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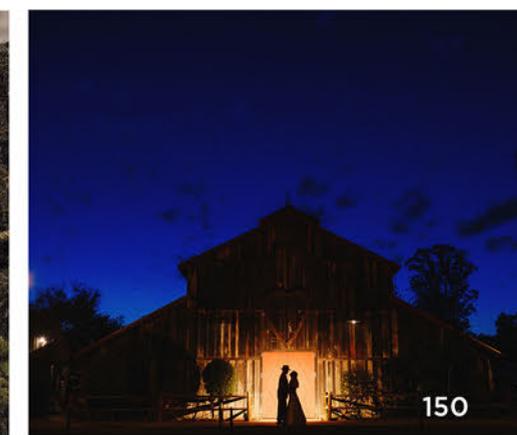
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- 14 | **Light Modifiers - The Beauty Dish** - Craig LaMere
- 22 | **Welcome to Lightroom CC** - Dustin Lucas
- 32 | **Color In Your Shadows** - Michael Corsentino
- 38 | **How I Got The Shot** - Sal Cincotta
- 46 | **The Key to Running a Successful Newborn Photography Business** - Kelly Brown
- 54 | **Newborn Video - 5 Tips for the Anti-Slideshow** - Rob Adams
- 60 | **Bringing Lifestyle to the Studio** - Heidi Guerard
- 70 | **Ages and Stages for Baby's First Year** - Lori Nordstrom
- 80 | **Top 3 Ways to Approach Newborn Fusion** - Joe Switzer
- 90 | **Business 101 - Newborns** - Melanie Anderson
- 98 | **The Revenue Stream - Tips for Capturing Baby's First Year** - Mimika Cooney

- 106 | **Newborn Photography From a Mom's Point of View** - Vanessa Joy
- 118 | **Creative Lightroom Presets for Baby Portraits** - Kristina Sherk
- 126 | **Inspirations** - From the Readers
- 134 | **The Anatomy of a Destination Shoot** - Leonardo Volturo
- 142 | **Building Blocks: Community Involvement** - Skip Cohen
- 150 | **Turning the Ordinary Into Extraordinary** - Michael Anthony
- 160 | **It's All About Communication** - Blair Phillips
- 166 | **ShutterFest Image Competition Winners Gallery**

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Light
Modifiers

The Beauty Dish

with **Craig LaMere**

by **Craig LaMere**

Light modifiers are a subject I love to talk about, because I'm a gadget junkie. I've used hundreds of different modifiers. This month, I'm going to talk about one of my all-time favorites, and a great one for my windy Idaho: the beauty dish.

Hard vs. Soft

There are two basic kinds of modifiers: hard and soft. The main purpose of a soft modifier is to diffuse light to a point where you significantly reduce any contrast in the subject you are shooting. These modifiers are usually less precise, and throw light rather than place it. This category includes softboxes, octaboxes and shoot-through umbrellas.

The main purpose of a hard modifier is to concentrate, or contain, light. This kind of light is very contrasty because of the quick transition of light to shade. Hard light is very specular because these modifiers only direct light and don't change its properties. This category includes pan and long-throw reflectors, barn doors and snoots.

My First Beauty Dish

And then there's a group of modifiers that fit dead in the middle of hard and soft to fill the needed gap.

My introduction to the beauty dish was ass-backwards. When I first started shooting outdoors with flash, I tried shooting with umbrellas and with softboxes, and it went terribly. Here in Idaho, the weather is crazy and unpredictable from one hour to the next. When I would try to shoot my umbrellas or boxes, any breeze would move

or even knock over my lights. The wind just causes havoc. Then one of my friends suggested I try this thing called a beauty dish. I had no idea what it was. I watched some videos and then bought a Paul C. Buff white 22-inch beauty dish. And I have been shooting with and loving them ever since.



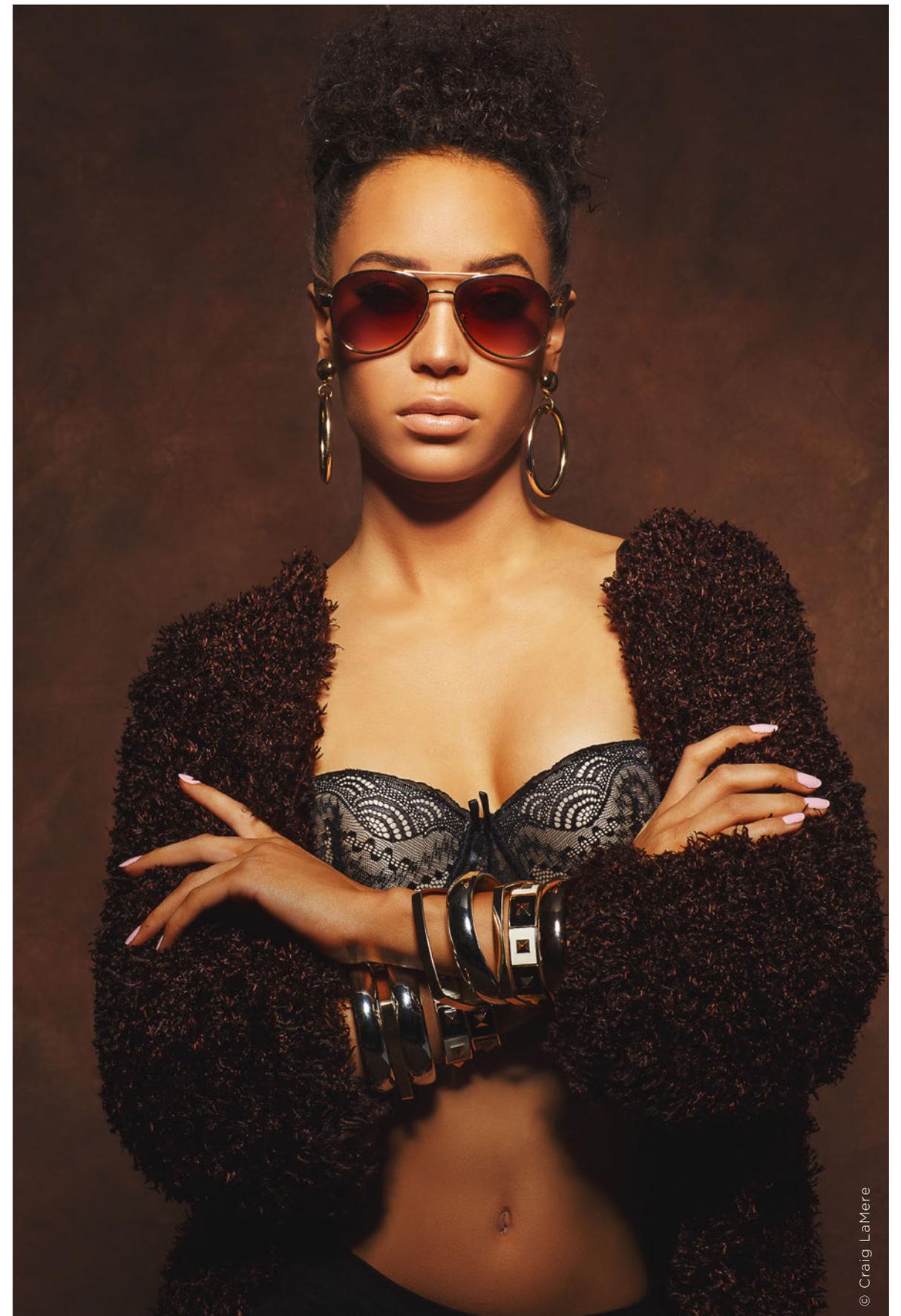
White 22-inch

Color

Beauty dishes come in one of two interior colors, white or metallic silver. The interior color is vital to what it can and can't do. It dictates the spread of light the dish outputs. A white finish has a wide spread of light, closer to a softbox. Metallic silver doesn't allow the light to spread; light comes out of the dish more like a spotlight or a gridded strip. For overall general use, or if you are just starting to shoot beauty dishes, I would go with white, since there's a greater learning curve for silver.



Metallic silver 22-inch



© Craig LaMere



© Craig LaMere

F-Stop and Power

One of the really great things about beauty dishes is that when they are not gridded or attached to a diffusion sock, they are pretty efficient with light. Unlike softboxes, they do not eat up a ton of power to get to f9–f16 at a little distance. The silver dish is at least a third more efficient than the white one, and does not take a lot of power to get to f11 at 10 feet or so. This is particularly nice when you are shooting OCF (off-camera flash) with a battery pack. On the down side, it is very easy to be a whole stop different in light in a matter of inches with a silver dish. That means you have to really meter properly in the right area, or you will be in hotspot hell. The white dish gives much more even exposure.

The Sock

Beauty dishes come with a white cover that fits over it and is used to diffuse the light and help minimize the contrast; this is “the sock.” I know a lot of shooters who like to use the sock when they shoot their beauty dishes, but to me, putting the sock on is like taking a tasty filet mignon and making it into a hamburger. It’s still tasty, but you took everything great away and turned it into something else. In essence, when you put the sock on, you turn it into a small octa. There is no right or wrong to using the sock, but I don’t use it if I don’t have to. The only time I use it is if I’m shooting on location at dusk and don’t want the harder light.



The sock

Grids

Grids are inserts that you place on the inside lip on the outside ring of the beauty dish. The actual grid looks pretty much like a honeycomb. The honeycomb prevents the light from spilling out, and directs it to exactly where you want it. Grids come in a variety of degrees. Each degree has a certain size honeycomb that allows only so much light to pass. The less light that passes, the more pinpointed the placement of the light. The tradeoff for more control is that the smaller the grid, the more it eats up light and power. If you were metering at f8 without a grid, when you put a grid on, depending on the degree of the grid, you could lose at least half the power and now could be registering only f3.5. Grids are a must-have when shooting beauty dishes.

Does Size Matter?

Beauty dishes are governed by the same rules as all mods and light sources: The smaller the source, the harder the light, and the bigger the source, the softer the light. Another thing to keep in mind when choosing your beauty dish is that they do not break down for easy transport. If your primary use is going to be location shooting, then size is a huge factor. Getting around with a 22-inch dish is a lot different than with a 28-inch dish. I shoot a 28-inch Mola Setti for a few reasons. It’s incredibly light; it’s large enough to shoot couples full length with little fall-off; and it’s large and heavy enough to handle the wind here in Idaho without blowing over. I bought the Setti for shooting OCF with my high school seniors and found out, after the fact, that it was great in studio. I still use my 22-inch dishes, but my go-to beauty dish is my 28-inch.



Grid



22-inch & 28-inch grids



22-inch & 28-inch dishes



22-inch & 28-inch dishes

© Craig LaMere



The 16-inch Beauty Dish and a Speedlight

I know a lot of people like to use speedlights for their flash photography. I used to shoot with them as my main off-camera option. I was always looking for modifiers that I could use with my speedlights that would give me a big modifier look. I pretty much bought everything I could for my speedlights, and then when I discovered beauty dishes, I thought the natural thing to do was to buy one for my speedlight.

I bought a 16-inch white beauty dish that came with a sock and a grid. I was sure I was going to be in heaven. I was not. My experience with 16-inch dishes and speedlights is that they are not the best match.

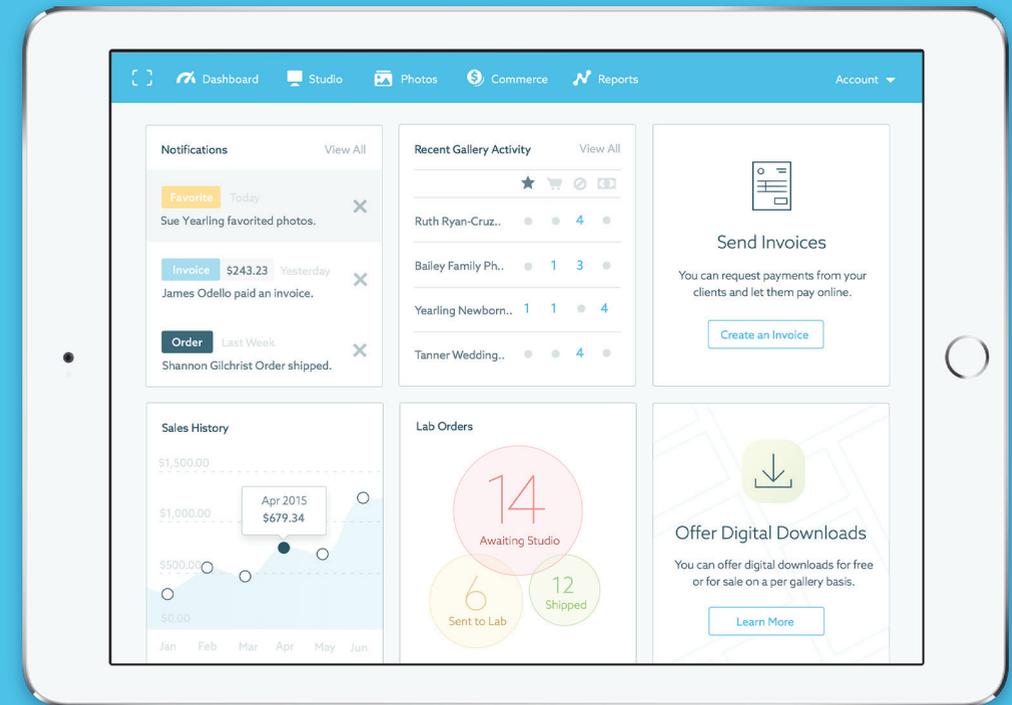
In the beauty dish I had, the middle baffle that you're suppose to fire into so you can disperse light across the dish was not big enough to contain the light from the speedlight. When I would shoot the dish indoors without the sock, light would escape and streak the image. When I put the grid in the dish to control the light, there was just not enough power in the head of the speedlight to be effective in bright sun at any real distance. Putting the sock on the dish was the best way to use the dish, but even then, it was not that great; it was more a matter of picking the lesser of the three evils.

Maybe technology has changed since I was shooting beauty dishes with speedlights, but I highly recommend finding a better modifier for your speedlights if those are your flash of choice. ■

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Lightroom CC

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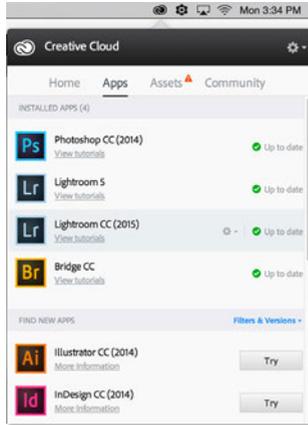


Figure 1

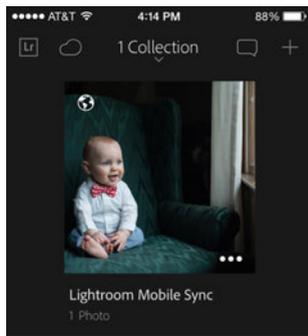


Figure 2a

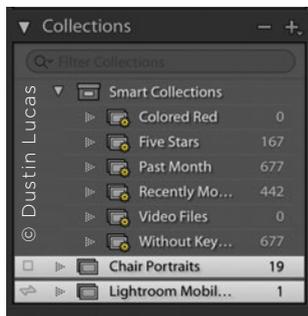


Figure 2b



by **Dustin Lucas**

It's finally here. Adobe Lightroom 6 and Creative Cloud were released just a few weeks ago after a long wait for some welcome upgrades. The upgrades, some useful and some not so much, include increased performance, Photo Merge software, facial recognition sorting and advanced video slideshow. What do these upgrades mean for your workflow?

With the integration of Lightroom and the Creative Cloud app, you gain the flexibility of using mobile devices that sync with your desktop. The question is, should you upgrade based on these improvements? Yes, you should.

The last thing you want to do is buy a new camera and have to convert RAW files to DNG because Camera Raw either hasn't or won't upgrade to a newer version. What a terrible workflow. I would know, because I bought a Nikon d750 before Lightroom 5.7 and Camera Raw 8.7 launched. This is a common case for individuals still using Lightroom 4 and purchasing the latest cameras and lenses. Lightroom CC does bring up some interesting compatibility issues with previous versions of Lightroom. We can go into depth later.

Choosing LR 6 or CC

Which version is better for your business? I find the best way to answer this is to use my experience with Lightroom in the past and make the jump to CC. After Adobe completely changed its marketing from stand-alone programs/suites to subscription-based plans, Lightroom CC joins the team (Figure 1). Lightroom 5 was included as well, but the extensive Creative Cloud integration gives Lightroom many added features. The stand-alone version of Lightroom 6 is missing the mobile flexibility of CC. Photographers using Eye-fi cards or Wi-Fi transmitters to send images instantly to a mobile device can automatically add these to a Collection in Lightroom Mobile that syncs with your desktop app. This brings tethering to a whole new level, whether shooting in the studio or not. For Desktop users, you can sync Collections with Lightroom Mobile as well (Figures 2a & 2b).



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5

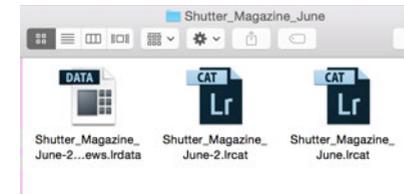


Figure 6

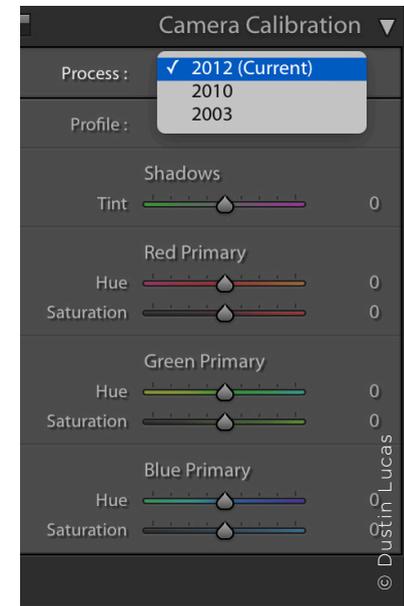


Figure 7

The annual subscription photography plan runs \$9.99 per month for CC versions of Photoshop, Bridge and Lightroom. That's a small price to pay for this upgrade. Of course, if you have a subscription, you get a free upgrade to Lightroom CC without replacing Lightroom 5 (Figure 3). Adobe charges \$149 for Lightroom 6, giving you full ownership. Adobe has ended backward capability between previous version catalogs (Figure 4).

Upgrading an older Lightroom catalog into Lightroom CC is simple to do. Just open it in CC, and the software prompts you to upgrade (Figure 5). In Finder, you will notice a duplicate catalog has been created to keep your Lightroom 5 catalog untouched (Figure 6). Going from Lightroom 3 to 4 was a nightmare because of the color process change from 2010 to 2012. Lightroom CC 2014 hasn't changed this yet, but there might be an update soon (Figure 7). For more info on this and camera profiles, check out my article "Color Space Part 2: Getting Control With Your Color." Once the 2015 version of Lightroom CC releases, there is no telling what they might update to. This is not a negative outlook; it just means Adobe has created a more advanced RAW processor for color.

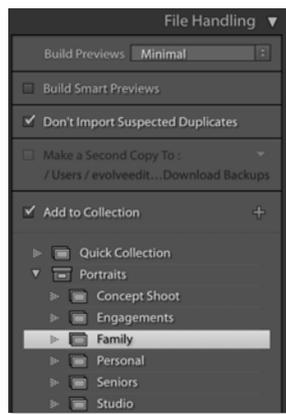


Figure 8

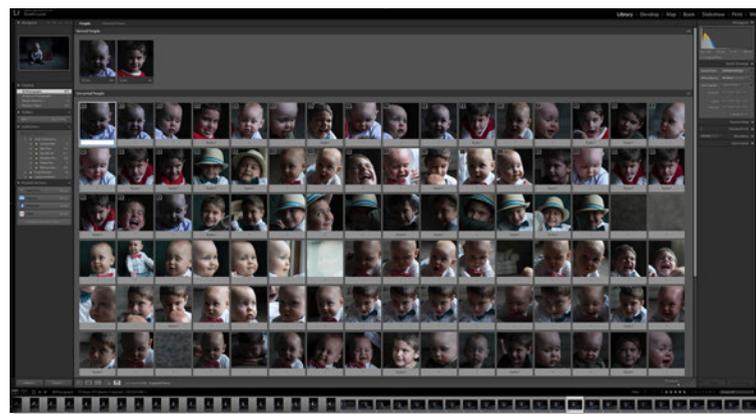


Figure 9

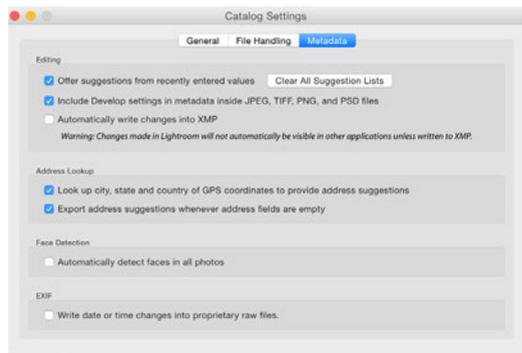


Figure 10



Figure 11

New Features in the Modules

You can't miss the performance upgrade that Lightroom CC brings to the table. Importing from an external hard drive never worked this smoothly. Culling got a little better, but there are plenty of programs to help, like Adobe Bridge, Photo Mechanic and OnOne's new Perfect Browse. Speaking of importing, you can now add images to Collections (Figure 8). This becomes handy for categorization of your files in one fell swoop. I have a few Collection sets already created, like portraits, landscapes, fine art, etc., and I can add different subcategories as well. For this client, I would add these images to the kids Collection under portraits. This feature will be more useful once you get into Lightroom Mobile.

Facial recognition software sorts your images based on people, a huge leap forward for keywording individual photos (Figure 9). You can tag names to the stacked sets of images to organize your entire job. This is a huge workflow boost for keywording individual photos and referring back to images for people to purchase later. If you want to turn off this tool, which prompts when opening a catalog, go into Preferences > Catalog Preferences and uncheck Automatically Detect Faces in All Photos (Figure 10).

Lightroom snuck in a couple more upgrades to the Library module. For global develop settings, hold Shift and click on the single arrows to adjust images. This allows only half the effect to be applied. For example, when you click the 1/3 exposure boost with Shift held down, it adjusts it +.17 instead of +.33, making it a 1/6 stop exposure increase. The same can be done with contrast, highlights, shadows, etc. By filtering images by metadata, one can sort by ratings and flags now. I found this to be very useful when sorting my picked images and viewing the quantity of rated images (Figure 11).

In the Develop panel, Lightroom made some interesting updates as well. Adjustment brushes got an overhaul. For instance, graduated filters finally got the erase mask feature, allowing you to remove the effect in unwanted areas. In the Edit tab, set the parameters of the filter and apply the desired effect to it to see what areas need to be removed. From there, click on the Brush tab and select the Erase option to begin painting away the effect.

Quick tip: Hold down the Option key to toggle the brush in order to add the effect back in. Hotkeys are your efficient friend (Figure 12a & 12b).

With this feature, I'm now able to tone skies and burn down blown-out foregrounds in a matter of seconds. With the crop tool, you can choose Auto for straightening (Figure 13a & 13b). I have been researching a way to batch-apply this across all the images, but have not found one yet. A similar setting can be batch-applied in the lens correction panel called Level. Check out my March article, "The Right Tools for the Job: Fixing Lens Distortion in Lightroom 5," for more info.



Figure 12a



Figure 12b



Figure 13a



Figure 13b

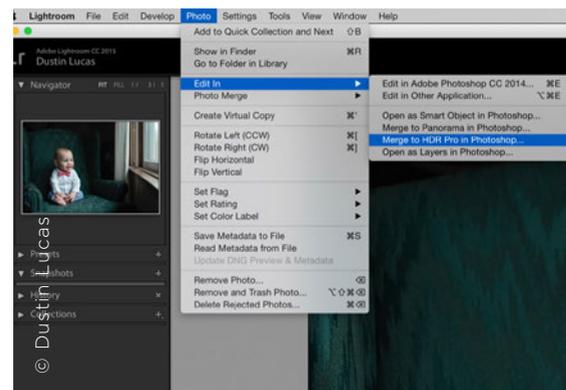


Figure 14

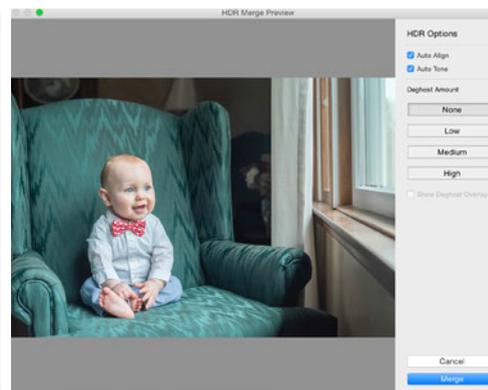


Figure 15

Photo Merge Engine

Adobe added another innovative feature for Photo Merge. You now have similar capabilities as Photoshop for HDR merging. In Photoshop, the 16-bit processing power is incredible. In previous versions of Lightroom, you had to be in the Develop module, select the bracketed exposures, navigate to the menu bar, hover the cursor over Edit In and select Merge to HDR Pro in Photoshop (Figure 14). So what's the big deal with that? When using Edit In, Lightroom exports a file (defaults as a TIFF), rasterizes it in Photoshop and saves a duplicate back into the catalog. You lose all the editing power of the Camera Raw engine. There's plenty of plug-in software that excels at HDR as well, but I give props to Adobe. Another new feature is that you can combine bracketed exposures without exporting the RAW files, giving you huge flexibility when editing afterward (Figure 15). You can adjust your exposure to +/-10 stops (Figure 16). I will dig into this feature in a later article for high dynamic range photo merging.

Don't Resist Creative Cloud—Embrace It

At the very least, go to Adobe's website and download a trial of Lightroom CC. If you completely hate it, move on. Stop the forum and blog searching. After reading this article, see how it fits for you. My driving point always leads to your workflow. Always upgrade your workflow and continue to make it more efficient. ■

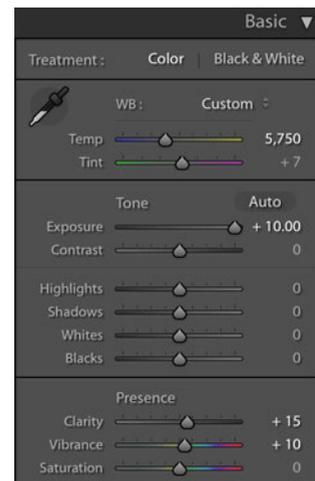


Figure 16



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by **Michael Corentino**

I love a good lighting puzzle, or what I like to call “decoding light.” Reverse-engineering the light you see in images is a great way to learn how it was achieved. This way you can try to replicate it, incorporate it into your work and eventually make it your own. The catchlights in the eyes and the placement and quality of the shadows are a few of the tell-tale signs to look for. I do this all the time, and encourage you to do the same if you’re just learning lighting or simply looking to add a few cool new techniques to your lighting bag of tricks.

Readers of this column know I’m a big fan of gels. There’s a ton you can do with them, from corrective to creative. During recent Google searches, I repeatedly came across several images that left me scratching my head. The images had a subject lit in what appeared to be relatively white light, seemingly from one strobe, yet the shadow being cast behind the subject was a completely different color. This was a big mystery to me. How was this possible? Where was the color coming from? How could the subject be in nearly white light but the shadow they were casting directly behind them be another color entirely? I couldn’t see any other light sources aside from the keylight, no secondary catchlights in the eyes, no double shadows to give away an additional light source. Definitely intriguing. After some digging, I found a few clues and set about recreating the effect myself. I set up my mannequin Roxanne in the studio in front of a white seamless background, and began trying to replicate the effect. Figuring out how to create colored shadows, a cool look for both fashion and catalog work, was tricky but fairly simple once I figured it out.

Here you can see the effect created by using two lights—one gelled, and one not from the same direction. This technique involves overpowering the gelled light with the light from the ungelled source so the subject remains in white light with a colored shadow. But this valid method produced a soft double shadow that I didn’t like. I wanted a single well-defined shadow.



It turns out that the secret is the use of a second light to create the color in the shadow. The devil is in the details. The placement of this gelled light makes all the difference. If it’s placed next to the keylight, you’re likely to get double shadows, which isn’t what I was after. I wanted one crisp, well-defined colored shadow. Placing the light on the opposite side of the keylight, pointed directly at the shadow, did the trick. The shadow still lacked the crispness I was after, but this was easily remedied by increasing the distance between the keylight and the subject and using a different modifier. What you’re doing here is filling the shadow; avoiding crossing shadows by keeping the power under the output of the keylight; and sidestepping any secondary catchlights in the eyes via the position of the light.

Creating Crisp Shadows

The qualities of shadows are governed by several factors, starting with distance. The distance of the keylight from the subject and the distance between the subject and the background will both dramatically affect the level of crispness achieved in the shadows being cast. The more distance there is between the keylight and the subject, the harder the quality of light will be. Hard light is a great fit if you’re after a deep, hard-edged, crisp shadow. The darker the shadow, the more color saturation you can introduce into it and the more defined the shadow will be, creating a more dramatic “crisp” effect. Remember that with this technique, in addition to using a keylight to illuminate the subject and cast a shadow, you use a second gelled light to fill in that shadow with color.

The Keylight

The next equally important factor is the modifier used for the keylight. The keylight used was a Profoto ProHead connected to a 7A 2400WS pack and modified with a Profoto Magnum reflector. The Magnum is a great light-shaping tool for creating contrasty, punchy light with crisp shadows due to its relatively small size, silver interior and deep shape. Because I wanted the crispest possible shadows, I placed the keylight approximately 10 feet high and 15 feet from the subject. The combination of distance from the subject and the properties of the light and modifier all contributed to the hard quality of light I wanted, and provided enough coverage for three-quarter and full-figure work.

This image shows the keylight alone. Here, I was dialing in the direction and length of the shadow and the best camera position.



The Fill Light

For the fill light, I used a medium-size strip box fitted with a 40-degree egg-crate grid and powered with a Profoto B1 Air. This light was placed close to the background relative to the keylight, about 5 feet away. The grid was used to tightly control the spill of light and confine it as much as possible to the shadow being cast on the backdrop by the keylight and subject. Inside the strip box, behind the internal baffle, I taped one different-colored gel at a time over the light head. Be careful doing this; modeling lights can easily get too hot and quickly melt your precious gels. Gels are also available in large rolls that can easily be used to cover the outside face of a softbox and avoid issues with modeling lights altogether.

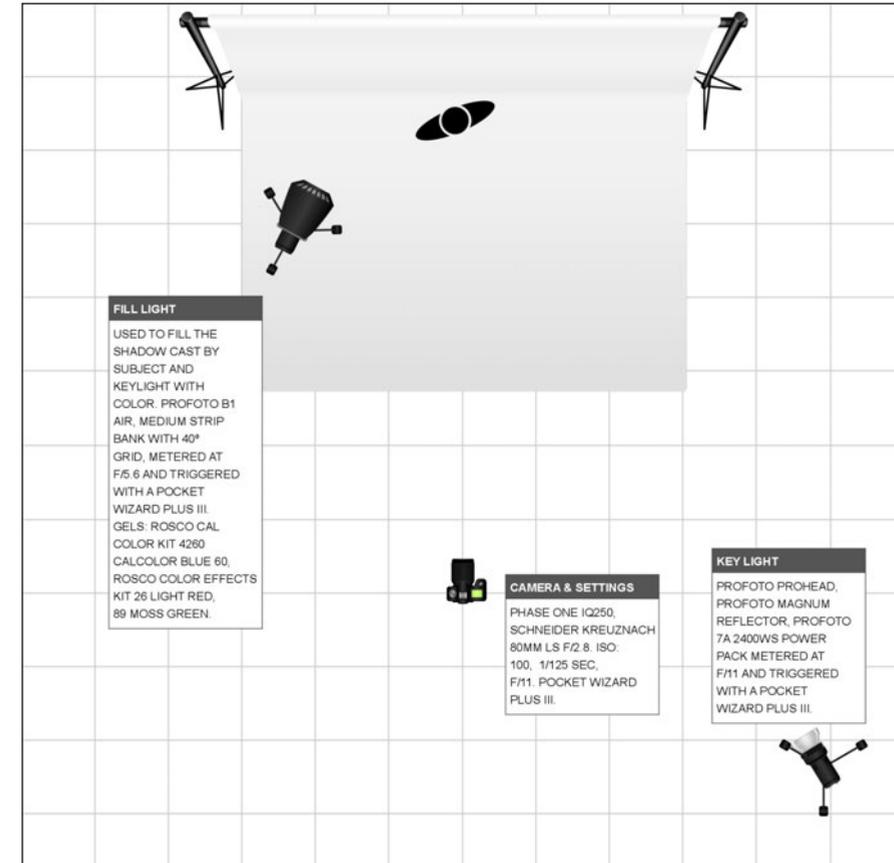
Less Power Equals More Color

Working with gels and strobes is a little counterintuitive. Gels behave differently when held in front of constant lights than they do in front of strobes. In front of constant lights, many gels can throw a lot of saturated, vibrant color. With strobes and, to a lesser extent, speedlights, it's a case of less is more. You get much better, more-saturated results using the lower end of the strobe power range than you do with higher output. Gels don't seem to like a ton of light; they quickly appear washed out and lose their punch. My gelled fill light was two stops under the key for each of the three finals. So again, less is more.



Image Left - Once my initial shadow direction and length were nailed down, I introduced the second gelled fill light, placed opposite the keylight and close to the background. This light was modified with a medium strip box and a 40-degree soft grid to keep its colored fill light solely on the shadow falling behind the subject.

Image Right - As a final step, I worked on the quality of the shadow. To create the well-defined shadow you see here, I used a Profoto Magnum reflector on the keylight and placed it 15 feet away from the mannequin, which was moved close to the background.

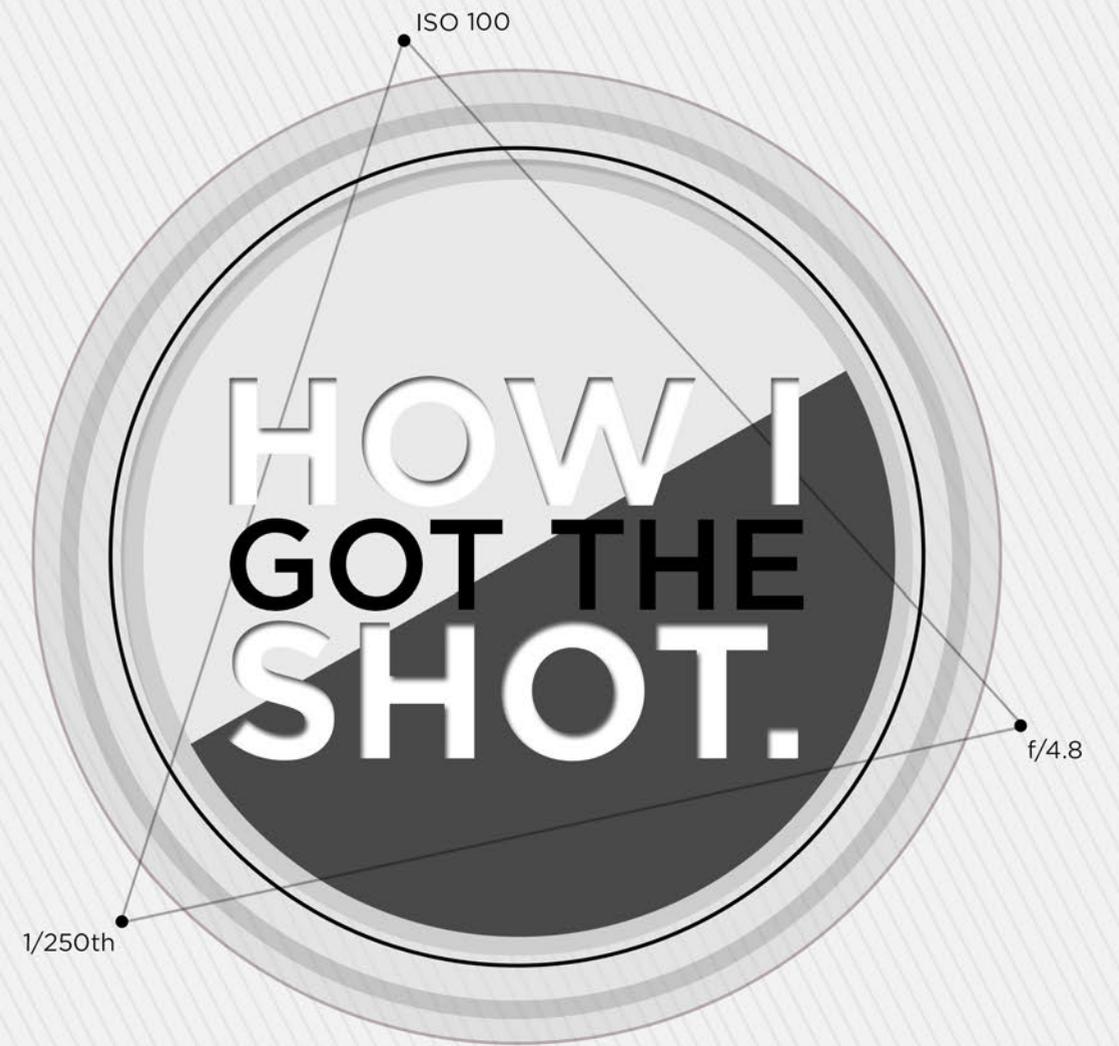


The Fill Light Modifier

If you're ready to take it to the next level and create the crispest hard-edged shadows possible, you'll want a Profoto ZoomSpot with four interior cutters. This modifier's built-in Fresnel lens allows users to control a light's spread from wide to spot, while a second sliding knob can vary the light from soft to focused. The cutters allow endless shapes to be created with the light. This is a super-versatile yet extremely niche tool best suited to fashion, beauty and the occasional portrait application. I use the last-generation ZoomSpot, which I picked up on eBay for \$650. Considering the new version, with its built-in 4800ws head, is \$10,500, I'd say I got a big fat bargain. Elinchrom and other manufacturers also have adequate and much less costly solutions, and there's always renting. When it comes to creating super-hard-edged shadows with a ton of control and custom light shapes at your disposal, nothing comes close to a ZoomSpot. I prefer Rosco gels for their quality and variety; they're available in rolls as well as cut sheets for both strobes and handheld flash.

Whether you use strobes or speedlights to achieve this technique, it's a great way to add sizzle to your images. So crank up the intensity in your images—gels offer the perfect way to do it. ■

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by **Sal Cincotta**

This month's editorial is all about babies. Just to be completely transparent, this subject is not in my wheelhouse. I am not a baby photographer, and I take my hat off to those of you with the patience to do it. Never one to shy away from a challenge, this month, I had my good friends bring in their son Benjamin, who is adorable and easy to work with. However, I quickly found that the pace of working with children can be challenging, even for this most seasoned vet. I mean, I am all about pace, direction, getting the shot and moving on to the next. Not so when working with children. You get what they give you. Sometimes it's gold; other times, it's, well, complete crap.

This shoot was incredible for me because it really pushed me to work on something I personally have no interest in. I photograph children, but it's just not something I am passionate about. Too often, people think because we have cameras we shoot everything. After this shoot, I realized more than ever that focusing on your area of expertise is the best way to go. Be an expert, not a jack-of-all-trades.



CONCEPT

The concept was a little rough around the edges. We knew we wanted something trendy, even a little hipster. The girls headed off to The Children's Place and picked up a hat, tie and denim shirt. The original thought was to have Ben shirtless with a bowtie and a hat, but that changed once we really got into it and looked at everything together.

Side note: There was a big debate going into this shoot on the definition of a "baby." Ben is 17 months old. Online research revealed that a baby can be anywhere from newborn up to 2 years old, but more commonly, babies are considered babies up to around a year old. So, maybe we bent the rules a little, but the challenge was on.

LOCATION

We shot this in our studio in O'fallon, IL. Nothing over the top. We shot this on a gray backdrop, and, since Ben was in all blue, we felt keeping the background somewhat low-key would pop Ben off the background.



LIGHTING

What's funny about this shoot is that I wanted to do something different with lighting and I thought to myself, "Are we overcomplicating this shoot? Why do we need so much light?" After I took my first frame, I realized how adding this many lights could really create an amazing image. I don't normally use this many lights, but now, my mind is racing on how I can add more lights to my portraits and create a really distinctive look. The crazy thing is, when you look at the shot, it doesn't look overlighted; in fact, I really could have added another light or two.

We used five lights. We had two edge lights from behind with grids on them, one light above for a hair light, and then an octobox and stripbox in the front. If I had to do it over again, I would probably add one more light, at a minimum, and fire it into the background to create a natural vignette.

GEAR

Camera // Hasselblad H5D-50c

Lens // Hasselblad 100mm

Settings // 1/250th @ f4.8, ISO 100

Lights // 3 Profoto B1's and 2 Profoto D1's

Modifiers // Profoto Octabox, Profoto Beauty Dish with grid, Profoto Zoom Reflector and grids and Profoto 1x4 Stripbox



© Salvatore Cincotta Photography



CLOSING

This was truly a fun and challenging shoot, and after all is said and done, I am very happy with the results. The additional lights really made these images stand out. A lot of baby portraits I see are usually in baskets, topless or sleeping, and that's just not my style of photography—it never will be. I was out to create something interesting for the client and do something that matches my brand and style of photography.

Deciding on the best of the many great shots we got of Ben was no easy task. We went through several rounds of internal voting. My vote was for the one you see here of Ben looking at the camera and smiling with his hat tilted back. Something about his expression and the edit I just loved, but ultimately, the one of him looking down in black and white won out with the staff here. You win some, you lose some. Having choices is never a bad thing.

Get out there and make it happen. ■

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THE **BABY** EDITION

46 - The Key To Running A Successful Newborn Photography Business

Kelly Brown

60 - Bringing Lifestyle to the Studio

Heidi Guerard

70 - Ages and Stages for Baby's First Year

Lori Nordstrom

90 - Business 101 - Newborns

Melanie Anderson

98 - The Revenue Stream - Tips for Capturing Baby's First Year

Mimika Cooney

AND MORE!



© Kelly Brown

the keys to running
a successful

NEWBORN
photography business

with **Kelly Brown**



by **Kelly Brown**

Listening to our clients' wants and needs is the key to exceeding their expectations, and when we do, it is the best possible way to advertise our business because they will in turn tell all their friends and family about the incredible experience you have created for them. And pregnant women know pregnant women, so it will be your best form of advertising.

With every session, I believe it's equally important to not only create beautiful images, but to provide that exceptional experience. Instead of only trying to get the next great shot, we need to focus on the comfort and safety of the baby and creating the perfect environment. When the baby is comfortable and safe, the flow of your sessions will become easier.

Creating That Perfect Environment For Your Sessions

Understanding babies and being familiar with what makes them comfortable is paramount during a newborn photography session. By creating a baby-friendly environment in your studio, you'll not only

cut down on the amount of time it takes to shoot, but you'll be able to pose and photograph the baby in his or her most calm state.

Keep in mind that newborn babies have spent the last nine months in the womb. The more you can do to recreate this environment, the happier your little subject will be. With that in mind, you can follow these simple steps to keeping newborn babies comfortable and at ease.

Regulate the Temperature in Your Studio

The womb is about 100 degrees Fahrenheit, so babies tend to be at their most relaxed in a warm room. I set my studio's heater to about 80 degrees, which seems to be the most comfortable temperature for newborns. Plus, this temp will keep their skin nice and peachy, while they could get blotchy patches if they're too cold.

Turn Up the Ambient Sound

Newborns are inundated with noise during their nine months in gestation. Not only do they hear their mother's heartbeat, they tune into her blood flow, digestive system and her voice. While you don't want to play loud music, you might try plugging in a white-noise machine (you can download white-noise apps on iTunes) or a heartbeat monitor to recreate the baby's time in the womb.



© Kelly Brown



Happy Parents Make for a Happy Baby

Chances are your clients are extremely tired from lack of sleep—not to mention the stress that can come with a new addition to the family. Newborns pick up on their parents' stress levels, so the more relaxed and comfortable you keep Mom and Dad, the better. Make parents feel welcome, offer them some water and try to connect with them on a personal level. The calmer the parents are, the calmer the baby will be.

Every baby is different and will not go into every pose. They each have their own comfy spot, and at absolutely no point should they be forced into any position. When a baby becomes unsettled, her parents become unsettled, so make sure that the parents and family members are enjoying the session. Gain parents' confidence by showing them that the safety of their baby is the most important aspect of your session. We must remember that it is a privilege to be asked to photograph these little bundles.

Photographing newborns doesn't have to be complicated. The simplest of images are often the most beautiful and treasured.

Baby Safety First

These are the safety rules I have in place for my studio.

- Never leave a baby unattended in a prop, on your posing bag or with a young sibling.
- Always have a spotter or parent next to your baby when using props.
- Use a support hand or finger when posing the baby, and clone it out later in Photoshop.
- Don't force a baby into any pose. Instead, adjust her to where she is comfortable.
- Have your camera strap around your neck when shooting above the baby.
- Never stand on anything above the baby.
- Never put a baby inside or on an object that could break or fall.
- Never use glass props.





© Kelly Brown

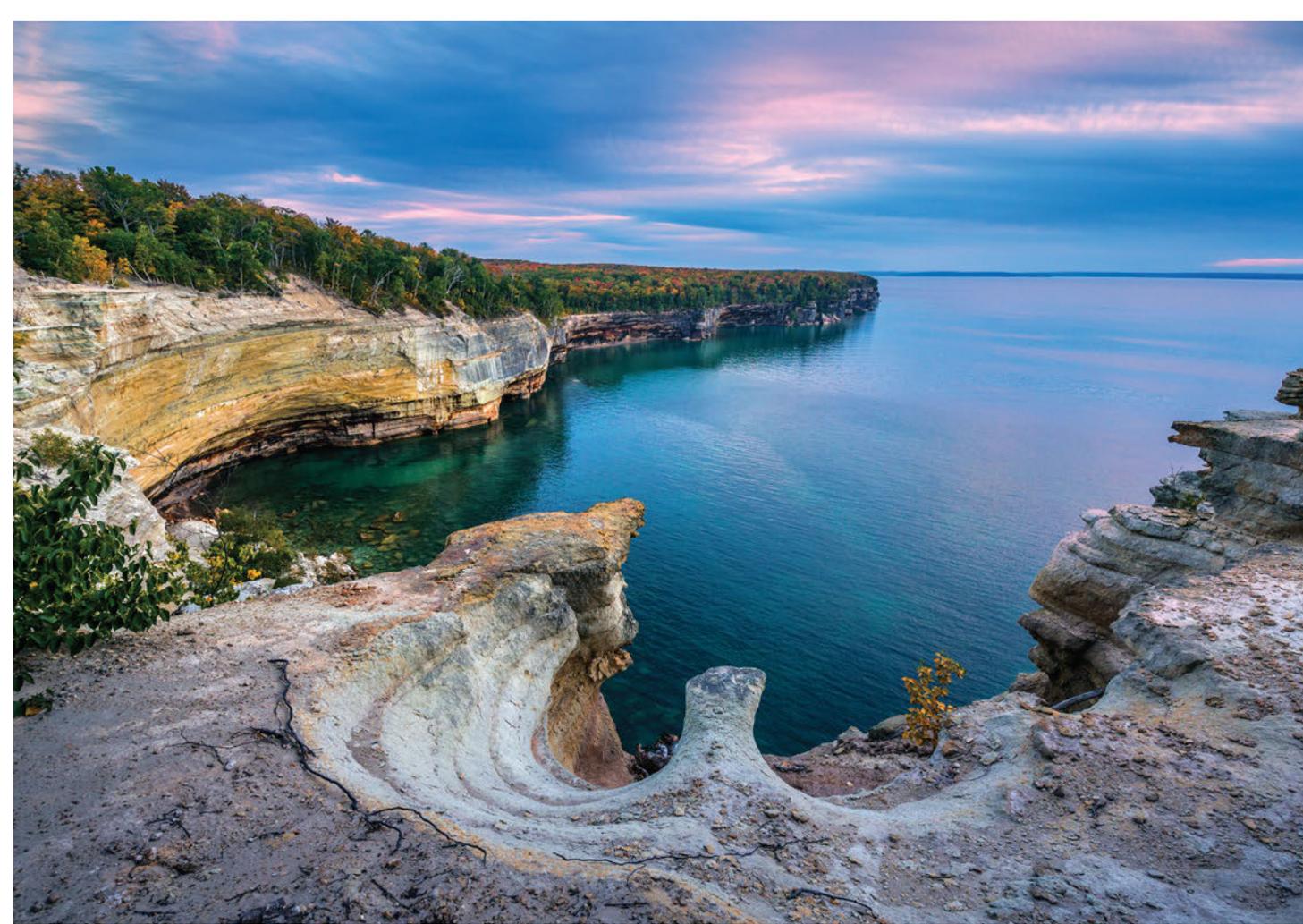


If a baby isn't going into a position easily or is showing signs of discomfort by waking or wriggling, it's time to move on or finish the session.

I'm a big believer in "prevention is always better than the cure." Use common sense. If the baby is showing signs of discomfort, do not force her.

The more comfortable you make the baby, the more content she will be. If she is continually moved and disturbed during the shoot, she will become overstimulated and unsettled. Gentle, small movements that transition babies into different poses will keep your babies nice and calm and ensure a smoother session. We have to have patience.

The challenges of photographing newborns are what make it so rewarding. Working with these little wonders isn't easy. You have to know how to take a technically good photograph but you also have to know how to handle babies with loving care. ■



Focal length: 15mm Exposure: F/8 1/40 sec ISO400 © Ian Plant

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NEWBORN VIDEO
—— 5 tips for ——
the anti-slideshow

with **Rob Adams**



by **Rob Adams**

I wasn't going to break out my Canon C100 to film our newborn baby. I was trying to follow a rule about professional camera work and personal events. I prefer to keep work, work and personal time, personal time. That's what smartphones are for, right? But I was urged to do something by peers and family who just couldn't accept that the filmmaker in the family wasn't going to document these first few months with a pro's touch.

I've been a wedding and commercial/corporate filmmaker for so many years that I completely overlooked newborns and children. It's not my forte, certainly. Weddings have always been our bread and butter. They are lucrative and somewhat formulated, and always provide ample opportunity for creativity. The idea of shooting newborns never even really crossed my mind as a filmmaker—until I became a father. And, of course it's fitting. Video and newborns go together perfectly. Who wouldn't want to capture those precious few moments when a baby is actually a baby? They change so much from day to day, even in the time between filming and editing.

It wasn't until I actually fired up the camera, mounted a lens and started filming that a flood of creativity and beautiful ideas sprung to life. After a hearty feeding and diaper swap, we put our 2-month-old daughter (a tad on the old side for a newborn shoot) in my wife's arms. I used the soft window light in the nursery to produce vibrant, intimate video clips of her perfect skin and all of her little baby parts. Even her tiny outie belly button. Not to mention her "eyes, ears, nose, head, shoulders, knees and toes." Yes, that song rings in my head daily.

As I was filming, I started thinking about all the little pieces that make up this abundant miracle. Right away, I conjured up a title for the video, "Pieces," and it would be all about how we love her pieces to pieces. Clever. Cute. And when you think about it, completely marketable as a product. Being that newborn photography is an entire sector of the photo-business world, why wouldn't video fit right in? I know some photographers have tried to incorporate video clips in a fusion slideshow format, but this takes it a step further. A video birth announcement doesn't have to be long or overproduced.



Mine is only a minute and 40 seconds and contains fewer than 50 shots (not a lot by video standards), including titles. Most of the shots are less than two seconds long and are cut to the tempo of the music. I shot it completely handheld, and mostly at apertures sub- $f/2.0$ for a soft, dreamy feel using the motion of my body to push in and sometimes out toward and away from the baby to simulate a bit of movement.

No fancy sliders, no glider, not even a monopod. It took maybe 10 to 15 minutes to shoot the entire thing. That was about all most babies will stand for. My daughter unknowingly did all the work by just being adorable and doing what babies do. It's funny: When you watch the video, you probably won't even notice the baby was crying and flailing most of the time. Only in the shots where you see her face is she actually calm. The stressed look on her face post-tantrum was actually cute.



5 Tips to Get You Started

1. **Keep it simple.** Don't try to get fancy and overuse sliders and other cinema rigging. There's one universal rule in show business: Children and animals will steal the show every time. Let the action of the baby speak louder than fancy gear ever will.
2. **Shoot shallow.** Trying to capture a moving, kicking baby in focus at all times can be a real challenge, so embrace this unavoidable problem and go with it. Allow the shallow depth-of-field to create a soft, ethereal mood. The thought that went through my mind when I filmed this piece was that I wanted to simulate what a baby's eyes might see—trying to focus on and track objects that are so new and wondrous.
3. **Aim for tiny moments.** What you film doesn't have to be earth-shatteringly beautiful. Don't force it. Let the child be who she is, and just capture that in small bursts. When you sit down to edit, you can decide how to string together various shots in a way that moves your viewer's eyes around the screen and reveals the baby a little at a time.
4. **Keep the room warm and cozy.** This is a newborn photographer's golden rule. You want an environment that doesn't disturb the baby. The infant doesn't have to be doing much, either. Simply lying there is enough. We didn't pose our daughter or try to get fancy with light. I just went for what was already there. It's real and sweet and couldn't be faked or mocked even if we tried. It's how I'll always remember my little girl.
5. **Edit cleanly.** Find a song that has innocence but also builds to create that cinematic tension and climax. Use simple titles to accent the message and polish the stone. Add some booked overlays if you want to jazz up the lighting scenario. ■

I cut the video together quickly with Final Cut Pro X, and created the titles using a preanimated title set from Pixel Film Studios called ProAccent. The edit required just a simple, straightforward cut with basic color grading that warmed up the image slightly and enhanced the lightness and saturation in the midtones of her porcelain-like skin and the color of her eyes. I didn't use any slow motion, but I'm sure that kind of artistic approach has a place in a video like this.

I used SongFreedom for the music. The online licensing service has an entire section devoted to children's and family music, and it was easy to find a sweet, building, driving instrumental score. Just by showing off my daughter's tiny form and cute expressions and overlaying some titles stating her weight and length at birth—and of course a hashtag at the end for people to post photos and comments—I ended up with an adorable little film that I know she will cherish 20 years from now.

Truth is, if you have the ability to use light to form dimension in your images and can hold a camera relatively steady for a few seconds at a time, you can make a fun and marketable video birth announcement that fits perfectly in today's crazed, short-attention-span, self-gratifying, Facebook-perfect, life-highlight-reel world we all live in. If you are already a newborn photographer, a video like this can open a whole new stream of income from your sessions.

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© Heidi Guerard



© Heidi Guerard

BRINGING LIFESTYLE — TO THE STUDIO —

5 Tips for an Epic Baby Shoot
with **Heidi Guerard**



© Heidi Guerard



by Heidi Guerard

I never dreamed that I would one day own a portrait studio. I have big dreams, but studio owner wasn't one of them.

When I started photographing babies, I worked off of my laptop and traveled to clients' homes. The commute into Boston, paired with three- to four-hour sessions, quickly took their toll on my young family. Having a small space where clients could come to me seemed like a logical solution. I opened the doors to my first studio in 2009. It was a tiny space with big windows and cheap rent. Signing the lease was terrifying. It was a humble start, but the decision to open a studio ultimately launched Heidi Hope Photography into what it is today.

Today you can find me running a 3,000-square-foot studio alongside my husband, Shaun. We employ three photographers and a support staff while hosting workshops and traveling to speak.

My studio is a dream I never even knew I had. I still pinch myself when I walk in and flick on the lights. Much has changed since the days of lugging a carload of newborn gear to my clients' homes. One thing you learn early on as a studio owner is that the old adage is true: Time is money. Every hour that your doors are open costs you.

Whether you own a studio or not, streamlining your business practices and becoming as efficient as possible in your sessions doesn't just mean bigger profits, it means shorter days and more time with your family. Eventually I realized that shaving half of the time off my newborn sessions would mean a big difference for our bottom line and our schedule.



© Heidi Guerard

It's easy to streamline a newborn session when the baby is a sleepy angel, but what could I do if the baby wasn't sleeping? How could I still create beautiful, memorable portraits with a baby that wasn't putty in my hands during that first hour? What about all of the older babies who missed the newborn-photography window?

Time wasn't my only concern. A few years into photographing clients in our studio, I started to feel bored. Eventually in a studio, you can't help but feel you've done it all. Though I didn't miss the commute, I missed the unique challenges each new home provided. I missed the energy and spontaneity of lifestyle photography. I missed scouting for the perfect background or pocket of light. I grew tired of studio backdrops and the same poses over and over. I knew I had to make some changes to my work to keep the passion alive.

That's when I began incorporating lifestyle-inspired photography into my studio work. Not only did my sessions become more interesting and fulfilling, my clients had more fun. I began providing larger galleries, and my sessions were over much faster. Long gone are the days of three-hour newborn sessions. All of those benefits equal bigger sales, higher profits and happier clients.

Of course, when clients come to a portrait studio, they expect a certain type of portrait. They want all four kids in focus and smiling at the camera or in a traditional pose to hang over the fireplace. I couldn't neglect those requests.

At the same time, our studio is well known for our creativity and unique perspective. Our clients want a one-of-a-kind experience, portraits that aren't like everyone else's. How do we achieve the consistency and quality of studio work while incorporating the fresh energy of lifestyle photography? Learning to balance these different desires through studio photography with a lifestyle spin has been a large part of our success.

Try these five tips to add a little lifestyle to your baby sessions and give your clients the best of both worlds.

1. POSE, UN-POSE, REPEAT

Pleasing our clients is our number-one job. We always have a pre-session consultation and write down all the must-have images that families are hiring us for. I call these the money shots because they always order them in the end.

Though our generation takes millions of photographs each day, we very rarely have quality portraits of the whole family looking at the camera. That is something consumers are willing to hire a professional for. It is always at the top of the money-shot list.

I like to ensure we get the money shot at the very beginning of the session, and then I allow myself to be a little more creative as time goes on and the family loosens up.

To do it, I begin with a traditional pose, take a few photos and then encourage my subjects to loosen up and interact within that pose. This ensures the strong composition and great lighting of studio work with the beautiful expression and spontaneity of lifestyle work. While the portraits appear candid in nature, the pose and composition were well thought out and executed first.

For every pose you photograph, try starting with a formal pose, get the shot and then allow your subjects to loosen up. They can talk to each other, sing songs or play a game.

2. GET PERSONAL

One of my favorite ways to add variety and a personal touch to studio work is to have clients bring in some favorite toys or books. It's a great way to get a family interacting and help them to forget about the camera. Sometimes we will have an older sibling read to a baby brother or sister. Other times we have the whole family read together. Favorite toys are also a great to keep busy one-year-olds in place.

I especially like incorporating these types of images at the beginning of the session when clients are still a bit nervous and stiff.

Personal touches help to make a session more unique and sentimental. All parents have an emotional connection to the stories they recall reading to their children. I can still remember my daughters' favorite bedtime stories. Often, these personalized portraits become some of the parents' favorites.



“
Try starting with a formal pose, get the shot, and then allow your subjects to loosen up!
 ”



3. SWITCH IT UP

One of my favorite things about incorporating lifestyle-inspired portraits in my studio work is that I can play. Lifestyle photography lends itself to experimentation with different angles and lenses. When clients are interacting within a pose, I walk all the way around them to look for unique perspectives, or switch my lens out for variety. The more variety a final gallery has, the harder it is for clients to leave without all of them at the sales appointment. Plus, I have much more fun and often stumble upon some really great results.

4. GET MOVING

My best piece of advice to achieve natural expressions and real smiles is to get clients moving. Have them run, spin, play tickle monster—whatever it takes!

If I have clients in a pose and it just isn't working, we get moving. Even if not one photo turns out from our silliness, just the act of moving helps them warm up to the camera and shake off the awkwardness. It makes the session more enjoyable, and all of the subsequent portraits are sure to be filled with natural smiles.

5. BREAK THE RULES

There are so many photography rules, especially in newborn photography. I was initially self-taught in newborn posing, so I missed many of the rules about how many fingers are supposed to be showing or which way the toes should be placed. I often joke that I'm a lazy poser.

That's why I love lifestyle newborn photography. It allows me to focus on what I really love about newborns. I can capture the bond with family and the priceless expression of an older sibling. I can use light, interesting angles and raw emotion to create a beautiful portrait, whether baby is awake or asleep. In a final gallery, I tie lifestyle portraits in with more advanced posing so clients get the best of both worlds.

It's real and it's beautiful and it's often imperfect—but isn't life? ■



“ This is
absolutely incredible!”

—SAL CINCOTTA



Watch **Sal Cincotta's Review**
of StickyApps on **Shutter Network**

StickyApps segment starts at about 13:08

STICKY APPS
a new for photographers to make money



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AGES AND STAGES

.....FOR BABY'S.....

FIRST YEAR

with Lori Nordstrom



by **Lori Nordstrom**

Baby's first year is a special time to photograph. When you get involved in the entire first year, it really ties you to a family. I love photographing each of four "stages." The key to being successful at it is to communicate extensively with the parents about the different stages. Even though babies all go through similar changes during the first year, all parents feel their child is special, and of course the smartest baby of all babies. Encourage them to talk about all the new things they are experiencing as parents. They will feel this way whether it's their first baby or their fifth.

The Newborn Session

I like to photograph newborns within the first 10 days of birth. I know that sounds early, but the "fresher" they are, the better. I tell moms that I want to capture their baby as new as possible. These are days that you think you'll remember forever, but they quickly go by. Brand-new babies are usually sleepy once fed, and are the easiest to work with. Once a baby is in position, however, use different angles and heights, and even walk around the baby to make your images different before moving her. Once you've got your shots, you'll be moving the baby again and will probably wake her. Newborn sessions are all about being patient, and you want to always put the safety of the baby first.

Talk to parents about their experience in the hospital as well as first reactions. Ask them how they've transitioned into being at home with their baby. All parents love to talk about the miracle that has taken place, and getting them to talk with you about it all will tie them to the images you create.



Prepare new moms for what might happen during her newborn session. I like to tell moms that their baby will cry. The truth is, the newer they are, the less they will cry, but I want moms to be prepared for this because when a new baby cries, a mother's first reaction is that something's wrong. If they are prepared for it, they won't panic. I also tell them that their baby will pee and poop and spit up on my things, and that I'm prepared for that. I let them know I'll be asking them to feed the baby as soon as we are together, so they may need to stretch or do a partial feeding and then try to keep the baby awake until we are together. Mornings are usually best with newborns.

Newborn Session Equipment List

- Diapers
- Baby wipes and wipe warmer
- Hand sanitizer
- Space heater
- Heating pad
- Puppy pads
- Microwavable hand warmer
- Beanbag
- Blankets
- White-noise maker



4-Month Session

At four months, babies are full of expressions that can change every second. Babies are holding their heads up well, and are interacting and recognize smiles and laughter. Take advantage of this to make this session completely different from the newborn session, when babies are sleeping and eyes are closed.

The way I help parents show off all those new expressions is with a nine-image collection of baby faces. This is definitely our best-seller from this session. I talk to parents about the expressions I'm seeing, how fun their baby is, and they have to have it when they see those expressions together for the first time.

To photograph the expressions, I have Mom or Dad hold baby up on their knees, keeping hands as low as possible. With baby on Mom's knees, he is happy and close to home. With studio lighting, Mom can even bounce the baby for giggles, and we can still get tack-on images.

At four months, babies are also great on their tummies. They are holding themselves up well, and will keep those expressions going for you. Be ready to photograph quickly—they will wear out. I'll also capture them on their back, snuggled into a soft fabric, holding onto toes or in a cute outfit. I still prefer naked baby sessions, with accessories, but if Mom does have a special outfit, we'll throw it in and show it off to end the session.

This session is also a great time to include some snuggly mommy moments—or daddy, too, if he's there. I do this when Mom or Dad is holding the baby for her "head shots." A parent is right there, so take advantage of those moments to get some snuggles and kisses, or Mommy holding baby in the air—anything that shows the connection and the fun stage the baby is in.

Make this session fun for the parents and for you, and it will result in big sales. A lot of photographers get intimidated by this session. You've put your best effort into the newborn session, got great images and made a nice sale. Then we talk ourselves out of the parents wanting to spend well again at four months. Remove this thinking from your mind. Continue to grow the gallery of their sweet little one by celebrating the stage the baby is in. Talk about it, ask questions about firsts and milestones, and then photograph everything they mention to you. These are the images parents will treasure and just have to have.

4-Month Milestones

Holds head up well

Makes lots of expressions

Laughs easily

Lies easily on tummy

Grabs things

Rolls from tummy to back

8-Month Session

The eight-month session is the third session during babies' first year, and it is my favorite to photograph.

At eight months old, baby has made many changes. Almost all are sitting really well and are very happy. They also aren't afraid of "strangers" at this age, which makes for a great session. I love talking to moms about the baby's milestones at each session, but at eight months, it seems that they are most excited to talk about all the firsts. When talking with Mom, take notes, as these milestones make great additions to the first-year album, as well as conversation starters during phone calls and future sessions.

By talking about these personal moments and milestones, we're continuing the conversation and the session becomes much bigger than the photographs I'm taking. I want Mom to have a special experience with her little one that she will remember every time she looks at her portraits. If I communicate with her those special moments and memories, she will see those things when she comes to view her portraits at the order appointment. When you can capture that, and not just a photograph, those images become very powerful.



At eight months, it's a great time to have Mom bring the baby's favorite stuffed animal, blocks or other toys or heirloom pieces. Her baby will have a great grip. Be aware that everything goes into the mouth, and comment on how cute that is. When you have a mom who tries to stop her baby doing what she's doing, the momentum of the session gets lost. Typically it's something very normal, so capture it and talk about it. I will say to a mom, "I love her hands in her mouth—so cute." And Mom suddenly sees what her baby is doing as a treasured memory instead of something that won't look good in a photo.

Another way to use those milestone memories is in the first-year album. As soon as the client leaves, take notes about the session, how it went, what was important and what was discussed. All of these things are tools you can use in the future when communicating with your client and when selling and making suggestions for purchase. You will not be "selling." You are remembering what's most important to this family and helping them celebrate it.

8-Month Milestones

- Sits up
- Laughs
- Crawls (some)
- Plays with toys
- Stands while holding onto something (some)
- Waves good-bye
- Plays patty-cake
- Likes music

1-Year Session

By the time the one-year mark rolls around, the baby that toddles into your studio will be a completely different little person than the one who first came. The first year of life is the time of the most growth and change. Babies will more than double their weight, sprout hair and teeth, begin babbling sounds and start to walk. It all happens so fast, and you get to document it.

During a one-year session, I will start with the baby's "traditional" portrait. Typically a one-year-old will have about a 10- to 15-minute time span where he will be willing to interact. During this time, I'll need a ball or a toy, dancing and singing, peek-a-boo and a number of other tricks in my arsenal. If the baby has started to walk, it's often a game of chase and place. I use Mom or Dad a lot during this session. They will need to be the baby handler, chasing after baby and then placing him again in the scene. I also want a parent close by since baby is now on the go, and usually not completely steady yet. We don't want tumbles during the session, so I have Mom stay very close anytime we have a child on a chair, a step or anything else that they might fall down from.



After 10 to 15 minutes of shooting, I want to make a change. It's time for a new outfit and new background or location. With one-year-olds, I've found that a good 15 minutes is about all I can expect. Let Mom know this during your consultation call so that she doesn't feel you are rushing through the session. Reassure her that you will be able to get everything you need in that amount of time. We only change clothes/background if the client wants her portraits in more than one room. I tell clients that we will be designing each clothing choice based on what room the portraits will hang in. This has completely changed the flow of sessions for me.

Have on hand soft balls to throw and roll. You can quickly retouch them off of a background if needed. The balls get the attention of the baby. Toys that make a noise are also great to have. Ask Mom during the consultation call if there is anything her baby has become attached to. Whether it's a blanket, a stuffed animal or doll, I want to photograph the child with that special item.

The birthday cake is the best part of the session. It's easy to make this happen in a short amount of time. Have a parent place the baby behind the cake, and get ready to snap away. Discuss with your client the different options for showing off all those great images.

Have fun with your one-year sessions, and embrace all the new things that the baby is doing. This is an exciting time for parents as their baby is becoming a little person.

© Lori Nordstrom



1-Year Milestones

- Plays patty-cake and peek-a-boo
- Waves bye-bye and blows kisses
- Starts walking
- Crawls quickly
- Starts drinking from a cup
- Starts learning to feed himself
- Recognizes humor
- Begins using sound words
- Shows definite understanding of certain words
- Imitates behaviors
- Dances
- Gets easily distracted

Client for Life

During each session, I talk about all the new things that baby is doing right now, and then photograph those milestones. These changes and new beginnings turn into memories because we've talked about them and then focused on them during the session. The goal for most photography businesses is a "client for life." Building a relationship through baby's first year lays the foundation for that client for life. Even though our Baby's First Year program is profitable, the best part is that these clients now feel like family. We've been a part of one of their most important year, which leads to a client for life.

With the first-year babies, I like to get parents in to view and order images as soon as possible—I even allow them to view their images immediately after the session. The sooner the better during the first year. And if I can show them their images right away, it's really great for workflow. When the client chooses images right after the session, the only images I ever have to touch are the images they ordered. Beautiful.

However you choose to photograph and then present the images to your client, remember that the more personal you can make the session—the more you make it about them and what's important to them—the more that client will be tied to you and excited about the product and service you are offering. The more you discuss with your client about what is going on in the life of her child, the more special the photographs you take will become, and the more you will ultimately sell. ■

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© Joe Switzer

NEWBORN PHOTO + VIDEO

TOP 3 WAYS TO APPROACH

NEWBORN FUSION

WITH JOE SWITZER



by **Joe Switzer**

Something new for me and hopefully for you is newborn video fusion. Newborn slideshows are the norm. Here, I'll show you how to add fusion and offer something different from your competition. Before your first newborn shoot, you should observe and assist an experienced newborn shooter. Working with newborns on location has many working parts. For this shoot, I teamed up with the photo newborn experts from Ashlephoto. The baby subject was my two-week-old daughter, Sloan Switzer.

Preparation

For very few of your shoots can you just show up with your camera and start filming. The good news is that this is the

exact shoot for that mindset. You are generally letting the photographer do all the preparation. Your only focus should be video, so you won't need to worry about the items that the Ashlephoto team has to. They brought a full carload of goodies that included blankets, a portable heater, pillows, props, a jambox, a reflector, stands, and their real secret sauce: a John Mayer playlist on their iPhone.

How are you supposed to prepare? You start by arriving 30 minutes to an hour before the shoot. This allows you time to get all your establishing shots finished without any unnecessary conversations or distractions. Most photographers plan for one to four hours for each newborn shoot because they know they are at the mercy of a newborn, so planning on a lot of time is a must. You can lose lots of time if Mom is nursing, you have a crying baby or a newborn that just won't go to sleep. You won't be shooting for all four hours. You will have a lot of downtime, but make sure when the baby is ready, you are ready to go. You don't know if you will have a few minutes or a few hours, so make sure you are prepared to capture the moments. Stay as long as the photographer does, and be extremely patient.



Filming Workflow

Is the photographer or filmmaker in charge of the workflow? The photographer is. Collaboration with a team of creative minds can enhance a shoot, but for this, the photographer is in charge. Video is secondary in these situations, so don't fight it. Embrace it. You want to be best friends with the photographer because you will be using a few of her photos for the final edit. Remember that the photographer is doing all the preparation and bringing the poses and props so you can focus on filming the day.

When shooting video, I'm always looking for the action of the subjects. Most of the films we produce capture the motion of moments happening. With a newborn, this is different. You don't have a lot happening besides a baby crying or sleeping with little or no movement. So what should you shoot video of, and how?

First, you'll need a monopod and track. The majority of the time, I recommend a monopod because it is quicker and gives more variety on the go. The most interesting video clips were photographers working, baby Switzer getting her outfits on, Mom interacting, detail close-ups and behind-the-scenes.

To produce a newborn fusion film you're proud of, you must have enough video content to work with. Make sure you are filming everything you possibly can, and have the camera in your hands at all times ready to record. You will need all the video clips you can capture to make this video interesting and relevant. The photographer and her assistant have a lot going on setting up the scene, helping baby stay calm, lighting and camera settings. While all that is going on is your chance to capture real moments of some preparation shots.

10 Shot Ideas To Get You Started

1. Empty crib and detail shots. Film any of the accessories and fun props that mom purchased for the shoot.
2. Film mom and baby when you can. Mom getting baby its first outfit on or bottle feeding are two examples.
3. Establishing shots of home.
4. Photographer setting up the room with the photo props.
5. Photographer's assistant working with baby on the pose.
6. Parent reactions.
7. Photographer working.
8. Wide shots of the entire scene when the photos are being taken.
9. Close-ups of baby feet, eyes, hands, hair, and lips.
10. Photographer's finished pose.



© Joe Switzer

Editing Fusion

You can edit your project with Animoto, Final Cut Pro or iMovie, just to name a few. For this edit, I used Final Cut Pro because I'm comfortable with the program and have used it exclusively for about a decade. You just want the ability to have both photos and video in your final edit. The length of the edit needs to be as short as possible. Final running time should be a couple of minutes. Nobody on Facebook, YouTube or Vimeo is going to watch a 10-minute baby fusion video, no matter how cute the kid is.

Keep the song short, and choose the right one. Take the time to choose something that really matches the moments that are happening in your film. The music provides the feeling that will carry your video. A good rule of thumb is to keep your edited video clips and photos around the one- to three-second range. Make sure you get the photographer's best 10 to 20 edited shots to choose from. Use any special effects you want, but I like to keep it simple and just use fade transitions. Other editors make photos come to life with a slight

movement of a pan and zoom that's called the "Ken Burns" effect.

With photos and video shots, your short film has transformed into something much more impactful than any slideshow. Make sure to credit and give thanks to the photography team you worked with. It's their creative posing skills that you're feeding off of. Tag them, use their logo in the photos and promote their brand.

This is a completely different workflow than a corporate video shoot or a wedding. The purpose of a newborn fusion video is to give your audience a look into what that day was like. The newborn phase is over in a flash, and the video is how they will remember these precious moments.

Start posting those videos, and more business will start coming your way. You will get referrals from both the client and the photographer as the video gets hundreds or even thousands of views. Photographers in your market will be fighting over you because they want a video to share that shows off their work as well. You are creating incredible value for the client, the photographer and your company. ■

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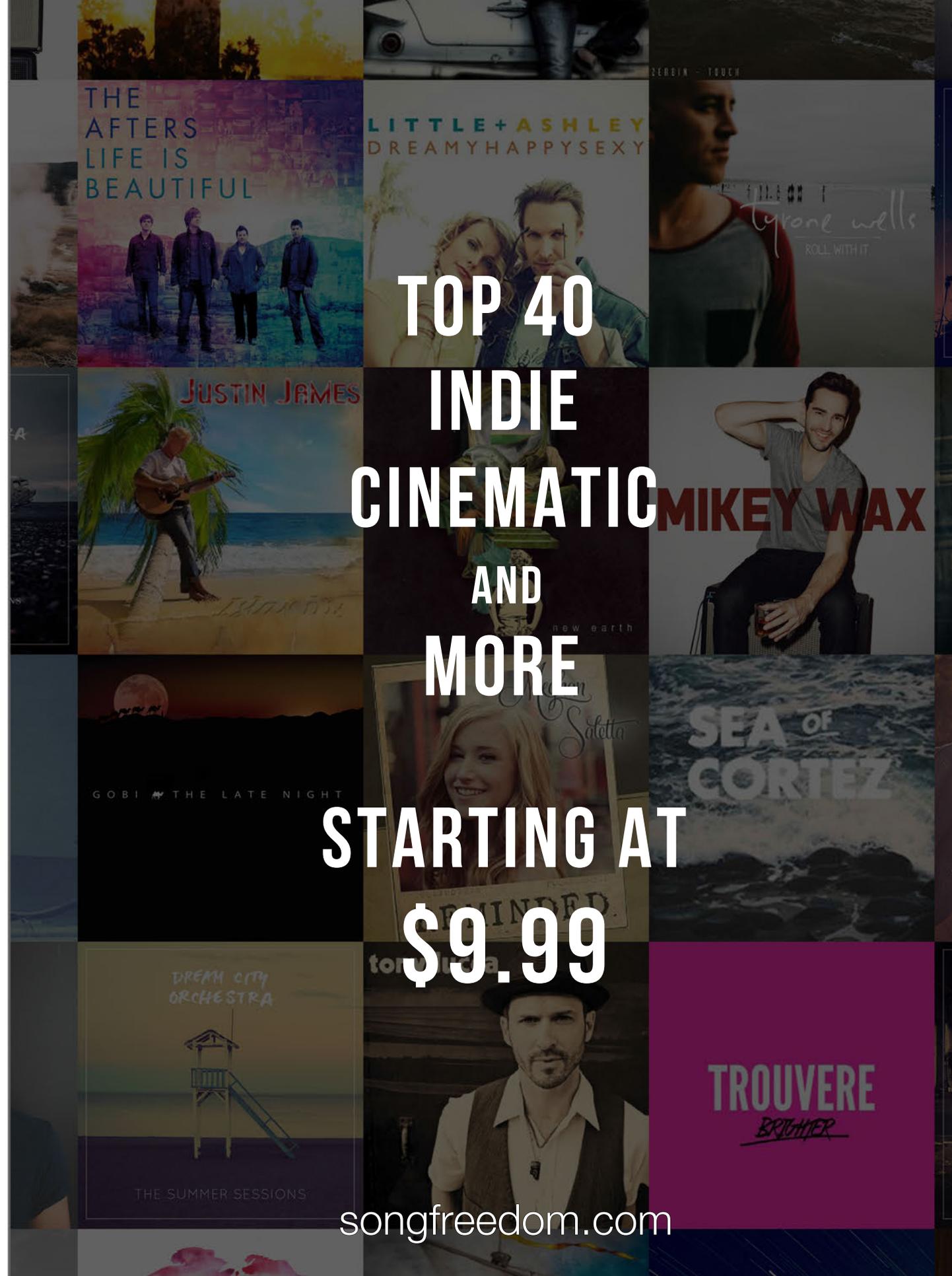
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Business 101

NEWBORNS
with Melanie Anderson



by **Melanie Anderson**

Newborn photography was where it all began for me, and since then, I have photographed over 500 precious babies. For many years, I was known as the newborn photographer in my area. And then the digital era came, and suddenly anyone could call herself a photographer. As professionals, we all know how frustrating this can be. To the untrained eye, these photos were “good enough” and a heck of a lot cheaper than mine. To continue in this industry and make a living for myself, it became increasingly important to get creative with my marketing and educate my clients.

Marketing

Word-of-mouth marketing is essential. Moms talk. By establishing your brand in the community—through your network, personality and quality of work—you will hear the phone ringing consistently. This applies to all aspects of your business. Here’s how I market newborns at my studio.



Figure 1

Displays

We have displays in the local hospital, OB/GYN offices, chiropractor offices and pediatrician offices, as well as the local mall (Figures 1 & 2). How do we manage that? We asked. What’s the worst they can say? But they didn’t say no. Why? Because of the relationships and reputation I have built.

Through these displays, clients come to me because they see me everywhere. How did I get everywhere? I know my clients. I know who my ideal client is. I know where he/she works. I know where he/she likes to go. You need to know what type of client you want, and market specifically to her. For newborn clients, go to hospitals; for high school seniors, go to malls; for families, go to pediatric offices. You would be silly not to display your work in every place you can.

At the mall, we have a large wall between Macy’s and the movie theater. I have a variety of images displayed on this wall. My monthly cost for this is \$600. This is the only display I pay for.



Figure 2

Social Media

Instagram and Facebook are our best friends in social media. We are constantly documenting behind the scenes at our studio. We document me holding the baby, me posing, the baby, and anything else we feel helps tell the story of our day with a newborn client—or any client, for that matter. We immediately upload to Instagram and use hashtags (#andersonphotographs, #newbornphotography, #washingtoncounty, #maryland, #marylandphotographeroftheyear).

These are just a small sampling of ideas. Make sure you are including the city, county and state. You never know who is searching under those hashtags. Our Instagram is set up to go directly to my personal Facebook page and Twitter. This alleviates having to duplicate posts over and over. We then copy and paste the same upload to the business page. We want everyone to know what we are doing in the moment. It shows that we truly are a full-service, full-time studio.



Client Communication

Client communication is key. You need to educate your clients from the moment the phone rings. Explain the session time, what they need to bring and what they should expect to spend.

When a client inquires about a newborn session, we always say:

“We schedule a three-hour time slot. It doesn’t always take that long, but we want to ensure we have plenty of time to capture all the images needed. We need the baby ‘milk drunk.’ That means when you arrive at the studio, you will begin feeding the baby. We want that baby asleep—passed out—because this allows us to move the newborn as needed. Bring extra diapers and formula if baby is bottle-feeding. Bring a blanket and any sentimental items you want your baby photographed with, along with a pacifier (even if baby doesn’t take a pacifier). Sometimes that pacie is all we need to get baby into a deep sleep. We will provide the rest.”

If Mom and Dad want to be photographed, have them bring a solid black shirt, or I will put Mom in a strapless gown and Dad can be shirtless (Figures 3 & 4).

I want newborns under the age of two weeks; at this age, they are still moldable, meaning I can squish them into curled positions and they will stay asleep. I can move their hands and neck to exactly where I want them. I have photographed newborns up to eight weeks of age—still doable, it just takes a bit more time and patience.



Figure 3



Figure 4



Sales

We do all in-person sales at our studio using ProSelect to maximize our sales and truly provide a personalized service. Sales sessions are best held within one week of the portrait session. We want to capitalize on the emotional connection of the images. Once a client enters our studio for a session, I cover these points:

1. How did you hear about our studio?
2. What are your plans for these images? Where do you want to place them in your home?
3. Whatever your budget is, I want to spend it wisely.
4. Anyone who needs to be involved with financial decisions needs to be at the order session.
5. You will be making your purchasing decisions on the day of your sales session.

See the video for further explanation of what I communicate to our clients, along with a quick tour of our sales room.

Props

Although I don’t use a ton of props in our studio (I like the focus to be on the newborn), I do see value in having them. Having these items in our studio allows our clients to pick and choose their favorites based on the décor of their home. We have mesh and knitted wraps, furs, hats, headbands, bowls and baskets, beanbags, pearls, flowers, etc.

Lighting/Gear

For newborns, I prefer to use 100 percent natural light. This is the only session in which I try to stay away from off-camera flash. Natural light provides a soft and beautiful light that just wraps around the baby. When needed, I use a reflector and/or SweetLight's constant lights. I love SweetLight's lighting system, which is daylight-balanced and acts like a huge window for me, providing beautiful light in any condition.

My camera gear:

- Nikon D4
- 85mm 1.4
- 24-70 2.8
- 105 macro

These lenses allow me to capture incredible images from the front and overhead, and all the detail shots I want.

Additional supplies:

- Portable heater to keep the room warm
- Small hand towels that I put under the furs, which allows me to lift the baby up a bit
- Posing blocks to tuck under the newborn, allowing me to further sculpt the pose
- I love using gloves with newborns because they keep my hands warm
- A noise machine on the waterfall setting keeps a consistent sound throughout the studio; this allows me to communicate with Mom/Dad, staff, etc., while keeping the baby sound asleep
- I use a Sirius Satellite system to play music in the background; typically set to the "Coffee House" channel
- Silverlake brand backdrops, floors and baseboards provide the right look for the background
- Hand sanitizer (which we use constantly)

Newborn photography can be extremely rewarding. Be patient, create a relaxing environment, use the proper tools and techniques, and you too can be known as the Baby Whisperer. ■



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TIPS FOR CAPTURING

BABY'S FIRST YEAR

— with Mimika Cooney —



by **Mimika Cooney**

Wouldn't you love the peace of mind knowing that you have a reliable cash flow month after month? We need to continually keep our diary full to keep our businesses afloat. But there's a difference between being busy and being profitable.

There's an old cliché: "It's easier to keep a client than to attract a new one." With the amount of effort required to market to a new client, we shouldn't short-change ourselves by stopping at offering just one session. If a new mom likes your work enough to commission your newborn photography services, you've overcome the biggest obstacle: trust.

Lately I've noticed a flurry of photographers, both seasoned and new, branding themselves as "newborn only." Although it's important to specialize in an area you love and are good at, it's just as important to hold onto clients beyond their newborn experience.

I want my clients to fall in love with me so they want to come back at every stage of their baby's first year. Once you've convinced the new parents how awesome you are and how wonderful your work is, you don't need to be a pushy salesperson, because you're 80 percent there.



© Mimika Cooney



Mimika Cooney | 101



Why Should a Parent Bring a Baby Back?

The developmental changes in a baby's first 12 months are so drastic that it's important to show Mom and Dad the value in having them return at each milestone. I show them an album of a baby's first year so they can see the changes their own baby will experience. I talk about how they will feel and how much they are going to appreciate it later in life.

I paint a picture for them by explaining the benefits of capturing each stage:

“A newborn is super-adorable captured curled up and squishy, sleeping soundly, when we can capture those creative poses. At three months, their personality comes out, they can hold their heads up and they are smiling. This is the first time we can capture those gorgeous close-ups of their eyes wide open and their gummy grins that you'll just love! At six or seven months, the change is remarkable; they are very animated, they can usually sit independently, hold a toy and interact with an audience.

“At nine months is their curious stage; they've developed the ability to move by crawling, cruising along furniture and pulling themselves up to a standing position. Of course at 12 months, it's their first birthday, which is always a great reason to throw a party and celebrate! They are probably walking, standing and moving about. Every stage is precious and so worthy of being captured; it will become so much more meaningful to you once the moments have gone.”

How Do I Create a Package That Makes Me Money?

Selling your services based on value instead of price is what is going to secure your future. I've built a package that includes all five developmental stages (newborn, three months old, six months, nine months and 12 months) that, when bundled together, is a discount from my standard session fee. This should be a no-brainer—the value goes up the more they invest with you.

On occasion, I've found that a high session fee can become an obstacle to closing the sale, so by offering all five sessions together, they feel they are getting more value for their money. I also include a few 8x10 prints in the bundle that they can use at any stage so they feel they are getting a tangible product as well as the investment of time.

If I've done my job right, they will find it hard to narrow down their favorites to just a single image. The package includes a single 8x10 matted print at each session, but 95% of the time they always buy more. It's important to upsell your services so you never create a ceiling. You want to encourage your client to want to invest more. In the long run, you will be making more money from the same client over the year because money spent is money forgotten.



How Do We Build a System That Works?

The trick is to hold their hand through the process. Treat them like gold, and you'll give them a reason to come back. At my studio, our primary focus (besides producing great-quality work) is client retention and working smarter. Having had my third baby just 21 months ago, I don't have a lot of time. I have to fit a five-day work week into two days while my toddler is at daycare. I need to make sure that every minute I spend is going to bring me results. I've developed a system that walks new parents from one milestone to the next so they don't have to think about what to do next.

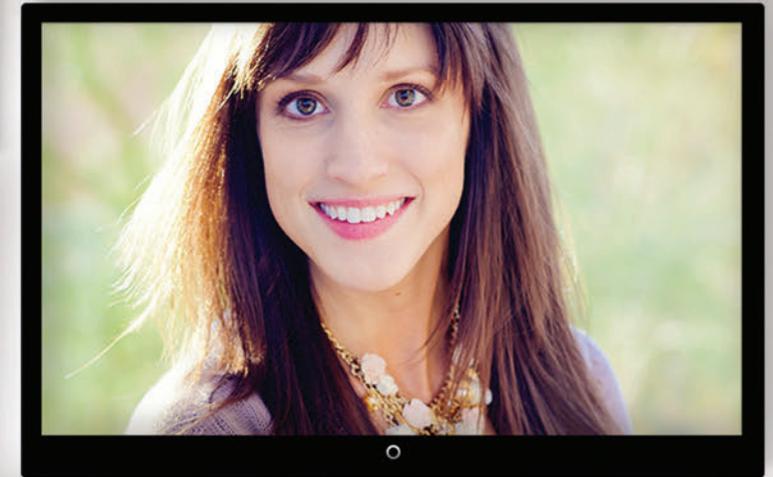
The key is educating the client. It starts with planting the seeds: "This is going to look fabulous above the fireplace" or, "This will look gorgeous above the crib." I'm a home-based studio, and I only sell by projection. I insist they come back after their session for a separate ordering appointment so I can guide them through the ordering process. I'm the expert, and they look to me for guidance, advice and artistic direction.

Leaving the purchasing decisions for your client to make at home through online ordering is just lazy. It's a surefire way of killing your sales. I also don't post any "sneak peaks" online or by email until after their ordering session.

It's important to hold your cards to your chest and build the excitement so they look forward to seeing your work. Once they've seen the images online, it's very hard to build that excitement back up again. Photography is an emotional purchase. We need to build all the emotion we can muster to keep the client vested in our services. ■

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newborn
photography
from a mom's
point of view



© Vanessa Joy

with **Vanessa Joy**



by **Vanessa Joy**

I'm a new mom. That phrase didn't faze me much until right after the first week of Felicity's life. By that point, in the span of seven days, I'd had a total of eight hours of sleep. Now, that sounds pretty grueling, but what's more grueling is the 160 remaining waking hours.

One hundred sixty hours of listening to crying—which used to be a form of torture to get prisoners of war to talk. One hundred sixty hours of attempting to clothe and change diapers on a baby that you honestly think you're breaking every time you do it. One hundred sixty hours of very painful bodily happenings, from healing to nursing. And last but not least, 160 hours of hormones making you feel like you are not cut out for the job and that, for your baby's sake, there should be some sort of return policy.

I remember when the thought of putting together my breast pump was an out-of-this-world task that really shouldn't be tackled, ever. To even contemplate getting myself decent and sane enough to arrange and take newborn photos,

needless to say, made climbing Mount Everest look like a Sunday stroll. I had to do it, of course, unless I wanted to feel like an utter failure in mommyhood by day 10.

As a newborn photographer, you're not really dealing with a newborn. Newborns are just a symptom of your genre of photography. You are dealing with Mom. Not just any mom—usually a new mom, definitely a tired mom, and certainly an emotional mom without a sense of logic. And I thought bridezillas were a nightmare! I'd like to publicly thank Jessica Morrisy (JessicaMorrisy.com) for dealing with my mom crazies and being an amazing friend and newborn photographer who provided these pretty photos of my little girl that you see spread throughout this article.

So what can you do to give that extra bit of customer service that Mom needs? That little something more that will get her comfortable with you and develop a trusting relationship that will convert into higher sales and a better customer experience? Here's what I know would work for me.

“
*...put together a ‘to-go’
 newborn studio
 and offer that as a premium
 service to your clients.*
 ”



If You Can, Come to Me

Leaving the house with a newborn is a huge chore. Your baby is a bomb set to go off at any moment, because once you finish feeding and changing, and perhaps get it to sleep or stop crying, you usually have only 45 to 60 minutes before you have to feed it again. Forty-five minutes to get the baby (and your disheveled self) in the car and drive to the studio before screaming restarts isn't much time—particularly if Mom doesn't want to arrive in a bathrobe. Top that with the germ fears that most new parents have, and getting that baby out of the house is like trying to cut the correct wire on a ticking time bomb.

Obviously, having a baby in your studio where everything is set up is ideal. But if you can put together a “to go” newborn studio and offer that as a premium service to your clients (and charge appropriately for it), I guarantee you'll have takers. I currently pay a premium to not leave my house for groceries, childcare and any other type of shopping that I can do online. Most moms who are financially able wouldn't blink at spending more to bring the photography in house as well.

Give Me Something Extra

As a new mom, I don't want an extra 8x10. I want sleep. I want relaxation. I want someone to take care of me an iota of the amount that I'm taking care of my baby. Throw something in your packages or overall service that lets me know you care about me too. Maybe a gift certificate for a massage, or cookies or other treats during the session. Double chocolate chip brownies on my nightstand got me through being awake all night for a week—I had to have something to look forward to!

Letting Mom know that she'll be getting a little comfort for herself when she works with you just might be the thing that tips the scale toward her booking you. It'll definitely be the thing she tells her new-mom friends about.





Don't Leave with My Baby

I've heard of practices where newborn photographers take the baby into the other room and don't allow Mom to follow to watch the pictures happen. I get it. I used to photograph babies, and having Mom lean over my shoulder was absolutely detrimental to my work and attitude. But as a new mom, I typically won't let the baby leave my side for anything. Not to sleep, not even to go to the bathroom. Allowing someone I don't even personally know to take my baby away, even if it's only in the other room, does not sit well with me. If you want to create separation between you and the parents, make it optional. Some parents love this, and take the opportunity to pass out on your couch. But a lot of parents don't like this, so make it optional. If they insist on being in the same room, establish ground rules for where they need to be and how they need to behave so you can do your thing.

Tell Me, "It Happens All the Time"

Fussing, crying, peeing, pooping, spitting up and, of course, mommy brain: all things parents profusely apologize for when it happens in front of anyone but family. Even if you tell us that it's OK and it's no big deal that the soft, white fluffy blanket now looks like it's been dragged through the mud, telling us we're not the first or the last will make us feel so much better about it (even if we think you're lying to us). For some reason, some moms tend to feel like their child is the anomaly and every one else's children are angels (maybe because we post only perfect, happy baby pictures on social media).



Remind Me There Are More Photos to be Taken

Checking newborn photos off the to-do list is a huge achievement. So much so that it never even crossed my mind that we could do more pictures at three, six and nine months as well. If you remind me of these future photo opportunities in a way that doesn't seem salesy, I'm going to be happy you did. Perhaps having an option in your newborn packages for a presell on a wall piece that holds a collection of my child's images from her first year would do the trick. Or suggest starting a canvas cluster that I can easily add to as time goes by.

Whichever way it works, it'll help me better document the rapidly changing first year—and help you get better sales. ■



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Why ProMediaGear?

Not all sliders are built the same. ProMedia Gear is not messing around with their video sliders, and as far as I'm concerned, they hit a home-run with the VS36 – PMG-DUO 36-inch Slider. I was blown away from the moment it arrived! My first impression? I could not believe how lightweight it was. I do a good amount of video work, lugging around a ton of gear, so every extra pound matters.

Please don't misunderstand, lightweight does not mean cheap. This product is very well constructed. The legs are incredibly durable and versatile. They fold up fast and allow the slider to lay flat, making it easier to travel with throughout the day.

One of my favorite features? The slider has two tracks in one. That's right! It has a curved track on one side, and flip it over and there is a straight track on the other. Genius. Now, I have two sliders in one and it's lighter in weight and more travel-friendly than any other slider I have ever had.

But wait, there's more. I know, you are probably thinking, 'holy cow Sal, is this an infomercial'? Well, yes. You don't have to shoot video to use this slider. ProMedia Gear also offers a motorized controller allowing you to create killer stop motion photos or time-lapse videos.

I had never used ProMedia Gear before this review, but I am officially a convert and have added the VS36 – PMG-DUO 36-inch Slider and motor to my personal toolbox for video production work.



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product review

 ProMediaGear® with *Salvatore Cincotta*



CREATIVE

LIGHTROOM **PRESETS**

FOR BABY PORTRAITS

with Kristina Sherk



by Kristina Sherk

If you've read any of my previous articles, you know my underlying theme: Time is money. Anything you can do to speed up your workflow helps you make more money in the long run. Lightroom presets are a perfect way to add style and eye-catching effects to your baby photography in order to make them match your personal photography look, or give the parents a keepsake they will cherish forever.

First, let's talk a little about presets. If you go into your kitchen and cook a meal from scratch, that's the same as using all of the develop sliders to edit your image. Now, if you're like me and can't cook your way out of a paper bag, then you go into your kitchen and pull a microwave dinner out and pop it in the microwave. That's the same as using a preset. It's a ready-made group of effects or changes that you can easily apply to any image by clicking one button (just not the one that says Start on your microwave).

In Lightroom, your presets tab is located below the navigator box in the upper left corner of your develop module. Click on the disclosure arrow to the left of the word *presets* to expand that window. You'll probably already see a few default folders in your presets section that are given to you by Adobe (Figure 1).

When you start out experimenting with presets, it's good to apply an existing preset to your image, and then go over to your develop settings to deconstruct what exactly the preset did to your image. This will help you figure out what each section of your develop module does so that you can learn how to use it and what it's capable of.

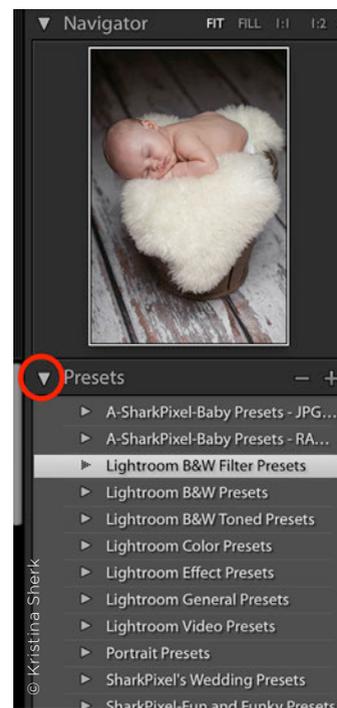


Figure 1

Let's start by creating our own baby preset. I've got an image of a sleeping baby here, and I want to create a very general preset (Figure 2).

When thinking about creating presets, it's always best to apply your tweaks as if they were being applied to multiple images. In other words, don't make the image that you're creating the preset on absolutely perfect, because chances are, the presets may work better (for your other images) the less extreme your changes are. A good rule of thumb is to apply about 70 percent of the change you'd like to make. This way, your preset is likely to look better on the other images you apply it to. Here are the settings I applied to my image, and the ones we will copy into our preset. (Don't worry about changing the white balance, since it won't be included in our preset creation.) (Figure 3).



Figure 3

Figure 2

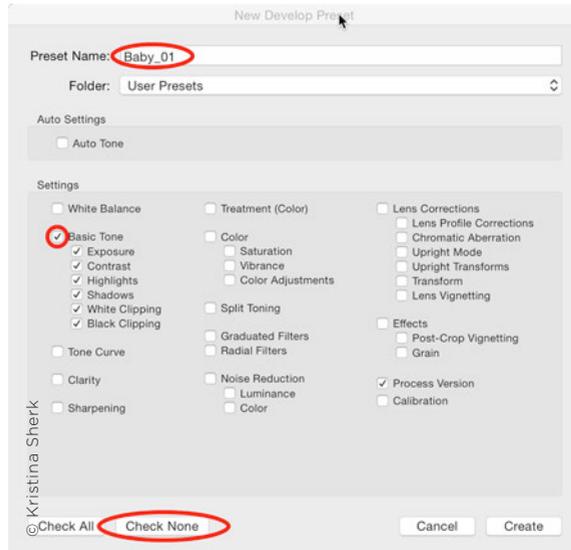


Figure 4

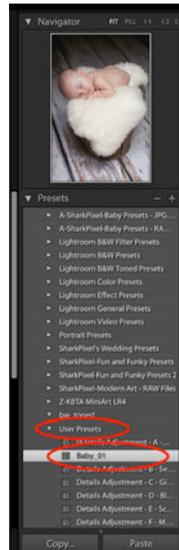


Figure 5

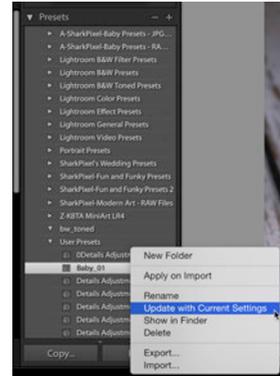


Figure 6

Now we're ready to create our preset. Over at the top of your presets panel, you'll see a plus sign. Click on it to save your preset. A window will appear that asks you to name your preset and which folder to put it in. Let's call this preset Baby_01, and let's put it in our User Presets folder. There should be check marks next to some of the items, but it's important to only check the items that we changed in our preset creation.

First, go to the bottom of the New Develop Preset window and click the Check None button. This should delete check marks from all of your Setting boxes (except for the Process Version box). Now, since we only changed settings within our Basic section in our develop module, we can click once on the box to the left of the words Basic Tone, and all of the items within our Basic section in the develop module will be copied to our preset. Now click the Create button to save our preset.

Figure 4 shows what your box should look like, and which boxes should have check marks next to them.

Now, if we look in our User Presets folder, we will see our created preset (Figure 5).

Once you've created the preset, you can easily apply all of your basic tone settings to any image by just clicking this one preset.

If at any time you feel like the changes you made in this preset were too extreme, you can edit it. Click on the preset to apply it to your image, go back to the basic section of your develop settings and edit the sliders, and then you can update your preset to reflect these new tweaks. In order to do this, you simply right-click (Control-click) the preset name over on the presets panel and choose Update With Current Settings (Figure 6).

One of my all-time favorite and most-used presets is one that comes by default with Lightroom. It's in the Lightroom General Preset folder, and it's called "Zeroed." (Figure 7).

To make the wide range of preset settings even more complicated, some of the settings applied in the first preset may not be deleted when you apply the second preset, thus creating a merge of the two presets (which usually ends up making your image look awful). The great thing about the Zeroed preset is that it's kind of like a Reset All command in Lightroom. This preset places all settings back to zero so that you can easily start fresh when applying a new preset.

Although this stuff might seem complex, don't fret. Presets offer a very creative way to enhance your images. One of the ways I make my presets a bit more intense is by applying split toning. In this preset, I added a pink tone to the shadow values of the image. Here's what my image looks like now (Figure 8).

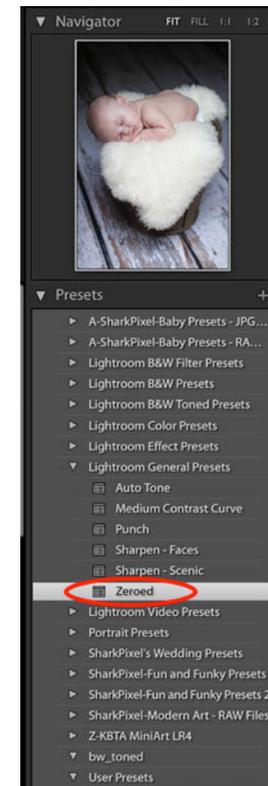


Figure 7



Figure 8



And here's what my split toning values were. (The split toning window is located below the HSL/Color/B&W box and above the Detail box in the right side of the Develop module) (Figure 9).

I've also put together two baby-themed presets for you to download free. Here's the original and here's what the two presets look like. Just visit SharkPixel.com/store to download the Shutter Babies presets. Feel free to deconstruct them and make them your own (Figure 10).

Figure 9

There's some serious power in Lightroom, and presets are just one of the many ways you can increase your productivity and effectiveness. Once you start playing around with presets, you'll realize the possibilities are endless. ■



Figure 10

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INSPIRATIONS

— best baby image —

Put 10 photographers in a room and ask them to shoot a paperclip, and there's no telling what will happen. And that, ladies and gentlemen, is why I love being a photographer. We all see the world in our own special way. Ultimately, though, nothing is truly new or unique. Everything is inspired by something that came before. In that spirit, this month we asked you, our readers, to submit some work you thought would inspire your peers. What you gave us was inspiring for sure. Enjoy.

— **SAL CINCOTTA**
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the anatomy
of a

**DESTINATION
SHOOT**

with
Leonardo Volturo



by **Leonardo Volturo**

I know April was the travel issue of *Shutter*, but an experience we had last month on one of our destination shoots gave me an idea for an article. What follows is the anatomy of one of our destination engagement shoots that shows why you should be offering them, how to produce them and, especially important, how to overcome the challenges they present. Let's break down what I think are the essential elements involved in putting together a successful destination engagement session.

Travel

We block out four days for destination engagement jobs: two for travel and two for scouting and shooting. I'll detail below how this plays out day-by-day. In the past, we tried to make it work with only three days away from the studio, but given issues with flights and weather that can crop up, we found four days was a better fit. With engagements, you've got much more control and flexibility compared to weddings.

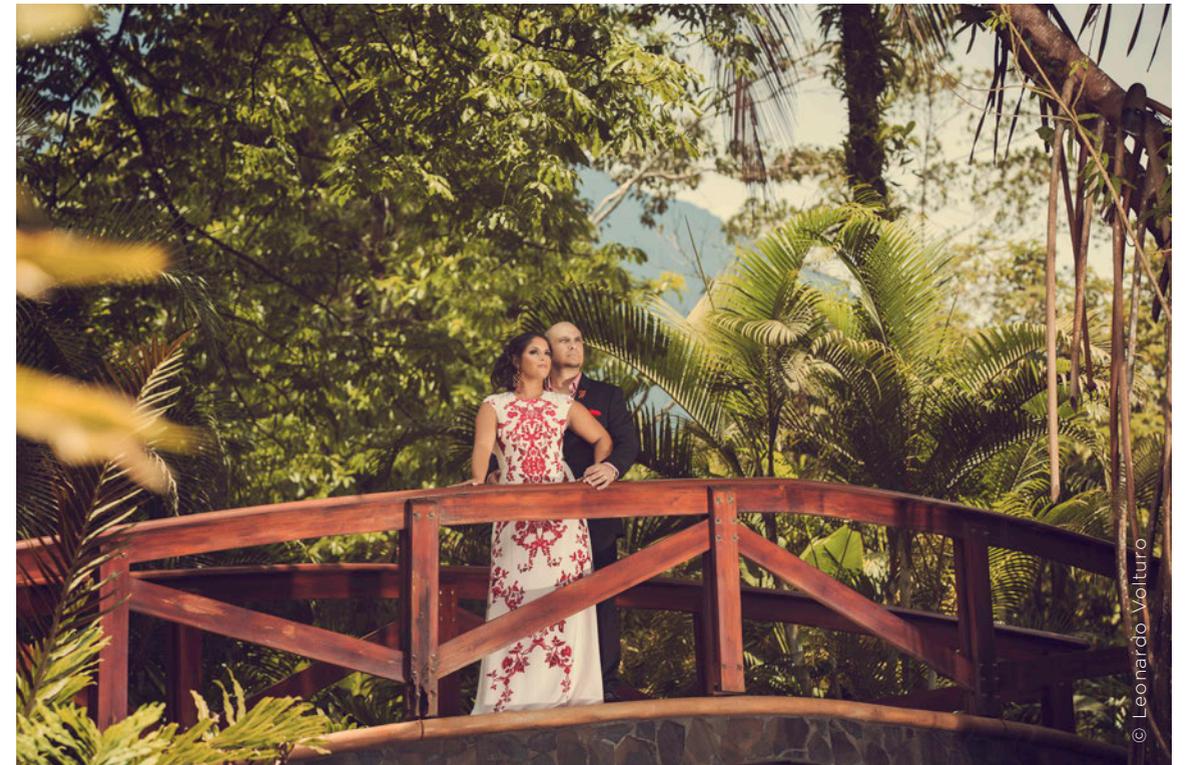
Weddings are often at the mercy of the weather. With our destination engagement sessions, we do our best to build in enough extra time and flexibility to account for unexpected flight and/or weather issues. Clients are spending a lot of money to get you and possibly your team to their destination, so you need to have a solid plan with contingencies in case things go off the rails. Remember, it's your job to provide a great experience and deliver the images you were hired to produce. Here's what our typical destination engagement shoot schedule looks like:

Day 1 Arrive at the location early; allow ample time for location scouting and any additional onsite planning that's needed. We also try to have dinner with our clients on Day 1. We spend that time catching up, telling them what to expect on the shoot, and genuinely investing in them and building a great relationship. (Despite the good times, it's equally important to keep in mind that you're not there on vacation.)

Day 2 Shooting or partial scouting and shooting, depending on how much is accomplished on Day 1.

Day 3 Built-in bad-weather/travel-delay contingency day. This is our extra day of padding; it's our safety net. If there were no issues on Day 2, then Day 3 can be a day to relax or do additional work with clients. We typically offer our clients extra time in front of the camera, giving them a wider diversity of images and a terrific overall experience. The added benefit is that more images and locations translate into more post-sales opportunities, so it's a win-win.

Day 4 Travel home.



Gear

You want to be as compact and efficient as possible. You are going to be going through security checkpoints and trying to shove your gear in those little overhead bins. Do not check your camera gear—ever! The only things we check if we can't carry them on are things like small light stands and inexpensive light modifiers.

The only time carry-on can present problems is if you are on a smaller plane, one that doesn't have overhead compartments large enough to accommodate a typical camera bag. Do your research ahead of time so you can find out exactly what type of plane you will be on, and plan accordingly for carry-on measurements and weight requirements/limitations. This is a super-important step. If your bag ends up not fitting in the overhead, you may end up having to surrender it to a flight attendant so it can be checked (read: chucked) into the belly of the plane. And if the bag is over the stated weight limitations, you can easily get stung at the gate with hefty fees.

Don't be surprised when they pull your bag aside at the gate and weigh it. You can either break it up into smaller bags or go with a bag that will fit under the seat in front of you. We carry on two bags with us (LowePro x200 and Profoto Backpack M) that each fits in the overhead bins of major airlines but not those on regional jets. One has our cameras and lenses and the other has our lights.

Here is a list of what we bring. These are all of the essential items we use to produce our images. We bring the lenses we use on a regular basis, two camera bodies and enough lighting to overpower the sun and provide creative flexibility.

Canon 5D MkIII x 2 — Canon 70-200 2.8L II — Canon 24-70 2.8L II — Canon 16-35 2.8L II
Sigma 1.4 Art — Profoto B1 Location Kit — Profoto Air Remote TTL-C x 2
Profoto OCF Grid Kit — Profoto OCF 2' Octa — MeFOTO RoadTrip travel tripod
Spider Holsters with lens pouches and hand straps x 2



Planning and Styling Your Session

When planning sessions, you definitely want to go above and beyond what you normally do for your typical local session. For our latest shoot, we initially thought about heading to Europe with our couple. But we decided on Costa Rica, which was the location of their first trip together. Locations matter. Choosing a destination that has meaning to your clients is a surefire way to create an emotional bond with the experience and images. This results in stronger pictures and increased sales opportunities. Another great example of creating an emotional bond based on location was shooting one of our couples in New York City, where they first met. You don't get a better backdrop than NYC.

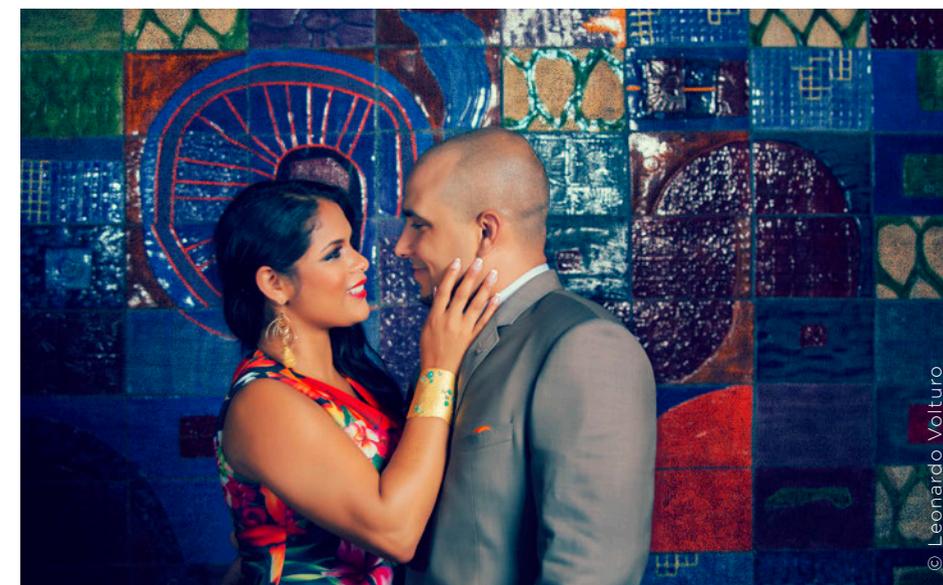
For Costa Rica, we coordinated with our clients as well as the stylist to create several different looks. It's important to have a well-thought-out concept, look and wardrobe. You don't want to show up and find out your client only has Bermuda shorts and flip-flops. We always provide plenty of direction for clothing, and view client selections well in advance. This way, we can make sure everything is consistent with the vision for the shoot. We give clients a clear idea of what pieces and styles they should be looking for when they're shopping, and ask them to send pictures wearing the outfits they choose. Doing this assures us everything's clicking, and provides an opportunity to make any necessary adjustments.

In Costa Rica, we knew we would be shooting around a volcano, beautiful tropical settings and thermal hot springs. With that in mind, we knew we wanted to start off with something casual. It was a great way to get our clients comfortable and then move on to the more dressy looks and finally the swimwear you can see in the images. We had three solid looks to work with in advance. After arriving in Costa Rica and scouting our locations further, we were then able to re-review all the wardrobe options our client brought, and formalize our shooting plan. We also had the luxury of a talented stylist on our team who provided added variety with makeup and hairstyling for a total of five different looks.

We can't stress enough the importance of planning and styling sessions in advance. It reinforces your position as trusted advisor for your clients, and also ensures that you will be able to deliver as promised.

Challenges & Tips

1. Sign up for a trusted traveler program such as Global Entry. Customs and Border Patrol Trusted Traveler Programs provide expedited travel for preapproved, low-risk travelers through dedicated lanes and kiosks. Global entry provides you with quicker reentry to the U.S.A. It costs \$100 per person and includes TSA PreCheck for your domestic travel. PreCheck gives you quicker transit through airport security screening and faster lines, and you don't have to remove your shoes, belt or light jacket. You can keep your laptop and "3-1-1"-compliant bags in your carry-on.
2. Always book your own travel. We learned this the hard way on our Costa Rica trip. After our first flight got canceled due to inclement weather there, our clients, who were already there, offered to book us a new flight. We thought we were in great shape until we tried to board seven hours later and were denied. It turned out the airline flagged our clients' ticket purchase as fraudulent because it was made outside the U.S. We weren't even allowed to pay our own way at that point; apparently it's against airline policy. We ended up being forced to take a flight the next day. So book your own travel and schedule an itinerary you're comfortable with. It'll save you a lot of headaches.
3. Pay for upgraded seating. The extra legroom is great, but the real bang for the buck comes with the priority boarding that's usually included. This means first dibs on the limited overhead compartment space.
4. Research your flight and plane to make sure you can carry on your gear. I use an app called SeatGuru. It allows you to book flights, but more importantly, it shows you your plane and a seat map, and provides details about each seat and the plane itself.
5. Our final issue, which I'm sure you're thinking about by now, is how to run your business while you're away. In the U.S., it's safe to assume you'll have access to cellular and Wi-Fi service. Once you're outside the county, it's a different ballgame. Install WhatsApp and have your clients install it too. This app allows you to text and call over Wi-Fi for free. Purchasing a prepaid SIM card for your phone when you arrive at your destination is another good move. Check with your carrier for options.





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It all comes down to doing your homework. Find out as much as you can about your destination, and make sure you have the ideal travel arrangements.

Why?

We've talked about traveling. We've talked about gear, some tips and how to overcome certain challenges. At some point, you may have asked yourself, "Why am I doing all this? Is it worth it?" Yes it is! Think about it. You're offering your clients a unique experience. We're all about standing out from the crowd. You're offering them once-in-a-lifetime images.

It's a win-win: The clients enjoy a sweet getaway and world-class experience, and you get amazing portfolio images and the opportunity for increased post-sales. People who are going to take time away from work, be out of town for several days, and spend their hard-earned cash on travel, wardrobe and your travel are going to make a significant purchase of the engagement images. Do your best to capitalize on that experience.

This is why I encourage everyone to offer destination engagement sessions. It won't be the right fit for every client, but when it is, it's an incredible experience for everyone involved. ■

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by Skip Cohen

We've worked on your site, your blog and your network. It's time to start building some brand awareness. It'll take a couple of articles to give you most of what you need. Let's start with the most important thing: community involvement.

Years ago, I heard Jay Conrad Levinson speak. He's known best as the guy who coined the expression *guerilla marketing*. Even though that was at least 25 years ago, the importance of having a marketing strategy hasn't changed.

Levinson's program that I sat in on was called "The Top 100 Things Guerilla Marketers Need to Do." Right up near the top of the list was to be involved in their community. Why? Because people like buying products from businesses they perceive as giving back.

Here's another way to look at it: You're looking for the community to be good to you, so you'd better make sure you're being good to your community.

Baby Steps

This might be a new concept for many of you. After all, it takes just about every minute of your day to keep your business going in the right direction. But here's the thing you need to think about: What good is working so hard to create the greatest images of your life if nobody knows who you are?

The great thing about being involved in your community is that you can put in whatever amount of time and money you want, and still have an impact. Let's start with baby steps—little things you can do to get more involved that require only your time.

There isn't a school system on the planet with the budget it needs to do everything on its wish list. Get involved in helping the PTA or a school directly. Volunteer to teach a photography class. Volunteer to help out with the yearbook or school newsletter. Volunteer to do a Career Day presentation on professional photography.

Not everything you do has to involve having a camera in your hand. Even serving hot dogs in the refreshment stand at a Friday night football game gets you involved and starts showing people your intent to support the community.

Then there are charity drives, fundraising walks and endless opportunities for you to participate directly or document these events and provide editorial support, through your images, for the organization in charge.

Stop Trying to Build a New Sandbox

So often I've talked with photographers who want to establish their own charity. They think this is the best way to have a bigger impact on a cause.

Actually establishing a legitimate 501(3)(c) nonprofit takes time, patience and work. Plus, even if you're approved by the government and have the legitimacy of a nonprofit, you still have the challenge of marketing. It's a new organization, and nobody knows who or what it is.

You're much better off aligning yourself with an existing organization in the community that ties in with a cause near and dear to you. Be an enthusiastic participant, and let people know you're involved.

"But there's nothing going on in my community."

I love it when I hear this one, because no matter where you live, there's something going on there. There are charity events going on everywhere. Check with the Chamber of Commerce, your church or temple, and local businesses, and you'll find something.

There are groups that help the homeless, animal shelters, school lunch programs, Meals on Wheels, breast cancer walks. Organizations like Kiwanis, Rotary and Exchange Club, just to mention a few, have fundraisers every year.

Don't forget programs that support servicemen and women. There are programs everywhere that support their deployment and return.

Doing Your Own Event

One of the all-time best-known fundraisers in the portrait/social side of the business was put together by Vicki Taufer six years ago. It was called Dog Days of Summer, and it's been copied dozens of times all over the country.

At the time, Vicki was a children's photographer based in Illinois. She knew there was a high correlation between families, kids and pets. And being an animal lover herself, she wanted to do something to help out the local animal shelter.

She designed the perfect program. Dog Days of Summer was a promotion that encouraged you to bring your pet into her studio for a portrait session for the price of a donation of food to the Peoria Animal Shelter. Everybody got one free 5x7. When the smoke cleared on that first one-day event, Vicki and her staff had done 150 portraits and had 40 more on the waitlist. Two years later, V Gallery was one of the best-known pet photography studios in the area.

One other thing that made the program such a success was the various partners Vicki brought into the program. You had a local dog bakery, a pet food manufacturer and the animal shelter. All the partners became ambassadors for each other.

Vicki's Model

The key ingredients of a local fundraiser start with identifying the cause itself. Once you've established that, look for a couple of additional partners who also have an interest in the same cause.

Give yourself plenty of time to get the word out. Look for other people, even other photographers, for support. This needs to be a win-win for everybody involved. A few competitors will add to everyone's exposure. Along the way, look for opportunities to talk about your event. Get the local paper involved. Enlist opinion leaders in the community who believe in the cause.

Photo-centric National Organizations

The photography industry is loaded with terrific nonprofits to help you build your own link within your community. Here a few that come to mind.

NowILayMeDownToSleep.org – Based in Colorado, NILMDTS was established 10 years ago by Cheryl Haggard

and Sandy Puc. Cheryl had just lost a child, and wanted a professional portrait of her son. So many people don't understand NILMDTS isn't about photographing dying babies—it's about helping families heal. It's a remarkable group of several thousand photographers, and it constantly needs help.

Help-Portrait.com – This one was founded by Jeremy Cowart. It specializes in portraiture for people who typically never get their portrait done. Jeremy's done a pretty amazing job spreading the word and building the organization.

HeartsApart.org – Besides supporting the men and women of our military with photography, what I love the most about this one is its finished product. It's a practically indestructible print that servicemen and women can have with them at all times. It doesn't matter what kind of damage the elements might bring—the print isn't going to fade, tear or become water damaged.

There are dozens more, each involved in some aspect of society, identifying a need in the community.

Our Experiences

Last January in Kentucky, during PhotoPro Expo, I was part of a team working with a group called Crayons to Computers (Crayons2Computers.org). It provides educational supplies to schools with budget issues. We did a program for teachers on photography in the classroom, and then a second program for students interested in taking better pictures.

I'm also involved with the Senior Friendship Centers here in Sarasota. My wife, Sheila, volunteers once a month at their Caregiver Resource Center. It's a wonderful organization. Nursing homes and senior centers have a never-ending need for volunteers to help with a variety of tasks.

Pay attention to things going on in your community, and without a doubt, you'll find a program that needs volunteers.

Local Photography Guilds and Camera Clubs

Just about every community has a group of photographers getting together, typically once a month. They range from formal PPA Affiliates to local camera clubs. They have Facebook pages, regular meetings, contests and often photo walks and day trips.

This is all about getting involved, and there's an added benefit with groups like this: They help to build your network.

The biggest challenge for most of you is to stop procrastinating and get busy. Everything you give back to the community doesn't have to be Nobel Prize-worthy. But the sooner you get involved, the sooner people get to know you. And at some point, giving back will make you feel almost as good as a Nobel winner. ■

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© Kelly Brown

Q + A

WITH

Salvatore Cincotta

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- + How to differentiate and grow your baby photography brand in addition to an already established wedding brand.
- + Tips on finding and compensating assistants for newborn sessions.
- + What to do when the baby won't sleep for the 'sleeping' image mom and dad want.
- + Post-production workflow for newborns.
- + Advice for booking Baby's 1st Year sessions.
- + Marketing strategies for newborn photography.
- + Tips on setting yourself apart from the other newborn photographers in your area.
- + Working with babies who won't sit still.
- + Posing and wrapping advice.
- + Where to find baby props for photo shoots.

GOT MORE QUESTIONS?

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

ONE-FLASH MAGIC



© Michael Anthony

Turning the Ordinary
into
EXTRAORDINARY

with
Michael Anthony



by **Michael Anthony**

As a wedding photographer in the highly saturated market of Los Angeles, I have always looked for ways to differentiate our brand. Early in my career, I experimented with different ways of using light. While I have

always been drawn to the look of off-camera flash, the need to carry around large equipment hindered my ability to make a studio-quality soft-light portrait in a natural environment. Finding the balance between beautiful photographs and the ability to interact with my clients on the wedding day was going to be essential to our success as a studio.

Seeing the Light

Many people are surprised to discover that the majority of our work is photographed using a single flash combined with ambient light. I prefer to use soft, directional light found in easily accessible places. By directional, I am referring to a light source that comes from a distinct direction, rather than just open shade. This type of light is usually found by windows, tunnels or under freeway overpasses, or created by bouncing light off buildings, cars or reflectors. Directional light, when used right, can be the most flattering type of light because it emphasizes highlights and shadows, creating dimension. When this light is found in natural environments, it is often soft and beautiful. While this is often good enough to make beautiful portraits, I have found that using a flash to accent the natural light allows me to create a studio-quality image in a natural-light environment.

Using Your Flash as an Accent

When using this technique, the flash will never be the keylight because a bare speedlight will create hard, distinct shadows. While this is good in some cases, many bridal portraits are more flattering with soft light. The flash should just be used to create dimension in your portraits.

Image 1 & 2 shows what I am talking about. The first image of this bride getting ready was photographed using just the window light. Notice the highlight-to-shadow transition from the left side of the face to the right. This image, like most of my bridal portraits, was lit on the short side of the bride's face (meaning that the light was illuminating the side of the face farthest from the camera). This is flattering light that provides a three-dimensional look to a portrait.

Short light generally looks good on everyone, but it looks especially good on females. The image of the bride is good by itself, but it lacks a punch and creative element that is consistent with our brand of photography. (Images 1 & 2)

For the second image, we added a flash behind the bride in a crisscross pattern, meaning the bride was sandwiched between light sources (the window and the flash). This added a level of dimension to the image, and separated the bride from the background. The flash was held by the makeup artist, and fired quickly through a small, portable softbox. (In small areas like this, use a grid on your softbox to avoid light spill.)

The second image is an example of how small differences can make a big impact in your photography.

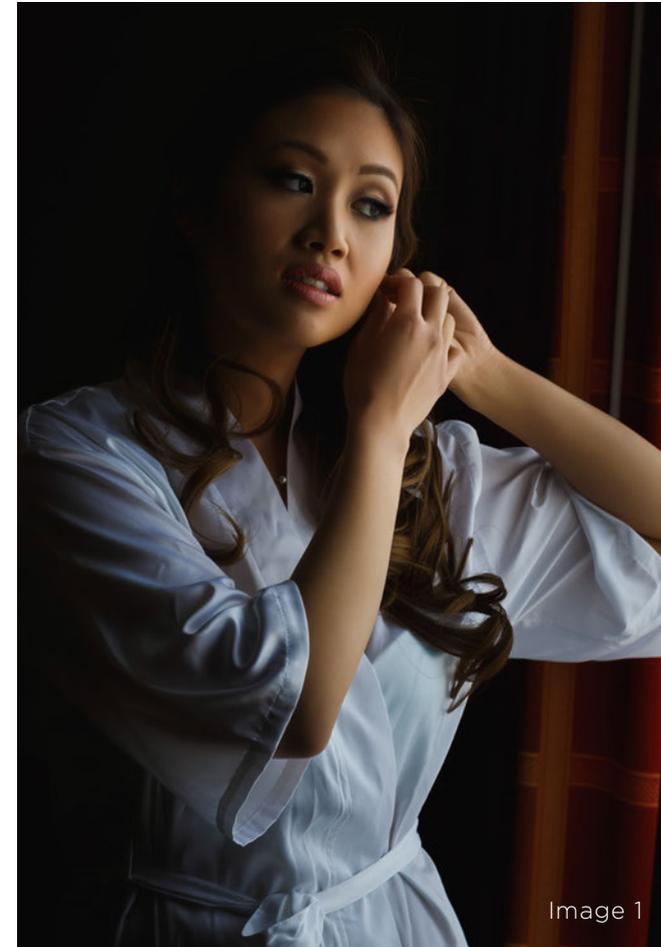


Image 1



Image 2

© Michael Anthony

Tips for using an accent light

- Your light does not have to be a hair light. You can use an accent light to light elements that you want to draw attention to. We often do this with details that are in the background of photos, such as a wedding dress.
- Experiment with colored gels to give your accent light a mood.
- Use a grid when in a small location to control light spill.



Creating Sun Flare With One Flash

Our studio is located just outside of L.A., where it is sunny and 75 to 90 degrees pretty much all year round. But sometimes we are faced with a gloomy day, or sometimes we are photographing in an open-shade location that needs a bit of punch. When conditions are not optimal, use a flash to create a warm, sunlit environment.

Back in April, we shot on a rainy day. It was gloomy out, but the way the sun lights up this particular location was something that we absolutely wanted our couple to have in their photographs. Remember, it's up to us to meet our clients' vision for their session if we expect them to make large purchases from us.

I positioned the couple on the ground and placed a light on a stand just behind them, camera left (Image 3). I placed the light behind some brush to allow the light to skim off the brush and create an ethereal look. Now, positioning the light is one thing, but we have to get the color right. I am a big believer in the MagMod system, which is an amazing tool for photographers. I used a CTO (color temperature orange) on my Canon 600EX-RT, and placed the stand up high and angled downward. I exposed for the natural light on the couple. This was the final result.

Tips for creating sun flare

- Experiment with full CTO or half-CTO gels, depending on how much orange you want.
- Position the flash behind the couple in an area where it would normally be.
- If you are a wedding photographer, this technique works great with a bride who has a veil. Just be careful to not blow out the details of the veil by setting the flash power too high.



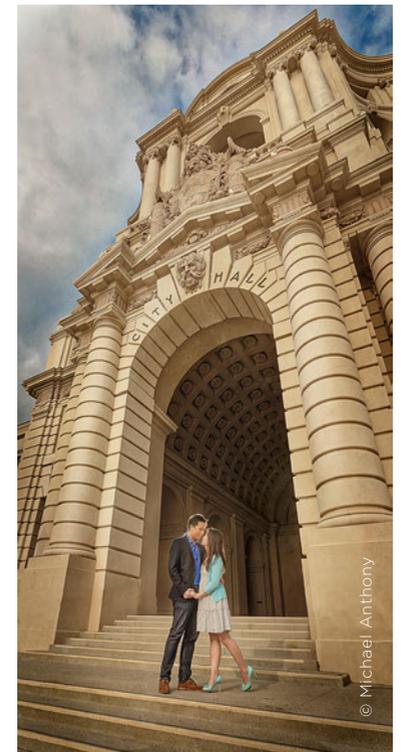
Using Backlight

We often use a flash in creative portraits as a backlight to give the image a unique look. Here is an example from a recent shoot we did in Pasadena, CA (Images 4 & 5). The bride and groom were positioned on a wall, and we were using the cherry blossoms as a background. The first image was lit in open shade, which was even and nice, but it lacked the whimsical look that complemented the masquerade theme of this shoot. By adding a backlight, we were able to create a magical look. This image is different: By using a quick flash as an accent, we were able to make it stand out from the rest of the images that couples look at when searching online for this venue.

Using a backlight is also a great way to separate your subject from the background if needed. This image was photographed against a darker background, and without any separation, the subject's hair would have been lost in the background. By using a flash behind the subject, we were able to make the subject stand out, rather than forcing the viewer to look for them within the image. The flash was positioned on a stand behind the couple, and was cloned out during post-production. When using this technique, place your back flash high enough to cover the back of the tallest subject's head; otherwise, their head will only be half-lit. Another thing you can do when backlighting a couple is to place the subjects slightly offset from one another. Have them turn their heads slightly, like they are about to kiss. The one farthest from the camera will have his/her face slightly illuminated as the light bounces off the one closest to you (we usually choose the bride to be lit).

Tips for using backlight

- Make sure your flash is not placed too low. This is done often, and will cause the groom to look like he is missing part of his head. Position your flash high behind the tallest subject.
- You can adjust the power of your backlight a bit more liberally than you would a keylight.
- Backlight water or translucent items for an interesting effect. This works great with fountains.
- Your backlight will reflect off bright objects, such as a wedding dress. Use this creatively combined with color-shifting techniques, flash gels and ambient light blending.





Lighting the Background

Lastly, I want to talk about lighting a background. We often use this technique on a wedding day to close out an album. We can easily create a beautiful silhouette by lighting a background directly behind our subjects (Image 6). For couples, this is a really nice shot that gives a more candid appeal with a creative twist. Use a colored gel on your flash (it's a good idea to use the wedding colors) to create a photo that doesn't look bland or flat.

When using your couple as a silhouette, there are a few vital posing techniques. First, keep a slight amount of space in between the couple. This allows the shape of the body to be seen. The noses of the subjects should not be pointed directly at each other or touching. Kissing silhouette shots do not usually work. ■

Tips for lighting your backgrounds

- Colored gels work great.
- Even when using multiple-flash setups, lighting a background can turn a bland photograph into a professional-looking image. Try it next time you break out your flash.
- When creating a silhouette, keep space in between your subjects to show their shape; otherwise, it can be difficult to see the subject.

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product review

TetherTools with *Salvatore Cincotta*



Why TetherTools?

I started shooting tethered just over a year ago and I have never looked back. Tether Tools makes it easy. They have superior products at an affordable price.

We use the Tether Table for all of our studio shooting. Super versatile, it connects to any lightstand. This allows me to place my laptop right in front of me for the shoot. When I am working with a client, like a magazine publisher for example, they love seeing the images come up on the screen so they can make decisions on images in real time. If we are working with portrait clients in the studio, shooting tethered is an effective way to get immediate feedback and build confidence in what you are doing. Everyone is gathered around my laptop watching.

The external drive compartment is one of my favorite hidden features. With Tether Tools, it's truly the little things that make a big difference. The external drive compartment allows me to shoot to an external hard drive without worrying about it falling or getting knocked over while working in the studio.

In addition, the JerkStopper is that simple feature that just makes sense. Shooting tethered takes some getting used to— you are connected to a computer in a confined space. The JerkStopper ensures your cable stays connected to your computer while you are working and doing your thing.

When it comes to shooting tethered, Tether Tools has the equipment and accessories you need.

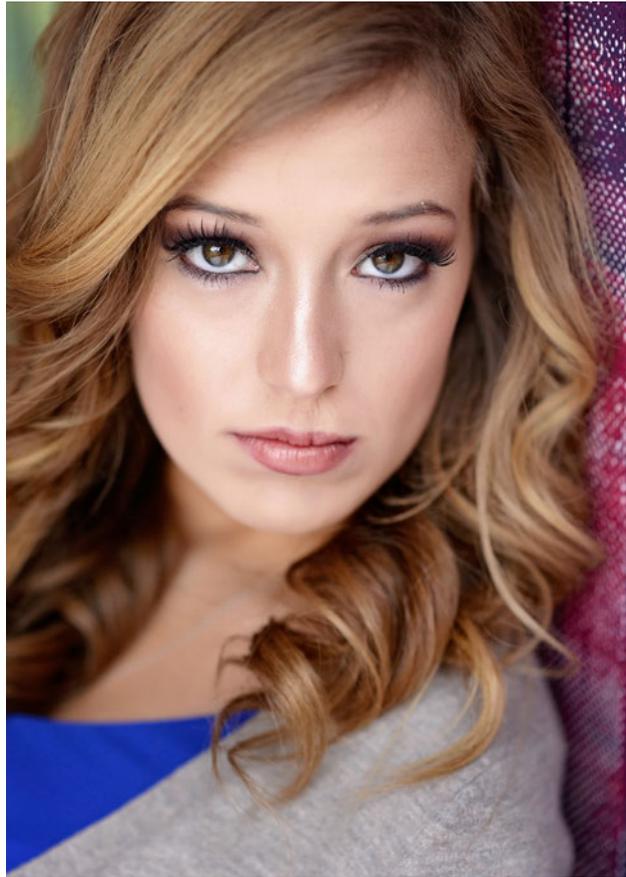


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It's All About
Communication
with Blair Phillips

BUSINESS SUCCESSES





by **Blair Phillips**

In order to achieve any level of success, one cannot assume that clients know what to expect. That is why large companies spend tons of revenue educating consumers on the ins and outs of their products. While people are becoming a little more comfortable with their spending, they are willing to spend lots more if it feels justified. Value is one of the most successful trigger concepts to promote spending these days. The more we communicate about our services and explain exactly what clients are getting, the more willing they are to open the checkbook.

COMMUNICATING YOUR PROCESS

Your sessions will be so much more profitable and enjoyable if you are in charge of every move. Clients love getting direction from you. They're usually pretty nervous about being in front of the lens, so they love to be told exactly what they need to be doing. When you are in complete control during a session, you are one step closer to guaranteeing a great financial payoff at the end.

I begin molding clients during the first point of contact. Instead of strictly talking about dates and prices, I want to build an experience that sounds very inviting and simple for them. I focus on the variety that we offer, and the fact that I will be there to guide them through every step.

At this point, they are either really interested or not. This way, we cut straight to the point of determining if we are the right fit for one another. Some parents and seniors come in and completely take over the session and tell you how things are going to be. I do my best work and have my best sales when I am in control, so this is another reason for such great communication during your initial point of contact.

COMMUNICATING PUNCTUALITY

Once a client has booked a session, that's not the end of the conversation. This is where you really need to begin pouring it on. People don't show up on time anymore. As the session approaches, I continue to communicate to my client the importance of being on time. I explain it in a way that lets them know we have two hours to complete their session. If they are 15 minutes late, that is 15 minutes of creative shooting time they will lose.

Since I began communicating the importance of time in this way, clients have very rarely been late. If you have ever had sessions run extremely long due to seniors taking forever in the dressing room, it is due to a lack of communication. I tell clients they can take as long as they want to change outfits. But I also remind them that we have a total of two hours. This encourages seniors to put some pep in their step while changing outfits.

COMMUNICATING WITH TEENS

All teens are on social media. Use it as an additional way to communicate with seniors and parents, something as simple as a post a couple of days before their session saying how excited you are about it. They love that you are taking the time to include them in your posts. Chances are really good that their friends will click on your username and check you out.

Snapchat is worth looking into. You can use it to create a story that documents their entire session. They will share that with all their friends, giving them a firsthand look at how awesome a session with you can be.

COMMUNICATING WITH PARENTS

Communication is as equally important with the parents. You really want to work hard to create a genuine friendship with a senior's mother, especially. She is in charge of the financial end of the session.

I always give parents a beginning dollar amount they should expect to pay. I never like putting a cap on what they have the potential of spending. If you are not getting the financial gain that you feel you deserve from your sessions, it is probably due to a lack of communication on your part. With proper coaching and steps put into place, you will have a much better chance of getting people to spend what you want them to.

COMMUNICATING ABOUT YOU

Take time to communicate with clients about you: where you came from and why you do what you do. Talk to them about your family. I always share with clients the importance of my family and that they are the driving force behind my working so hard to create impactful images for clients.

I also continually communicate just how genuinely thankful I am for their business. You will find that most people will begin to become emotionally invested with a photographer, and that is what keeps them coming back. Far too many people are treated like a business transaction these days, so the more personal you are, the more guaranteed success you will have.



COMMUNICATING AFTER THE SESSION

Communication is very important before and during a session, but it should not stop there. In some cases, the actions you take after a session can be more important than what took place before. Take time to write each client a note expressing your genuine appreciation for her investment in your photography. It is rare that people receive handwritten notes anymore, so they are usually very appreciated. Add all clients to your database so they will receive any mass emails that include future specials and other information. Pick a handful of your favorite images from their session and post them to your social media avenues. Tag the photos and encourage clients to share with their friends.

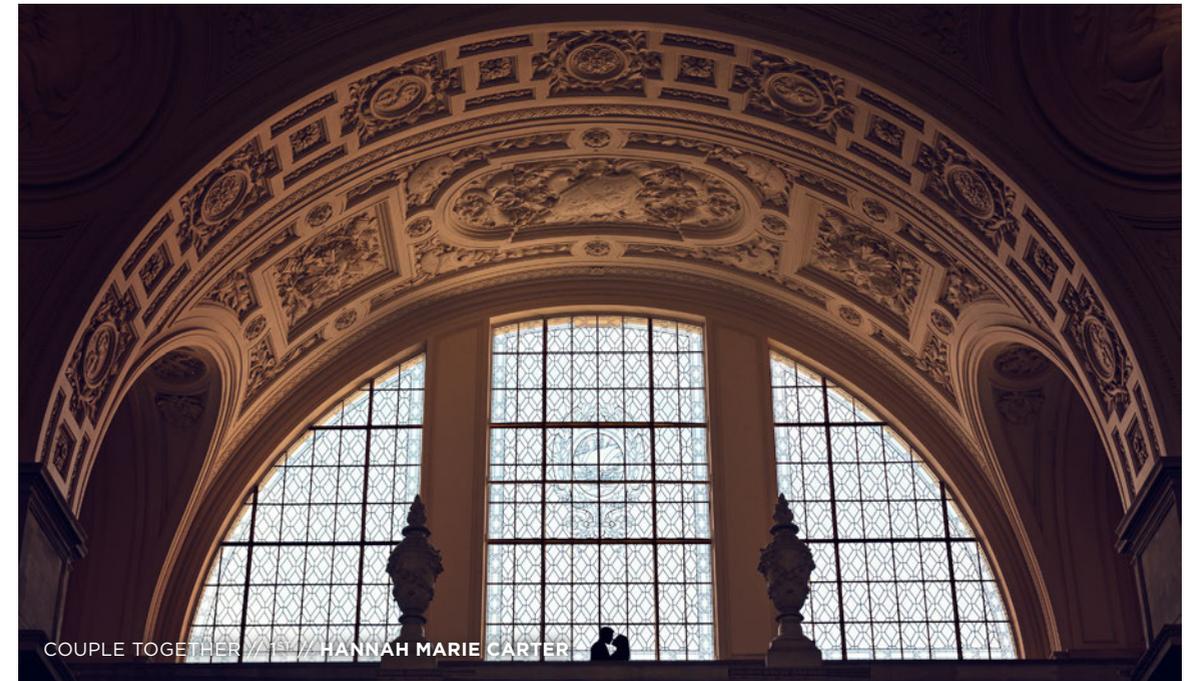
Proper communication does not cost a ton of money, but a lack of communication can cost you a fortune. Lay all the groundwork that you possibly can. Communication ensures a healthy business, and can eliminate surprises—for you and the client. ■

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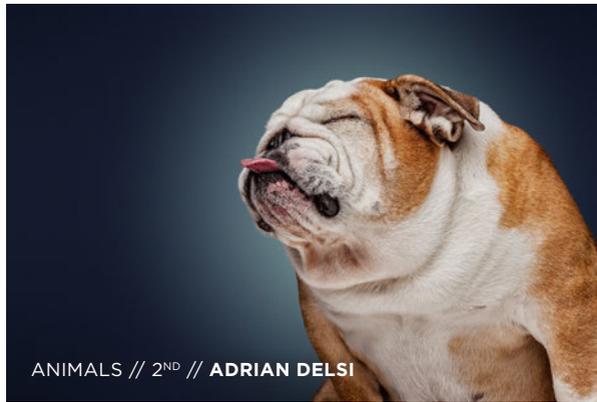
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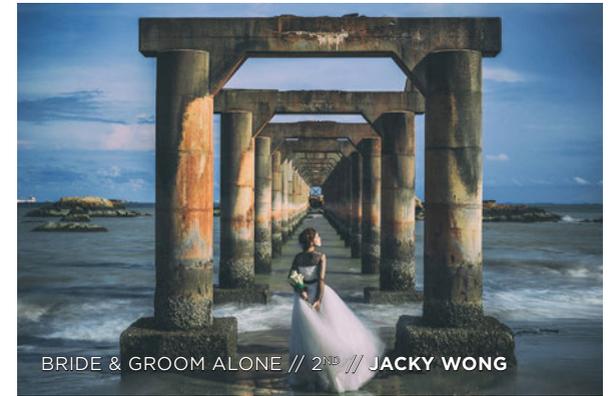
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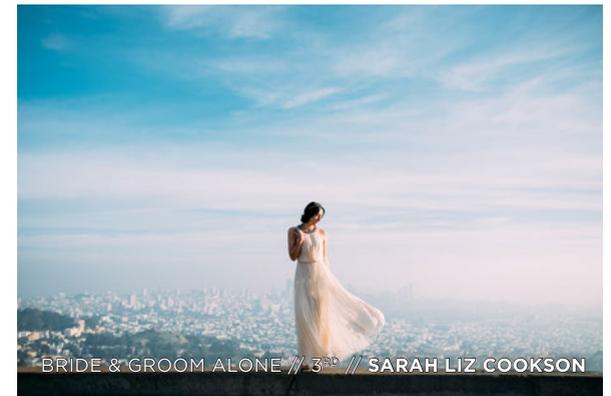
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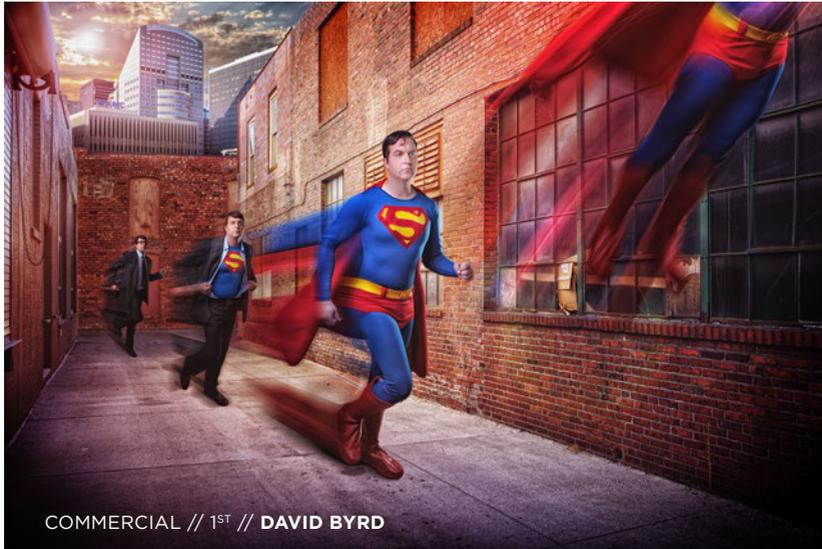
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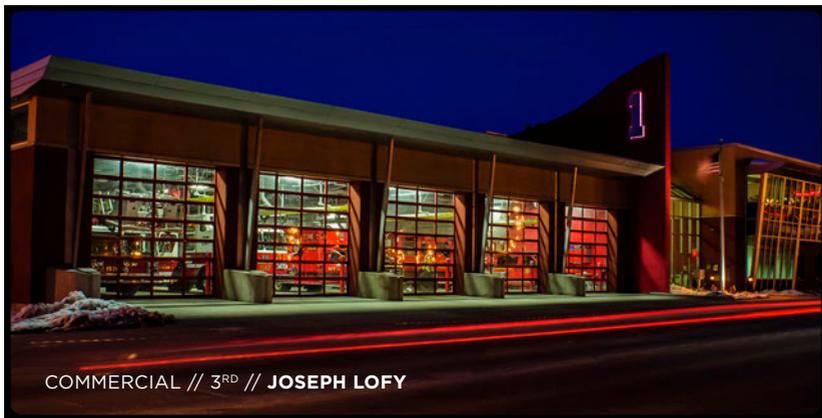
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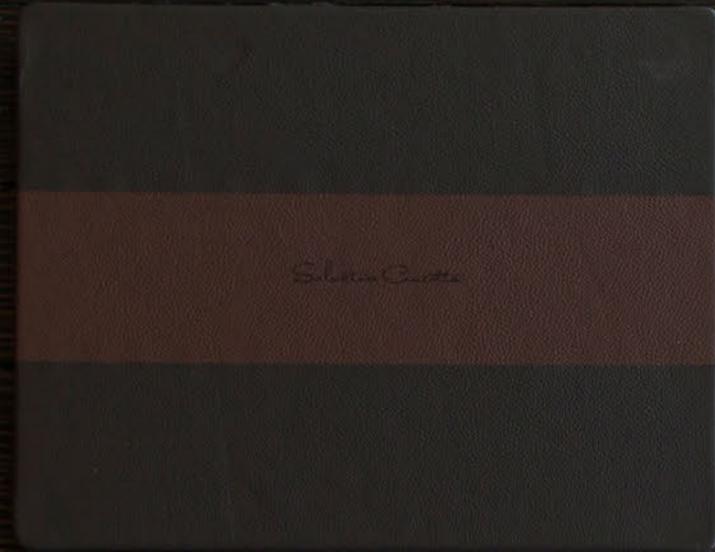
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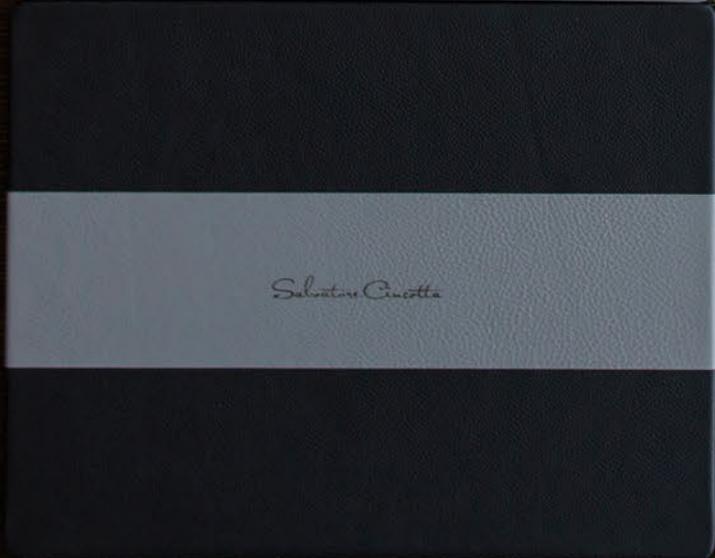
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