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– **Andy Strong**
Owner of A Strong Photo
& 17hats Member

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THE
CHILDREN
EDITION

Studio Samples



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Automate your scheduling in four easy steps.

STEP 1 SELECT YOUR SERVICE

Your leads or clients can book practically anything with the new 17hats Online Scheduling: consultations, reveal sessions and even portrait sessions.

Take back control over your calendar.

Sarah Bellum Photography
WEDDING SPECIALISTS

SERVICE DATE & TIME CONTACT INFO CONFIRMATION

Family Portrait Session
Our 30 minute family portrait session is perfect for families with small kids. With this session, we will visit one location in the Richmond area to capture genuine portraits of your family.

Extended Family Session
Our 60 minute extended family session will visit a variety of backdrops in the Richmond area giving your family a chance to capture all sorts of styles, from fun to candid.

Sarah Bellum Photography
sarah@17hats.com | (310) 123-4567 | sarahbellum.com

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17hats has done it again. Our new Online Scheduling feature makes it a snap to book any kind of appointment with clients. Say goodbye to the chaos you're used to with scheduling!

This innovative feature will be grandfathered in for existing 17hats members. And it's available as a module for new members who are ready to organize and systemize their business.

STEP 3 CAPTURE CONTACT'S INFO

17hats Online Scheduling turns days of back-and-forth emails into a minute or less.

Easier for clients.
Time-saving for you.

SERVICE DATE & TIME **CONTACT INFO** CONFIRMATION

Please enter your contact information below:

First Name: Mary Last Name: Little
Email: Mary.little@me.com Phone Number: 989-999-9090
Message (Optional): I look forward to seeing you then!

Your Family Portrait Session will be on Apr 27, 2019 at 5:40 PM

BOOK

Sarah Bellum Photography
sarah@17hats.com | 999-999-9090 | sarahbellum.com

STEP 2 CHOOSE A DATE & TIME

An at-a-glance schedule lets your clients see what dates and times you've made available.

Clients appreciate knowing their options.

Sarah Bellum Photography
WEDDING SPECIALISTS

SERVICE **DATE & TIME** CONTACT INFO CONFIRMATION

April 2019

Select Your Timezone: U.S. Pacific Time

Morning: 8:00 AM 8:40 AM 9:20 AM
Afternoon: 5:00 PM 5:40 PM
Evening: 6:20 PM 7:00 PM

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STEP 4 YOU CONFIRM OR RESCHEDULE

You always have the power to say yes or no. Online Scheduling puts you in control.

You get the final say.

Mary Little Family Portrait Session Sarah Bellum Photography Sat Apr 27, 2019 05:40 PM **PENDING**

Booking Info
Date/Time: Saturday April 27, 2019 at 05:40 PM
Email: Mary.little@me.com
Phone Number: (989) 999-9090
Client Message: I look forward to seeing you then!

Booking Actions
Confirm Booking
Reschedule Booking
Cancel Booking

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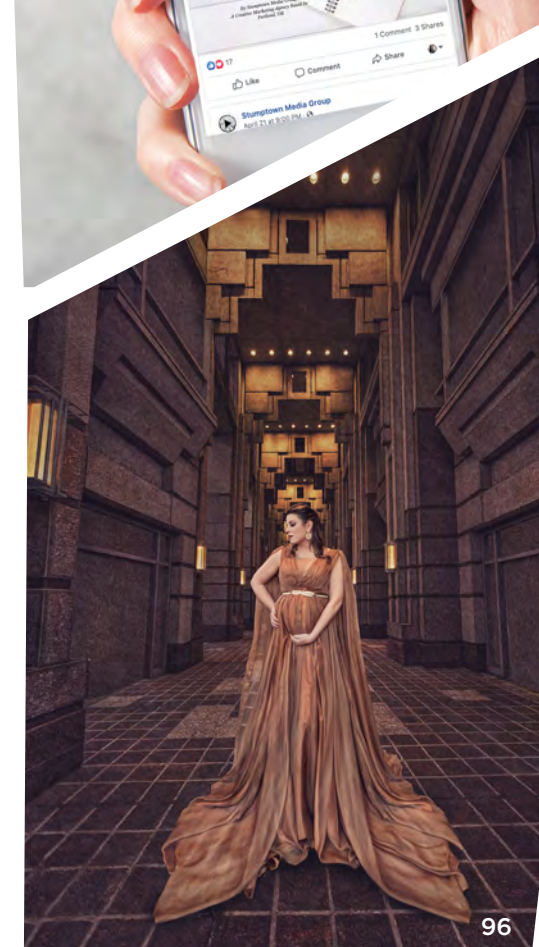
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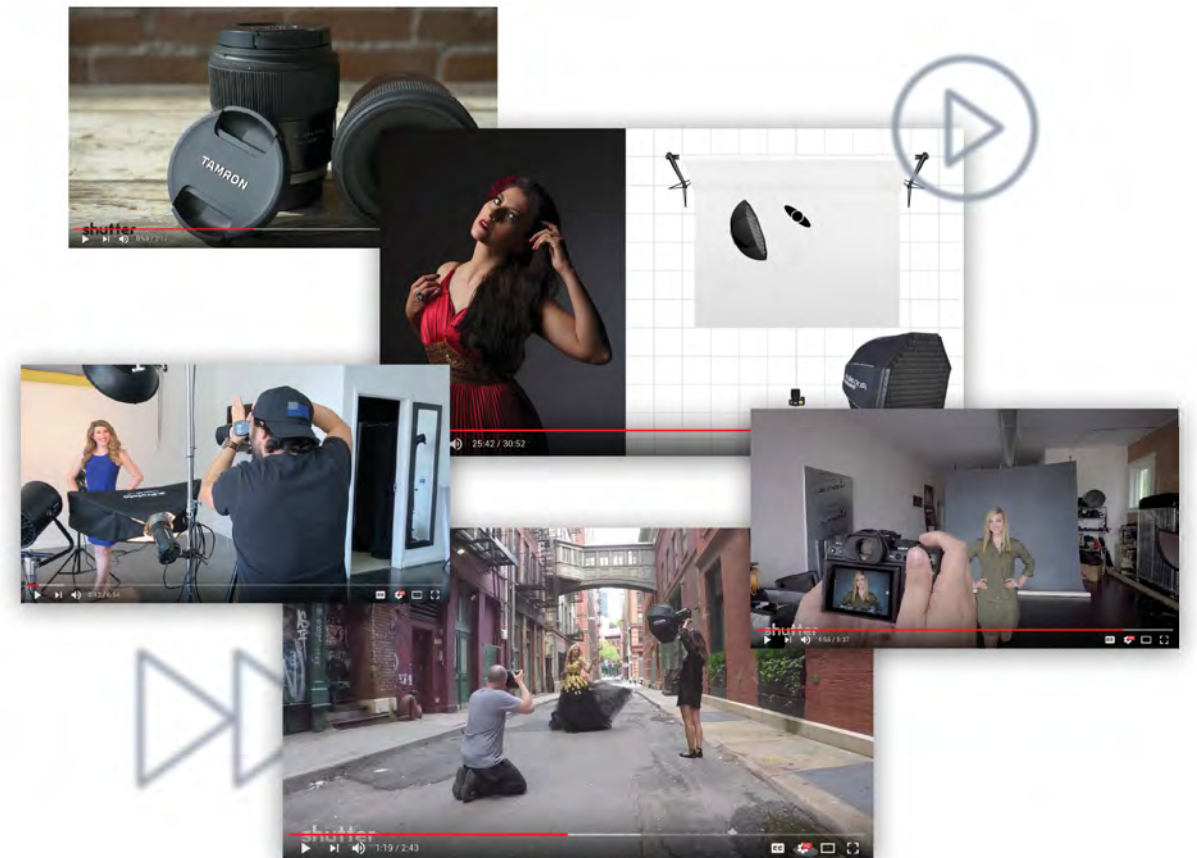
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MISSION STATEMENT

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

Shutter Magazine: By photographers, for photographers.

PUBLISHER Sal Cincotta	EDITOR-IN-CHIEF Alissa Zimmerman
LEAD DESIGNER Alicia Simpson	JR. DESIGNER Ellie Plotkin
ACCOUNT SPECIALIST Christine Gill	COPY EDITOR Dylan Garity
CONTRIBUTING WRITERS Vanessa Joy, Michael Anthony, Sal Cincotta, Skip Cohen, Jeff & Lori Poole, Christine Yodsukar, Michael Corsentino, Karen Bagley, Casey Dittmer, Dustin Lucas and Phillip Blume	

THE COVER



TITLE: "Triplets"
PHOTOGRAPHER: Crystal Reddick
WEBSITE: imago-dei-photography.com
CAMERA: Canon 5D Mark ii
LENS: Sigma 35 1.4 ART
EXPOSURE: f2.8 @ 1/200
LIGHTING: Paul C Buff Einstein E640 Monolight with an 86" PLM Umbrella
ABOUT THE IMAGE: The sweet baby in this image is a very loved Rainbow Baby named Valori. Valori's parents had eight miscarriages leading up to her birth, and she is the only surviving of a set of triplets. The eight pastel hearts over her head represent her eight siblings. The two pearls in the necklace represent her two identical brothers, and the rainbow-colored jewel represents Valori. After placing mom's special necklace in her hand, the baby placed her hand across her heart, as if thinking of her brothers.
CHILD: Valori

LAUNCH POINT

A message from the publisher

Image © Imago Dei Photography | Crystal Reddick

We are all children at heart.
Learn how to embrace your inner child &
be inspired to capture
more compelling images.
- Sal Cincotta



MEETING YOUR ANNUAL SALES GOAL

with Jeff & Lori Poole





**YOUR BUSINESS PLAN AND
SALES SYSTEM ARE LIVE...
TIME TO CHECK IN!**

For the past 12 months in The Business Corner, we’ve been building Your Dream Studio from the ground up. We started with your vision of your dream business (see The Business Corner articles from July and August 2018 for a discussion on business models and forecasting). With your unique vision in mind, we built your cost-based and demand-based pricing, and examined strategies for digital files (October, November, and December). Next, we built your sales system using your a la carte list (January), your bundled options (February), and your upselling strategies (March). In April and May, we translated all that theory into action with inquiries, consultations, and in-person sales. Now that your Dream Studio is fully live, it’s time to check in and see if your plans are actually working!

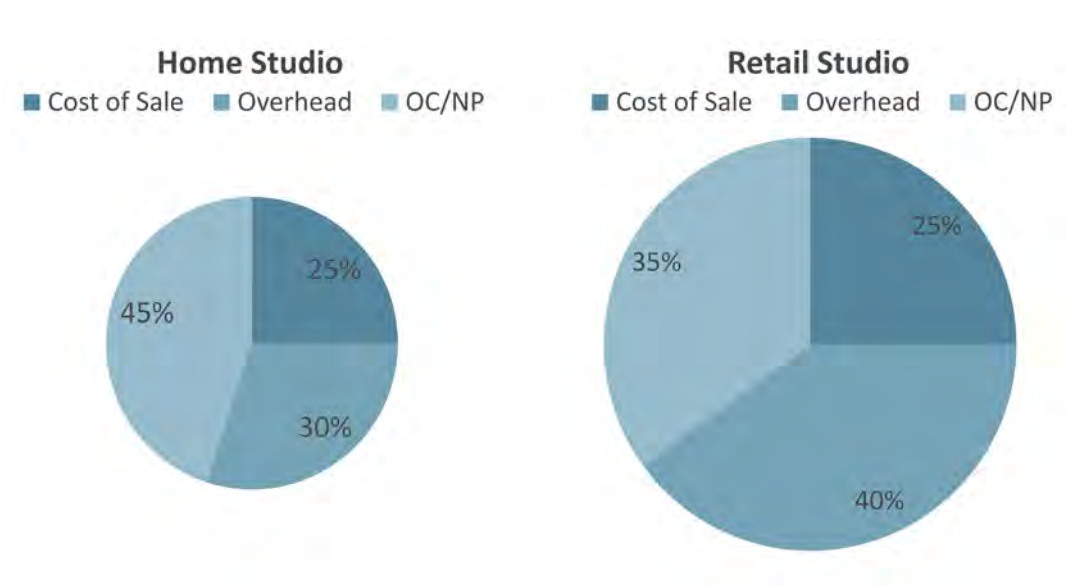
BACK TO THE BEGINNING

To analyze whether your sales system is accomplishing its goals, you need to revisit those goals that you set back at the beginning. In August, you set your initial goal based on your target take-home pay. Everything that has followed since then has been an attempt to meet that goal.

Let’s say your goal is a take-home pay of \$75,000. If you’ve been monitoring your expenses (September), and pricing your products appropriately (October-December), then your total expenses should now look something like this:

- Cost of Sale = 25% of Gross Sales (same for both home and retail studios)
- General Expenses = 30% of Gross for home-based studios/40% of Gross for retail studios
- Net Profit = 45% of Gross for home/35% of Gross for retail

The differences here are that home-based studios have lower overhead costs, but they also generally make less total income. Jeff and I like to say that home-based studios take home a bigger proportion of the pie; however, retail studios have a bigger pie.

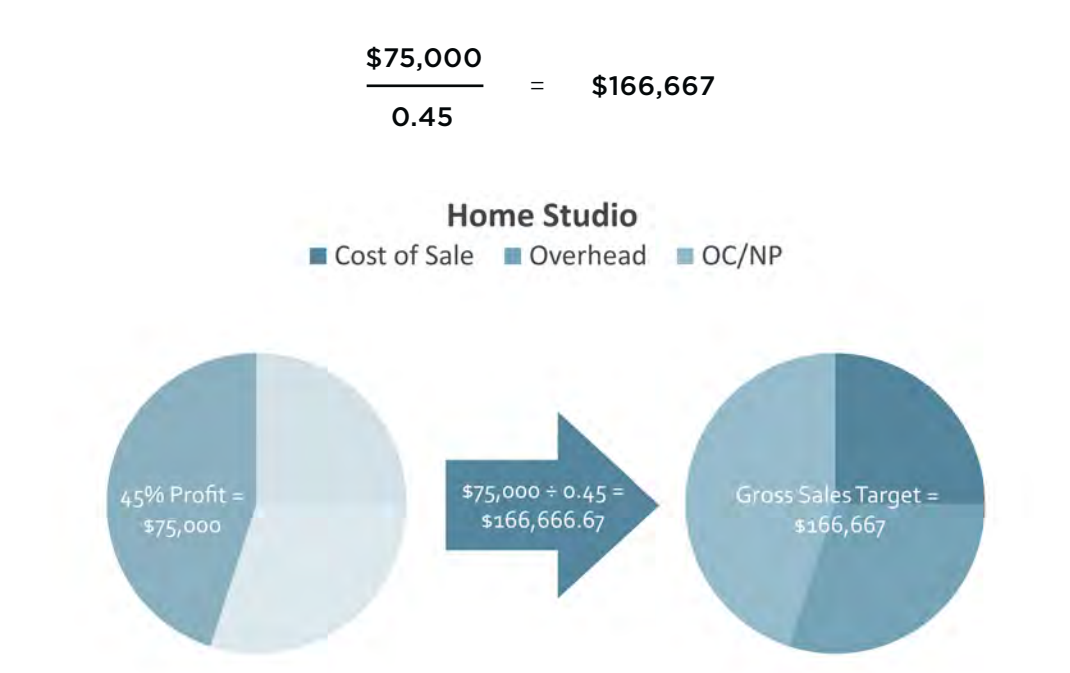


Breakdown of expenses for home-based and retail studios.

Now that you’ve been implementing your sales system for several months, you should be able to analyze your income and expenses to see if you’re making that 45% (or 35%) benchmark. If you are not, I recommend that you revisit the articles from September through December to get your income and expenses in line.

For the sake of this article, we are going to assume that you are a home-based studio wishing to keep 45% of your gross for a total net profit of \$75,000. You can easily adjust the formulas below by plugging in your own numbers if you keep a different percentage or wish to take home a different net profit.

Based on a target net profit of \$75,000, you can do the math to figure out your annual gross sales target. Simple divide \$75,000 by 0.45 to get \$166,667.



Calculating your annual sales target based on your desired net profit.

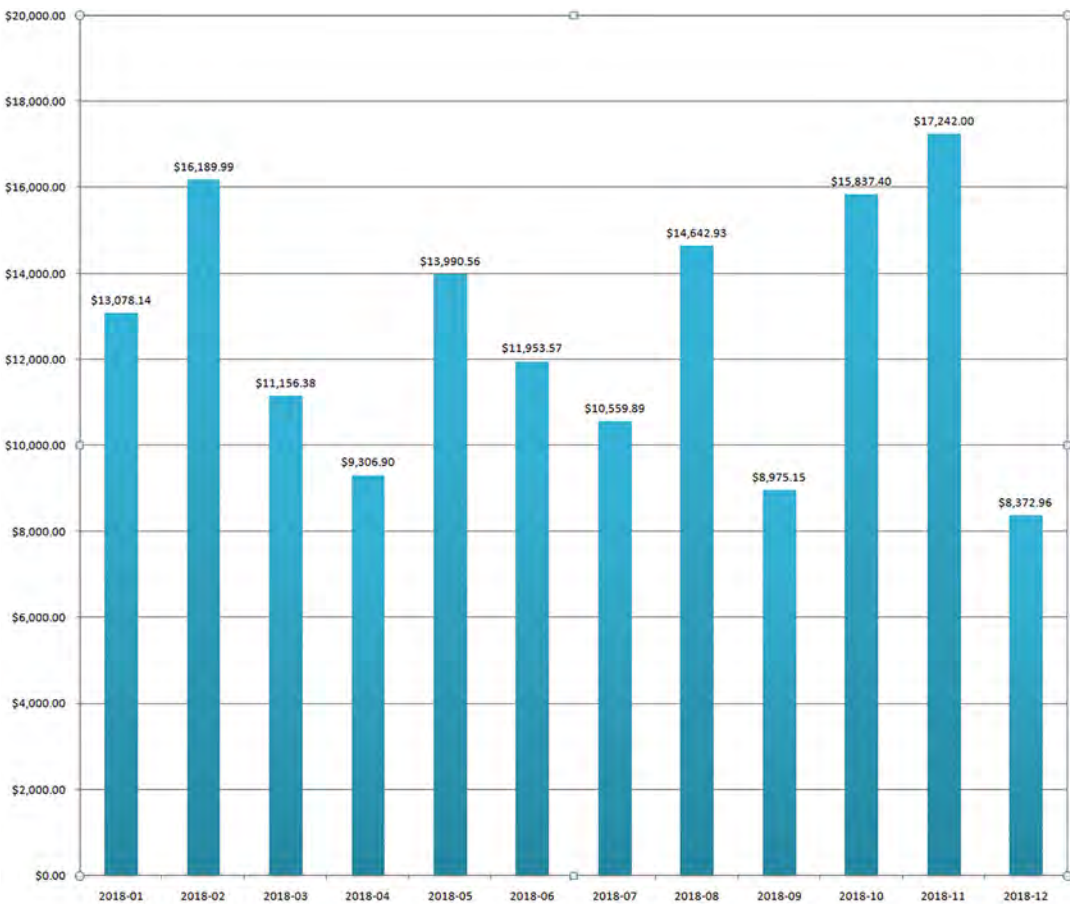
Let’s take this one step further. Let’s divide that annual sales target by 12 to get an idea of what you should be pulling in monthly to meet your goal.

$$\frac{\$166,667}{12} = \$13,889$$

How are you doing compared to your goal? Let’s find out.

YOUR MONTHLY SALES REPORT

Having goals is great, but it’s crucial to be able to check your progress against them. Jeff and I believe strongly that your CRM/studio management software/invoicing software MUST have the ability to generate financial reports. You cannot grow what you cannot measure. One report that is integral to meeting your goals is your monthly income. Generated over the course of a year, it should look like this:



Examining your monthly income in a graph helps you quickly identify weak months.

If your software generates the numbers in a table, but not a graph, you can have Excel plot a graph for you.

A visual representation of your monthly sales allows you to see at a glance how you’re doing. It also allows you to see seasonal trends in your business. If you see two or more months in a row of low sales, you can address that by trying to boost sales during your slow season. In this graph, you can easily see that this photographer met their \$13,889 goals in some months, but not others. There does not appear to be any seasonal trend in this graph.

Based on the information you see, ask yourself these questions:

- When are your low months?
- When are your high months?
- Is there a seasonal trend?
- How can you explain what you’re seeing in this graph? For example, do your low months correlate to family vacations or convention travel? If you’re a wedding photographer, do your high months correlate to booking season and wedding season? Are family portraits big in the fall? Seniors in the spring?
- Based on the answers to the previous questions, what strategies can you implement to meet your goals?

STRATEGY 1: EVEN OUT YOUR SEASONAL INCOME WITH PAYMENT PLANS

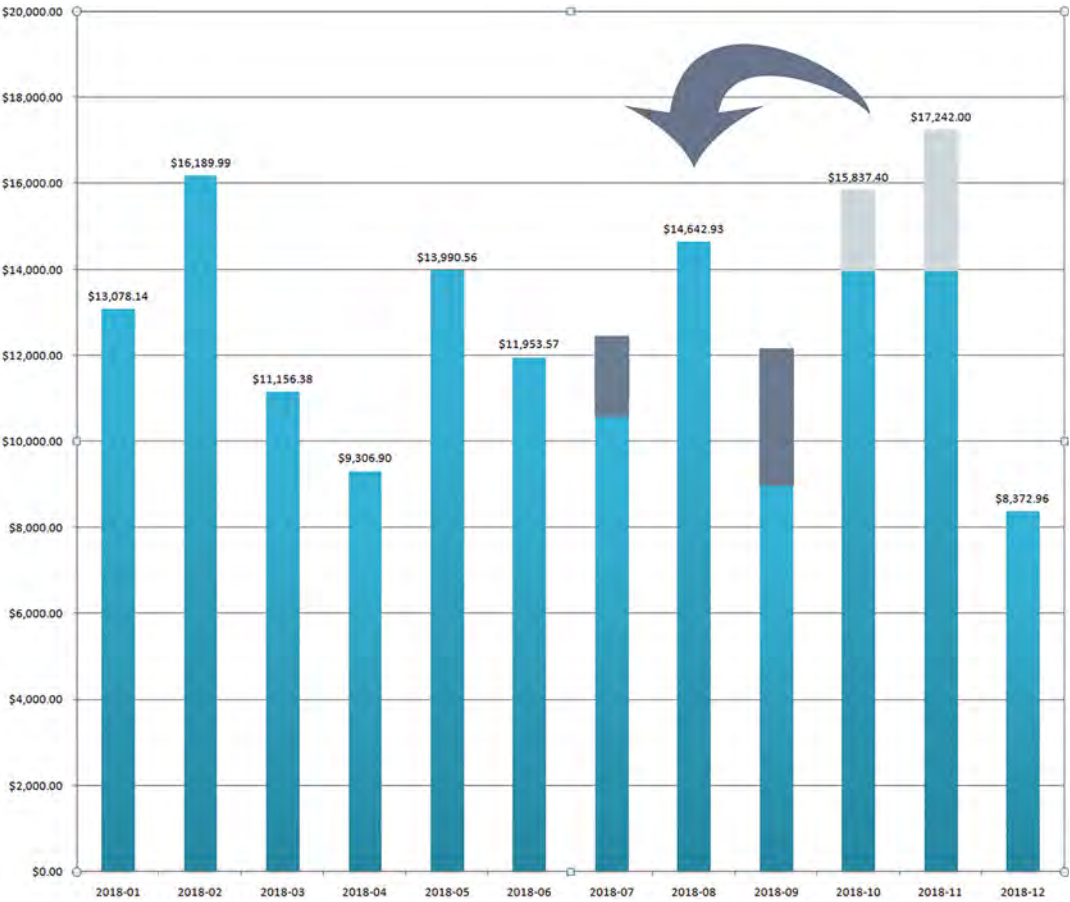
The first time that Jeff and I ran our monthly sales report, it confirmed what we already suspected: we were heavily seasonal. The majority of our income came from weddings at that time. Our payment structure was simple: a flat fee retainer to book, and the remaining balance due prior to the wedding. This led to three spikes in our income stream. The first spike was during booking season in January/February. The second spike was just prior to a rush of May weddings, and the third spike just prior to a rush of October weddings. May and October are the most popular wedding months here in Wilmington.

In addition to those peaks, we also had some serious valleys. Early summer, after our May rush, had dismal sales. Late fall, after our October rush, was similarly low. We began to joke and call those times of year “ramen noodle season.” Looking at the graph, I was able to see that each valley was about four months prior to our next peak.

An easy fix was to change up our payment structure for weddings. We still have the initial retainer. But now, we also require a percentage of the balance to be paid four months prior to the wedding date, and then the full balance still paid before the wedding. This helped even out our cash flow by reducing the extreme peaks and filling in the lowest valleys.

Think of other ways that you could encourage clients to send you money in your off-peak months. For instance, you could work on selling more albums after the wedding. You could even allow clients to break their album/product payments up over a few months, which spreads out that income further. If you go this route, I highly recommend that you not deliver their products until paid in full.

If you flip this scenario around, you can also work on payment plans that encourage payment prior to the session. For example, have your portrait client choose their product package at booking, and incentivize or encourage payment in full between booking and the session date.



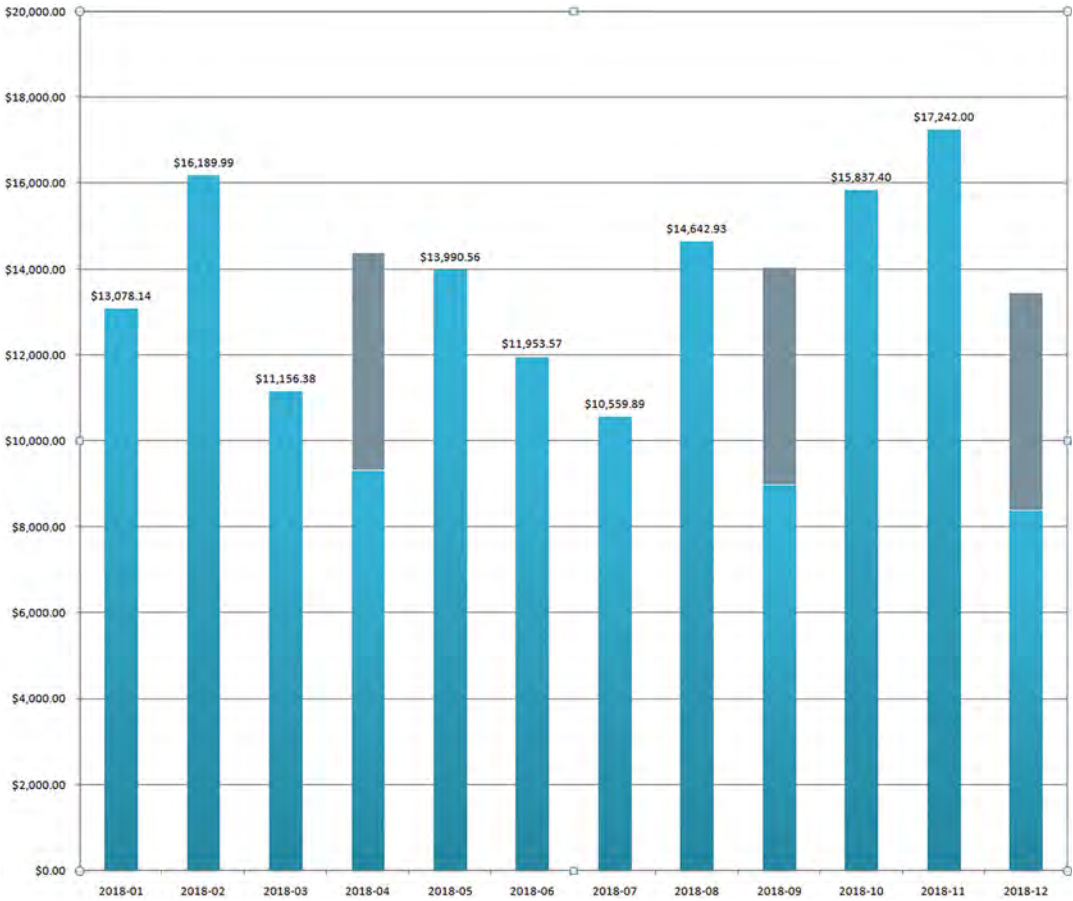
Use payment plans or other incentives to distribute income from peak months to low months.

STRATEGY 2: FILL THE GAPS WITH MARKETING EVENTS

Looking back at our imaginary photographer’s original monthly sales report, we can see that some months were well above the \$13,889 target; others were below. It’s not necessarily important that every month meet or exceed the target. Remember that we are working with both averages and totals. As long as the monthly income averages out to \$13,889, we would meet our total annual goal of \$166,667.

That being said, the months with the lowest total sales WILL translate to lean months for this photographer. Overhead will not decrease during these months, which means net profit will suffer and this photographer won’t get the take-home pay they are used to. A savvy business person will attack those low months first to bolster sales.

If we were to tally this photographer’s total annual sales, we would find that this photographer grossed \$151,305—only about \$15,000 short of their goal. I see three obvious low months—April, September, and December—so I would try to add \$5,000 to each of those low months to make that goal.



Fix shortages in income by targeting your leanest months with marketing events.

Can you come up with three marketing events that would make \$5,000 each? Perhaps to bolster April, you could run a campaign targeting seniors wanting portraits in May and June. Plan your event correctly, and you’ll be receiving your session fees and prepayment plans in April. Families love fall portraits in October and November. Again, plan your marketing so that you’re collecting income in September. A Valentine’s push for boudoir portraits can bolster your December income. For more on this, watch the video that accompanies this article!

STRATEGY 3: F*CKING HUSTLE AND MAKE IT HAPPEN

Get in the habit of running your monthly sales tally on a weekly basis, if not more frequently. Don't wait until the end of the month—or worse, the end of the year—to realize it's too late to meet your goal. When you look at these numbers frequently, you'll become more determined to exceed your targets.

The very first month I committed to doing this for boudoir, I beat my long-term goal. The second month, I realized that I would be just a couple grand shy of my goal, so I searched for ways to make it happen. Could I close a lead? Upsell an old client? Run a sale on wall portraits? I realized that I had an out-of-town client who was still trying to figure out when she could come to town for in-person sales. I called her and offered to do a virtual meeting with her, which she accepted. Of course, then I had to figure out how to do a virtual meeting...but I hustled and made it happen. Goal exceeded.

Keep an eye on your numbers, and challenge yourself to make it work when it's not looking good. Be proactive and keep up the hustle. Don't give yourself an out.

IT'S A JOB THAT'S NEVER DONE

This month marks the 12th installment of The Business Corner. That's one full year of vision, business planning, accounting, pricing, selling, and marketing. And after one full year, guess what: Keep going!

Truly successful business owners don't sit and passively wait for money to roll in. They also constantly revisit their goals, their strategies, and their progress. Coming up with a business plan is not a one-time deal; you don't just set it and forget it. This definitely holds true for photographers. Get in the habit of examining your goals, running your numbers, and measuring your progress. Depending on your results, either fix what's broken, or set a new, higher goal. Implement. Assess. Analyze. It might sound like a lot of work, but I guarantee the first time you meet your monthly goal, you'll be hooked. Then send me an email or pull me aside at ShutterFest and tell me all about how you love geeking out on your numbers. ■



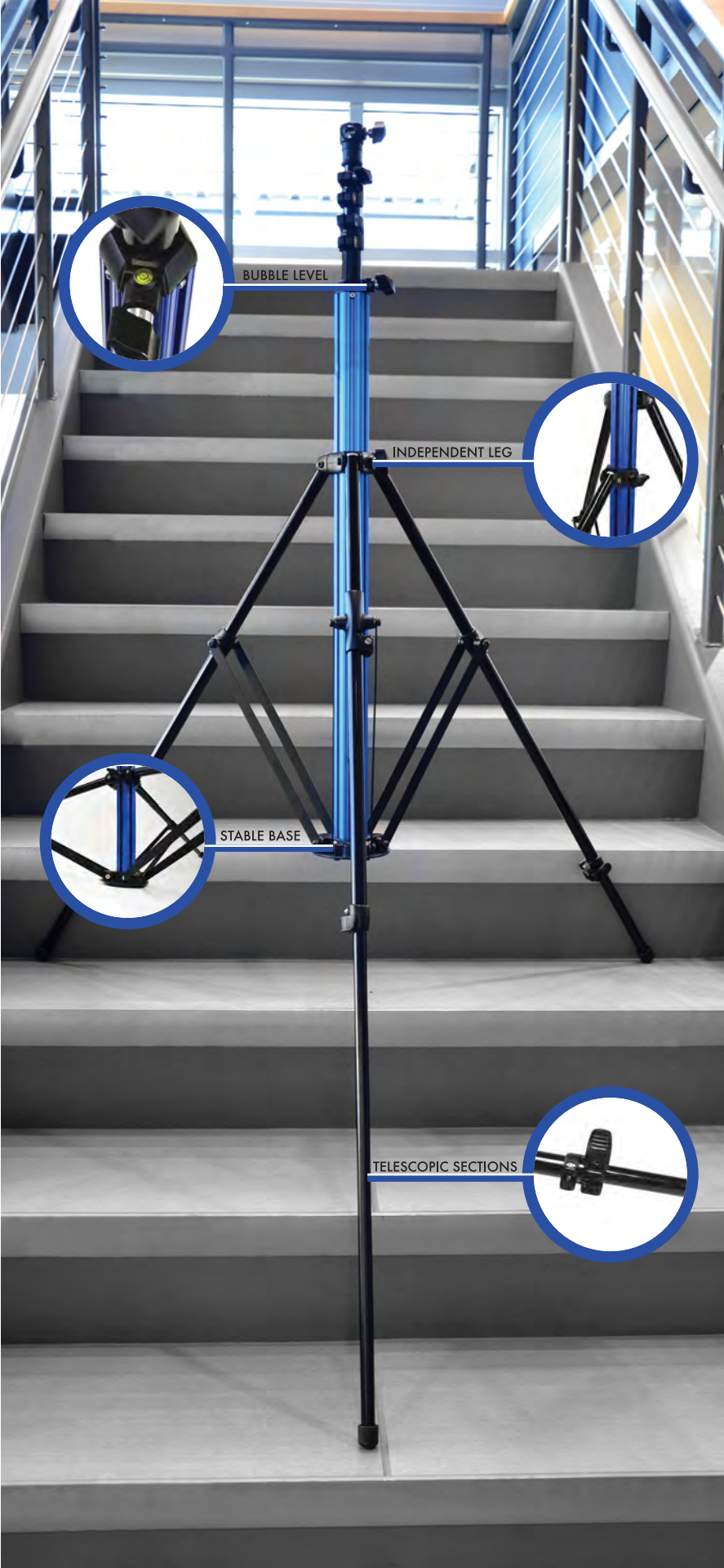
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Just a few years after Jeff and Lori found themselves struggling to survive while living in the basement of their studio, back in 2012, they are the proud owners of a brand-new home on the coast of North Carolina. The owners of Wilmington's Indigo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

indigosilverstudio.com



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product
spotlight

SIGMA with *Salvatore Cincotta*

SIGMA



Why the Sigma 40mm 1.4 Art Lens?

Fast and sharp, Sigma has yet again raised the bar with their new 40mm 1.4 Art lens.

The autofocus is insanely quick and when shot wide open it will produce stunning images you will love. However, this is not a small lens and with speed, comes size and weight because of the size of the glass. The size doesn't bother me at all, I am a huge fan of prime lenses - I find it worth the extra weight to get the extra speed. And of course, I love the milkiness of the final images.

Check out some of the images we produced, and I am sure you will agree, this Art lens is stunning and the 40mm focal length will give you a unique look for your portraits. It's worth a closer look in my opinion.

The Sigma 40mm F1.4 DG HSM Art is available for Sigma, Nikon, Canon and Sony E mount camera systems.



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For more information, visit sigmaphoto.com/40mm-f1-4-dg-hsm-i-art



Paying Attention to *Pricing and Profitability*

with Skip Cohen



Profitability doesn't happen when you're walking on bullshit!

- Jerry Martin

I'm writing this month's article after returning from ShutterFest last night. The energy at each conference is remarkable, and 24 hours a day you can find somebody working to capture the ultimate image. Equipment, models and an ideal location abound, but what happens when you're out of the SF environment? What happens when your responsibilities are back to the reality of being a business owner and you need to cover your expenses, provide for your family, etc.?

You'll never hear me say anything bad about working hard to develop your skill set. In fact, nothing I've written about over the years works unless you know what you're doing with your camera. But, here's what so many of you are missing—you've got to make money if this is going to be more than just a hobby.

So many of you have dreams of being a full-time photographer, but you can't afford to go full-time until you can't afford NOT to. That means your part-time income from photography has to exceed what you're making in your day job, so you have to go full-time or lose substantial revenue.

PRICING YOUR PRODUCTS/SERVICES

You shouldn't start anywhere but the very beginning. Sadly, most of you don't think about a starting point. For example, you look at the price of a print from your lab at three to four dollars and get excited because you're going to sell it at twenty! But through the whole process, while short-term that looks good on paper, you never consider your real costs, and in reality, you're losing money.

So, let's go back to the very beginning and look at everything it's taken to get you to this point today. Start by looking at everything you've invested. Here are 25 things to put on your list, and I'm betting most of you don't think about half of them!

Camera Gear	Lighting Gear	Accessories	Computer	Education
Phone	Website/Blog	Travel	Lab Costs	Insurance
Space*	Printed Material	Furniture	Supplies	Software
Utilities	Car	Gas	Legal	Accounting
Dues/Memberships	Advertising	Marketing	Costs From Outside vendors	Your Time

Working out of your home? There's still a cost and a percentage of your mortgage or rent.

Five years ago, Bryan Caporicci wrote a guest post for the Skip Cohen University blog about pricing and profitability. It’s still one of the most in-depth explanations about pricing I’ve ever shared. One area of importance is looking at what Bryan called “Influencing Factors.”

He shared the five factors below, which most of you never consider:

1. *THE QUALITY OF YOUR PHOTOGRAPHY AND THE FINISHED PRODUCTS THAT YOU PROVIDE.*

There is no room to compromise on the quality of any product or service you’re providing to a client. You’ve got to provide the best and always stay focused on exceeding client expectations and in turn making yourself habit-forming.

2. *YOUR PERCEIVED VALUE AS A PHOTOGRAPHER IN YOUR MARKETPLACE.*

No matter how good your work is, what’s the perceived value of what you’re providing? Does your work stand out from the crowd? What makes you different and better than your competitors?

3. *HOW CONFIDENT YOU ARE.*

The issue isn't whether or not your lack of confidence is real, but whether or not it's justified. If you really do lack the skill set, but you're serious about building a business, then you may have entered the market too early. This isn't a career path where you can fake it 'til you make it. One unhappy consumer who realizes they bet on the wrong horse can influence hundreds if not thousands of other people.

If your lack of confidence is deserved because you don't have the skills yet, then you shouldn't be in business. Your reputation is your most valuable asset—don't screw it up. Take the time for more workshops. Read everything you can related to what you're missing. Watch every video you can find, and take advantage of online education. Practice nonstop and learn every aspect of your gear. Be a second shooter and learn the skills you need for confidence.

Now, if you lack confidence simply out of fear, start getting involved with your local photographer's group. Most communities have a group of professional photographers who meet monthly. Get involved in the various forums on Facebook, and share your work. Utilize your network together with your ShutterFest family.

Being a business owner isn’t for the faint of heart. Even if you’re working freelance, you still own a business focused on providing something to a target audience.

4. *WHAT YOUR COMPETITORS ARE CHARGING.*


Your success competing in your market isn’t just about pricing—it’s about the perceived value, your reputation, and how you stack up against other artists.

Low-ball pricing might bring you some instant business in the short run, but eventually, it will destroy what you're trying to build, not to mention undermine the strength of the market. If you want to build a strong reputation, build it on the quality of your products, your services, and the experience people have working with you. Look for added value to the pricing equation, NOT discounting. Talk with your lab, album company, and framer about new products.

5. *YOUR COST-OF-GOODS.*


The foundation for cost-of-goods is up top with that partial list of 25 cost items you’ve already invested in, but some are a foundation for all your business, while other costs are specific to that one print, canvas or album you’re selling.

As Sal Cincotta once said, “If you’re starting your business off and you want to start off on the wrong foot, get your pricing wrong!”



PROFIT IS NOT SOMETHING TO ADD ON AT THE END, IT IS SOMETHING TO PLAN FOR IN THE BEGINNING!

- DesigninganMBA.com



PROFITABILITY

No single article, video or even workshop/conference can take you through everything you need to think about when it comes to pricing and profitability. One thing I repeatedly discovered at ShutterFest was the number of photographers who are putting everything into the capture and creation of an image, but not the same effort into building a business.

Yes, that’s a foundation of what ShutterFest is all about, and it’s a remarkable event for hands-on shooting and developing your skill set, but there are also plenty of business and marketing classes each year, plus SF Extreme. You’ve got to think through how to price your products; what products/services you’re going to offer and how you are going to make money.

When it comes to profitability, it’s not how much you make but how much you keep. And, for those of you who are part-time photographers, you still have to think like a full-time artist and charge a reasonable amount to keep a roof over your head without the subsidy of your day job.

That means working closely with your lab on buying the right products for your audience. It’s about taking advantage of special promotions from retailers, maintaining consistent cash flow, and often renting vs. buying expensive equipment. Partnerships can also help, especially with direct mail and promotional efforts, along with all your marketing efforts.

And, when it comes to your fear of pricing, Simon King, a photographer from the UK, wrote an excellent post for me once: “Are You a Photographer Needing to Act More Like a Head Chef?”

“When I go out for a nice meal, I expect the head chef to know his art, and I’ve chosen the restaurant based upon the menu and the establishment’s reputation. I don’t, on entering the premises, start negotiation on my meal and ask to chop and change the menu…”

The second comparison is the one on price. There may be two very similar restaurants in the area, but one is twice as expensive as the other. So would many of us go to the high-end restaurant and state that the other one is similar and much cheaper and then ask for a price match? The response you would get to that is "NO, just book the other restaurant…”

Remember, most head chefs cook because they love cooking, but they would never consider being dictated to by the customer. Most photographers love what they do first and foremost, but maybe we should all behave a little more like a head chef!”

Starting a new business as a photographer is overwhelming, but what good is working to create the most beautiful images of your life if nobody knows who you are and you can’t sell your products and services? ■



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youtube.com/btsShutterMagazine



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

Panasonic | LUMIX

LUMIX G9
Imagined by Creators.
Built by LUMIX.



For the past 10 years, creators like you have helped Panasonic to design and build LUMIX G mirrorless cameras. And now, we are Changing Photography together. The **LUMIX G9**’s massive 80mp RAW capture is ushering LUMIX toward a new era of image quality and creative control.

Where will LUMIX take you? | [#wherelumixgoes](https://twitter.com/wherelumixgoes)

Photo Credit | Charles Maring
LUMIX G9, LUMIX G LEICA DG VARIO-ELMARIT 12-60mm, F2.8-4.0 ASPH. , POWER O.I.S. (H-ES12060)



Why Do We Fail?

with Sal Cincotta



We all fail at some point. Even the most successful people fail. What most people don't realize is that successful people fail more than most. It sounds counterintuitive, I am sure, but it's reality nonetheless.

As cliché as it sounds, failing truly is about getting one step closer to success. Failing is about ruling out yet another variable in the equation. However, the word failure for most people is up there with vomit, worthlessness, and a host of other derogatory words. Now, I am not encouraging you to love failure or even relish in it, but I am encouraging you to think a little differently about how you can understand why we fail and what you can do to use it to drive your own success.

FAILING BECAUSE OF FEAR.

I have seen it time and time again. Fear paralyzes people. They are so afraid of making a mistake that they inevitably make the very mistake they were afraid of making. For example, I have someone very close to me who panic orders every time we go to a new restaurant and the waiter shows up to take our order. She knows what she likes and doesn't like. Yet, because of her fear of making a mistake and ordering something she won't like, she inevitably orders something she has never had before. It's like walking into a pancake house, specifically for the pancakes, and when the waiter shows up you panic and order chicken strips.

Why? People handle fear in all sorts of quirky ways. Some people have it in their head that they need to be adventurous, but then just when the moment arises they self-destruct, crippled by fear.

Another example would be someone so crippled by fear that they never even try. How sad is that? The fear of making a mistake, the fear of the unknown, the fear of what will happen if you choose the wrong door stops you from even trying. Even worse are people who won't admit that this is what they are doing. It becomes so second nature that they don't even realize they are disengaging to avoid the pain of fear. There is truth in the statement, "You will never fail if you never try."

While that is one way of looking at it, I suggest we think about it this way instead. Success is truly a journey. Now, that success can come in many ways. Ever meet that person who things just seem to come easy to? Yeah, we all hate that person. At some point, that person will find failure. They might be farther along the path than you are, but until they find failure, they will never know true success. I'll dig into that a little later.

Whatever you do, push past the fear of failure. One step, one day at a time. Fear, like confidence, is a habit. Confident people tend to be confident about everything. Optimistic people are optimistic about everything. And of course, pessimistic people are, you guessed it, pessimistic about everything. Now as for me, personally, I consider myself a "skeptimist." I am skeptically optimistic. I think as an entrepreneur, you have to be. Be skeptical with what you do, but see the big picture and be optimistic about it.

Fear can and will cripple you. Embrace it. Let it motivate you to be better. And realize, 99 percent of the time, it's going to be ok if you fail. Tomorrow will bring another chance to get it right.





FAILING BECAUSE OF PRIDE.

Pride. Man, this is a nasty one for sure. Pride gets in the way of people's growth all the time. The funny thing is, the very people I am talking to in this article will read this and be convinced I am not talking about them. That's because we all have a self-defense mechanism built inside us. If you find yourself making excuses and blaming others because of your shortfalls, then you are the person I am talking to.

This is even worse than those inflicted with fear. At least they are being honest with themselves, but the prideful person is so delusional about their results that any realistic assessment of the results is nearly impossible.

Again, we have to circle back to the process of failing and understanding that it's part of the pain process of learning and growing. Imagine if you didn't have pain receptors in your hand and you placed your hand over a gas burner—you would have no way of knowing your hand was on fire and your skin was literally melting off your bones. You would not have the information you'd need to course correct and remove your hand from the fire. I guess you would eventually smell it, but again, that is a receptor reporting back to the brain what is going on. When you are filled with pride and make excuses for your failings, you are in essence blocking those pain receptors and preventing yourself from correcting course. You will never learn because it is never your fault.

Make no mistake—this is a character flaw. You have to want to fix this. If you want to be successful, you have to be willing to accept fault and be committed to analyzing the results for one thing: truth. Whenever I fail, I take a step back and look at—Why? What went wrong here? What did we do right? What did we do wrong? What could we have done better? Notice, nowhere in here am I saying or implying or asking: What wasn't my fault? That is useless in the pursuit of truth.

Now, I suppose you could read this and counter my argument with, "What if there was an earthquake and my car got swallowed up and my house keys were in the car and then the city poured concrete over the hole my car was in..." Yeah, I get it. Shit happens. But, if we are being honest with one another, we can all agree that this is a true one-off situation. Probably 99.999 percent of the time, the piece that was not your fault is going to prove irrelevant to the process. I very rarely spend my time trying to dissect that. Instead, I am trying to understand, address, and perfect the things I can control. Pride gets checked at the door. Once that happens, you are on a path to success. Why? Because now you can adjust your course as needed. Your failures will lead to your final destination: success.

FAILING AS PART OF THE PROCESS.

Which leads us right to this moment. Failing is without a doubt part of the path to success. Like I alluded to earlier, we all know that person who things come easy to. Those people will eventually fail.

Don't measure yourself against anyone else. Compete against yourself. I am not sure how many of you play golf, but golf is a game of strokes. Every time you swing the club, it's a stroke. A professional golfer might score a 65 on a golf course, whereas a weekend warrior might score a 145 on the same course. They each have their own path to follow. Each will fail at completely different points. Golf comes easier to one vs. the other. If the two of them were to play side-by-side, they would not be competing against one another, right? I mean, that would be one-sided for sure. So, if you are the person swinging 145 times, you would get discouraged very quickly if you were comparing yourself to the person swinging 65 times.



This is my point. Instead of discouraging yourself by comparing yourself to others, focus on you. If you scored a 145 today, your goal for tomorrow should be to shoot a 144. A 143 the day after, and so on. Each and every day, examine where you made mistakes and failed, and course correct. Adjust, adjust, adjust.

Now, of course, this is a golf analogy, and I know this is a bunch of photographers I am talking to. So, apply this to your photography, apply this to your business. Where are you failing? Remove the ego. Remove the pride. Remove the fear. Keep it simple—Where do you need to get better? Is it sales? Marketing? Or more on the technical side of our craft? Put a list of your top five areas for improvement together, and attack them with vigor. List out your weaknesses and put an action plan together.

I realize you may have many things you want to work on at the same time, but in my experience you can only focus on three to five things at a time. Don't overdo it here.

My philosophy has always been to "fail hard and fail quick." Get that crap out of the way. The sooner you fail and make mistakes, the quicker you can course correct. How you measure success or failure will be different by task, so make sure you have a way to measure your results. Some will be financial, some will be technical, and others will be more opinion based. All are ok. Just make sure you are operating with a simple goal: to be better than you were the day before. Be curious, look for what you did wrong vs. what you did right, make the adjustments, and try again.

I promise you, if you do this and make this a habit, you will not only improve quickly, but fear and pride will give way to confidence and unprecedented success!

Go get 'em! ■



Sal Cincotta is an international award-winning photographer, educator, and 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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FACE-TO-FACE

MARKETING FOR PHOTOGRAPHERS

with Michael Anthony

Whenever I get an opportunity to talk about business to photographers, I always ask the same question: What are the challenges that you are currently experience in your business? The answer is always the same: How can I find clients who are willing to pay my prices?

If you are reading this article, you are likely in one of two camps—either you have been doing this for a while and you are now looking to expand your business, or you are just starting out and need some advice finding your first clients.

There is one truth to marketing above all others: No marketing that you do in your business will be a silver bullet. To have a consistent flow of clients coming into your business, you will definitely need to put work in. I want to get that out of the way, because if you read this article expecting a simple solution for finding new clients, then you may end up being disappointed. Instead, I am going to show you a few long-term strategies that helped us specifically when we were initially ramping our business in 2014-2016, and strategies that we continue to employ today.

There are three different avenues in today's marketing environment. One is online marketing, such as Facebook, Google, e-mail campaigns, etc. Then there is print advertising, like local vendor books, magazine ads, billboards, and direct mail. But today, I want to focus on the most effective type of marketing for those of you who have a limited budget. I call it Face-to-Face Marketing.

To many, the thought of putting yourselves out there can be daunting, especially if you are by nature an introvert. Face-to-Face Marketing often will require you to shed that dynamic if it is part of your personality. But being a good networker does not mean that you have to be a salesperson. In fact, I recommend just the opposite—if you want to be good at marketing, you simply have to be likable.





IDENTIFY YOUR OPPORTUNITIES

Networking with sources of potential business is not hard, but before you can even get started you need to know where to look. As a wedding photographer, my efforts have always been focused on identifying sources that were ahead of us in the booking process. We developed relationships with local gown shops, catering managers and event coordinators. Network marketing actually takes a bit of time, so you want to make sure that the relationships that you begin to cultivate will pay off for you long-term. Identify venues or planners that share a similar business philosophy to yours and do enough volume of business to be able to send you multiple referrals throughout a year.



LEARN THE RULE OF RECIPROCITY

All networking can be successful, but before you begin forming relationships, understand that in order to see results, you will need to give much more than you expect to ever receive. People like working with others who help solve problems for them, and by identifying those pain points, you can develop a strategy to help your partners overcome them.

Let’s use a pretty common example—almost every single vendor that I work with tells me that they have a hard time getting images back from their vendors. Last November, when speaking at Wedding MBA to a room of over 1,000 venue owners, they told me that many photographers would never send them images in a timely manner. In today’s world, the one that is fastest will always win the business.

So with that knowledge, offer better service than your competitors by getting images to your venues and planners IMMEDIATELY after an event.

But let’s take this a step further. What else do small business owners need? Headshots, promotional video, marketing materials, and images for their walls. As a photographer, you are able to provide all of these things to them. Give, give, give, and eventually, human nature dictates that they will give back to you.

DEVELOP A REPEATABLE WORKFLOW

In business, organization is key to your success, and you probably often talk about things that you “should” be doing in business, but are not, and the reason for that is often because you are not organized in your workflow.

When you work an event with other vendors, you should be using your clients to gather information about their vendor team so that you are able to use it to network. Our clients fill out a questionnaire that gives us everything from their vendor’s web URL to their Instagram username. That allows us to communicate, tag, reach out, and network with them. If there is a vendor that we continuously work with, then I often will reach out to them to set up a meeting to deliver photos, and during that meeting, I begin finding out about their pain points, as mentioned above. Having the common ground of working together on a job should be the only information that you need to get your foot in the door. Once you do, make sure that you are working to provide them with everything they need.

Most of all, be consistent. You should be reaching out in some form or fashion to every vendor that could potentially give you business after working an event with them in order to, at the very least, establish a working relationship.

Utilizing services such as 17Hats, or project management software like Asana, you can stay organized and on top of different tasks in your business. I can’t stress how important organization is, especially when getting into a groove during the introduction of a new workflow.

BE EVERYWHERE

This is F2F Marketing 101—if you want your local community to notice you, then you have to be everywhere in your local community. Let’s just say you are a corporate photographer, and your business relies on headshots. In that case, I would make sure that I was attending every single networking event in my local community, and even consider donating time to charity events and offering heavily discounted coverage for non-profits.

By working in your community and being at all of the places where your potential clients or referral sources are located, you send the message that you care about your business and that you will take care of your clients. Furthermore, as the Rule of 7 goes, you give others more opportunities to see your business and brand, trying to get to that magic number of seven, which helps them to realize that you are an expert in your field.

We started our brand SoCal Headshots back in 2016, and our goal was to grow it once our wedding business had scaled to a point where we were happy. This year we decided to allocate resources to it, and the largest resource would be personnel, because starting a new photography line would require us to put significant time into its growth. However, being that there is huge opportunity there, it’s well worth the effort.



So the first thing Jen did was join our local chamber of commerce, BNI, rotary, and industry associations. The second thing she did was buy tickets to 30 events over the first month we were home from Shutterfest. This included dinners, lunch-ins, charity events and fundraisers. We also purchased booth space at business expos throughout the Santa Clarita Valley, where our studio is located.

We know that if we want to compete with the local photographer who currently shoots all of the business headshots in our area, we are going to have to work harder than them. That's fine, because it's what we love to do. But make no mistake, if you are afraid to put yourself out there, business will never magically come to you, and if you can't get out of your shell, you have two options: Hire an amazing salesperson, or go work for one.

BUILD RELATIONSHIPS THAT WILL LAST

One of the things that I firmly believe in is that if you walk into any relationship expecting them to owe you something like referrals, that relationship will never last long-term. You have to be authentic and focus on helping colleagues solve problems in order to get long-term results from your relationships with them.

Once you do develop a relationship, and those relationships turn into business opportunities, then please remember to be thankful for them. We always send a handwritten thank you card and a gift to vendors that are nice enough to refer us, and that mentality has helped us to secure exclusivity deals with some of the most popular venues in our area. If you are delivering good service, and you are showing vendors that you are thankful for the business they give you, then you will likely create more opportunities for your business to grow in the future.

THE MINDSET OF A MARKETER

As a business owner, there really isn't a more important task than marketing. You never know where your next paycheck will come from, so it's up to you to be the person selling yourself. The more relationships that you form, the better chance you will have of building new business, so keeping that in mind, shift your mindset to that of a marketer in order to recognize opportunities when they come about. Once you recognize an opportunity, it will be much easier to capitalize on it. ■



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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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Stand Tall



2nd Place | Bree Zamora
Sacrifice



3rd Place | Bob Younger
Barlo Baginses

PHOTOJOURNALISM | WEDDING



1st Place | Adam Sachs
Facebook Official



2nd Place | Michael Anthony
Love at 80



3rd Place | Adam Sachs
Big Day

PORTRAIT | ANIMALS



1st Place | Jen Hargrove
Lazy Days



2nd Place | Jen Hargrove
Shoosh, I'm Trying to Ignore You!

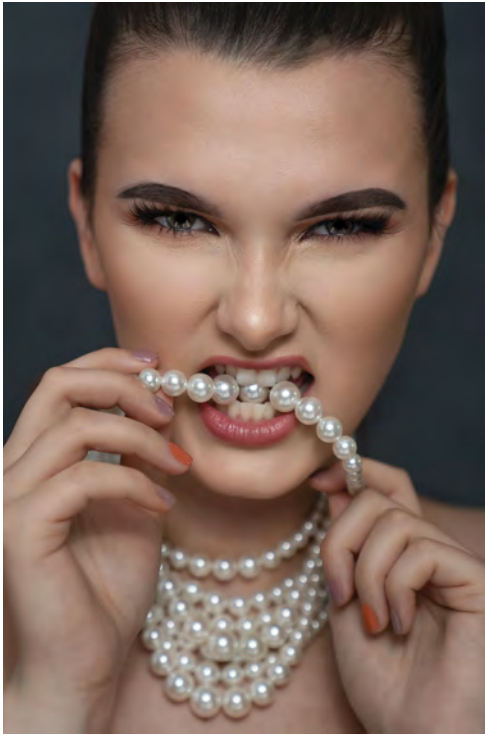


3rd Place | Alyssa Harrington
Expression of Fall

PORTRAIT | BEAUTY



1st Place | Geanina Salceanu
Amber



2nd Place | Jen Rutledge
Are These Even Real?!?



3rd Place | Miguel Quiles
Flower Queen

PORTRAIT | CHILDREN



1st Place | Kirsten Peterson
Simply Innocence



2nd Place | Andrea Sollenberger
Personality Unveiled



3rd Place | Mark Boughton
Galaxies In Her Eyes

PORTRAIT | ENGAGEMENT



1st Place | Michael Anthony
On Our Way

PORTRAIT | GROUP OR FAMILY



1st Place | Casey Dittmer
Three Sisters Be



2nd Place | Frank Carrino
Power Couple



3rd Place | Rob & Deanna Lyons
It's Time

PORTRAIT | HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS/TEENS



1st Place | Melissa Kelly
Big Top Red



2nd Place | Jessica Robertson
Elastigirl



3rd Place | David Beckham
Kenzi's Prom Dress

PORTRAIT | INDIVIDUAL



1st Place | Jen Hargrove
No Sacrifice too Great



2nd Place | Ivan Duran
Godless



3rd Place | Michael Anthony
Dance Like Nobody Is Judging You

PORTRAIT | MATERNITY



1st Place | Casey Dittmer
Hump and a Bump



2nd Place | Casey Dittmer
Green Glow

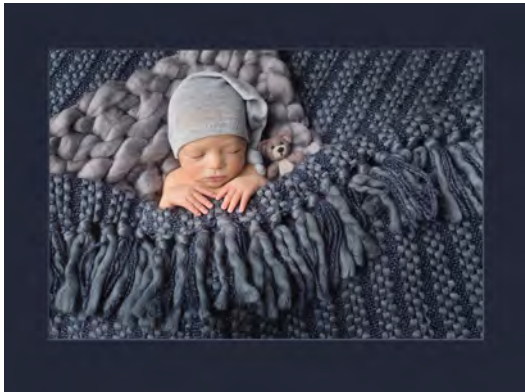


3rd Place | Casey Dittmer
Cloaked in Darkness

PORTRAIT | NEWBORN



1st Place | Crystal Reddick
Nine Loved Babies



2nd Place | Lori Dunbar
snug



3rd Place | Melissa Inskeep
Snuggle Bunny

WEDDING | BRIDE OR GROOM ALONE



1st Place | Michael Anthony
Stairway to Eternity



2nd Place | Michael Anthony
Flora



3rd Place | Michael Anthony
A Concert of Triangles

WEDDING | COUPLE TOGETHER



1st Place | Michael Anthony
Gone Too Soon



THE CHILDREN EDITION

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THE 4 SECRETS OF *Child-Whispering*

with Phillip Blume





Photographing children used to stress me out. Don't get me wrong, I've always loved kids! I would happily play all day with them, giving piggyback rides or pushing them on the swing set. But if you put a camera in my hands around them, I would suddenly lose all control. I tried to use a sweet voice and give simple directions, but I just couldn't keep their attention anymore.

Now, everything is different. There's truly no subject I enjoy photographing more than children. And my personal experience is 180-degrees different—I'm in control again.

So what changed? Let's just say nine years of fatherhood and eleven years of photographing children helped me develop a few strategies to consistently regain control over my young subjects. In short, I became a "child-whisperer."

Sometimes my child-whispering strategies feel like magic, but it's nothing you can't learn. So let's look at just a few techniques to help you become a child-whisperer, too!



1. SHARE THE BIG SECRET

When a family arrives on location for portraits, whom do you greet first? You usually greet the adults first, right? But kids are tuned in to every nonverbal cue we give, and our greetings say a lot. They immediately communicate whose relationship we value most. So I always greet the kids first by name. The parents can wait—believe me, they won’t be offended. In fact, they’ll likely be impressed by your attention to their kids and the positive effect it has.

I waste no time. As soon as I meet the kids, I share with them The Big Secret. I can’t believe I’m even sharing this with you for free, because The Big Secret is priceless. I’m usually giggling to myself when I share it, and it goes something like this: “Listen! Do you guys want to play a trick on your mom and dad? They think we’re just going to take normal pictures. So don’t tell them! But we’re really gonna surprise them and make them laugh a lot, okay?”

The wider your eyes are as you share The Big Secret, the wider the kids’ eyes will become as their imaginations begin to run wild with what you have planned. Because, really, you haven’t given them any details yet. Just finish by whispering, “Okay, then we’ll start by pretending to do a normal picture. But get ready...as soon as I count ‘1-2-3’ we’re going to do the big surprise!” Now the kids have their listening ears tuned to me everywhere we go. I set up and get a few of those “boring, normal” pictures, then I count “1-2-3,” and direct the kids to suddenly tickle their parents, plant big sloppy kisses, tackle them, or any wild antic I can think of to give the kids a great emotional payoff.



Image © Blume Photography

2. REVERSE PSYCHOLOGY

The most refined reverse psychology doesn’t sound like, “Now, don’t smile for this picture.” With that, you’ll just confuse the kids!

Opposite to what you might expect, kids don’t usually misbehave because they feel superior or “in control.” Rather, kids more often act out because they feel vulnerable and “out of control.” It’s their attempt to self-protect in a stressful situation.

So, make it clear that you’re giving the kids a degree of control from the beginning. If a little boy won’t stop sticking his tongue out at the camera, I don’t chastise him or ask him to stop, but I don’t wait silently either. I actually praise the behavior, saying something like this: “Oh, ya! Haha, that’s awesome! Keep sticking your tongue out just like that. What a funny idea. I love that! This is my favorite picture ever!”

Next, I steer us back on course in two incremental steps: Step 1. “Oh, now do you know how to do a funny fish face? Can you do that?” I avoid saying, “Let’s do a fish face” and instead ask “Do you know how?” which psychologically presents a challenge rather than a direction.

Since I’ve suggested another silly face, he can still feel he’s in control and testing the limits. But in one simple baby step, I’ve actually taken the reigns back as director. Step 2: “Now, I wonder if you know how to pretend you’re the sweetest little angel? Look, Mommy. Isn’t he the sweeeetest, most peeeerfect little angel you ever saw, smiling and making you soooo happy. I think I see a halo over his head!” Now you’re getting what you want, too!





3. GIFTS THAT KEEP GIVING

My "treasure hunt" strategy works surprisingly well even for older kids, but it's ideal for toddlers who don't understand much verbal direction. You'll just need a few easy-to-find, pocket-sized items: 1. plastic eggs, 2. deflated balloons, and 3. individually packaged LifeSaver gummies.

First put a packaged LifeSaver gummy and balloon in each egg. Next, before your clients arrive, hide the eggs near two or three of your favorite locations you've scouted. This setup allows me a couple different "bribing" strategies when I need them, which work a hundred times better than traditional bribing (i.e. dangling candy in front of a crying kid until she shuts up and complies—which, by the way, will never work in a million years).

For Strategy One, I begin with a simple promise: "We're going to explore this garden. And I heard there's a treasure hidden here! So if we go everywhere and take pictures, I just know we can find the treasure. Do you want to take the pictures and go on a treasure hunt?" Before, the kids were dreading this photoshoot. Now, it's not a photoshoot at all. It's a treasure hunt, and they're totally into it! I don't bother leading them to the hidden eggs yet. I rely on the anticipation to keep the kids going.

I pull out Strategy Two as soon as I feel I may be losing the toddler's interest: "Oh my goodness, look! I think I might see a treasure! Look!" I guide the child to the general vicinity of the plastic egg, and I photograph her as she excitedly looks for it. (It's stunning how long it can take a two-year-old to find an egg lying almost out in the open...but it makes for plenty of fun, candid photos.) Once she has the egg in her hands, watch her face light up—and be ready to capture the moment!

The gummy is perfect because, unlike with chocolate, hands stay clean and there's no melty mess to try Photoshopping away later. But I don't encourage kids to eat their treats right away. Instead, I playfully suggest a game: "Let's play fetch!" The parents can throw the candy (or balloon, if that's all that's left) toward me. Then, as their toddler runs merrily to retrieve it, I get so many fun active shots!



4. GET THEIR PARENTS ONBOARD

Once you start child-whispering, you may find that a few parents seem to become more difficult than their children. Hey, I understand! Even I get wound too tightly sometimes. Sadly, some parents can’t wrap their minds around the idea that having fun leads to better portraits. They can’t seem to stop shouting commands at their kids, like, “Stop it! Hold still! Show your teeth when you smile! Can’t you behave?!”

To prevent grumpy parent syndrome, prepare them ahead of time via email. We use both our landing pages (where our clients book) and a series of pre-session emails to explain our child-whispering ways ahead of time. So parents come knowing what to expect and dress appropriately for all the fun they’re going to have. As a result, we’ve never before received so many kind thank you notes and sweet stories about kids who want to become photographers when they grow up!



Image © Blume Photography

CONCLUSION

Sure, kids may suffer from short attention spans or have limited vocabulary to understand my posing directions. But if you had a simple system to overcome all those challenges, wouldn't you agree kids are naturally the most authentic, animated, and expressive subjects you can imagine? Not to mention their parents adore them and can't buy enough of their portraits.

To me, kids are clearly the ideal kind of subjects for any portrait photographer. As you try out these new child-whispering strategies, I hope you agree. Have fun, and connect with me online to learn more. ■



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youtube.com/btsShutterMagazine



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

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MATERNITY PORTRAITURE FOR THE
Modern Mom

with Karen Bagley



Maternity portraiture, along with just about every type of portrait photography, has changed. Why has it changed? Because times change, styles change, EVERYTHING changes. Is that a problem? Well it can be...if we, as professional photographers, are not making sure that we are providing a service, experience and portraits that keep up with the “times,” so to speak. Then yes, it’s a BIG problem, and you are more than likely losing money. So, what do we do to “keep up with the times,” yet remain timeless?

We need to constantly evaluate our business and our style and simply pay attention to what is going on around us. As an example, do you know what the color of the year is? Did you even know we have a color of the year? The official color of the year for 2019 is Living Coral. Why is it important to know or even care about the color of the year? Pantone Institute says, “The color of the year is a trendsetting concept for branding, marketing and the creative society as a whole.” Are we not creatives? Do we not need to know how to market? YES! Yes, to all of it. You need to know these things ESPECIALLY when it comes to your maternity portrait work.

The truth is simply this: if we want to make serious money in the maternity field, we have to give clients something worth booking us for. By keeping our maternity portraiture modern, we will attract the up-and-coming generation of expecting mamas. As a whole, the maternity portrait field still gets put on the back burner. I still hear it regularly...“No one will spend money on maternity pictures, they want the newborn pictures.” Guys, this is just not true. However, it will be true if we do not appeal to our modern moms. I still, to this day, have people look at me like I’m telling a lie when I say a little over 70 percent of my business is maternity...ONLY maternity. I am still not sure why it is that hard to believe. I have found my niche; I know it backward and forward. I have spent years learning about my field, my clients, and pregnancy itself. My clients can see this immediately and know they are in good hands.

So, what do we know? We know that modern moms want bold locations—not every mom wants to be in a wheat field with a flower crown. If you shoot in studio, don’t use the same backgrounds you have had for your seniors, babies, and everything else under the sun. Innovate! They want gowns that everyone will say “ohhhh, ahhhhh” at when they share their images. Not every mom wants a flowy off-white gown. Put them in a fitted gown, for goodness’ sake! Let them show some skin. Motherhood doesn’t mean we fold up shop and quit caring.

Becoming a mother is one of the most powerful and lifechanging times in any woman’s life. Pregnancy should be celebrated, not hidden. We know soon-to-be-mamas want posing that makes them feel like a model. Why do we pose every mom in the exact same way? They are pregnant, not handicapped—they can do other things with their arms and hands aside from holding their baby bumps. Try new things (always being safe, of course). Posing can be tough, because you feel limited. You may just not quite get it, because maybe you can’t relate to pregnancy, but that’s ok! Think of this: How do you pose (or how would you pose) a senior girl? Take some of those movements and positions, and incorporate them into your posing for your maternity sessions. Maybe try shooting from a different angle. Lastly, we KNOW these modern mamas want an experience they can brag to their friends about. Why would anyone pay more for your services if they are the exact same as the person down the street who is \$500 cheaper?





Images © Karen Bagley

Now let's focus on what we do NOT know. Which is HOW do we break out of the same cycle of those expecting mamas who want the dreaded "simple" images? The same images they have seen their friends do. The same images you have probably been shooting time and again. The answer is: You have to educate them, tactfully of course. You must play a part in every session you do. Why? So that you can guarantee the vision you have can come to life. For example, I bring one gown for every single client who walks through my doors. (Yes, I charge appropriately so that I can do that.) The reason for that is, if I have a client who tells me they want to take pictures in jeans and a white t-shirt, I will kindly explain that I will photograph whatever they want. I will make it clear that that is not my style, but if it is something they want for whatever reason, I shoot it. But you better believe we will shoot in the gown I have also! When it comes down to it, do you really think a picture of them in their jeans is going to overrule a picture of them in this amazing gown? No way! Plus, now you have marketing material to attract other expecting mamas looking for that more modern feel. Do you see where I'm going with this? You, in a sense, are forcing your client to see the difference between what I like to call "your mom's maternity portraits" and "Modern Maternity Portraiture." Your clients do not really know what they want until you show them. This rule applies in almost every area of photography, right down to sales and products.



What about posing? How do we break out of the posing that is in every maternity shot we see? Even further, how do we get our clients to do the poses we want them to? Well, my friends, again this falls on you. As the professional photographer, you have to ask your clients to move the way you want. I know you may be thinking, “Karen, I ask and they say it feels weird, or they don’t do it all. Now what?” I will use my own personal example. When I ask a client for a pose and they seem shy or act like they don’t want to do it, I simply say: “Let’s try it. You can always get rid of it if you really don’t like it.”

And boom, I’ve got my modern pose! Even with the small chance they do not like that image, you again still have marketing material for the moms who are out there right now, looking for you. Maternity portraiture will forever be a huge field of portrait photography. The same as weddings and newborns. It is up to us to make sure that we are not missing out on the huge amount of income we could be bringing to our studios by failing to improve our craft.

Everything falls on us as the professional photographers. That’s ok though, we are in this industry to create. We want everything to fall on us! Those modern mamas are waiting on you.



HOW I GOT THE SHOT

This mama was 30 weeks when photographed. She purchased this gown on her own from one of our vendors. She knew where to look for her wardrobe because I educated her well beforehand. I shot this image with my Canon 5D Mk4 and I used my Canon 11-24 lens. This lens is absolutely a favorite of mine, because I like to get surrounding landscape behind my subject. This is what I am known for. We held our session in the Atlanta Botanical Gardens. You can see I shot from a lower angle. YOU MUST be careful with this, shooting from a lower angle can cause the attack of the triple chin. You must be able to direct your client to avoid the unflattering side of shooting so low. If you look closely you can see I had my client tip at her hip (JUST A LITTLE) to lean closer to the camera. This adds length when you are shooting with such a wide-angle lens. I also posed this client in a way to add depth. I did something with her left arm aside from holding baby bump. This image was lit with a Profoto B10 camera right at about ½ power. I diffused the light with a Westcott rapid beauty dish. My settings for this shot were focal length of 11, aperture f/10, shutter speed 1/100th, and ISO 200. ■



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

EMOTION

with Casey Dittmer

Creating emotion-driven experiences builds lifelong clients, passionate testimonies, and higher sales. Some of us have been fortunate enough to go through this with our clients by happy accident, but there are steps that you can take that will help foster and generate the emotional client experience in a natural and consistent way.

First, make sure you prepare yourself and the client. The groundwork you lay before your session is critical. It truly will determine what kind of overall experience your clients have. Working closely to help ease apprehension in clothing choices, accessories and location will allow the client to relax and enjoy the process more. Stress should not be the overwhelming emotion.

During session prep, I know we get excited talking with clients and building a plan. We start talking about ideas or locations, and then it snowballs from there. We dominate the conversation. But what we need to do is slow down. Stop. Listen. Ask questions, and then let them talk. Key in on little things that will give you a creative edge and an emotional foundation. A lot of times, it's the things that are not being said, or the ones that are said in passing, that will give you the most information. For the session I feature in this article, the clients came to us for newborn pictures. All communication prior to the session was done through email. Once their session fee was paid, we began the conversation asking about colors, props, and if they had any specific ideas. Mom's response was what we usually get—she wanted neutral tones and shots taken with her son, but overall didn't have anything specific in mind. Months went by, and once baby arrived and we went to schedule the session, Mom made a comment...“Dad is a firefighter, so I just need to make sure it works for his schedule.” DING DING DING! There it was. My thread I could pull. I followed that lead and talked to her about Dad bringing his gear, because I loved how dynamic firefighter and baby images are. I told her that Dad would LOVE creating these and that it would be a great way to have him invest in the process (she was worried about how much he would want to be in the pictures). The more we spoke about details and shot ideas, the more excited she got! She already knew that this session was going to be personal and unique to them. And then she dropped the golden nugget: “Oh, I am also a firefighter, should I bring my gear as well?” Uh...Yes please!!! TWO firefighters. In the same family! I was stoked. I knew that, based on the conversation I had with Mom, she was already sold on the idea of creating a special set of images that featured her growing family and the couple's passion for their profession. We had started the process of an emotional experience for this family.





Image © Casey Dittmer



Image © Casey Dittmer

When the clients arrive, you want to immediately set the tone for what is to come. Welcome them, help them carry things, show them where the bathrooms are, and offer them water. I know this all sounds elementary, but because it's basic, it can easily get skipped. Let them relax and get comfortable. We have a separate playroom for kids. It's great because it immediately alleviates the parents worry about them touching things or getting bored. Kids are happy. Parents are happy. I always have families get comfortable, and we casually talk about what they have brought for their session and any ideas or specific needs they have. Some of this has already been discussed, but by asking again and listening to them, I am reminding them that I am here for them. I want to create something special for them. They let their guard down and stop worrying about all the little things. Especially for Mom, the getting-ready process can be stressful. Allowing her the time to breathe, decompress and then reignite her excitement is key to great expressions and calmer energy overall.

The actual session is where you really work your magic. Have a game plan. Understand that things may occur, especially with younger children, that may detour your plan, but at least you have a great outline for creating connective images. You want a calm and welcoming feeling for your clients, but do not mistake that for not being in charge. They came to you for a reason. My clients love that I take charge. I dig through their stuff and make a plan, and off we go. If you throw it to them to make the creative plan, they will feel overwhelmed and less confident in your ability to lead them to greatness. When shooting, you want to keep things simple. Focus on the faces and the bond between subjects. Too many props, too busy of a set or background, will detract from pure connective posing. I always suggest they wear neutral tones and longer-sleeve shirts. This will help keep the focus on the faces. For posing, think of it as planned snuggling. Encourage kisses, funny faces, hugs, and other expressions of love. If you have close head positions, subjects not always looking at the camera but instead sometimes interacting with each other will lead to stronger emotional images. Make sure while you are setting up different shots and poses you watch for natural moments to occur. Little candid snippets between the siblings, glances between Mom and Dad...all those things are easy to miss if you are too focused on posing things just right or checking the back of the camera.





For this family's session, Mom and I had built up all this excitement for Dad in his fire gear with the baby. And even though we really didn't talk about it much beforehand, I knew that it would also be great to shoot Mom in HER fire gear with the baby to create a match set. We shot various poses and expressions with each parent and the baby, but I was most excited about getting both parents in gear with the baby. It's rare to see both Mom and Dad as firefighters, and I had to make the most of it. While shooting this grouping of three, the couple's little boy ran up to snuggle on Mom, and he looked up at her for a split second. It was magic. It wasn't planned, but it was powerful. So I simply grabbed a stool, stood him by Mom again and let them love, look at, and enjoy each other. While I was shooting, I kept verbalizing how amazing they were. Beautiful. Exciting. And they fed off of it. The emotional reaction to that moment grew because I verbalized my excitement and how it affected me, and then I took the time to show them the back of the camera immediately. Mom cried. The rest of the session we kept letting people drift in and out of shots organically. Watching brother interact with baby, observing the bond between Mom and Dad. It was my job to document their love. It was my job to create something as powerful as their love. I knew that the set of images I had created using simple, small prompts were cohesive and purposeful.

By the time this family came into their viewing they could hardly contain themselves. They had seen the back of the camera that day and remembered all the amazing things we did. The final step is to present the images in a way that continues to showcase the strength and power of the session as a set. You have to make it a complete story, to strike that emotional cord. Slide shows are great for this. Funny how a little music and crossfades can sway the heart. We helped them cull through; it was hard, because they loved them all. Dad immediately asked for our Black Label Package, because how could he not "want a book, and wall art? And the family will all want some. It just makes sense."

I didn't even have to try. But I knew this couple was fully emotionally invested. I pulled up my favorite family image, the one of all four in black and white, and said, "You know...I think I am going to print this for my gallery. It's so powerful. It's a once-in-a-lifetime shot for me. I think I am going to print it the size on that wall. (I gestured to a 30x40 hanging in the gallery hallway.) Dad got up, walked into the hallway, came back, and said, "I want the same for the house." And he added it ON TOP of the package they had already decided on. He knew it was powerful. He didn't want someone else to have a better art piece of that image than he did. When it was all said and done, their order was over \$4,000. They thanked me over and over. They commented on how happy they were that they'd taken the time to make this happen. They loved how easy the process was. Painless, and guided but friendly. The images and products we made for them were more valuable than anything else, because now, they had a powerful memory that was attached to them.



When Mom came to pick up the order, she cried with each canvas I showed her. She hugged the book and said it was hers. Grandma would have to be watched. She was giddy to get these home and show her husband, who anxiously called her while she was there to see if she had them yet. She joked that she was going to have to pull over at least twice on her one-and-a-half-hour drive home so she could look at them again.

We hadn't just taken their pictures. We had walked them through a celebration of bringing a new baby into the family. We had honored the work that they do. We had provided a fun and safe place for big brother to be. We had created an event in their life that was forever marked by the true art that hangs in their home. It will be one I always remember as well. See, the power affects both you and your client—making you better, making your passion burn a little brighter. All of this will lead to those happy client referrals and effortless higher sales. Go make some connections. ■



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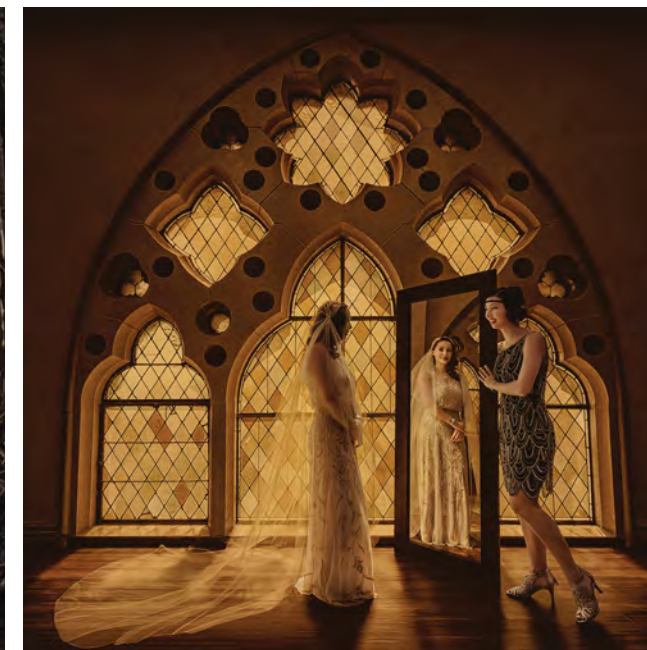
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THINGS I WISH I KNEW BEFORE I STARTED USING STROBE

with Michael Corsentino

The saying goes that hindsight is 20/20. Never has this been more accurate than when describing my 40+-year learning curve with all things strobe. When I began my journey down the road to a better understanding of flash, images were captured entirely on film. Film that needed to be processed before any of the exposures made could be seen. There was none of the instant feedback we now have with today’s dSLRs, there was no TTL flash mode, there was no YouTube to seek out tutorials, there was no Creative Live offering online classes, there was no Shutterfest conference, and there certainly was no Shutter Magazine! Things have come a very long way since the first three-light set of Bowen’s strobes I scrimped and saved for so many moons ago as a teenager, a set of lights that I ended up selling in frustration, abandoning strobe for years because I didn’t know how to control them.

The problem was I didn’t know 10 key things that would have gone a long way to explaining how to effectively and confidently use flash. Since then, through much trial and error, I eventually mastered and incorporated flash as an integral part of my photography. Now I’m able to share these 10 things with you and hopefully shorten your learning curve and help you avoid the same frustration and confusion I experienced. Using strobe in the studio and on location is now second nature for me, and it can be for you too. I think you’ll find once you understand strobe it opens up a whole new world of exciting creative possibilities. Here are the 10 things I wish I knew before I started using strobe.

LIGHTING IS A GAME OF MODIFIERS.

It would be inaccurate to say lighting is entirely about modifiers, but it’s damn close. The modifier you choose controls the quality of light created, broadly speaking hard light vs. soft light. Combined with the direction and distance of the strobe in relation to the subject, the right modifier makes all the difference in the tenor and mood of the lighting. Hard light is defined by a rapid transition between highlights and shadows and results in a crisp, contrasty light, a.k.a specular. For this quality of light, the best choices are smaller reflectors, soft boxes and octabanks with interiors finished in highly reflective silver fabric. The basic rule of thumb is the smaller the modifier and the farther away its placed from the subject, the harder the light. Conversely, soft light is defined by a gradual transition between shadows and highlights. It’s typically a more diffuse, broad light. The best modifiers for soft light are large octabanks and soft boxes with white interiors and several layers of diffusion fabric. The basic rule of thumb for soft light is the larger the modifier and the closer it is to the subject, the softer the resulting light.



Modifiers Make All The Difference



Images © Michael Corsentino

LESS IS MORE.

For many people starting out with strobes, budget can be an issue. Good lighting equipment doesn’t come cheap, but keep the following things in mind: light is light, and one light rules. As much I’m a buy-it-once-and-keep-it-forever proponent, if brands like Profoto or Elinchrom aren’t in the budget, don’t fret. We lighting geeks are fond of saying that light is light, and it’s true. Regardless of which strobe you invest in, they all do essentially the same thing—they create light, and light is light. Also, don’t feel constrained if you can only afford one strobe. Truth be told, I own a dozen or so strobes of various power and feature configurations and end up using just one flash much of time. You can do a ton of amazing things with only one strobe, and simple, uncomplicated lighting is a very good thing. Remember the sun and/or a reflector is always available as a free or low-cost second light for accent or backlighting.

Images © Michael Corsentino



Image © Michael Corsentino

MORE PEOPLE EQUALS BETTER RESULTS.

I know we want to be self-sufficient, but know this—you can only take your lighting so far operating as a one-man band. Try rigging and controlling an 8x8 scrim over your subject while shooting and making sure the soft box you’re using for a kiss of fill flash doesn’t blow way! I could go on. The more people you can bring along to help and allow you to focus on doing what you do best—being a photographer—the better the results will be. Think in terms of a team: model, hair and makeup artist, stylist, assistants, photographer. Each person plays to their strengths and brings their best to the shoot. In my experience, a combined effort always results in superior images compared with a singular effort. I know that you’re thinking—“I can’t afford assistants.” Don’t worry, that’s where interns, high school students, spouses, kids, etc. come in. Trust me on this, it’s more than worth the effort.

FOUR PRINCIPLES OF LIGHT.

There are really only four things to consider when it comes to using strobes: quantity of light, quality of light, direction of light, and distance of light. Quantity of light simply means how much light you want from your strobe. It’s as simple as more light or less light. Dial the strobe power up for more light and down for less. Quality of light is all about modifiers, as outlined above. Choose the modifier best suited for the quality of light you want to create. Direction of light governs the amount of shadow introduced by your lighting. The further you move the light around your subject, the more shadow is created. Shadow creates volume, drama and dimension. This is one of the main reasons to take your flash off your camera and give your light some direction! Distance of light is the final but equally important concept. The closer you place your strobe and modifier to your subject, the larger its perceived size and the softer its light. Conversely, the farther away you place your strobe, and modifier the smaller its perceived size and the harder its light.



Images © Michael Corsentino

SHUTTER SPEED DOESN'T MATTER IN THE STUDIO.

When using strobe in the studio, flash is often the sole and dominant light source for the exposure. Despite overhead constant studio lights, with the camera settings typically used in the studio (f11-f16, 1/125 second, 100 ISO), shutter speed is basically immaterial—you set it at your camera’s maximum sync speed and forget it. Once your shutter speed and ISO are set, you simply decide which aperture works best for your subject matter. For me, that’s usually between f11 and f16, but you can use a wider setting if desired, then just dial in a flash power that matches the aperture you’re using. This is easiest with a handheld flash meter, though you can also chimp your way to a proper exposure.



MULTIPLE LIGHT ZONES.

Working with multiple strobes allows you to add extra dimension and sophistication to your lighting. Today’s leading wireless triggers typically permit lights to be assigned and controlled independently in up to three groups. Think about lighting with multiple strobes in terms of zones. Key light zone, fill light zone, accent light zone, etc. Each light is controlled separately using a wireless controller typically mounted in your camera’s hot shoe. I recommend working one light at a time. I set the key light first and work from there, one light at a time. This way I can clearly see the contribution each light is making to the overall exposure.



BALANCING FLASH & AMBIENT.

This is something I know a lot of people struggle with, but there’s no need for that struggle to continue if you follow these simple guidelines. First and foremost, remember you’re working with two independent light sources, flash and ambient, each controlled separately. In ambient and flash scenarios, ambient light is the dominant light source. You control the amount of ambient light contributed to the exposure by adjusting your shutter speed setting. If you want a dramatic, dark and moody sky, you simply use a faster shutter speed. If, on the other hand, you’d like more ambient light for an open, airy-looking lighting, you’ll need to use a slower shutter speed. It’s really that simple. When it comes to flash power, it’s as easy as dialing it up or down. Typically I start by finding a proper ambient-only exposure and then and only then turn on my flash and adjust it as needed. I leave my aperture alone as I’ve set it where needed for the desired amount of background information. In the case of TTL, you’ll simply use Flash Exposure Compensation to control flash power in +/- 1-3 stops.



WHERE TO START WITH MANUAL FLASH POWER?

This one is a head scratcher for a lot of people. Manual flash is really very simple, and that’s why I recommend people start with it rather than TTL. With manual flash, it’s all about dialing in more or less power to create the amount of light desired. There is no right or wrong place to start, you just have to start somewhere. For me, that depends on the power of the strobe I’m using and its distance from the subject. A good rule of thumb is starting at 50% power. From there, you simply dial it up or down intuitively or with the aid of a handheld flash meter. See below for more about flash meters.

WHEN TO TURN OFF THE FLASH.

I may be putting the cart before the horse here, but at some point you’ll be so comfortable with strobe and enamored by what you can do with it that you’ll likely never want to turn it off. It’s happened to me! Using strobe is all about creating the light you want rather than being held hostage by the light you’re given by Mother Nature, unless that’s the quality of light you wanted. Remember to assess the light, think about the quality you want before you leave for your shoot, make a plan, bring the tools you need to achieve that plan, and stay flexible. Sometimes, the light on scene is better than anything you can create artificially, and other times it requires your intervention. The main takeaway is as much as I love strobe, it’s a means to an end, and you don’t always need it.

WHY A FLASH METER IS SO VALUABLE.

I’m a big advocate of using a handheld flash meter! Why? Because a flash meter does things your camera’s meter simply can’t. As good as it is, your camera’s meter is unable to measure manual flash, unable to determine the ratio between a key light and an accent light, and unable to take an incident reading. Built-in camera meters take only reflective readings. Incident readings measure the light falling onto a subject rather than the light reflected from it. Because of this, incident readings are more consistent and more accurate. Flash meters allow you to work quickly, consistently, accurately, and with repeatable results every time. With a light meter, you simple match the shutter speed and ISO settings used on your camera and measure the light from your strobe until it matches your aperture setting. This way, your first exposure is rock solid. There’s no guesswork, no chimping, and no wasted time. I call that a win! ■



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

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How to Photograph the Details at a Wedding

with Vanessa Joy



Image © Vanessa Joy

The wedding details, such as the ring, accessories, invitations, and other little elements, come together to make the big day as special as it is. The ceremony is important, of course, but it is often the photos of these little details that allow the bride, the groom, and their friends and family to really revel in the awe and beauty of the wedding.

Personally, one of my favorite parts of photographing a wedding is capturing all of the details before it begins. Focusing on the details first gives the bride and her bridesmaids an opportunity to get used to a photographer being in the room.

While I do like to get a few behind-the-scenes shots of everyone getting ready, I tend to wait until the bride and her bridesmaids are done getting all dolled up to stage the shots. That way, no one is being photographed with their hair or makeup half-done.



Image © Vanessa Joy

PHOTOGRAPHING THE DETAILS

TAKING THE PHOTOS

Before taking any photos, you have to make sure all of your equipment is in order. Getting great pictures all starts with a great foundation, after all. It also helps pull the album together beautifully by having a ton of little details.

When I'm photographing the little details, I prefer to use my Canon 50mm F/1.2L lens because it allows me to get close enough to an object without it going out of focus, but still gives me the option to pull back my camera for wide-angle shots.

I try not to switch lenses a whole lot in order to save time and to prevent any unnecessary hassles. Opting for versatile lenses that I know I'll need for the type of pictures I intend on taking saves time and keeps my camera bag light.

Most of the time, I am taking my photos fairly wide open, with my aperture set to F/3.2L or a bit lower, depending on my subject. I do this to keep most of the details in focus while still creating that soft look most of my images typically have.

MACRO PHOTOS

For smaller objects like jewelry (the ring, earrings, etc.) I'll switch to a Canon 100mm F/2.8L macro lens. It does a beautiful, sharp job compressing the image and capturing all of the little details.

Although you are shooting at a higher aperture, the point of focus is incredibly small while taking macro pictures. One of my biggest pet peeves is not having the ring in focus, particularly the diamond, which is the very centerpiece of the ring. To get everything in focus as much as possible, shoot at the highest aperture you can, taking the lighting conditions into account and not letting your ISO get too high.

REFLECTORS

A reflector can be your best friend while taking these detailed shots.

I tend to take most of these wedding photos by the window of the bridal suite, which means the light source is coming in from one side. A reflector allows me to really bring out all of the little details from a side-lighting pattern because the light and shadows are going across my image.

I have two different-sized reflectors I liked to use. My larger reflector is 42 inches, which is great for portraits. My smaller reflector is 4 inches, which does a phenomenal job of giving the wedding ring a little extra sparkle. It also fills in any shadows in detail pictures that I don't want in the final images.





STAGING THE WEDDING DETAIL PHOTOS

CONTRAST IS KEY

When staging the photos, a good bit of contrast, creativity and consistency will really make the details pop, truly capturing the essence of the day.

First, I'll find an area with a fairly simply background, preferably one that contrasts with what I'm photographing. For example, if I'm photographing lighter-colored items (peach-colored shoes, white pearls, etc.), I'll choose a dark background to contrast with the subjects of the photo, allowing them to truly pop.

Image © Vanessa Joy

GET CREATIVE

Another aspect of photographing the details at a wedding that I really enjoy is how creative you can get with your shots.

When I'm photographing the wedding invitation, for instance, I like to incorporate other elements that really draw all of the details together. I might decide to include the ring, jewelry, or the shoes. It's nice to have the invitation alongside other elements from the wedding so that it isn't just a photograph of a pile of papers.

Finding some foliage or perhaps some flowers from the wedding florist to incorporate into the images is another favorite trick of mine that breathes life into the photos.

STAY CONSISTENT

Consistency keeps your photos on brand and in style, ultimately enhancing the quality of the shots as a collective whole. I also enjoy consistency in the detail images because these photographs will generally be on the same spread in the bride's photo album. While taking the photos against different backgrounds may make for a creative spread or arrangement, it may not mesh very well. Staying consistent allows for a cohesive album spread, as all the pictures will match one another.

To achieve this kind of style and consistency, I try to take all of the photographs of the wedding details in the same place with the same background, whether it's the invitation, ring, shoes, or flowers. Having consistent lighting is also another important part of the aesthetic.

Choose to either contrast or blend what you're photographing with the background to make all of the little, most important details pop. Using layflats is another great way to ensure a consistent look. Layflats allow you to control the color of the background, and they also keep the images consistent.

I have been using layflats from KISS albums lately, and they've recently come out with entirely redesigned styling kits that have been a lot of fun to use. Here's a helpful hint: Don't just use layflats at weddings. Use them in your studio to photograph albums and other products you offer to your clients. Making them look appealing will help you sell them, and creating them on a consistent background will make them look more branded and cohesive on social media and your website.





Capture the emotion in every detail.

ZEISS Batis 2/40CF Close Focus



IN CONCLUSION

There are a variety of factors that will ultimately enhance the quality of your photographs. When taking the photos, it's important to make sure you have the right lens and equipment. In my case, the small reflector and macro lens are crucial for those detail shots.

Staging the photos is your time to get creative, and for me it's my time to breathe and get in the zone before having to photograph people. Don't be afraid to mix and match different elements, such as capturing the invitation next to the heels and the ring or using the veil as part of the background. You can also use what's around the room (or even someone holding the details), such as foliage or flowers from the wedding florist, to add a very unique touch and fill in any empty spaces that are in the shot. Whatever it is, bring your creativity and brand into the mix and have a little fun. ■



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

SERIES TO STEP UP YOUR
LIGHTROOM GAME:



PART 1 STORING AND MANAGING FILES

with Dustin Lucas

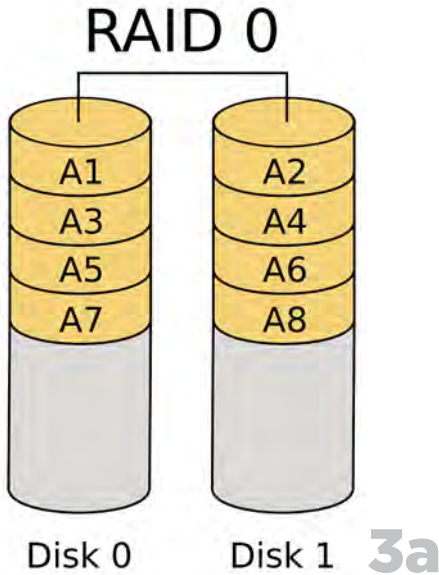
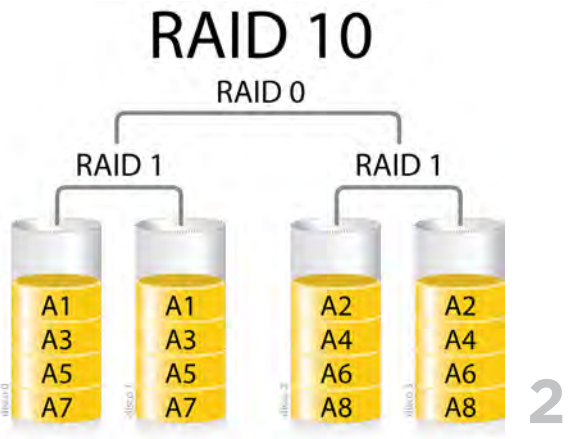
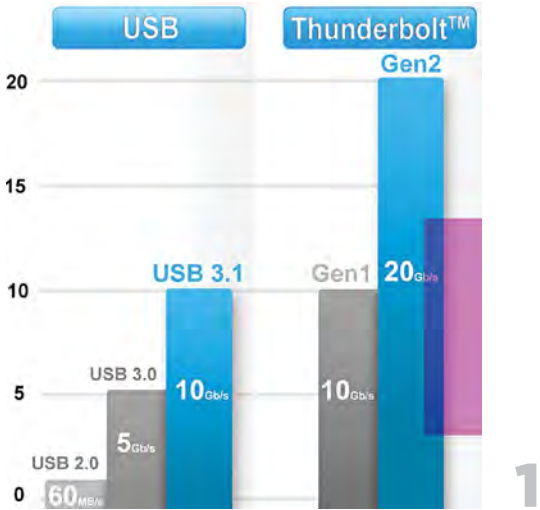
It's time to step up your editing game and start using Lightroom this year. Like many photographers, I have used other RAW Processing programs, and none compare to the Adobe ecosystem with Lightroom and Photoshop. When it comes to shooting over 100,000 images per year and needing speed on my side, it's a no brainer: I choose Lightroom. The program is simple enough to use, and I want to show you the best ways to do so in my seven-part workflow series.

Over the next seven articles, respectively, I am going to discuss storing your files and how to properly manage Lightroom catalogs. Then, you'll be ready to cull and sort your images while you import. Next, you will learn to color correct from the basics to the advanced stuff, leading you to a solid creative editing workflow with Photoshop. Once you dial in your editing, you'll be ready to export and finalize your images. After exporting from Lightroom, you may want to take them into Photoshop, and I will show you how to keep things organized across the programs. For now, let's jump into file storage solutions and a backup plan for your RAW files.

FILE STORAGE SOLUTIONS

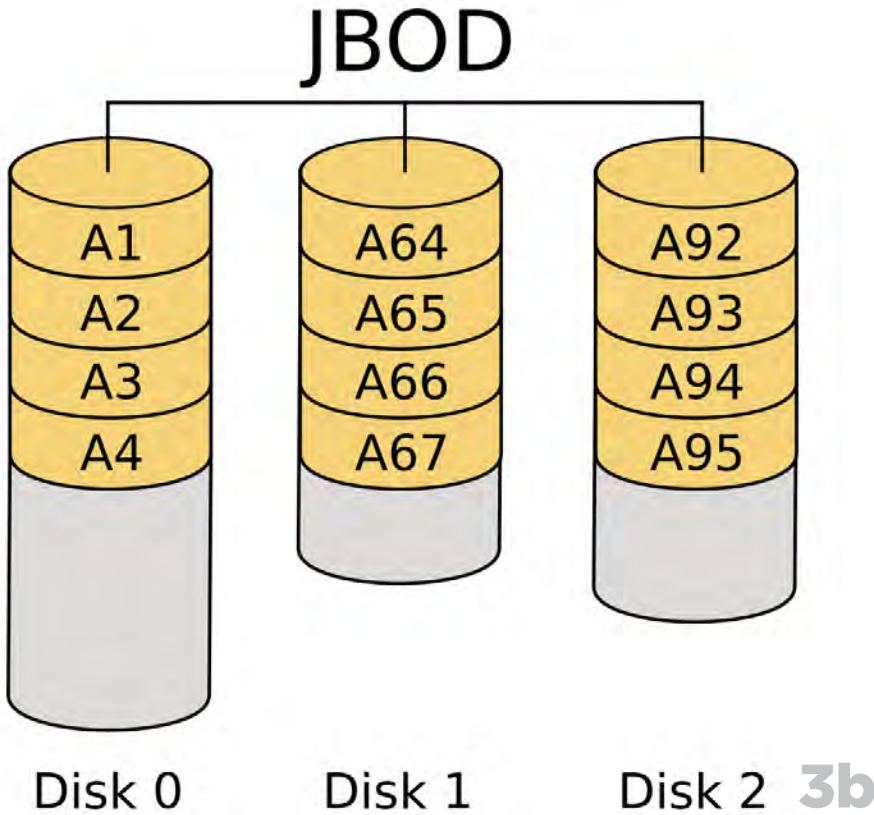
Creating a safe and secure file storage solution is one of the most underestimated parts of a digital workflow. If you store every photo you've taken on your computer's local hard drive, or better yet a single external drive, you are in great need for intervention here. Invest in a storage solution and follow the backup rule "3-2-1." I will get back to the backup rule part of this after we solidify your storage solution first. Now, you may have come across the term RAID and then bought a Drobo storage system to handle your storage. This is a great start, however this is only one copy of your files. You'll need another one locally and another copy outside your studio. Let's dig into RAID and why it's important.

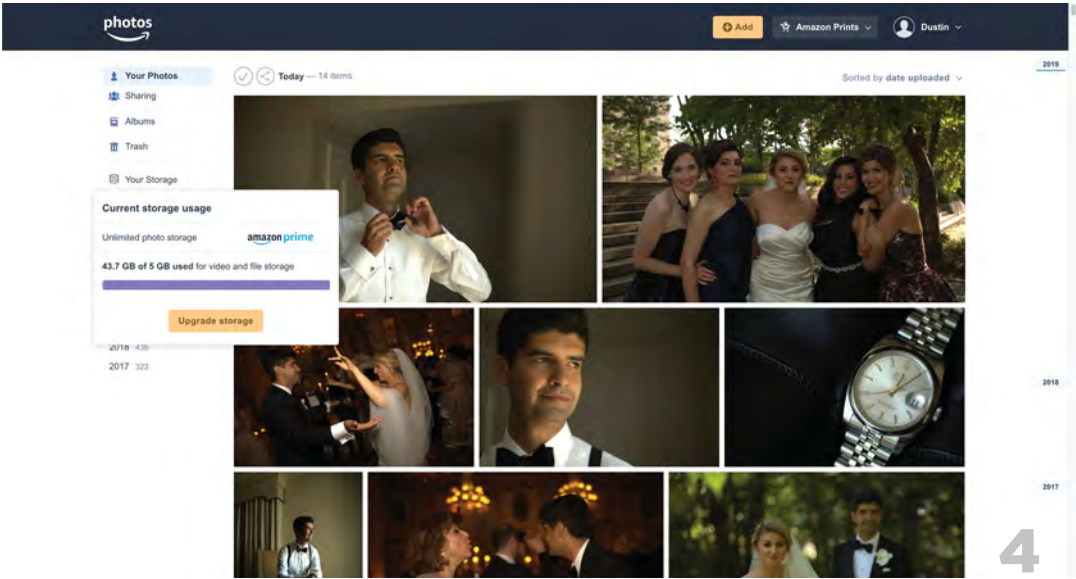
Just because your computer has 1 TB of storage space doesn't mean you should be storing all your RAW files on it. Invest in external storage. If you want a local-only solution, you can go with Direct Access Storage or DAS; these are very affordable. Another benefit is these can be configured with multiple 3.5" hard drives to make bigger capacity affordable, as well as different interfaces to gain file transfer speed. You can buy faster interface options than your standard USB 3.0, rated at 5 GB/s or actual transfer speed of 625 MB/s. Almost everything has converted to USB 3.1/Type C to give you speeds of 1.25 GB/s using the Generation II version, as well as the next-step Thunderbolt 3 at 5 GB/s. This level of speed is essential when you need



to be connected to your images at all times.(1) A Network Attached Storage or NAS system is great if you travel and need access to your storage system while on the road. This type of system is great when you don't want to tote an external and risk losing data. Next, you need to consider a RAID storage system.

RAID basically means a copy of your file(s) is spread across multiple disks, creating performance and reliability. For your main/working drive, I recommend RAID 10 for the best of both worlds. You will need a minimum of four disks, and keep in mind you'll lose 50% capacity of the entire set of disks.(2) This means if you buy four 4-TB disks, this would equal 16 TB if combined as Just a Bunch of Disks or JBOD. By configuring them into a RAID 10, you would have 8 TB of useable space with twice the redundancy. This is important, because hard- drives fail, and if you lose one, the other two disks will rebuild to make your storage whole again. Using RAID 0 or JBOD to get twice the disk space and performance means you lose everything if one of the four disks goes down.(3ab) Another thing to consider is buying at least a USB Type C Gen II disk enclosure to gain performance Read/Write. I am not going to pimp out brands to buy—just do your research and don't be cheap! Let's move on to backup.





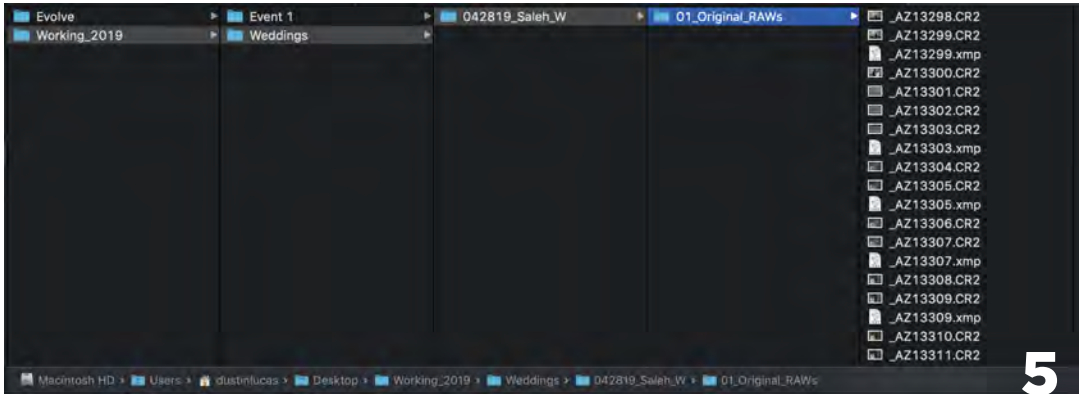
YOUR BACKUP PLAN

Remember that a RAID drive is not a backup, which is a common misconception. What happens if your drive gets stolen, more than one or two or three disks fail during rebuild, the RAID software is incompatible with new computer, the interface is no longer compatible—then what? You need a separate hard drive to save a copy of your file on as well as something off-site like cloud storage. For your second hard drive, this will be looked at as cold storage, meaning you won’t be accessing it much, if ever—it’s your just-in-case drive. Separate disk drives are a backup, redundant disks are not.

Cloud storage is a popular topic, and on the subject of security, many photographers fear stolen RAWs. Well I guess the same goes for online banking accounts, using a debit card at Target, buying something off Amazon, etc., as it can all be compromised. To be honest, I struggle with storing massive amounts of RAWs due to upload speeds being slow, and I typically use my client proofing site, where I post JPEGs, as off-site backup. Amazon Photos has an unlimited option for Prime members—it’s annoying to use, but it works for High-Resolution JPEGs.(4) Remember, off-site doesn’t only mean cloud storage. You can get NAS drive, back up files over the network, and store them on a home server too. Lugging a hard drive around to and from to satisfy the off-site backup is a bad idea—figure out what works for your needs. Above all, I recommend a 3-2-1 backup plan, meaning two copies of the file saved on two different local drives, with the third going to a cloud drive. If you don’t have a backup plan, start with this one and stick to it. Think about it like this: you shoot with two memory cards in case a card gets corrupted, right?

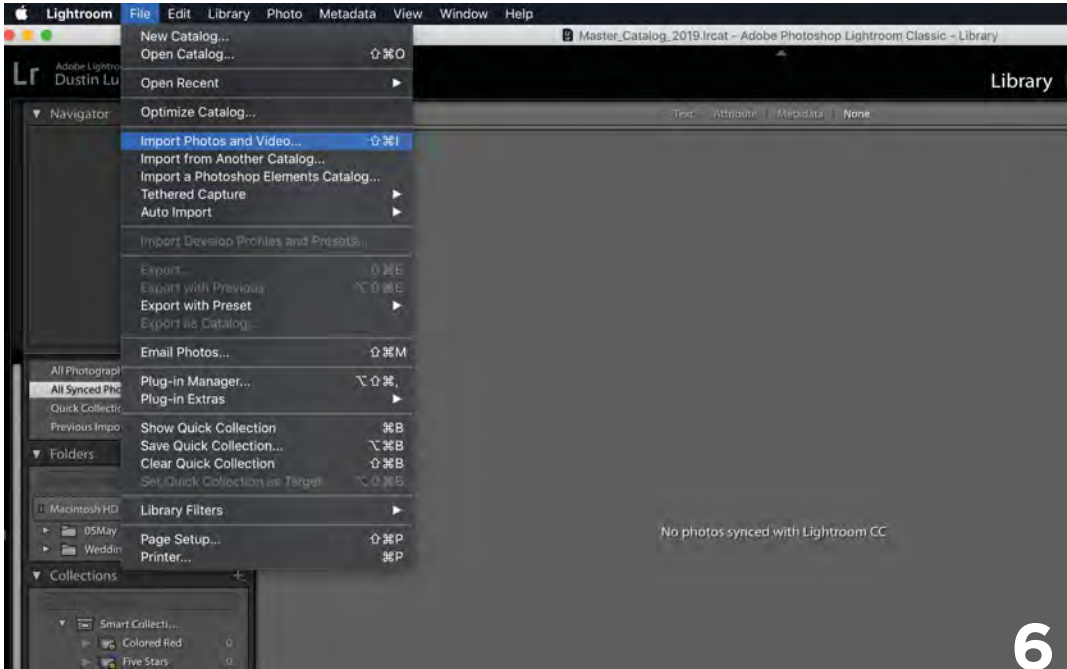
Once you have a storage solution in place, you are ready to create your file folder structure to keep things organized. I always recommend starting this before you import into Lightroom so that everything is consistent across both drives. This is a very important step considering how easy it is to access these files. You can start with the Year (2019), Shoot Type (Weddings), Date_Client Name (042819_Saleh_W), and then additional subfolders after you import.(5)

Once you have your memory card ready to import, we can finally get started in Lightroom!



CREATE A CATALOG & IMPORT YOUR FILES

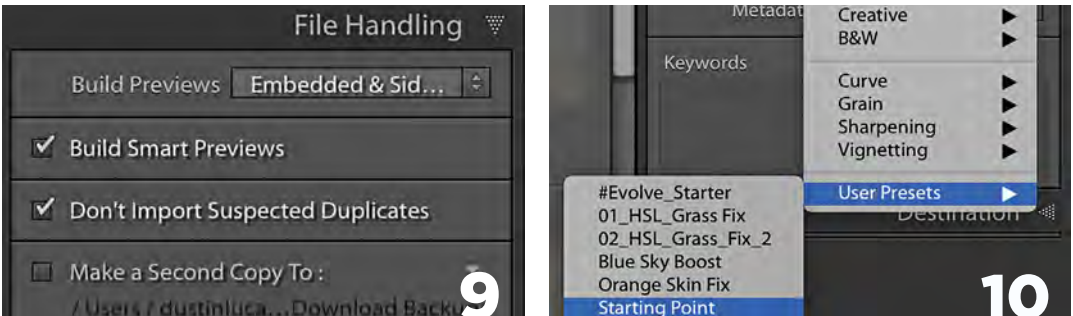
First thing first, we need to open Lightroom and create a 2019 Master Catalog. I highly recommend importing files into a single catalog versus creating one per client, and here is why—working in a single catalog makes it so much more simple and efficient to access all your files from the year in one place. I create a new catalog per year so it doesn’t start to run slow and risk corruption. After you create a 2019 Master Catalog, we can go into the Import module and apply our import settings.(6)



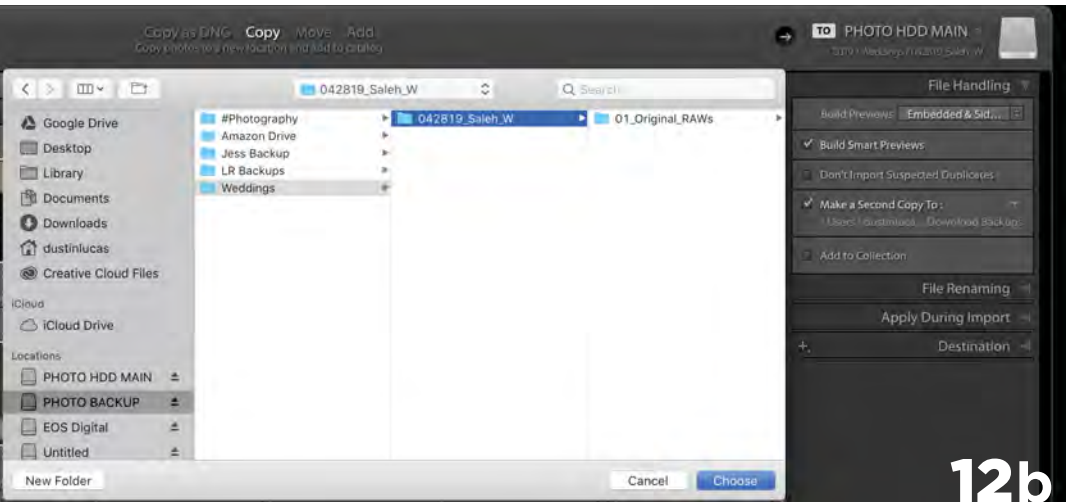
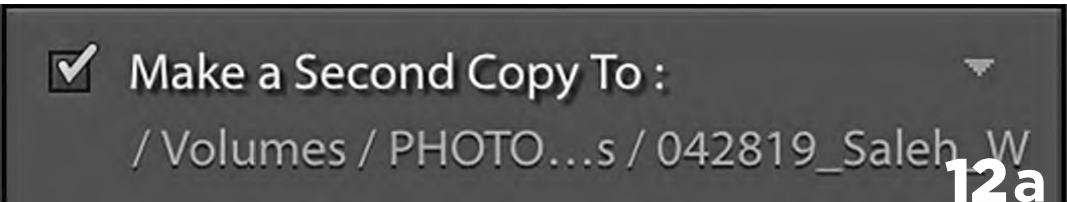
When ingesting files from your memory cards into Lightroom, you want to be sure to select the card listed under Source so you can choose multiple cards at once.(7) Now, you may be worried about files with the same names, and you are right that this is an issue if they all go into a single folder. But you can just opt to rename your files so they call all go in one place and no file-naming issues will occur. Now, for the sake of renaming the files again after we cull, I recommend keeping the file names simple, for example SCP_0001.(8)



Next, you want to configure your image previews to build at import based on what you want to do after import: cull, sort, edit, export, etc. I will cover this more thoroughly in the next articles. As we'd like to cull immediately, I would choose Embedded & Sidecar as well as check the Build Smart previews to make editing faster as well. (9) Moving into the Apply During Import panel, we can apply import presets; we will save these for later use as I typically import without them applied.(10) Having an untouched before preview saves rendering time. I will touch on this more in the next articles as well.

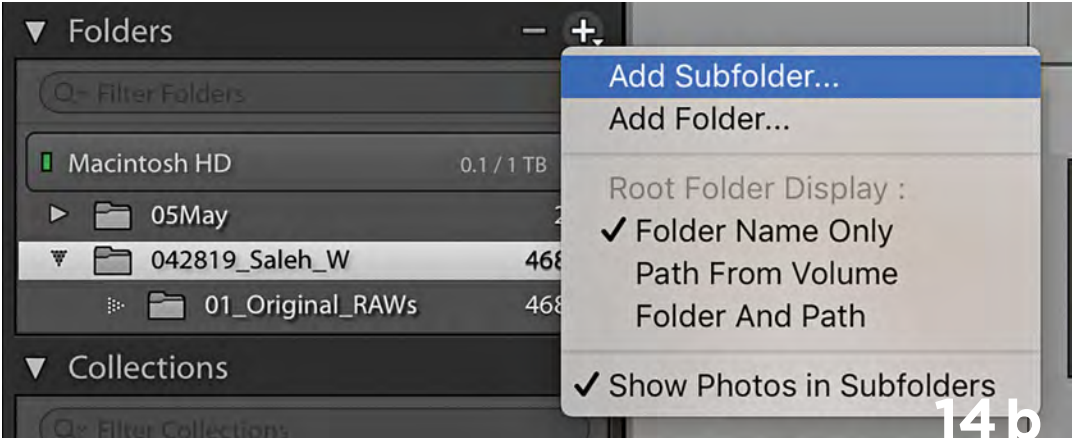
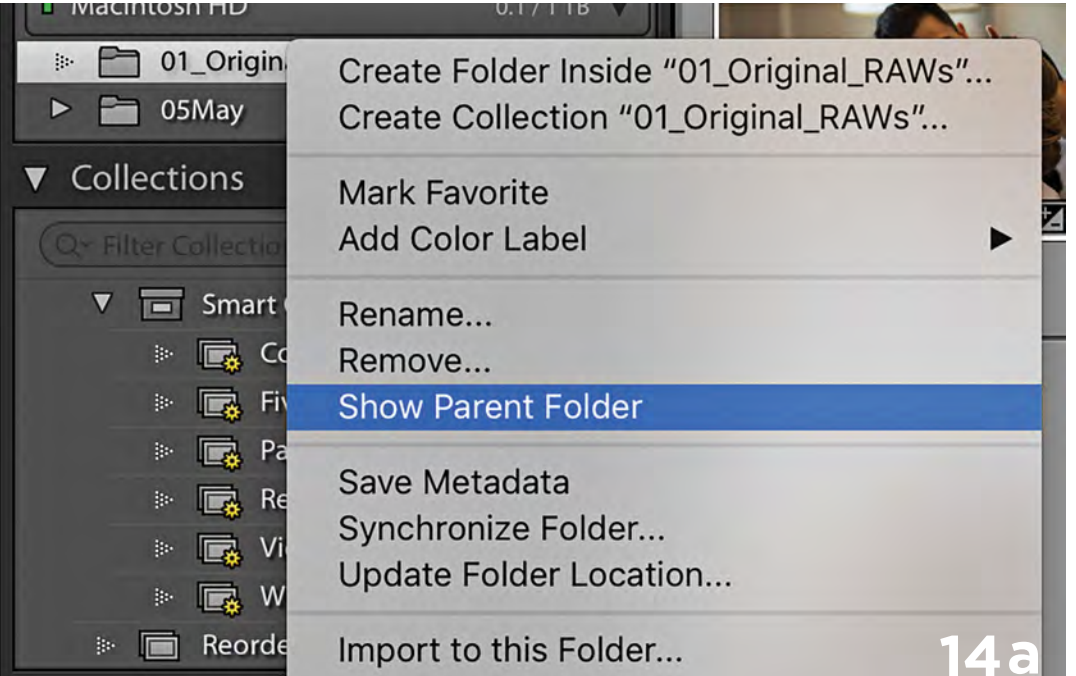
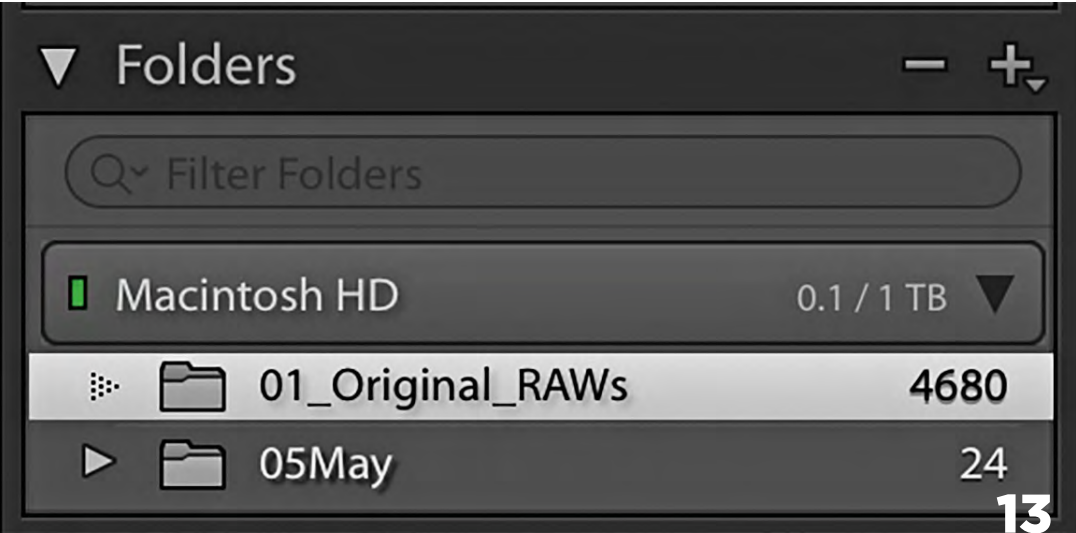


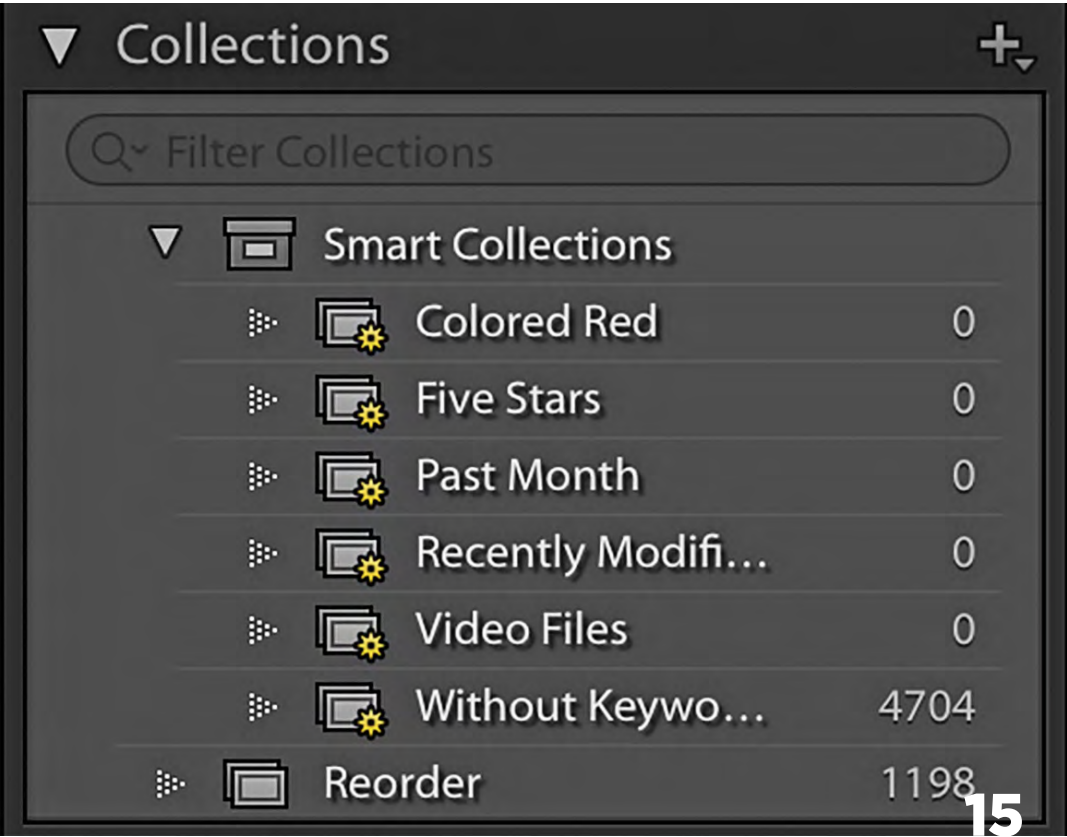
Moving down to choosing the destination for the RAW files, we can choose the 01_Original_RAWs folder we created on both storage drives.(11) The second copy location can be selected from the “Make a Second Copy to” option, and we will choose the 01_Original_RAWs folder on the secondary drive. This doesn’t allow us to create a folder inside Lightroom, so I do this prior to import so the primary/working drive has the same folder structure as the second one.(12ab) This is very important in case the primary drive goes down and the folders are easily relinked, since they are named the same. Once we’re ready, we can click import and watch the files begin to copy to the storage device and import into Lightroom all at once.



BASIC FILE MANAGEMENT IN LIGHTROOM

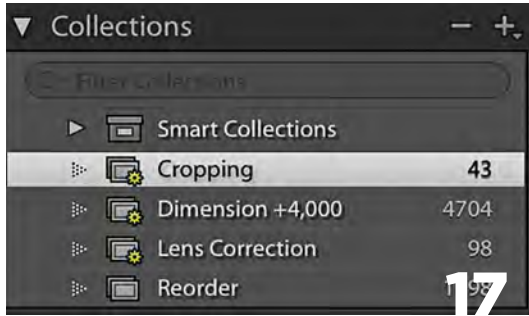
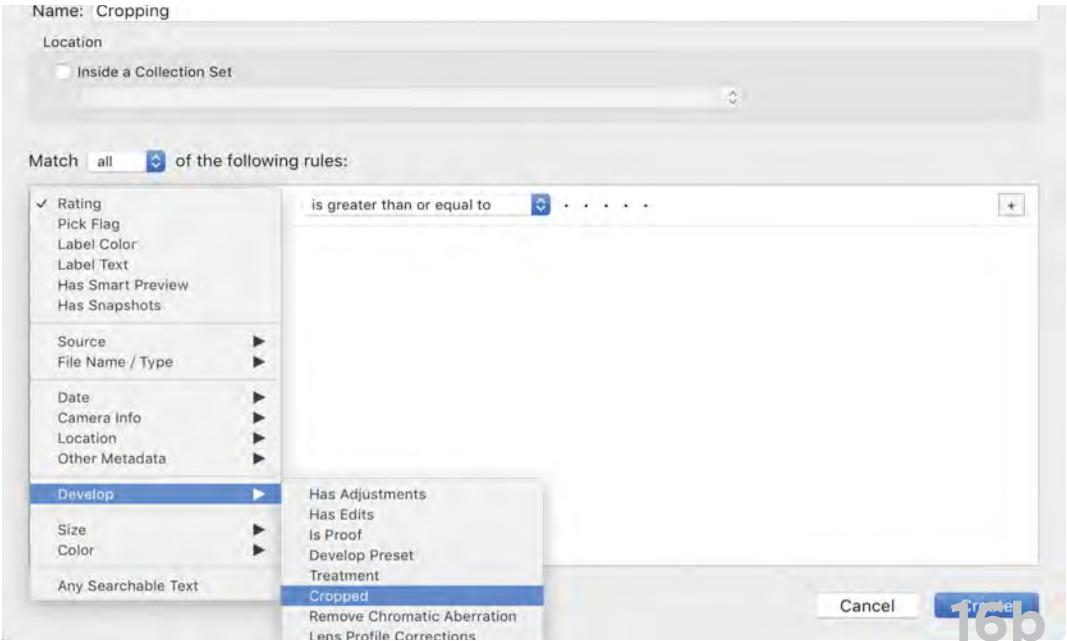
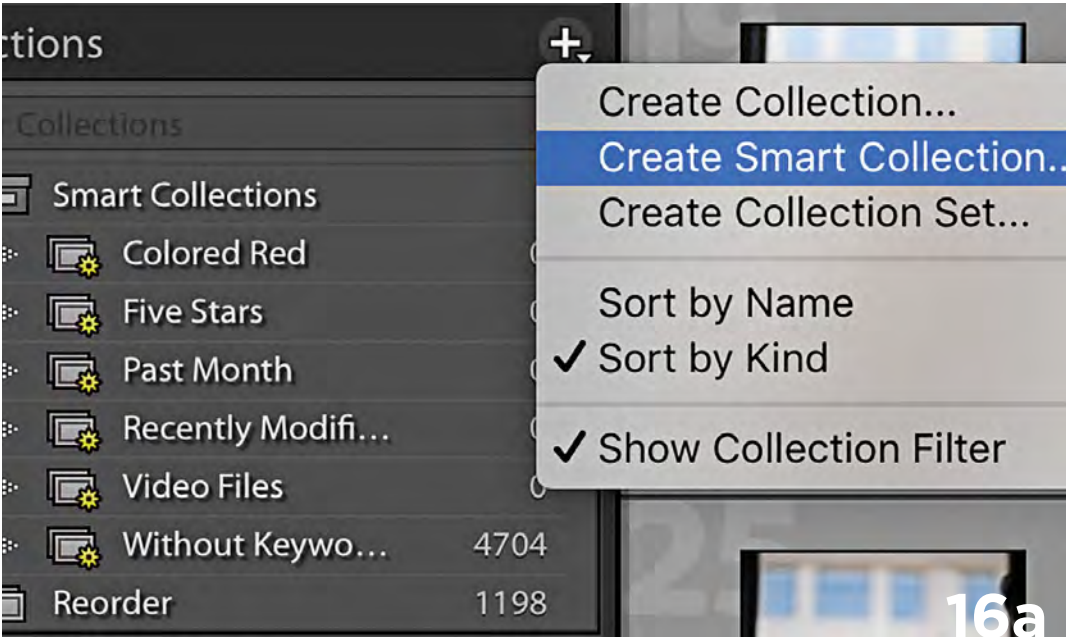
When it comes to basic file management in Lightroom, you want to be in the Library module to set up your file folder structure. On the left side, there is a panel called Folders where you will see the 01_Original_RAWs folder we copied and imported.(13) By right clicking and choosing Show Parent Folder, we can see the outer folder and can now add more subfolders based on the naming structure we decided on: 02_SELECTS, 03_Finals, 04_Creatives, 05_Blog, 06_Album, 07_Print.(14abc) Here is a huge tip for Lightroom: if you make a change outside Lightroom, you will likely have problems in your catalogs. When creating folders, moving files, renaming, etc., you should remember to always do it within Lightroom.

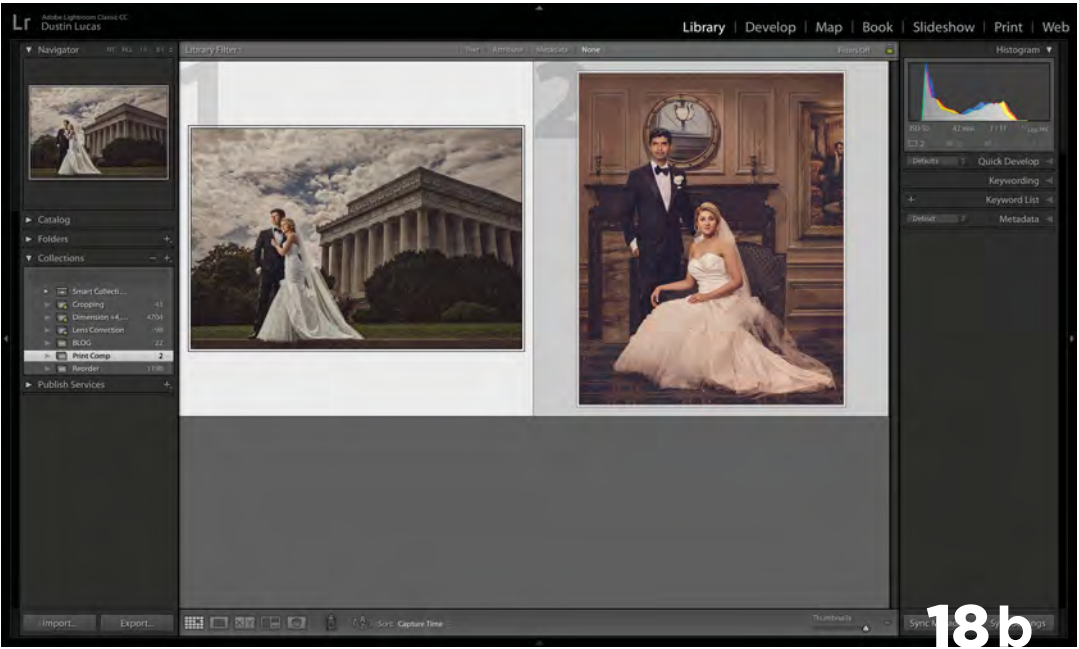




Another great tool for organization and sorting is Collections, an excellent option for storing images virtually.(15) What I mean by that is that you can add files to a Collection (virtual folder) without actually moving your files on your hard-drive. This is the key difference between working in the Folders and Collections panels. You can keep things simple by creating a Collection and adding files manually or creating a Smart Collection based on specific parameters to automatically add files.(16ab) Why would this be important? Well, if you want to sort by whether you cropped, applied lens corrections, or added custom metadata, or search images with a specific dimension or even the location where they were shot, you can create a Smart Collection to automatically add images fitting a certain set of parameters.(17)

This is an awesome way to automate some of your sorting based on the attributes and the Develop setting you apply. With Collections, you can really taking organization to the next level and store your blog, web and competition images in them to recall later.(18ab) This becomes massively handy for me when I want to submit image comp work at the end of year, as I don't have to sift through thousands of images. I will go more into depth on this in the next article—Part 2: Managing Catalogs.





WRAP UP

It starts with a solid storage and backup plan to make sure you images are safe and accessible in the fastest way. Once you begin to import your images, remember that Lightroom is a Digital Asset Manager, or DAM—everything else can be done here. Again, it’s simple and easy to do things in one place so you can stay organized. Think about it like this: Lightroom combines the organization of Adobe Bridge and the editing power of Adobe Camera Raw into one program. Stick with a single Master Catalog so you get into a solid routine and aren’t chasing around 100 different catalogs in a year. Then it’s time to better manage your files in Library so Lightroom can keep track of everything. Above all, once you bring images into Lightroom, any changes you make must be done in the catalog. ■



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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 of fine arts degree, a career opportunity opened once he began working with Evolve Edits. Through teaching photography classes and writing about photography, Dustin continues to expand his influence on art and business throughout the industry.
evolveedits.com

Photographer
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Location
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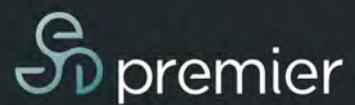


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SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY PYRAMID

with Christine Yodsukar



The world of social media can be daunting. There are so many platforms to choose from and to post on, and different things seem to be working for different people. It can be overwhelming trying to figure out what to post, when to post it, where to post it, and what to do after you’ve posted it. In our social media marketing business, Stumptown Media Group, we create social media marketing strategies for each of our clients. This not only gives us a strategy to work from as we create their Facebook ads and funnels, but it also gives them a framework for posting their own content so they know exactly what to post, when to post it, where to post it, and what to do after.

The Social Media Strategy Pyramid is one small part of the entire marketing strategy we create with our clients, and you have the opportunity to use it now as well. Go get ‘em!



COMMODITY

The bottom section of the pyramid is where everyone who owns and runs a business is. You are here along with everyone else who offers a product or service that is the same as or similar to yours. This section is called Commodity, because all you and everyone else are doing in this phase is telling the world, “I offer this product or service.”



TRUST

The next level up in the pyramid has a few less people and businesses, although it is still a very saturated level. The Trust level is where potential customers can start to trust that you will deliver on your product or your service. In this level, you are sharing testimonial videos and written reviews from past clients. Those testimonials and reviews build trust in the potential customer because they can see that other people have taken a gamble on you and your business and have come out with a win on the other side of that experience.



EXPERT

Once you enter the Expert level, you are certainly far ahead of the majority of small businesses and the type of content they are putting out on social media. In this level, you are sharing content that is of extreme value to your audience about the topic at hand. For example, you are sharing a blog with your favorite tips on getting a family ready for their photo session with you. You’re sharing photos with outfit ideas for your boudoir clients, and you’re sharing videos on topics like where to display your wedding album in your home to get the most enjoyment out of it. Once you enter the Expert level, your audience knows they can come to you when they want to receive value in your genre. Few small businesses ever journey past this level.



LIFESTYLE

If you make it here, you'll have even less competition and have clearly set yourself apart from the rest. Hardly any small businesses bring themselves to this level, and I bet you can think of very powerful brands you love that live here. In the Lifestyle level, you are providing your audience with valuable content above and beyond your genre or industry. You are now bringing value to your client's life outside of the product or service that you share with them. Maybe you're sharing a video of you making your favorite cake recipe, or a written blog about how you mentally prepare yourself for your days to achieve maximum success, or perhaps you're sharing photos that show your audience the step-by-step process to creating DIY yarn lanterns that they can hang on their covered patio in the spring and summer. Even when your customer is not in the zone of needing your services, they are still staying in your ecosystem because you continue to deliver value that they can use in their lives every single day. This will lead to them referring you more and thinking of reasons to buy from you more, and you coming to mind first when anyone mentions the product or service you provide. Can you think of brands you love that live in the Lifestyle level as well as each of the other levels?



It means a lot.
Kindness to others, and most importantly,
Kindness to yourself.



Justin Harwood, Zara Ashby and 66 others

6 Comments

Each of these levels offer types of content that you can be sharing on your social media pages. It's good practice to post and share photos, videos, and written content from each level often.

To take this to the next level, because that's what we do in the Shutter world, let's think about how we can amplify the impact of this Social Media Strategy Pyramid. How can we do it faster? How can we do it in a more effective way? How can we deliver all of this content to one person in five minutes?

Facebook ads and funnels are the way. A really well-done Facebook ad and funnel will cover every level of the pyramid in five minutes, and every person going through this funnel will get to experience content from each level. Making sure each new prospect gets to go through every level of the pyramid means that the ones who make it all the way to the end are your ideal clients. They have made it past all of the qualifying statements, been given all of the important information they need to know to ensure they are an amazing client for you, and are at the point where they are asking for more content from you.

These prospects that go all the way through the funnel become your warm leads. This means that they like what you're doing and want more. It also means that they are likely to become clients of yours. They now know that you offer the product or service they've been looking for, that other people have found success working with you, that you are an expert in your field, and (BONUS) that you are enriching their lives in ways beyond what they originally came to you for.

What about those people that started down the funnel but didn't make it all the way through? Well, statistics show that if nurtured well, a percentage of those will still become clients of yours. Don't just let them go and never offer them something of value ever again—with proper ads and funnels, you can then send valuable information straight to their news feed, continually proving that you are the trusted expert that they can rely on for what they need and so much more.

The power of Facebook ads and funnels is such that you can now pick the person you want to talk to and speak directly to them, instead of having your dad be the only one liking and commenting on your posts. We love Dad, but we can call him up anytime we want, so our marketing efforts are better saved for those clients we want to hire us.



Go through the Social Media Strategy Pyramid and write down five posts for each level that you can put out into the world. As you are creating your posts, think about the one person who is your perfect client, and write in a way that speaks directly to them. Be intentional as you write your posts and take your photos and create your videos, and be confident that someone out there wants exactly what you’re serving up. ■



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

photographer | audrey woulard | katcteens.com
image title | girl, wondering.



exposure | f1.6 @ 1/2000, ISO 64
lighting | profoto b10, ocf beauty dish
location | chicago, illinois
gear | nikon z7
| nikon 85mm f/1.4



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