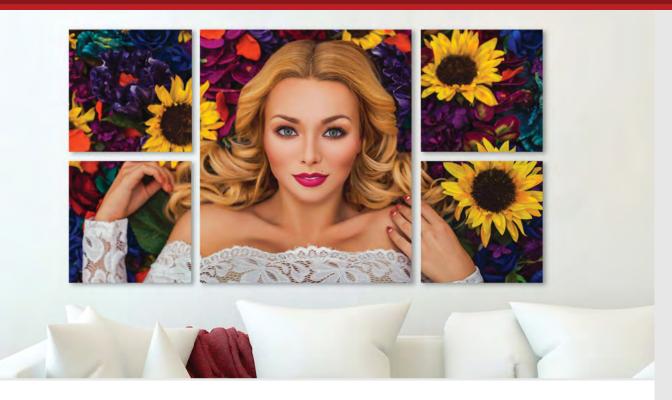


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Looking To Improve Booking?



This month, business experts Amanda and Donovan answer your burning questions about booking coordination.

Amanda & Donovan - COO & CEO, 17hats

How can I systemize booking?

Donovan: You've asked the right question. 17hats offers a systemized, consistent, and repeatable approach to booking.

Amanda: Booking should be simple, fast, and easy – otherwise, would-be customers won't follow through. Make paying easy, or miss out on revenue.

Booking is time-consuming. How can I make booking more efficient?

Amanda: This problem alone leads hundreds of photographers to our platform. The solution is simplicity itself: With 17hats, you can send your Quote, Contract, and Invoice to clients in a single email. Everything's in one place, ready to go.

Donovan: This streamlines what can be a three-day, back-and-forth ordeal into just a few minutes.

Amanda: Yep. It's click, click, paid!

About that – what's the best way to handle payments?

Amanda: We thought you'd never ask!

Online payment is the way to go, either by credit card or e-check. 17hats accepts both.

Donovan: It's easier for you, and them. 17hats also supports Stripe, Square, PayPal, and Authorize.net as payment processors.

Amanda: Hey, you can't make money without getting paid. (Laughs.)

One-step process: Send your Quote, FROM Sarah Bellum Photography 123 Success Street Contract. and Invoice. Pasadena, CA 91101 TO Anna Hats all in a single email. March 2, 2019 Pasadena, CA 91101 VALID UNTIL March 3, 2019 Select One Please select one of the following options Gold Wedding Package 8 hours of wedding day coverage with 2 photographers, bridal session, engagement session, signature ROM Sarah Bellum Photography alburn, digital files, 60 day online wedding gallery and slideshow 123 Success Street Pasadena, CA 91101 Silver Wedding Package 6 hours of wedding day coverage with 2 phot TO Anna Hats Wedding Packages Pasadena CA 91101 DUE DATE Basic Wedding Packages Additional Options
Please select any of the following options: Gold Wedding Package 8 hours of wedding day coverage with 2 photographers, bridal ses engagement session, signature album, digital files, 60 day online wedding galler 3 additional hour of coverage 3 additional hour of coverage \$1,500.00 Client Name: Anna Hats Phone Number: 888-111-1111 Email: anna@17hats.com Total: \$12,592.50 Initials here: AH It is understood that Sarah Bellu the photographic services requested by this conti \$12 592 50 Initials here: AH Sarah Bellum Photography res promotion by print, digital transmission, video, or Thank you for choosing Sarah Bellum Photography Initials here: AH in the event of postponement or o ✓ Accepted: March 2, 2019 more than 50% of the paid funds, excluding deposit, will be refunded Quote options Initials here: AH A NONREFUNDABLE retainer of 20% is due upon booking. Initials here: AH Additional orders must be paid for in full when placed. Balances must be paid in full, before delivery of chosen by clients With 17hats templates, are automatically producing Quotes goes Initials here: AH The photographer makes every effort to take all photographs requested. Inclusion and exclusion of poses may be done so at the photographer's discretion. reflected in the from time-consuming to initials here: AH Extra hours may be purchased the day of at the discretion and availability of the photographer. The updated Invoice. business-building. photographer reserves the right to deny any last minute requests for extra time. \$700 per hour Contracts can be signed Anna Hats ✓ Signed March 2, 2019 electronically with ease. Sarah Bellum ✓ Signed March 2, 2019 Goodbye paper jams!

Sample contract for illustration only. Don't borrow something that important from a magazine – talk to a lawyer.

Leave the Chaos Behind

Learn why Sal swears by 17hats at 17hats.com/sal



Don't miss Alissa's video: "Getting Paid in 3 Easy Steps"

FEBRUARY 2019 | ISSUE 077

shutter

- 12 | Beyond Presets: 5 Tips for Crafting Your Style Scott Detweiler
- 32 | The Answer to All Your Problems: Marketing Sal Cincotta
- **42** | **Defeating the Dark Side of In-Person Sales** Alissa Zimmerman
- **56 | Your Dream Studio: Building a Price List That Sells** Jeff & Lori Poole
- 70 | Using Events as Marketing Christine Yodsukar
- 84 | How to Use the Cost of Doing Business to Price Your Work Michael Anthony
- 96 | Sigma 70-200mm Lens Product Spotlight
- 98 | 5 Tips for Updating Your Social Media Strategy Vanessa Joy
- 112 | 5 Tips for Better Sales Karen Bagley
- 128 | It's Not About You, It's All About Them Jonathan Tilley
- 138 | ACI Riveli Albums Product Spotlight
- 140 | How to Get New Clients From Wedding Vendors Phillip Blume
- 156 | Inspirations Our Readers
- 186 | It's Time for Some Housecleaning Skip Cohen
- 194 | How to Edit Color for the Season in Lightroom Classic Dustin Lucas





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Y

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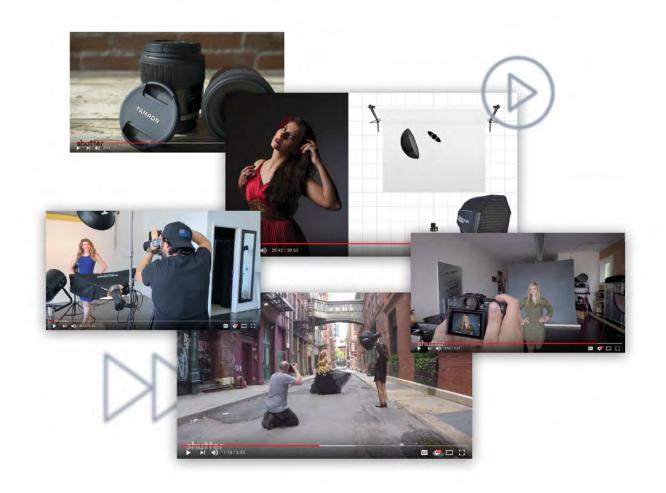
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MISSION STATEMENT

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

Shutter Magazine: By photographers, for photographers.

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OCF Ge

 $\ensuremath{\mathsf{ABOUT}}$ THE IMAGE: This image was taken at the City

Museum in St. Louis, Missouri, in August 2018.

MODEL: Avery Piepenburg, Ford Models Chicago

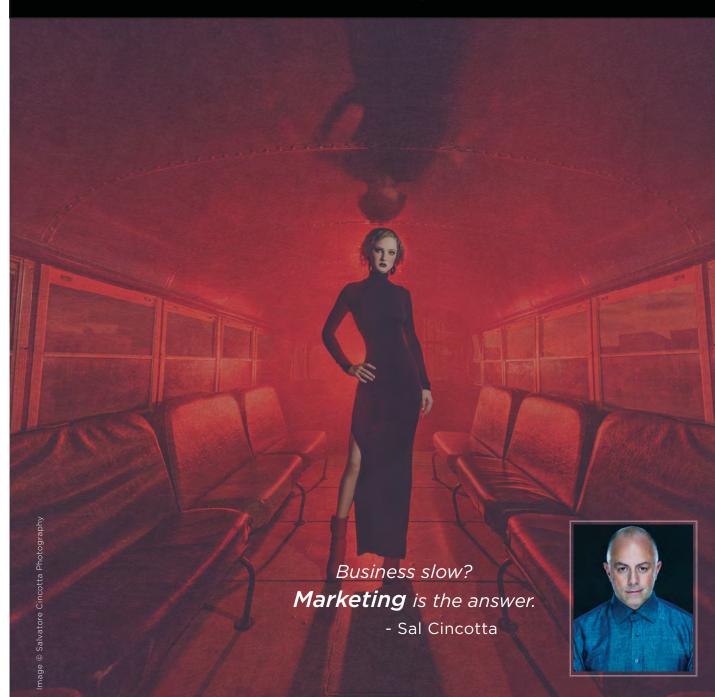
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LAUNCH POINT

A message from the editor-in-chief





BEYOND PRESETS TIPS FOR CRAFTING YOUR STYLE

with Scott Detweiler



One thing I often hear from new photographers is how challenging it is for them to find their style. Initially, most people tend to reach for actions or presets in their favorite editing applications and adopt one. Sure, these bundles can give you ideas and narrow your focus, but in the long run, they are not the ideal solution.

You're probably assuming I don't know about that fantastic Black Friday 50,000-plus Mega Style Pack for Lightroom and Photoshop you bagged for \$9, saving you nearly \$84,922. There is no doubt that your future style is buried in there and all you have to do is find it, even if it takes you a year or two. Of course, then there is the potential impending fistfight with the neighbor who has a nice camera who has also selected Borneo3321 as her style, and now your photos all look pretty much the same. So, rather than spend days or weeks in a desperate search for the one that speaks to you and spending money on medical bills from the stitches in your face, let's just learn how to find it from the outset.

Finding your style is easier than you think because you already know what it looks like. Let's break down how do define it so you can get on with perfecting the rest of your photography.

Let's first wrap our head around a simple idea: Your style is what you enjoy in the subject, technique, lighting and tone of a photo. If you took all the photos you like from any photographer and put them all in a pile, you would see a specific look. Your style is more than just the colors, contrast, tone and saturation that are magically bestowed on the photo you have selected by a handy preset; there is a lot more involved when you're searching your soul for your unique look. Let's break down style into a handful of components, and then discuss how we can use each one to narrow our search for what speaks to us.

SUBJECT MATTER

The subject matter is that thing that turns your creative crank, and you enjoy shooting it above all else. Sure, you might have to take jobs in peripheral areas to help pay for luxury items like food, but you need to find what area you are passionate about. The subject matter often drives different styles. Discovering that you treat boudoir images differently than a fashion shoot should not come as a surprise. If you find your work is a bit fractured, perhaps it is because you are working on a lot of different areas of photography and not all of them are singing from the same hymnal. That can cause brand confusion if you are working under one unbrella, so consider unique brands for these areas.

Once you have a sizable portfolio in one specific area, you should see some trends in how you approach your subject, and that is the first step. What you tend to shoot has a lot to do with style, but it can limit our scope. If you love to shoot street photography, then you probably love black-and-white imagery and unposed storytelling. This doesn't mean you have to stick with that stereotype, but initially, most head in that direction. Don't be worried if you find you approach different areas of photography in unique ways; this shows healthy growth and perspective and not a one-style-fits-all mentality. One style rarely works for everything you shoot unless it is so subtle that it's barely noticeable.



LIGHT

Light turns heads pretty quickly. Dark, moody images get those "love the light!" comments, but that doesn't mean they are for everyone. Light and airy and soft and natural are also beautiful. Regardless of your abilities as a photographer, you probably have a preference for the types of images you enjoy. This drives photographers to learn to light. Getting something close to those images they enjoy is their goal. It is also an area where growth is usually fast and leads to quality in a short time. Leaning on natural light is not harmful when you're searching for your style, as that is what many people enjoy. It has a much more significant role to play in flexibility and keeping your images from looking like those shot by the throngs of people with cellphones.

Don't assume your style is based on natural light because you don't know how to use off-camera lighting yet. Seek out what you want and don't downplay your ability to learn to light. Don't get caught in the trap of lighting, requiring more work because you have to haul it around and you might need an assistant to get the image you want. If you want more than natural light, don't hold yourself back. There are plenty of sessions on lighting at ShutterFest, and one of those is bound to resonate with your muse.







Beyond Presets: 5 Tips for Crafting Your Style | Scott Detweiler

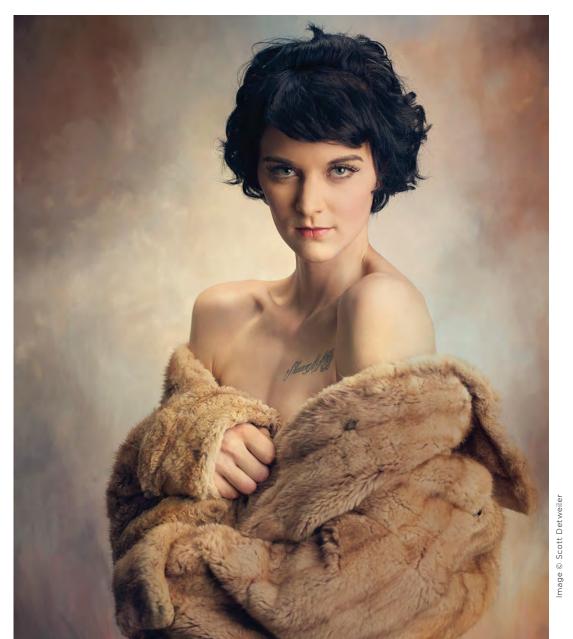
When people think about style, tone pops into their head right away. Do you prefer warmer or cooler images? What about cool shadows and warmer highlights? There are so many possibilities, and what makes matters even more complicated is that each image might not fit your main style and will need a bit of a nudge to make it feel right. On top of that, you might prefer warmer tones for work like boudoir, but cooler for things like pets. Contrast, saturation and overall feel of an image can be subject to whim, and indeed should be.

Getting stuck using a specific action or preset is the same as eating nothing but cheese pizza your entire life. Sure, pizza is great, but there might be something right in front of you that you love but will never get to taste. Don't get stuck in a rut and forget to explore.

One of my favorite ways to tone an image is to start with the shadows and work in cool and warmer tones until I find the ideal tone. Then I do the same to the midtones and highlights. In the end, each image is unique, and I don't use any presets. When I look at my body of work, I see similarities even though they were not intentional at the time. Each image is made without consideration for consistency in look, but in the end, they all tend to look like part of the same family, my family.



Do you prefer a shallow depth of field and love all that bokeh? Perhaps you enjoy shooting at very high ISO settings for a film-like grain. Maybe you prefer products that alter the focus plane and create unusual effects. All of them are worth trying, and might speak to part of your soul that nothing else has touched before. The technique we choose impacts our images, and there are many out there to try. You can see some of these trends today, like shooting with neon sign lighting and severe underexposure that can be brightened in post-production. It is just one of an infinite number of ways you can approach your favorite subject and use your camera in creative ways. I am always open to trying something even if I think it isn't for me—it might lead me down an unexpected rabbit hole and on to a new adventure.



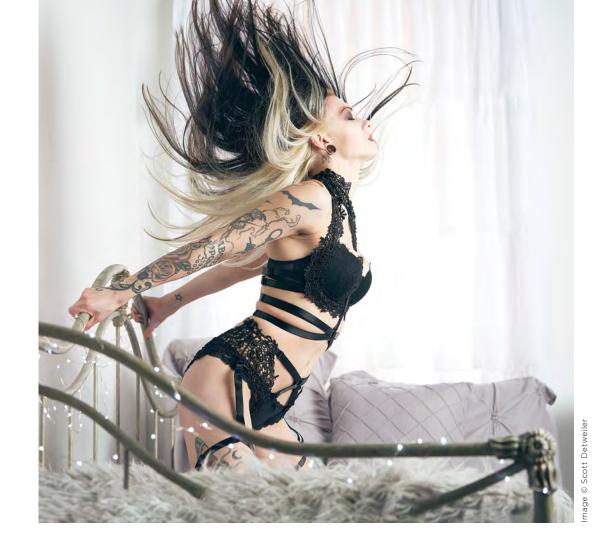




PRESENTATION

Have you ever seen one of your favorite images printed large and in an elegant frame? Once you look at your work in print like this, you will have a hard time making a justification for digital being the way you want your images presented. Sure, we all need to post photos on social media, but if that is where your process ends, you are missing out on a world of creativity.

I like adding additional texture, paint and other media to my printed images to create a work of art from my art. This can open doors to more substantial sales, as I have mentioned in previous articles.



HATE YOUR OLD WORK?

If you don't enjoy much of your older work, that is a good thing. Hating some of your past creative works shows you are growing. You probably now see things you wish you could change, be it lighting, pose, technique or post-production. Never stop exploring and expanding, and you will see your style evolve over time.

If you ever feel you have reached your maximum potential, try different subject matter and look at how that can be different from what you have already mastered. It might open new doors in your primary area you never considered. I don't feel I will ever master any area. I enjoy looking at things differently. If you feel you have mastered something, you have not yet dug deep enough.



Scott is a conceptual portrait photographer based in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Along with his original approach to portraits, he excels at fashion and boudoir, and is an amateur body painter. When he is not shooting, Scott turns his studio into a classroom where he holds workshops on lighting, conceptual work and boudoir. Follow him on Instagram @sedetweiler and visit his



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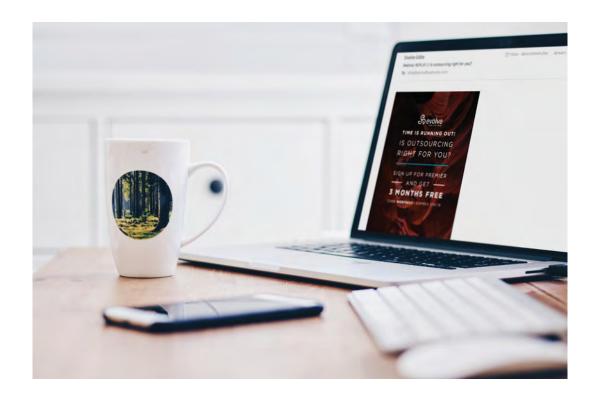
There are time-worn strategies that go into marketing. You don't just do something and magic happens. You need a plan. You then must execute that plan. You then evaluate the results, make adjustments and re-execute your plan. Rinse and repeat.

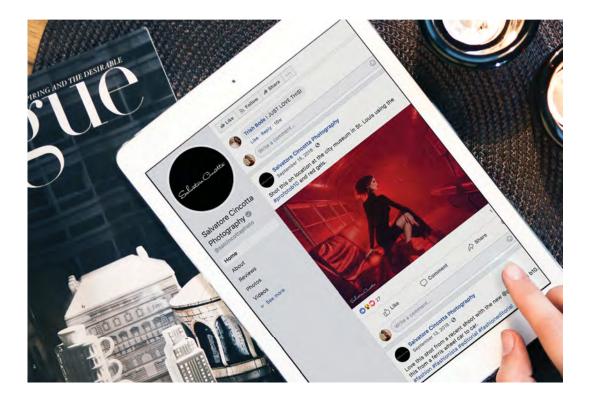
This is probably not what you want to hear. You want to know that there is some recipe for marketing and that it's like making chocolate chip cookies and if you follow the recipe on the back of the bag, you will have tons of clients and money. No, it just doesn't work that way. Marketing is a way of life. There needs to be a bumper sticker made and slapped to your forehead. I work with businesspeople, not only photographers, all over the world who don't want to accept this simple concept. Yet they look at what we have built and say, "I want to do that." Right. Well, the "that" you are referring to was built through hard work, providing good service, a good product, listening to our clients and tons of marketing.

Here is something else you are going to have to accept. It doesn't matter how good a photographer you are. If no one knows you exist, you will be broke. That messaging to the world, yep, you guessed it—that is called marketing.

If you want to change your business and your life, get your marketing chops in short order and start doing something different. I promise you, you will see a big difference.

Let's start with some concepts.





AWARENESS ADS

How do clients know you exist? How do they know you are the best maternity photography there is and that they should hire you? How do you make them wish they were pregnant just so they could get pictures taken by you?

This is what awareness ads are. They let the world know you exist. These ads rarely have any tracking ability other than "I heard of you from..." They are very hard to track, and that's ok. The goal should be for you to become a household name. Your logo should be a recognizable brand.

No one should ever say, "I never heard of that photographer." If they do, that means you are doing a shitty job at creating buzz.

Options for awareness ads include billboards, direct mail, Facebook, movie theater ads and short videos showcasing your experience.

If you are not doing something every month around awareness, you will find out quickly how irrelevant your brand is. If you want to motivate people to act when you are running a special sale, they must be familiar with the brand.

You could do something online for a 48-hour sale on your session fees, such as 50% off fall session fees. By using this idea with your marketing channels you learned about when you created awareness ads, you can make conversions to real customers spending real money.

So, the same channels are still in play: billboards, direct mail, Facebook, movie theater ads and short videos showcasing your experience.

Here is where messaging comes into play. Below are some ideas you can hack and make your own for immediate results (provided you have been doing awareness ads; you can't just jump in and expect results).



Idea 1: 50% off your session fees

I am not disparaging product or digital files. This is for just the session fee. You have to be able to make money on the backend via IPS. If you are not doing in-person sales, that may be another reason you are not making money.

This can be delivered via Facebook Ads, direct mail, billboards, etc

Idea 2: Refer a friend and get a free 16x24 canvas

We have done this over the years, and found it to be a perfect offer for existing clients. They love you, they love your experience—now give them a reason to refer you. One year we used this, one of my brides referred nine of her friends for weddings, families, etc. And yes, I gave her nine canvases.

This is super easy to market. Draft a well-designed email and send it to your past clients. Keep it clean and simple. Insert a flyer in every client order. This is what we did. There was no way for a client to say they didn't know.

Idea 3: Do something, get something

This is left intentionally vague. You want money. They want something too. Everyone loves a deal. So what is the give-get here? What are you willing to do to get them to act? Urgency is the key, as is having something of value to get them to act with urgency. Don't mistake this for some late-night "But wait, there's more!" infomercial.

You want to offer something of real value and showcase that value in your marketing: "Book your session today and get a free 11x16 print (\$195 value)!"

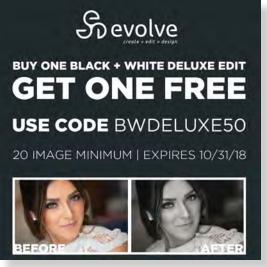
Again, these are just some simple ideas you can implement pretty quickly.

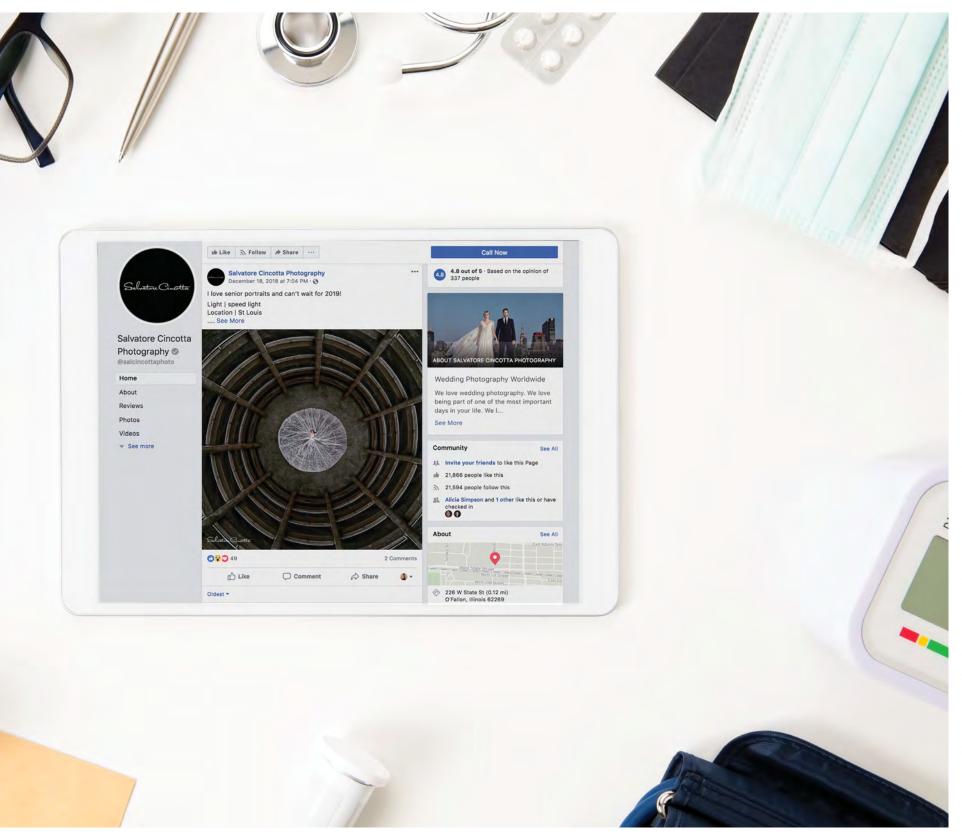
LAST WEEK TO SAVE

EXPIRES 9/30/17 -

Idea 1







BUILD YOUR LEAD LIST

Marketing can be expensive. We spend a lot on it. But it gets cheaper when you start building your lead list. A ton of tools on the market allow you to build, track and engage with your leads. Mailchimp is an easy one to use. They have a free version for less than 2,000 names.

Now, you might be asking, why is this so important? For starters, every time you try to market your business, the "who" you are marketing to becomes very important. If you reinvent the wheel every time you market, the costs are significantly higher.

Imagine if you were a family portrait photographer and you already had a database of people with families who have signed up for more information about your family sessions. This would be a no-brainer when you market your fall family sessions, right? Or, what if you had a list of local businesspeople who were interested in new headshots?

This doesn't mean we won't go after traditional marketing routes. It's about blending our marketing spend. Once you have the name and email, the cost of marketing to this list goes down exponentially. You have to be committed to building it. Everything you do in your organization is geared toward building your lead list. This is where you see the real money. That list is worth hundreds of thousands in the right hands.

Here are some ideas for building your list. This is not a cookie recipe. I am giving you ideas to spur some creative ideas.

The key to building your list is the existing customers who are on it. But how do you add new prospects? Why in the world would a complete stranger want to give you their name and email?

That is where marketers earn their money. You have to start looking at the real world around you and how and why people are willing to give up their information. Consumers usually provide their contact details for information and education. Imagine you've created an ad offering families the "Top 10 ideas for killer family portraits." This does a few things. If they sign up, you know they are interested in family pictures. Now you can market your call-to-action ads. How about "Save 50% off our session fees—48 hours only"? Sound too easy? That's because it is. We do it every single day here.



What about for businesses? You could do a campaign for businesses called "1990 called. They want their headshot back." Fun, quirky and sure to get people to laugh. Tie this in with a "5 tips for a better headshot" or "Research shows that your headshot can make or break a deal." Now you are building a list of people who are clearly interested in your knowledge so that when the time comes to sell to them, they are already aware of your brand and are more likely to respond to your call to action versus one from a complete stranger. See how this all works?

You can do this. Get out there and start. Action is always better than inaction. What do you have to lose?



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



How does Sal Switch?

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

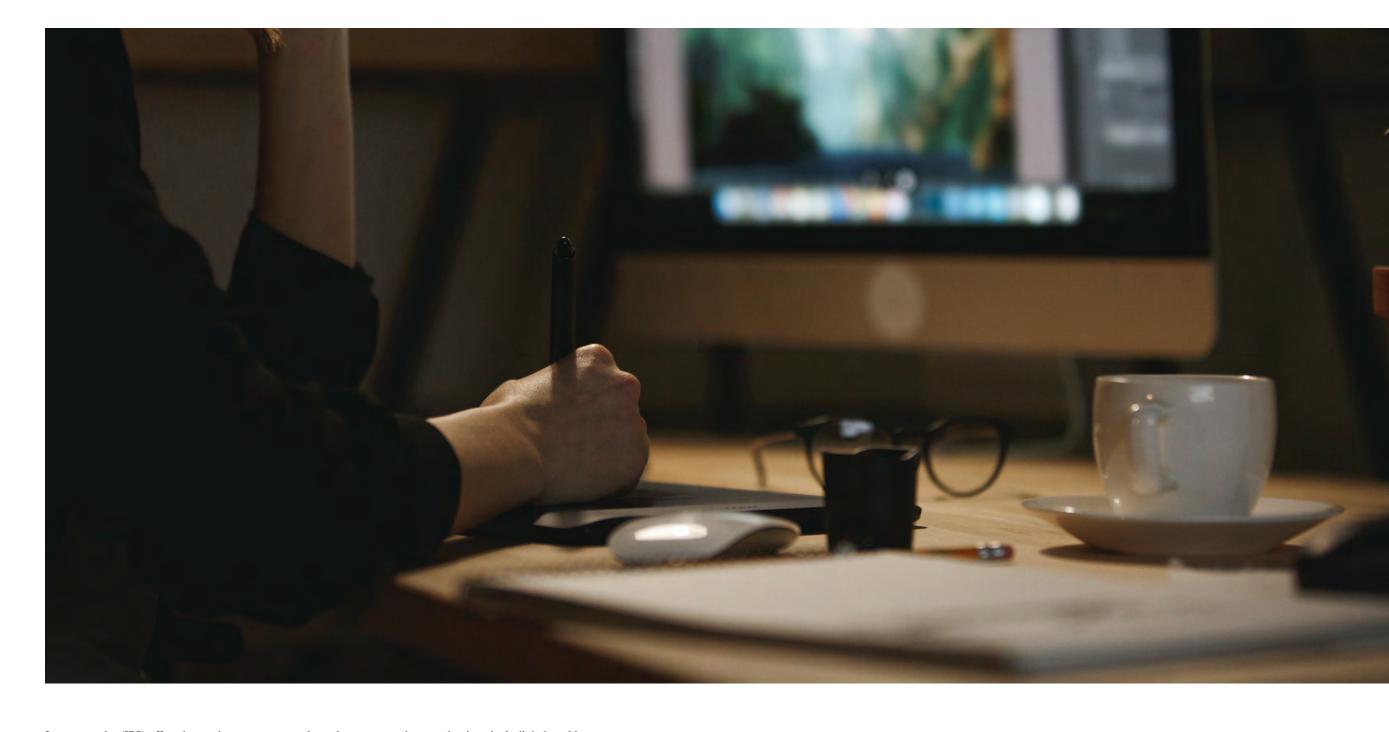
The new Switch Series for Rapid Box and Beauty Dish offers 13 interchangeable light mount inserts for 9 versatile light modifiers. Pair with new egg crate grids for total lighting control like never before.

When will you make the Switch?

FJWESTCOTT.COM/SWITCH







In-person sales (IPS) offers the number-one way to make real money as a photographer in today's digital world. But lots of photographers still resist this proven strategy.

Most people who refuse to implement IPS are terrified of it. That's understandable. The idea of sales has such a negative connotation, especially for artists who already suffer from the "Am I good enough?" complex. Those photographers are expected to sit in front of their clients, confidently make eye contact and ask for thousands of dollars? Forget about it.

I started handling the sales process for our studio three years ago, and I'd be lying if I said it has been a smooth ride. But it has been one of the best learning experiences for me as I stumbled my way through my insecurities to make the cash register ring over and over again.

Let me break it down for anyone who has just transitioned into doing IPS or is thinking of taking the plunge.

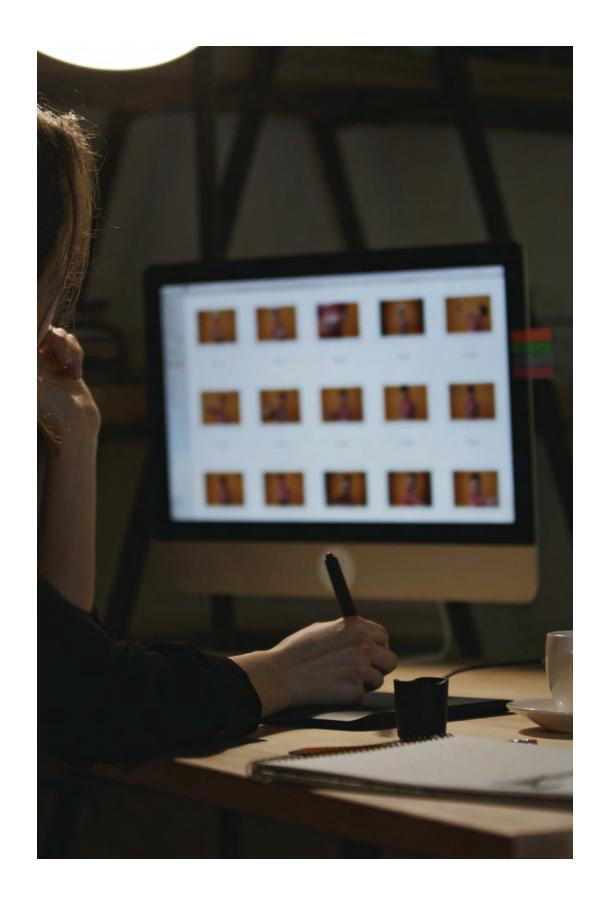
IT'S NOT ALWAYS GOING TO BE FUN

Let's not fool each other with this one. There is so much more that goes into selling than just sitting in a room, drinking wine and picking out pretty pictures to hang on a wall.

IPS is not easy. You have to commit a lot of time upfront to making sure you have everything you need to close a sale. Do you have the tools you need to run a smooth process with your clients face to face? Do you have your cost of goods figured out so you can create profitable packages? Have you invested in printing samples of everything you want to sell? This is only the beginning.

You're going to run into walls repeatedly. Welcome to running a business. Don't let these hiccups stop you from continuing down the path of in-person sales. Learn from your mistakes and understand that your internal process should always be evolving. Don't jump ship the first time something goes wrong. Follow the 80/20 rule. Look at trends. Are there objections coming up in the sales room 80% of the time? Pivot. If it's just a one-off thing, don't panic and change your entire business plan. Take a deep breath and stick to the formula you have built.





IT'LL MAKE YOU UNCOMFORTABLE

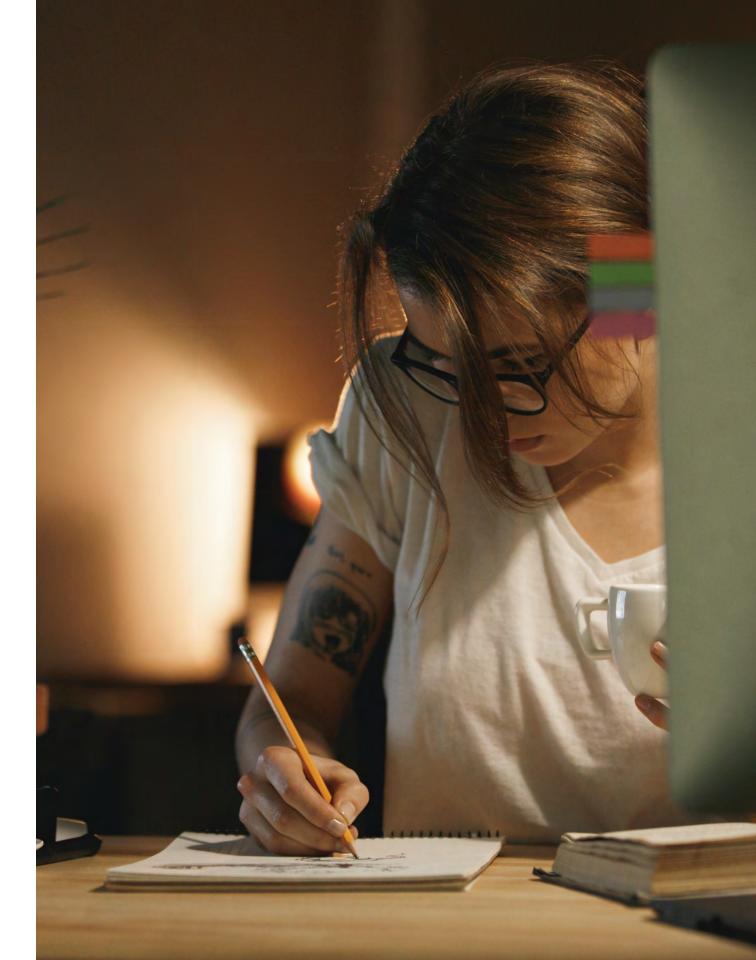
I mean this mostly for those who do not consider themselves to be person people. I would put myself in this category of humans.

The act of interacting one on one with other human beings fills many of us with anxiety and awkwardness. Now just add a splash of uncertainty and a spoonful of "Would you like to pay with a credit card or check?" to the mix, and you've got yourself one hell of a painful experience.

This is where you will need to channel your inner strength and fake it a little. The best thing you can do is familiarize yourself with all the products and packages you offer so you won't easily get blindsided with a million questions you can't answer. Understand your cost of goods so well that you can make adjustments or concessions in real time without impacting your bottom line.

Spend the time upfront to educate yourself as best you can so you are able to take away most of the fears you have around selling. Most of the time, those fears are tied directly to a fear of looking or feeling stupid in front of strangers. You will find that by having a solid foundation about your costs and products, you'll be well on your way to looking like the most confident person in the room. And remember, perception is always reality.

There will be plenty of times in the sales room when you will get caught off guard by a question you aren't prepared for. That is totally normal. You're never going to be able to predict the outcome of a sales session, but you can make sure you don't repeat the same mistakes by documenting objections as they occur. Don't stop your sales session to jot down an objection that comes up, but take 10 to 15 minutes after your clients leave to write down the objection that stumped you and how you responded to it, then discuss with a teammate, boss or significant what you could have done differently. Make note of the best response possible, and practice that response repeatedly until it becomes second nature.



YOU HAVE TO STAY ORGANIZED

The world of product sales has so many moving parts. If you're not organized, you'll quickly become overwhelmed.

A typical client cycle goes a little something like this:

Pre-sales session:

- Client photo session
- Send images to Evolve to be edited
- Schedule client sales session
- Render images for sales session
- Prepare sales room (products set out, pricing printed, wine chilled, etc.)
- Upload images to N-Vu IPS (build slideshow, update settings)

During sales session:

- · View images
- Narrow down images
- Walk through products in the packages
- Select package with client
- Finalize image selections for all large prints in the chosen package
- Collect payment

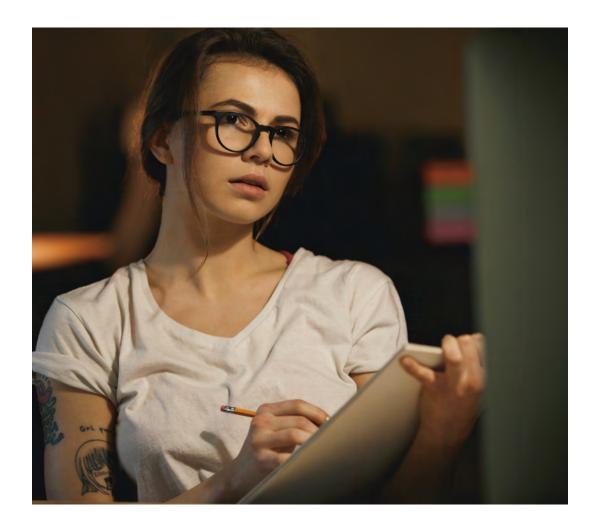
Post-sales session:

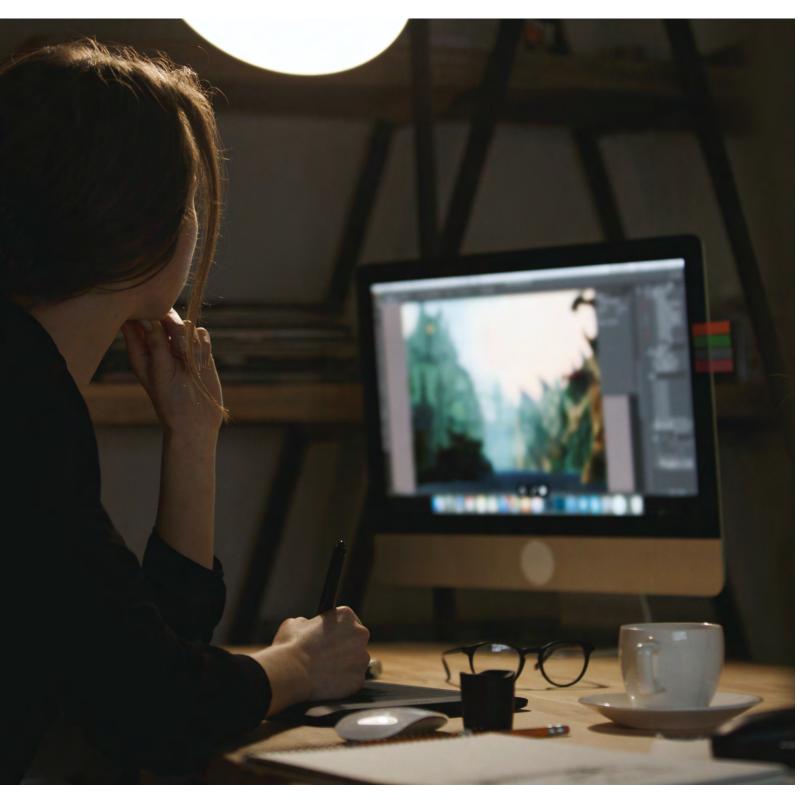
- Process payment
- Send client receipt with list of turnaround time expectations
- Create client image gallery and send link to client
- Order any images not requiring additional retouching that night
- Send any images requiring retouching to Evolve
- Export favorited images from N-Vu for client slideshow
- Set up client project in Asana to track deliverables with team
- Once products arrive, wrap everything and schedule pickup
- Follow up with client three days later to make sure everything is great

Can you imagine doing all of this without any sense of organization? I didn't think so.

If you want to be a top-tier studio with a luxury brand and high-paying clients, you need to get your shit together, build an organized workflow and give your clients an unprecedented experience. That will keep them coming back.

Don't expect to be able to easily fix a broken process later down the road. There's nothing worse than a business workflow operating with Band-Aids covering the holes. Invest the time to make it right, or you will spend the rest of your time as an entrepreneur focusing on things that don't make you money. That leads me to my final point.





EFFICIENCY IS THE KEY TO SUCCESS

Is the idea of in-person sales scaring you even more now that you've made it to the final topic? Good. This is where it all comes together and where I ease all of your fears.

You can't ignore the online and software-based digital solutions that are built to help you run an efficient business. It's time to ditch your paper order forms and sticky notes. It's time to get rid of your giant whiteboards and dry-erase markers. The world operates online. It's time to innovate or die.

The quickest way to get yourselves to a point of despising in-person sales is to run an operation with no efficiencies. There is no reason that you, the self-empowered creative business owner, should be sending out manual email reminders to your clients about their photo sessions. There is no reason you should be creating invoices from scratch every time you need to collect money. Use automation and templates. 17hats will be your very best friend.

Are you a "solo-preneur" doing everything on your own? It may be time to hire an assistant, or at least someone part time in the studio who can handle some of the daily mundane tasks so you can focus on shooting and marketing and bringing in the dollar bills in the sales room. If you can't afford a real living human assistant, look into virtual assistants.

Are you tired of running your IPS sessions across 15 platforms? It's time to wake up and smell the money N-Vu will save you by combining your online galleries, mobile apps, slideshows, note tracking, order forms and so much more into one place. We run our entire in-person sales program through N-Vu and 17hats, and have saved so much time, energy and, best of all, money. At the end of the day, that's ultimately what it's all about, right?



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

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TURNING YOUR PRICE LIST INTO A SALES SYSTEM

For the past several months in The Business Corner, we've been building your price list from the ground up. We started with cost-based pricing as a foundation (October), and then looked at alternative pricing methods for products (November) and digital files (December). Last month, we built the important first half of your price list: the à la carte menu. Remember that the function of the à la carte menu is to be a bare-bones product offering that is both paltry and expensive. This serves two purposes: If a client insists on shopping from the à la carte menu, you will charge enough that your session will be profitable. But more importantly, it will drive the majority of clients to shop from your sales system, helping you achieve your target sales averages. The next step is to create your sales system with your full product offering.





9



WHAT IS A SALES SYSTEM?

For successful sales, you have to create a system that makes getting to your target sale easy and fun. This month, we focus on the role of your price list in making your target sale the easiest way for the client to buy from you. Your sales system is more than a price list; it involves your entire client experience from inquiry through product delivery. For simplicity's sake, we will define your sales system as a collection of services and products that are designed to help you reach your target session average. It is not just a list of every product you offer, but a systematic approach of presenting different items and offers that your clients can't resist.

Jeff and I often use the example of Bath & Body Works. Let's say you enter the store to purchase an \$8 bottle of lotion. You see a sign that says "Buy 2, Get 1 Free." Since that seems like a good deal, you grab two more bottles, putting your subtotal at \$16. As you wander the store, you see another sign for a free gift with purchase over \$20. So you opt for another bottle. Your subtotal is now \$24. While you wait in line to check out, you stand next to a carefully placed display of impulse-buy items (hand sanitizer, travel-size bottles of your favorite soap). By the time you complete your purchase, your intended \$8 lotion has become a \$30 purchase of several items. Yet you leave the store excited by the great "deals" you've scored. You are happy with your purchase, and the store is happy with its sale.

That scenario is a very carefully thought-out sales system using the sales psychology tactics of bundling, incentives and more. We should be using similar business tactics in creating our own sales systems to encourage clients to buy more, all the while celebrating the great deals they've scored. It's win-win.

Shutter Magazine Eebruary 2019

PRICE LIST STRATEGIES: À LA CARTE VS. BUNDLING

As we discussed last month, your à la carte price list is the foundation of your sales system. This menu is meant to seem paltry and expensive in comparison—but in comparison to what? Your price list should include two methods for the client to buy: à la carte being one, and the other employing some kind of bundling technique such as packages, create-your-own collection (or CYOC) or a combination of a base product plus product credit (which we've dubbed Base Product Plus, or BP+ for short). While packages, CYOC and BP+ have some subtle differences, the core principles are the same: The client is required to purchase multiple products; the combination of these products leads the client to your target sale amount; and the client is rewarded for their bulk purchase with a discount, compared to your à la carte menu. Let's explore these bundling systems in more depth.

The most familiar option is packages. These are combinations of products prearranged by you to maximize the sale of profitable products. From a client standpoint, the benefit of a package is simplicity: Fewer decisions have to be made to complete the purchase. The drawback is inflexibility because clients may not be able to choose the exact combination of products they want.

This has led many photographers to use a CYOC system. Instead of prearranged combinations, clients may choose from curated lists of products or product categories. For example, the client chooses one album option, one wall portrait option and one digital product option. When the client has chosen the requisite number of options, they are rewarded with a discount. Clients enjoy the added flexibility, but may be overwhelmed by the number of choices or complicated rules.

A third option, BP+, starts the client purchase with one or two base products, then allows the client to purchase more with a product credit. The credit inflates the price of the bundle, effectively creating a minimum purchase while allowing the client maximum flexibility in choosing additional products. Clients may ultimately purchase fewer products with this system, opting to use their credit to upgrade their base product rather than purchase additional products.

An effective sales system employs one of the above three options—packages, BP+ or CYOC—and then contrasts that one option against the à la carte menu. All three options have pros and cons, and there is no right option. The question to ask yourself is, which will you feel most comfortable selling to your clients? Which makes the most sense to you? A huge factor in successful sales is your own comfort level and belief in what you are selling. For the rest of the article, we will refer to your chosen option as a bundle.

session options



Each session includes a recommended product. Substitutions ARE permitted!

the vixen

2 hour session / up to 4 outfits*
hair & makeup included
the couture album
bonus! smart phone app of
all purchased images
\$400 credit toward
additional products
1700

the temptress

1.5 hour session / up to 3 outfits*
hair & makeup included
vogue image box
bonus! smart phone app
with vogue box images
\$300 credit toward
additional products
1350

the diva

1 hour session / up to 2 outfits*
hair & makeup included
8x8 printed folio
11" standard wall print
\$200 credit toward
additional products
1000

the flirt

30 minute session / 1 outfit*
hair & makeup included
4x6 bedside acrylic
\$100 credit toward
additional products
650

Birthday suits count as 1 outfit

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ruary zolg

bridal sessions

bridal session investment



the mini

package 1

package 2

45 minute bridal 1 location 11 inch wall portrait 5 digital files

\$450

90 minute bridal 1 location 16 inch canvas wall portrait 10 digital files 2 album spreads*

\$850

30 min bridal boudoir 60-90 minutes bridal 20 inch canvas portrait 5x7 acrylic block 20 digital files

\$1250

additional products available

custom thank you cards | portrait books | canvas wall portraits digital files | gift prints | framed wall portraits | album spreads

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CREATE YOUR OWN COLLECTION

Choose at least one item from each step below.

Save 20% off your entire purchase,
and receive a complimentary smart phone app of all your purchased images.

STEP 1

Couture Album (any size) Vogue Image Box (any size)

STEP 2

Canvas or Metal Wall Portrait (any size) Set(s) of 5 or 12 Digital Files Complete Set of Digital Files

STEP 3
Mini Box with 10 Prints
8" Printed Folio
8" Curved Desktop Metal

PLEASE NOTE

Albums, image boxes, and/or the complete set of digital files are the only items avialable for purchase a la carte without the purchase of a collection.

Now that you understand the purpose of a bundling system, the next step is to figure out which products







PULL-THROUGH

Pull-through is a form of incentivizing most commonly used with packages or BP+. When building your bundles, don't simply make each bundle larger than the previous. Instead of relying solely on scale, place highly desired items only in the top bundles. If your clients covet digital files, do not place any digital files in your lower bundles at all. In order to access the option for files, clients would be required to purchase a larger bundle, thus incentivizing larger purchases. As a further use of pull-through, you may also consider keeping these highly desired items off your à la carte menu, thereby requiring a bundle purchase.

Real-life example: A "family four-pack" of amusement park tickets is not only discounted relative to à la carte ticket sales, but includes additional perks and coupons to sweeten the deal.

GOOD/BETTER/BEST

Encourage upsells by offering multiple variations in either quality or size. You might offer multiple sizes of wall portraits, portrait sessions of varying lengths or albums in economy and deluxe versions. Clients will instinctively choose the middle, hoping to avoid the risk of too little or too big. In fact, one method of increasing your sales average is to simply add a new size at the top end of the scale, effectively moving the middle choice up a rung. We used to offer two wedding album sizes: 10x8 and 12x9. Clients would avoid the 12x9, saying they didn't need the biggest option. So we added an even larger option (14x11), and instantly started selling more 12x9s. This year, we've added a 16x12 to see if it encourages more 14x11 purchases.

Real-life example: Car companies offer economy and deluxe models of the same car.

GIFT WITH PURCHASE

A gift with purchase is a free or discounted add-on with very little cost of goods, but which is highly desirable/ valuable to the client. This item is gifted to the client when a high-end product is purchased or minimum sale is reached. You might offer a free mobile phone app of purchased images with any bundle. This incentivizes the bundle over the à la carte and incentivizes purchasing more prints so that more images will be placed in the app. The gift does not always have to be free. You can also "gift" a discount when a milestone is reached. You might offer x% off of a proof box when the client purchases both an album and digital files.

Real-life example: Fragrance companies offer a free or discounted cosmetics bundle with the purchase of a perfume.

TIERED DISCOUNTS & REWARDS

As a variation on the gift-with-purchase incentive, you can incentivize spending milestones. The client receives a discount or gift when a total purchase amount is reached, and an even better discount or gift when a higher total purchase amount is reached.

Real-life example: Customers often purchase additional items to reach the \$50 milestone required to earn Kohl's Cash.

QUANTITY DISCOUNTS

Encourage clients to purchase more than one of each item by offering discounts on additional items. Offer discounts on album clones. Sell wall portrait groupings as an alternative to single portraits. Offer gift prints in sets.

Real-life example: Rack Room Shoes sells shoes at buy one, get one 50% off. The second pair is nearly impossible to resist.

PULLING IT TOGETHER

So far, you've chosen the products that you believe in as an artist, which will be the pillars of your bundle system. You've chosen the specific system (packages, CYOC, BP+) that makes the most sense to you and that you feel comfortable selling. Within your bundling system, you've now employed psychological tactics and incentives to encourage higher sales—all with the goal of guiding your client to your target sale amount. When done correctly, your chosen bundle system will be much more enticing than your à la carte menu.

Remember that last month when you built your à la carte menu, you kept the products limited and you marked them up so your bundles would be cheaper by comparison. Your clients will purchase more, they'll be excited by the "deals" they've scored and they'll hug you on the way out the door.

Don't miss this month's bonus video, where we perform a makeover of a real photographer's price list. By simplifying her price list with the methods discussed in this article, this photographer went from an \$800 average sale to a \$2,600 average sale—without raising her prices.





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

indigosilverstudio.com



For the past 10 years, creators like you have helped Panasonic to design and build LUMIX G mirrorless cameras. And now, we are Changing Photography and Cinematography together. From LUMIX G9 with massive 80mp RAW capture, to LUMIX GH5s with Anamorphic C4K video, your voice is ushering LUMIX toward a new era of image quality and creative control.

What do you want us to create next? | #HeyLumix





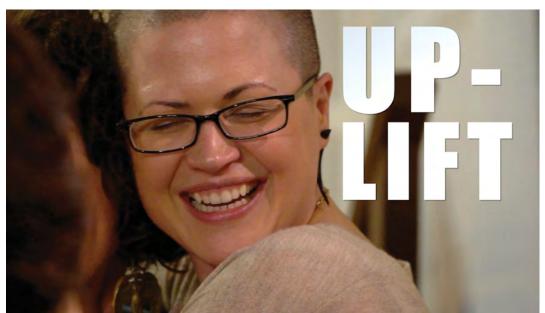




For a long time I despised marketing because I did not have a strategy for our B2B video and photo company. Anything that I had tried, like posting on Facebook and Instagram or email marketing, did not seem to work for me. These strategies work when done well, but I did not figure them out and was getting frustrated. A mentor told me to look at my best clients—the 80/20 rule—and figure out the commonality between all of them. Were they all the same type of business? Did they all have the same product or service? Did they all find us through Google?

Our best clients are those who were regular repeat clients, who invested with us, who we enjoyed working with. Our best clients were people we had built strong personal relationships with. They trusted us, knew our work and came back again and again. The commonality was the personal relationships. So I took the advice from my mentor and focused on bringing in new business by building more authentic relationships.

As we build relationships with the intent to grow our business, we need to remember that people can smell phony a mile away, and no one wants a phony friend. So while we are going after building business relationships, we also want to remember to be a cool human. Don't go straight for booking. Go into situations where you might find a new connection, looking for people you would have fun with and enjoy being around. For more on this, read my article "Business Is Personal: How to Leverage Your Personality to Get More Business" in the November 2018 *Shutter*.





Now that I knew I wanted to focus on building more relationships, I had to figure out where I was going to invest my time and energy to make that happen. Networking can be great, but in many of the groups I have visited, not much business happens at the end of the day. I needed a situation where I could make a great personal connection and be in a position of influence. At the same time, my little family and I had just moved to a new city and we were going to local events as we got the lay of the land. One event was hosted by the most well-known swim shop in Portland. It is eclectic, caters to all sizes and does custom alterations...and it has a fully stocked tiki bar for everyone to enjoy while they shop. That is the kind of company I wanted to work with: progressive, mission-driven, successful.

How could I start a relationship with them? A lightbulb went off. My company would sponsor the event and deliver an amazing video to them at the end. We would get one-on-one access to the owner of the swim shop and he would get to see how we work and what a final deliverable looks like from us. Reaching out was easy. They responded almost instantly with a big fat yes, and we even got a booth for our B2C Portrait Studio at the event in return. It was already a win-win. That one sponsored video in the summer of 2016 has since turned into almost 20 jobs with his companies, and he refers us and gives us rave reviews. I was sold: Events are the new marketing.

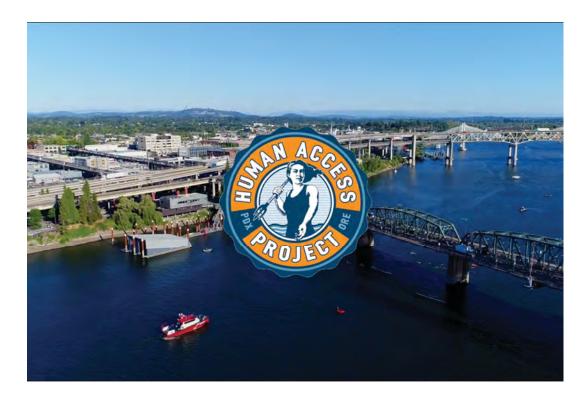
Our first paid gig with his company came almost immediately after the event we sponsored. He had a lot of work, and he wanted to make sure we were the ones working on it with him and his company. As soon as I saw how successful this was, I started to pay attention to all the events happening in my new city. Who was sponsoring the event, who was hosting it and who was in any way involved? Were any of these companies ones I wanted to work with?





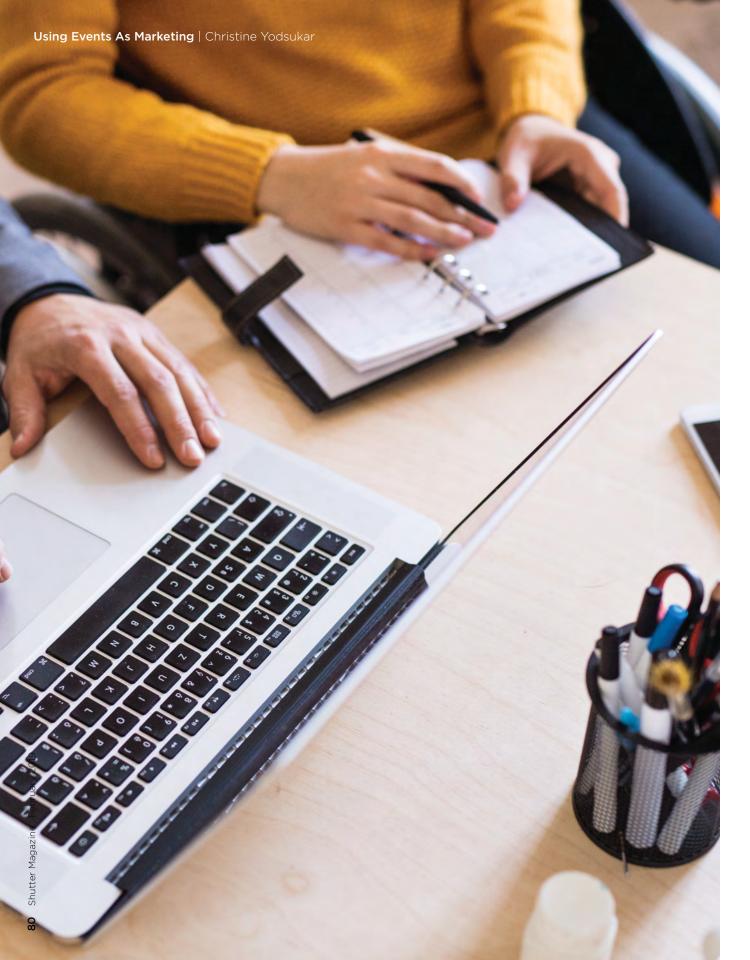






Recently there was an event in my city called the Zero Waste Conference that focused on ways we can get closer as individuals and businesses to producing no trash. Earlier this year, I had found the zero waste movement and latched onto it, so this small conference was of interest to me. With my new marketing strategy in the works, I looked at what other businesses would be sponsoring or speaking at the event. It turns out that the coffee roaster I had been following for over a year was speaking at and sponsoring the event. As soon as I saw that, I knew this was my opportunity. I reached out to the organizer and asked if they already had a video sponsor. The next day, we were signed on to do a highlight video of the event and deliver video of each speaker's speech. Was this a lot of work? Yes. Could we have just done a highlight video and called it a day? Yes. Delivering the individual talks played an important role in my strategy. Individual talks gave me an even deeper connection with each speaker.

At the event, I talked with the two people representing the coffee company: the marketing director and manager of their newest cafe. After their talk, I chatted with them. I did not ask if they needed a new video. I did not pitch them ideas. I simply told them what I loved about their talk, and then I thanked them for being a part of the event.



I asked the organizer for the contact info of each of the speakers so I could personally deliver their speeches to them. Bingo. Fast forward to delivery time. I knew that I wanted this event sponsorship to turn into a relationship with the coffee company I had been fangirling for over a year. I carefully crafted my email to them with an open heart and loads of passion. I told them I had been following their company, how I found out about them, why I loved them. I linked them to the video and asked if they had been thinking about their 2019 marketing videos. I said I had a couple of ideas I'd love to share with them. The marketing director quickly replied to say they had no plans for video marketing for 2019 because they had no resources to do it, and wanted to hear my ideas, in person, at their newest cafe.

At that meeting a week ago, instead of proposing my ideas, I simply asked questions. I asked what their goals were for the next year, what their most important projects are. Through this, I learned so much about the company, but the marketing director also talked about their two big projects. At the end of the meeting, they asked me to put together two proposals. Go time!

This story isn't over yet. I do not have a signed contract or a filming date, but even if the proposals aren't exactly what they are looking for, I know that because of the real relationship I have built with them, the conversation will continue until we find a way to work together. That is the power of building real relationships, not cold calls or emails.

Do you have a company you would love to work with but have no connection with? Find out what events they will be at and put yourself there in a position of influence. Use events as marketing. Show up and build authentic relationships with specifically targeted people and companies.





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

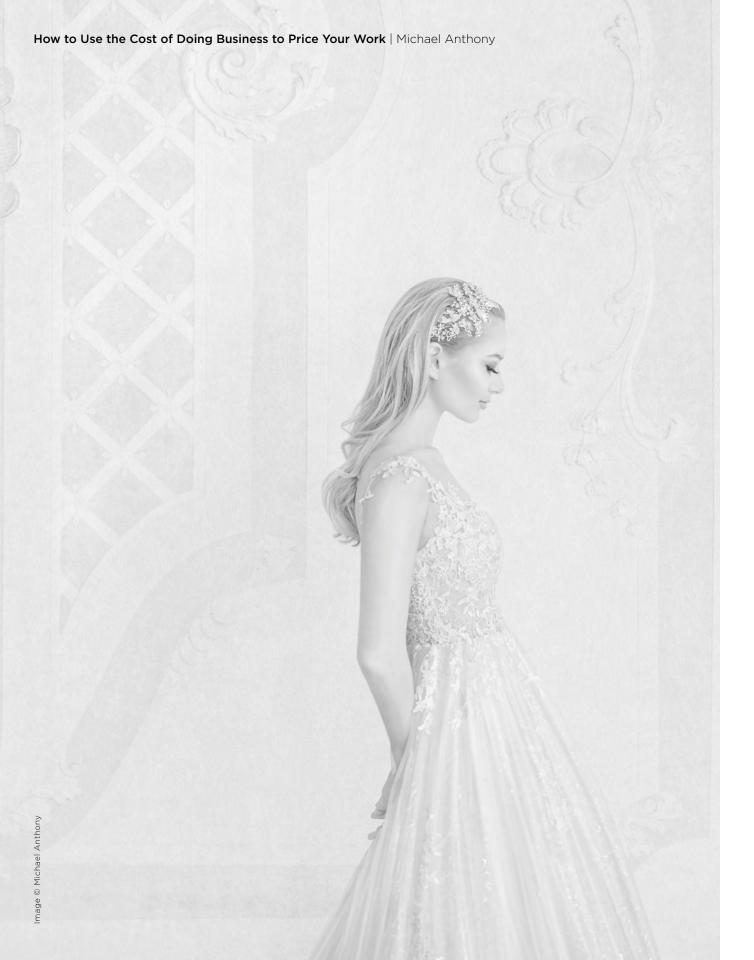




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The photography industry is unique. We start as artists and learn early on that in order to support our art, we need to go into business. The problem is that very few of us understand what goes into running a business when we start out. Learning to be a business owner is a trial-and-error process. The problem is that many people start their business before considering the costs.

I have been writing for this magazine for long enough that some of *Shutter Magazine's* new readers may not know my background or how I got started. I am going to take you down memory lane to teach you exactly what not to do when starting your business. Thankfully I found Sal early on—and his model, combined with my sales background, helped our business to take off.

When I started my business in 2012, I was charging \$1,750 for wedding photography and \$300 for portraits. Fast-forward to 2018, and we have taken in as much as \$24,000 for a single wedding, with an average of over \$10,000 per wedding.

It may sound unattainable, and it did to me too at one time. Back in 2012 when Sal was teaching on CreativeLive, he mentioned that his studio did \$1,000,000 in sales, and I said the exact same thing.

In 2018, our studio crossed the \$1,000,000 mark as well. So let me be a case study: With hard work, it is definitely possible.

Hard work is not enough. To get far in business, you have to understand what it costs you to be in business. Had I known how much it cost me to be in business, I would have known the path to get to where I am a bit sooner.

In today's photography market, too many new photographers charge based on what they think they are worth, combined with what they see other photographers charging in a rudimentary competitive analysis. This is no way to run a business. I didn't realize what it cost to be in business until I got my hands on the PPA Benchmark Survey, and when I realized that professional photographers keep only a third of their revenue as profit, it forced me to look at what it was costing to be in business.

WORK BACKWARDS TO FIGURE OUT YOUR PRICING

Let's create your business model. First, decide what you need to make in a year. As a business owner with no benefits or retirement, you have to decide what that number is. Let's say that when you add up all of your household expenses, you want to make \$100,000 a year.

Add what it costs to run your business every year. Let's use PPA's most recent benchmark survey. It states that non-brick-and-mortar studios keep approximately 50% of their revenue as gross income. That means you would need to generate \$200,000 in revenue to hit your target goal.

Before you read on, put pen to paper and figure out your exact number. Without that number, you will have a hard time proceeding. If you are an established studio, run through your books for a baseline or average cost of items to help you budget for next year.

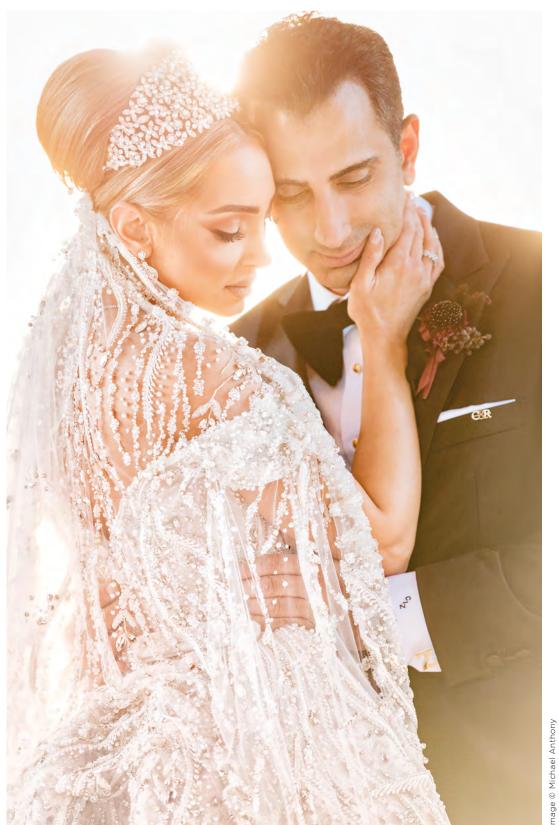
The average wedding photographer in the U.S. charges \$2,630, according to The Knot. Let's take a look at what it takes you to serve this client.

If you are shooting weddings at the average cost, you would have to shoot 76 weddings in a year—not really attainable as an individual, and even if you were able to, your cost of doing business (CODB) would likely be higher than 50% of revenue.

This is the part where, if you are an established photographer, you should probably take a look at your packages and figure out your hard costs down to the dollar. Things like albums may have fluctuating costs. It's important to account for those things. In our studio, any upgrades that we get charged for by our lab, we offer to the clients as an upcharge so we never lose money on our base costs.

Let's say you are able to get \$4,000 per wedding and that you book 40 weddings per year, which is more than the average. You would have to make the remaining \$40,000 with portrait shoots.

You can see very quickly that running a successful business requires you to charge much more than the average cost of wedding photography in the U.S. But if that is the case, then why is that average so low? The answer is twofold. Some photographers don't understand their CODB when they are starting out, so to grab market share, they underprice themselves. This is not a sustainable way to run a business. Other photographers don't need to make a full-time living doing this. They are content with part-time income and treat this as a hobby.





While many professionals will tell you that you are not competing with the latter photographer, the truth is that you are, I am, everyone who runs a full-time business is. But to win market share, you have to play in a field that the part-time photographer cannot afford to play in. You have to offer better albums, better service, a better overall experience. You have to market, hustle and analyze the data to give your business the advantage in finding the smaller number of clients that want this type of service.

Make no mistake about it: Our industry is providing a luxury product. Most people have never had a professional photoshoot, so that makes the client base limited. If you do take on a client who wants a luxury experience, then you will be spending a substantial amount of time with them. What does that look like?

The time involved with each individual client is substantial. But most of us don't really know how much time we are spending with a client. So let's break it down for a typical wedding.

- 1 hour email exchange answering basic questions to set up a consultation
- 1½ hours initial consultation
- 8 hours shooting on the wedding day
- 2 hours transportation
- 2 hours culling the wedding
- 10 hours post-production time
- 2 hours communication to deliver photos, request reviews, coordinate timeline, etc.

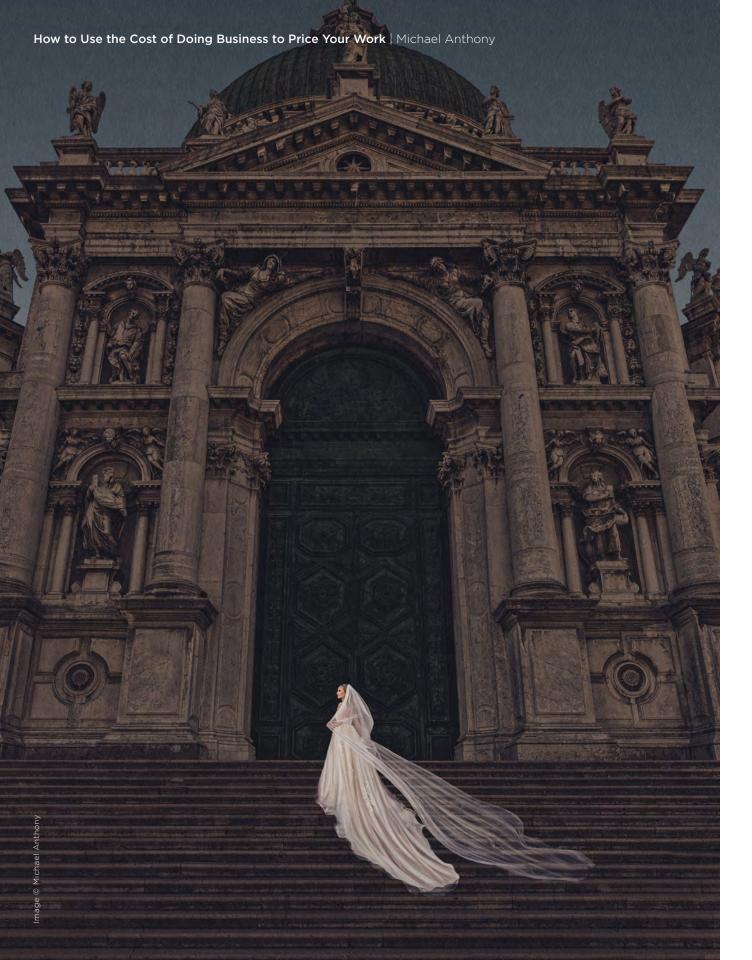
If you are including an engagement session, which most photographers in my market do, then add the following:

90 minutes engagement session

1 hour transportation

1 to 2 hours post-production

You can see that each individual job is 30 hours worth of work, meaning that a typical wedding takes up a week of work for an individual. If you don't have a team of shooters or if you are booking more than one wedding per week as most of us do because of the seasonality of our business, you are looking at 70 to 80 hours per week of work after you factor in your admin hours bookkeeping, marketing, etc.



So how on earth does this knowledge help you make more money? It sounds like it's really hard to be a photographer, right?

Knowledge is power. What things can you cut down on your list? The most obvious would be your editing time. I don't get anything for telling you that Evolve Edit's premier plan helped me weather tough times in the beginning. At \$199 per month for single-photographer studios, you are saving between 10 and 40 hours of work per week.

This time allows you to market to your clients, and marketing is how you make more money. I spend 20 to 30 hours of my week marketing, whether it's through social media, vendor relationships or working on past client referrals.

I never would have been able to build a business had I not outsourced my editing. By using this resource, I was able to charge a more competitive price. By taking advantage of Evolve's creative editing services, I was able to build my business model around artwork instead of promising clients 800 perfect images.

That type of promise is unscalable and unsustainable. While you can fulfill it if you are doing 10 weddings a year, you will ultimately let them down with inconsistent work, unpredictable turnaround times and bad customer service. I know this because I get requests to redo wedding photos all the time.

Since we are just getting started with 2019 and wedding season is right around the corner, this is a good time to revamp your business model to make sure that you are able to hit your goals.

In order to succeed, you have to put in the work. Success in this industry is not about how many likes you get on Instagram or how many awards you win in image competition. As I get older and more seasoned in business, I am reminded more and more that as artists, we conflate an ego boost with success, and if you allow that to happen, it becomes a distraction.

Success boils down to how lofty your goals are and how close you come to accomplishing them. At the end of the day, nothing else matters.





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.

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When I saw Instagram's announcement of Instagram TV, IGTV, I thought, "This is so exciting!" I was thrilled because I'm good at video. But then I thought of what this really meant: more work. More algorithm changes. More hours of me trying to figure out what the heck I should be doing on social media now. I went from "This is so exciting!" to "This is so much work" in five seconds. It's also the most time-consuming task, taking us away from our passion of running our own photography business.

As a wedding photographer, social media is one of the strongest marketing and branding tools at our disposal. It's also the most time-consuming task, taking us away from our passion of running our own photography business.

It's the end of engagement season, so marketing is a top priority for wedding photography businesses. Social media is where most newly engaged couples hang out digitally these days, but that's not the only way to get in front of them. How can you make sure you're doing your best job at marketing when everything keeps changing?







KNOW YOUR HUMANS

At some point, I've felt the desire to give up. Not on wedding photography altogether, but on little pieces here and there. It's tempting to feel that way about social media and want to kiss it goodbye because you just don't want to learn something new. Fight that urge. You don't have to be a master at social media, but you do need to continue to educate yourself to stay relevant.

Marketing is founded on basic human psychology. Read the book *Predictably Irrational* by Dan Ariely. No matter what new marketing trick or medium you may have to learn, your goal is to appeal to humans. Humans have recognizable patterns in wants, needs and behaviors.

Imagine a line of people waiting outside a restaurant. What is your impression of that place? It must be amazing, right? It's like witnessing the social validation that a high number of followers or engagement on Instagram or Facebook gives to a consumer, just in real life. So how can you make that happen in your business? Get down to the root of human behavior and build marketing campaigns from there.

DON'T BELIEVE THE LIES

It's tempting to look for shortcuts when the social media side of marketing gets overwhelming. That won't end well. Shortcuts include buying followers and even likes. Take a look at this video that debunks social media myths: https://youtu.be/130-F3yehsE.

Don't lie on social media. It is incredible how many people lie their asses off. Photographers, speakers, influencers, kids, moms, dads—everyone. Do not believe what you see all the time and certainly don't measure yourself against it. Don't be one of those people claiming success that you don't actually have. Instead, use your energy to build up yourself and others around you, and watch the whole industry grow.

One of the most rewarding things I do in this industry is help others. It makes me proud to watch my peers work hard and be rewarded for it. Try it, and I bet your work will pick up because you'll have more people who respect you and what you do.





UNDERSTAND WHAT WORKS ON SOCIAL

Every time you see a change to a social media platform, just remember that each of these platforms has a corporation behind it trying to make money by engaging users. If you remember that concept, you can weather any change by coming back to it. Before you post, ask yourself: "Will my audience engage with this?" It doesn't matter how they engage with it (like, comment, watch, click), just that they do.

At the same time, marketing yourself on social media has to be twofold. Do a lot organically (not paying for it) and experiment with paid advertising. Facebook and Instagram ads that lead to sales pages or lead capture forms from https://stickymarketingtools.com/ are a great way to pull in leads both organically and paid. I'm a big fan of these sites' new email campaigns. You can see the pop-up on my website at www.vanessajoy.com.

Don't feel ashamed to hire someone to post and interact with others. Virtual assistants and office assistants are great for this, and they will take a lot of the weight off your shoulders so you can focus on your clients and what you do best. I recently hired someone to handle my Facebook and Instagram, and another company to manage my Pinterest account (which more photographers should be using). I'm still working out the kinks, but growing a team has been rewarding—and not doing everything myself is a lifesaver.







Want to know what my biggest booking tool was this year? Networking, hands down. It wasn't easy. It's taken four years, but I was finally able to connect with one of the high-end halls in my area and on a personal level with one of its salespeople. So I now get referred more to a place I love working at, and I made a new friend.

Because social media and digital solutions are so accessible, we slack off on the personal connection to our peers. Be the exception and find a way to connect to people in person. You'll have a better chance of being remembered that way—and probably make a better connection.





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.

vanessajoy.com



PATENT PENDING

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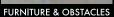
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I am not born a good salesperson. I can't stand salespeople. I just never felt comfortable pressuring someone into buying things. What exactly does it take to be a good salesperson? You can't just be an artist. You have to know how to sell too. So, the million-dollar question is: How can you become a better salesperson?

After many sales sessions, I've identified things that can hurt or help any sales session, and have compiled five key tips to help any photographer become better at sales. I prefer in-person sales (IPS) over online gallery sales. IPS has allowed my studio to see what our clients are looking for so we can give it to them. But these tips can be applied to any sales situation.

TIP 1: BE EMPATHETIC

I know it must seem odd to have this at the top of my list, but don't be fooled. This tip is one of the more important ones. Empathy is "the ability to understand and share the feelings of others." So why is this so important? If we understand the client's reasons for coming to us, we can connect with them on an entirely different level than just as a photographer or salesperson, shooting, selling, ordering, calling, emailing, day in and day out.

If we are not careful, we can lose our empathy. If we lose our empathy, our clients can tell, and then our sales are affected. On the other hand, if we have deep empathy for our clients, they can feel it. They trust that we understand how important these images are to them. That is what makes a photographer great. Great salespeople have empathy. They aren't just shoving product down clients' throats. We know how precious these images are to them, and we want them hung in their homes. We don't want to sell them. We want to guide them because we know how they feel.









TIP 2: KNOW YOUR PRODUCTS AND HAVE THEM TO SHOW

How can you sell anything to anyone if you do not know your products inside and out? Do you know the materials your products are made of? Do you know how they are made? You are in a sense asking your clients to give you possibly thousands of dollars. You should know everything about a product you are asking them to invest in.

Imagine a new mother going to buy formula for her baby and the grocer says, "This is the best formula on the market, your baby will love it!" Yet when asked what makes it the best, the grocer is unable to answer. He doesn't know the ingredients or health benefits. You can see how silly that is. Not only did that grocer not sell the formula, he may have lost a customer. The same is true for photographers. If we do not know our prints and products like the back of our hand, can we be taken seriously?

This leads us to the second part of tip two: having your products to show. Humans are visual creatures. If we do not have samples of the prints and products we hope to sell, we are shooting ourselves in the foot. Having samples of our products validates you as a professional and shows that you take this personally. Most importantly, it affects your sales. If you show the difference between a framed and unframed acrylic, your clients may automatically increase their sales simply because they were able to see the product.

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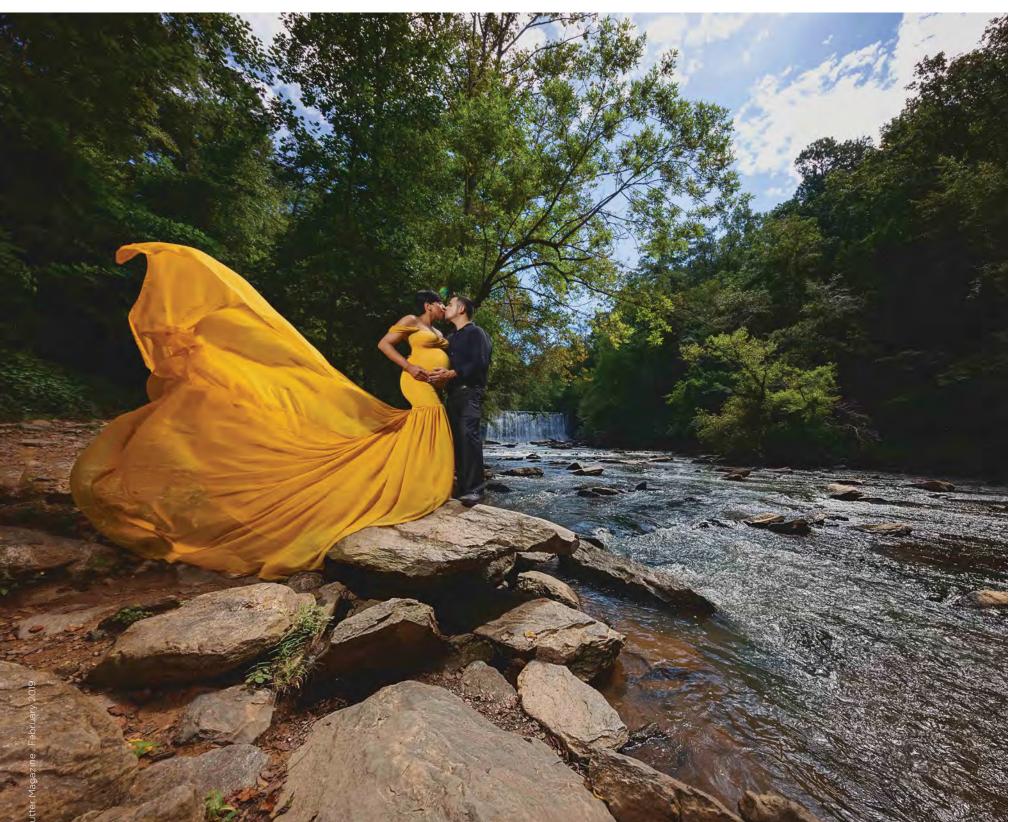




TIP 3: BE PREPARED TO ANSWER SALE BLOCKERS

There is always that one. You know what I am talking about: the spouse or significant other or family member of a client who doesn't appreciate your art and tries to talk the client out of the sale. "A 16x20 is just overkill. I think an 8x10 is enough." Ugh. We all get them. You must be prepared to deal with the sale blocker. Remember who the professional is. Who knows what an 16x20 versus an 8x10 will actually look like on a wall? You!

Here's successful sale-blocker response I use that works wonders: "I know the cost can sometimes be a defining factor on the products you choose, but think of it this way. We will spend \$40,000 or more on a car that we will have for maybe ten years. Are your memories not worth more than a car?" It shuts the sale blocker right up every time. Be prepared. Don't skip a beat, just keep on talking as if the sale blocker isn't there.



TIP 4: BE A GOOD LISTENER

Imagine you are car shopping at a dealership. You tell the sales associate that you are looking for a reliable family car, and he suggests two sports cars. Great, but they're not family cars. The biggest mistake a salesperson can make is to not listen to what clients want. You hurt your income, lose respect from your client and maybe even ruin your reputation. Imagine if that car salesman came back with the perfect family car that was a little over budget but had everything you asked for, plus some. He gets the sale. Listen to your clients' needs, dislikes and tastes. That boosts sales and builds trust. If we have our clients' trust, we have everything.







TIP 5: BE CONFIDENT AND DO NOT REACT EMOTIONALLY

Last but certainly not least, we must have confidence. I always tell photographers that clients are like kids. They can smell your fear. If you show the slightest lack of confidence, your clients will push and try to walk all over you. They will think, "If they aren't even confident in what they are charging, why on earth should I pay that price for it?" You have to believe you are the best, know you have the best products, have complete confidence in the fact that you offer the best experience. This is not something that comes easy.

All photographers have struggled with confidence. This is where the saying "Fake it till you make it" comes in so handy. Your confidence will build over time. And when things don't go how you want, keep a cool facade. The second you let your emotions take over, the client has won. Remember, you are the professional.



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

significant moments photography.com



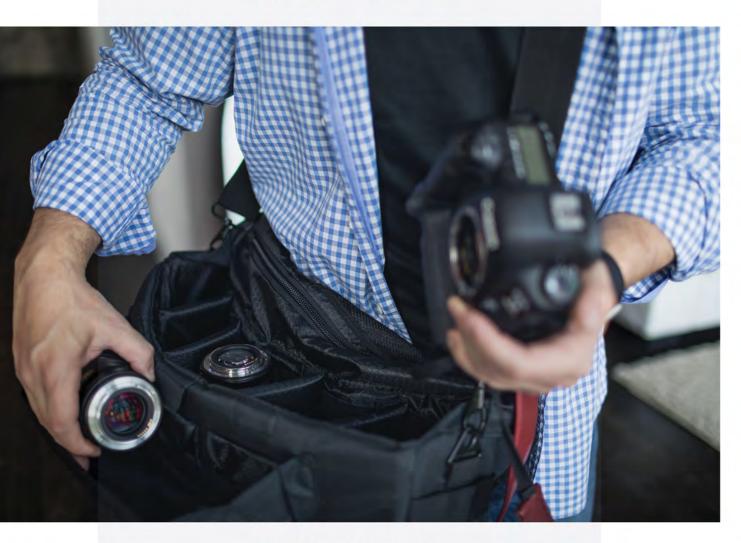
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As a photographer, you love the technical side of everything—lights, ISO, exposure, white balance, Photoshop, Lightroom. If a nonphotographer heard you talk about these things, they'd think you were a mathematical genius spouting complicated fractions, not someone who takes pretty pictures. You love the creative challenge of turning that one innovative vision that you got at 3 a.m. into a masterpiece, but others don't understand what the hell is going on.

Sophia the makeup artist thinks you are speaking Swahili when you whisper under your breath about your camera's settings. Kristi feels crippled because you keep rolling your eyes at the lights, but she thinks you're rolling your eyes at her thighs touching. Or even worse, your website talks all about how awesome you are, your About page sounds like a narcissistic tyrant's elevator pitch and you mention nothing about what your clients want from you: to feel confident, elegant and beautiful in the most vulnerable place on earth—in front of your lens.

It's not about you. It's all about them.

I saw this the other day on Facebook: "Please help me get my name and brand out there! Please LIKE and SHARE! I really, REALLY need work.... It's been a slow couple of months. THANK YOU SO MUCH!"

Seriously? His mentality is that it's all about him. What's in it for the potential client? Nothing, apparently.

We've all been there. Things just aren't working out. Jobs aren't coming in. So you panic. You need work. You need to pay the rent. You need to keep your head above water. This is all about you, you, you.

But it's not about you. It's all about them.







Clients don't care that you need work. They don't care that you need to pay your rent. They don't care that you can't keep your head above water. Your friends and family may feel bad for you or lend you some money, but that's about it. Clients care about one thing: themselves. And rightfully so. They're the ones paying you.

They don't have time to care. It doesn't help them. It doesn't serve them. And this mentality that it's all about you doesn't serve you, either. It's your job to take photographs. Your client cares only about the service you are providing them.

You provide a service for the client in return for money. The client wants the whole experience: to be treated exceptionally well, spoken to nicely and get top-quality imagery handed to them at the end. They don't care whether you can pay your rent, if you went to college, if you put in long hours of prep. They don't care about anything other than the service you provide.

Isn't that refreshing? You can save hours, weeks, even months of your life not talking about yourself, not bragging on social media about how awesome you are (when really you're dying inside), not whining to everyone who will listen about how broke you are, how behind you are, how scared you are, how unprepared you are, how nervous you are.

What can you fill that empty void with where you used to complain and bitch and moan about things no one cares about? Invest that time and energy into serving your clients. Help them make their dreams come true. Help them have a positive and unforgettable experience. Help them create a memory that will make them smile on their deathbed.

Successful photographers instinctively ask questions like: How can I help? What can I do for you? How are you today? How can I serve you? How can I better the world? How can I leave a legacy behind?

And they mean it.



So how can you help? How can you do something for someone else? How can you serve? How can you better the world with your talent? What will be your legacy? It won't be the awards, the red carpets or the magazine covers. That's all fluff. How can you not make it all about you, but make it all about them?

Your clients are yearning to know how you will make them feel from beginning to end, with all the bells and whistles. So give it to them. Document your creative process through their eyes. When they are researching photographers, they want the calmest clarity in your pricing breakdown delivered with a reassuring nod. Give it to them. In their deepest moment of self-consciousness in front of your camera, they want to know that you won't laugh at them when they're most vulnerable. Give it to them. In their highest moment of euphoria when you show them the prints for the very first time, they want to drink a glass of champagne with you in celebration. Give it to them.

It's not about you. It's all about them.

Get hyper-specific in documenting your creative process through the eyes of your client on your website and in your marketing. That will turn a window shopper into a client who books you a year in advance. You're the exact same photographer with the exact same skills, but your mentality has shifted from you to them.

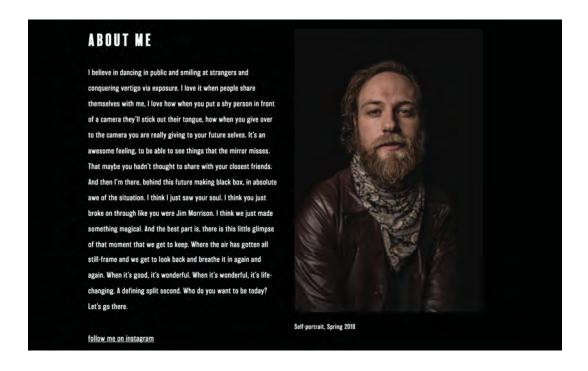
Answer these questions: Are your testimonials on your website hyper-specific, showcasing the special moments you create with your clients? Or do they just say, "I'm a good photographer"? Is your email communication proactive and client-oriented? Do clients feel seen, heard and reassured that they are making the right decision? Or do you send three sentences with a price and if they don't pick you, then it's their loss?

When the client comes to your studio for the first time, do you preheat the studio 30 minutes before they arrive, take their coat when they walk through the door, offer them a coffee or a water, take them on a tour of your studio and listen for clues about their insecurities? Do you allay their fears during the session, tell them when they've hit a great pose that makes them look gorgeous, give them time to breathe in between, allow them to play and make them feel like a superstar? Or do you let them in, point to the stool for them to sit in and start shooting?

Is your About page a hyper-specific sneak peek into how you make your clients feel during a shoot? Or do you ramble on about the first time you picked up a camera and how it made you feel?

Shutter Magazine . February 2019

Check out this excerpt from photographer Andy Strong's About page from his website, www.astrongphoto.com. We spoke about his previously not-so-great About page at ShutterFest 2018. He took my advice and changed it to this masterpiece:



The only time Andy makes it about him is when he says, "And then I'm there, behind this future-making black box, in awe of the situation." It's as if he's the least important person in the room who's lucky to be there to capture it all. This About page is all about the client. This About page can convert half-interested website visitors into diehard clients who can't wait to stick their tongues out and feel like Jim Morrison. This About page is the beginning of a phenomenal customer experience.



Jonathan Tilley is a personal brand strategist who helps photographers shine online and share their talent with the world. He also likes to help them rewrite their About pages. Jonathan is honored to be invited back to his second ShutterFest Extreme.

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Why ACI Riveli Albums?

I feel like I am constantly beating the drum for these albums. If you are not offering your clients albums, you are losing money on every deal. Albums are not just for wedding clients. We offer albums to our family clients (number-one seller), engagement couples and seniors. This is a must-have in your product offerings.

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As a wedding photographer, you should be filling your calendar with free leads from fellow vendors. I mean, aren't they grateful? Haven't they seen all the amazing photos on your blog? Without your images, no one beyond the guest list would ever see the flowers, fashion and decor they create—at least not in the appealing and professional way you photograph them.

If that's how you think it works, slow your roll, my friend. It's not nearly so simple. Artists of all kinds coexist inside this delicate ecosystem we call the wedding industry. None of us is the center of this solar system, and a lot of competitors are fighting to fill every niche.

I know you feel pressure. So do I. And believe me, every other vendor feels it from their competitors as well. If you want to get on a wedding planner's good side, see your name on a venue's referral list or even become the go-to personal photographer for wedding vendors everywhere, consider the following tips.



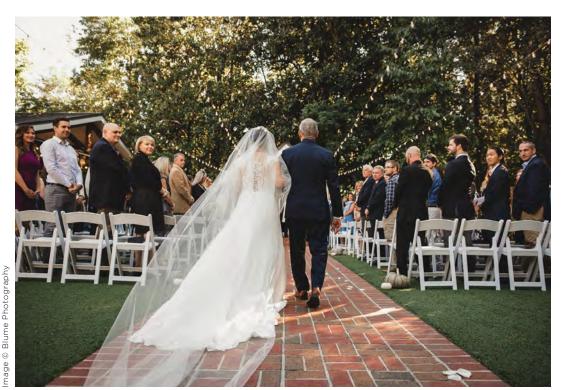


Symbiosis just means "you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours." Picture the plover birds that manage to safely clean leftovers from the teeth of giant crocodiles. Instead of eating the birds, the crocs provide a meal to them in exchange for free dental care.

So what are you doing to serve fellow wedding vendors? If you scratch that itch they can't reach, you may have found the ticket to putting bread on your table for years to come.

Unfortunately, many photographers think of symbiosis as sucking up to vendors. Have you ever invited a high-end wedding planner out for coffee or a nice dinner ("my treat, I'd just like to pick your brain")? Or maybe you gifted expensive wedding books to every venue you've ever photographed. You may be trying too hard; as a result, you may look desperate or even go broke with nothing to show for it.

Remember the 80-20 rule: 80% of good results usually come from 20% of your efforts. So imagine the potential results if you focused 100% of your effort on only the smartest, most efficient strategies. (Have you really booked enough weddings from that sample book to justify its cost?) The good news is that the best strategies aren't necessarily the most expensive.





nage © Blume

SAMPLE PRODUCTS

Don't run a reactive studio. Be proactive. If you wait for vendors to ask you for what they need, chances are another photographer will meet the need first. Or even if they come directly to you with a request (for sample work or a styled shoot), you will have to provide everything they ask for in order to meet expectations. If you make the offer first, you have the freedom to be creative and set expectations.

Venues are always asking for sample wedding books. Books take time to design, they're expensive to you and most venues don't even display or use them well. So get ahead of the curve. Instead of a book, design a single graphic collage featuring the best portrait and detail images from a recent wedding at the venue. Produce the collage as a mounted print 24x36 or larger. We order prints like this from WHCC. The value and quality are excellent. And after you deliver it to the venue in person, its size and impact can't be denied. It will be shared and seen.

Include both your logo and the venue's logo prominently. This is your billboard advertisement. But they will only value it if it promotes them, too. Brand association is powerful in a client's mind. When a couple sees those logos together, it's equivalent to a strong endorsement from the venue.

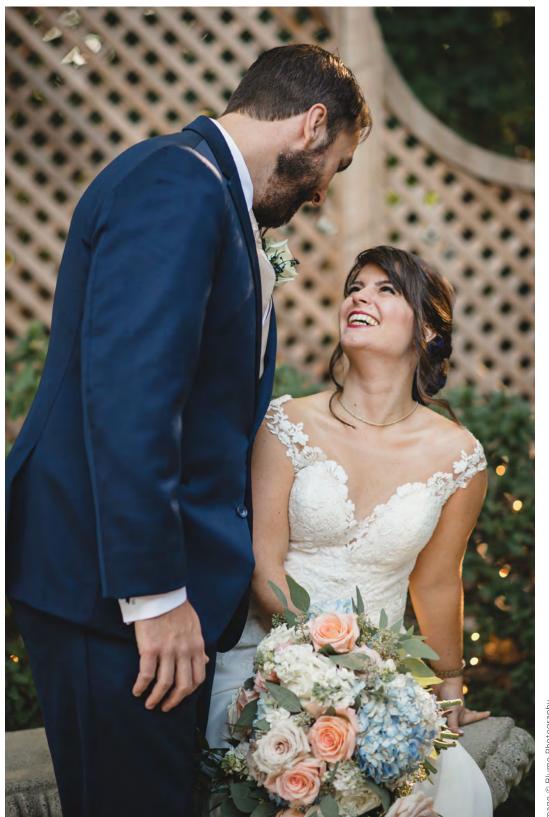
DELIVER DIGITAL PHOTOS

The most obvious way to scratch a vendor's back is to share your wedding photos, which feature their work. Just like you, they need photos to market and maintain a relevant presence on social media. This strategy is so obvious, why bother mentioning it? Because even though all photographers know they should be sharing images, almost no one does it. I'm no longer surprised when vendors thank us profusely, telling us we are the only photographers who share photos with them.

Are photographers lazy? Or maybe it's just too easy for us to take visual marketing for granted. After all, we're photographers. Our work is our marketing material. But having worked on shoots for companies like Coca-Cola, I can assure you other businesses place a high value on photo collateral. It's hard to come by and usually expensive.

So how should you deliver photos to vendors? And should you charge for them?

First, prioritize delivery to wedding planners and venues. That doesn't mean you shouldn't share photos with other vendors—you should. But remember the 80-20 rule. In terms of the pecking order, only planners and venues are consistently higher on the food chain. In other words, couples tend to book a venue or planner before anything else, so they are your ticket to the hottest leads. True, we've gotten a lead or two from florists and dress boutiques over the years, but couples already have a photographer when they reach that stage of planning.



At the very least, we've found the modern age now requires us to post a sneak peek during the actual wedding. Otherwise, vendor snapshots often end up being the first shared wedding images on our couples' social profiles the ones that get hundreds of likes and comments.

Even worse, any photos you later make public (but haven't shared directly with the vendor) will be used improperly. Whether it's screenshots from your blog or proofs emailed to them by your client, the photos are less likely to have your watermark, get tagged or lead to you in any way.

I know what you're thinking. No, do not send a cease and desist letter to your fellow vendors. I'm a staunch copyright advocate, but right or wrong, your images will be misused. Get used to it, or choose to make the experience a positive one where vendors feel served by you. The last thing you want is to put your fellow industry professionals on the defensive. Even if they loved your work, they won't be able to refer you anymore. You can't fight them; instead, learn to work within this reality and use their momentum to your benefit.



SOFTWARE TOOLS

For same-day sneak peeks (which I define as one or two images posted to Instagram), we use the Wi-Fi tools of our Sony A7iii to transfer photos directly to our phones. When the couple sits down for their reception meal, we send the JPG versions (not full Raw copies) of our favorite photos to the phone, add our branded preset via the Lightroom mobile app, then post to Instagram, where we tag every vendor from the event. Laptops are no longer required. (Use the IFTT app or a posting service like Buffer to make sure your photo hits Facebook at the same time. This is where social sharing takes flight.)

To deliver entire photo galleries to vendors, you have a couple good options. If you want to get a wedding published, which we recommend, subscribe to Two Bright Lights. Here you can upload a curated gallery of wedding photos and submit it to hundreds of publications (online and print). Even better, you can send vendors private gallery access to download images, too. So even if the wedding isn't published yet (which vendors love), they can get the images and feel confident you're working for them. If the photos do get published, the vendors are notified automatically so you don't have to send that extra email. What vendor wouldn't want to refer a photographer who gets their business free print publicity?

But using Two Bright Lights does take extra time—curation, detailed submission forms, finding vendor profiles (which are too often out of date on the site) and more. Although I still submit our best weddings for publication on my own time, we've found a much easier solution for speed: ShootProof.

ShootProof's brand-new specialized Vendor Galleries make delivery a breeze. They've thought of everything. First, integrate ShootProof with Lightroom. You can literally drop wedding photos in a linked Lightroom folder and see matching ShootProof galleries appear online like magic. Next, highlight any images you want to share and click to create the Vendor Gallery. (To offload even more of the time required, we drop all images in the Vendor Gallery—but limit the number of downloads a vendor is allowed so they're incentivized to choose only appropriate photos and not the whole gallery.) ShootProof lets us choose the download size, watermarking and delivery of our personal copyright requirements automatically.

The best part is, our couples and their guests never see the vendor options inside their gallery. Even though it's all there (no separate galleries or additional uploading required), the download buttons and options show up only for our designated vendors. Very cool.







TOUCH POINTS

As you begin working more often with the same vendors, I hope you'll find it easier to become personal with them, as you would with any office coworker. It's too easy to ignore vendors on a wedding day, as florists and planners move past frantically trying to meet deadline. Yes, respect their time and let them focus. But there are ways to connect with them, too.

We use a 17Hats questionnaire before the wedding to get every vendor's email address from the couple. Then we start our relationship by sending an email before the event, simply asking if there is any help we can provide to a vendor before the big day. Almost no one needs anything from us at this point. But we've made clear that we are in their corner. We also express our excitement to work with them on this event, creating a positive tone. Finally we announce our desire to share photos after the wedding and help them get published. So exciting—but what's even more exciting is that we share a link to the couple's ShootProof gallery, where we invite vendors to preregister for a notification when the gallery is ready (so I no longer have to remember to send another email after the wedding).

Next, thanks to this workflow, on the wedding day, every vendor already knows us. We look them in the eye and say hi with a smile. Ask them how they're doing. Beyond that, we just let them do their jobs. But there is something most photographers forget to do: get a photo of important vendors (especially planners, florists, etc.) alongside the couple if possible. These pros understand that showing relationships helps build trust with potential clients they'll meet in the future. This photo is often overlooked, but it may be the one your fellow vendors value most.

We can't be real-life besties with the dozens of wedding vendors we work alongside. But we can be true friends and supporters to them. If you're helping them put bread on the table, you mean something to them personally. As a result, we like to give at least one personal outreach for all our vendors per year. They get a Christmas party invitation, and we add vendors to our personal Christmas card list. Through this simple gesture, we're inviting them into our home and showing them our human side. They see our kids grow up in pictures, and we come to know them and their families. It even opens the door to photographing their families, and some join our client loyalty program.

The best vendor relationships are genuine ones. As a result, our studio has remained successful over 11 years with barely any paid advertising.





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

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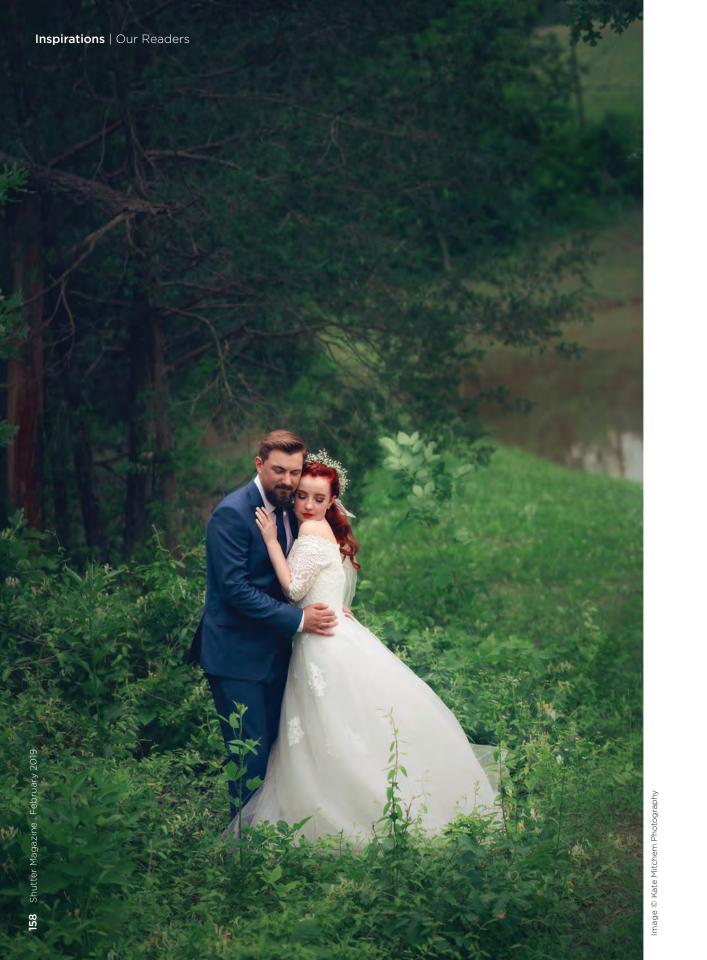




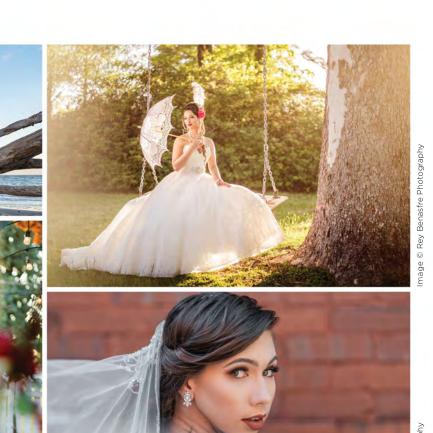


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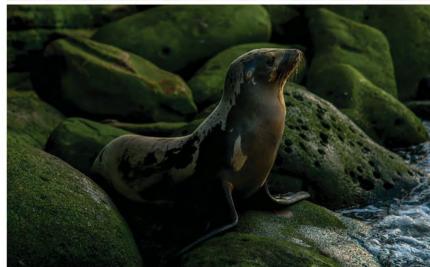
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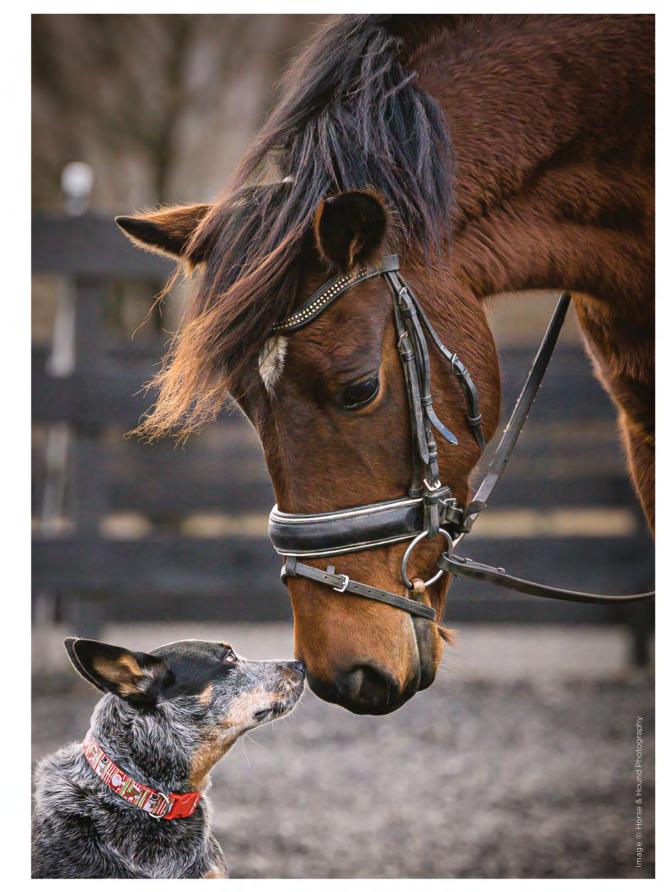
























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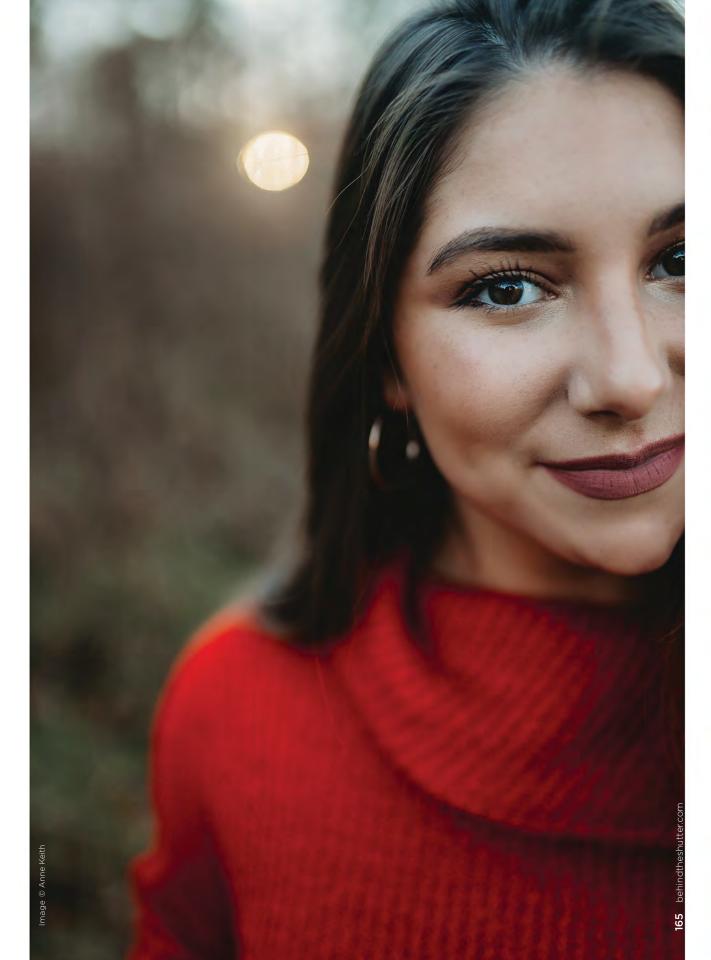




















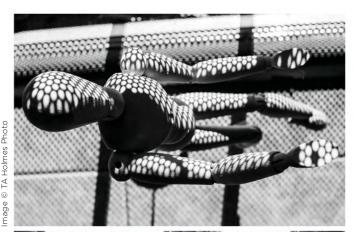
































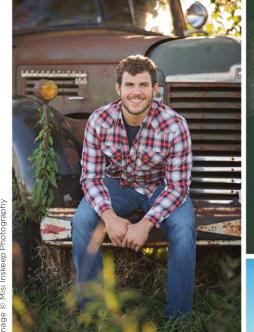




















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WEDDINGS

DIGITAL IMAGE COMPETITION

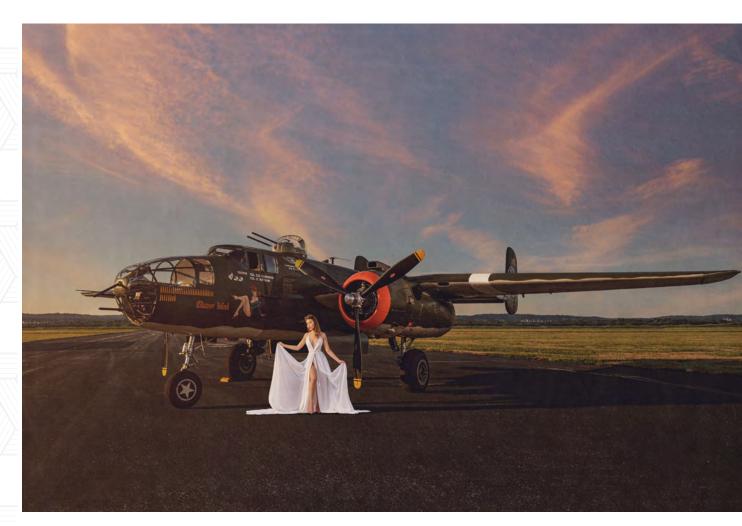
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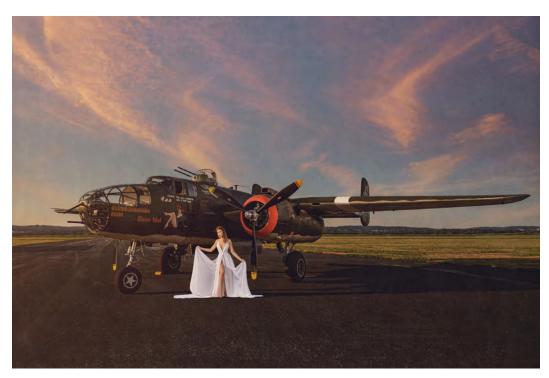
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1st Place | Andrew Klosterman Pin Up Bride

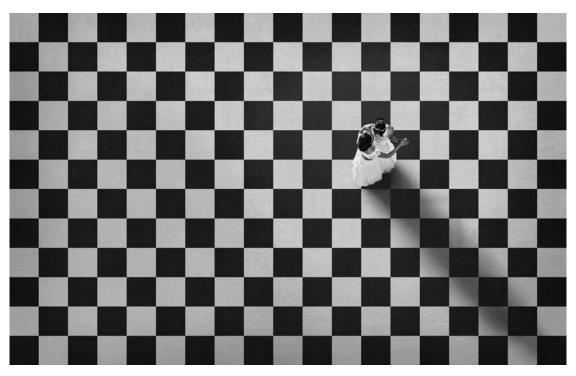


2nd Place | Geanina Salceanu Chapel of Rememberance



3rd Place | Kevin Shoemake At Last

COUPLE TOGETHER



1st Place | Zaki Charles First Dance



2nd Place | Zaki Charles Candy & Edi



3rd Place | Nadege Barnes Kiss in the Wind



2nd Place | Jacky Wong *Wedding Day*



1st Place | Brandon Hunter *Rodeo Rockin'*



2nd Place | Ryan Eda Inside A Greek Ceremony



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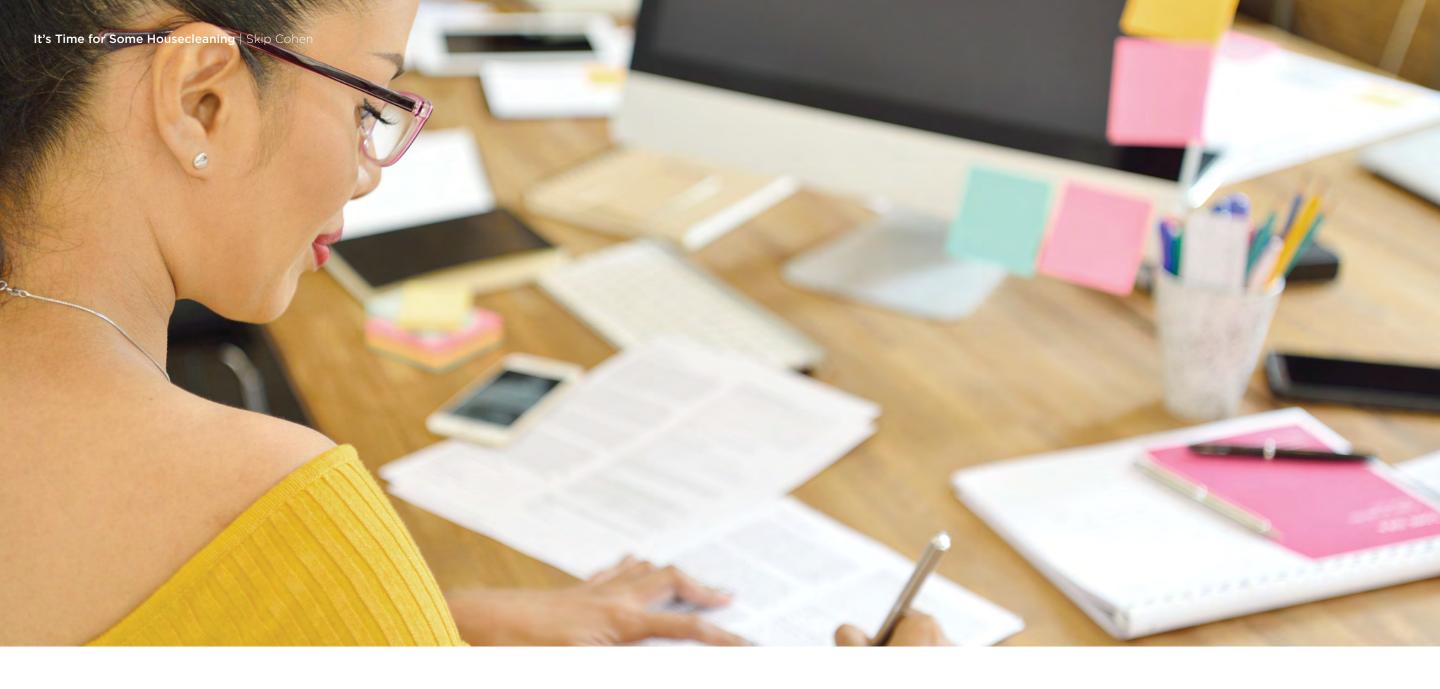
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IT'S TIME FOR SOME HOUSECLEANING with Skip Cohen







It's February, one of the most significant months of the year in professional photography. First, there's a little seasonality in the month because of Valentine's Day, especially when February 14 falls on a Friday or Saturday. (Relax—this year, it's on a Thursday.) "'Tis the season for proposals, as nearly 40% of all engagements happen between Thanksgiving and Valentine's Day," as weddingwire.com put it. That makes Valentine's Day a great opportunity for starting relationships with new couples, along with boudoir and portraiture. There are some unique opportunities for winter promotions in photography.

Second, while February is right in the middle of what many of us refer to as the slow season, that doesn't mean it should be a quiet stretch for you. Now is the time to do some serious house cleaning and stop procrastinating about the key elements on your website.

You know the areas that need attention, but you've been hoping to skate by month after month. Well, there's no reason to let that dripping faucet continue. We've all been there, with an annoying faucet that just won't shut off. If you're into DIY projects, it's usually an inexpensive washer that needs to be replaced, but you keep putting off that trip to Home Depot.

It's been a long time since I wrote about building a more effective website. For the most part, it's all DIY. But you have to take the time and be in a great frame of mind to do it right—no shortcuts and no attitude of "that's good enough."

PEOPLE DON'T BUY WHAT YOU DO; THEY BUY WHY YOU DO IT. AND WHAT YOU DO SIMPLY PROVES WHAT YOU BELIEVE.

-Simon Sinek

Website Design: It all starts with knowing your target audience. For most of you who are on the portrait/social side, your target audience is either Mom or brides. Based on a Kodak survey from many years ago, women make 98% of photography purchase decisions. That means you need to pay attention to the design and color elements of your website. I've seen both male and female artists insist on sites that feel too masculine and high-tech.

Navigation: Make a visit to your website habit-forming and fun, just like a visit to your favorite stores. Don't make it hard to find what's most important to your audience. Test your site every day to make sure it's loading the way you expect.

Above the Fold: Pay attention to how things look on your monitor. Too many of you have poor designs with important information below the fold, forcing your audience to scroll through pages to find information they need. Too often they miss what's most important.

Start With Your Galleries: Your very first tab should be your galleries, then your About page. Hook clients on your images first so they want to find out more about you.

How Many Images? Keep your galleries relatively small. Be selective in what you show. I once did a website review for a photographer who had over 4,000 images on his site. You need only a dozen to make your point—as long as each image is a wow print. A wow photograph is so good that it's the only one you'd have to show to

Albums: I love websites with completed albums. While you may think of albums as strictly for wedding clients, the key point is showing your skills as a storyteller. Showing an album is a great way to plant the seed of an idea for newborn, children and family photography. Think about a "day in the life" book telling the story of a new baby, a child's environment or a family. Instead of just pitching a client on an updated family portrait, get them excited about a complete project documenting their family.

Mixed Messages: Everyone has other interests in photography besides their core specialty, but be careful how you share them in your galleries. A wedding photographer who has an interest in beauty and fashion is targeting two different audiences. An ad agency looking for a beauty and fashion client is going to walk away from a wedding photographer's gallery. The same applies to a children and family photographer who also has an interest in fine art landscape work or wildlife.

Remember your target demographics. There's nothing wrong with multiple specialties and interests, but you need either a second website or a landing page that gives each visitor a choice of which door to go through.

About You: I'm hoping more of you will consider two different directions for your About page. How about a mixed-media video combining still images and a couple of short video clips (10 to 20 seconds) set to great music? You need a great marketing video to show your work and your love for the craft. If you hate being on camera, kick things off by talking about your passion for photography while showing some of 2018's best images.

If your bio talks in the third person, is all about your awards, how you got started or what equipment you use, dump it. Unless you've won the Pulitzer Prize, nobody cares what awards you've won. They also don't care that your grandfather got you started with your first camera or that you're into the latest technology.

What your target audience does care about is why you should be trusted to capture the kinds of photographs they want. They want to know why you love photography, working with people and your career choice. It's all about relationship building. Stop talking in the third person as if you're being interviewed for a magazine article.

Make your About page an artist's statement and stay in the first person. Add your signature at the end. Make it unique and personal. Relationship building is your most important marketing tool, and it all starts with that first visit to your website.

Information: So many of you share information on your website that would scare away an IRS auditor. Stop posting policies about deposits and cancellations. This information belongs in the contract discussion, not on somebody's first visit to your website. The information is important, but it doesn't belong on your website. Let your site represent your passion for the craft and your enthusiasm and love for your clients.

Pricing: Rather than share pricing, I show a starting price for packages. Remember: "People rarely buy what they need," as Seth Godin wrote. "They buy what they want."

Your goal is to make visitors to the website want your services, skill set and finished products. Don't let pricing become the issue until you've got them to realize you're the best. Pricing is important, but it doesn't need to be on your website.

Contact Information: If you've attended any of my workshops, you already know this is a pet peeve: lack of contact information. There's no such thing as too many ways for people to contact you. Photographers who work from home don't want to show an address. That's fine, but give people a phone number and an email address. If you use an email form, it's only as good as the speed of your response.

I'm going to hit some new ideas in blogging next month, but for now, here are a few important reminders:

- Your website is about what you sell, and your blog is about what's in your heart.
- Consistency is critical to a blog. If you're blogging every other full moon, give it up—it's hurting more than helping you.
- Post on your blog at least twice a week. Any less, and you'll never build a readership.
- Content is king. Remember your audience and this great line from author and motivational speaker Ed Foreman, which you've read on my pages many times before:



You've got to understand what's important to your audience, and just putting yourself in their shoes isn't enough!





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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You can recreate this in camera with off-camera flash, gels and a lot of time on the shoot. But when it's freezing and you get only 50 frames, you don't have time for lights and setup. You have to compose, track your subjects and shoot. So on those overcast days, you are happy because the colors pop but you'll have to crop out the sky because it's empty. In Lightroom, we can dial in color for a neutral base, target specific tones and even create sunlight quickly.

Once I have a few images picked, I can start to develop these images for a more seasonal look and feel.

COVER YOUR BASES WITH BASIC CORRECTIONS

As soon as I get set up to apply basic corrections, the first image is darker and warmer than I want. I always start with exposure to get the brightness corrected, then the white balance. (1) When you want to apply creative adjustments later, it is best to edit for a neutral and simpler base. We will focus on the skin tones for this section. What I mean by that is leaving the contrast, whites and blacks sliders alone for now to utilize them in the Tone Curve panel. You want to correct blown-out highlights and blocked-up shadows. (2)

Jumping down into the Tone Curves panel, I can use one of the prebuilt film-style point curves. You can quickly see the shifts in the different curves here; if we go with something heavier in contrast, dial it back with the region sliders or, better, in the basics panel. (3abc) Now play with the whites and blacks to correct any clipping. This is all relative to your taste and is the easiest part of the edit because now I have to deal with targeting color and tones. (4)

Other adjustments like lens correction, sharpening and noise reduction are good corrections to make as well. (5) Let's move into HSL to tone down the greens and pump up the blues.













HSL is simple to use. Grab the target adjustment tool for saturation to click and drag down to reduce the richness of a specific range of colors. I desaturate the green tones, lower the saturation and brighten for skin tones. (6) In this shoot, I also want to enhance the blue tones in their clothing, which I can do quickly. Once I correct the color and tonal range for the image, I can start to add some creative effects like split toning. We can add some tones to match a warmer mood and add some purple tones to the shadows. (7)





Under Split Toning highlights, I like to drag the hue slider between red and yellow to dial in a nice orangish tone. Moving saturation to the right acts like an amount slider. (8) The same goes for shadows: We can adjust the hue slider between the blue and red for a purple tone. This creates a warm to cool look that's great for these winter portraits. (9)

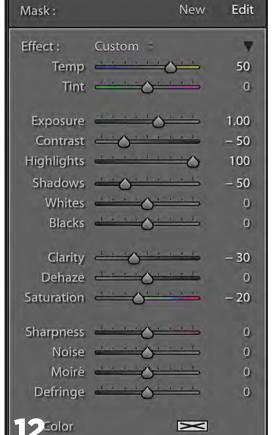
Before we go into Local Adjustments, we want to create virtual copies to preserve the creative edits we've already made. Then we can remove the split toning and any other creative effects to keep things closer to a more natural look. (10)



















CREATE YOUR OWN COLOR WITH BRUSHES

Beyond just a dodge and burn with exposure, highlights and shadows, we can start to paint in sunlight in the background. This is what I was missing on this shoot. It actually made it easier for me to control light since it was overcast. This is exactly why we edited for a neutral base: so we could push warmer tones and brighten the areas behind the subjects. This is opposite of what we normally do, since you normally want to darken and tone down the background to let your subject pop. Let's jump into Adjustment brushes.

Make a subtle sun flair effect and build it up by lowering the Flow brush setting. Start by setting your brush feather slider to 100 and flow at 30. (11) Then, from top to bottom, create the sun flare under the effect section. Move the Temp to 50, Exposure to 1, Contrast to -50, Highlights to 100, Shadows to -50, Clarity to -25 and Saturation to -20. (12) Add a colorized sun flare by adding a specific color tone. (13) Once you have these settings entered, click on Custom next to Effect. Choose the option at the bottom of the drop-down menu. Save Current Settings as a New Preset to keep these settings for later use. (14) For a stronger sun flare, set the Flow to 100 and increase the Exposure to 4.

For a close-up image, I would only apply the base settings and build it up to add a subtle sun haze from the top and side. (15) I can erase the effect with the flow set to 30 for more subtle brushwork or 100 when I want it completely removed. (16) This adds quite a different look than the earlier split-toned image with the warm and cool edit. (17) With a wider shot, I would need to start with a heavier flair and then paint in a subtle build-up of light spilling into the scene. Here is how we can keep the empty sky and add some creative lighting. (18)













THE RESULTS

Editing color doesn't have to be that heavy-handed, and you don't need to add sun flares to photos. This is just a quick example of how you can save yourself going into Photoshop with the tools in Lightroom. Push yourself to branch out and try new things. Editing to enhance or create a specific mood can deliver images your clients want during the season. You don't have to wait for perfect weather. I like to shoot when it's overcast because I have more control to manipulate color later.





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.

evolveedits.com



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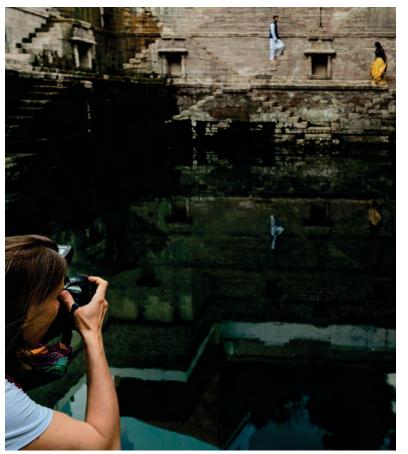
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