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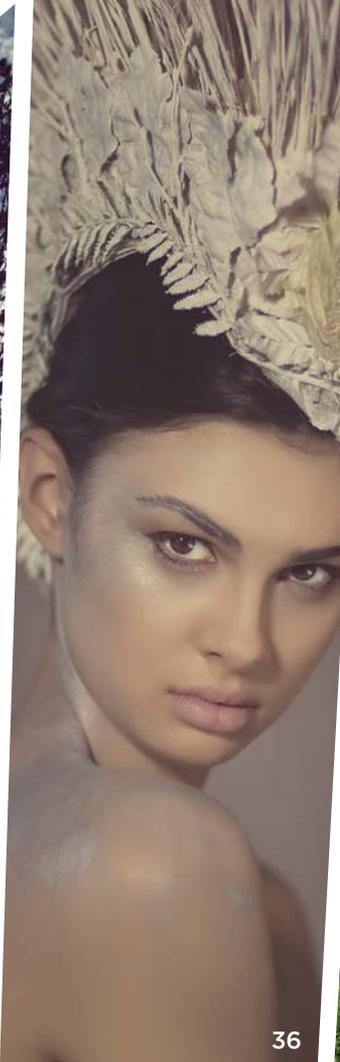
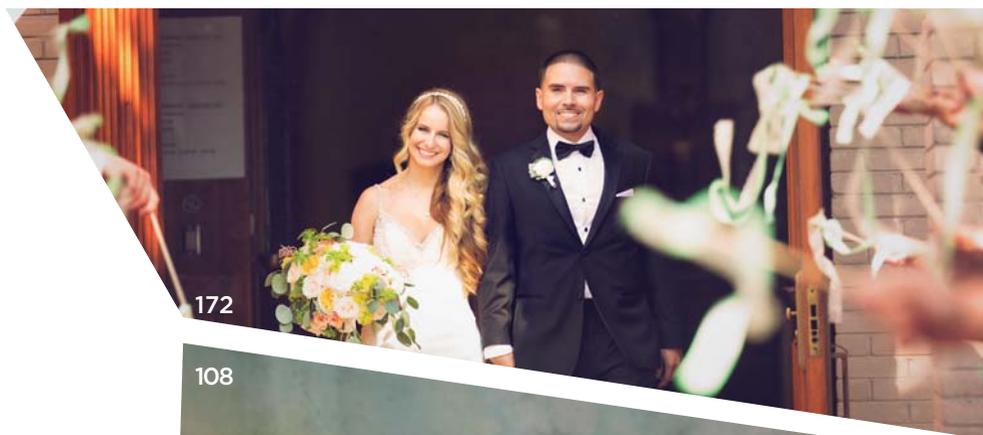
"17HATS is so intuitive and easy to use. It allows us to streamline operations and focus on the things that really matter in our business!" - **Sal & Taylor Cincotta**



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Salvatore Cincotta
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Shutter Magazine is about photography education. Our goal is to provide current, insightful, and in-depth educational content for today's professional wedding and portrait photographer. Shutter Magazine 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 establish the magazine as one of the leading photography publications in the world.

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THE COVER

PHOTOGRAPHER: Sal Cincotta | salcincotta.com

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EXPOSURE: f1.2 @ 1/250th, ISO 200

LOCATION: Chicago, IL

ABOUT THE IMAGE: This image was taken in our hotel room in Chicago in January 2016.

LAUNCH POINT

A message from the editor-in-chief

*Without
sales and marketing,
there is **nothing**.*
- Sal Cincotta

Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography



Filming for Fun

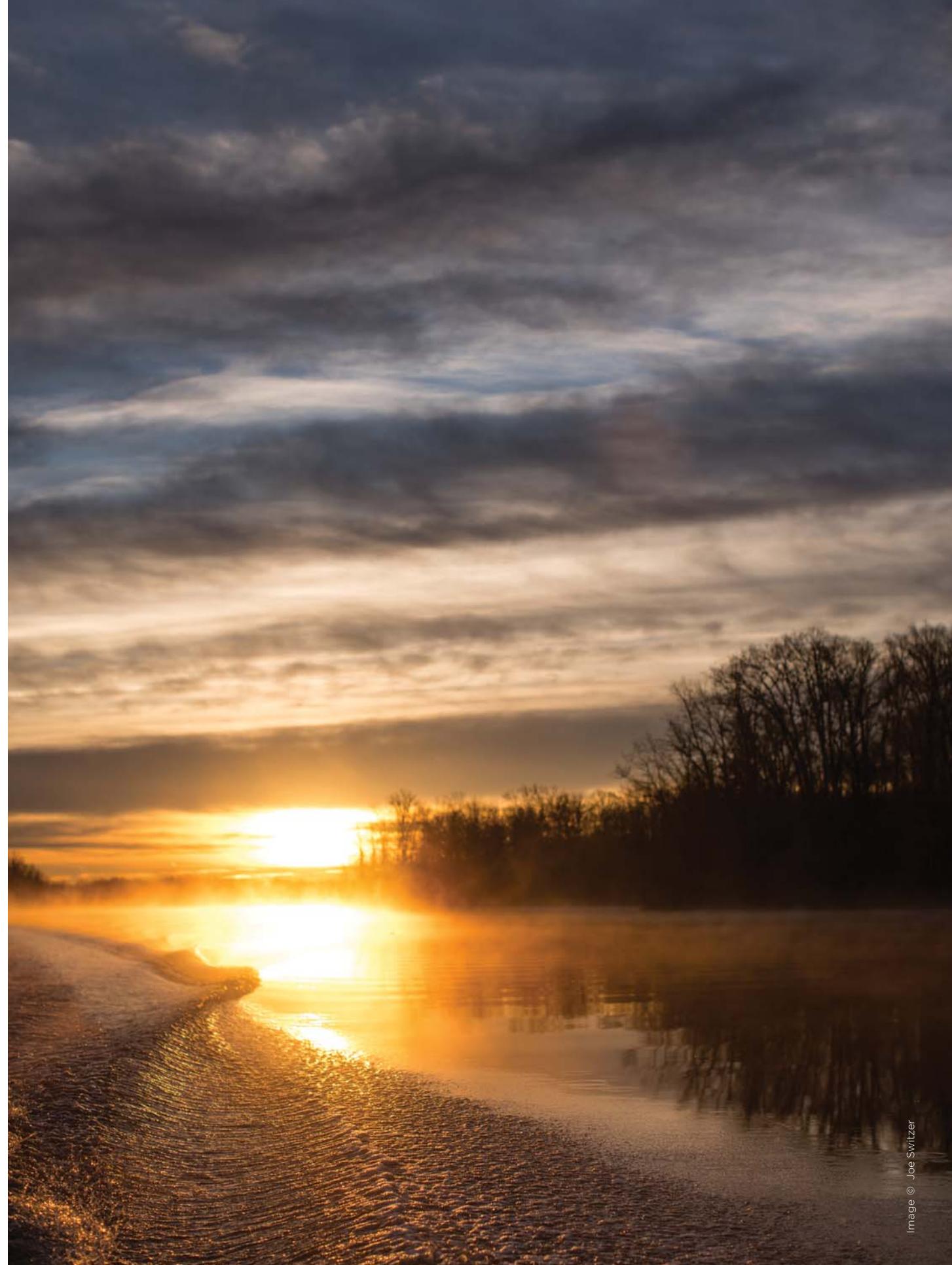
with

GoPros

with Joe Switzer

Are you allowed to experiment and have fun filmmaking? Every year, I leave all my professional gear at home and take a few GoPros with me for a day of fun with my dad. We have a winter tradition of going fishing together. I'm not about to bore you with fish stories. This article is about showing you how to step up your video game by having fun filming your family, friends and anything you're excited about. This can lead to a passion for filmmaking and a desire to capture more and better video for yourself and clients.

Growing up, the only reason I wanted to make video was to entertain and have fun, which meant a video camera was in my hands throughout high school and college, which jumpstarted my film career. If you just can't get into video yet and are looking for a way to spark some excitement, the GoPro might just be the answer.



Professional. ■■■■

Every production doesn't have to be perfect. Experimenting and trying new gear with different camera settings can help you in the long term. Looking at yourself on video without any rules or expectations can help you become better. Anytime I'm filming my family, it's always a reminder of how meaningful moments are. It's not always about the perfect backdrop, pose, lighting and composition.

It's the moments that people cherish and look back on. On our fishing trips over the years, my dad and I have encountered snow, bitter cold, thunderstorms, fog and ice. It's fun to look back at what we've encountered. It didn't matter if we had photos with aperture of 1.2 or 15. Didn't matter if the video or photos were in perfect focus. It's all about the moment and capturing it.

Make It Easy. ■■■■

For filming my personal adventures, all I need is a GoPro. The goal is to focus less on filming and more on experimenting with angles, camera settings and having a good time. I don't want to film my dad making cast after cast with a monopod and DSLR. I'm not bringing a motion stabilizer on my one day off to relax. This trip is for catching fish and not worrying about what lens to use. The gear in my bag for this shoot was two GoPro Hero 4 Blacks, two SanDisk 64GB MicroSD cards, a GoPro Jaws Flex Clamp, curved and flat adhesive mounts, blackout housing, selfie stick, duel batter charger, side mount and four batteries.



Images © Joe Switzer

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Camera Settings. ■■■

The GoPro Hero 4 can film in 4K, which uses a lot of memory. If you're filming for a long period of time, you can save card space by setting it to 1080 resolution. For this trip, I used 4K, 1080p at 120 fps (slow motion) and 1080p at 24 fps. We rarely film in slow motion, but fishing is so fast, with the fish fighting, hitting and being swung into the boat, that the 120 fps shows you action that you normally wouldn't see.

For color, I turn on the ProTune feature and set color to "flat." This gives me ultimate flexibility to color-correct in post. I never want to change my color settings because I will forget to change it back to flat for the next important shoot I'm on for a real job. It's usually one long clip you're adjusting the color on, so it's no big deal to have flat color and then color-enhance in post for the one video clip.



Image © Joe Switzer

Preparation and Filming With GoPro. ■■■

The cameras were set and ready to go. I didn't have to find batteries and format cards. No changing of settings. Just like on a professional shoot, when I'm using the GoPro, I have the camera in the blackout housing, card formatted and battery charged, and the camera is on the side mount with the adhesive ready to stick and the button ready to press in just seconds.

The most challenging part of filming with GoPros is where to stick them. On the boat, I'm looking for something that doesn't move, that provides a rock-solid base. Putting the camera on my chest, head or trolling motor creates too much movement and has not been effective for me over the years, but I still look for ways to make it work.

Over the past year, Switzerfilm has used GoPros in almost all our productions, where we also look for rock-solid surfaces. One example is over-the-road trucking. In the past, we have had GoPro failures when sticking or clamping to unstable parts of trucks. Be on the lookout for vibrations, and don't put the GoPro on any part of the object that shakes, rattles or vibrates. Even though the camera can handle motion well, with outstanding stabilization, if a vehicle is vibrating, the footage will likely be unusable.

First, determine an interesting angle that would be impossible to get with your DSLR. Then find a rock-solid place to stick or clamp it. If the object you're placing the GoPro on moves (not shaking violently), you'll get even more interesting footage. We've put the GoPro underneath trucks, outside of trucks, atop truck trailers, on roller coasters, zip lines, welding helmets, waterpark playgrounds, Ferris wheels and on lumber going through cutting machines.

Be prepared. Have the GoPro charged and ready in its waterproof housing with the mount and adhesive. If you're not ready to have it on and recording in seconds, you will miss amazing opportunities.



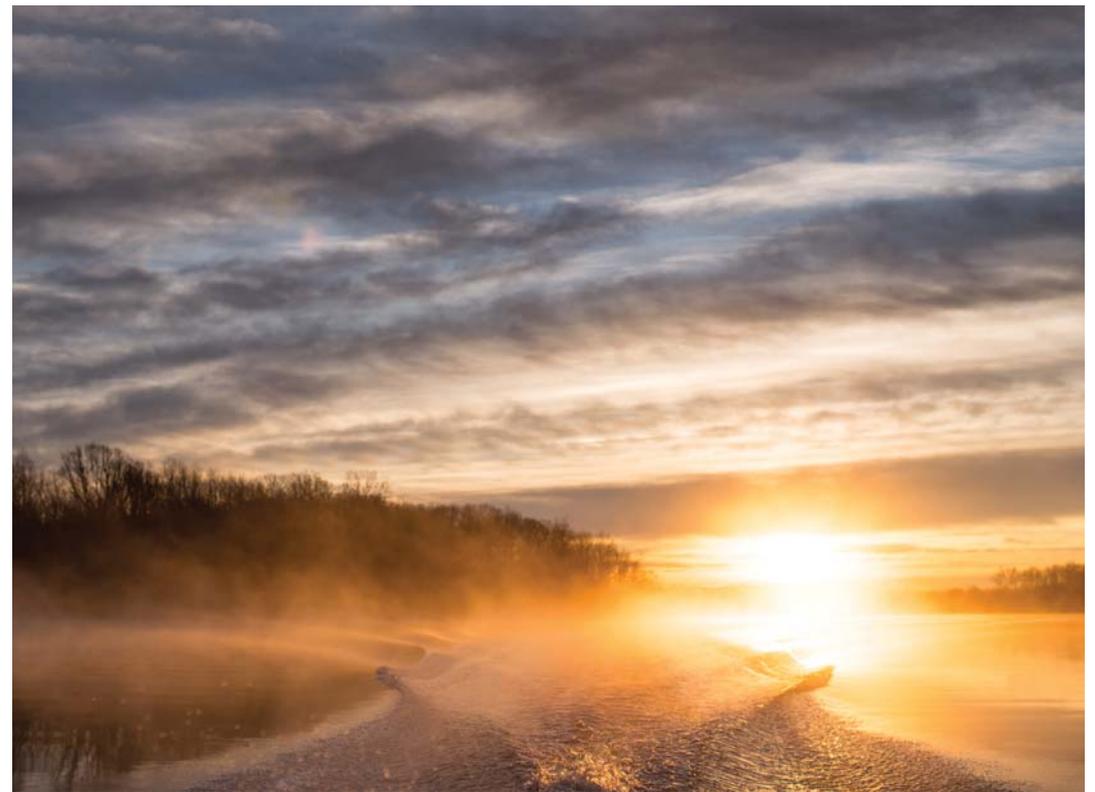
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Editing. ■■■

A big challenge is when you download hours of footage and there's only one minute of video that you actually want to watch. Instead of wasting hard drive space and eventually deleting it and losing it forever, it's best to edit your footage right away.

For this video, we had about three hours of footage and probably four thousands casts. I love watching us fish, but I'm more excited about the catching, not the casting. While the day was still fresh in my mind, I downloaded and edited the video on the way home from the lake. It takes only a few minutes to import and put the video together. My total editing time was less than an hour. Edit your video right away so you have something interesting to watch and share.



Family, Friends and Adventures. ■■■

At the end of the day, if you just want to have fun with a GoPro and you're not concerned with cinematic shots, experiment with interesting angles by using the clamp mount, chest mount, head mount or just handheld. Maybe you're going hiking, skiing or to a theme park. You can learn—and capture a ton of memories—by keeping it simple.

You just never know what having fun with a GoPro could ignite for you as a professional. It might unleash a passion you never knew you had for video. If nothing else, you'll have fun family moments to look back on forever. ■



Image © Joe Switzer

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Joe Switzer founded the international award-winning photo-cinema business Switzerfilm. His team is made up of four young creative minds striving to take the world of wedding cinema and photography to the next level. The team travels the world for inspiration, going anywhere and everywhere to top their latest work. Joe finds joy in teaching all over the world and helping up-and-coming "ographers" lay the groundwork for a solid future. Over the past 10 years, he has counted the majority of his clients as lifelong friends.

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indispensable:

Extremely important and necessary; not subject to being set aside.

irreplaceable:

Too valuable or rare to be replaced; not replaceable.

I always thought I wanted to grow within my role to a point where my boss considered me irreplaceable. While it is still nice to be considered irreplaceable, I've learned that having your employer view you as indispensable is that much more important to your career success—you are a necessary part of the company's growth and success.

I've worked really hard over the past four years with my boss, Sal Cincotta. Here are the Top 10 tips I've gathered over those years for making yourself indispensable.

be proactive.

Today's generation of entitled millennials think that doing what's expected of them is deserving of a gold star and a pat on the back at the end of every workday. Sal takes the time every night to put together our "Top 5" tasks for the following day. These are our marching orders, the five things he needs from us. Does that mean when you check off all of the items on your list that you're done for the day? No. It means you've completed the tasks your boss assigned you, and now it's time to start taking more from his or her plate. That is what will make you stand out as a key employee.

be proud to sign your name to your work.

When the CEO of a company asks you to do something, there is an implied directive to do it with excellence. Think about it: The CEO is drowning. He has hired you because he needs help taking tasks off his plate. Your job is to perform those tasks with excellence. What is the point of taking the work off his plate if you're just going to make him go back in and do it right, creating more work in the long run?

I have built trust with Sal over the past four years by doing just that. I take great pride in my work and my abilities. I want him to feel confident that when he hands something over to me, I will be able to complete it within 98% of what he would have done.

anticipate your boss's needs.

When I was first hired, Sal used to say to me constantly: “I need you to start anticipating my next move.” I had no idea what that meant. Did I need to become a mind reader? How the heck am I supposed to know what you're going to need on a Thursday at 3 p.m. if it's snowing outside? Don't overcomplicate it. It really is as simple as taking the time to get to know the habits and routines of your boss so you can always be three steps ahead.

Many photo assistants spend most of their day doing administrative tasks rather than assisting on photo shoots. So it's important to stay on top of your game. You want to really become indispensable to your boss? Read this, and make sure you understand the perspective: I have taken the time to get to know Sal so well that I am in a position to do the thinking for him, and he relies on me for that more than he'll ever want to admit. It's the little things that matter most, too. He's the CEO of a company that continues to grow at a seemingly never-ending pace. He makes big decisions all day. The last thing he wants to do is think more. So when he asks for a cup of coffee, I know to also bring him some kind of chocolate pastry to go with it. When he's traveling alone, I know to send him a text with his hotel information so it's readily available the second he lands, and he doesn't have to go digging for information.

understand the importance of making sacrifices.

For most millennials, the concept of sacrificing anything for work is completely alien. Unfortunately, that's the reality of life when you're trying to build a career—especially if you want to be a core part of a startup.

Working weekends, late nights, giving up vacations and dinner plans are all sacrifices that show your employer you're in it for the long haul. Your sacrifices are actions that prove to your boss that you take your job seriously and are the type of employee who has the passion and dedication to the company that every employer dreams of finding.

To any CEO who complains that finding good people to hire is a challenge: Do something about it. Be a living example of what you expect from your employees, and they will follow suit.

be the expert.

Like most CEOs, Sal is extremely logical. When he hands over a task, he expects me to own it.

To be the expert in the eyes of your boss, take pride in your work and own your tasks from start to completion. If you're going to half-ass something, don't do it at all (though you'll inevitably end up getting fired). Don't back down from any task. Be able to logically and factually pro/con the available options. Prove to your boss that you've done the necessary legwork to come to your conclusion. Over time, after proving yourself to your boss consistently, you will gain trust and your boss will rely on you more.

understand the bigger picture.

I've talked about this in previous articles, how Sal runs this company very much like a football team: He is our quarterback, setting flags, assigning roles and delegating tasks to accomplish the end goal, as a team. Being a team player on our staff means coming in, doing your job with excellence, and being available and willing to take on more if you can.

Let's take it a little further. Are you living in the day-to-day and completing your to-do list each day? Good job. Unfortunately, it's not enough if you want to take your position in the company to a new level. Take a step back and look at everything going on around you. Seeing the big picture means you are aware of what the “flag” is and what steps you need to take to get there. Understanding the bigger picture, however, is what makes you indispensable. Once you understand the why and the how and every freaking wall you could possibly hit along the way, you'll start changing the way you view the world, and your questions will be geared toward five years from now, not just today.

beware of the dreaded “black hole.”

Ah, the black hole. We've all had to visit it at least once in our career to retrieve that task that was originally assigned to you that you delegated to Susie, who then delegated it to Bobby, and now here we are scrambling trying to figure out if it's completed or not because the boss is down your throat asking for a status update. Yep, the black hole.

Stay on top of the things that are assigned to you—always follow up and close out tasks when they are completed. It's one of the easiest things you can do as an employee, but seemingly the most difficult to execute consistently.

solve problems, don't create them.

Everyone needs to have basic problem-solving skills. But that's the number-one trait lacking in almost every new person we try to bring onboard.

If you really want to be a valuable employee, learn how to figure things out on your own so you don't need to be handheld every step of the way. It's that autonomy that allows your boss to feel comfortable enough to let go and delegate more and more to you.

have a good attitude.

Your attitude really is everything. I went through a dark few months awhile back where all I could focus on was the negative. Perspective is a beautiful thing—once I realized Sal had to have multiple sit-downs with me about what was going on, I knew something needed to change, and that something was me and my attitude.

Every day when I wake up, I have a choice. I have a choice to come into work and start my day off mad at the world, or I can come in happy to be alive, thankful to have the job and opportunities I have, and ready to attack the challenges that are thrown at me throughout the day. You have the exact same choice. Who wants to spend time with the person who mopes around the office, or the person who could snap at any minute? I know I don't. People want to be around happy people. So be that happy person everyone wants to be around. It's that simple.

learn from your mistakes.

We all make them. Mistakes are inevitable—especially as you're learning new things in your role. It's what you do with those mistakes that determines if your boss will keep you around. If you make the same mistake over and over and over and nothing ever changes, chances are you will wind up back on the job market sooner than you'd expected.

It's important to take time to reflect on the mistake that was made. Understand how it happened, and what you can adjust in yourself or your process to prevent it from happening again. If you learn from your mistakes, the likelihood of your making them again is much smaller. ■

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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, Shutter Network 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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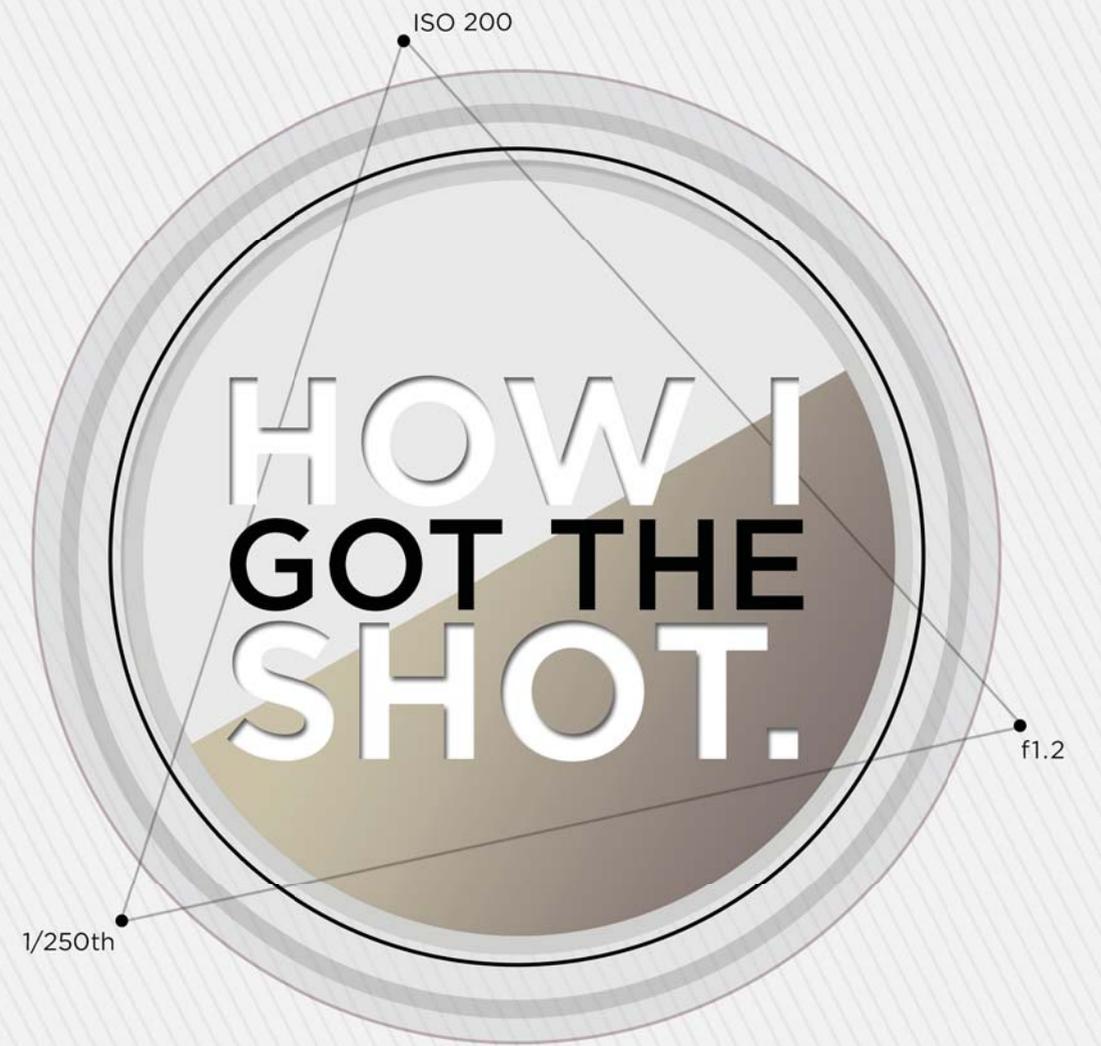
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with **Sal Cincotta**

This month's shoot was, in a word, fun. I love having a creative group of people around me. This time, we had an internal debate about the direction and concepts for the cover shoot. We had two options that we just couldn't decide on. So we did both. I know, a good problem to have.

Alissa had this vision of a high-fashion metallic silver background. Krystal, one of my staff members, had created this killer headpiece from scratch. Both ideas were really cool and enticing, but only one would get the cover.

No spoiler alert here, but as you can see, the headpiece won out. It's interesting how we all work creatively. It's so important that the photographer "see" the vision. For the silver paint, it wasn't my vision and I just couldn't see it. As a result, I was not happy with the final shot. Admittedly, I didn't do the best job shooting it. As artists, we see this a lot, don't we? The free advice we get from those around us is always, "You should try this." I want to smack people sometimes. Yeah, and you should try playing in traffic blindfolded.

My point is that vision encompasses so much more than the obvious factors around you. I have learned something about myself over the years: If I can't visualize the shot beforehand, I'm going to have a very hard time taking the shot. I imagine this is true of most visual artists, and something to keep in the back of your mind.

Okay, back to the action.



Images © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

Concept.

The concept here was all about the custom headpiece. When Krystal offered up the idea, I wasn't onboard with it at all. I couldn't see it. Her description didn't knock me out: "Okay, it's gonna be cool, with feathers coming out of the top, but the feathers will be gone, and I am going to spray-paint it too." Huh? I was thoroughly confused. I couldn't visualize it.

She put a lot of time into it, working away at the head of a Styrofoam mannequin on her desk. Watching it all come together was pretty cool. Suddenly, I had vision.

Altogether, I am pretty sure this piece cost us less than \$40. Not that this is something you would wear out on a Saturday night, but it's pretty damn cool for a commercial-style shoot.



Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography



Location.

Have hotel room, will travel. Not everything you do has to be on a large set or with tens of thousands of dollars' worth of set design, staff, lighting, etc. We were in Chicago and had access to some talented people. First up, makeup artist Vanessa Valliant, signed with Wilhelmina, who has worked with the likes of Jennifer Hudson, Lady Gaga, Madonna and Kardashian Kollection. Suffice it to say, this girl knows her stuff.

Our model is an adorable law student named Kellen. What I loved most about Kellen was not her good looks, but her smartass personality. As a native New Yorker, I appreciate sarcasm more than you will ever understand. We spent the day laughing and making great images.

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Lighting & Backdrop.

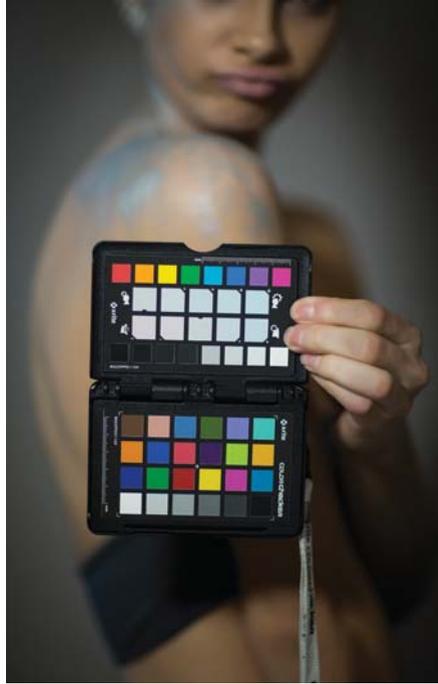
I know, you must be tired of hearing me talk about the Profoto B1, but it really is one of the best products on the market. It's got the portability and the power I need. I am all about the right tool for the job. Sometimes that tool is a speedlight, and other times that tool is a B1.

We had two Profoto B1s, one with an umbrella and another with the portable 2' Octa Softbox. Super light and super portable. Equally as important, in a small space like a hotel room, the lights and modifiers are easy to work with and, best of all, put off little to no heat compared to traditional heads.

The background, as you can see, is nothing fancy. Just an unlit white background. This will go gray, which I like for this shot.



Images © Salvatore Cincotta Photography



Images © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

Gear.

- Profoto B1
- Profoto Umbrella
- Profoto 2' Octa Softbox
- Canon 1Dx
- Canon 85mm 1.2
- 1/250th of a sec @ f1.2, ISO 200

Alternate Shot.

Alissa had pitched another idea that didn't make final, but let's talk about it. The concept was a fashion-fantasy-meets-Tin Man-from-*The Wizard of Oz* commercial shot. It just didn't knock me out. I couldn't see it.

I can tell you this, though: It was pretty cool to watch it come together. Vanessa had to order special makeup, a metallic-silver body paint. And the background? That was pretty damn crafty. Now, I can't take credit for it—credit goes to Alissa, who somehow MacGuyver'd it using aluminum foil and a cardboard box.

The lighting setup was a little different. If you look into her eyes, you can see the clever setup. We had the Profoto B1 with Octa Softbox on the right of the shot, and used the Profoto Silver Reflector on the floor, camera-left, to push light back up into the shadows. The main light was just bright enough to catch the crumpled-up foil on the background to give it some dimension.

The settings for this shot were 1/100th of a sec @ f2, ISO 160 using the Canon 85mm 1.2 and the Canon 1Dx.

While this didn't make the cover, it's still a neat shot.



Images © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

Canon 1Dx
Canon 85mm f/1.2
1/100th
f/2.0
ISO 160

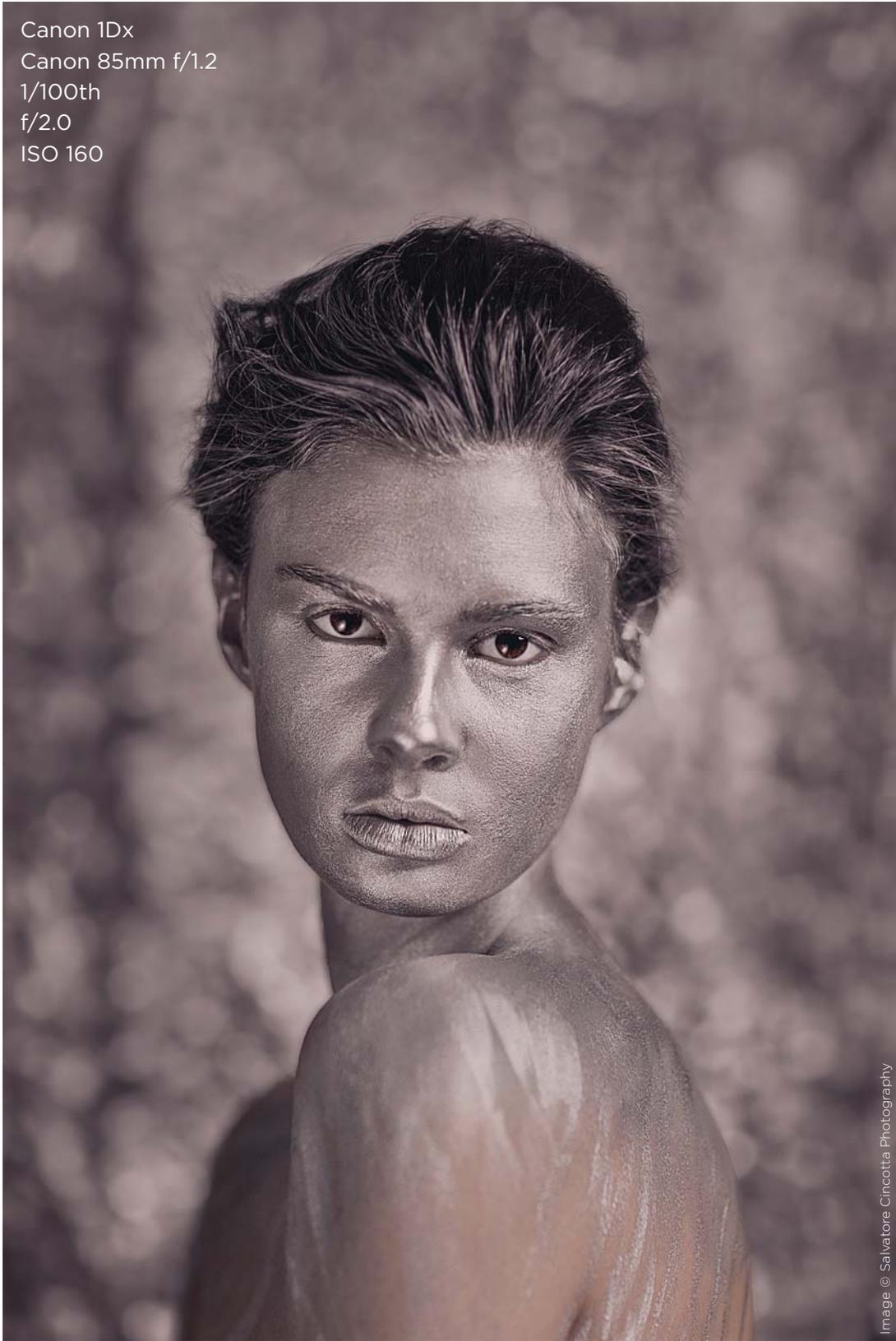


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Closing Thoughts.

It's all about vision. You have to be able to visualize your shot before you take it. Having some creative people around you for inspiration and collaboration is what I love most about working on shoots like this. You never know what you are going to get. You have an idea, a concept, a vision, but you never know until that shutter is released and the image made.

I learned a lot about how I work and see things. I hope my team learned as much about me as well. Challenge yourself every day. Challenge yourself to do something a little out of your comfort zone, even if you don't initially see the vision. Create a vision and adapt. I promise you, you will be a better photographer in the end.

I am a wedding and portrait photographer, and shoots like this challenge me to think a little differently about what I am doing. Because of that, I have watched my knowledge and skill increase tenfold over the past year. So, where do you want to be as a photographer? Go out and make it happen. ■

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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.

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Guerrilla Gone Wrong

A Cautionary Tale of
Backups and Adaptability

with **Michael Corsentino**

No matter how good you are, you're only as good as your last shoot. That means you'd better get the shot. Being prepared for the unexpected will help you do this. This was never more evident to me than on a recent location shoot where everything that could go wrong did.



The Brief

Twice a year, the big open field by my house is dotted with countless round hay bales. I've been trying to get the Orlando rock band Blaine the Mono, which I do promotional work for, to do a shoot using the field and hay bales as a backdrop for the past two years. The bales don't stick around long; they're removed after a short drying period, so there's only a limited window of opportunity. Due to scheduling conflicts, it hasn't worked out until this year.

The Original Plan and the Adapted Plan

"Life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans," as John Lennon famously said. This is one of my favorite quotes. It relates perfectly to the vagaries and joys of location photography. My original vision for the lighting and composition for this promo shoot of Blaine the Mono was one thing, but for reasons beyond my control, some happy and some not, what I ended with was something entirely different. The good news is through skill, preparation, a bit of luck and an open mind, I was able to make it work and produce a killer image.

I turned the photography lemons I got that day into lemonade, and so can you. It's often said, and I believe it's accurate, that the true mark of professionals is how they handle things when everything is crashing and burning around them. This shoot was the perfect storm.

The Shoot

Strike one: The band arrives an hour late, cutting heavily into setup time. Thankfully, all my gear—modifiers, lights, ladder, light stands, etc.—had already been packed up, so I was ready to go the minute they rolled up.

Strike two: Shortly after we arrive and start setting up, we narrowly escape getting busted for trespassing. Turns out the field we were in was private property, and we weren't supposed to be there. We were allowed to finish up, but were told to be really quick and warned in the strongest terms that at any moment the agriculture police—yes, there is such a thing—could roll up and arrest us. Great, now I was sweating it! The band had traveled over an hour to get there, and I didn't want it to be all be for naught. So we crossed our fingers and continued setting up.

Strike three: My Profoto 7B 1,200-watt second pack is dead on arrival. I'd tested it before the shoot, and it had been working fine. It must have been on its last legs, and I'd used the last few pops during my preflight testing. Things just kept getting better!

The pressure was on. We were losing the sun, the cops might be showing up at any moment and I had to scramble to come up with an alternate plan to salvage this shoot in a hurry. My initial plan was to shoot with a 74-inch Elinchrom Octa, placed to the right of and between 10 to 15 feet away from the band. I needed a lot of light because of the size of this modifier, my indirect light source and the distance involved. Hence the 1,200-watt second pack, which was now out of the picture.



Small changes make a big difference. We're getting close as the image progresses from my original idea into something much more mature. Here, I've reposed the band and lowered my shooting angle substantially to give them a more heroic stature, and I've underexposed for the sky.



Originally I planned to use my Profoto 7B 1,200-watt-second pack and one head. I made this call based on the 7B's ability to deliver the power necessary for the Elinchrom 74" Octa I planned on using. This modifier and the distance needed between it and band to evenly expose them all would require as much power as I could throw at it. Unfortunately, despite testing the pack beforehand, it failed right at the beginning of the shoot. Time for plan B!



Elinchrom's 74" Octa is one of my all-time favorite modifiers for portraits. With its large surface of just over 6 feet, interior and exterior diffusion fabric, and the indirect orientation of the light head mounted inside, it provides a beautiful soft light with gradual transitions between highlights and shadows. See the sample image "Blaine shot in studio with the Elinchrom 74" Octa" for an example of what I originally had in mind for the on-location lighting.



When combined with its interior and exterior diffusion fabric, the Elinchrom 74" Octa's indirect light head orientation provides maximum softness and gradual transitions between highlights and shadows.



Blaine shot in studio with the Elinchrom 74" Octa. This was the lighting style I originally had in mind for this location portrait of Orlando rock band Blaine the Mono. Due to gear failure in the field, what I ended up creating was something entirely different. Because I was prepared with backups and was able to calmly think on my feet, I was able to hit a home run despite the unforeseen changes to my plans.

I always bring a spare head or two, so I had a Profoto B1 on hand, but that's only 500 watt-seconds. So the Elinchrom Octa was now also out of the picture. But I'd need a different modifier, one that would work with the lower-powered B1 and provide enough output and coverage for the group shot of Blaine. I'd brought along two Profoto 65-inch XL Umbrellas, one white and one silver, for extra options. I opted for silver for the extra output it would deliver, and accepted that I'd have a more specular look. It was a different look than I'd originally envisioned, but it ended up working in my favor.

The Elinchrom Octa would have delivered a soft, even light with gradual transitions between shadows and highlights, otherwise known as soft light. The silver Profoto XL Umbrella created a crisper light with faster transitions between shadows and highlights, known as hard light.

After some quick testing and adjusting of the position and power of my light, we were ready to knock out the world's quickest photo shoot. And we didn't get arrested. Man, did we hightail it out of there.



Profoto's 500-watt-seconds B1 to the rescue. I always carry an extra head or two, and this time it saved my butt. With less power, I'd need to switch the modifier I'd planned on using, and work with something that didn't need as much power. I chose a Profoto Deep Silver Umbrella XL—again, having spares on hand saves the day!

Profoto's Deep Silver XL Umbrella provided the coverage I needed and the efficiency required for a 500-watt-second head at 12 to 15 feet from my subjects. The look was definitely different from what I'd envisioned going in—considerably more specular and with much faster transitions between highlights and shadows—but that's okay. It works.

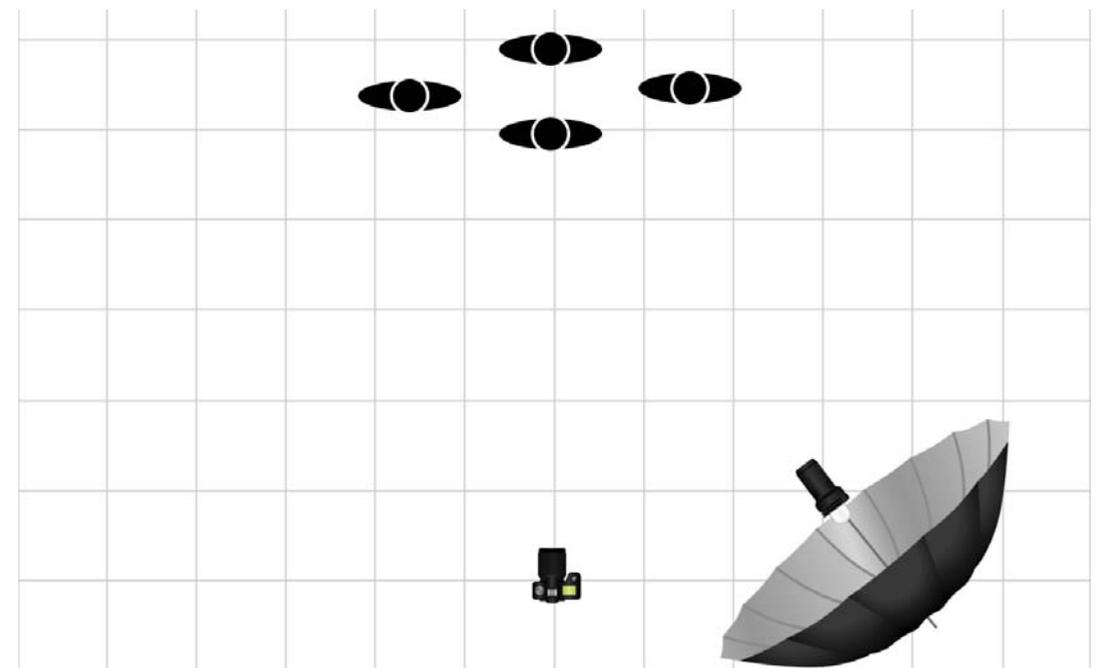
The Preflight

Just as a flight crew checks all the systems on an airplane before taking off, photographers should be in the habit of testing their systems and components before a shoot. This has saved my butt more times than I can count.

It's easy to be lazy and just throw everything into your gear bag and go, but you're really rolling the dice. I sleep a lot easier prepping my gear the night before the shoot and taking the time to test all the systems to make sure everything is working and that there are no missing pieces. Funny thing about photography equipment: Even the smallest, least expensive, seemingly most inconsequential piece of equipment can cause an entire shoot to grind to an unceremonious halt if it's missing or malfunctioning. Things like a broken PocketWizard, a missing memory card or a malfunctioning cord can derail your shoot in a heartbeat, so it's important to be organized and prepared. I use a gear checklist to keep track of what I need to pack for location shoots and what needs to come back when we're done.

The second but equally important part of being prepared is backups. Having backup gear and several modifiers on hand, especially on location, not only saves the day when systems fail but provides creative options when your initial concept doesn't meet expectations. I always pack extra sync cords, an extra PocketWizard, an extra strobe and a few extra modifiers.

Remember, you've got people counting on you to produce. Taking the simple steps above will put you on solid footing and help you deliver the goods.



Although my lighting plan had to change on the fly with respect to the modifier and source, the basic lighting orientation remained the same. We placed the keylight, a Profoto B1 Air 500-watt-second strobe, camera right, about 15 feet from the band, and fired into a Profoto Deep Silver XL bounce-back umbrella. This combination of source-to-subject distance and the silver umbrella interior resulted in even coverage for the staggered subjects, as well as the hard quality of light evident in the final.

The Whole Is Always Greater Than the Sum of Its Parts

It's tricky to describe the elements that differentiate a winning capture from the frame that came before it or after it—you just know it when you see it. As you can see by comparing the rejects to the final from this shoot, it's the small things that make a big difference. The best images are the result of collaboration, either explicit or implied. Maintaining open communication with your subjects and team is key. Having an open mind and a willingness to not only accept but encourage input, think outside the box and deviate from your plan goes a long way toward keeping things spontaneous, energized and creative. I can't recommend this enough.

Without this collaborative mindset, it's easy to get stuck seeing things in only one way and missing out on the real magic that's right around the corner. It's about letting go and not being afraid to share the creative credit. This shoot was no different. Even though we were completely under the gun, with failing gear and a possible trespassing arrest looming, we worked together to create a winning image. Because I kept an open mind and was adaptable, the final image was so much better than the one I'd had in mind. By allowing the band to play a role in the creative process, we created a much stronger final.



Image © Michael Correntino

The composition, camera angle, posing and background represent my original vision for the final. As you can see from the opening image, which ended up being the final select, every aspect of the image evolved into a far superior version for a number of reasons that I'll discuss in this month's video.

Post

Due to these events, there's only one final from this shoot, but that was always the mission anyway. Anything else would have been gravy. There were other acceptable images, but the final was the clear winner. I kept post simple using a combination of Capture One Pro and Google's Nik Color Efex Pro Bleach Bypass effect. I tinted back the effect so it didn't overwhelm the image, and added a few empty layers to my layers stack set to soft light blending mode for burning and dodging where necessary. If you haven't tried this method, check out this month's video for a short demo.



Image © Michael Correntino

Final before post processing. This image pushes things even further. Here, I've turned the band around to face a more dramatic sky, and, again, underexposed for sky. This image is SOC. I wanted to include a before and after comparison to provide some insight into my editing philosophy. I favor post processing that supports the vision of the image but isn't heavy-handed or intrusive—in other words, too effects driven. Less is more.



Image © Michael Correntino

Final with post processing. Some light retouching, a bleach bypass effect, burning and dodging, and sharpening add the finishing touches to this image of Orlando rock band Blaine the Mono. With good lighting and the correct exposure, there's a lot less heavy lifting required on post.

Get the Shot

At the end of the day, it's all about getting the shot. Be prepared and flexible, bring backups and alternates, and have the ability to think on your feet. These are the tools you need to get the job done no matter what comes your way. ■

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

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William Innes. Changing Photography with 4K Video.

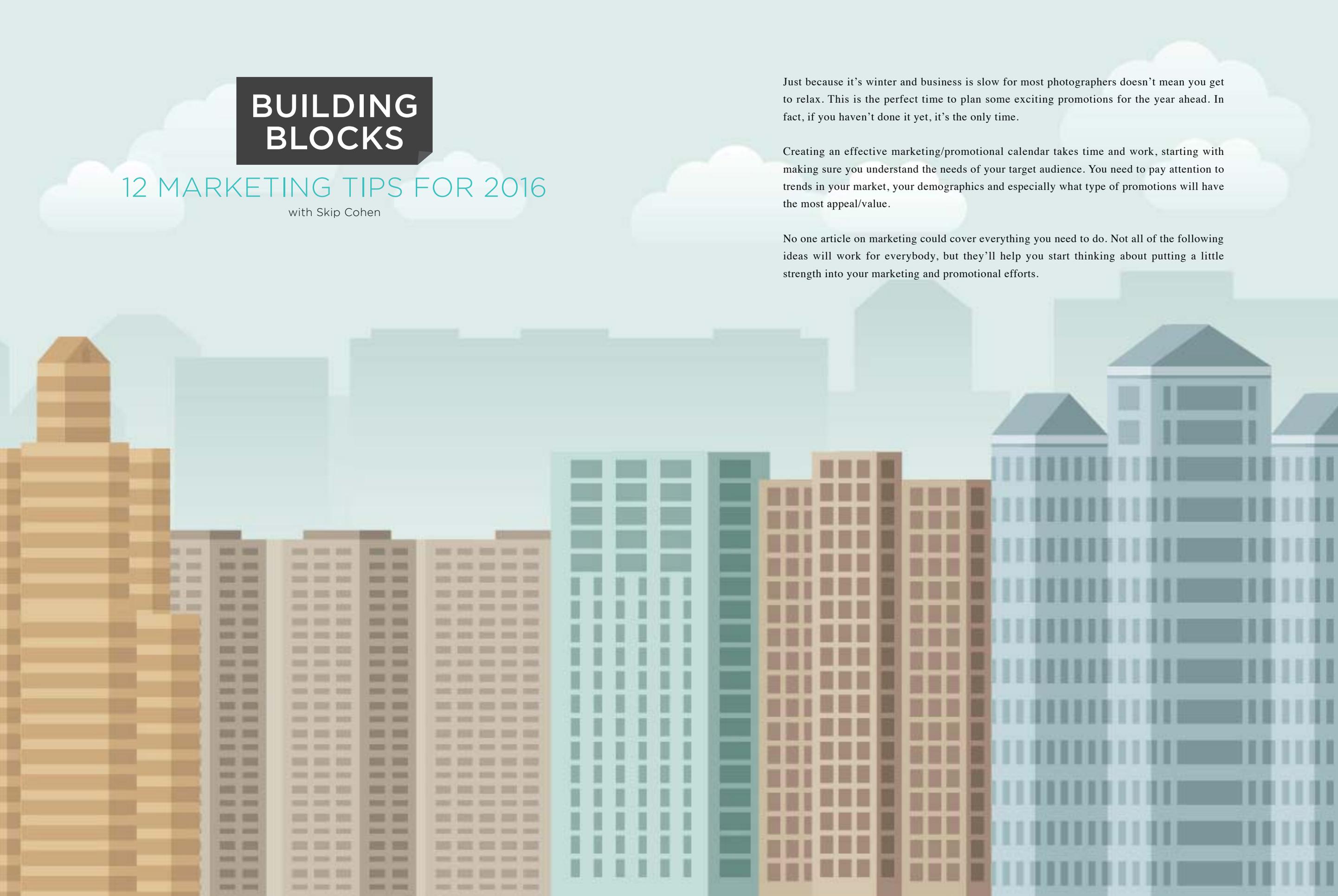
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**SALES &
MARKETING**
EDITION

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BUILDING BLOCKS

12 MARKETING TIPS FOR 2016

with Skip Cohen

Just because it's winter and business is slow for most photographers doesn't mean you get to relax. This is the perfect time to plan some exciting promotions for the year ahead. In fact, if you haven't done it yet, it's the only time.

Creating an effective marketing/promotional calendar takes time and work, starting with making sure you understand the needs of your target audience. You need to pay attention to trends in your market, your demographics and especially what type of promotions will have the most appeal/value.

No one article on marketing could cover everything you need to do. Not all of the following ideas will work for everybody, but they'll help you start thinking about putting a little strength into your marketing and promotional efforts.

DATE NIGHT

I first heard this idea a few years ago from a photographer at Skip's Summer School. Since then, a lot of people have put a different spin on it. Start by finding a great little restaurant in the community, and work with it on a discounted gift certificate for two for dinner.

Next, your pitch to Mom couldn't be easier to understand: "When was the last time you and your husband went out for dinner without the kids?" Your promotional offer is a package deal that includes a half-hour portrait sitting shot like an engagement session, and then they're off to dinner—on you. The gift certificate is included in the evening along with the portrait session. It's up to you what prints and finished product you want to build into the package.

START A NETWORKING LUNCHEON

All of you have the ability to start building relationships with other vendors who have the same target audience. A wedding photographer, for example, should have relationships with florists, limo companies, caterers, venues, wedding consultants, travel agents, bridal salons, hair salons, tux shops and music promoters.

Find an inexpensive local restaurant, preferably with a private room, and simply invite everybody to lunch. Work on a fixed price with the restaurant so you're not chasing everybody to split the check.

Imagine the growing strength of your network if you were sitting in between a florist and a caterer. This is about building relationships, and the first meeting is just about getting to know everybody.

LAB PROMOTIONS

Every professional lab introduces new products almost every week, but so many photographers fail to stay on top of what's new. Even more important is sharing that information with your clients. There's that old line: "If you do what you've always done, you won't get any more than you ever got." Look for new products that are a little different and that get people excited.

Technology has given labs the ability to print on virtually everything. Just pick up the phone, call your lab and ask, "So what's new and different?" Then work on getting a few samples to show your clients.



PARTNERSHIPS

I've written a lot about bringing in partners. Here's a perfect example. Find two noncompeting partners and design a direct-mail piece. Create an oversize postcard. Buy a mailing list and split the cost between the three of you. Each of you becomes an ambassador for the other businesses, and you're saving 66 percent of the cost for design and mailing.

CROSS-PROMOTE WITH OTHER COMPANIES

Along with partnerships in mailings and brochures comes your ability to cross-promote with other products. For example, you could work with a florist to create special offers for each of your products.

THIRD-PARTY PROMOTIONS

I did a podcast for *Weekend Wisdom* with Doug Box last year, and he shared some outstanding ideas. The summary is pretty simple. Offer a gift certificate to a third party they can give their clients. Doug talked about a photographer he worked with who came up with a gift certificate for a portrait sitting for her insurance agent to give away to key clients. Because the gift was from the agent to his clients, the photographer was insulated from looking like she was discounting her products. It drove traffic to her studio and created new business.

CAREER DAY AT SCHOOL

If we've learned nothing else from retailers like Toys R Us, it's that the way to get to Mom and Dad is through their kids. Relax, I'm not talking about anything deceptive, just building relationships that position you as one of the leading photo educators in your community.

There isn't a school on the planet that hasn't had budget challenges in the past few years. Every teacher is looking for ways to inspire students. Doing a presentation on being a photographer is a great way to get your name out in the community. And if a Career Day type of presentation isn't to your liking, offer to help older students with the school yearbook, newsletter or website. The key is to be involved and make the community aware of your interest in giving back.

PET PROMOTIONS

Dog Days of Summer is still the holy grail of pet promotions. It was started by children's photographer Vicki Tauffer many years ago. Her promotion was for a free sitting and 5x7 of the owner and their pet, or just the pet. When the smoke cleared, Vicki and her staff photographed 120 sessions and had 40 people on the waiting list.

To qualify for the free sitting and print, participants had to bring a food donation for the Peoria Animal Shelter. Vicki pulled in several partners for the promotion, and each became an ambassador to help spread the word.

It's up to you whether you do a small print for free or charge a minimal amount, but the idea is to get pet owners in for a portrait. Remember the hierarchy of why people hire a professional photographer: brides, babies and pets, in that order. Within two years of this promotion, Vicki's studio became one of the best-known pet photographers in the area.

YOUR DATABASE

I'm so tired of hearing photographers talk about finding new customers when they've done nothing to cultivate stronger relationships with their existing clients. I'm not suggesting you shouldn't be looking to expand and bring in new customers, but let's start with those you already have.

First, keep in touch with your past clients. A while back, I did a podcast with Angela Carson, a children and family photographer out of Detroit. She knew exactly how many portrait sittings she needed to do each year and how many of them would be repeat customers.

Angela makes it a point to keep in touch all year long, tracking special birthdays and anniversaries, for example. With some of her best clients, she'll even pick up the phone and check in now and then—not to sell them anything, but to keep building the relationship.

Assuming you did a great job, your past clients are your best ambassadors. You might want to start with a personalized letter to everybody you photographed over the past two or three years announcing a new service you're offering, a new frame line or something else you're adding to your business.

FREQUENT-BUYER PROGRAMS

Over the past decade, we've all become "point whores." The commercials have us thinking, "What's in your wallet?" We buy products on specific credit cards to get the points to reapply to travel and other products.

Why not start your own program? It's easiest as a children's photographer, because isolating those memory-making moments is straightforward. But everybody, no matter their specialty, can build a referral program for previous clients.

OWN YOUR ZIP CODE

I've written about this before. It's old-fashioned marketing at its best. There's nothing more effective than knocking on every business door within a few miles of your location. This is about being helpful, and it's nothing more than introducing yourself. It's a great way to remind people, regardless of your specialty, that you're in the area and available to help with any of their photographic needs.

DO AN OPEN HOUSE

Here's where your creativity can shine. If you have a studio, this is perfect, but if you work out of your home or only have an office, it's a little more challenging but still doable. Look for another vendor in the community to work on this with you. Maybe it's a restaurant with a little ambiance, a gallery or spa. Remember, your target audience is always "Mom" in the portrait/social specialties, and it's an opportunity for you to team up with another vendor to host an evening event.

We've all been to gallery openings with wine, cheese and artists working the crowd. You can do the same thing. It's a chance for you to show off new products you're launching with your lab and create excitement.



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Just remember a couple of key points. First, your goal is always to exceed client expectations and make yourself habit-forming. Second, you've got to use all the communication tools at your disposal. That means your blog, direct mail, Facebook and Pinterest, community involvement, publicity, advertising, networking and personal contact.

There is no single formula for success. It takes time and patience. In the end, though, when you choose a job you love, you will never have to work a day in your life. ■

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

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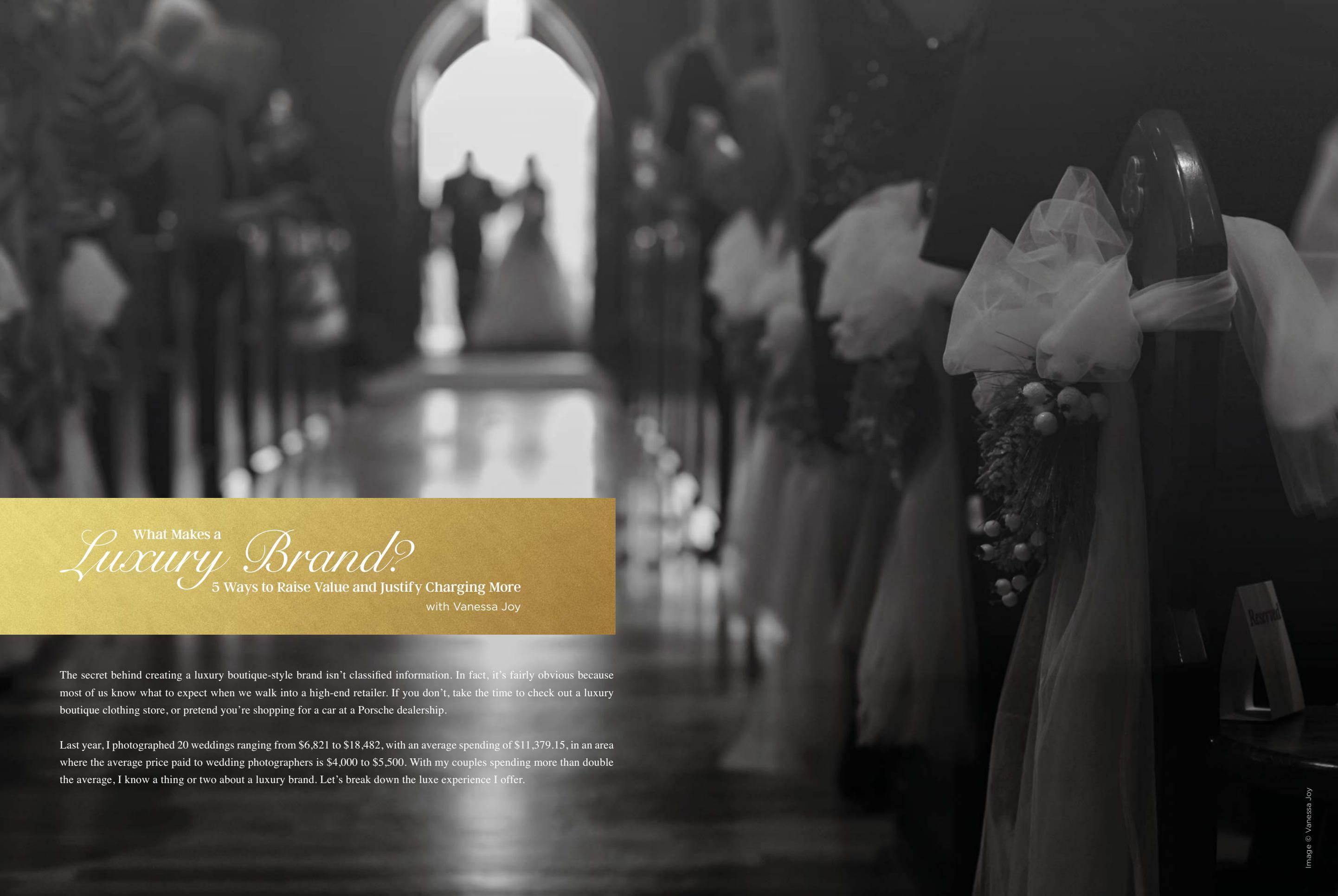
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What Makes a
Luxury Brand?

5 Ways to Raise Value and Justify Charging More
with Vanessa Joy

The secret behind creating a luxury boutique-style brand isn't classified information. In fact, it's fairly obvious because most of us know what to expect when we walk into a high-end retailer. If you don't, take the time to check out a luxury boutique clothing store, or pretend you're shopping for a car at a Porsche dealership.

Last year, I photographed 20 weddings ranging from \$6,821 to \$18,482, with an average spending of \$11,379.15, in an area where the average price paid to wedding photographers is \$4,000 to \$5,500. With my couples spending more than double the average, I know a thing or two about a luxury brand. Let's break down the luxe experience I offer.



Image © Vanessa Joy

Show Me the Wow

This is where the rubber meets the road. The start-to-finish experience you give your clients either holds your brand true to its word or calls its bluff. Your brand sets the expectations for your clients, and you have to follow through with it 110 percent.

One way I maintain my brand image is through client gifting. I want my clients to feel special. I want their decision to be validated throughout our time together. Better yet, I want to give them tangible items to share on social media and brag to their friends about, which further establishes my brand recognition and reputation. I give them a hello gift, a goodbye gift and a “It’s almost your wedding day” gift. Gifting is one of my favorite love languages, and I love showering my clients with surprise presents.

However you want your clients to remember your business and however you want them to share it with friends and family is how you’ll want to tailor their experience. Do you tout yourself as being an expert in your field? Continually offer tips and tricks to your customers. Is your business about quality of life? Then look for ways to help improve your client’s wellbeing outside of the service or product you’re providing.

Go above and beyond for your clients in a way that superbly represents your brand mission, and you won’t go wrong.



Images © Vanessa Joy

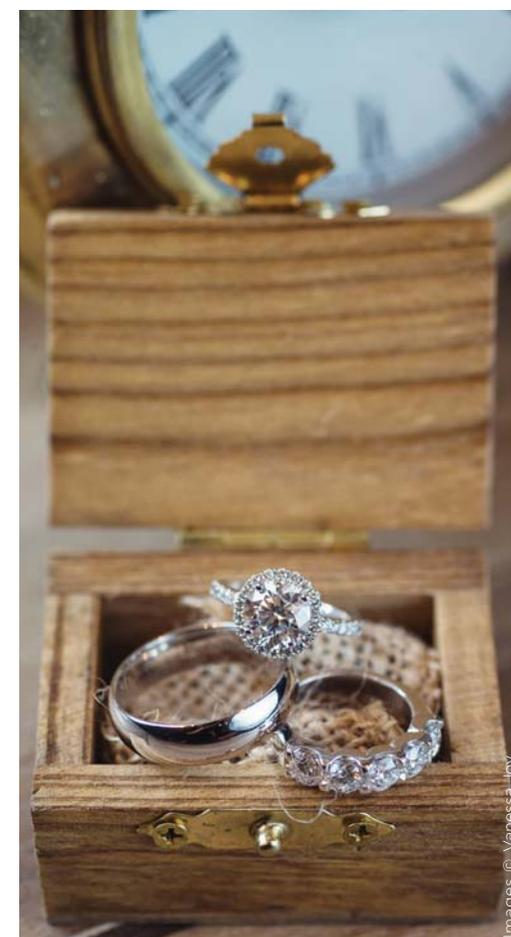
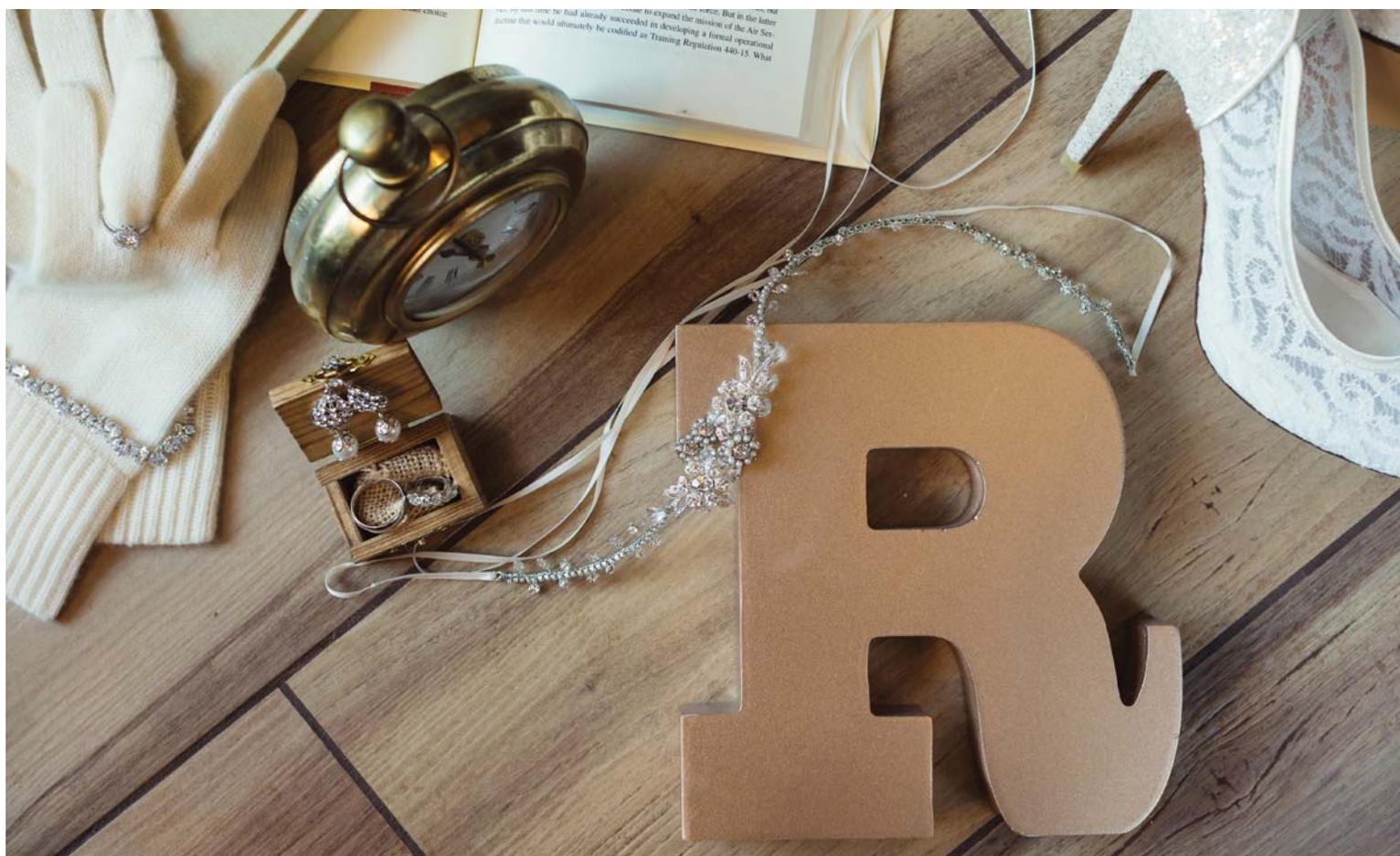
Don't Blink

When I first started charging for my work, I was 15 years old and a Realtor wanted headshots. So I set up my white backdrop (that I had no idea how to light, by the way), got my exposure on my Canon 10D and promised the client that we would keep taking pictures until we got one she could use. All for \$50. I remember cringing when I told her that's what I would charge her.

Spouting off the number in your price list may not be the most natural thing in the world, and that's okay. However, that doesn't excuse you from learning how to confidently give your pricing to your prospective clients. State your fee without hesitation. If you hesitate, so will they. If it's easy for you to say, it'll be easier for them to pay.

Along those lines, be extremely careful about discounting. Luxury brands don't discount. Christian Louboutin shoes are almost never on sale. When you walk into Gucci or Prada on Fifth Avenue in New York City, you're not going to find clearance racks (and if you did, shopping from them would almost be considered tacky).

If you want to throw in something additional for your clients to sweeten the deal, offer them a "gift" rather than a discount. Gifts come from friends and family; discounts come from used-car salesmen.



Shopaholics Rejoice

You want your clients to value the product and service you're offering, especially if you run a boutique business and are charging a premium for it. Part of being able to get your customers to pay your luxury price is conveying to your clients that you too value what you're offering.

When you're selling high-end fashion apparel, you can't do it while wearing off-the-rack. You need to wear staple pieces from high-end brands to be convincing to your clients and to relate to them. (Too bad clothes aren't typically a tax-deductible purchase.) Likewise, when you're selling top-dollar photography, you have to show your best personal work. Hang your most treasured pictures of you and your family in your studio, and talk on social media about your next planned time on the other side of the camera.

The brands that you buy, wear and support say a lot about you and your business. Political affiliations aside (not to belittle the effect that can have on business), the brands and type of brands you visibly support communicate something to your audience. Make sure that they're communicating that your brand is luxury from start to finish.



Image © Vanessa Joy



Image © Vanessa Joy



Image © Vanessa Joy

Would You Smile Already?

When I do my initial consult with clients, I always tell them about my second photographers who will accompany me on the wedding. In a second shooter, I look for people who are great at what they do, but also people with a similar personality and demeanor to me. If I'm trying to get my clients to pay me for who I am rather than what I do, then who I am needs to be seen in my employees too.

I often tell the story of an amazing photographer I chose not to hire. Typically, before I hire a photographer, they come along on a test wedding not only so I can see the work they produce under the same circumstances that I'm shooting in, but so I can see how they work. Once, I had a photographer join me for this on-the-job interview who wowed me with the images that came back. What I didn't love was that throughout the whole day, the photographer looked angry. When I addressed this, the photographer stated he was so focused on creating great imagery that he was "in the zone" and didn't realize he was coming off negatively. Okay, fine. I could accept that, so I gave him another shot. The second time around, it was unfortunately still the same. His images were fantastic. His inability to smile through the stress was not.

One of the biggest day-of perks my brides experience is that I am calm, collected and seemingly in control the entire time. Even when everything is going haywire, I'm still smiling just as any experienced luxury photographer should be. Being a rock for my clients is part of my brand, and indicative of the experience I want my clients to have—so every member of my team needs to know how to do the same.

Who Are You?

You are your brand. You are the face of the company. You are what makes it unique. The best part about this is that you can simply build the luxury brand around who you are. The most well-branded small businesses I've seen are ones where the owner has done exactly that. A high-end wedding planner I know—who's an Anthropologie nut with Restoration Hardware all over her house—became wildly successful by making her business an extension of herself and her lifestyle.

It seems like a no-brainer, but it's amazing how many people I've seen attempt to create a business that's the opposite of who they are. One of two things will happen in that case. Either the business owner changes who they are to be a reflection of their business, or there's a disconnect between the owner and the brand that leaves clients subconsciously confused.

Take Steve Jobs, for example. That man looked, dressed and acted like everything we know the luxury brand Apple to be. He was simple and sleek, with an intelligent sophistication about him. He practically was a black iPhone. Could you imagine if he was the opposite? If he wore Free People clothing and acted like a flower child? Or if all of a sudden he took up the hipster trend and traded his black shirts and wire-frame glasses for plaid and thick frames? He wouldn't be Apple anymore, and there would be a huge disconnect with the brand. A luxury brand doesn't have loose ends. Everything, and I mean everything, is strategically placed in a beautifully decorated and presented package.

This isn't to say that you need to script your life. It's just the opposite, because when you make your business about you, all of the above will easily fall into place—it's just you being you.

To quote Gary Vaynerchuk in his book *Crush It!*: "Watch me for two seconds and you know exactly who I am and what I stand for. Authenticity is key.... I'm not putting on a performance when I do the show or my blog posts—I'm just being me."

“ Watch me for two seconds and you know *exactly* **who I am** and **what I stand for**. **Authenticity is key....** I'm not putting on a performance when I do the show or my blog posts— ***I'm just being me.***

-Gary Vaynerchuk



Image © Vanessa Joy



Image © Vanessa Joy

Luxury branding is a continuous task that evolves with your company. I'm working on a new brand at BreatheYourPassion.com, and I'm starting from the ground up. You can create or adjust your brand at any time. That's one of the best parts about owning your own business. What you do can be as small as the type of Post-it notes you use or as large as the billboard space you just rented.

For me, these three words perfectly describe the basis of luxury branding in photography: Just be you. Start with you, end with you and be true to you everywhere in between. ■

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

vanessajoy.com



Shot with the EOS 5D Mark III Camera & EF 70-200mm f/2.8L IS II USM Lens



It took courage and confidence for Roberto Valenzuela to convince his clients to step out into the rain on their wedding day. When you're taking wedding photography to the next level like Roberto is, you treat every obstacle as an opportunity to create something truly extraordinary — even a rainy wedding day. It's that attitude that's helped professionals take the art of wedding photography to new heights. Stay focused. Be Creative. Canon is with you every step of the way.

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Tips
for
Better
Blogging
with Michael Anthony



We have many decisions to make when marketing to new clients. We need to weigh the benefits and drawbacks to certain avenues before deciding to invest in them. This can include both paid and free methods of advertising. Today, I want to talk about one of the most effective and basic forms of marketing available to pro photographers: blogging.

For an image-oriented business, blogging is one of the most simple and effective forms of marketing available. It allows us to showcase our latest work to potential clients, to communicate our ability to provide consistent results from shoot to shoot, rather than just a few good portfolio images on our website.

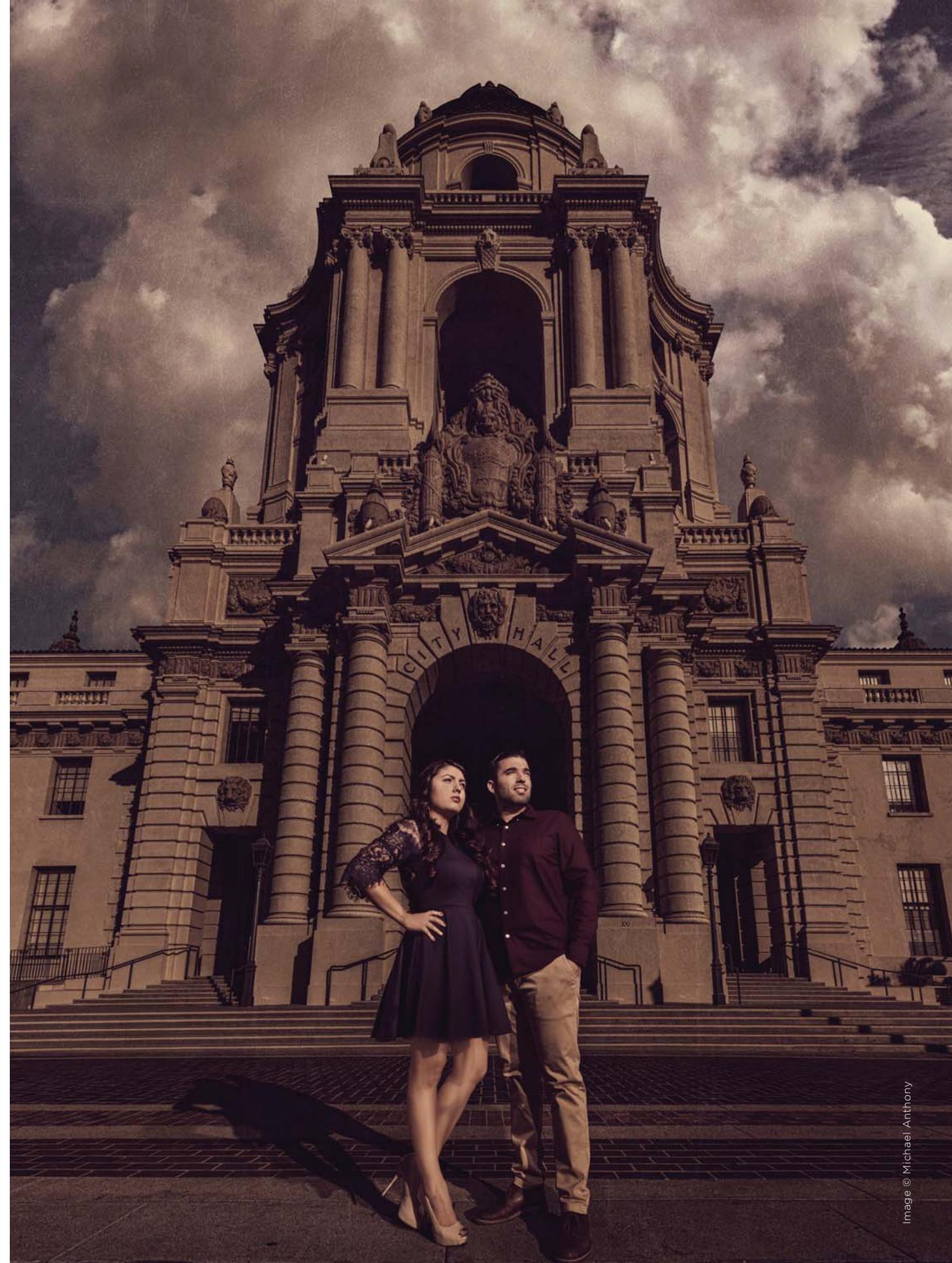
Here are a few things you can do to make sure you're making the best use of this free marketing resource.

Tip 1. Focus on Good Textual Content for SEO Purposes

This should be the first thing you take into consideration when creating a blog post. The structure of your post should be engaging to viewers, but also to search engines—first and foremost, to Google, where text is king. Not just any text, but quality text that will be engaging to your website's viewers. Google also cares about how you structure your posts, and it pays attention to content that you tell it is important. Your post title tells a search engine what your post is about, so structure your title with keyword-rich phrases that relate to the content of your post. Use appropriate heading tags (h1, h2, etc.) to tell search engines what to prioritize in your article.

While good SEO can attract potential clients searching for a key phrase (such as “los angeles wedding photographer”), search terms are very competitive and may not be obtainable in the short term due to a number of factors that are beyond our control. Instead, focus on being found via keywords that are less competitive but that still relate to your ideal clientele. Focusing on venues has been extremely successful for us in finding clients who are searching for images of weddings that took place at specific venues.

In your main content, focus on using more keyword-rich phrases, without overusing your keywords. Your content should sound normal when you read it aloud, since overusing particular keywords can earn you a penalty from Google. In addition, do not reuse content from post to post, or from elsewhere on the Internet. Google hates duplicate content and may penalize you if you are copying and pasting verbiage. Use a good plugin such as Yoast to make sure your blog post meets the minimum criteria for good search engine optimization.





TIP 2. Take Time to Focus on the Metadata in Your Images

Metadata is often overlooked by photographers. Lightroom allows us to easily alter metadata in an image. I am not going to sugarcoat it: This is the most consuming part of blogging, but it is the most necessary in order to get good results in the search engines.

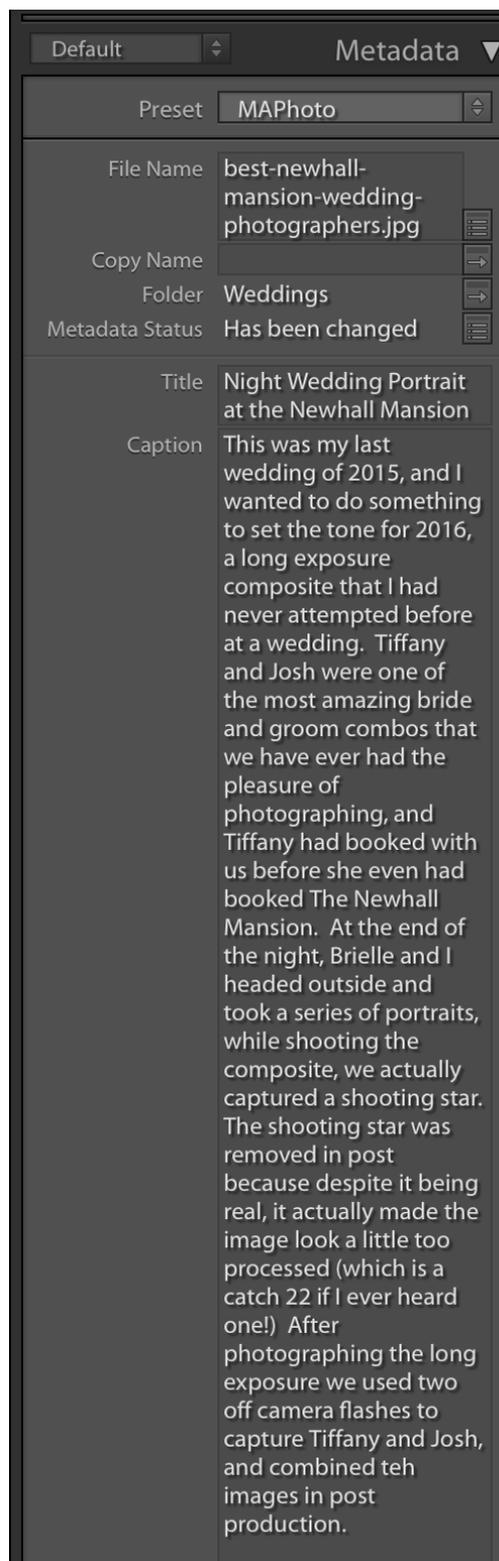
In the library tab in Lightroom, scroll down to the Metadata module. From there, click the dropdown menu just left of Metadata and select Default. The next section goes into detail about many of the fields that will appear. After you change the metadata in your Lightroom catalog, don't forget to highlight all of the images you changed, and then choose Metadata > Save Metadata to File.

Filename

The filename you choose matters. We usually title all of the images in a blog post the same way, sequentially ("Hyatt-Valenica-Wedding-Pictures-1," for example). Whatever you choose, make sure it's relevant to the blog post, and use hyphens to separate the words since this filename will become part of the URL of the image when posting online. SEO experts recommend you use a different filename for each image. While this may be best for SEO, it is very time consuming.

Title

This is what Google reads alongside the filename to give your image context. Choose a separate title for each image. Remember, Google does not like duplicate content, and if you choose the same title for each image, Google will likely pick one to index, rather than all of them for different search terms. The problem is that you will not have a choice as to which one is indexed. In a wedding post, I create titles like "Groom with his mother and father before ceremony at Wayfarers Chapel" or "Bride putting on veil at Hyatt Huntington Beach." Google associates words such as *bride* and *groom* with *wedding*, so don't obsess about constantly using the same words in your titles.

**Caption**

Google loves text, and the caption is where Google wants to see the details about what is going on in your photograph. Good practice is to write 100 to 300 words in your caption for each image. I know it's time consuming, but it helps get your images indexed in search engines. Use keyword-rich (not spammy) text when describing what is going on in your photograph.

Sublocation

Matt Cutts, head of Google's web spam team, announced in February 2014 that Google may use location information along with other metadata embedded in your image to influence search engine ranking. I usually include the location of the venue I am shooting at in the metadata of my images if it is a location people would be using in a search engine query.



TIP 3. Your Blog Is Not for Your Current Client, but for Your Next Client

Way too often when I look at photographer blogs, I see some amazing images, but then I see some that actually detract from the body of work in a post. Early in my own career, I thought it was prudent to tell the whole story of a wedding day in a blog post. I would include 60 to 70 images of things like close-ups of hands during the cake cutting, or the groom placing the ring on the bride's finger.

Are these important moments? Sure, but they are not going to influence the next person looking at my blog to hire our studio. Instead, use only images that you feel show what is unique about your style of photography. Our style is unique, but we still take traditional photos on the day of the wedding. You just won't see these images on our blog because they do not showcase what is different about our style.

Give the images you are blogging the same attention that you would if the client chose them for their wedding album. These images need to be more than just color-corrected, and should show your skill in lighting, composition and retouching. Keep the mindset that the images you show are designed to attract your next ideal client.

TIP 4. Use the Power of Social Media to Attract Clients to Your Blog

Many photographers are eager to get images posted on social media to reach potential referrals. By sending images straight to Facebook, though, you are not taking advantage of the search engine optimization benefits you get from getting extra traffic to your blog. When clients are eager to share their images, they will happily take a link that you send them and share that rather than just images from a social media page.

That link will get people to your website, increase your website traffic and get potential clients right where they need to be to see the rest of what you offer. Remember to put a contact form at the bottom of your blog post. If you are using WordPress, NinjaForms is a great plugin that allows you to do this. Squarespace allows you to add a form at the end of a post as well.

Remember, for this to be effective, an event or shoot has to still be on people's minds. If you are a wedding photographer, blog the images within 72 hours. In 2016, my goal for our main Michael Anthony Photography brand is to get a wedding blogged no later than the Monday after a Saturday wedding so I can market it Tuesday to vendors and the client's social network.

TIP 5. Your Blog Can Be the Most Effective Form of Follow-Up for Cold Leads

We have spent a good portion of time talking about the SEO benefits of blogging, but in addition to good SEO, blogging is great for organic marketing as well. Every time we put up a new blog post, we send out an email campaign to our list that is constantly updated with new leads. These leads now have the opportunity to reconnect with our business, and I can't tell you how many times this has turned an otherwise cold lead into a signed contract. It is our most effective form of follow-up, going well beyond a random follow-up email because it's indirect and reminds clients why they initially connected with you.



Image © Michael Anthony

While there are many forms of marketing, the blog still remains one of the most important tools we have. If your blog is stale, update it at least once a week to ensure you are providing potential clients fresh, up-to-date content. If you need to, set up some styled shoots for fresh images just for your blog.

While blogging may seem time-consuming, with persistence and consistency, you will see results from incorporating it into your marketing plan. ■

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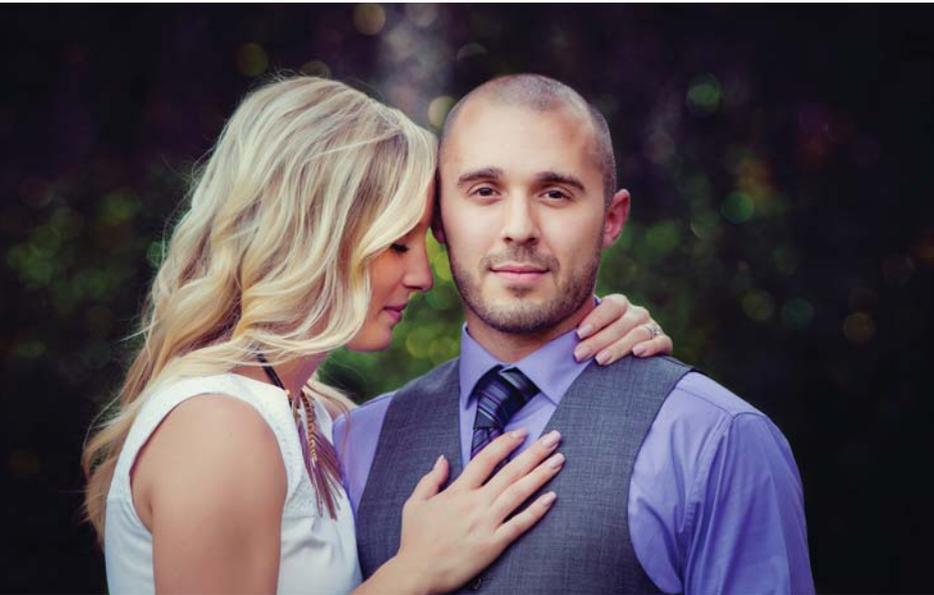


Michael Anthony is the owner of Michael Anthony Studios, a wedding photography studio based in Los Angeles. He has won multiple awards in international image competition for his creative use of light, storytelling and environmental portraiture. The five-member team at Michael Anthony Studios photographs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

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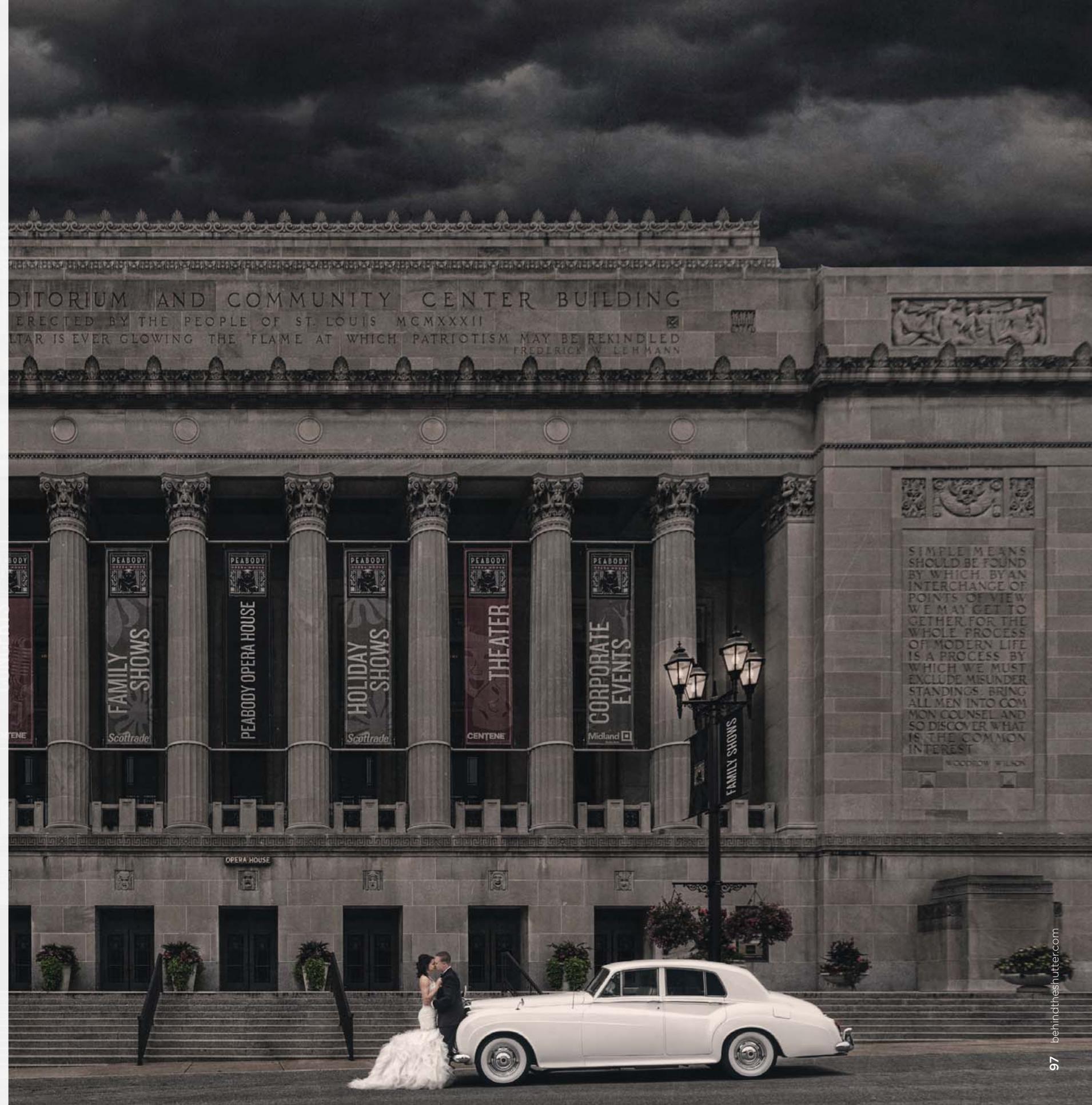
- + How to outsource successfully.
- + Tips on how to grow your mailing list.
- + The do's and don'ts of networking with vendors.
- + How to get clients in for the initial consult.
- + Using Snapchat to market your business.
- + How to close business at bridal shows.
- + Tips on getting more sales after the wedding.
- + How to promote yourself in a new market.
- + What to say when you face client objections in the sales room.
- + Tips on making your website stand out from the crowd.

GOT MORE QUESTIONS?

Every month we will have a call for questions on our Facebook page and Sal will answer them with real-world advice.

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HOW TO RUN A HIGH-END **IPS** EXPERIENCE

WHEN YOU DON'T HAVE A **STUDIO SPACE**

with Hannah Marie

It is a common misconception that you need a beautiful studio or office space for a high-end client experience. This story is all too familiar: A wonderfully talented photographer with a solid business model lacks the confidence to move to in-person sales because she doesn't have a studio for client meetings.

Whether you have zero interest in ever owning a studio, or are still a few years away from achieving your dreams of seeing your name on the sign above the door, this article is for you. We are going to look at the five things you can do today to deliver the most exclusive client sales experience without a studio space.



Image © Hannah Marie



Image © Hannah Marie

In Home = The Highest of Luxuries

It is always fun to enjoy a luxury shopping experience in an upscale store. These stores are expert at knowing how to tap into each of your senses and make you feel like the most important person at that moment: luscious fabrics to touch, beautifully designed lighting, a curated playlist of songs to set the mood and room temperature set just so. To top it off, your consultant calls you by your surname and offers sparkling water, champagne or an espresso.

As lovely as those stores are, they reserve an even more exclusive experience for a select group of clients. Sometimes the designer will pull pieces from his or her collection based on a particular client, and provide an in-home (or in-palace) shopping appointment created just for them, and occasionally even design a custom piece for an event.

These types of services are not available to everyone, but you can apply the same strategies to your client meetings. Create a personalized in-home ordering appointment by presenting it in such a way that it feels exclusive and unique.



Image © Hannah Marie



Communication Is Key

A good business owner takes the time to answer all of her client's questions. An excellent business owner answers those questions even before they come up. This concept rings true regardless of how or where you run your business. Guide each customer through the process by answering their questions before they ask.

In the case of in-home appointments, from day one, you need to educate your clients on what makes their time with you unique. Use words that illustrate an upscale exclusivity. If you don't guide them through the process, they will take the lead and likely assume you have a studio; take control of that conversation before they give it any thought, and create some excitement around the experience you love to deliver.

Element of Surprise

When it's time for the in-home ordering appointment that they have heard so much about, you have to exceed their expectations and "wow" them. Consider ways to add an element of surprise, such as a favorite drink or home-baked treat. By this point in our client-photographer relationship, you know your client well enough to have a good sense of what they enjoy. In the past, I've brought a bottle of their favourite wine or Scotch, a package of loose-leaf tea, their go-to drink from a local cafe, freshly baked ginger biscotti, etc.

When you surprise someone with something so personal, it shows you are attentive and communicates how much you value them. The client feels genuinely cared for.

There's An App for That

Design your ordering session to run as efficiently as possible. (Hint: Your iPad will become your new best friend.) Invest in the latest iPad and a beautiful case that matches your company branding; everything your client touches should reflect your brand. I use the white and gold iPad Air 2 with a navy leather case because those are my company colors. Having the most recent iPad isn't essential, but for me to deliver the upscale experience I have designed, my technology needs to be as current as possible. I've opted away from the iPad Pro because it is so much larger and more cumbersome to carry, but maybe one day I'll warm up to it.

I use two apps that simplify ordering sessions and bring an added value and greater degree of professionalism to the appointment. One app streamlines the proofing process, and the other helps in selecting the appropriate size of artwork for the wall. Do a search and compare them to find the ones that best suit your style and needs.

The proofing app I have allows me to use my company branding, create a slideshow set to my choice of music and, most importantly, it allows my clients to effortlessly sort their portraits. I can also record their order and email myself a list of the final selections for fast sorting in Lightroom.

The other app I use allows me to photograph clients' walls and show them different gallery options using their portraits. This app is by far my strongest tool for helping clients select the perfect artwork. When someone orders 8x10s, the larger, more appropriate wall sizes can sound far too big and slightly intimidating. This app lets them see exactly how their portraits will look on their walls to ensure they select an appropriate size. I no longer have to explain why the size they think they want isn't right for them; I happily show them the selected portrait on their wall in the measurements as requested, and immediately they ask to see it bigger and bigger until it fits the space.

Show It to Sell It

You may have heard this a hundred times by now, but it's true: You have to show it to sell it. Showing your products is a little more difficult with in-home appointments because it is a lot of work to bring along every single item on your menu. I bring only select items, specifically from my Signature Collection, because they are the products I am known for and that truly set me apart from my competitors. When my client has expressed an interest in a particular product from my menu that is not in my Signature Collection, I bring that sample along too.

To show the other products you offer, create a digital catalogue on your iPad using individual albums in "Photos." Simply photograph each product and the details you want to highlight, then create an album for each one. You can "favorite" one main photo of each product to highlight all of the menu items in your "Favorites" folder. Open up the albums they're interested in and show each item in more detail.

Tip: Use your iPad to display your wedding collections and product menus rather than printing them out. Simply save the files as images and create an album for them. This allows you to keep all of your information in one place, which means you won't need to make multiple printed menus for each step in the client lifecycle.



Image © Hannah Marie

Conclusion

If a studio isn't a priority for you and doesn't fit your brand, don't force it. Embrace the amazing benefits of being free from a location. Don't compare your route to the road others have taken in their businesses.

Either way, start wowing your clients today by implementing these five ways of offering an upscale in-home ordering appointment.

The stellar experience you deliver, not bricks and mortar, is what will set you apart as a professional in this industry. After all, when you believe you're delivering an excellent service to your clientele, they will too. ■

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Hannah Marie is an award-winning Canadian wedding and portrait photographer whose timeless style attracts clients worldwide. She can be found teaching at CreativeLive and ShutterFest, and provides private mentoring to professional photographers and small business owners across North America. Her expertise is in sales, branding and business organization.

hannahmarie.ca



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Oh, **Baby,**
Watch Them **Grow**
with Blair Phillips

The more times you can convince clients to let you photograph them, the more moneymaking potential you have. If we are photographing newborn babies only one time, never to see them again, we are going about it all wrong.

Newborn babies yield the highest average across the board with the vast array of clientele I service. I want as many of these sessions as I can get, and I've figured out a way to keep the ball rolling. We created several baby plans. Our plans are a way to get clients to pay in advance for a product that may take several sittings throughout the first year of a baby's life. The few quick images from each session contribute to the prepaid final product. It's also a platform through which I can sell them images from each visit.



Image © Blair Phillips



Image © Blair Phillips

Plan 1 Grow Baby Grow

Grow Baby Grow is the name of the first plan we offered several years ago. It begins with a newborn session. Then we photograph the child each month until she reaches her first birthday. During that first year, the subject is photographed in the exact same place, using the same props, outfits or heirloom pieces. I like to do this outdoors so we can show a complete year of seasonal changes.

Along the way, we show parents the images each month and give them a very small purchasing window. After that year is complete, we present parents with a 2-foot by 5-foot canvas with an image from each month that neatly shows age progression. The parent pays for this upfront. If they did not, they would likely get too busy and skip a month here or there. This conditions them to always want pictures. It also gives me a full year to develop a relationship with the client and baby. This pretty much guarantees me an amazing retention rate for my girls.



Plan 2 Crib Companion

Another baby plan we have is called Crib Companion. We photograph the baby as a newborn, then at four months, eight months and one year. This is all prepaid to keep them interested and motivated for the final product. We photograph them on four completely different sets with different looks. This product is designed with the intention of it going above the crib. The final pieces are four vertical canvases. There are a certain number of letters on each of the canvases that make up the child's name.

Since these four really short sessions are on a different set with completely different looks, we have the client come back to the studio for an order appointment where we sell them on additional images. This helps generate a healthy bit of revenue that I would not have without a baby plan.



Plan 3 Baby Platinum

Never assume your clients will not spend a large sum of money. You should always have products available for those who are not afraid to drop the cash on you. We have an additional baby plan that is priced very similar to a wedding. Baby Platinum requires four full sessions throughout the first year of life.

I photograph the baby at birth, five months, eight months and one year. Each session lasts around an hour and a half, and includes as much variety as the child will tolerate. As with our other plans, there's a final product the client receives at the end. The client gets a 12x12 premium leather album, with every page showing a custom design. It is a lot of work, but the payday makes it worth it.

This is marketed to fathers as a great gift to their expecting spouse. When a mother shares this album with friends who don't have kids yet, they remember it when they are expecting their first child. We also market it as a group gift that several people can go in on together.

Offer Your Client What Your Client Will Buy

If you get frustrated that clients are not spending the kind of money you want them to, it could be because you're not offering the right packages or products. If you want a client to spend \$2,000, you have to offer something they perceive to be worth that amount. If you have products that clients have not bought in a year or more, get rid of them. Your sales will continue to grow each year only if you know your margins and present your clients only with products that you want them to buy.

It is really difficult for clients to come in with their baby once a month, or even once every four months. If you offer any type of baby plan, collect the money upfront. I learned this when we allowed people to pay as we went through the first year. If they do not pay upfront, they are very unlikely to bring the child in as needed to create the final product. When they pay in advance, they will show up. If they do not show up, it does not hurt you as much since you have already been paid. You will also find that you do your best work when you know you are getting paid to do it.

Deep, Lasting Relationships

I highly value the relationships I foster during these baby plans—even more than the money. It’s a deeply shared experience. After the first year, we know a lot about each other. A client who allows you the opportunity to build that kind of a relationship is highly unlikely to go anywhere else. During that first year, I am constantly conditioning them on the importance of pictures while their child grows. I am telling them about other projects I am working on, about upcoming changes to the studio, and reminding them just how appreciative I am to have them.

Think about what it would take for you to be happier with your business. It does not matter what type of plan you put together—find one that gets your clients in the door more often. You can spend your entire career searching for more and more clients, only to learn they have been in front of you the whole time. Eighty percent of your business comes from 20 percent of your clientele. Condition, use and truly appreciate the client base you already have. Think quality above quantity.

Whether or not you are good at marketing and sales, you have to do it to make it in the photography world. Now that we have a taste of success through our baby plans, we are looking into ways to create plans for other areas. When you find success with something, use that as motivation to find more. You never know when that success may run out. ■



Image © Blair Phillips

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Blair Phillips launched his business nearly 10 years ago in a small town. Since then, Blair Phillips Photography has become a beloved household name to its many fans and clients. Each year, Blair photographs up to 30 weddings and over 600 high school senior, newborn and family studio sessions. He has educated photographers all over the United States at events by WPPI, WPPI U, Imaging USA, SYNC Seniors and various state PPA groups.

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Client Communication
and Workflow to
Maximize Sales

with Melanie Anderson





Bad communication and workflow can gum up your sales process and stagnate your entire operation.

Let's first discuss client communication. Our sales begin with the phone call. When a client calls our studio, we immediately ask how they heard about our studio. Typical answers include the mall display, doctor's office displays, social media and word of mouth. The number-one answer we hear is, "You are everywhere." We ask because we want to know where are marketing efforts are working, and we want to maximize these opportunities.

This gives us an idea of the type of client we are interacting with. As we begin discussing session options, we talk clothing, time frame and what to expect. We also share a "starting at" price range to give our clients an idea of what they may expect to spend.

CLIENT INFORMATION

ANDERSON

PHOTO · CINEMA · DESIGN

DATE _____ CLIENT _____
 ADDRESS _____
 MAIN PHONE _____ SECONDARY PHONE _____
 E-MAIL _____ REFERRED BY _____
 SESSION TYPE _____
 ANNIVERSARY _____ IN DATABASE _____
 (STUDIO USE)

PEOPLE BEING PHOTOGRAPHED

NAME _____ DATE OF BIRTH _____
 NAME _____ DATE OF BIRTH _____

MODEL RELEASE

OCCASIONALLY WE HAVE A NEED TO ADVERTISE USING SOME OF OUR WORK.
 BY SIGNING BELOW YOU GIVE US PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE PRINTS FROM THIS SITTING AND POST
 IMAGES ONLINE FOR THE SOLE PURPOSE OF ADVERTISING.
 THANK YOU!

I GIVE PERMISSION TO ANDERSON PHOTOGRAPHS TO ADVERTISE
 ANY IMAGES FROM THIS SESSION IN PRINT AND ONLINE.

SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____

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MELANIE@ANDERSONPHOTOGRAPHS.COM	WWW.ANDERSONPHOTOGRAPHS.COM

CLIENT WORKFLOW

ANDERSON

PHOTO • CINEMA • DESIGN

CLIENT _____
 SESSION TYPE _____ DATE & TIME _____

INITL.	TASK	DATE COMPLETED
--------	------	----------------

	Complete Client Information Form & Enter Client into Stratus	
	Session Fee Collected & Invoice Created in Stratus	
	Enter Session in Stratus Calendar & Paper Calendar	
	Create Client Sleeve & Place in Binder	
	Session Confirmed & Pulled	
	Session Photographed & Reviewed Pricing	
	Sent Card to Production	
	Client Session Downloaded to Both Hard Drives	
	Session Jpgs Downloaded/Uploaded to ProSelect	
	Session Narrowed Down	
	Order Session Completed	
	Created Invoice in Stratus and Payment Received	
	Client Paid in Full	
	Sent Order to <input type="radio"/> Production <input type="radio"/> Balance Due	
	Client Order Processed	
	Custom Products Created & Uploaded for Approval	
	Images posted to Facebook, Instagram & Website	
	Order Sent to Lab & Sleeve Placed in Packaging Bin	
	Order Reviewed with Shipment & Packaged	
	Client Notified Order is Available for Pick-up & Client Sleeve Placed in Order Pick-Up Binder	
	Client Picked-up & Signed-Off on Order	

Next, I ask what they hope to achieve during this session. What is the main goal? Are we documenting a family that hasn't been photographed in more than five years, or are we photographing a family that comes in year after year? This is important. I want to know what they will need. Are we looking at albums, wall art or gift portraits? I shoot with intention, and the more information I have ahead of time, the better.

I then offer suggestions that I think will best suit their needs, along with approximate costs. This ensures we are staying within their budget. I show them wall art and albums in the studio. Once we begin the session, as I'm photographing, I mention images that I think will look best as canvases or collages, and how many images we should plan for if we are photographing for an album. I want to be sure I have met or exceeded their expectations, giving them plenty of variety to choose from.

Once we have completed our photography session, I mention that we will be scheduling the in-person order session. This usually takes place the following week. I walk them into my sales room and state that their images will be narrowed down and cropped. No postproduction work will be done. When they arrive, they will view the images via projection and narrow down their favorites. I then begin discussing the portrait collection options—what is included and how much it will cost. I have wall portraits displayed, gift portraits on the sales table along with albums, wallets, announcements, etc. I want my clients to be able to hold and look though whatever is of interest to them. I explain that if they purchase a collection, any à la carte items will be 20 percent off.

A few additional items I share is that anyone who needs to be involved in financial decisions needs to be at the order session. They will be making their purchasing decisions that day. I mention that whatever their budget is, I just want to spend it wisely. That is important to me. I am here to serve. I want all of my clients walking away having experienced the best possible service and receiving the best possible products. Word of mouth is huge for me, and the verbiage and experience I convey to my clients is crucial. I don't ever want a client coming into a sales session unprepared and unable to make a decision. We have a workflow in our studio that ensures we are efficient and productive.

As I mentioned above, I shoot with intention. That means once I have nailed the shot, I move on. I am not a spray-and-pray type of photographer, hoping that within a few hundred images that I have captured something that will work. I photograph exactly what my clients need, and then a few extras that I think they will love.

When a client calls, we make a record in our studio call log. This is a reminder of what information we need to gather in order to schedule a session. This paperwork is then placed in a clear sleeve and inserted into a binder labeled "Upcoming Sessions." We call all clients the day before to remind them of their session and confirm their time, along with any items we need them to bring.

When the client arrives at our studio, she does paperwork, which includes a waiver covering use of the images. This is so vital, because we share everything on social media, and occasionally I use their images for commercial work or print competitions. I need to be sure I have their permission to do so. Only on a rare occasion do I have a client not willing to sign this release. This is typically a boudoir client, and for obvious reasons, I am okay with that. Respect their wishes and do not use their images if a client has not given permission.

After we begin the session, I discuss with them what to expect, and ask them a few questions so I am equipped to handle all of their needs. After their session, I walk clients into the sales room and specify everything listed above. When the client leaves, I upload the images to the sales room computer so I can prep for the order session. I'm often unable to complete this task immediately because I have sessions back to back, so I'll have several to do at once. Once I am completely finished with that session, the CF card is placed in the clear sleeve with the client paperwork and given to our designer. Our designer then uploads the images and creates two copies to ensure we have a backup on an external hard drive. Once all copies have been created, the card is cleared and the client paperwork is placed in the order room, ready for the sales session.

The client's order and payment information is placed in the clear sleeve and given back to our designer. Images are processed, orders are placed and images are posted to social media. That paperwork is then placed in the back for when the order arrives and needs to be sorted through. The order is then packaged and the client is called. The order and the paperwork are then placed up front ready for a signature showing their entire order has been completed. The final packet is then filed and available for reference at any time. Throughout this process, we also have information online regarding the client, type of session and payment information.

SESSION CALL LOG

ANDERSON

PHOTO · CINEMA · DESIGN

DATE _____ BOOKED BY _____ REVIEWED PRICING

LAST _____ FIRST _____

MAIN PHONE _____ SECONDARY PHONE _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

E-MAIL _____

FAMILY MEMBERS' NAMES & AGES _____

HOW'D YOU HEAR ABOUT US? _____

SCHEDULING

APPOINTMENT APPOINTMENT TYPE _____

SESSION SESSION TYPE _____ FEE \$ _____

BOOKED SITTING DATE _____ TIME _____

LOCATION STUDIO OTHER PHOTOGRAPHER _____

PAYMENT INFORMATION

NAME ON CREDIT CARD _____

CREDIT CARD # _____ TYPE OF CARD _____

EXPIRATION DATE _____ VCODE _____ CHECK # _____ CASH

SESSION DETAILS

ADDITIONAL SESSION INFO

INSIDE PET

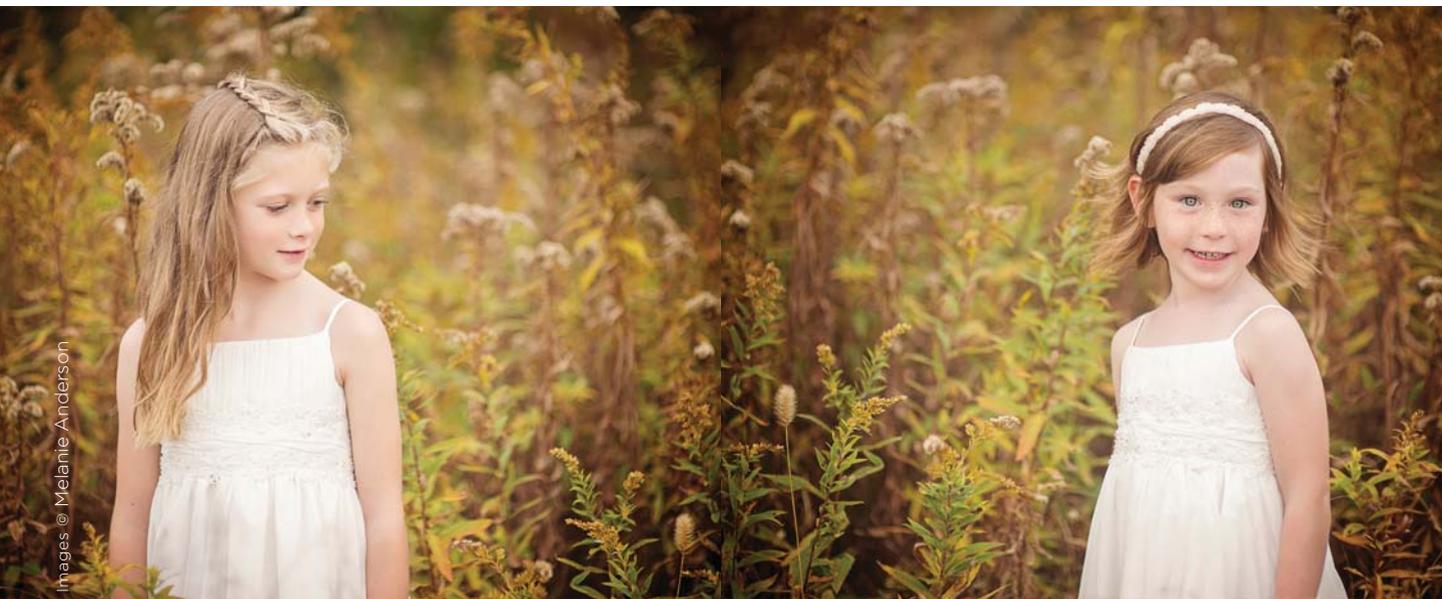
OUTSIDE/URBAN ON LOCATION

UPSTAIRS OTHER

NOTES _____

2 SOUTH POTOMAC STREET, HAGERSTOWN, MD 21740	301-393-4515
MELANIE@ANDERSONPHOTOGRAPHS.COM	WWW.ANDERSONPHOTOGRAPHS.COM

Images © Melanie Anderson



I hope this article has given you some specific verbiage you can use with your clients. The more you can educate ahead of time, the smoother the process will be.

Here's a recap of specifically what I say to each client:

How did you hear about our studio?

What are your plans for the images?

Where do you want to place them in your home?

Whatever your budget is, I just want to spend it wisely.

Anyone who needs to be involved in financial decisions needs to be here for the order session.

You will be making your purchasing decisions on the day of your sales session.

Action Plans:

Be intentional in your shooting.

Ensure that you have a process for client workflow; use my examples as necessary.

Educate your clients. ■



Melanie Anderson is an award-winning photographer and wife to her husband of 20 years, Bill, and a mother to their four children, Sarah, Emily, Kayla and Billy. Anderson Photographs is located in the Arts & Entertainment District of downtown Hagerstown, Maryland. Melanie is a Certified Professional Photographer who received her Photographic Craftsman degree in February 2015. Melanie is passionate about one-on-one mentoring and works diligently to provide educational resources and workshops to fellow photographers through Anderson Education. Learn more at AndersonPhotographs.com.

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The Preshoot

CONSULTATION

with Craig LaMere

One thing I tell attendees at my speaking engagements and workshops is: Thank the Lord I'm so pretty, 'cause I'm really not very smart. They all giggle, but in all honesty, when it comes to the way I handled some of my business in the beginning of my little career, it is amazing the doors are still open at Moz Studios. To say I learn the hard way is like saying there is a little water in the Pacific Ocean.

This month, I discuss one of the best ways to qualify clients to make sure the time you are investing is well spent, and that the people you're spending it on are the right ones for you. Ladies and gentlemen, the preshoot consult.

SETTING UP THE CONSULT

When I first started shooting, I took any and all clients who were willing to drop some cash. People called asking how cheap I was, and, because I was so cheap, they booked on the spot, no questions asked. I put them in the books, and the next contact would be when they walked in the studio doors for their shoot.

Most of the time it was cool, with no issues, but when it was not cool, it was monumentally bad. Most of the issues were due to a lack of communication on my part, due to just saying yes to business rather than qualifying the right clients—or, worse, not learning the expectations of good clients and failing them. The worst situation was when, about five minutes into the shoot, I realized we were not compatible in the least and now we were both stuck in a situation we shouldn't have been in. After a few of those, I got a little smarter and decided it would be a good idea to get to know potential clients before committing to anything.

These days when I get phone call inquiring about sessions or pricing, the first thing I do is offer a consultation meeting at the studio. For email inquiries, I write them to see when a good time would be to call and chat about their session. When I get the number and the time, I call and set up the consultation. The conversation is very simple, but it is the best tool for weeding out suspects who are only price shopping or who are not serious about booking, from actual prospects who are ready to commit to a session.

I ask potential clients to come into the studio so we can go over the pricing structure and so we can show them all our products. I tell them it is important to see the product so that when we pick out their images, they have a good idea what it is they want to purchase and that we may have some really cool options for them that they did not even know about.

It's at this point I say, "Cool, when can we schedule your consult?" Here is where the rubber hits the road. You will know if you have a serious prospect or someone who is not ready to be a client. As the saying goes, "First one to speak loses." You literally just sit there until you get a response. Most of the time the answer is immediate, but sometimes it seems like an eternity before the person on the other end of the phone says anything.

Be patient, and it will come. If they say, "Sweet, let's set up a time," then you set it up; but if they say, "I have to talk to my wife" or, "I will get back with you," chances are they are not ready, which is supercool because you found out in five seconds who you are dealing with. Now that you have the consult set up, you are in the driver's seat. You will show this client the best time they have ever had, and you will set yourself up for a killer sale.



THE CONSULT

The consult has four parts to it. There is the interview, product acclimation, the decision—and finally the taking of the cash.



THE INTERVIEW

The interview is the part of the consult that is by far the most valuable. There is a number of things you will find out in the interview that will dictate your choices at the shoot—or, for that matter, if there is even going to be a shoot, but we will get to that in a minute.

The first thing I do before I open my big mouth is take a few minutes to just check out my possible client. If you sit back for a moment and observe, you will get a really good idea fast about whom you have in front of you. You will get a good idea if she is more conservative or wild, or if she is more fancy or more casual.

Then I start asking questions. How many people are in the party? Are there any little kids or babies? Is there more than one family unit? If you have a group with little kids, you have about a 10- to 15-minute window to get the main group shot before you lose the kids and the session. The reason you ask about the units is because if they want all the units shot, you have to account for the time. I want to know the size of the main group, because that starts the posing gears turning in my head, and I will know if I have to get seating. I ask them if they like more natural or urban settings. I ask if they like brighter or cooler colors. There are a lot more questions I ask, but you get the idea.



The interview is also the time when the client gets to meet me. This is the dealmaker or breaker. A lot of people are familiar with my work, and not so familiar with me. So the interview is where the client gets to know who I am as a person, not just a shooter. I wear my official Moz uniform so they get a good idea and first impression of me. My uniform is black gym shorts, a black Moz logo T-shirt that shows off both my tattooed arms, a black-and-white Moz hat and my sweet black flip-flops.

This is the point where I make my decision either to proceed or cut bait and run. When I first started shooting, I would take any paying client, but now I am at a point where the client has to be the right fit for me, and not the other way around. By the end of the interview, I pretty much know if taking on the client is in the best interest of my business, or if the demands, expectations and personalities are not the right fit.

If I feel this will be an unprofitable situation, I tell the client I will not be able to help her. I have not had to do this a lot. It's never a fun conversation, but I would rather have a moment of awkwardness than a whole lot of pain in the ass later. What I say is pretty much this: "I super appreciate you taking the time to come in, but I honestly do not feel from the things we have discussed that I would be the best photographer for you. Because of your wants and needs and because I feel your family images are so important, I would be doing a disservice to you shooting your images, and I want you to have the best experience possible." Then I thank them for coming in, and that's that.

Now, if I feel we are a good match, then it's on to the next part of the process.

PRODUCTS

I have every type of image I sell hanging in my view room. Before I had my studio, I would have to just tell the clients how cool the products were, and they would have to go on faith that I wasn't full of shit. I have no doubt now, looking back, that I missed a lot of sales because my clients could not see and connect with the products. I'm a firm believer that clients have to see and feel the product to really connect with them or for them to envision the product in their home. You'd be surprised how many of your new clients have never seen metals, acrylics, whole-wall displays or family albums before in person.

I don't hang anything smaller than 20x30 in my studio unless it is part of a wall collection. The larger your prints, the more impact they have. Your clients are always wanting a size smaller than what is on your wall, and when you are able to show them physical examples, it does two important things. One, it gets the client's wheels turning as to the options available to them; two, it shows your craftsmanship and skillset, which is the best way to separate what you do from the millions of image takers out there.



TIPS AND PRICING MENU

Now I provide tips and the pricing menu. In the interview portion, we talked about clothes, location and grooming options. The Tips and Pricing menu has the information that we talked about, as well as all the product and pricing options. I don't spend a lot of time on the details of the menu. I want them to have it to go over on their own later. The main reason I want clients to have the menu is so they will understand the investment they will be making—at the view session, there is no sticker shock or misunderstandings.





GET THE CASH

The last part of my consult is to finalize the deal. When I say finalize, I mean get the cash. Collecting the retainer, which is the cost of the session, solidifies the appointment. While money down does not guarantee the client will not back out later, it does show a level of commitment by the client.

Asking for and collecting money was the hardest part for me when I started shooting. I would just book sessions on a promise, and I can't even count how many times that session did not happen. But when you have monies collected, your client has skin in the game and is far more likely to fulfill her commitment to the shoot. ■



Image © Craig LaMere

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Craig LaMere is an award-winning professional portrait photographer from Pocatello, Idaho. As well as running his full-time studio in Idaho, Craig is an international educator and speaker specializing in lighting and posing. He has two dogs named Logan and Steve and two cats named Emit and Martin.

mozstudios.com

A romantic couple is sitting in a vast, green field under a dramatic, cloudy sky. The man, on the left, is wearing a teal denim shirt and brown cowboy boots, and is holding the woman's hand. The woman, on the right, is wearing a white lace dress and black boots, and is leaning towards him. The background shows a line of trees in the distance.

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Networking Tips
to Bring In
Qualified Referrals
with Lori Nordstrom





Image © Lori Nordstrom

During my meeting with Susan, I tell her how I'm seeking people just like her to work with. I ask questions about where she spends time—the organizations and clubs she's involved with, where she goes to church, etc. I ask about the businesses she uses (where she's spending money). I ask about everything from her real estate agent to her financial planner to where she buys clothes and shoes for herself and her kids.

The person I select is based on the genre of photography I'm aiming for, but the process is the same. I am seeking organizations, businesses and well-connected people I want to be partnered with.

“The richest people in the world
look for and build networks;
everyone else looks for work.”
- Robert Kiyosaki

We always have those times when we need to bring in new clients. If we've just raised prices or have made some big changes, the need may be not only for new clients, but better-qualified clients. The best way to find them is to form partnerships with other businesses and well-connected people who are already working with the same clients you want.

The first step in determining whom you should be partnered with is to think about the businesses your target client is working with already. I ask myself these two questions: “Where is my target client spending time?” and “Where is she spending money?”

You want to start thinking like your target client, and then build a presence where she is. If you have no idea where to start, pinpoint someone you know who fits the description of someone you would love to work with, either a client or a friend who is a perfect fit for your business.

A conversation with a gal I've met a few times at the gym might go something like this: “Susan, I enjoyed meeting you last week, and would love to get to know you a little better. I'm working on some changes in my business right now, and you seem like someone I'd like to work with, so I'd love to pick your brain for market research. Is there a day in the next week or so that I could take you to lunch?”



Image © Lori Nordstrom



Ivan Misner, founder of Business Network International, defines networking as “the process of developing and activating your relationships to increase your business, enhance your knowledge, expand your sphere of influence and serve your community.” At its core, networking is about connecting with others and building relationships, and its primary goal is referrals. Once you’ve begun a relationship with another business owner, you can work on ways to use it to both of your advantage. To be successful with business-to-business networking, it’s important to look for ways to help others. They are more inclined to help you in return.

You are looking for new, qualified clients. What is the other business looking for? Talk to them about marketing, who their target client is and what they feel their weaknesses are. Determine how you can help them reach their goals. Even very well-run and profitable businesses are always looking for ways to refine what they do. You have the gift of photography to bring to the table. Using tools like Animoto and Sticky Albums, you can help spread the message of their brand—and, while doing so, gain a presence in front of their clients. By cobranding articles, blog posts, newsletters and printed pieces, you create a win-win for both businesses.



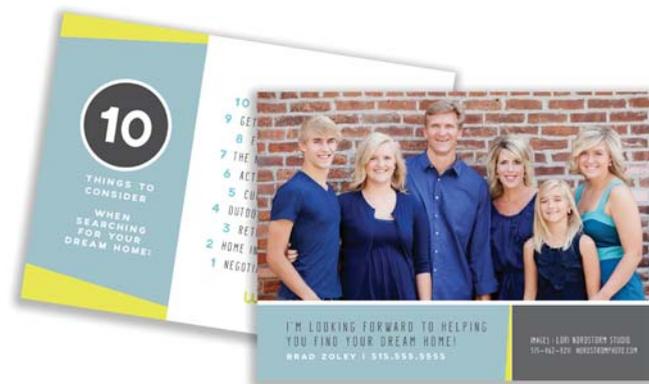
“*If you want to go fast,
go alone.
If you want to go far,
go with others.*”
- African Proverb



Image © Lori Nordstrom

Two Networking Ideas

Partner with a real estate agent who specializes in helping families find their dream home. Photograph the agent with several families in front of their new homes. Interview the families about what they enjoyed about working with the agent, and blog about it. Provide the info and watermarked images to the agent for his own blog, newsletter and website. Provide a Sticky Album with images, messages and offers from both the agent and yourself. Provide gift cards for the agent to give to each of his clients after the sale of a home, and offer to photograph each of these families. Nurture your relationship with the agent and each new family you get to photograph.



Start going to a high-end salon. Get to know the staff, and then offer to photograph each stylist's family, which can be presented as a gift from the owner. Hang the portraits next to the stylists' work stations. This gives them something to talk about with each and every client that sits in their chair. You will have the opportunity to sell to and build relationships with the stylists. Give them an experience they are excited to share, and offer each stylist gift cards (to your business) to give to their own clients as a thank-you for working with them.

Work with the salon owner to put together a "new looks" or "trending" day at the salon. The stylists invite their favorite clients and offer hair and makeup, and their favorite photographer: you! This is an opportunity for you to get fabulous images of the salon's clients, build relationships and follow up with them, leading to future portrait sessions. These events can lead to portfolio building, displays, partnership marketing and more.

What should you leave for a collateral piece when partnering with another business? I learned the hard way that no matter what you invest in a piece, no matter how grand it is, the other business owner is not excited about getting it into her clients' hands if it has nothing to do with her business. Be sure that your marketing pieces feature both businesses. I ask business owners what information they want their clients to have. I include this information on a card for them, with my information and offer on the back. This piece is sure to get into their clients' hands because it contains info that the business owner is eager to share.

When networking leads to a display, I design wall ideas in PreeVu. Just as I design walls for my portrait clients, I put together my suggestions for the business. Once we've agreed on a look, I write a script for the business owner and ask that she call her favorite clients who I'll be photographing for the display. I work with each new client just as I normally would. They get a complimentary session for being our model, but otherwise I'm suggesting and selling to them just like a regular client. This way, I create clients for life who aren't expecting everything for free.

It's been said that the opposite of networking is not working. Building relationships with other business owners gives you the chance to have a presence and be recommended to qualified potential clients. By carefully choosing the businesses you partner with, you are attracting and creating your own future clientele. ■



Lori Nordstrom (M.Photos, CPP, ABI) owns a boutique studio (NordstromPhoto.com) specializing in children and family portraits located in the tiny, picturesque town of Winterset, Iowa. Lori began her career photographing her own kids in her backyard almost 20 years ago, and is now known not only for her simple and sweet portraits of children, but as a leader in the photography industry in the areas of business, marketing and sales. Lori is a PPA-approved business instructor, and is passionate about sharing her knowledge with other photographers and small business owners.

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WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW
ABOUT GOOGLE'S
SEARCH ENGINE QUALITY EVALUATOR
GUIDELINES
with Justen Hong

Last November, Google released its Search Quality Evaluator Guidelines, which human evaluators use to manually rank websites. These guidelines give us a glimpse into what Google’s algorithm is looking for.

The entire 160-page document was leaked online, the first time a full copy has been publicly available. I have sifted through the document and pulled what I think a professional photographer needs to know. There is a strong emphasis on YMYL (“your money or your life”) websites, or sites that can directly affect you. These include online stores and financial, medical and legal websites. It appears Google ranks these sites with more scrutiny, but a photography site probably wouldn’t be in this category.

Here are some of the main takeaways photographers need to know about.

E.A.T. (Expertise, Authoritativeness and Trustworthiness)

E.A.T. and reputation are referenced a lot in the guide. This refers to whether or not a website is reputable. Does the site provide information from an expert? Does the expert have any authority in the field their website is about, and is the site and its information trustworthy?

Raters are urged to search the domain name looking for articles, reviews, forum posts, discussions, etc. Yelp and the Better Business Bureau are specifically named. It says a website with some positive and some negative reviews can still be considered okay, but sites with a lot of negative reviews, or a low BBB rating, is evidence of a negative reputation.

As a photographer, I would say things like “Best of Award” or “Published in” badges from reliable sources would make a rater consider a site reputable. A BBB A+ Rating badge, well-written testimonials, positive reviews on multiple sites like Google+, Yelp, The Knot, etc. are also things they would be looking for. I also assume a strong social media presence and popularity would show a strong E.A.T. An About section that talks about the photographer’s experience, awards they have won, or education is also something they could be looking for.

High-Quality Pages

Raters are asked to determine if a page is high-quality. The guide says to look for a satisfying amount of quality content. They are most likely referring to text, but as a photography site, I would say a decent amount of high-quality imagery would also be included. It again references E.A.T. and reputation, along with a good user experience, functional page design, that the site is well cared for and maintained, and that the site has useful supplementary content. Another important takeaway was the importance of a satisfying amount of website information, like a well-thought-out About section, contact page, etc.

Supplementary content refers to everything on the webpage that isn’t the main content. Some examples are a call-to-action to secure a wedding date from the wedding portfolio, related articles and blog posts, contact info in a sidebar and testimonials that relate to the main content. These help visitors and also keep them on your website longer, which can help your rankings. The guide also says there should be a clear division between the main and supplementary content, and that it shouldn’t be distracting or unhelpful—so don’t just add extra content unless it has a purpose.

There is also a section on what makes a site or page low quality. The main things to watch for are low-quality-content pages with unsatisfying amounts of main content, a site that lacks E.A.T., sneaky redirects, spammy content, keyword stuffing, copied (and even modified) text from another source and nonmobile-friendly sites.

TIP:

Make your About section thorough. Tell your visitors a little about yourself. Show them that you are an expert and have authority in your field. Feature photos and an introduction video. Spend some time on these pages. Brand yourself. Include a contact page with more than just a form. Have a local phone number (not an 800 number), an email address and mailing address. Google will be looking for these, and omitting them can affect your local ranking.

Mobile Friendly

There is a section dedicated to mobile, meaning if you still don't have a mobile-friendly or responsive website, you needed one yesterday. If you do have a mobile-friendly site, double check that it displays correctly and is easy to use on mobile devices. I see sites all the time that are technically mobile friendly, but that actually don't work so great on mobile devices.

Some things to look for:

- Is the navigation easy to use?
- Are forms easy to fill out?
- Is all the text easy to read?
- Do images and videos scale properly on the screen?
- Does the website use Flash?
- Is the site loading quickly?

NOTE: There is a section called Needs Met. Raters select from Fully Meets to Fails to Meet how well the search results found what they are looking for. This is important because any site that is not mobile friendly automatically gets a Fails to Meet score.

Needs Met

Needs Met refers to how well a search result answered the searcher's inquiry. It ranges from Fully Meets to Fails to Meet, with three steps in between. The most important aspect of this section is that if you are search-engine optimizing a page for a certain search term, your page had better fulfill the search's expectations. Not doing so can lead to Pogo Sticking (the user going directly back to their original search), which can negatively affect your ranking.

Learn More

This was just a brief examination of the document. It is full of much more technical information that may or may not be relevant to your site. Download the entire PDF by doing a search for "google search quality rating guidelines."

Conclusion

The biggest takeaways are to make sure you not only have a mobile-friendly site, but that it is easy to use and read on a mobile device; provide enough information on your site to show that you are credible, an expert in your field, and that you and your company are trustworthy; and, lastly, meet the needs of searchers with both main and supplementary content, and display it in a visually pleasing and easy-to-follow manner. ■



Justen Hong is an award-winning, internationally published graphic designer in the St. Louis area. His work has been featured in *The Big Book of Packaging*. Justen's driving passion is creating logos. A dozen of his logos appeared in *Logos Talk II*, by Hong Kong publisher Artpower International, and many more of his logos appeared in several LogoLounge books. He is the owner and head designer at Visual Lure, which specializes in logo design, graphic design, web design, search engine optimization (SEO) and packaging design. Justen has a studio art background with a degree in graphic design, and a printmaking minor. He also loves art, photography and architecture.

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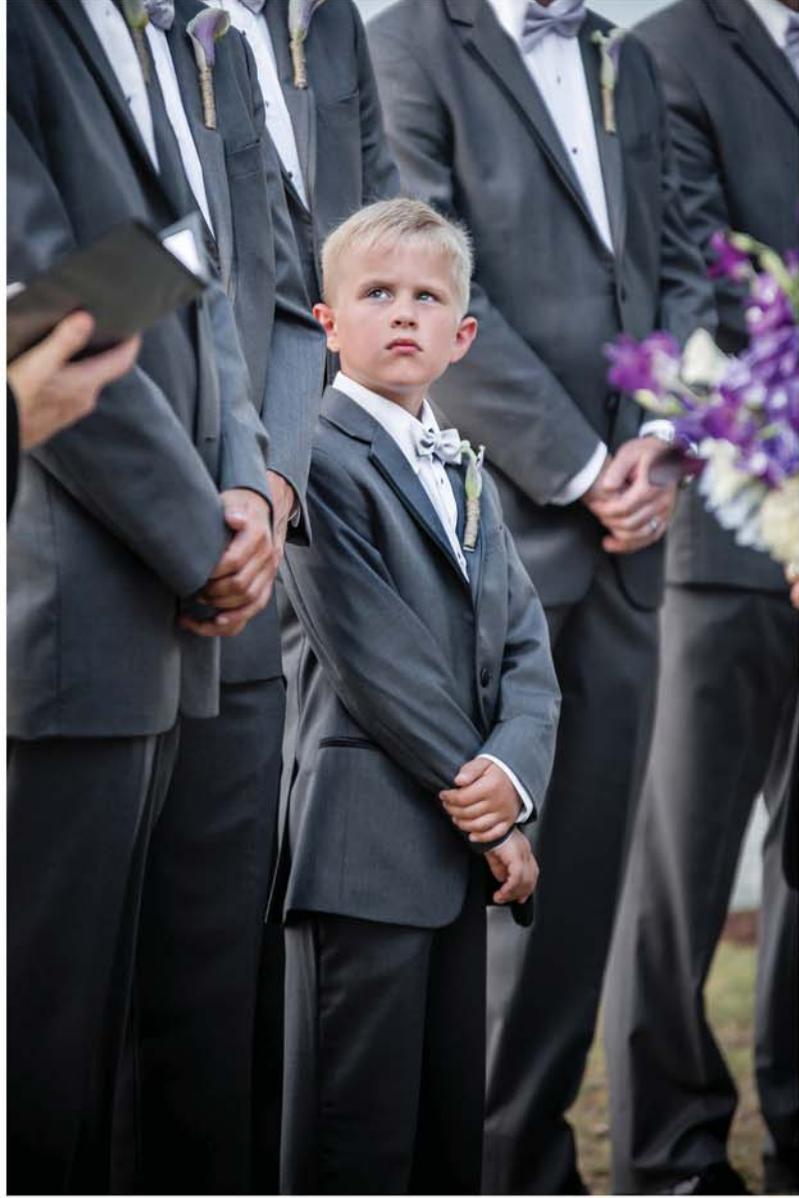
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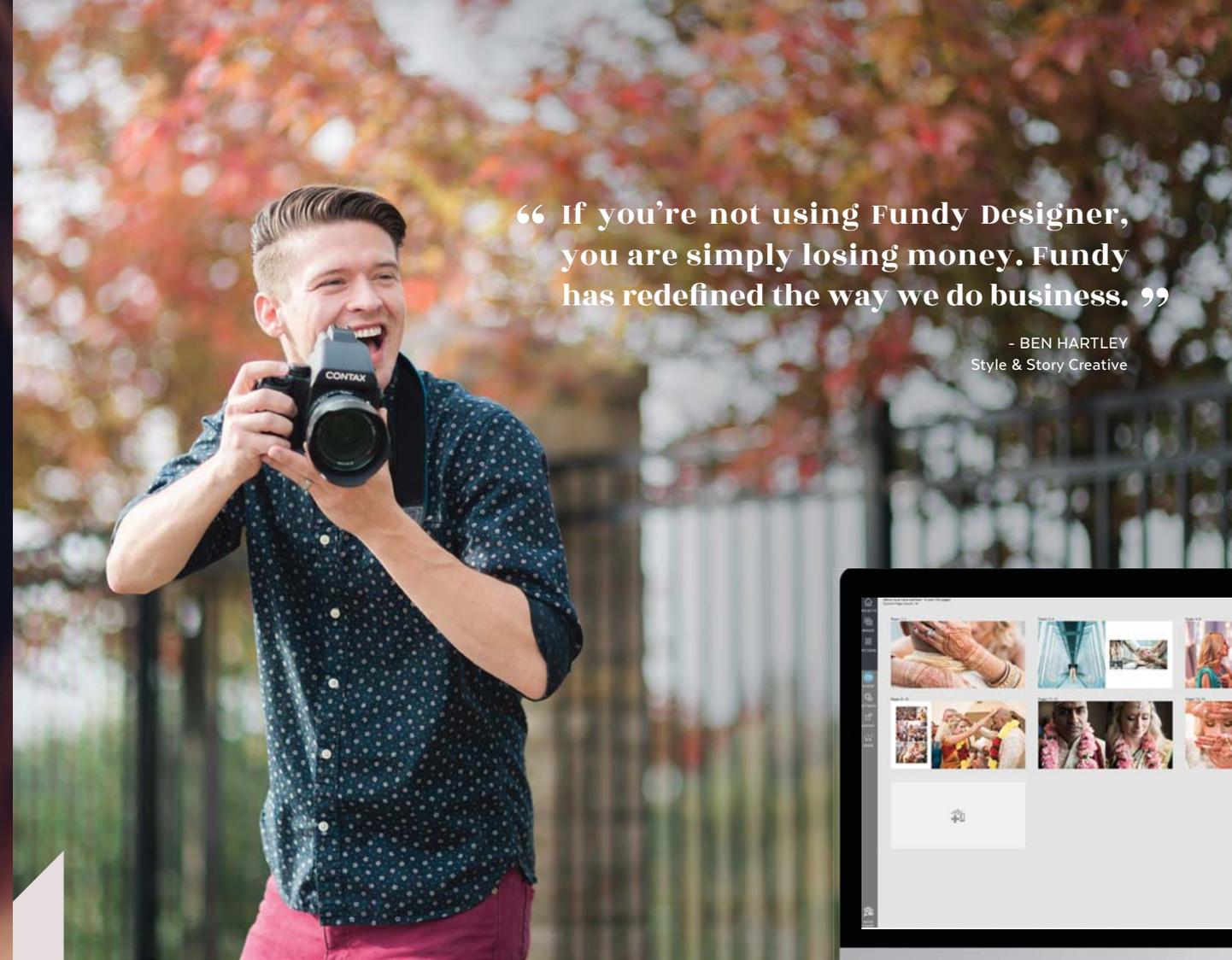

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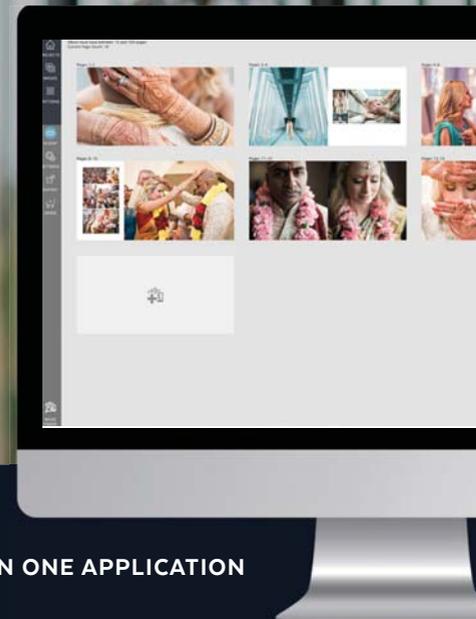

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5 WAYS TO Advance Your Photography Education

with **Leonardo Volturo**

Congratulations: If you're reading this, you're on the right track. Photography is more than just taking pictures and investing in the never-ending flow of gear. If you want success, the most important thing to invest your time and eventually money into is education. As Ben Franklin said, "An investment in knowledge pays the best interest"—and this month, I want to drop some knowledge on you and give you some insight and tips for maximizing your photography educational opportunities.



Before we dive in, here's some of my history, which will show you how I got to where I am today.

I actually got my start in the wedding industry almost 20 years ago, around the age of 12 or 13. It began with an interest in music and a family friend who had a DJ company in Brooklyn. I worked my first wedding at 13. Over the years, I worked hundreds of events and learned the ins and outs of the industry, along with regular nightclub gigs and some radio work. In 2002, I relocated to South Florida and spent a couple of years getting involved in the industry down there before launching my first company in 2004, when I was 21. We started off offering DJ, production services and videography, having partnered with other local professionals. Not too far down the line, we started offering photography and brought on several shooters to become a full-service event company. I was deejaying and handling sales and service. It wasn't until years later, in 2012, when I first picked up a camera.

If you ask my wife, the story goes like this: "One day, he picked my camera up off the bed and said, 'How do you use this thing?' I showed him a couple of things, and the next day, he was teaching me stuff."

My wife, Melissa, had been shooting for years when we got together at the end of 2011. Up until that point, I had only been selling. My interest was piqued. I love everything tech and I love learning, especially learning things that are difficult. When I get into something, I devour it. So after that day of simply picking up a camera, my journey began.

Here are a few tips for finding your own way in photo education.

Online Resources

There are endless education opportunities online, from free YouTube tutorials to subscription-based sites, live courses and on-demand education covering all facets of photography. My first stop was to Lynda.com, a subscription site with on-demand courses. I started with their Foundations of Photography courses, covering exposure, composition and the different types of lenses. I also found some Lightroom and Photoshop classes to start understanding processing and workflow.

The next site we discovered was CreativeLive, where the first course I ever saw was Sal's High School Senior Photography, in the summer of 2012. Seeing that class brought us into Sal's world and led us to his workshops—and to where we are today. CreativeLive is a strong resource with live and on-demand courses featuring some of the top educators in the industry. It's definitely worth staying on top of their schedule for the free live courses, which you can purchase for anytime viewing.

If you're reading this, then you obviously know about BehindTheShutter.com and *Shutter Mag*, the leading educational magazine in the industry. Stick with us, and you'll have a great resource featuring top educators across all styles of photography.

Lastly, don't forget about Facebook groups. Some are a nightmare-filled, with trolls and complainers, but there are some solid groups out there where you can get some quick tips and inspiration. They include In Person Sales for the Professional Photographer, which is great for learning about IPS, and The Shredder, which is good if you're not afraid of getting your images critiqued. And of course the ShutterFest community is incredibly knowledgeable and giving.

These are all great options for the burgeoning photographer that provide a minimal or free barrier of entry.



Workshops

Finding a great workshop is an art in itself. There are so many out there for varying levels of experience. Workshop costs range from very inexpensive into the thousands of dollars, and from local to exotic destinations around the world. The main thing you need to do here is evaluate your needs. You won't find many one-size-fits-all workshops. Don't just sign up because of the name associated with them. Dig into everything being offered in the class. Does it make sense for your business and style? Read reviews from previous attendees. Just because LeBron James puts on a basketball camp doesn't mean it's a great one.

These can be significant investments. When you walk away implementing new ideas and processes, you want to have confidence that you're going to see a return on your investment.

The biggest mistakes I see from workshop and conference attendees is:

1. They're not even paying attention to the teacher, and end up standing around talking. This can happen in a large group or if the teacher doesn't have solid command and direction.
2. Students go home and don't practice or implement what they've learned, essentially throwing away the entire experience and money they've spent.
3. They showcase the images they shot in class in their portfolio without being able to reproduce that level of work on their own.
4. Attendees are wallflowers who don't make the most out of the workshop.

Get in there, get involved, don't be afraid to mess up—and, when you get home, keep up with everything you just learned.



Image © Leonardo Volturo

Conferences & Organizations

ShutterFest, WPPI, Imaging USA, PhotoPlus, PPA—there are quite a few photography conferences, trade shows and organizations providing high-quality education and support services, and they all have their own unique and appealing features. It's hard to choose between them. Conferences last up to a week and feature a host of classes covering all aspects of shooting and the business of photography. At trade shows, you can check out new gear and products. There's a wealth of information available at these events, and, with the right game plan, you can walk away with some great skills, friends and connections.

ShutterFest is the new kid on the block. It's heading into its third event at the end of March. Sal made a lot of waves when he launched his conference. It was more intimate, very hands on and free. ShutterFest has grown immensely in a short time. It includes a full trade show and the brilliantly named Rent-a-Human program, which gives attendees free access to models, wardrobe, and hair and makeup. There are shooting bays for working with the latest in Profoto gear, nightly parties and instructors who are always available and who put in extra time with attendees outside of their scheduled classes.

WPPI is another great experience. Head out to Las Vegas for a huge trade show, a week of classes, parties and around 15,000 of your photography friends.

I always made it a point in classes to be up front and involved. Aside from getting the most out of the class, it also helps for networking and making connections with the instructors. I've built several great relationships by doing just that. It helped greatly in finding a couple of mentors. That is the best advice I can give you.

If you're attending any of these conferences, I recommend spending some time in the image competition judging rooms. There you'll see work from your peers and some of the greats dissected and scored. You'll learn what makes a technically great image. I also suggest you enter some of your own images to get that feedback and maybe even an award or two.

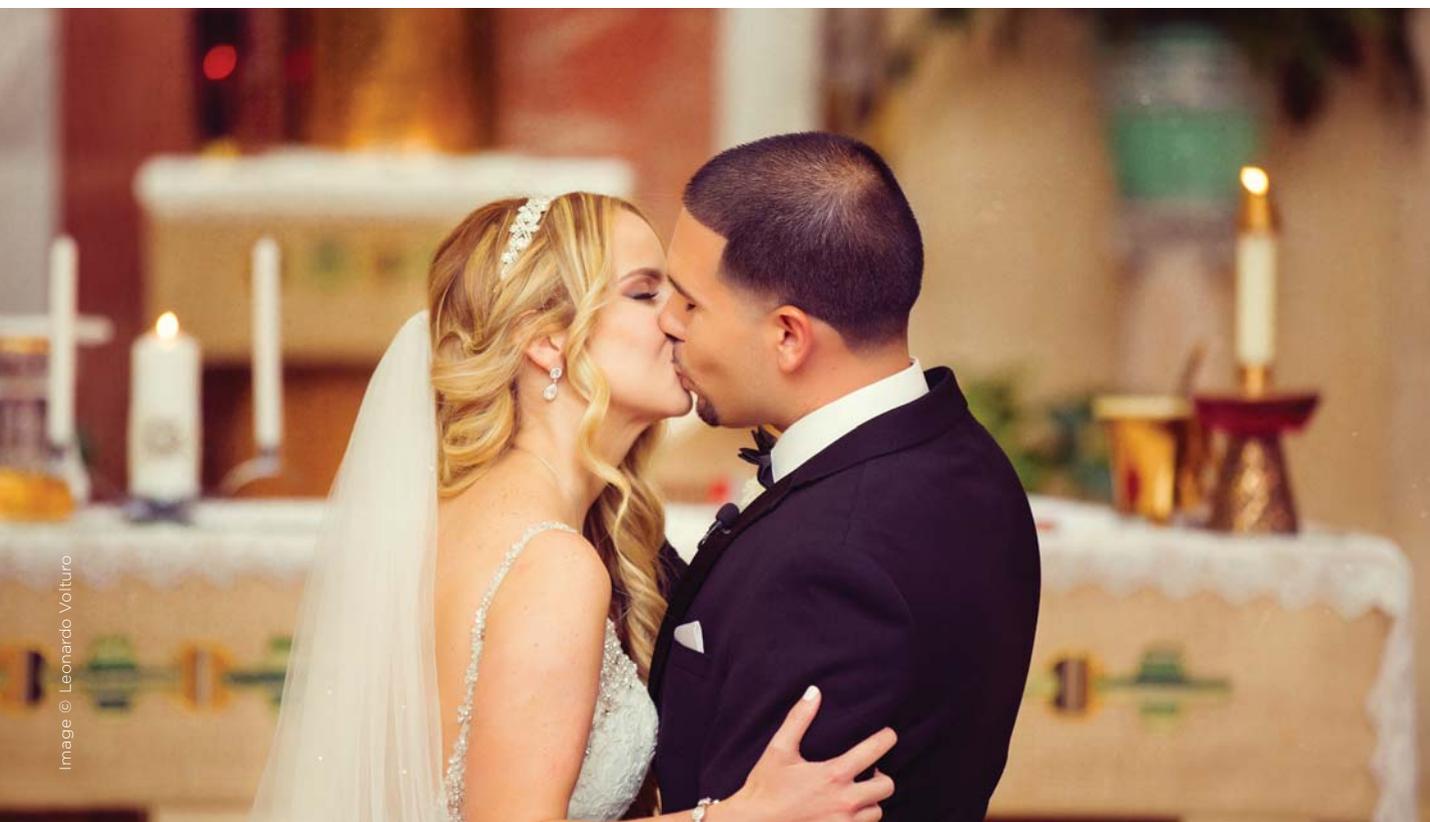


Image © Leonardo Volturo



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Finding a Mentor

Finding a mentor has been the most crucial and best part of my journey in photography. I have been very fortunate in the last few years to learn from and work side by side with some of the most talented artists and businesspeople in the industry.

Two people who have been very influential and supportive in my career are Sal Cincotta and Michael Corsentino. Like I said earlier, I first saw Sal on CreativeLive in 2012. What spoke to me immediately was his teaching style and no-nonsense Brooklyn-Italian attitude (yes, that is a thing). Being from the same neighborhood with the same background, I was easily able to relate, and I knew this was someone I wanted to learn more from.

Sal was also on tour that year, and was coming to my area soon after I saw that course. My wife and I (we weren't married yet) purchased tickets to the two-day course. I told Melissa I was going to walk right in there, sit in the

front row and be in his face the whole time, getting as much out of the classes as I could. We learned so much in just those two days. We started implementing what we learned immediately, and continued to follow Sal and his teaching.

Melissa and I were able to build a relationship with Sal and Co. over time—emailing, going to workshops, one-on-one coaching. We became friends, and Sal's team even shot our wedding. Ultimately, in an incredible turn of events, we relocated to work with them. This is not a template for working for Sal (so don't go sending emails), but more about me seeing someone I could connect with to better myself, and that person offering his knowledge and support for the betterment of not just me but the community.



Image © Leonardo Volturo

I was able to connect with Sal and Michael in the exact way I said you guys need to attend workshops and conferences: by putting yourself out there, interacting, networking.

At the first ShutterFest, I took one of Corsentino's classes and got myself front and center to be involved with as much as I could. I ended up being called on to assist for the rest of the class. After class, I found that he was from Brooklyn but living closer to me, in Florida. We chatted awhile, and eventually met up back home and began working on projects together. Corsentino has been a great asset in helping me cultivate and grow my lighting skills, and someone I reached out to about writing after I was asked to write for this magazine.

Having forged relationships with two great educators, I was able to grow my business and skillset in every direction. Going through all this has also better equipped me as a writer, speaker and future mentor to others.

The information is out there. There are so many great avenues for education, and I've touched on just a few. I hope you'll take this information and make the most out of your opportunities. Remember, education is not just about photography and learning how to make great images. For my fifth tip, check out the video. ■

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Leonardo Volturo is an international award-winning wedding and portrait photographer, writer and educator. He started his career almost 20 years in New York City before taking on Miami, and now heads up Studio C for Salvatore Cincotta. Leonardo is known not only for his outstanding wedding imagery, but also for his passion for the industry and educating others in business, marketing, sales and lighting.

leonardovolturo.com

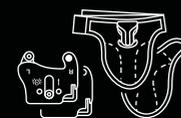
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How to Transcend the Trends

with Dustin Lucas

When it comes to creative and artistic direction in your editing, it is hard to distinguish yourself from the trends. You may have established a niche in your market, but how can you create work that doesn't look dated as soon as you update your portfolio on your website? You have to transcend the trends and pay attention to what is going on in your industry. Submitting your work to print competitions and professionally graded reviews is a great way to see how you compare with your peers. Seeing how other artists are capturing and editing portrait photography has really changed the way I look at this industry.

You can integrate fine art photography into your posing, composition and (especially) post-production. Post-production is an art in itself, and the techniques used today have paved the way for many artists to begin pushing the boundaries. In this article, I demonstrate some toning and editing techniques that will give your work a boost without your having to worry about a trend dying.

Fine Art Toning in Photoshop

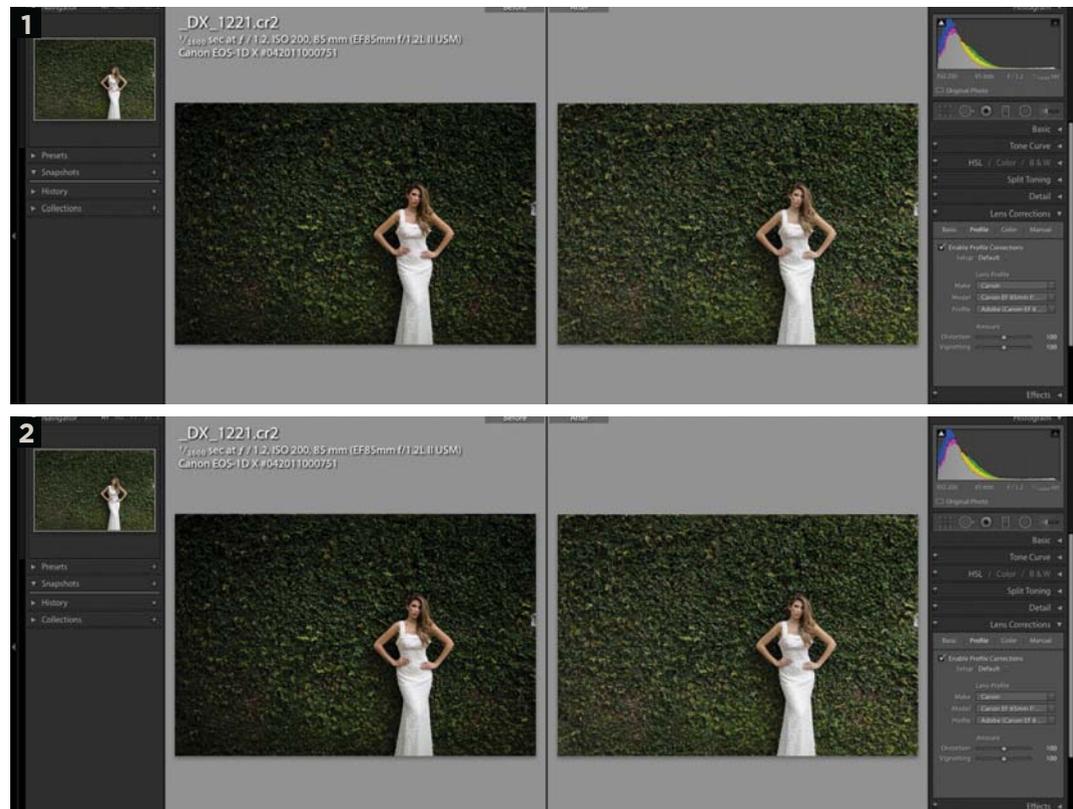
Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography



Preparing Your Image

Before proceeding with toning, we need to color-correct the image. I have processed the image through Lightroom CC and exported it as a Photoshop Document (psd). This file type is great for working files, but it is quite large and causes the computer to work harder when you make changes.

A few hard and fast tips: I tend to do less tonal work with the contrast and tone curve; I reset sharpening to 0; I use lens correction; and I always use an appropriate camera profile. (1) Adobe Standard can worsen your image color and toning, so set this to a different profile—I chose Camera Neutral, and changed the red values. (2) To learn more about this, check out my July 2014 article, “Color Space Part 2: Getting Control With Your Color.”



With the image opened in Photoshop, we now need to fix some of these dark and bright spots with a technique called dodge and burn. This is a vital step in fixing specific exposure issues in an image. Create two curves adjustment layers and rename one Dodge and the other Burn. On the Dodge curves layer, click the layer thumbnail to open the properties panel. Click in the middle of the diagonal line and drag your cursor up two cells. Click on your layer mask and invert it by holding Command (Mac) or Control (PC) and striking “I.” Follow the same instructions for the Burn curves layer, but drag the diagonal line downward. I group these adjustment layers together.

You can now use the layer mask to paint in the effect. Lower the opacity and edge hardness of the brush to subtly dodge and burn areas of the image. (3)



Toning With Curves

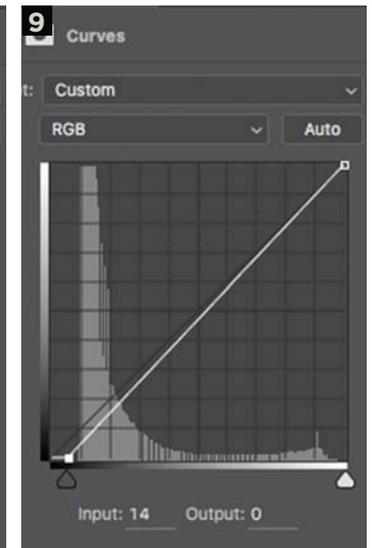
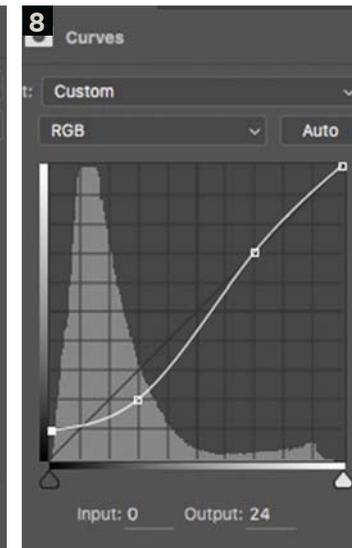
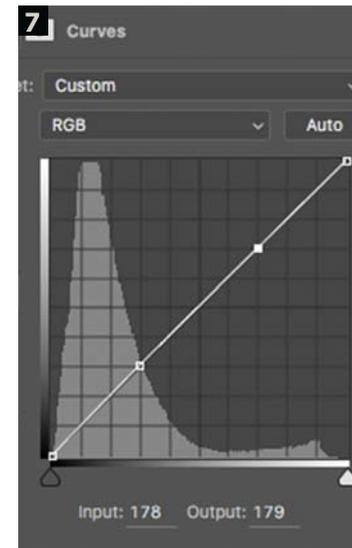
Now that we have cleaned up the image, we are ready to start adding some creative toning. Curves can provide a variety of effects and should be used to their fullest extent. Add a curves adjustment layer and create a matte-like look. Simply click the point in the bottom left corner and drag upward and drag the upper right point downward. When using smaller grid cells, I am able to more accurately drag the curve line where I need to. To toggle between different cell sizes, hold Option and click in the curves window. You can make this a little extreme for now, and we can dial this back with the opacity of the layer. (4)



It looks like the contrast was pulled out of the image, but it looks different from just dropping contrast. Dropping contrast makes the skin look flat and unflattering. (5a, 5b) This curves adjustment is very basic and needs to be further manipulated. We need more definition and contrast. Drag the back point slider to the right till it meets the diagonal line. This gives some definition to those black tones that we flattened. (6)



Taking this technique a step further, we need to reset our curves adjustments and begin to tone the image with even more definition. Add two points on the curve line, each about three rows from the ends. (7) Click and drag the third point down to the next cell row. Lift the bottom point upward to the second row. (8) Make an additional curves layer and drag the black point slider to about the second cell. (9) You can see the difference between the first curves layer and these two. We are beginning to define our own look. (10a, 10b)



Using Gradient Maps and Color Fill Layers

Gradient maps can really add some nice color tone to your image. Applying this gives it a grayscale range of toning, and you can select specific colors to use as well. This can give you some unique looks; I have used Selenium I. (11) This gives my highlights and midtones a more neutral contrast with some desaturation to those green tones. This setting gives the midtones a warmer neutral gray as well; to change the effect, select different blending modes in the layers palette.



A few good choices are Multiply, Soft Light and Luminosity. (12a, 12b, 12c) Remember, you can lower the effect by dropping the opacity and masking out the subject. My settings for this effect are layer opacity at 40% and blending mode set to Multiply, and I have masked out my subject to allow about 20% of the effect. This gives the image a dark and dramatic look. (13)



Color fill layers can add a nice hazy effect to the image. I want to make a slight warming effect in the highlights and shift a little cooler in the shadows. To do this, I create a new fill layer with a solid color. I select a warm color like orange, set the blending mode to Soft Light and drop the layer opacity to 10%. Next, add another fill layer with a magenta color selected, set the blending mode to Multiply and drop the layer opacity to 10%. (14)



Finally, to cool down the image, we create a blue color fill layer. Set the blending mode to Exclusion and adjust the opacity to 10%. You can lower this effect as needed to reduce the blue cast. (15) These three fill layers work together to reduce any white balance tint cast issues, while still providing an attractive matte finish. Group these three layers together so that you can mask out all three effects at once if needed. This is extremely helpful in removing the color effects from the subject's skin. (16)

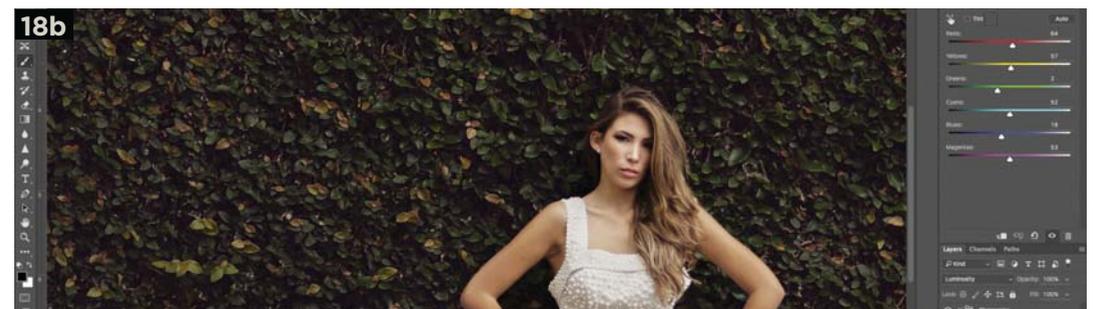


Sharpening and Cropping

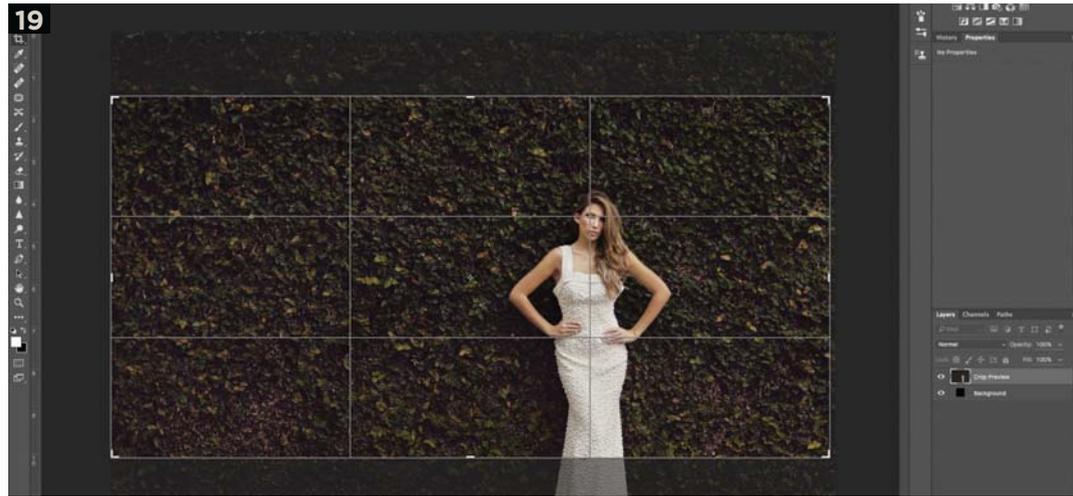
These final steps can transform your image. They rely heavily on your output method. Sharpening can be a very in-depth process. Read my previous article from the November 2014 issue, "Attention to Detail: Better Results With Sharpening." In terms of sharpening, this image needs input and output adjustments made. For this article, I have applied my action set to automatically create these two sharpening layers. Take a look at the difference in the details with the Presharpen layer made—with the Output layer added as well, you can determine how much sharpness to use when saving output versions, like web or print, out of Photoshop. (17)



Another technique I like to use to fine-tune the tonal range is to create a black-and-white layer. I usually adjust the sliders by selecting the auto button and set the blending mode to Luminosity. You can adjust these accordingly afterward. This dulls the highlights and gives definition to these hot areas in the image. Use this effect sparingly, and check the image at a 100% view to make sure pixel degradation and/or banding does not occur. This is a quick and easy technique. (18a, 18b)

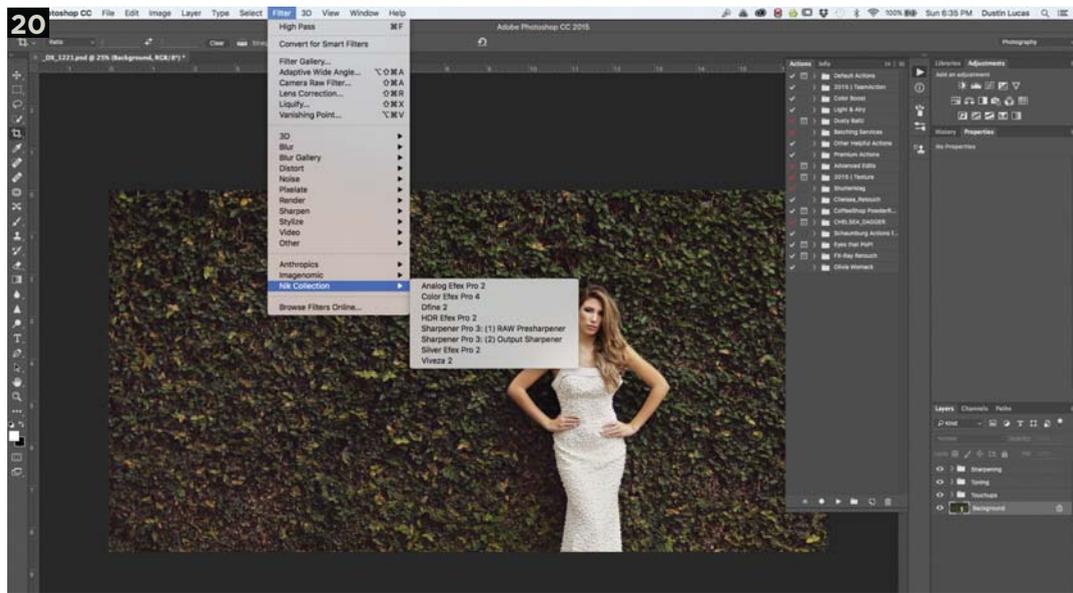


Lastly, I like to crop the image to a more nontraditional photographic scale. Recently I have come to really like the 2:1 ratio for landscape-oriented images. I cropped this image to remove some of the headroom and grounded the bride right below the knees to achieve a stylistic composition. Be bold with your cropping and try something less safe compositionally. (19) Always crop last and save alternate versions of this so you do not carelessly throw away pixels from the working file.



Nik Software

I like to automate as much work as I can with actions and plugins. The Nik software suite has become a huge component of my workflow, replacing some hands-on work. My go-to tools are Silver Efex Pro 2, Sharpener Pro 3: Raw Presharpener and Sharpener Pro 3: Output Sharpener. (20)



Silver Efex Pro 2 has a huge selection of preapplied effects that can be custom-adjusted and saved as new presets. (I'll discuss them in depth in a later article.) Let's use the 019 Fine Art Process preset and add some settings in the finishing adjustments by adding a vignette and some sepia tones. (21) Once I am finished, the program automatically creates a new image layer; I will adjust it later by lowering layer opacity and masking techniques. As you can see, the gradient map as well as the black-and-white layer techniques have been given a run for their money with the Nik Silver Efex Pro layer. (22a, 22b)



The Results

When it comes to trending effects and editing techniques, you need to develop your own style. The ability to distinguish yourself from the bad trends requires you to constantly see what is out there. You have to see the bad to understand what I am talking about.

Googling is helpful, but you need to look at the print competitions in your industry. Seeing high-scoring fine-art prints up close gave me the drive to push the limits in my own work. Constantly push yourself to remain relevant and transcend the trends. ■



Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

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

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You Are Likely Flying Your Drone Very Illegally

with Rob Adams





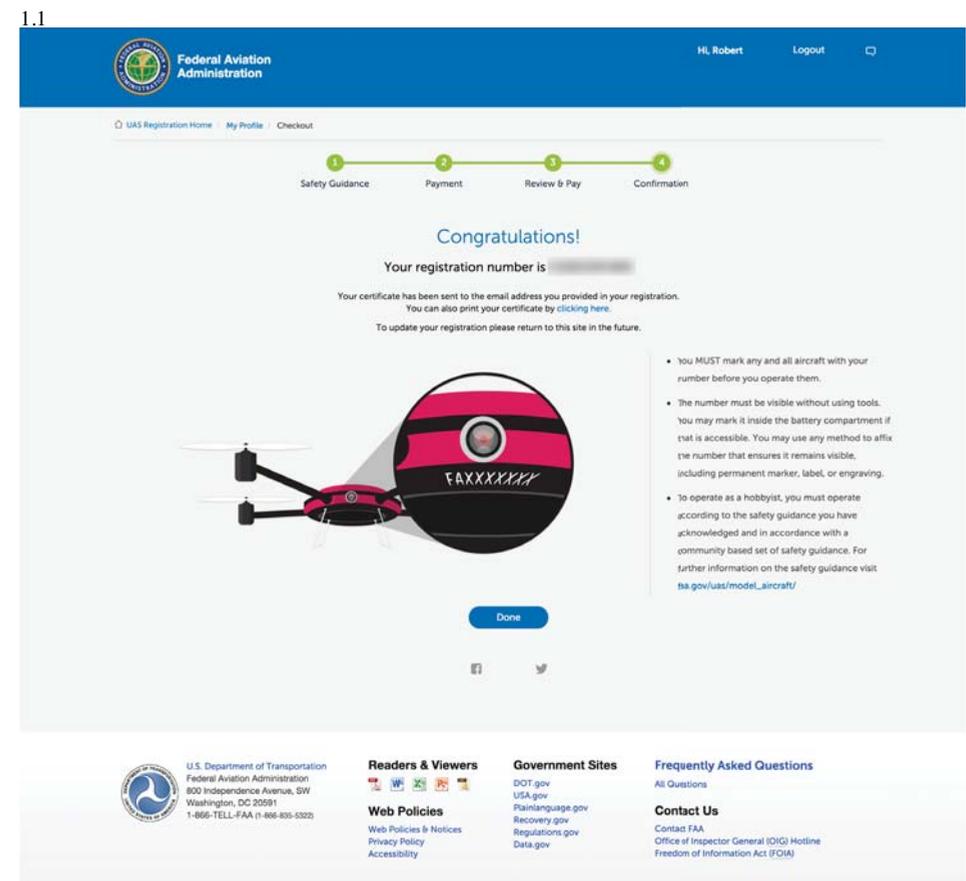
It seems like everyone in the photo and video world has a drone these days. We can now get amazing perspectives and high-angle shots with superb image quality, allowing us to take our productions to a whole new level. But you may be surprised to hear that if you are flying a drone like the insanely popular DJI Phantom series of quadcopters, you are very likely breaking the law—federal law.

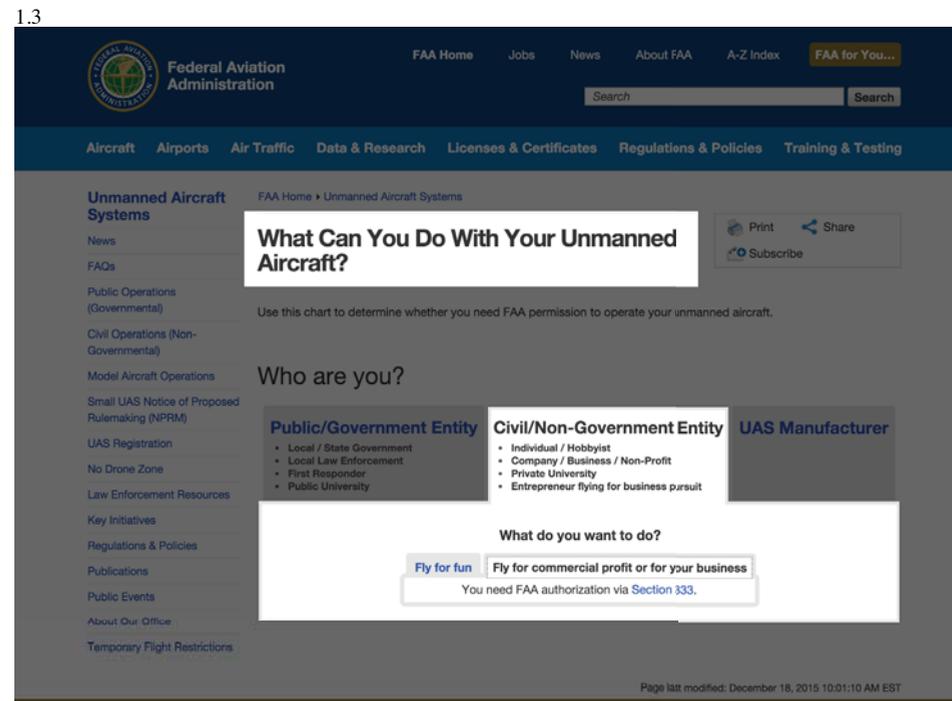
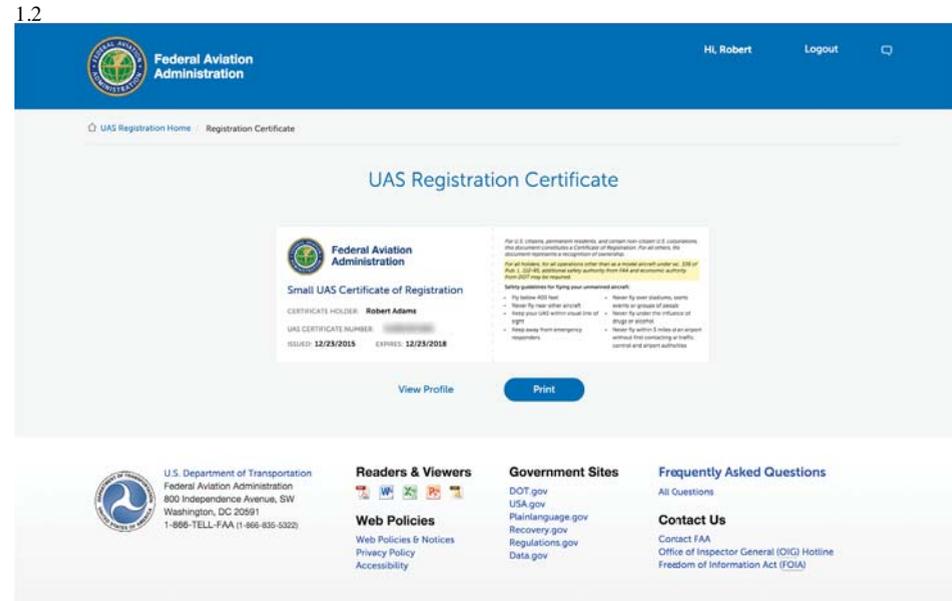
The Federal Aviation Administration just enacted new regulations for small UAS (unmanned aircraft systems) that cover all drones weighing between .55 and 55 pounds total, between the aircraft itself and any payload. Many of us (including me, before I dug deeper) thought that all we would have to do is register our drone via the Federal Aviation Administration website when the time came, pay our \$5 fee, affix our registration number to the drone and off we fly. Wrong.

The new drone regulations that went into effect on December 21, 2015, the ones everyone has been talking about, legally apply only to hobbyists, not commercial users. Commercial users operate drones for profit, so we are bound by other, more stringent regulations and operational license requirements. According to the FAA website (www.faa.gov/uas), any person or business that flies a drone for commercial profit must apply for a Section 333 exemption from the FAA, which allows them to operate their small UAS under more specific guidelines.

That’s not all. The new UAS regulations stipulate that hobbyists who register their drones must abide by certain rules. They must maintain a flight ceiling of 400 feet in elevation above sea level (not 400 feet from where you are standing), not fly within 5 miles of any airport or government building, and not fly directly over people or highways. The exemption further states that drones must not fly at a speed greater than 80 MPH, and that users maintain visual line of sight at all times, fly only during daylight hours, never around stadiums or sports complexes, and always have a dedicated observer during all flights to keep visual track of the UAS.

But wait, there’s more. Commercial drone operators who are granted the Section 333 exemption must also obtain and carry a Certificate of Waiver, issued with a granted Section 333, and must obtain an FAA Airman Certificate. That’s right, you need a pilot’s certification to fly your drone commercially. Don’t shoot me, I’m just deciphering the federal law. You can see screenshots of the UAS registration information on the FAA website in Figures 1.1 through 1.4





What this means is that the new drone regulations basically don't apply to any of us using our drones for commercial purposes, and we must still jump through hoops that have always been in place in order to fly and capture images with our drones legally. So the new regulations are basically only for enthusiasts who got a drone for Christmas this year and fly only for fun. Depending on where you live and your local laws, you may need to visit a local flight school to become certified for the Airman Certificate.

The FAA's website shows examples of Section 333 exemption applications that have been submitted, and also letters of approval so you can see who is actually licensed to fly their drones and what permits are pending. The information is very specific. Each applicant is required to list the type, model and serial number of the drone they intend to fly, for what purpose and what the final payload will be. If accepted, the FAA will authorize specific permission for what you have listed for a period of two years. You can see a portion of one such approval letter here detailing the permissions granted.

You'll have to affix your registration number someplace on your drone where it is plainly visible, and there is a \$5 fee to obtain the registration certificate. No sticker is provided, just a number that you can put on the drone by means of a marker, label, sticker or etching.

The FAA is also getting serious about giving everyone the right to declare their property, residential or commercial, as a "no drone zone," providing logos on its website that people can download to put on signs and stickers.

For a videographer like me, the new regulations pose a glaring issue. I'm not a pilot, nor do I think I will be taking a certification course to become one. Have you seen what it costs to learn to fly? It's cheaper for me to outsource my drone work to someone who holds the certifications, and let them assume all the risk and responsibility. For as little as I use my drone for wedding work and commercial ventures, I certainly won't be jumping through these hoops unless absolutely necessary. I won't be flying my drone illegally, either. You will likely find it listed for sale on Close5 or eBay soon.

Here's the text from the FAA's website detailing Section 333's requirement for the pilot's certification:

By law, any aircraft operation in the national airspace requires a certificated and registered aircraft, a licensed pilot, and operational approval. Section 333 of the FAA Modernization and Reform Act of 2012 (FMRA) grants the Secretary of Transportation the authority to determine whether an airworthiness certificate is required for a UAS to operate safely in the National Airspace System (NAS).

This authority is being leveraged to grant case-by-case authorization for certain unmanned aircraft to perform commercial operations prior to the finalization of the Small UAS Rule, which will be the primary method for authorizing small UAS operations once it is complete.

The Section 333 Exemption process provides operators who wish to pursue safe and legal entry into the NAS a competitive advantage in the UAS marketplace, thus discouraging illegal operations and improving safety. It is anticipated that this activity will result in significant economic benefits, and the FAA Administrator has identified this as a high priority project to address demand for civil operation of UAS for commercial purposes.



This is pretty clear, and it's a blow to all of us videographers and photographers who've been having great fun producing stunning aerial images with technology that is only getting better as demand increases.

In my video in this issue, I speak with Ray Adams, who's an FAA spokesman and president of the National Air Traffic Controllers Association Northeast Region (and also my older brother). We discuss these regulations and the misconception that commercial drone operators are required to do only what's required of hobbyists. ■

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Rob Adams is a New York City-based wedding cinematographer, commercial film producer and educator who has been producing wedding and corporate films for high-end clients for more than 17 years. Rob's visual storytelling style and knack for creating amazingly high-production value under pressure is industry-leading. He films and speaks around the world.

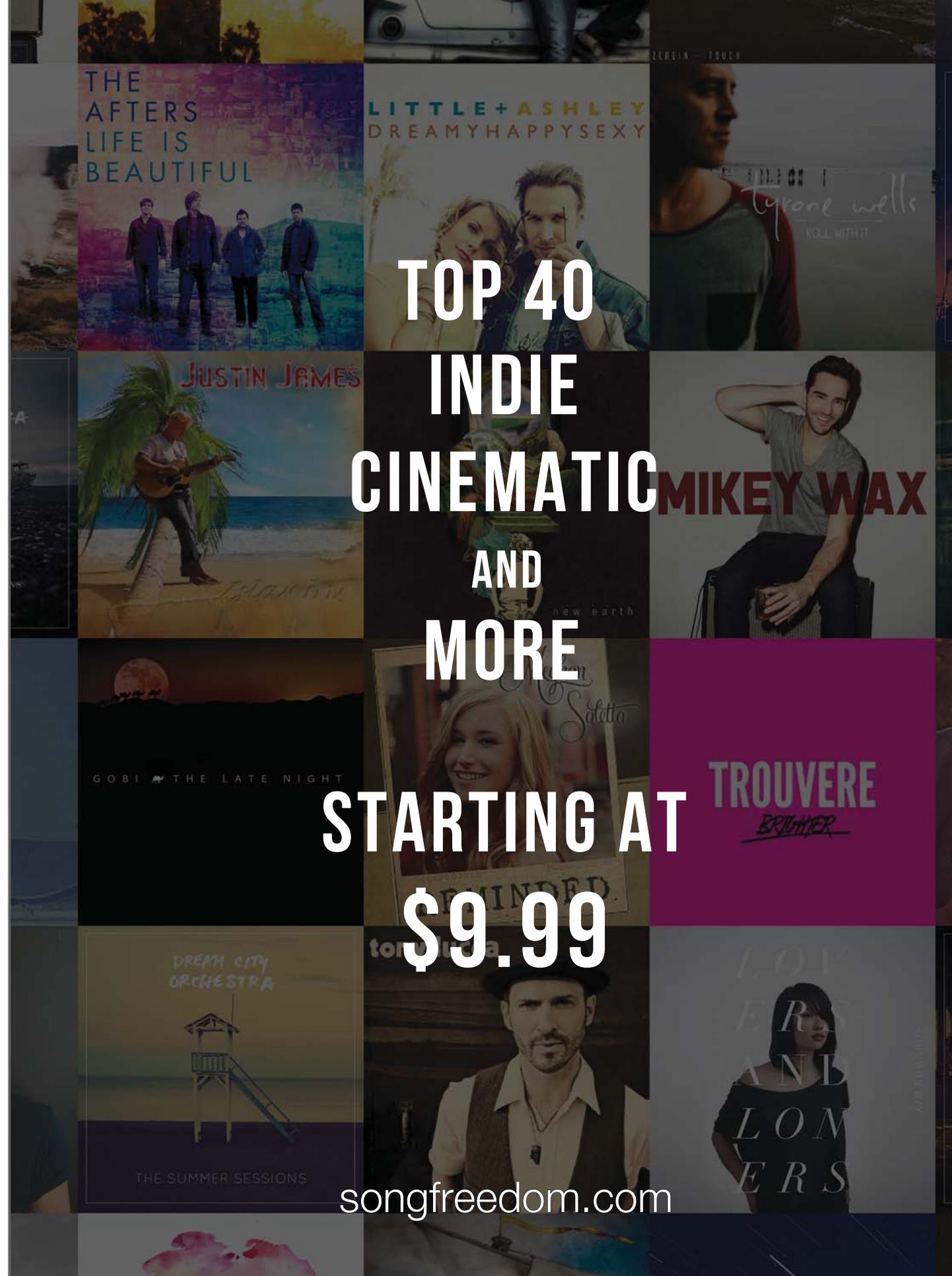
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