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X-Pro2



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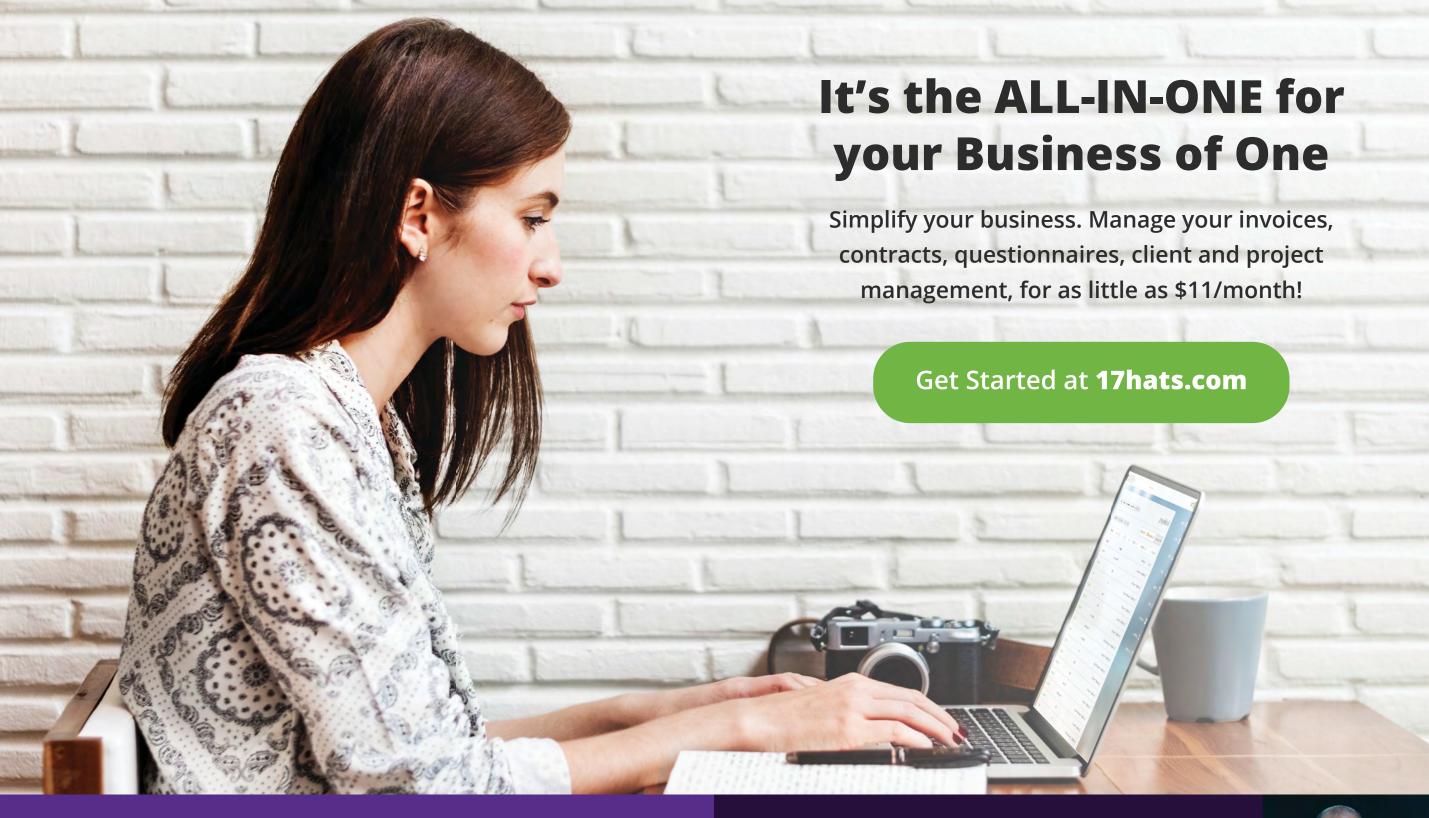
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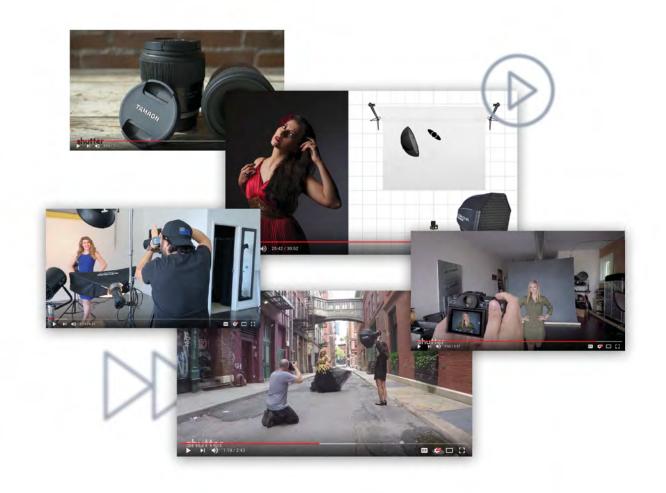
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# MISSION STATEMENT

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.

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CREATIVE DIRECTOR

Sal Cincotta

Alissa Zimmerman

LEAD DESIGNER

DESIGNER

Alicia Simpson

Sarah Cobb

COPY EDITOR

**ACCOUNT SPECIALIST** 

Tom O'Connell

Christine Gill

### CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Vanessa Joy, Michael Anthony, Sal Cincotta, Skip Cohen, Audrey Woulard, Scott Detweiler, Jonathan Tilley, Fabio Laub, Michael Corsentino, Christine Yodsukar, Paul & Melissa Pruitt, Gary Hughes, Joey Thomas, Dustin Lucas, and Phillip Blume



# THE COVER

PHOTOGRAPHER: Sal Cincotta | salcincotta.com

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LIGHTING: Profoto B1 with 5' Octa | Westcott Eyelighter

**EXPOSURE:** f2.0 @ 1/125, ISO 100

ABOUT THE IMAGE: This image was taken at our studio

in January 2018.

SHUTTER MAGAZINE | BEHIND THE SHUTTER
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# LAUNCH POINT

A message from the editor-in-chief





—— THE ———

LEAST EXPENSIVE,

MOST VERSATILE

**LIGHTING** MODIFIER

with Michael Corsentino ————



When the question "What's the one lighting modifier I should buy?" comes up, my answer is always the same: a convertible umbrella. With many models available for close to or under \$100, this humble tool is arguably one of the least expensive lighting modifiers you're likely to come across—and, without question, one of the most versatile.

A quick Google search turned up convertible umbrellas available in varying sizes for as little as \$17. That's hard to beat for any lighting modifier, let alone one that does so many things and does them all really well. For the shoot featured here, I used a 41-inch Lastolite 8-in-1 Umbrella, clocking in at \$113. What makes this umbrella so special is its eight possible configurations based on the fabrics and masks included. In order to keep things generic and applicable to any convertible umbrella you might find, I'll focus on three of the four most common ways to use this tool.

### PROS AND CONS

First, let's discuss the pros and cons of umbrellas. They're often maligned for their light spill and lack of precise control compared to softboxes, beauty dishes and the like. In the right situations, this is a positive. Sometimes the light you create doesn't need as much of a defined edge as you might think, as you can see in the images in this article. Convertible umbrellas are a jack-of-all-trades tool that offers four lighting configurations: shoot-through, bounce-back white interior, bounce-back silver interior and bounce-back with front-facing diffusion material. That means that with an umbrella, you get the option of direct or indirect strobe orientation (facing toward or away from the subject), which directly impacts the quality of light, all with one modifier. I'll go over each of these configurations below.

In addition to their versatility, umbrellas work equally well with strobes or speedlights, requiring no additional expense for a speed ring. In fact, most strobes come with a built-in umbrella receptacle. Speedlight users need only an inexpensive tilt swivel bracket with a built-in umbrella receptacle to be up and running.

One of the other benefits of using an umbrella is the ability to focus the light to some extent. This is done by sliding the umbrella closer to or farther away from the strobe. The closer the strobe is to the center of the umbrella, the more focused the light, which translates into a harder quality of light with more contrast. Conversely, moving the strobe away from the center and positioning it at the widest part of the umbrella creates a less focused, softer, broader light.

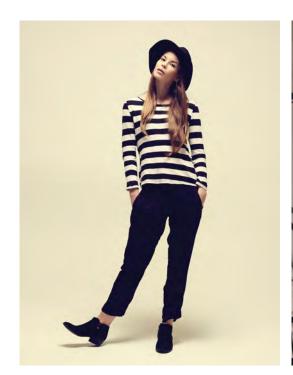
Lastly, umbrellas are lightweight and compact, making them easy to use on a boom stand, light enough for an assistant to hold for an extended period of time and easy to transport. While this article focuses on their use in the studio, umbrellas excel on location for many of the same reasons listed above. The one caveat is wind. As with any umbrella, they don't perform well in overly windy situations. If you find yourself working in heavy wind, you'll probably want to reach for another modifier or risk watching your umbrella blow over.

Regardless of which modifier you're using, factors like angle, size, position and direction of the strobe (toward or away from the subject) all play a role in the quality of light created. Once those decisions are made, it's all about choosing shoot-through or bounce-back, the interior fabric (white or silver) and whether or not to use diffusion fabric.

### **BOUNCE-BACK WHITE**

Right out of the box, your umbrella will likely be set up in the bounce-back white configuration. This configuration uses an opaque black exterior/silver interior fabric stretched over a shoot-through umbrella. The combination of the diffusion fabric inside covering the silver underside creates a white interior reflective surface.

There are several benefits of using an umbrella in a bounce-back configuration. First and foremost is the fact that it positions the strobe in an indirect position with respect to the subject. In other words, with bounce-back, the strobe faces into the umbrella and away from the subject's position. In many cases, this results in a softer lighting effect than that created using a modifier, where the strobe faces the subject. This softer quality of light is further accentuated with a white interior.



illuminate it via spill light.



White bounce-back umbrella overhead: By positioning White bounce-back umbrella overhead: By varying the model and keylight with the white bounce-back the distance of the model, keylight and modifier from umbrella close to the background, I was able to the background, I was able to control the amount of background illumination.

# **BOUNCE-BACK SILVER**

Here, the same attributes as bounce-back white apply, but with considerably more contrast and light output. This is due to the use of a silver reflective interior fabric. If you need a more punchy look or increased output from your strobe/speedlight, this is the way to go. That said, silver bounce-back is the one iteration I ended up not using for this shoot. When you need it, you need it. The Lastolite 8-in-1 Umbrella I was using has a separate insert that's used to convert the umbrella from white to silver. Your mileage may vary depending on the model of convertible umbrella used, but the lighting effect will be the same.

# **BOUNCE-BACK WITH DIFFUSION SCREEN**

In this configuration, a front-facing diffusion screen is added to the widest part of the umbrella, the side closest to the subject. Combined with its indirect strobe orientation and white interior fabric, the addition of diffusion material further softens and broadens the light, creating the softest possible lighting effect. Essentially this turns the humble umbrella into a makeshift octabank with all the upside and none of the expense.



Bounce-back umbrella with diffusion and fill reflectors, model facing keylight: By shooting some of a variety of captures with light that varies in softness and brightness. I get a brighter but still soft look with diffusion and the model facing the light.



To create a series of soft editorial images, we outfitted the umbrella with a white interior and front-facing the images with the model facing toward the keylight diffusion and put it to the side. A fill reflector below and others facing away from it, I was able to create the model opens up shadows under the chin and in the eye sockets. Opposite the keylight was a 4x8-foot white reflector card for fill on the shadowed side of the model's face. We switched the keylight to the left side of the model for the finals pictured.







Shoot-through umbrella with fill reflector

# **SHOOT-THROUGH**

With the opaque black outer fabric removed and its diffusion fabric-covered frame revealed, a convertible umbrella is now ready for shoot-through use. In this configuration, the strobe is aimed into the umbrella and fired through the diffusion fabric's convex side of the umbrella, which faces the subject. In contrast to the three indirect bounce-back variations described above, shoot-through umbrellas use a direct lighting method. The strobe is positioned facing the subject. The light is surprisingly pleasing rather than harsh, with no overly bright hot spots you might expect. Of the variations discussed, shoot-through umbrellas provide the least degree of lighting edge and precise control, and they spill light everywhere. As you'll see, these attributes can be turned into positives when you know where, when and how to use them.



Shoot-through umbrella with fill: Here I used the umbrella as a shoot-through with a fill reflector below for a classic clamshell beauty lighting effect.



Shoot-through umbrella with fill reflector



To create a series of soft editorial images, we outfitted the umbrella with a white interior and front-facing diffusion and put it to the side. A fill reflector below the model opens up shadows under the chin and in the eye sockets. Opposite the keylight was a 4x8-foot white reflector card for fill on the shadowed side of the model's face. We switched the keylight to the left side of the model for the finals pictured.

# **SOFT PORTRAIT**

Here the umbrella was used as a bounce-back, with white interior and front-facing diffusion fabric. I moved the strobe to the side of my model, Candice, kept the fill reflector in place (shifted to match the new keylight position), and added a white V-flat on the opposite side of the keylight to provide subtle fill light on the shadowed side of the face. Changing the position of the keylight from the camera position to the side of the model introduced shadow for a moody vibe. The indirect strobe orientation, bounce-back lighting and diffusion fabric created a softer lighting effect.

# **FULL-FIGURE FASHION: TWO WAYS**

For the full-figure fashion images, I wanted to create one set of dramatically lit images with a nearly white background and another set with a slightly darker dove-gray background. It was easy to control the illumination on the background, in my case the white cyclorama wall in my studio, by simply varying the distance of the keylight from the background—no seamless paper changes required. The farther the strobe is from the background, the less light that spills onto it and the darker it gets. To create the dramatic lighting effect, I positioned the umbrella and strobe, configured as a white interior bounce-back, directly above and facing down toward my model. The edge of the light, or the "feathered" portion, plays a key roll. To achieve this, I simply instructed Candice to stay just behind the back edge of the umbrella.



By moving the model and keylight with a white bounce-back umbrella farther from the background, I was able to lessen the spill light and create a darker background.

# SIMPLE TOOLS, AWESOME RESULTS

If you take just one thing away from this article, it should be that you don't need a ton of expensive gear to create compelling work. Stop using the gear as an excuse. You can do amazing things with simple inexpensive tools like a convertible umbrella.





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



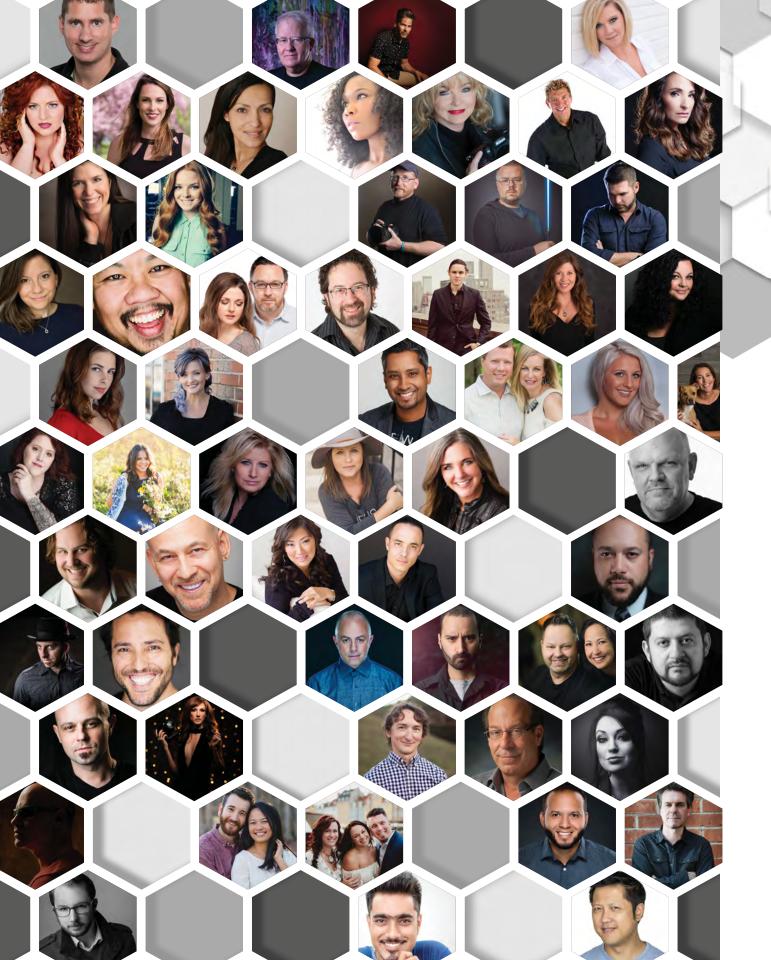
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# **BASIC TONING IN ON1 DEVELOP**

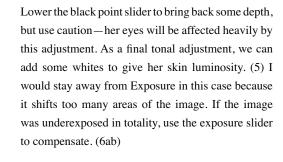
First things first, I need to adjust my Raw image to get a little more dynamic range for the skin tones. Navigate to the image we want to edit in Browse, highlight the file and click Develop from the right side panel. (1) Begin adjusting the image to increase density with the white and black points. For this type of adjustment, I need to use Histogram and Show Clipping. At the top of the right side tool panel, select Levels to display the Histogram and then hold Alt while striking the J key for Show Clipping. (2ab)







As we can see, this Raw portrait is quite flat, meaning it lacks density. Lifting the whites and lowering blacks until we see some clipping with the red overlay gives us a solid total image density. (3) This is a bad direction for skin tones for this type of close-up portrait. Instead, let's use the Midtones slider to slightly brighten her skin without adding blotchiness. This tool is useful for skin tones in cases where we are evenly lit and just need to boost the midtones. (4)



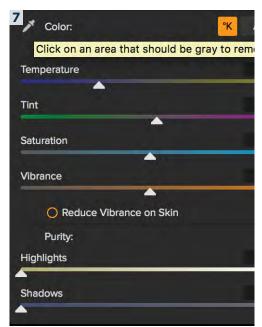


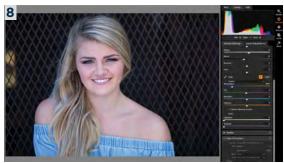














In addition to separating colors to adjust hue, saturation and luminance, we can use the Range slider to increase or decrease this effect based on color range. This is useful if your subject's skin tone matches something in the background; otherwise, I would keep it at 0. (10)



The Color Adjustment picker falls short when it's used to adjust a single color versus multiple colors for skin tone adjustments. The Target Adjustment tool in Lightroom can pull reds, oranges and even yellows when you click on the skin. (11abc)

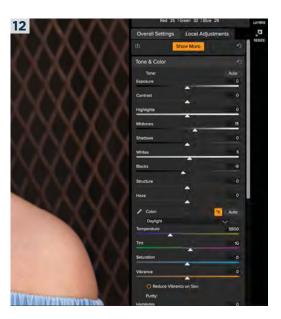


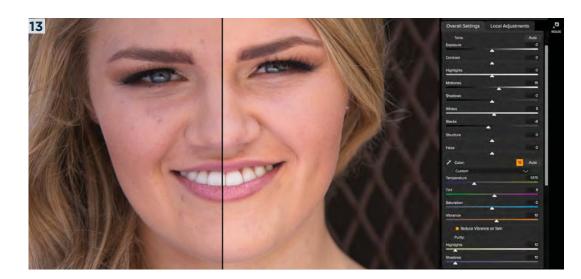




At the end of the day, we want to make sure unwanted colorcasts are removed and the skin retains attractive levels of saturation and luminance. (12) Make sure you are working in a calibrated environment to adjust for this. If you rely solely on predetermined settings or straight daylight balance (5,000 to 5,500K), adjust for reflective colorcasts on the subject's face. This becomes more obvious when your subject is posed facing a red brick wall or sitting on green grass.

Purity is another useful color tool in dropping saturation in larger tonal groups that are broken down into highlights or shadows. Drag this slider to the right to desaturate the color ranges. Once we have the skin tones dialed in, we can move into the Skin Retouching tool. (13)





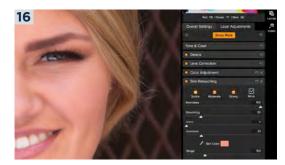






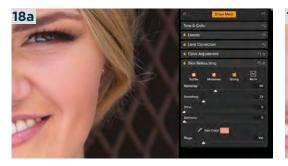
Let's dive into the sliders and how we can use them here. First, let's look at the Blemishes slider.

I find that the Blemishes slider is more distracting to skin when used above 50 because it softens lines rather than removing blemishes like the Healing brush. (16) If we leave this at 40, we can move to smoothing, which is the most common feature here. This tool starts at 20; moving it to the right makes the subject's skin soft and unrealistic. (17) Remember, when retouching skin, you should be subtle with these sorts of effects. You want people to look like themselves.



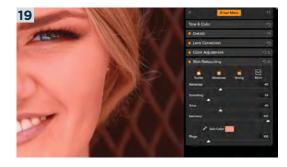


I like how the Shine tool fills in brighter, less saturated areas with skin-toned recovery. It works like Highlight Recovery, except it blends color tones rather than turning white tones to gray. This image does not distract with shiny spots, but to even out the lighting, I like to add a shine value of between 25 and 50. (18ab)





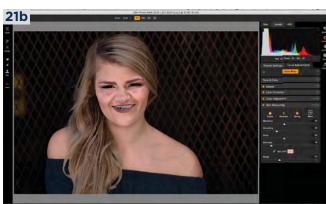
Evenness is an interesting tool. It acts as a split-hue adjustment for the skin and shadows. This slider simultaneously reduces red blotchy skin tones and green casts in the shadows. (19) I assume this tool was intended for images white-balanced toward green tint to reduce redness of the skin. (20)





It's challenging working with these adjustments because they are being applied to the entire image. Use the color range tool to select the desired skin tones and adjust the range in which this effect is applied in the image. (21ab) My major issue is that the background gets softened as well as her hair. That is why we need to add layers and move into the Effects panel. From there, we can start to brush in the skin and reduce the risk of softening those aspects of the images meant to stay sharp.

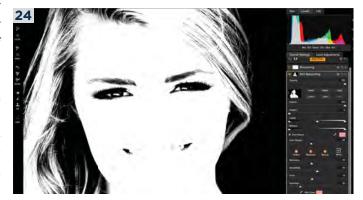




Now strike the B key to access the Mask brush and strike the X key to switch the mode to Paint Out. Once we get to a solid point, click on View to start fine-tuning the edge of the skin where it meets the hair. (26)











Once the settings are to my liking, I need to add Sharpening back into this image; this can usually be accomplished by lifting the Amount slider in Develop. You can see the difference masking makes in these two previews. (27ab)

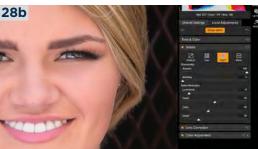




# ATTENTION TO DETAIL

When we move back into Develop in the Details panel, we see Sharpening and Noise Reduction. In the Details panel, use Sharpening in a similar way you would when applying Input Sharpening in Photoshop, driven mostly by UnSharp Mask. I tend to add more detail here versus applying other types of sharpening in the Effects tool. I set this to 100 and apply a subtle amount of noise reduction because this image was properly exposed for and shot at a low ISO of 100. (28ab)





If we need more sharpening, we can't lift this any higher, and I do not want to add structure because we just softened the skin. (29) Another option is to go back into the Effects panel, choose Add Filter and then the Sharpening filter. We have three options for sharpening: High Pass, Progressive and UnSharp Mask. (30)





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We can't forget about the hair, eyes and teeth, which are just as essential as the skin. Go back into Develop and choose the Local Adjustment tab. (33) Click on Add Layer, click More to choose a preset and then let's choose Toothbrush. (34) We can already guess where to use this adjustment: The effect of painting on the teeth is a bit too much. Lower this to .5 and rename the layer "Teeth-Adjustment."





Now for the lips. Click on Add Layer to slightly brighten and add saturation to the lips once we've painted our mask. The same goes for the hair: Layer to add some brightness, contrast, vibrancy and structure for a little more punch. (35)



Lastly, I want to burn down the background and dodge the subject to keep the focus on the subject. I love the nondestructive aspect of the edit so far, and the fact that I can turn effects on and off for everything we've done. As a bonus, all this work has not bloated my hard drive with a heavily layered PSD file. (36ab)





This tool is great for blemishes, makeup lines, bags/wrinkles under eyes, skin flakes, etc. I can even remove cross hairs on the face and forehead to speed things up. (38) Flyaway hairs are another story. I can rely on the Clone brush to quickly remove these distractions. Strike the S key and then choose where to sample from by holding Option and clicking an area of the image. First, I want to remove the distracting yellow object to the left because it should be easy to match up with the repetitive grate behind the subject. The same goes for removing some of the flyaway hairs. In situations where there is not a large area to sample from, you may need to shoot a plate shot to composite with—or spend hours clicking, cloning and sampling. (39)

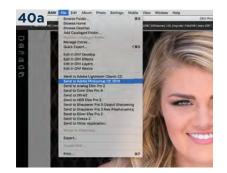




### FINAL TOUCHES WITH PHOTOSHOP

Lastly, I want to straighten this image and take it into Photoshop for some quick body shaping. Much like in Lightroom, I can Edit In another program by saving a copy of the file. I open it directly in Photoshop, process the image further and, when I save in Photoshop, the image updates simultaneously in On1 RAW. This is necessary when organizing/processing Raws and using plug-ins and other applications for specialized processing. To do this, go into Browse, select the image or images you want to edit in another program, navigate to File in the menu bar, click Send to Adobe Photoshop and wait for the process to complete. (40ab)

With the image open in Photoshop, I like to do a quick transform technique to slightly thin my clients. This works only with continuous backgrounds and is not intended for every image. First, I duplicate my base layer by holding Command and striking the J key. I rename it to whatever tool/adjustment I am making, which in this case is "Transform." Activate the Transform tool by holding Command and striking the T key.





Then I can superthin the subject by holding Option while moving on the center point to pull both sides at once, but this looks overdone. (41) Instead, let's pull the left side to give a bit more room from the edge and apply some minor body shaping. (42) Photoshop's Liquify tool offers another subtle adjustment to remove some camera distortion or unflattering perspective, but nothing to change the subject's natural appearance. (43) Again, we can remove these body-shaping adjustments with a click of the mouse since we duplicated our base layer—I always recommend doing this. (44—before and after)











# THE RESULTS

ON1 has stepped up its game with RAW 2018. Users can now access adjustment panels built specifically for portrait retouching. We can pile on Layers to customize our images while retaining the efficiency of a Raw processing program. The Retouching brush fixes the majority of distractions with a single click, and the Cloning tool fixes those flyaway hairs. What more can you ask for? As a Lightroom user, I am looking to implement ON1 RAW for portrait work, especially for retouching.

You should always use the latest products and keep trying out new software. With ON1 RAW, you have the full flexibility of working within other programs while keeping everything organized in one place, which is huge for anyone's workflow.





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.

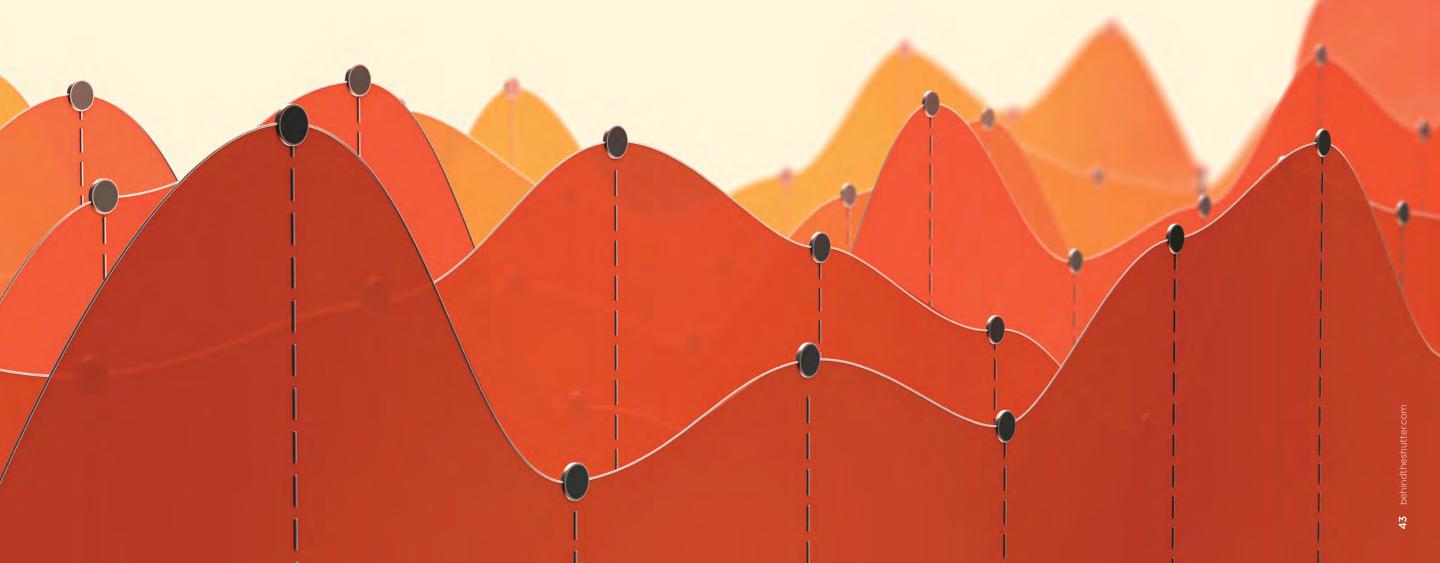
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# SALES & MARKETING EDITION

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- ARE YOU A -

# **PHOTOGRAPHER**

OR A

# **MARKETER?**

YOU HAVE TO BE BOTH!

with Sal Cincotta



Shutter Magazine . February 2018

Without marketing, you are dead on arrival. There is no greater truth in business. I know that's not what you want to hear. I am not here to sugarcoat things. I know you want to believe that if you only offer the best product, you'll hit your stride and end up killing it out there. But the sea of broke photographers should be a sobering sight to you.

Marketing is messaging. It's that's simple. Don't overcomplicate it, which is easy for us to do. Yes, it's social media, it's bridal shows, it's magazines, it's networking, but all these things can be described in a single word: *messaging*. You must communicate the benefit of your product or service to potential customers. I am sure you are sitting there right now thinking, well, duh, Sal, the benefit is obvious, it's our great images.

Blah blah-de-blah blah. No one cares or even hears you.

Let's get real: Most of our clients are not art majors. They rarely set foot in an art museum. They couldn't tell the difference between a bad image, good image or great image if it hit them on the head. This is not a dig at them, it's a dig at us. Stop assuming they know. Market to them! Tell them what makes a great image. Tell them why you are better than the \$50 Groupon photographer. Tell them why they should hire you and not their friend with a camera.

I had a wedding show just two weeks ago. A bride walked into my booth and said she needed a wedding photographer. "You're in luck," I told her, "because I just happen to be one." We laughed and started talking about her day and the importance of engagement pictures.

She told me she'd had a friend take their engagement pictures, and didn't think she needed professional ones. RED ALERT. RED ALERT. My senses started to tingle. This is going to be a nightmare if I am competing against her friend with a camera. I immediately went into the pros and cons of her friendographer. She stopped me and said she completely agreed with me. She hadn't seen a single one of the engagement shots, and they were taken three months before. Now her wedding was in two months, and she had no idea if her friendographer would show up to shoot the wedding.

"She hasn't returned a single call over the last month!" said my potential bride client.

"That's a pretty shitty friend," I said.

The friendographer turned out to be her cousin. Holy shit! Can you imagine? She made it pretty easy for me to explain why we were worth it.

This is just one example of clear messaging. I wasn't trying to convince her my photography was better. Art appreciation is subjective. Instead, I spent my time messaging the other aspects of my studio. It's safe to assume that if they contact me, they already like my work.

Here are some ways to become a better marketer.



Your marketing mission is to define a need and communicate how you can fulfill it. To my wedding clients, I offer a service that helps them document the most important day of their lives with an album and other art that will serve as their first family heirlooms.

This all depends on understanding your product market fit. What problem are you solving for your clients? Do your clients even know this is a potential problem? If not, then you have to educate them as to why this is important to them, much like I did with my bride. You're going to trust the most important day of your life to a friend who's doing it for free—and who might not show up?

If you are merely offering a thumb drive of digital images, I would seriously question what problem you are solving and the value of that service. This is why you see shoot-and-burners on Groupon for \$50.

# Establish your value proposition.

Once you know your product market fit and understand what your clients want and need from you as a service provider, craft your messaging around your value proposition. How will your clients benefit by hiring you? What value are you bringing to the table? Beyond the fact that your work looks pretty good, why am I hiring you and not your competitor?

Is it your personality? Is it your product offerings? Is it your professionalism? Is it your unique style?

I don't know what your answer is, but I know if you don't have one that resonates with your clients, you will struggle. Why? Because you are now just a guy/gal with a camera, and they are a dime a dozen.

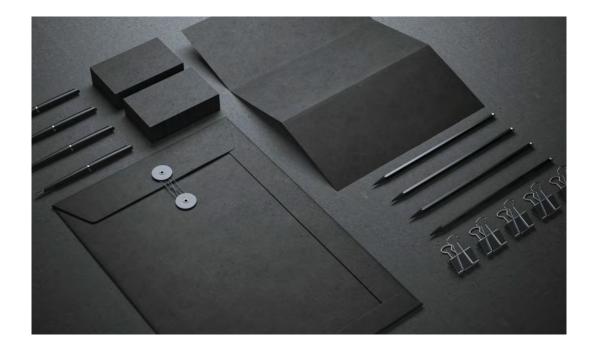
You must establish clear messaging around this. It should be easily articulated and visible in everything you do.

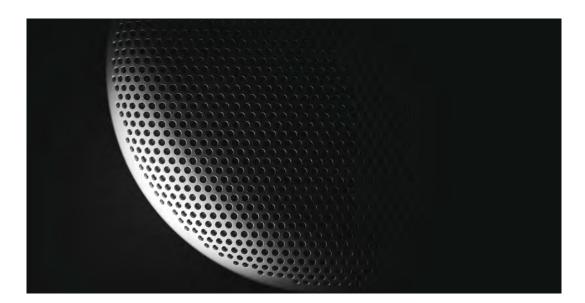
The biggest mistake in marketing is when your messaging is all over the place. You can't be high-end, but have a website that looks like your daughter did it for a high school project. Your website matters. As does everything you do. You must be consistent across your brand, website, social media, photography, the way you dress.

This is probably one of the most important lessons I have learned over the years. We are a high-end studio. We treat our clients to the high-end experience they have come to expect when dealing with high-end brands like Louis Vuitton or Mercedes-Benz.

Our messaging is consistent at all times. It doesn't matter if we are advertising on Facebook or in a local magazine. The messaging is about delivering unique images from your wedding day and delivering your first family heirloom. We message it on our site. We message it face to face. We message it with our imagery and shooting style.

Clients are not smart enough to discern the difference or connect the dots in your messaging. There can be no gaps in the messaging. Be clear and consistent. It's one of the easiest things you can do, but so many ignore it or get lazy.





# Get the word out.

Marketing is messaging. How are you getting the word out? Are you using the "build it and they will come" marketing strategy? How's that going? Yeah, it doesn't work. You have to keep marketing all the time, and to anyone who will listen. They need to know who you are and what you do. Connect with vendors, give them free headshots, give them free pictures of their venue. Show them why you are the one to work with in your market.

Here's an important thing I've learned over the last 10 years. I spend just 15 percent of my time shooting but 85 percent of my time marketing. That's right. The sooner you accept this reality, the sooner you will get to the place you want to be. If that's of no interest to you and you want to shoot 85 percent of the time, that's possible too, but you will need to hire someone dedicated to marketing your business. Growth doesn't happen on its own.

If you spend more time being a marketer, you could see immediate results. Get out there and tell your story.

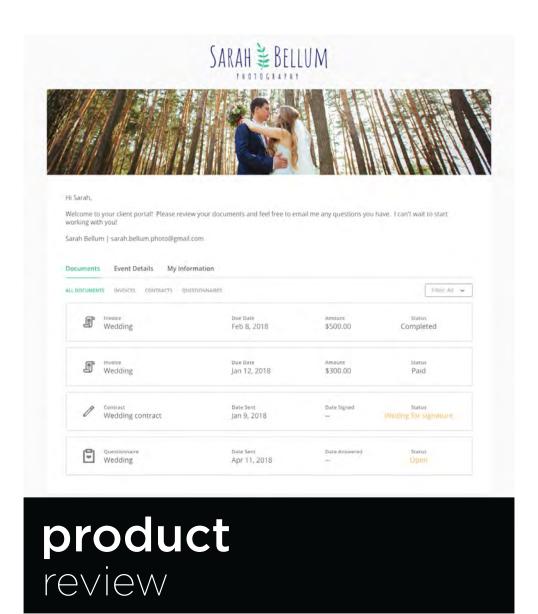




Sal Cincotta is an international award-winning photographer, educator, author and the publisher of *Shutter Magazine*. Sal's success is directly tied to the education he received in business school. He graduated from Binghamton University, a Top 20 business school, and has worked for Fortune 50 companies 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









# Why 17hats?

Upgrade your client experience, optimize your time and gain an edge over the competition with 17hats—an all-in-one application that can simplify your business and give you back time and control.

# Use 17hats Lead Forms and Workflows to gain an edge over the competition.

Embed 17hats Lead Forms wherever you get leads. Upon receiving a new lead inquiry, the system automatically triggers a lead response. That means all leads are responded to within minutes.

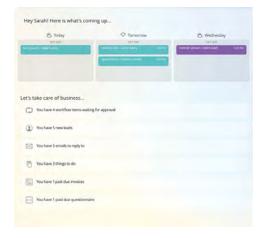
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# Optimize your time.

Streamline your booking experience and deliver one email that includes your quote, contract and invoice. Pair that with online payment processing, and you are sure to close more accounts in 2018.

# Upgrade your client experience.

With Client Portal, your clients have a beautifully designed and secure location where they can review and complete all of their important documents. Quotes and contracts are at their fingertips, and they can complete questionnaires and pay invoices all in one place.



Never again will you need to resend important documents or project details, which saves you time—while giving your client experience a valuable upgrade.

# Pricing

Get one year for \$199. Buy two years and get one free, which is three years for just \$398. Get started today with a free trial at www.17hats.com.









Most of the articles I see on increasing sales revolve around pricing strategies, approaches to marketing and, especially, in-person sales because of their immediate and considerable impact. But these articles don't get to the heart of why we have trouble increasing sales: There might not be enough sellable images.

Consider a random sequence of 10 photos from one of your recent sessions. Open those files. How many of those 10 pictures are genuinely unique? If Jimmy is smiling in one (and in focus), how many similar photos do we require? We need to present the client some options for each pose and expression, but we must also learn not to belabor a pose and know when it is time to move on. As you gain experience, you will find that you know when you have nailed a shot with a few options and need to move along to the next major scene. In collections or packages where there is a time limit or a specific number of outfits, we want to end the day with as many unique permutations as possible in the shortest reasonable timeframe.

Let's define what I mean by a "sellable image." That is an image that has no other competition in the sales presentation, and purchasing it will not cause another photo that is "close" to be thrown out for a slightly different expression or pose. Hypothetically, if your entire sales presentation is 100 percent sellable images, you could sell every single picture, and that would probably set some sales records. Unfortunately, subtle variation will need to be part of each session, if only to catch Mr. Angry Eyes at his best when he accidentally smiles, but we also need to show off his epic and well-known RBF. Assume from here on out that we know we need a few expressions in each scene, but we are going to limit ourselves to just a few shots.

# **KEEP THE OPTIONS IN CHECK**

All too often, I see photographers plant themselves across from the client and bang on the shutter button as the client sits there making minor adjusments. Standing in place and shooting happens more often with a backdrop, as folks tend to feel limited and don't ponder how to make more variety. Each of those poses might not be much different from the other, and in a sales session, it will become apparent as a few prints seem to cover the vast majority of the image diversity.

Time is of the essence, and if you drive your sales packages based on session duration, you are fighting against the clock to get as many workable, sellable images as quickly as possible. Luckily, there are a few simple strategies you can follow to increase your unique image count and capitalize on that shiny new pricing folio you are handing the client.





Imagine a situation where you have Jimmy the high school senior in his favorite red T-shirt. How many unique images of Jimmy can you devise in 10 frames and in the shortest amount of time? Most of us can do this by moving him around the park. Here is Jimmy sitting on the grass, leaning on a tree, climbing another tree, reading a book. All of these are great and unique, but they also take a long time. Can we increase the number of sellable unique images in other ways, or combine all of them to create a pile of sellable photos?



















# THE Z

The Z pattern is an exercise that is typically performed outside the studio. With a paper sweep or backdrop, it doesn't work as well, but can be done if you are mindful of the edge of your paper and you remember you can rotate the model (funny how often people forget this!).

Start with your camera in landscape and take a shot with the subject in a scene that features the landscape or building where the model is seated. For example, if they are standing next to the St. Louis Arch, your shot would encompass that structure or a large part of it. Next, move to the right (or left) and zoom in, catching a three-quarter shot of the client. By moving to the side, we are changing the background of the photo. The next shot is another few steps to the right; now you are zoomed into something like a headshot. We can repeat this process, but changing our camera to portrait orientation and framing the images differently than on the first series of shots.

In another example, imagine shooting a high school senior on location on a farm, a typical scene here in Wisconsin. You can capture a bunch of unique sellable pics with a minor positional shift from a field in the background to one with an abandoned barn to one where the sun is over his shoulder. These can all be captured quickly depending on where you decide to set up your shot. By thinking ahead and knowing you will want to aim for a unique background in your images, you can find the optimal places to shoot.

I call it a "Z" because I might also add in some low-angle shots, where I am shooting up at the client. This angle, otherwise known as a "hero shot," is pretty decent when combined with power poses. It's excellent for executives. Or, if you have the kind of wicked clouds often associated with sirens and people running to storm cellars, get some low angles to catch that incoming storm while holding onto your light stand with an iron grip.

We should end up with at least three landscape and three portrait images, all of which are sellable, and all shot in well under a minute. If you are in a place with 360 degrees of freedom, you could repeat this process until you get dizzy. I also tend to work in a few shots that have the sun behind the client, which often results in a lovely silhouette or one that adds interest when combined with a strobe. Don't forget some options with a macro, which are beautiful choices for boudoir, brides and newborns. I repeat this Z series for every new location, and even in the same area if there are plentiful options available. I do this for most of my sessions, and it works amazingly well for boudoir.

# Shiitter Magazina Eabrilary 2018

# **WORKING BOTH SIDES OF THE LIGHT**

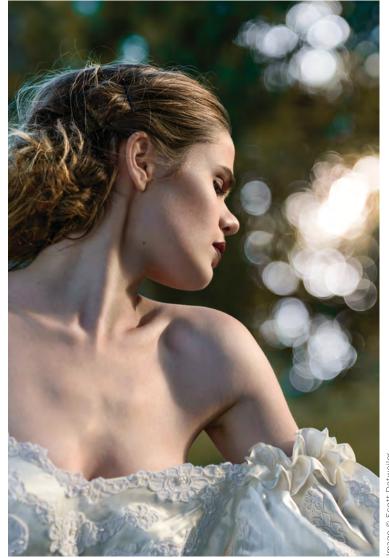
When looking at a typical portrait, we have learned to identify some basic lighting patterns that should fall on the face. The split, butterfly, loop and Rembrandt are common and pleasing on human faces. If you don't know these terms, now is a perfect time to look them up (or catch a portrait lighting class at ShutterFest).

Each lighting pattern offers a very different view of the same face. And each pattern also has broad and short versions. For example, we can shoot the Rembrandt lighting pattern from the lit cheek (the broad side) or the one in shadow with just the triangle of light toward us (the short or narrow side). Both work, but one is much moodier than the other. The key here is that they both look incredibly different and only require us to move to the opposite side of the client. If you are working the Z series, you will end up with a variety of both.



Not all clients enjoy the narrow/short side of the light, but I have seen sales soar because clients love it. This is especially true in boudoir and newborns. For newborns, the narrow side is well suited for black-and-white macro shots of lips and toes. The light doesn't need to move, and we don't have to wrestle a sleeping baby; we can just get off our butt and move to the narrow side of the set.

The client doesn't need to be facing the camera in every shot. Every so often, I find myself shooting the back of the client. I have sold large prints of clients walking down paths with their dog and other poetic images that don't even show their face. Think of them like book covers, and realize these are potential sales you might have been overlooking. Making an easy artistic choice for such a huge difference should be low-hanging fruit for image variety.



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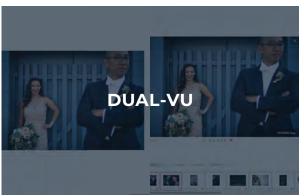
Planning your shooting in this way can easily double your total sellable images, which should have a direct impact on the final number at the bottom of the client invoice. Shoot for as much possible variety as you can without moving, and you can increase your sellable images without increasing your session times.

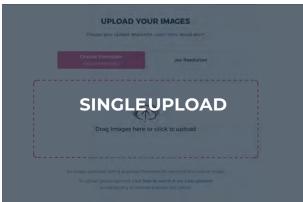


Scott is a conceptual portrait photographer based in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Along with his original approach to portraiture, he excels at fashion, boudoir and occasionally weddings. When he's not shooting, Scott turns his studio into a classroom where he holds workshops on subjects like lighting, conceptual work and boudoir.

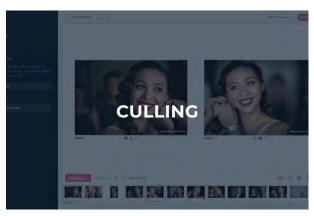
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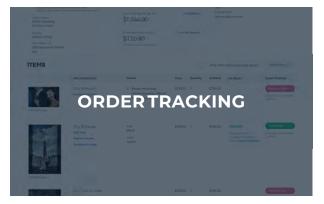


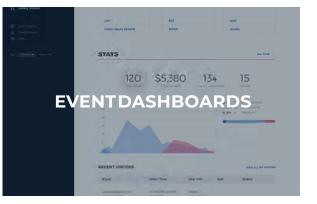


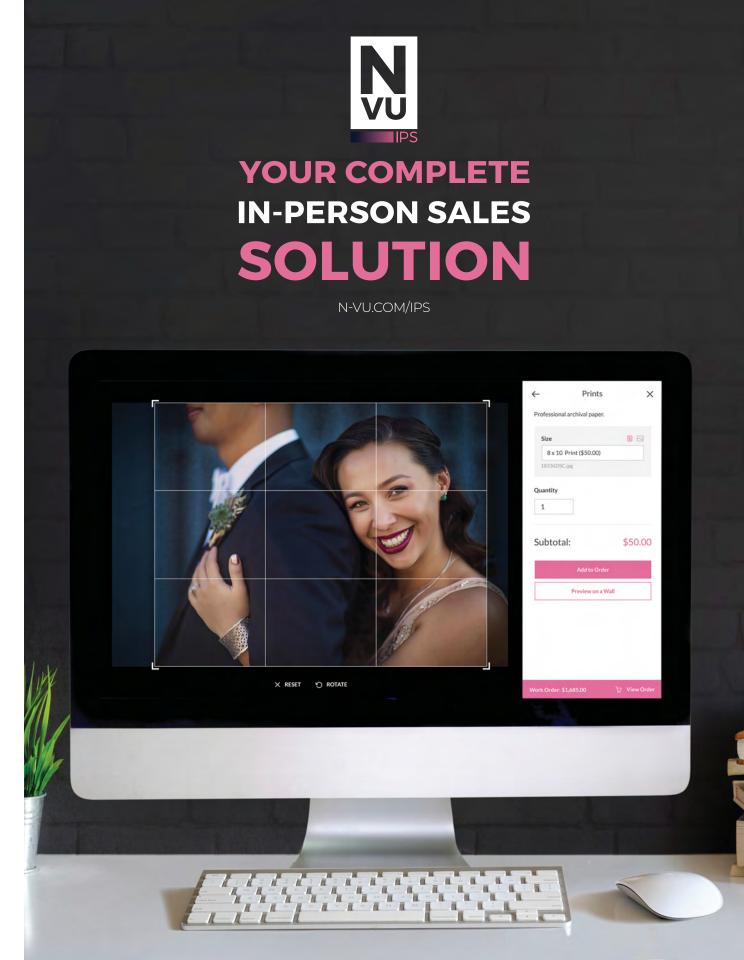














Shutter Magazine . February 2018

Remember holding your first professional camera in your hands for the first time? Feeling the weight of it as you ran your fingers over the body? Being extra careful not to smudge the lens? Hearing the clicking noises for the first time? Ah, the amazing imagery you would make with this fine piece of technology. The ridiculous amounts of money you would earn from a single click of the shutter release. The accolades you would receive from your artistic genius. The world was yours.

Jump cut to last week when your stress levels were higher than those of a Wall Street stockbroker on the verge of a meltdown. The rent is due, there are more mothballs than dollars in your bank account and you're bouncing between artistic integrity and getting a cubicle job. You're a photographer. You know you can do this. But how did you get to this place?

You're a photographer, not a salesperson. Cut yourself a break. Pour out the chai/coffee/wine/absinth (no judgment) and listen up. You don't need a master's in business to become a successful photographer. But if you don't immediately cut out a few things, you will turn into the cliché of the starving artist that your right-wing Uncle Barnie loves to mock, asking you at family gatherings, "So when are you going to get a real job?"

To that I say, "Sit your fat ass down, Uncle Barnie. I've got this."

Stop pulling your hair out trying to employ these five marketing strategies everyone tells you to do but that bring in zero ROI.

# **MARKETING MISTAKE #1**

"If I write a weekly blog about how much I love photography, which camera to use and when, and how I retouch my images using these shortcuts in Photoshop, then my dream clients will find me on the Internet, read my blog, consider me an expert in my field and book me!"

Do you really think your potential clients have the time to dillydally around the Internet looking for content on how to retouch an image, and that they'll somehow stumble onto your little blog post in a vast ocean of nearly identical blog posts? If your dream client is an art director at an ad agency, he doesn't give a flying Fig Newton about how you retouch an image. He wants you to come into your interview with an impressive portfolio and work so hard that you save him time and make his life easier.

You are important, but you aren't so important that your dream client will hunt you down and buy you a dozen roses because you wrote a brilliant blog post about retouching an image. So if you have a blog, stop writing it. You're wasting your time—unless you are also a coach/educator who teaches other photographers.

# **MARKETING MISTAKE #2**

"If I do a webinar or a Facebook Live where I teach others how to be a pro photographer, then I'll show my expertise to my dream clients and they'll book me."

This is true...if you are a coach/educator and your dream clients are your photography students. Then, by all means, blog and Facebook Live yourself away. But if you are not a coach/educator, if you are not Sal Cincotta, Chase Jarvis or Sue Bryce, and you do not have any coaching products to sell at the end of a blog post or Facebook Live, then why are you giving away your secrets for free? Ever heard of a successful photographer who got over 1,000 likes on his Instagram from his followers who are not other photographers? Neither have I.

Social media is there to help you show your work, maintain brand consistency and interact with others—but it's not designed to help you seal the deal. Social media is the small talk at the bar. Social media is the glance across the room. Social media is not the signing of the contract. So stop doing webinars and Facebook Lives, and posting 10 times a day in hopes of getting work. Post once a day. In that post, share your talent with the world without expecting anything in return. Then use the one ridiculously simple marketing strategy that I tell you about at the end of the article.

# **MARKETING MISTAKE #3**

"If I upload all of my imagery to royalty-free stock photo websites, then my dream clients can download my images for free, use them however they please, credit me for my work—and then when they want more, they'll find me on the Internet and book me."

Ever sell anything on eBay? It's where clinically diagnosed bargain hunters go to buy stuff. Now, if those clinically diagnosed bargain hunters reproduced mutant babies with six fingers, four toes and an even more miserly brain, those mutant babies would go to royalty-free stock photo sites to hoard your work for pennies. These mutant babies are interested in one thing: not spending any money on your work. These same mutant babies are the ones who complain about the stamp prices going up 2 cents at the beginning of the year.

Why would you even consider these mutant babies as potential clients? Why are you catering to them when all they want is more for less? They will never treat you or your photography the way you and your photography should be treated. You're so much better than that.

# **MARKETING MISTAKE #4**

"If I throw together a website that doesn't work on mobile devices, at least that's better than giving away my work on royalty-free stock photo sites—and I'll call it something catchy like yourphotographyextravaganzabybonanza.com so dream clients will notice me and book me."

Did you know Ryan Gosling owns a restaurant in Beverly Hills? Pretty cool! Do you know what it's called? "Tagine." Or, as most of Southern Cali's upper crust call it, "Ryan Gosling's Restaurant."

You see, your name holds so much weight. You're original. There's no one like you on this planet. You're a star! So why are you branding yourself with something catchy and cliché like "Your Photography Extravaganza by Bonanza" when your name is Greg? It just makes you sound cheap and inexperienced.

Instead, try this whopper of an idea: "Your First Name and Your Last Name dot com." Or if you want to get fancy: "Your First Name and Your Last Name and the word Photography dot com." Simple. To the point. Gets the job done. And Google's search engine recognizes that and puts you at the top of the list. Yay!

And please, for the love of the Internet, where over 70 percent of all traffic is viewed on a mobile device, make sure your website is responsive. (Responsive means that your site looks perfect on a desktop, laptop, tablet and smartphone. Some people call it mobile-friendly.)

If you are beginning to have a panic attack about your website's responsiveness, here's a tip: Build your website in half the time with Squarespace. It has great templates just for photographers, and they're all responsive. I switched over to Squarespace in 2014 and haven't looked back. It's a game changer.



### **MARKETING MISTAKE #5**

"If I give discounts, go on Fiverr or do free work for the exposure, I'll get my foot in the door, make an amazing impression—and then, when things really get rolling, I'll raise my prices so that dream clients will continue to book me."

Didn't I cover this in No. 3? Didn't I talk about the miserly mutant babies? Didn't I say that these people are not your dream clients?

The same goes for these types of people. Your dream clients understand that the value you give is impeccable photographic work. They understand that when you raise your rates, you are growing and chasing greatness. Your dream clients don't bat an eye when you raise rates. Instead, they think you finally know your worth.

Well done. You've made it this far. Congrats. You'll never make those five marketing mistakes ever again. But we're not done yet.

# ONE RIDICULOUSLY SIMPLE MARKETING STRATEGY

Now that you've freed yourself from all those marketing strategies that just wasted your time, here is the one ridiculously simple strategy that books the big gigs with the bigwigs.

Talk to people. That's it.

Building professional relationships is how you get jobs. It is all about whom you know. But it's also about who knows you.

I can feel you cringing just thinking about going up to a stranger and asking for a job. But that's not what I'm asking you to do. I want you to talk to people in your area, people like your hairdresser, grocery store manager, school principal, event manager, church pastor. All of these people have established networks of people you can leverage.

Let's take your hairdresser. Next time you get your hair cut, go in, be pleasant, ask your hairdresser how she is doing. Keep the conversation light. After you've paid but before you put on your coat to leave, say this: "I'm a photographer and I'd love to be a resource for you. I'd love to shoot some of the latest hair trends you are creating. Here's my card. My website is on there where you can check out my portfolio. I think what you do is awesome, and I want to make you look just as awesome online."

Then go grocery shopping. After you've checked out, roll your trolly over to the manager's area and ask to speak with the manager on call. Then say this: "I'm a happy customer of yours and I'm also a photographer. I'd love to be a resource for you. I see that your employee-of-the-month pictures are a bit outdated. I imagine there are newer employees who don't even have a picture to hang. I could help you freshen them up and in turn boost team morale. Here's my card."



Now you're on a roll. Go to a school's principal, say the same things as above and offer to do senior pictures. Visit an event planner and offer to do their next event. Drop by a church and offer to do wedding shoots.

By offering your services to these different people and making it all about them and not about you, you become a resource. You become the one they go to when the new hair trends roll out, etc.

By simply talking with people in your community, you are communicating who you are, what you do and how willing you are to help. Remember the last time someone genuinely wanted to help you? Neither do I! In the greedy, self-consuming world we live in, few of us genuinely offer to help others. When you do it, you leverage the one thing we are hardwired to do: make a human connection. By talking to people and making a human connection, you can become a local legend.



Jonathan is a personal-brand strategist who helps creative people shine online and share their talent with the world at Jonathan Tilley.com. His TEDx Talk "What Creativity Is Trying to Tell You" has inspired hundreds of thousands of creatives to turn thoughts into things, and his online courses have helped creatives build six-figure businesses. Jonathan believes there is far too little art in the world because creatives aren't taught how to promote their careers without feeling like a starving artist. That's why he enjoys traveling the world sharing his knowledge with the creative community at conferences, events and workshops.

jonathantilley.com



#### **EQUIPMENT USED**



#### DigiBee DB800 Flash Unit

- 7 f-stop power variability (5 Ws to 320 Ws)
- Ultra bright LED modeling lamp (400W equivalent, daylight-balanced)



#### AlienBees™ B800 Flash Unit

- 6 f-stop power variability (10 Ws to 320 Ws)
- Step less slider adjustment from full to 1/32 power

#### 22" White High Output Beauty Dish

- Produces smooth skin tones and even coverage



#### GET THE SHOT ROB CROSBY

I had an opportunity to work with rapper, CAMM. We had a few hours to connect and take some shots. My lighting set-up, including the DigiBee and AlienBees™, plays a huge part in me not only getting the photographs I want, but also being able to push myself creatively. Incorporating gels with the bright, crisp light source of the beauty dish, allowed me to achieve the desired effect I was wanting to create.

GO BEHIND THE SCENES ON OUR YOUTUBE PAGE! youtube.com/paulcbuff



ROB CROSBY
Photographer | robcros.com







2017 was a year of change for the photography industry. I kept hearing photographers and videographers complaining about bookings being down for the year. The reason for that can be myriad, so we're not going to delve into marketing methods or the state of the photography industry. That can be saved for the next "excusitis" pity party.

I've always said the best way to make more money is to work more with the clients you already have—the ones who love your work, trust your judgment and have already given you their business. It's much less work than finding new clients. Sometimes just by offering more to existing clients, not even doing full-blown sales sessions, you can earn tons. It made me about \$20,000 the first year I gave it a try.

Here are four ways you can make more money without spending any money at all.



#### 1. DO AFTER SALES

Just do them. No excuses. The first year I attempted this, I did nothing more than make some price lists and email them to my clients with a note saying, "You can add this stuff on if you want." Boom—\$20K in my bank account after the first year.

The best part about this isn't even the money. It's the fact that I'm now providing a full photography service to my clients. Without blatantly offering things like wall art, album upgrades, parent gifts and so on, you're leaving your clients with empty spots on their walls or drugstore prints. Offer them everything they want. Don't make them go it alone.









#### 2. INCREASE YOUR PROFIT MARGIN

One of the scariest things for photographers is raising prices. I constantly tell people to raise their prices, especially when someone books their highest package. But did you know that you can make more money without raising your prices?

This requires a little bit of math and analysis. If you don't already know your cost of sales and cost of business, check out the free tutorial at BreatheYourPassion.com/money. You'll need to know both for this quick moneymaking exercise. Another good idea is to take a look at your expenses. It's incredible how much money you spend that you don't even realize you're spending. I like to keep track of my books in 17Hats and QuickBooks Online.

Once you have your data, it's fairly simple. Cut costs. I'm not telling you to cut quality, but find areas where you can stop hemorrhaging money for things you probably don't need. Cutting costs allows you to make more money per job without the fear of raising your prices. As long as you do it in a way that doesn't noticeably change your level of quality, it'll probably be a good move for your bottom line.







iges © Vanessa Joy

A sure way to overcome this is by having products that they can't get anywhere else—things like deep matte paper, acrylic prints, metals and specialty frames that can be found only at professional printing labs like Miller's. Feel free to embellish on the products as well. I like having my clients feel the deep matte paper and then tell them how it feels like their pictures are printed on rose petals. It'll be hard for them to Google that one!











#### 4. MAKE THEM FALL IN LOVE

If you're photographing weddings, this is an easy one because your clients are love-minded already. Your job is to just transfer that to your products. This last tip is almost a no-brainer, but I see so many people not taking advantage of this simple idea.

Post your printed work. We create gorgeous displays. Canvases, albums, prints—whatever! When you get a product in, photograph it and post it on your social media. Make a blog post about your products. You can also put up a gallery of them on your website. I just snap a few shots with my iPhone half the time.

Displaying the types of things that clients can do with your photos helps them fall in love with them long before you ever get them in front of your camera. It shows off your work in new ways and helps them make the decision to book you.

I have a gallery dedicated to "Albums & Art" at www.vanessajoy.com. I direct new leads to it and mention it to my clients a few months before their wedding. By the time they come in for their album session, they're fairly well educated on what I have to offer and usually have an item or two on their must-have list.





#### BONUS TIP: DON'T STOP AFTER THE WEDDING

Reoffer products to your clients for their one-year anniversary. With my 17Hats workflow, I send out an automatic email to all of my brides on their anniversary, offering them a 25 percent off coupon to their online gallery just in case they still have some photos they want to print. It takes me no time at all, and they can take it or leave it—and I don't feel pushy about it.

If you're a studio that does repeat business, use this same methodology to encourage clients to come in to update their family photos, headshot or whatever type of photography they originally came in for. Or, two years after the wedding, you can do what I do and casually mention that you do maternity photos as wellwhatever works for you to get them in your door again.

February can feel like a financial slump. These tips can bring up your bank account sooner than later, and have positive long-term effects.





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 ner informative, open-book style of teaching.





Exquisite performance. Meticulous details. Introducing the new high-speed

standard zoom lens SP 24-70mm F/2.8 G2.

SP 24-70mm F/2.8 Di VC USD G2 (Model A032)

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The trick to a fulfilling career in photography is to be able to get creative in business. Every year around December, I take a few weeks to rebuild all of our processes from the ground up. Since we started our photography business in 2011, our processes have evolved our business into what it is today. In 2012, we photographed seven weddings. In 2017, we photographed 132 weddings and close to 200 portrait sessions across our three brands. Our average wedding with MAP spends \$10K to \$12K, and \$5K to \$6K between our main and associate brands. Now, I understand there are lots of definitions of success, but I share these numbers with you to serve as inspiration no matter where you are in your career.

I will never forget back in 2013 when I was working a full-time job and I had asked an established photographer in my area if it were possible to gross \$250K in sales as a wedding photographer. He responded in awe that I would even ask such a question: Of course it's possible.

It is not an easy journey from part-time photographer to full-time photographer with a successful studio. It is incredibly difficult to establish yourself in a new market, and it is even harder to maintain your status. 2017 marked a year where more businesses in the United States closed their doors than ever before. Facing a sea of competition, businesses have to fight for every customer they get, and that will never change.

So with all of these challenges facing you, what is the recipe for success? The answer comes in three flavors, and today we are going to tackle them.



#### BRANDING & MARKETING •

Your branding is the number-one key to your success because it is the first impression that potential clients have of you. The cliché statement "You never get a second chance to make a first impression" never rings more true than in business.

So as we move into 2018, let's look at your branding circle. Is your logo modern, or did you design it in Illustrator using a YouTube tutorial? Is your website modern, clean and cohesive? Does the imagery you show above the fold on your website match the style you convey to your clients? Do the first nine images on your Instagram account all have a cohesive style? Or are you trying to be bright and airy for her and dark and dramatic for him? The images on your website need to look like they were shot by the same photographer.

The questions I get asked most often by other photographers familiar with our business are: Where do I advertise? How do I get clients to inquire? The answers start with first impressions and end with the client experience.

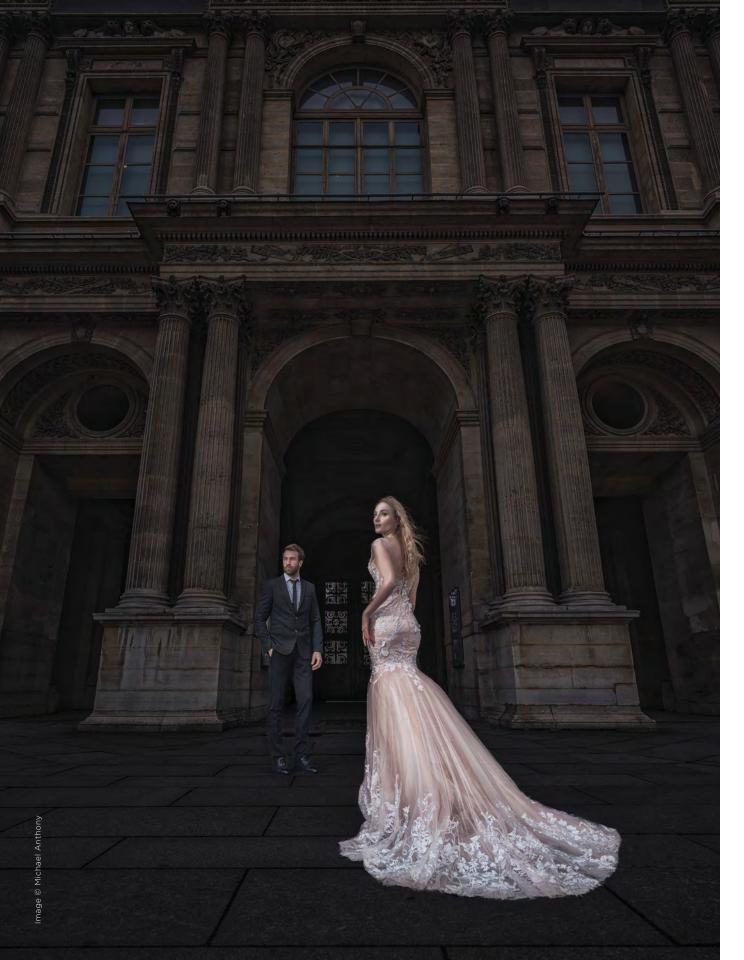
Let's talk about advertising for a second. The first step is to understand that nothing you do will work if your branding isn't in order first. If people cannot recognize your brand, they will pass by any advertising they see. Don't believe me? Can you name the last three ads you saw in your Facebook feed? Nope, and that is because you are immune to them. Millennials, especially, have developed a psychological defense mechanism to sales strategies that most businesses employ.

So what does that mean for you? It means that once your branding is in order, your advertising needs to provide a value proposition to your client if you want them to even take a second look at your business.

There are no secrets to where people advertise. If you don't know, let me tell you. You can advertise online through Google AdWords, Facebook/Instagram ads, directories like TheKnot and WeddingWire, and a host of other websites promising more exposure. You can advertise traditionally by partnering with venues and small businesses, and by buying print ads in magazines or billboards/kiosks at the mall. You can be like a Realtor and buy a bench and put your images on it if you want. But with endless places to spend your money, where is the best option that will provide the most return?

Find ways to establish trust in your brand through third-party sources. Use them to promote your business. The easiest way to do this is to form your current clientele through passive marketing. Passive marketing is when your current clients or business partners sing your praises through actual experiences they've shared with you. Why does this work?

Millennials have that psychological defense mechanism against modern advertising. The reason for this is because clients know that you can pay money and write almost whatever you want about your business in the advertisement. There is no faith in that source, so those ads are largely ineffective. However, when Susie tells Sally that YourTown Photography was incredible because they offered her beautiful pieces of art for their home that turned out nicer than they could have ever imagined, and that the photographer offered a champagne welcome toast in a beautifully designed studio, Susie just established trust in your brand to Sally.



Now, when Sally sees that advertisement on Facebook, she is more likely to pay attention to the copy in it if she is currently looking for a photographer. This is a huge mistake that photographers make: They throw stuff against the wall to see what sticks and get disappointed that the ad was ineffective.

Just remember what I said in the first part of this section: Your branding has to be in order before you start paid advertising.

#### • CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE •

This is an area we can all improve on. Most of us are not business majors, so we often don't understand how to control an impression of our brand. The easiest way to do this is to put yourself in the shoes of your average client. With every contact you have with them, you need to ask yourself, "Was this experience unique enough to leave a lasting impression?"

Is the client's process of inquiring easy? Or do they have to field a bunch of unnecessary questions? How does this process work on desktop versus mobile?

How about your response time? Do you know that in the wedding business, customers are more likely to book the first vendor that responds to them? Did you know that you are 70 percent more likely to get a response to an email inquiry if you respond to your clients within five minutes? This is all part of the experience. We millennials are used to instant gratification, so serve the need as best you can.

Let's talk about the shoot itself. Do you have the answers to any questions that might pop up? Do they know what to wear? Where to park? What time to arrive? Did you spend less time messing with equipment and more time interacting with them? Did you clearly and effectively communicate the process of buying prints and what to expect after the shoot?

I will tell you a little secret that I have noticed. If you give clients an amazing experience, they will be more satisfied overall with the final results of the photos. Keep the energy high and share with them the back of the camera to make creating great images a collaborative effort.

Now, let's get into the hardest part of the customer experience: sales and delivery. Why is this hard? Because this is when we need to get down to business. Here are some things to think about. Was your studio clean and free of odors? Are your sample products new? Sample products that are not on the wall should be updated every three to six months.

How are you presenting your images to clients? Are you still using Lightroom? Newer sales software like N-Vu, ProSelect and Fundy Designer allow you to display collages of images that are available for purchase. With ProSelect, you can project images in the correct size on the wall with a projector for your IPS meetings. We designed our new studio with a custom 4K projector and motorized screen to give our clients the best viewing experience possible. (We will be showcasing it in next month's article.)

When you complete the sale, are you providing your clients with the next steps in the process? I won't sugarcoat it: Delivery of products is by far the hardest part of the IPS process and the easiest place for you to screw up. It's also potentially the most detrimental to your brand because it is the last part of the process. Develop a system to track orders. We have developed a workaround in our CRM using the notes section to track orders and make sure we meet production deadlines. Order printed products immediately after the session to ensure fast delivery.



#### • VALUE PROPOSITION •

The key to creating an amazing sales machine this year is to make sure that your processes, products and services are all a win-win for both you and your client. Just because you need to earn a certain amount per wedding doesn't make you entitled to it. You're up against a ton of competition, and it's up to you to prove your worth, and not just with your photography. Even if you are an incredible photographer, photography is just a small part of your overall brand and organization.

At some point, you have to make sure you are increasing your value to potential clients. That comes in the form of your photography, your brand and your customer experience. What can you offer your clients that other, less expensive photographers can't? Have you ever wondered why photographers who haven't updated their style since 1970 do so well? It's because their brand offers trust, which is the most crucial element in the value proposition. Make sure that clients can trust that you will do an incredible job for them, and then watch your value begin to rise.





Once your business is established, continue to improve your processes to increase your value. I have spent years refining any processes that have caused problems. My articles and YouTube channel can supply you with the shortcuts to refining your own processes. We used Sal's business model as a shortcut to start our business, and over the years we've evolved and refined as we figured out our brand.

I'll leave you with a few questions to ponder. What is your value proposition? What makes you unique? Why would potential clients choose your studio and brand over hundreds of others? Answer those questions and keep working to improve your value proposition to make 2018 the most successful year you've had. I look forward to reading your success stories.





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.

michaelanthonyphotography.com



## Luminar 2018

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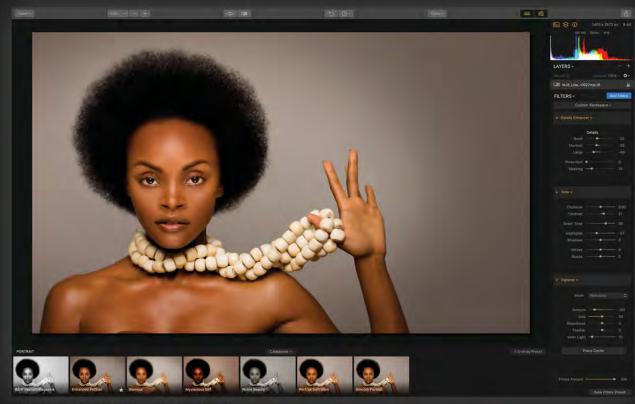


photo by Matthew Jordan Smith

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Shutter Magazine . February 2018

It's a slow time of year for business for many of us, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't be busy. In fact, it's just the opposite. The first quarter is the perfect time for you to lock in your plans for the year ahead, starting with your blog.

#### **YOUR BLOG**

Your website is about what you sell. Your blog is about what's in your heart. You've seen me write that a lot.

You shouldn't be in the photography business without a blog. I'm not suggesting you can't make it with just a website and a great reputation, but a good blog gives you the power to enhance your role in the community. It helps you reinforce your passion, sincerity, integrity, expertise and trust.

Here are some key ingredients in the recipe for success.

#### **CONSISTENCY**

Post fresh content at least twice a week. A blog's success is about building readership, and you can't do that by posting every other full moon. Choose two posting days and then stay with them for at least six months, and never miss a post.

"But Skip, I start getting busy and can't keep up with it!" The answer? Build a stash of material in advance. I've written about this before, and so many of you still haven't figured it out. Start writing now and don't stop until you've got at least 20 posts in your stash. This content will bail you out when you get too busy or just don't feel like writing.

If you hate writing or are a terrible writer, don't despair. Visit a high school and find yourself an A student or an English teacher looking to moonlight. Somebody who loves writing will have no problem listening to an idea you have for a post and producing an article based on your words and ideas.

#### **CONTENT IS KING**

The foundation for success of your blog is the content your target audience wants to read. For most of you, that means moms and brides, since women make 98 percent of the purchase decisions to hire a photographer in the portrait/social category.

Your topic range is huge, anything that's helpful to your readership. Here are a few of my favorite suggestions.

#### **PHOTOGRAPHY TIPS**

There are things you do every day that you take completely for granted, but Mom doesn't know them. Share ideas on posing, composition, fill flash, depth of field and storytelling, just to name a few. Show examples of before and after, which helps establish your expertise as the photography expert in the community. Don't be afraid to show examples with cellphone pics. The purpose is to raise the bar on the quality of images they're capturing on their own equipment.

#### PLACES TO PHOTOGRAPH

You don't have to give up your secret spots, but share a few places in your community as great places to shoot.

#### **COMMUNITY EVENTS**

This is one of my favorites because no matter where you live, there's something going on of interest to your readers. When you post about a walkathon for a nonprofit, you're also helping the organization. You're spreading the word while standing out as more than just another business in town.

Do follow-up posts on as many events as you can attend, which puts you in the position of being able to walk the talk. You're not only attending the event, you're demonstrating your skill set as a storyteller and photographer.

#### **COMMUNITY PROFILES**

Take your camera and visit businesses where you spend your money, such as pizza restaurants and grocery stores, and offer to do profiles on the business and its owner or standout employee. Share the photos on your blog with a short post about why you enjoy this establishment or the person being featured. When the post runs, give a copy to the subject to share.

There's a very cool thing that happens when you start doing community profiles: You demonstrate your ability as a photographer. This is assuming your skill set is top shelf and you know how to light and shoot a wide-angle environmental portrait. If you don't have the technique down yet, keep practicing and put this idea on the back burner. Your images have to be terrific.

Second, your subject becomes your ambassador. Most people like being in the spotlight, especially businesspeople. A portrait of the chef at your favorite pizza place will probably put a copy of your post up by the register. They're proud to be featured, and you'll find that with each profile you do, you've found a new marketing ally.

This kind of content is easy because it's the environmental portrait that's doing most of the talking. All you need to do is share some text about why this is one of your favorite places or people in your area.

Don't be afraid to give a few suggestions on your favorite style of pizza. Here in Sarasota, we've got a favorite sushi place I've written about several times on TripAdvisor. We've become friends, and they want me to create a unique roll and put my name on it!

#### **GET PERSONAL**

I'm always hesitant to suggest this because you have to do it with lots of common sense and finesse. It's okay to share a little about your own frustrations in life, but you have to do it in a way that's not offensive. Share some of your frustrations about your kids growing up too fast, not enough quality time with your family or there never being enough time in the day. Then include some ideas on how to solve these challenges.

Remember, the readership for most of you is Mom. She has her own challenges in finding balance in life, including all the different hats she wears.

#### **SHARE YOUR IMAGES**

So many of you have turned your blogs into nothing more than an extension of your galleries. You're caught up in what I call riptide marketing. Because you feature images from every session or event, you can't stop without offending your client, especially if you live in a small community.

Here's the solution. Show fewer of your images. Use the ones you do share to point out another lesson in photography. Talk about what to wear for a portrait, the time of day, a special location or technique you used to capture the image. Stop showing everything you shoot.

#### THINGS TO DO WITH PHOTOGRAPHS

This is especially helpful in planting ideas like framed prints, slide shows and canvases into potential clients. If you think nobody wants to print your images, wander over to my blog (SkipCohenUniversity.com) and read Michele Celentano's December episode of "Why?" Michele shares a piece she wrote several years ago that explains why her clients need to print their images, and she's given all of you the okay to plagiarize what she wrote.

#### THROWBACK THURSDAY

This is one of my favorites because it's like the old "Subliminal Man" sketch on *SNL*. Share some of your old images and talk about how fast kids grow up, how quickly families change and how important memories are.

Just a few weeks ago, I tweeted a quote, attributed to Dr. Seuss, that's become one of my favorites. It fits so well with my definition of photography: "Sometimes you'll never know the value of a moment until it becomes a memory."

Now think about your role as a photographer. It's perfect for Throwback Thursday content and being able to remind your readers the important role photography plays in their lives.



Here's the bottom line of this month's article: Don't let this first quarter slip through your fingers without cleaning up a few messes around your business, especially your blog. If you don't jump on these things now, in May when you're too busy, you'll be saying, "You know what I should have done?"

As my wife Sheila likes to remind me, "Don't *should* on yourself!"





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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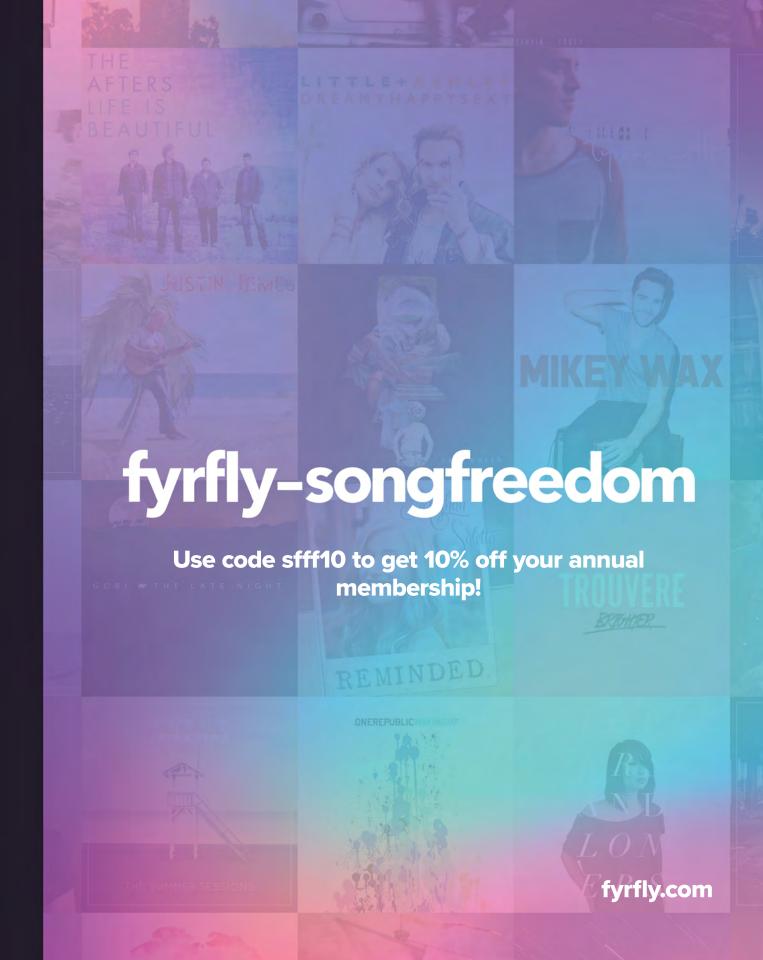




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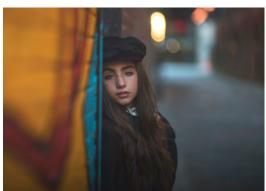






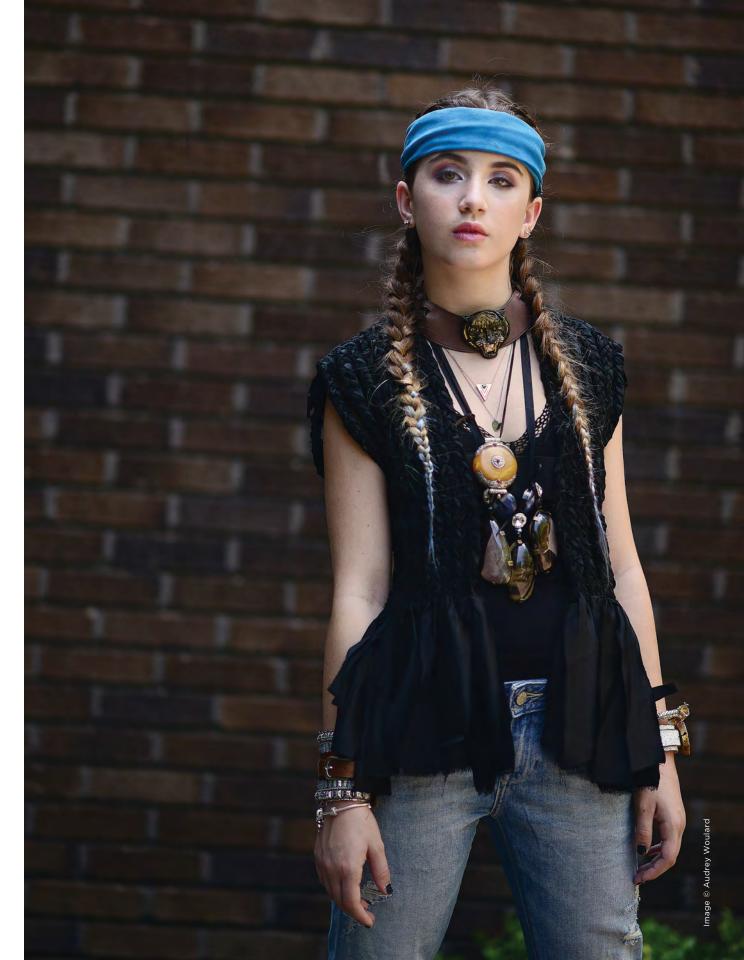
What is marketing? It's basically the action or business of promoting and selling products or services. You can't sell anything until you promote it. Promotion is marketing. How you promote ties directly into sales.



















mages © Aud

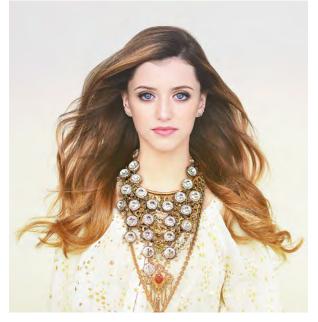
I often see photographers work on their pricing before they put together a solid marketing campaign. I've been a full-time professional photographer for 16 years. One thing I've learned is that when I know who my ideal client is, it makes it easier to determine what they will pay. I also learn how to present my product efficiently to maximize sales.

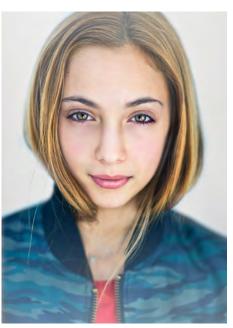
When I began, digital images weren't all the rage. I had to learn how to sell prints. I also didn't have a studio. My guiding principle early on was very simple: I would not leave my family at home to pursue something I wasn't being paid well for. I love photography, but not enough to be a starving artist.











nages © Audre

But this is such a small piece of the puzzle. Their personality determines how they eat, dress, talk, interact socially and how they shop and spend their money. Because I am my brand, I find clients who will pay my price point but who will allow me to run my business the way I want to. I knew that I could sell precisely how I wanted to and make the same amount or more as everyone else.

Since marketing influences all aspects of business, I wanted to market to a high-end client who would allow me to sell to them in my pajamas. This means that after the shoot, I wanted to go home. When it was time to present and sell my images, I still wanted to be at home. Although I have a gorgeous studio in downtown Chicago, I had little desire to sit in my studio projecting pictures on a screen showing clients different crops while they sipped on a glass of wine. I use my studio to shoot in, and that is it.



We always hear colleagues say you have to do in-person sales (IPS) to sell the wall portraits. That may be true for many photographers. Why is it that many photographers find success with IPS and not with online sales? It's because one has to learn how people think when they are shopping online.

There is an art to selling online, and it requires marrying the experience to the personality of the client. A client's personality is an indicator of how they shop and spend their money. Once you have this figured out, how you present your product will have little effect on how much they are willing to pay. If Louis Vuitton can sell a \$3,000 purse that you can't touch and feel online, then you can sell a wall portrait online as well. It's all about learning who your client is and how to present your product to maximize your sales.

I admit I am a big-time shopper and lover of fashion to the point that I am a VIP at a few luxury fashion houses. (We all have our vices!) This has given me some insights that I've applied to my business. I know firsthand how people think and act when they are deciding to make a purchase, regardless of the cost. There is a process everyone goes through the minute they identify something they want.

In my business, I sell prints and albums. I have clients who have huge 30x40-inch and larger images on their walls. I have clients who have 5x6-foot prints leaning on the walls of their foyer. I was able to sell all of these products online. There is a method to the madness. You can't just plop the images online next to your online cart and hope for the best.











#### SHUTTERFEST EXTREME

I am excited to share my sales insights at this year's ShutterFest Extreme. I'm often asked about my sales methods, and I usually shy away from the topic because there are no quick answers. And then there are the photographers who think you're crazy for not doing IPS. When photographers learn that I sell online and then hear my averages, they are often confused. Most think I merely plop my images online and hope for the best.

At ShutterFest Extreme, I will break down my entire process. I will map out how I decoded how my market shops, and how I applied that thinking to achieve online portrait sales for a \$2,800 per-client average. Even if you never sell a portrait online, the class will show you how shoppers think, and there will be plenty of tips for in-person sales too.

Who wants to sit in their studio watching their client drink wine while looking at your images? I prefer sitting at home drinking wine in my pajamas watching Netflix.



Audrey Woulard is a portrait and commercial photographer specializing in tween portraiture who works out of a natural-light loft in the Loop of downtown Chicago. She is an industry speaker and educator, traveling the world to share her knowledge with other photographers. alwphotography.com







If you want to know how to get better clients, start by looking at yourself. How are you procuring and then working with your clients? A common mistake is that photographers don't effectively communicate their "value perception." That's how others perceive the value of the work and services we provide.

The client chooses how much they'll pay for a product depending on how valuable he feels the product to be. If he does not see the value, it is probably your fault, since a quality product does not sell itself. You have to make the client understand this so he believes you are his best option and agrees to pay your price, even if it is more than that of your competitors.

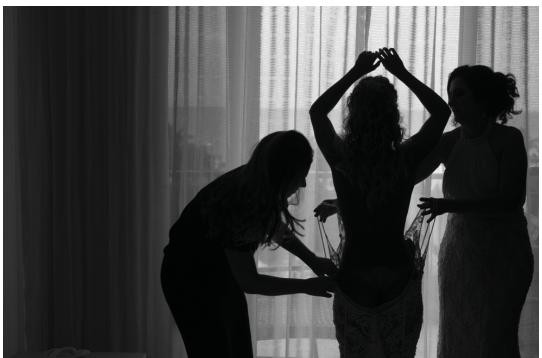


Image © Fabio Lauk



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If you begin to negotiate openly, offering more and more items, lowering your price or giving discounts to game the competition, it is very likely that you will leave your client with the perception that not even you believe in the value of your own product. I know the market is difficult and very competitive and that these are tempting ways to try to force a sale, but attitude adjustment might be a better place to start.

How do you communicate how your brand is different from the rest? How does the market perceive your firm? Many potential clients come to me hesitantly, knowing that I am one of the most expensive photographers in the market. They come to me because of my reputation for great work, even if they are wary of my prices. And I can guarantee that they leave the studio certain that our work is worth what we ask for it. Even if our prices are outside their budget, it's important that they leave the studio with the perception that my service is worth what I am asking and that they pass on this information.

You need to deeply study the market that you serve. Understand what clients in this market like, which businesses they frequent, how these places deliver their products. It's humbling to see the cool things your competitors are doing, to constantly compare yourself to them. Let it be an opportunity to get inspired, to change.

The famous adman Washington Olivetto (of W/McCann, formerly W/Brasil) once said in an interview something that touched me profoundly: The worst thing that can happen is excellent publicity for a terrible product because many clients will buy it and then the lie will be discovered more quickly.

For many years, the objective of my firm was to capture the largest number of clients possible. All of our work was directed at this objective. We worked very hard to close more and more contracts, even if it meant doing five weddings in a week. And we were successful, because we reached 150 weddings in a single year back in 2011.

Today, all my efforts go exactly in the opposite direction: I want to reach the incredible number of 18 weddings per year. Then you will ask me: "But Fabio, this is not even 20 percent of what you were doing before." And I will answer you: "Yes, this is exactly what I want." I want these 18 weddings to be thought of, executed and photographed with all my potential, care and dedication, something impossible when I was in the third wedding in the same week. You reach a level of exhaustion where you end up photographing on automatic pilot. It is very difficult to reinvent yourself when you are in the same church for the umpteenth time that month.

Things happened in my life that opened by eyes to new possibilities, and this triggered an intense process of change. Many said I was crazy. The success I had achieved was inspiring to many people, many of whom believed I was throwing this away. I confess that maybe even I thought so.





























Many people ask me at workshops and conferences how they can win better clients. My reply is always this: Work your brand and your products. Understand everything about your client-know what she consumes, what she desires, what she expects at such a price.

You also have to invest in that one thing no one can copy if you want those clients: Invest in you.

Investing in you means going all out to set yourself apart. The client is willing to pay more only if you offer something no one else does. I say this with a great deal of certainty—after all, for a long time, I was the most expensive in the market.

Before they open their wallet, clients have to know your photos are technically good—but your competitors' work is probably just as good, let's face it. You need to inject yourself, your personality, your attention to detail, into your work. That can include how you conduct sales sessions, little things like snacks and drinks before a shoot, how you deliver products and just how you talk with clients.

How you treat people really is an art that spills over into how they perceive the end product.



Fabio Laub considers himself a contemporary of other Brazilian photographers like Camile Butcher who have taken a more journalistic approach to social photography. He has had a successful studio in Brazil for nearly two decades. Fabio lives for emotional reactions to his work, and says photography is "not solely for remembering, but also for reliving."

fabiolaub.com

# TAKING CARE BOOK SO CONTROLL BOOK SO CONTROLL

with Christine Yodsukar







The old 80/20 rule states that 80 percent of the effects come from 20 percent of the causes. In business, this means that 80 percent of your business comes from 20 percent of your clients, so it makes sense that we should take extra special care of our clients. Look back through all of your clients from 2017. Who were your best clients? They could be the ones who spent the most with you, the ones who worked with you the most frequently or the the ones who spent an okay amount with you but were the exact people or companies you want to work with. These are the ones you want to pay special attention to. Here are some ways to take care of your 20 percent.

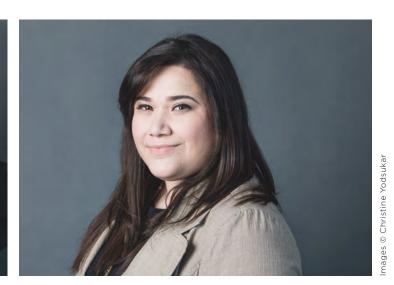
#### BUSINESS IS PERSONAL

I have found over the years that the longer I build my business relationships with people and companies, the more our personal relationships grow. I used to think this was wrong and unprofessional, but it has actually become a huge part of my business relationships. Get to know the people you are doing business with. Keep jokes and conversations appropriate, but allow yourself to connect with them on a human level. Everyone is trying to do their best at life, and we all want real human connection.

#### PERSONAL DELIVERY

It makes a huge impact when you personally deliver things to clients who live within driving distance. It makes them feel special and shows that you go above and beyond for them. Deliver their artwork orders, holiday gifts and even a bottle of champagne to celebrate their purchase of a new home, the start of a new business or a landmark birthday.

For clients who are not local, you can hire someone to do the personal delivery for you. For my clients in Los Angeles, I hire a friend and fellow photographer to deliver artwork. Some of my clients have seen her multiple times and feel like she is just as much a part of the Yodsukar family as I am, so they look forward to seeing her. Nothing says you value someone like giving them your time.



THE PHONE CALL CHECK-IN

Social media has made people lazy. A phone call just to say hi is a rarity and a welcome change from texting and messaging. I love calling my past clients to check in on them and see how they are doing. If they bought artwork from me over the past year, I ask them how they are enjoying it. Their excitement is the best feeling in the world.

I also like to call my clients if I hear that they have gone through a hardship recently. Even if they are unable to talk or answer the phone, just knowing you cared enough to actually call has a huge impact. People never forget how a person makes them feel.











#### THOUGHTFUL AND EXTRAVAGANT GIFTS

Gifting is a way to show your clients you're thinking of them. You can give gifts as a thank you, for the holidays and to celebrate something big and exciting happening in their business or life. Extravagant gifts speak for themselves. Bottles of expensive champagne and luxury spa gift certificates are two examples of gifts that make clients' jaw hit the floor. It should be a gift they wouldn't normally purchase for themselves.

Many of my in-person sales sessions happen online because so many of my clients are not local. But for my best out-of-town clients, I fly to them and do the sales session in their home. They are unbelievably appreciative and understand that I do not do this for everyone. Going the extra mile for them (or extra thousand miles) shows how much my team and I value them.

Thoughtful gifts are just as impactful as extravagant gifts because they show time and energy were used to pick out the gift, rather than simply swiping a credit card. One of our wedding couples loved to joke about the fact that he drinks cosmos and she drinks whiskey neat. We got them a custom cocktail glass engraved "HIS" and a whiskey glass engraved "HERS." They posted a photo of the glasses with the caption "The best news a silly couple can get when they shoot their in-no-way-serious engagement photos? Photographers who show up with a gift that proves they GET IT. If you're getting hitched, hire the Yodsukars for your photos. You won't regret it."

#### GIVE A LITTLE TO GET A LOT

It's all well and good taking care of your top 20 percent clients, but how do you get these clients in the first place? I've snagged many of my top clients by giving my time or my talent before they gave me their business. I worked for free or at a lower rate than normal to get in the door.

In September 2017, I ran a promotion offering free portrait sessions to celebrate my husband's birthday. One job I booked during that promotion turned into two sessions at a total of \$9,000. We landed a company client that we now work with monthly by approaching them about a video we were doing about their product, and wanting to know if there was anything specific they would like me to include. They asked for a meeting, and the rest is history. We continue shooting videos for them.

To get valuable new clients, you have to believe in yourself and the value you can bring to them.

















#### LET YOUR PROBLEM CUSTOMERS GO

To free up your time and energy so you can focus on your top 20 percent clients, you might need to let some clients go. The ones to let go are the problem customers. You know the ones: They have endless issues with you and the work you do, they require two or three times as much attention as your other clients and what you put into the relationship doesn't seem to outweigh what you get out of it. It's time to let them go. This allows you to focus more on your best clients, the ones bringing you 80 percent of your business.

Personal connections will never go out of style. Showing your clients that you care about them as people and not just as clients goes a long way. Dumping your problematic clients will free up valuable time and resources that you can devote to your best clients—and your best clients will bring in more clients just like them.

Find ways to add personal touches and enrich your professional relationships to grow your business and make the work you do so much more enjoyable.





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.

theyodsukars.com



### Where Will LUMIX Take You?

#### CHANGING PHOTOGRAPHY



Over the last decade, mirrorless hybrid photography has evolved from a niche, video-focused subset into the new standard for professional still photographers and videographers alike. With incredible detail retention, true-to-life color, dual image stabilization, advanced auto focus and built in WiFi, compact, lightweight LUMIX cameras and lenses offer the best of modern imaging technology along with the unlimited possibilities of 4K video frame capture and editing.

We've changed photography. Now it's your turn.

Photo Credit: Ben Grunow DC-GH5 with Leica DG Vario Elmarit 8-18mm Lens 1/400 sec, F/5.6, ISO 100, Focal Length 12mm (24mm, 35mm camera equivalent)





Tamron's SP 24-70mm F/2.8 Di VC USD G2 achieves top image quality and performance. At 5 stops, it provides the highest image stabilization of any lens in its class thanks to its Dual MPU system that also yields excellent focusing speed and accuracy. e-Band and fluorine coating, new hood release lock, TAP-in Console compatibility and much more round out this new Tamron G2 zoom.

tamron-usa.com

The Solix is a new powerful daylight LED from Westcott featuring an integrated rotatable speedring for attaching nearly any softbox. The included barn doors and diffusion cap have magnetic attachment for easy control of the light and the single button that controls power and dimming makes this light extremely user friendly. The Solix operates on traditional AC power and also DC power sources using a D-Tap Cable.

fjwestcott.com/solix





Grand Folio Boxes - an amazing Album alternative! This elegant customized black box has clean lines, but is special enough to display. Created to hold up to twenty mats, adding in an optional Personalized USB and Magnetic Easel makes this a spectacular way to give Digitals and Prints to Clients. Now Available sized for 8x10 or 11x14 mats or prints.

photoflashdrive.com

N-Vu's new IPS system makes it easy for you to help your clients (and make more money) by offering you a complete solution for your in-person sales process. It's easy to use, seamlessly integrates with other parts of your photography workflow like Lightroom, client galleries, mobile apps, and is completely customizable. Sign up for early access today!

n-vu.com/ips



Shutter Magazine . February 2018



In our experience coaching and mentoring photographers, most photographers don't like doing sales. Here are the most common reasons:

- They have never had to sell anything before and feel they lack experience.
- They have had bad experiences being sold things and don't want to do the same to their customers.
- They don't like talking about themselves or feel insecure about the value of their product or services.

Sales can be scary. Sales means different things to different people. For some, sales can feel pushy or slimy. What comes to mind when you think car salesman?

This is not the most positive way to look at sales. It can create internal challenges when it is time to sell your own services or products.

We reframe selling as sharing, which is a much more positive approach to sales. If you have a good product or service and believe it can help others, why wouldn't you want to share it?

If you hold back on sharing, you might prevent someone from having a good experience. When you look at selling as sharing, it shifts your mindset that selling is a good thing that you need to do in your business, and it doesn't have to be so daunting.

Selling begins with your message and how you share what you have to offer. When the messaging is done correctly, your potential clients will be seeking you out for more information.

The OPEN method is a way of looking at the buying process a person goes through. OPEN stands for "oblivious, pondering, engaged, need." By understanding this method, you can adjust the way you communicate with your potential clients, depending on where they are in the buying process. Not all clients are in the same stage of buying, so the way you communicate with them should vary.

# **OBLIVIOUS STAGE**

In the first stage of the OPEN method, the potential client is oblivious to your product or service. They don't need your service and don't even know about you. This is the majority of people. They don't need photography right now.

The people in the oblivious stage are the biggest pool of people. When you create your ads or posts on social media, it's like going to the mall with a megaphone and shouting, "Hey, I'm a photographer. Do you need photography?" This is a random method of communication, basically cold calling.

You don't know who you're talking to, you're just blurting your message out into the world. All of us go through a journey in the buying process. When you hit people in the oblivious stage, they don't need photography, so it's a total waste of time trying to convince them that they need you. It's not smart marketing because you will be spinning your wheels and spending your energy talking to people who don't need or don't know they need your services.

# **PONDERING STAGE**

In the second stage of the OPEN method, they are a bit closer to making a buying decision, but are still in the early stages. They are farther along than those in the oblivious stage, who have no clue or desire for photography services.

Those in the pondering stage are experiencing some sort of life event. Photography services are typically needed during major life events. Getting pregnant, having a baby, getting married, getting divorced, getting a new job... these are all major life events that could lead to a photography need. So now that this life event has happened, they are starting to think about photography.

# **ENGAGED STAGE**

In the third stage of the OPEN method, individuals are looking for a photographer. It could be a high school junior looking for a senior session, a mom who will be giving birth soon and needs to line up her newborn session or a newly engaged couple looking for vendors.

# **NEED STAGE**

At this final stage, individuals are ready to buy, have their checkbook or credit card ready, and are ready to spend money.

# 01.00 Visc. 2500

# **COMMUNICATION AT EACH OF THE BUYING STAGES**

We tend to do most of our messaging toward individuals in the need stage. We share information about sales or events we are hosting to convince these people to buy. But our messaging is overlooked most of the time because the majority of the people we talk to are not yet in the need stage.

Think about how you would feel if you were solicited on a regular basis. You would probably unsubscribe from, unfollow or delete that person. You would probably be annoyed and turned off. So with this in mind, think about your messaging, and if you find yourself constantly saying, "Buy my stuff, buy my stuff, buy my stuff."

Look at your messaging. Are you knocking everyone over the head with solicitations? Are you sharing content your potential customer would be interested in? Put yourself in the shoes of the consumer. What are they struggling with? What are they thinking about? What's their life about? What are they going through right now?

Think from the perspective of a couple who need their wedding photos taken. Is your message specific to the couple or the bride? What are they struggling with? How could you connect with them even before they get engaged? Remember, the earlier you become an influence, the more likely you will be on the top of their mind when it is time to select a photographer.

Some content a bride may find interesting or have a need for may include the latest bridal trends or finding other vendors, like a florist or DJ. You can provide this information with a free guide or tip sheet. Having this information handy allows you to influence and market to these individuals over time.

Think of their wedding prep needs. What would be a valuable piece of information they'd be willing to trade their email address for? By providing this vital information, you are helping them and building trust over time. So as the individual gets closer and closer to getting engaged, they already know who you are and you become their go-to source for photography. You've been talking to them for the past couple of years about all the preparations and challenges of wedding planning. You've been nurturing that relationship the entire way.

Perhaps there is an article of interest you can provide to couples looking for a location for their engagement session. Maybe an article about topics a couple should talk about before getting married. You will create trust so that when it is time for them to look for a wedding photographer, they know where to go.

Some of this can include curated content. As long as you cite the original author, you don't have to come up with your own content. You can talk about the article, video or other content from your own unique perspective. Give them tips to help them with their challenges and speak in their own language.

None of this information has to deal with photography. But sharing it makes you the expert and builds trust.



# CONCLUSION

True entrepreneurship is a marathon. You have to nurture relationships and let go of the need for instant gratification. This is about building long-term relationships by positioning yourself as the photography expert in your community.

When you understand the OPEN method and the thought process of people in the different stages of the buying journey, you'll know how to tailor your communications. Your communication style will be more effective. You'll build trust with those in the earlier stages of the buying journey, and then be able to target those who are closer to making a buying decision.



Paul and Melissa Pruitt are the cofounders of the Photographer Entrepreneurs Association, which provides branding, marketing and sales resources, done-for-you services and business photography education. Together they provide support and mentoring to photographers and speak nationally on small business solutions. Paul and Melissa are the authors of the Amazon best-selling book *PROFITographers: Creating a Successful Photography Business.* They help their Facebook community of over 16,000 photographer entrepreneurs and host a weekly show, *Tog Talks*, about the business of photography.

PhotographerEntrepreneur.com



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At first we felt like the dog that finally catches the car he was chasing: confused and overwhelmed at what to do next. After a lot of trial and error, we have developed some solid concepts to help portrait photographers bid on and book commercial jobs. If you approach commercial inquiries with the same mindset as weddings, boudoir and babies, you will find yourself getting passed over a lot. If you want that sweet corporate payday, you have to think differently.









# PRICE IS THE GATEKEEPER, EFFICIENCY IS THE CLOSER

All of the concepts for communicating with and booking commercial clients can be divided into two categories: price and efficiency. Price is the gatekeeper. Efficiency is the closer. Without both, you may book a job, but you won't book that same job again-and return clients are what make a commercial photography business successful. Let's start with the inquiry.

Commercial inquiries almost always have the following things in common: They are short (often too short) and they ask for a quote. Let that be your guide.

For a potential commercial client, at least the first time they reach out to you, you are an item on a checklist: Order ink for the copier, get paper towels for the break room, hire a photographer for the convention. That's you. Next to the paper towels. (But you're actually totally beautiful and unique, I promise!)

For a large company, photography isn't an emotional decision, like hiring a wedding photographer. You have to approach these interactions without ego or emotion if you want to book consistently.

First rule: Be efficient. Keep every email, phone call and interaction to the least number of words possible. When you get an inquiry for a wedding, you respond all warm and fuzzy. Middle managers don't have time for warm and fuzzy.

A bride wants warm and fuzzy. The 28-year-old post-graduate middle manager who emailed you about photographing a building does not. A response to a commercial inquiry should look something like this:

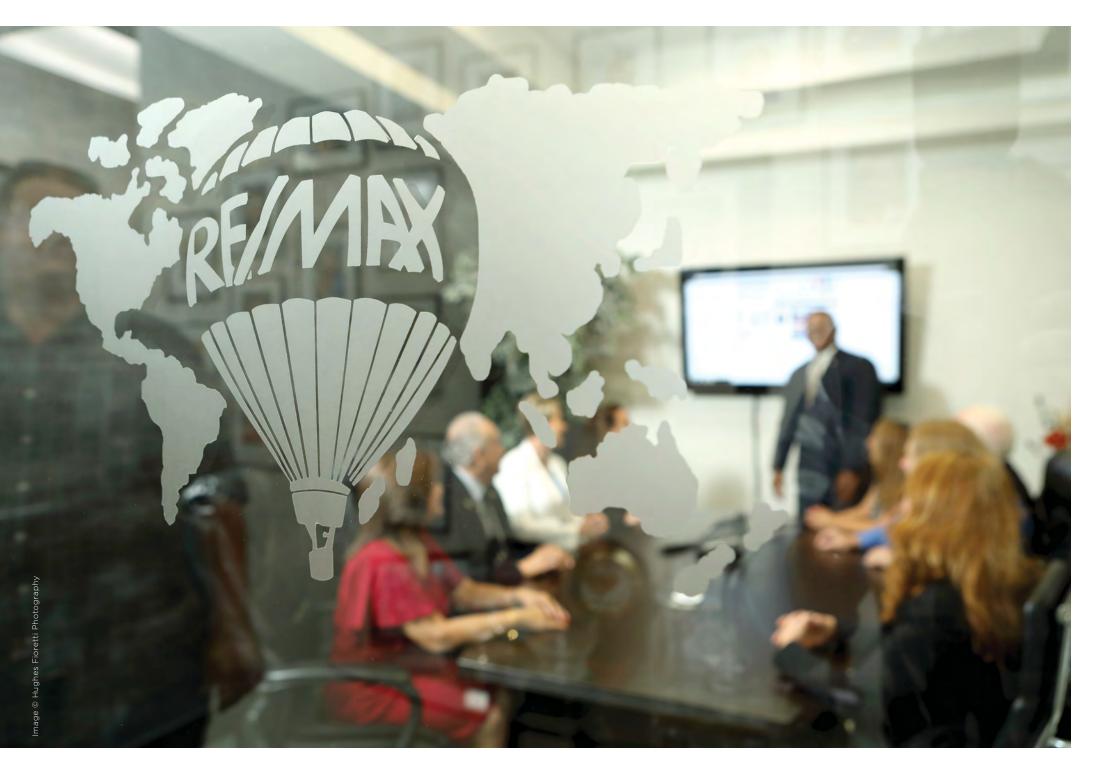
Thanks for your email. We can definitely help you with that. We are available on those dates, and from your inquiry, I suggest the following coverage and extras at the price of \$\_\_\_\_\_. Attached to this email you will find an itemized quote, our full price list, and our Federal Tax ID and insurance information for your records. If you have a specific budget in mind, we are happy to work with you on a custom quote.

All the Best,

Gary Hughes Hughes Fioretti Photography www.hughesfioretti.com

See the difference?





Let's go over the five most important rules of communicating and bidding with commercial clients.

- **1. Be direct.** Don't try to pull the client into a larger conversation—not yet. This is the first contact, and all they need to know is if you are available and if your price is in the ballpark of their budget. If you respond quickly and meet those two requirements, you will have passed the first hurdle. Wasting time with a ton of questions and a longer discussion is likely to get your email ignored. This is not the time for information gathering.
- **2. Be efficient.** The response above succinctly answers every question that comes up in an average inquiry. We included information like the insurance and tax ID that they will need later if we get hired. We have now saved them a step and showed them that we know what we are doing and can anticipate needs in advance.
- 3. Respect the budget. When a large company calls, they know how much money they are going to spend on a project. The amount is mostly set when they get in touch, and you have to find out what that amount is and decide if you are willing to work for that. In this sample response, we gave them a number as a starting place, attached the full list of services so they can build their own package and let them know we are willing to work within their budget if possible.

- 4. The lowest price doesn't always get the job. For anyone who has ever worked in the corporate world, here is an example you might understand about budgets: Larry has a budget of \$5,000 for his project at work. He gets it done for \$2,500 and pats himself on the back for saving the company so much money. Next year, Larry is tasked with the same project, but now his budget is only \$2,500. What happened? In most cases, it is important to your client to come in under budget, just not too far under budget. Most of the time, our initial bid is more than what they want to pay, but if you have done everything right up to this point, they will come back and ask you to bring the price down. We have found that the sweet spot is to come under about 90 to 95 percent of the budget. It's enough under to make them look good without getting their budget slashed the next time. When they come back to you, ask them what their budget is, and, when they tell you, decide if you are willing to work for 90 to 95 percent of that amount.
- 5. Have a day or hourly rate. Commercial clients understand billable hours better than anyone. It's how the corporate world works. If you have a rate per product, per person, per location or anything that is even slightly difficult to understand, you might lose out to someone whose pricing makes more sense. Our price list is broken down to a day rate with available extras like hair and makeup, retouched images and everything else we offer as an upgrade. Every single service is listed separately with its own price. Breaking the services into separate line items makes the numbers smaller and allows the client to build a shoot based on their needs without going over their budget. Since we switched to a pricing menu, we've gone from a 50 percent booking rate to 90 percent.



Do better. Do more. Remove any potential bottlenecks and overdeliver whenever you can. A good corporate client will be more loyal and spend more money with you than just about any client you have ever had if you impress them and make their life easier. If things get sticky and you drop the ball, you aren't likely to get called again.

There is an advantage to being on the checklist with the paper towels: If your corporate client has found in you a vendor they enjoy working with, who delivers consistently and at the right price, they will consider that item on the checklist permanently crossed off, and that's very good for business.



Image © Hughes Fioretti Photography



Master photographer, lecturer and author Gary Hughes has become one of the industry's leading headshot shooters. His work has garnered local, national and international awards, and has been featured in *Professional Photographer* magazine and *Huffington Post*. He founded Hughes Fioretti Photography in Orlando, Florida, with his wife, Julie, in 2008.

hughesfioretti.com

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What comes to your mind when you see the phrase *client education*? Do you imagine an awkward conversation where you're telling a couple that they probably should have purchased digital images and a print release rather than produce their own 24x36 screenshot of an engagement blog post? (Did they really not care that your watermark was covering the image?)

Or perhaps the phrase conjures up memories of a long email reply you once wrote in which you tried to convince a potential client who questioned your pricing that the quality of your work is worth more than the \$200 they budgeted for a family session and a disk of images. (Or did you try to justify your prices by detailing your business expenses and the depreciation value of your camera equipment? If so, please don't admit it!)

If we're honest, client education is probably the scariest thing about running a photography business. Always having to justify our value to a bargain-hunting bunch of incredulous consumers just seems cruel.

Welcome to the professional world, my friend. Don't let it get you down. But do get ready to work hard and reshape the way you communicate. As business owners, we wear so many hats, including "director of public relations"—perhaps the most important of all. Convincing the unconvincible is an art and a science.

To become anything more than just another starving artist, you need to become an expert at convincing. Here's how and when to do it.



Did you notice the contradiction? I described the need to hook your client, which is accurate. But I also described you, the photographer, as the "fish" in an overcrowded sea of fellow photographers. Fish don't hook fishermen, do they? No, but that's how we act sometimes. Photographers do not outnumber our clients. We are in the boats, and the sea is full with clients for us all. They are the fish. If we are patient enough to learn the skill of fishing, we control our own destiny.

It sounds counterintuitive. So how can I make such a claim?











I make it confidently first because of my own experience. My wife and I serve a small market. Our studio is located in a town with a population of 2,863. The nearest urban market is a city of barely 100,000 that also boasts the USA's highest poverty rate. Since it's a university town with art schools, our favorite pastime is counting the number of enthusiastic new photographer grads who launch websites each year. Keeping count is a lost cause, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't try to compete. You must believe there are plenty of clients out there for you.

Photographers too often take a self-defeating attitude about booking clients. According to this defeatist attitude, other photographers are out to get you and so you have to work for less than what your time and talent are worth just to compete. Finally, you become desperate. Desperation - not a problem with supply and demand - defeats the photographers we've seen come and go every season while our studio has grown for almost a decade. Don't just hope to succeed. Make the choice to.

Instead, embody confidence. Purchasing and hiring decisions are made in the limbic brain, which is the emotional and abstract part of the brain that's not interested in numbers or details. When someone books you, they do it because they get a good gut feeling from you.

Research shows that trust is the number-one motivator behind final purchasing decisions. You can make booking easier for your clients by creating a sense of trust. Trust is the result of clear understanding. Make every inch of your process and services crystal clear. Simplify your menus and packages. Too many options make consumers retreat.

Spend your time with clients explaining step-by-step what they can expect on a wedding day, not dull facts about the quality of your products or whether you define your style as journalistic or fine art. We put potential clients to sleep with that nonsense. Walk them through every option of your packages, showing samples.

Of course, you can direct them to build their own package, but hourly rates and à la carte items must cost enough that your prebundled and discounted packages make much more sense. This shows potential clients the value of their own initiative, without you needing to educate them in words. When people learn something for themselves, they're more likely to accept it and move ahead confidently beyond their initial budget.

This is also a weeding-out process. If they can't afford your lowest wedding package, they are simply out of luck. You will disqualify some bargain-hunters by sticking to your prices and policies, but you will earn better-qualified clients who have realistic expectations. That's a recipe for a less stressful transaction.















# **Boost Your Sales Average**

When we began our business, I assumed we could make a living on photography session fees alone. What was I thinking? Like lemmings, I guess we were just following the crowd. But we wised up just before the crowd plunged over a cliff.

Sure, there will always be photographers who appeal to a luxury market by virtue of their brand name. They can charge exorbitant fees upfront and deliver nothing but digital images on the backend. I'm happy for them. But let's be honest. Only a limited number of markets are economically suited to that model—mine certainly is not. I believe in providing my clients with something of lasting physical value. Nowadays, 70 percent of my studio's income is from print sales. So how can you achieve those kinds of numbers and find success even in a depressed market?

Have you considered lowering your session fee? I know it sounds crazy, but I'm a firm believer that the ideal portrait session is a free one. With a free session, it's 100 percent clear to clients that nothing can possibly be included. Yes, we do still charge session fees in most cases; you have to set these carefully considering what your market can bear. But we also give away a lot of free portrait sessions (and sometimes even weddings) through charity events that benefit both the charity and us. But it helps when fees are low and there's no confusion that digital images are available only at additional cost. Then the whole process feels more honest to your client because you're providing a kind of guarantee: If I don't produce great work for you that you want to purchase, you don't lose anything.

Provide a pricing menu and limited-time sales before the client's ordering appointment so they can consider how they might like to preserve and display their artwork in the home. Most importantly, never let anyone see images online (not a blog post, not an online gallery) until after their ordering appointment. Otherwise, you will kill your sale dead. Seeing images online gives people the false sense that they will always be there to enjoy. It doesn't matter if you try to educate them about the instability of digital media or remind them that their grandkids likely won't use USBs or Facebook anymore than we now use eight-track tapes.

Remember, facts don't convince people's limbic brain, and the expectation that everything is ever-present on every device won't go away because you say so. Good client education is not about winning arguments at all; it's about having a system that requires good behavior.

It's easy for a client to decide against buying photography before a session is booked, but it's extremely rare for someone to walk away once they've seen and fallen in love with their personal artwork. When we show a client their images for the first time, we click through every photograph in Lightroom and let the couple or family indicate their favorite images. We mark each with two stars. When they inevitably end up with a lot of favorites, we say something along the lines of, "That's the perfect number to use for a coffee table book that will preserve every bit of your personalities and tell your story."

By choosing the number of favorite images, they've made the decision for themselves. We don't have to predesign oversize wedding books beyond the number of pages we sold them earlier in their wedding package. That feels just a little too sales-y for us, and clients pick up on it. We prefer to provide a map and let the client point the way.

Here's a big problem I have with the shoot-and-burn mentality: The vast majority of people who walk away with digital images never print them, and certainly not professionally. If you don't send your client away with something tangible that adds value to her life experience, why would she want to come back to you for another session? Does she really need another disk in her junk drawer?

One important law of ROI (return on investment) is that it almost always costs less to remarket to a repeat client than it does to convert a cold lead into a new paying client. With a new client, you have to start from square one and build up the necessary trust bank from scratch.

If you want to make a career in photography, start thinking long-term. Keep an organized contact list. As time goes by, start emailing your families with growing kids about senior portrait sessions. Email your senior clients about wedding photography. Email your brides about maternity or newborn portraits. Then you start to see a cycle.





In the shorter term, think about using our Maximized Mini Sessions method to get newlywed couples and families coming back to you every year. With a simple friends-and-family program, we have begun to earn more from just one 20-minute mini session than we used to earn from an entire wedding and engagement session combined.

Our website TheBlumes.co shows only weddings, but weddings aren't great for repeat business. If the bride has more than one, it's not likely to be with the same photographer. Mini sessions are the engine that grows our business most reliably. They make photography an annual tradition for our clients and provide an amazing experience that convinces even the unconvincible of the value of professional photography.





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.

theblumes.co





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# FROM COMMODITY TO INVALUABLE:

3 STEPS TO ELEVATING YOUR WORTH

with Joey Thomas



She was well on her way to joining the 85 percent of new photography businesses that shut down after three years. Small populations, tire-kicking clients and "people only want digitals" are among some of the excuses photographers use to explain their failures.

Don't be a part of this epidemic!

I believe all humans are masterfully crafted to succeed and excel at everything we do. I believe we are designed to adapt and tackle any challenge we face. So how can photographers find success despite these obstacles?

Author and leadership expert John Maxwell says that giving value to others helps your own success. "I think that every person can be successful if they do one thing," he once said. "Every day, wake up and ask, 'Who can I add value to today?'"

Three months after giving birth, Victoria went from making \$250 one day to a \$17,000 sales session the next. Now, three years later, she has a VIP Facebook group of 25,000 women she calls her "tribe" and over 85,000 people following her business page, and lives in a 4,500-square-foot Tuscan-style villa, paid for in cash. With a newfound purpose in life and a nothing-to-lose attitude, Victoria reconstructed her business by focusing on the value of in-person sales and genuinely serving her audience.





*Value* is a term we hear quite a bit with packaged deals and pricing. We hear about it in the context of getting a lot of stuff for a "good" price. However, concentrating on *why* we do what we do and *whom* we serve makes what we deliver more significant.

Perceived value is what people believe something is worth. It has nothing to do with physical value. It is what our work intrinsically means to our clients.

If adding value has such a strong impact on how our businesses are perceived, what can we do to systematically integrate this practice into our client experience?

Supercharge your client's perception and create immense value by focusing on:

- Your brand (the *why*)
- Your relationship (the *who*)
- Your craft (the *what*)

Here's how to tackle each of these pillars of value perception.

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# hutter Magazine . February 20

# 1. FOCUS YOUR BRAND

A brand is an idea or image of your company your clients connect with. Effective branding gives a practical description of what you do—but more importantly, it elicits an emotional response as to *why* you do it.

There is one thing that makes your wedding unforgettable: the story of your love and friendship.

That is the first line of text potential clients see when they go to the Joey T Photography homepage. The next lines drive my message home and add clarity to my brand.

You will receive photographs that remind you of all the special moments shared with friends, family and with each other on your wedding day. You will experience the love and joy of your unique story every time you turn the pages of your heirloom album or see the artwork on your walls.

This description is essential to my brand because it clearly conveys what is important. This is also the first place I mention the word *heirloom*. This word is mentioned a total of 12 times on my website. Is there any doubt what I'm trying to convey? In a nutshell, I want to tell the story of important relationships with heirloom keepsakes. I've chosen not to show too many wedding day details on my site to bring attention to the importance of relationships.

# **YOUR TAKEAWAY -**

Use your online presence to market a clear message and vision in such a way that your target audience expresses the same message back to you. This is how you know your marketing efforts have successfully conveyed your brand identity.

This brand message is the first critical leg of your clients' journey. This is the part of their experience where they either gain clarity or leave confused.









# 2. DEVELOP AUTHENTIC RELATIONSHIPS

Kick fear in the teeth and be yourself! You don't have to be perfect. If you show the real you to your clients, they will reciprocate and be genuine as well. This is when the magic happens. Laughter, jokes, tears, playfulness, the sharing of stories—it all results in connecting with people in an honest way.

In giant bold text on my homepage, I've written:

Inspired, Sincere, and Personal.

I do my best to live by this and treat my couples like human beings and not numbers on an invoice. If you serve your clients in a sincere way, you inevitably pull them into the culture you are trying to create instead of just pushing sales and deals their way. You can do this by investing time.

Successful studios invest time in building relationships with their audience and clients. Time is the scarcest commodity. It's a nonrenewable resource that holds value like nothing else. When we create opportunities for our clients to spend more time with us, they begin to appreciate the experience rather than focus only on price.

Jeff Dachowski of Dachowski Photography has shared how he grew to become one of the most profitable studios in the Northeast. He and his wife, Carolle, spend countless hours giving back to the community through silent auctions and other activities for charitable causes. The time they spent adding value to other people had a direct effect on the success of their business.

Jeff and Christine Tonkin of DigiSmiles connect with their high school seniors by investing time engaging personably on social media. They include behind-the-scenes footage in the experience. They're real and they're approachable at every point in the relationship. This has led to their great success.





With my clients, I make every attempt to connect in personal ways, not just through texts and emails. Phone calls are critical to building the client relationship. After the initial inquiry, I make a phone call to set the tone for the culture I want to create. This is where the relationship begins. This phone call leads to meeting in person. Not only do we meet during the initial consult, but also during and after the engagement session, during and after their bridal session, and multiple times after their wedding day. There are several phone calls and up to eight in-person visits.

Time and time again, when I go to photograph the getting-ready portion of the wedding day, I get the same question from at least one bridesmaid: "How long have you guys known each other?" They see how excited the bride is to see us, the big bear hugs, the friendly conversation we have as soon as we walk in. No one ever thinks they just "found" us.

## YOUR TAKEAWAY

Adding value to other people's lives is a path to your own success. People are drawn to people they like and trust, the people they enjoy spending time with. Don't limit the experience to convenient texts and emails. Invest time in shaping authentic relationships.





# 3. MASTER YOUR CRAFT

Building your brand and fostering relationships are great ways to skyrocket perceived value. It will get your audience and your clients excited about working with you. But now what?

There is only one way to convert this perceived value to real value, and that is to follow through by delivering an amazing product.

Quality catapults their expectations into tangible results. It converts relationship into referrals, positive reviews and exponential growth.

That means it is time to go to work!





iges © Joey Tho

Amazing resources like ShutterFest are at your fingertips. With your access to an online community, amazing gear and a plethora of educational resources, you have no excuse not to put in the practice. Lighting, posing, composition and storytelling are indispensable aspects of great photography. What are you doing daily to elevate your photography?

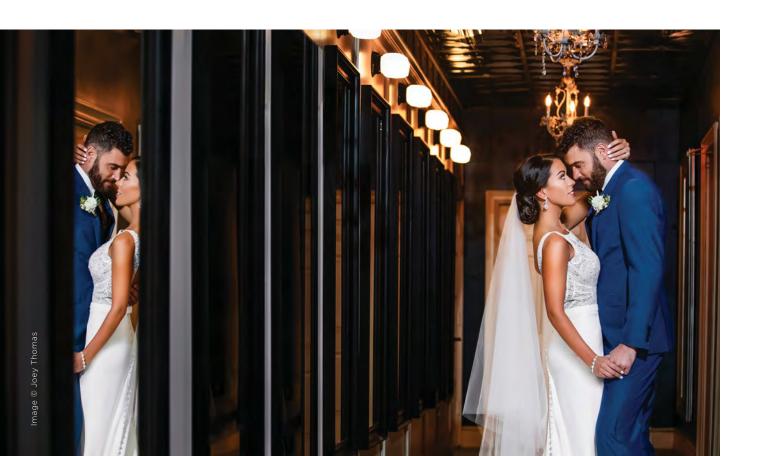
Remember, we are not honing our craft just to create an epic image. We serve our clients by making them look amazing, by telling their stories with impact.

We are ensuring we deliver products that exceed every expectation.

This is how our company Serendipity Albums was born. With over 30 years of wedding photography experience between us, my partners and I knew our product needed to blow away our clients. Although we first created albums only for our own clients, it grew into a brand that allowed other photographers to raise the perceived value and reputations of their own studios. We are very proud of this.

## **YOUR TAKEAWAY -**

Don't be lazy! Laziness leads to failure. Put in the time practicing your craft, investing in education and delivering high-quality products. You did not wake up today to be mediocre. Work.







ages © Joey Thomas

I remember a time in my studio when I put in 16 hours a day, almost seven days a week, shooting 50 to 60 weddings a year to meet our goals. That may seem like success, but it was quite the opposite. When you go home and your baby looks at you like a stranger and is afraid to come into your arms, you understand something has to change.

Family is very important to me. Family is the reason I do what I do. I quickly realized the need to switch my focus to adding value during every part of the client experience. I realized it was for my own sanity, that I needed to speak to my target audience in a way that made them feel confident about their investment. I realized I needed to understand the value of the heirloom instead of just offering digital pixels. This shift in focus allowed me to drop my workload by 60 percent and still make 25 percent more. It allowed us to grow from \$2,500 weddings to \$25,000 weddings.

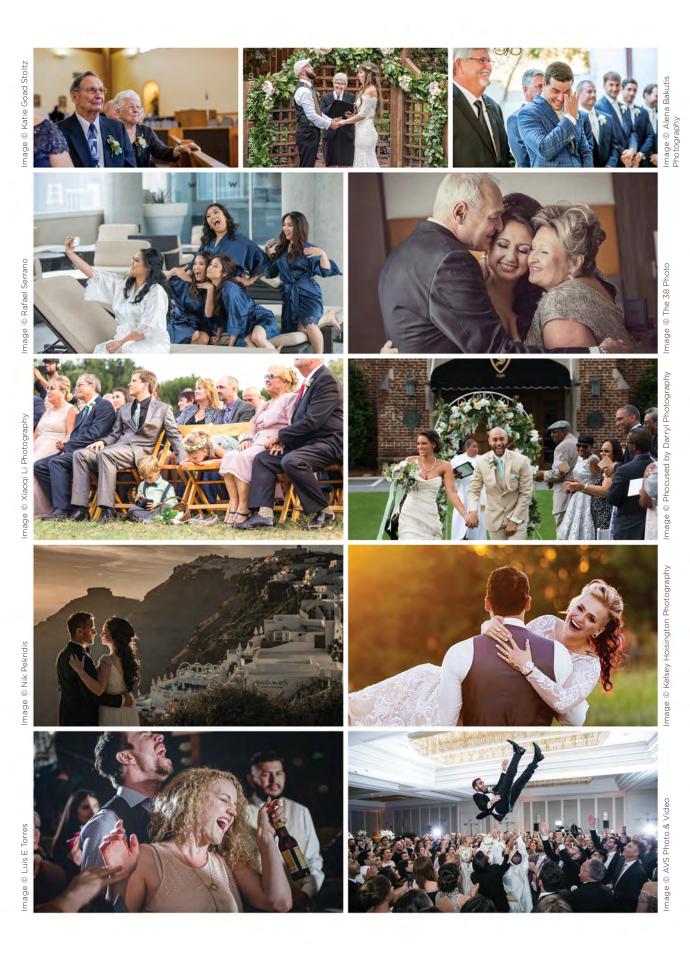
A clear brand message, authentic relationships and an exceptional product are the anchor in your clients' perception of the value of your craft. Value perception not only serves them—it also serves you, your family and the industry.



Joey Thomas is the owner of Joey T Photography, one of the top wedding photography studios in the Houston area. He is an award-winning nationally published photographer whose work is often featured on magazine covers and in blogs and editorials. Joey is the co-owner of Serendipity Albums and teaches photography workshops worldwide.

joeytphotography.com







































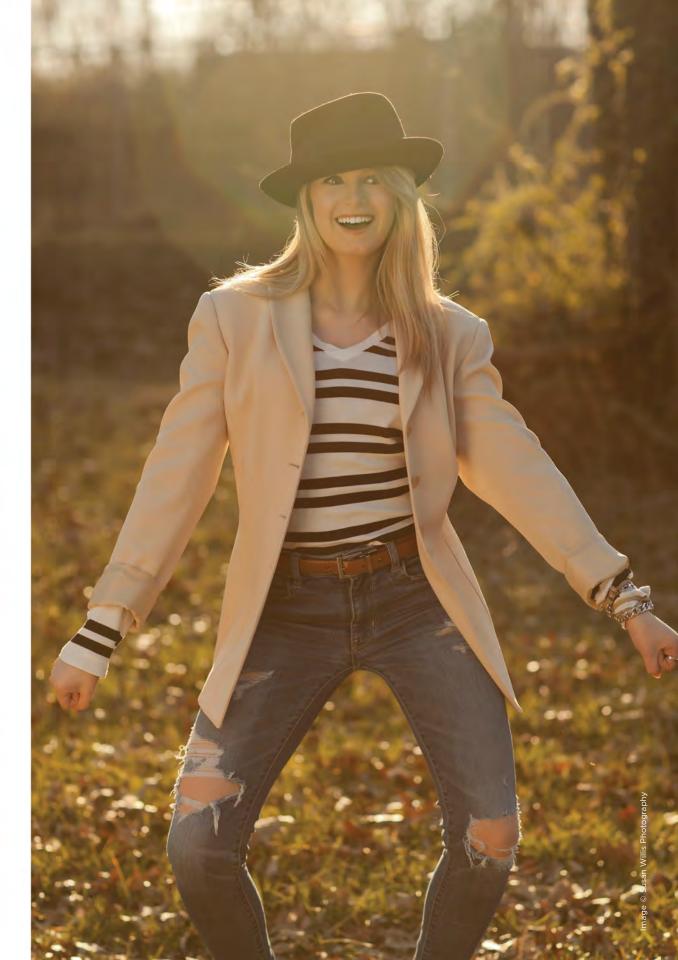
















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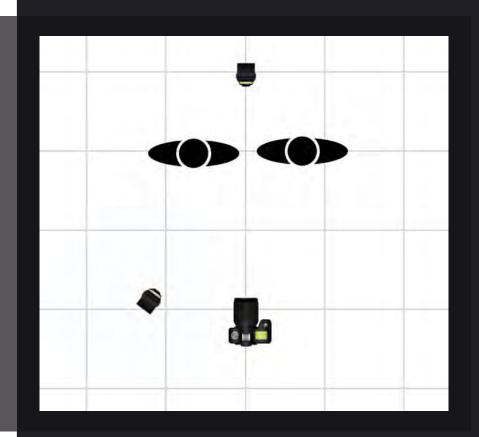






# final inspiration

photographer | salvatore cincotta image title | city lights



location

exposure | f2.8 @ 1/40, ISO 1600 lighting | 2x profoto a1, off-camera brooklyn bridge, new york city gear | canon 5d mark iv | canon 24mm 1.4 ||





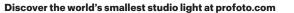








We created the Profoto A1 with a round head that delivers light that's both natural and beautiful both on camera and off. It's also incredibly easy and to use, with superfast recycling and a long-lasting battery, so you'll never miss a shot. It might be the smallest light we've ever made, but the creative possibilities are enormous.



**Profoto A1** 

