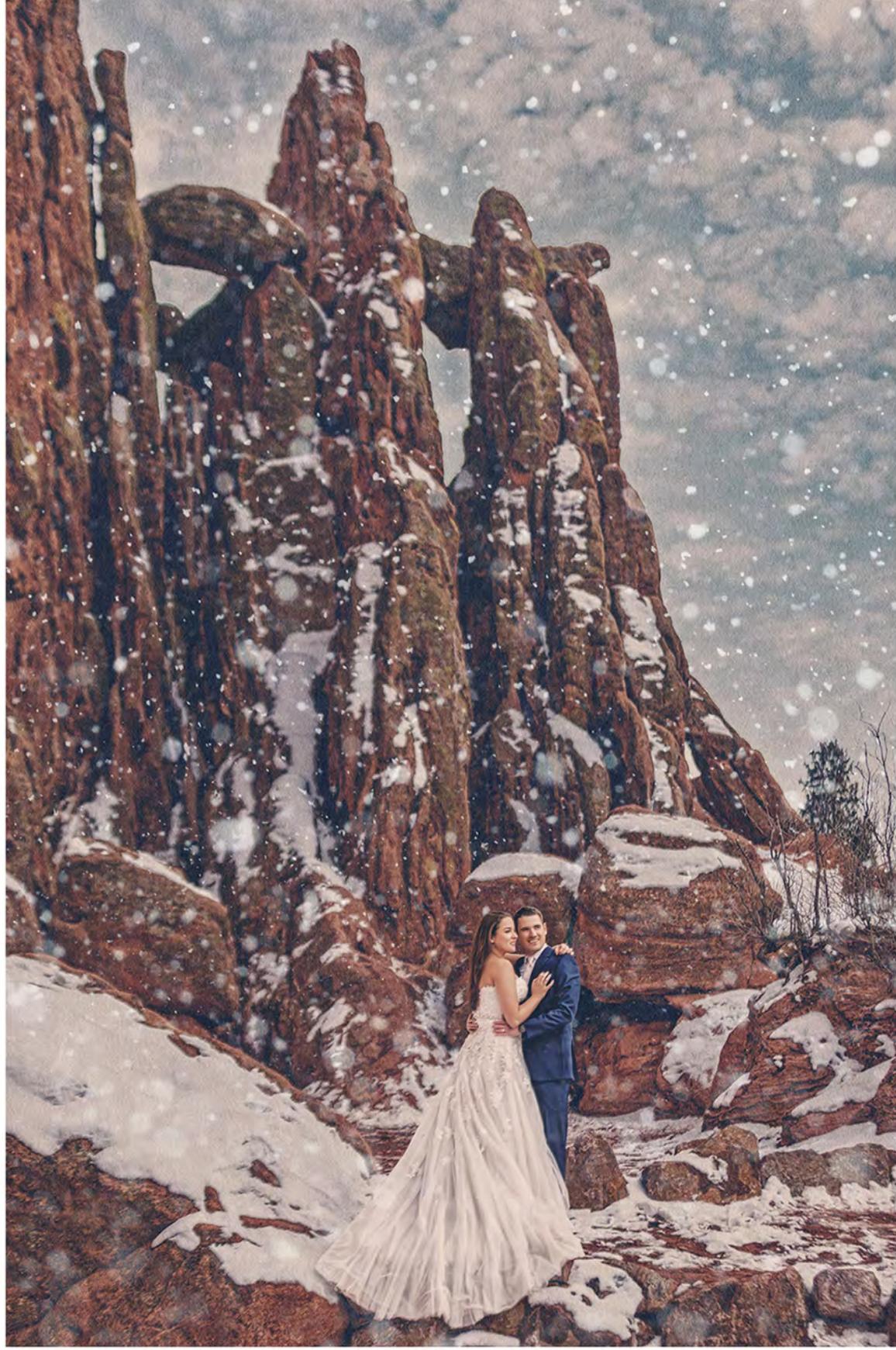


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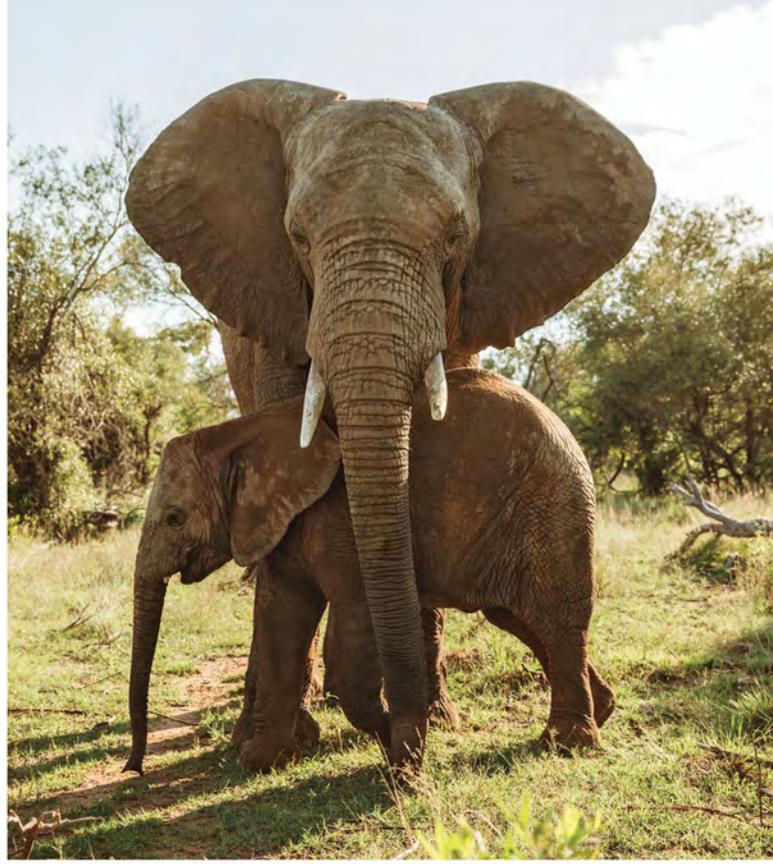


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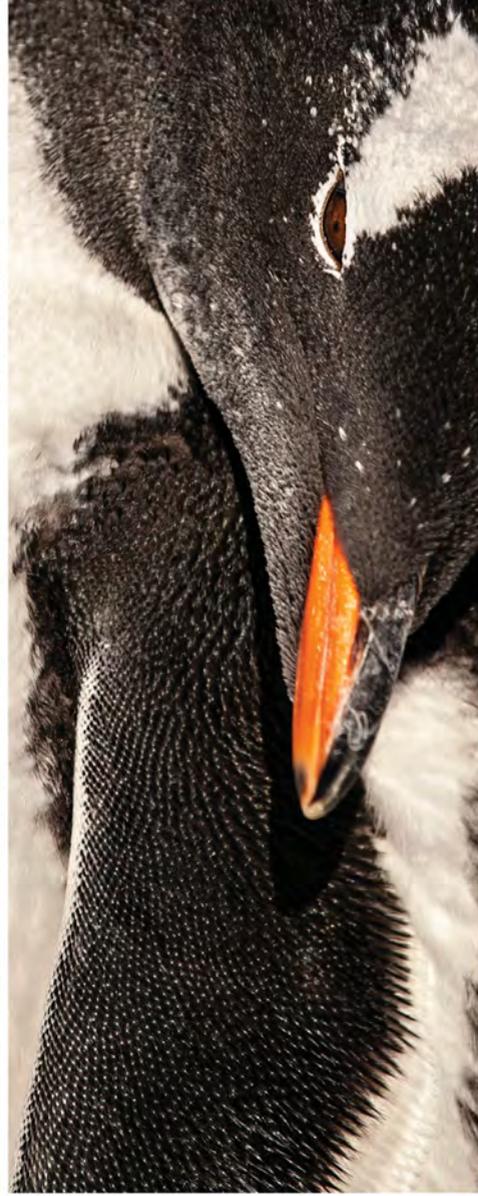
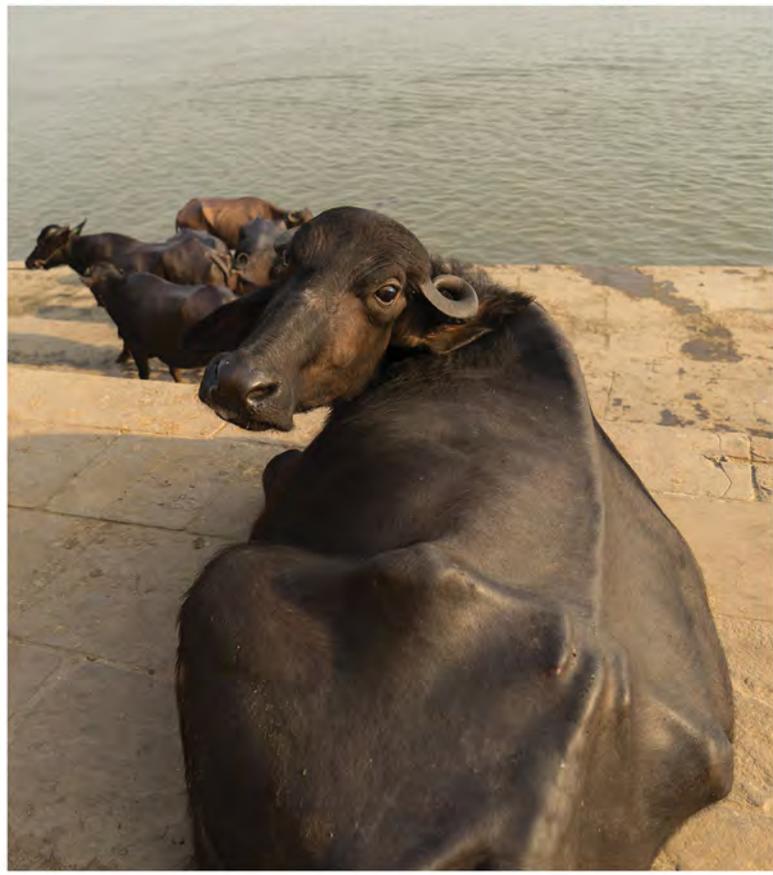


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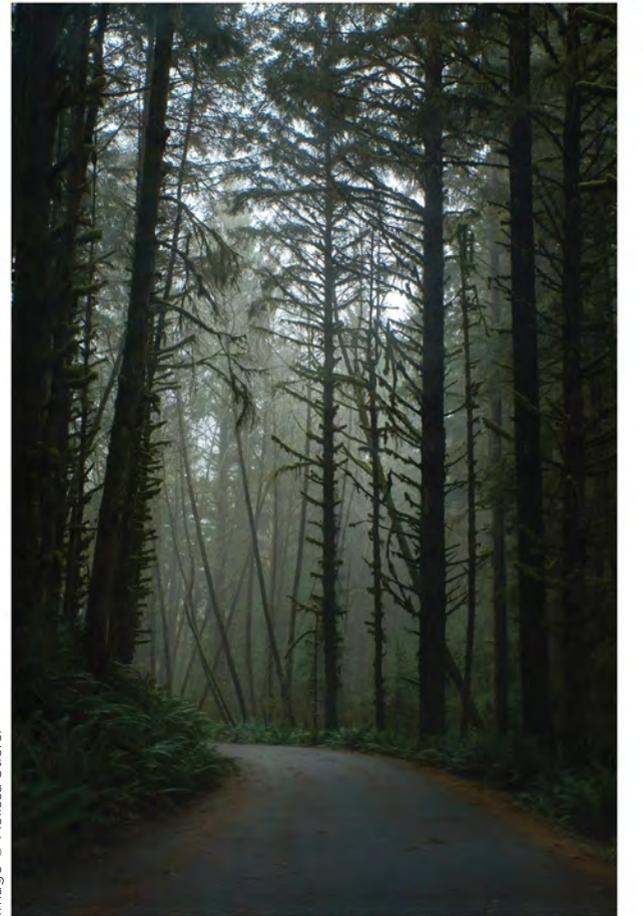


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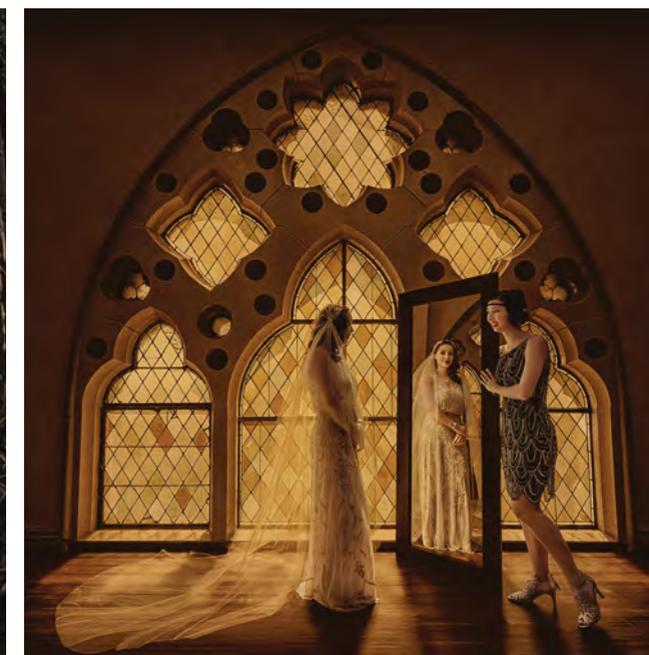
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PORTRAITS WITH IMPACT

with Michael Corsentino





The best portraits, and those I strive to produce, have impact. The elements that provide that are numerous and differ from subject to subject. But they remain a fairly consistent and solid list of potential contributors. The longer I've made portraits, 40-plus years, the more steadfast I am in the belief that it all starts with lighting. Whether soft, hard or anything in between, each quality of light and shadow imparts emotion and drama to help tell a unique story. Lighting's job is to support the story you're trying to tell rather than distract from it.

Other elements that can add impact include your choice of background: a location or color, physical attributes, skin color, wardrobe, hats, jewelry, cigars, cigarettes, sunglasses, cars, motorcycles, musical instruments, essentially anything that helps tell your subject's story. I refer to many of these as props, and I always ask my subjects to bring a range of options. They make a significant difference in the end result, give your subjects something familiar that comforts them and something you can use to build a portrait around.

Originally this portrait shoot was supposed to be with Vlad, a guy I know who could easily be mistaken for a rap star or hip hop mogul if you didn't know otherwise. His dark black skin, long distinctive beard, thin cigars and signature cool sunglasses are all the props I was prepared to use to design his portrait around. Due to family commitments, he had to reschedule, so we'll catch Vlad in another tutorial. But Travis, who I also wanted to shoot, was available and stepped in. These are two very different people, so their portrait lighting and the props that help define them would be different too.

Travis loves music as much I do. We've spent hours spinning records together. When he showed at the studio wearing an awesome red hat, gold chain and white T-shirt, he looked like he was channeling a New Orleans blues musician. I decided to follow that lead and design the lighting around that vibe. I wanted it to look like it was shot in a club or on a stage. I used red and blue gels—red from the front, camera right, and blue from the back, camera left.



Image © Michael Correntino



Image © Michael Correntino

Gels are tricky business. I'm continually reminded they are a less-is-more proposition. The less light you put through them, the more saturated the color they create. Too much light quickly washes them out. So I used two 600-watt daylight Fresnels, one for each of the two colored gels.

I also set up a Mola Demi Beauty Dish with a silver interior to serve as a crisp, contrasty keylight. This highly polished reflector works wonderfully with dark-skinned subjects. I set my aperture at f16, ISO 100, shutter speed 100, metered the strobe to match f16 and made a few test exposures. It was clear right away that the white light from the strobe, while properly exposed, was too strong with respect to the gels. Nearly all of their color was being washed out by the strobe's white light.



Image © Michael Corsentino



Lighting and photography in general is an evolving problem-solving process where you start with an idea, see what happens and make adjustments as you go. In this case, I liked the color I was getting from the gels but it wasn't strong enough to compete with the strobe I was using for the keylight. Time to rethink my strategy.

Image © Michael Corsentino

First, I needed to do whatever I could to get as much color out of the gels as possible. To do this, I first changed my camera settings to ISO 800, opened my aperture to f5.6 and dialed in a 1/50 shutter speed. Next, I focused each Fresnel's beam into a tight spotlight that helped increase the color intensity from the gels. I turned off the strobe being used as the keylight and tried using only the two lights with gels on them. I liked what I was seeing but it still wasn't what I wanted. The lighting lacked the crispness you get with a strobe, especially one modified with a silver reflector.

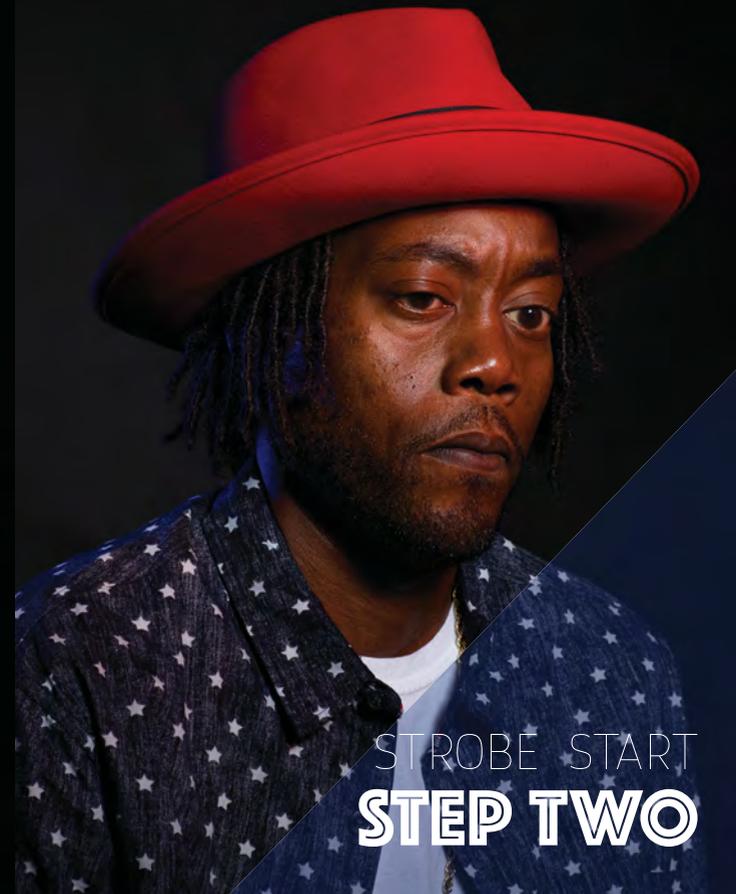
I cut the power of the strobe to its lowest possible setting and made a test exposure. Still too much light. I put a 20-degree grid spot in front of the beauty dish to confine the beam of light from the key to a tight circle and cut some of its light. Still too bright. I added two layers of neutral-density gel inside the beauty dish covering the flash and a diffusion sock on the front of the beauty dish. That did the trick. The amount of light being contributed by the flash ended up being very small, but added just enough white light and crispness to make the lighting pop.

By changing my ISO to 800, I increased the camera's sensitivity to light and made it much easier to get highly saturated colors from the gels and constant lights. Using a 1/50 of a second shutter speed was necessary since I needed a slower speed to capture the ambient light. In the end, it was a subtle balancing act between flash and constant light. The slower shutter speed had the added benefit of giving the exposures a natural-looking softness via the resulting motion blur. Between the two sources, strobe, constant light and the camera settings, I ended up with the best of both worlds, tons of color, a hint of crispness from the keylight and a softening motion blur.





WITHOUT STROBE
STEP ONE



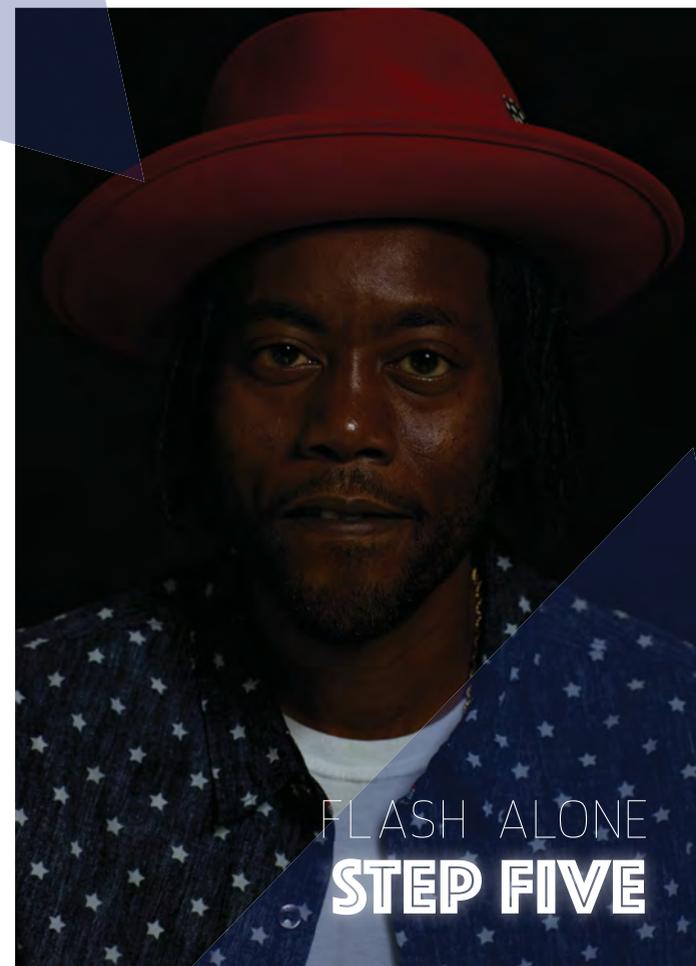
STROBE START
STEP TWO



RED LIGHT ALONE
STEP THREE



BLUE LIGHT ALONE
STEP FOUR



FLASH ALONE
STEP FIVE

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Quality moments deserve reliving.
Print their adventures.



Color grading also plays an important role in all my work. I create or choose a color grading style at the beginning of each session. Styles are just like Lightroom presets. Even though I do this at the beginning of sessions, I think of color grading as the finishing touch for my images. For this set of images, I used a color grading style from Capture One's new Editorial Style Pack. ■

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Michael Corsentino is an Orlando, Florida-based editorial fashion and portrait photographer. In addition to his busy shooting schedule, Michael is a passionate educator, teaching workshops domestically and internationally. He is an author of two books, writes a monthly lighting column for *Shutter Magazine* and is a regular contributor to *Photoshop User* magazine and *JointheBreed.com*.

michaelcorsentino.com

BE YOUR OWN DAMN *guru*

with Christine Yodsukar



Image © Christine Yodsukar

Growing a business is the most invigorating experience there is. It can also suck the life out of you. You worry if your client is going to be happy with their images or if they think you're a slimy used-car salesman at in-person sales. And you brought in so much money last month, so how come there isn't any left? So many obstacles come up when you're running a business, and with them, endless strategies to become more adept at navigating all of those obstacles. As you continue to grow, you'll start hearing a lot of the same information. You know how to price your products and you've heard all about tracking your expenses. You know which lens to use in which situations, and you're saving time by outsourcing your editing. So why is it still hard?

The inner work, the work that seemingly has nothing to do with business—that is the next-level work. And it is not only how you better yourself as a person, but it is actually how you better your business too.

The health of our business correlates with our physical health. If we are having a hard time making it through life's day-to-day routines, then chances are we are having a difficult go in business as well. The most major times of growth in my business have been directly tied to self-development. There is no question. And if we ignore the health of our bodies and minds, we are capping the potential of our business success.

Here are some of the best ways to begin to better yourself to better your business.



READ

Learning from others in person is amazing, but I've found that reading is really powerful because even though I'm learning from someone else's words, reading is a solitary activity, so I can take in information at my own pace (I sometimes reread pages over and over again). I can digest information any way I want to. I take photos of things that impact me while I'm reading so that I can go back through those photos later and take notes to further digest the information. I can perceive the information any way I want to. It's much different from learning in person or by watching a video.

BE QUIET

Let your mind be still. If you're working through shit, then you need to let your higher self come through the noise and give you some guidance, and it can't do that if you're constantly running from one thing to the next. Whether meditation or just taking a walk with your dog is your jam, giving yourself time to relax and calm your mind is incredibly powerful. It's like when you're in the shower and you suddenly have the best business idea ever. That's a result of allowing your brain to relax. Just don't let that idea slip away—it's probably an idea that will change your business if you actually follow through on it.

HEAL YOUR WOUNDS

When your gut is freaking out, you've hit a nerve, and this is when you've found something you need to work through, not around. This is the basis for all self-development, figuring out all the ways in which you're broken and bruised and healing those wounds and releasing the emotions you've held onto for years, sometimes decades, because of it. The longer you hold onto those emotions, the stickier they become and the more painful it's going to be to release it all. I now actually enjoy facing my fears and working through my issues. When I come across a situation that brings up my fears or anxieties, I now know how to respond in a way that helps me. Nature, meditation, spirituality—these are the things that help me work through long-held blocks. And once I release the blocks, it's like an explosion of abundance in all areas of my life: business, money, opportunities, love, support. It's endless.

DON'T BE A DICK

Talk nicely to yourself. If you speak kindly to yourself, your reality changes for the better; if you speak ill of yourself (or your business, your skills, your work ethic, your money-making ability), your reality will change for the worse. If you speak badly about yourself in any way, you're making a decision about who you are and what you are capable of. Once you've made the decision about who you are, you will look for evidence that supports your beliefs about yourself while also thinking that anything outside of that is just plain luck. So if you're going to pick one of the two to think and be, why not pick the positive side of things?



Image © Christine Yodsukar



GIVE MORE

Care about others in such a way that you are giving to them, putting yourself in a position of empathy. You're caring more about them than you are about all of the things you want to complain about, and that will change how you appear to the world. Empathy puts you in your customer's shoes, which makes you a better resource for them. You'll be able to market to them better, serve them better, think of new and exciting ways to grow your business. Customers want to invest in valuable resources, not businesspeople who are selfish and upset all the time.

CREATE HABITS THAT HELP YOU DO A BETTER JOB

You don't have to wake up at 5 a.m. or have a binder suited for AP Calculus class, but habits that serve your best life help you in your personal life and business. Some of my favorite habits are centered around the following.

PLANNING MY WEEKS, MONTHS, QUARTERS AND YEAR. I crumble when I feel overwhelmed, and a surefire way to help me feel calm and in control is by creating plans for both my personal and business lives. I create a plan for my year and each quarter at the end of the previous year, I have my quarterly goals up on a big whiteboard in our office. My team's monthly goals are in Trello so we all can work from them, and my personal monthly goals are written on papers that I keep with me whenever I am working. My weekly goals are written in my notebook along with other things like journaling, gratitude, and mastermind and meeting notes.

HOUSEHOLD ACTIVITIES LIKE GROCERY SHOPPING AND CLEANING. I make a meal plan every Saturday and go grocery shopping every Sunday. This way, I don't have to frantically try to figure out what my family is going to eat on any particular day, and I give myself some grace by planning to not cook on the weekends. I have a nanny who also does the cleaning, so that decluttering toys is about the extent of my home cleaning. It frees me up to focus on family time and personal time when I am not working, which allows me to focus on work when I'm working.

TAKING A BREAK WHEN I NEED ONE. This habit doesn't have a time and date attached to it, because it is a habit I created that happens in response to an emotional feeling. I am an extremely emotional being, and I know myself well enough to know that for me to be at my best, I need to honor my emotions and not suppress them. If I suddenly find myself feeling anxious or overwhelmed to a point that it is affecting my work, I make it a priority to relax. Even if it is for 15 minutes (although it's usually about an hour), taking that time to stop the madness and get back on track can save my workday. It may sound counterintuitive to stop working when things are falling apart, but I noticed a night-and-day difference once I started taking peaceful breaks when I really needed them. In fact, I have come back from many of these breaks and made phone calls and landed contracts that have completely changed our business.

Image © Christine Yodsukar



BE YOUR OWN DAMN GURU

Take in all of the information you feel called to consume, but at the end of the day, only you know what your gut is saying. Joseph Campbell said it best: “You become mature when you become the authority of your own life.” Research, do, assess, make changes, do again, live. Find your own answers to the questions, and you will watch your business begin to flourish unlike any other. ■

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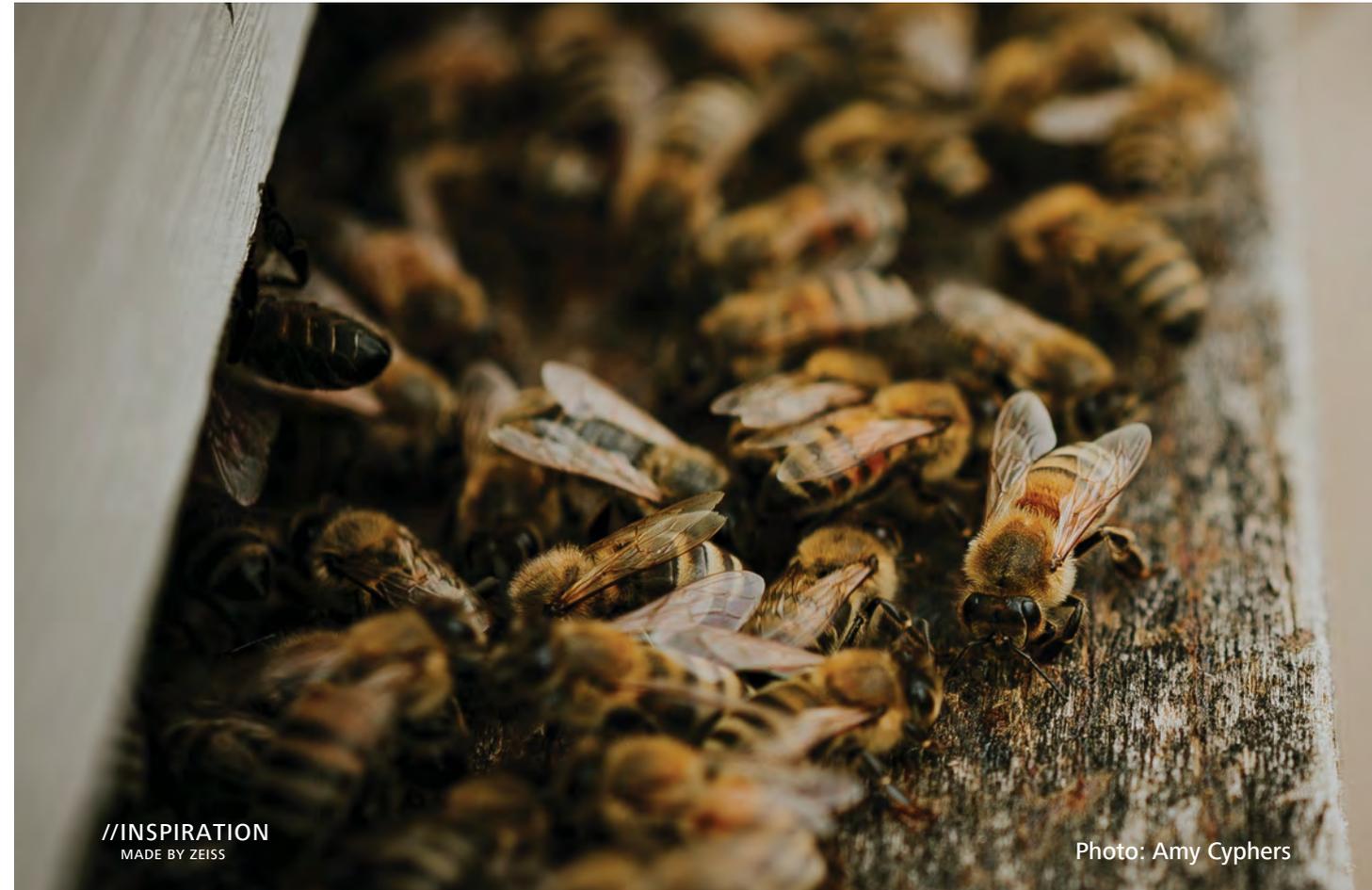


Christine hails from Boston and currently splits her live/work/play time between Los Angeles, Portland, Oregon, and the rest of the world. Along with her husband and business partner, she took her wedding business from \$100 weddings to a six-figure income in three years. She's passionate about sharing her knowledge and can be seen frequently on WeTV as a wedding photography expert.

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DEATH OF A SALESMAN:
HOW TO DEVELOP A

sales style

THAT WORKS FOR YOU

with Vanessa Joy



Sales has always been an ugly word to me. Maybe it's from growing up in the Northeast, but we're bred for the cold and have no tolerance for salesmen pitching their life away in the hopes of getting our money. Shopping for cars is a fun pastime for me because I know the shtick so well that I play it back to them and they're at a loss for any more creepy "buy me" metaphors.

I kept going to these conferences and hearing from my photography peers how I was supposed to be selling more and more to my clients. I hated the idea. I didn't hate the idea of more money, just the thought of asking them for more. They had already spent more on me than I would've ever paid for photography, so how could I ask them for more?

The first time I tried after-sales, it felt silly. The most I could bring myself to do was send an email after their wedding telling them that the free thank-you cards that came with their wedding package could be upgraded in size and style. I also threw in the idea that they could add pages to their albums. I still remember cringing as I hit send. I felt like such a sleaze.

I shot around 25 weddings that year. I sent out that itty-bitty email of offerings to everyone. I didn't meet with them in person. I didn't offer packages. I just gave them a few options that they didn't even have to say no to—they could've just ignored them. But they didn't. I made an additional \$20,000 that year because of silly little emails.

After that taste of success, I kept thinking of ways to sell more. I didn't do it all on my own. I've consulted with amazing photographers like Sal Cincotta, Christine Yodsukar and Makayla Jade. We all have our own style of selling. I'll outline it for you next, but I want to make it very clear that you shouldn't copy this verbatim. You need to develop a selling style that works for you and your clients.

You can do this in person in a quiet location, or over video chat. Don't meet at a Starbucks. Meeting in person has gotten me better results, but I meet with clients at a coworking space or in the studio of a florist or DJ I know. You have to get their undivided attention.

Here's the order in which I do things in a sales session.





1

SHOW THE ALBUM PREDESIGN IN SLIDESHOW FORMAT

Predesigns are crucial to creating a final album that flows beautifully and tells a complete story. I tell my couples when I first consult with them that I don't dump the chore of choosing photos on them. Instead, I lay out a visual album that they can tweak. They love the reduced hassle—plus the fact that their album will be delivered in three to six months.

2

EDIT THE PREDESIGN WITH THE COUPLE'S INPUT

This part does take a long time. The whole appointment takes about two hours, often more. It's important to prepare clients for that. I encourage them to add photos, and if they want to take things away, I don't stop them (it rarely happens, though). I have a new little toy that I'm using for this process, which I show off in this month's video.



3 CHOOSE ALBUM COVER

This is a good time to take a break from the inside of the album and start concentrating on the outside. I work with three main album companies: Miller's Lab, FLORIColor and PictoBooks. I don't plop down every available option, because that would be overwhelming. Instead, I start talking them through macro options, like whether or not to have a photo on the cover and the type of fabric. Then I present various options based on what they've told me they like and what I know of their wedding style.



4 PRESENT WALL AND TABLE ART OPTIONS

After the album, I have a good idea of their favorite pictures and can start talking about what types of pieces they would look good on. I ask about their home and wall space and suggest media and sizes that would work for them (typically from the packages that I offer).





GO OVER PACKAGE OPTIONS

Based on the size of their album and desired wall art, I suggest the ideal packages. I remind them throughout the process of how many pages of their album they already have filled and how many we've designed so there are no surprises. I present what I think works for them, and also show another, less appealing option, and then ask which one they prefer.

This is the part where I hold my breath. Sometimes they decide they need to trim things down. Photographers have their own sales tactics here, but I'm perfectly happy not pushing. I enjoy being the catalyst, a guide leading them to what they need and want.

CHOOSE WALL AND TABLE ART

Now we pick final images and sizes for their art pieces and wrap everything up. I tell them when to expect each tangible item so there isn't any confusion over how long everything takes, especially the album. I send an excited note that gets them pumped to receive their images to hang in their home and enjoy over their lives together.

Images © Vanessa Joy



So guess what? I'm not a sleaze! I'm a business that gives customers every option they could possibly want. The idea that I was practically robbing them was my own imaginary manifestation. Looking back, I realize my clients wanted to spend more money with me all along. They wanted to complete their photography experience by glorifying their wedding photos grandly with wall art and larger, more exquisite albums.

So now I have happier clients, and I've been rewarded for it. You know that \$20,000 extra a year I earned doing 25 weddings? Last year, I shot 19 weddings and took in an additional \$88,919 in after-sales. This shit works. Go do it.

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Vanessa Joy has been a professional wedding photographer in New Jersey since 2002, and an influencer in the photographic community for years. Since starting VanessaJoy.com in 2008, she has taught photographers around the globe at almost every major platform in the industry (LearnPhotoVideo.com). Vanessa has been recognized for her talent and business sense at the renowned industry events CreativeLIVE, Clickin' Moms, WPPI and ShutterFest. Her peers love her informative, open-book style of teaching.

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