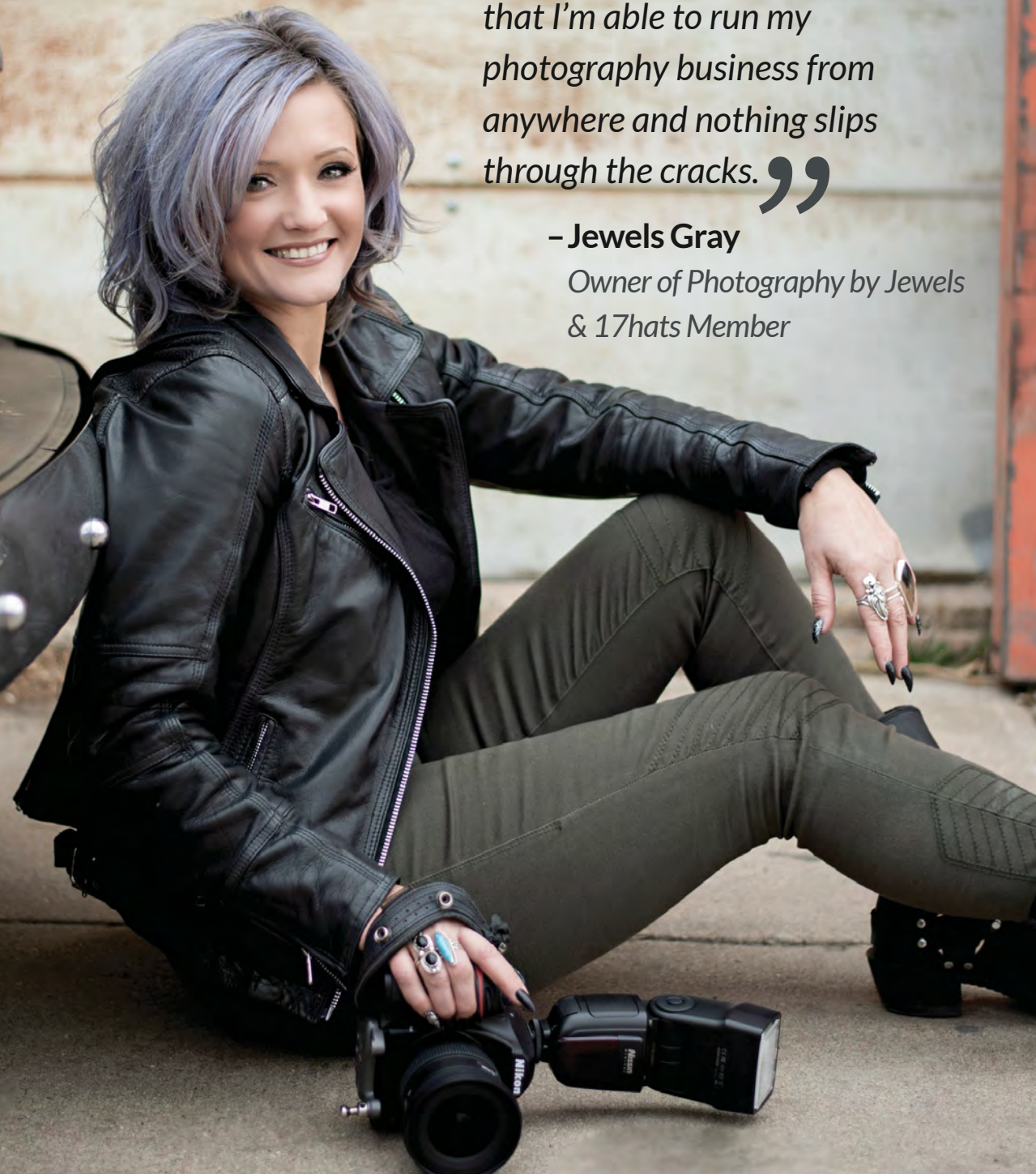


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– Jewels Gray

Owner of Photography by Jewels
& 17hats Member



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On To Onboarding!



This month, 17hats business experts Amanda and Donovan speak to a crucial system for your business: Onboarding.

Amanda & Donovan - COO & CEO, 17hats

1 What exactly is Onboarding?

Donovan: Onboarding is how you get clients “on board” with your way of doing things. You learn about your clients, and they learn about you.

Amanda: Your 17hats features work together to systemize Onboarding. A tailored Questionnaire solicits key info, and your personalized Email Templates convey professionalism.

2 So, Onboarding only happens at the beginning of a client relationship?

Donovan: No – Onboarding is an ongoing process that spans your client relationship. Think back to the Client Journey – say, for a wedding. There are questions you would ask at the outset, like the date and venue.

3 How does Onboarding benefit my clients?

Amanda: A well-designed Onboarding system tells your clients that they are in good hands.

Donovan: Yes. The questions you ask ... when you ask them ... and your polished, consistent communications ... it all works together to inspire confidence.

Amanda: The bottom line is, the right approach to Onboarding adds tremendous value to your brand.

Leave the Chaos Behind

Questionnaire Print

SARAH BELLUM
PHOTOGRAPHY

Groom Information:
Parents of the Groom:

Names of Best Man and Groomsmen: Please note if anyone is related by placing "brother," "nephew" or "brother of the bride" next to the name.

Name and age of the ring bearer: Please note if he is related to the bride or groom. (OPTIONAL)

Bride Information:
Parents of the Bride:

Names of Maid of Honor and Bridesmaids: Please note if anyone is related by placing "sister," "niece" or "sister of the groom" next to the name.

Name and age of flower girl: Please note if she is related to the bride or groom.

Name anyone special you would like a picture with before or after the ceremony (OPTIONAL)

Name and Phone number of an emergency wedding day contact:

Are there any family situations I should know about: divorce, illness, death. The more you tell me, the better and easier the family formal will be. (OPTIONAL)

Save as Draft Save and Send

Getting to know you: With 17hats, Onboarding is easy.

Your Onboarding workflow automates the process – so you ask questions and share details at key junctures.

Onboarding Workflow

Send Questionnaire: Wedding: Family, Wedding Party

When: Immediately after activating this workflow (auto)

Send Questionnaire: Wedding: Vendors

When: 60 days before the Project date (auto)

Send Questionnaire: Wedding Day Activities

When: 30 days before the Project date (auto)

Send Questionnaire: Wedding: Portraits: Shot List

When: 20 days before the Project date (auto)

Send Questionnaire: Wedding: Blog

When: 14 days after the Project date (auto)

Your tailored Questionnaires solicit the right answers at the right time in a client relationship.

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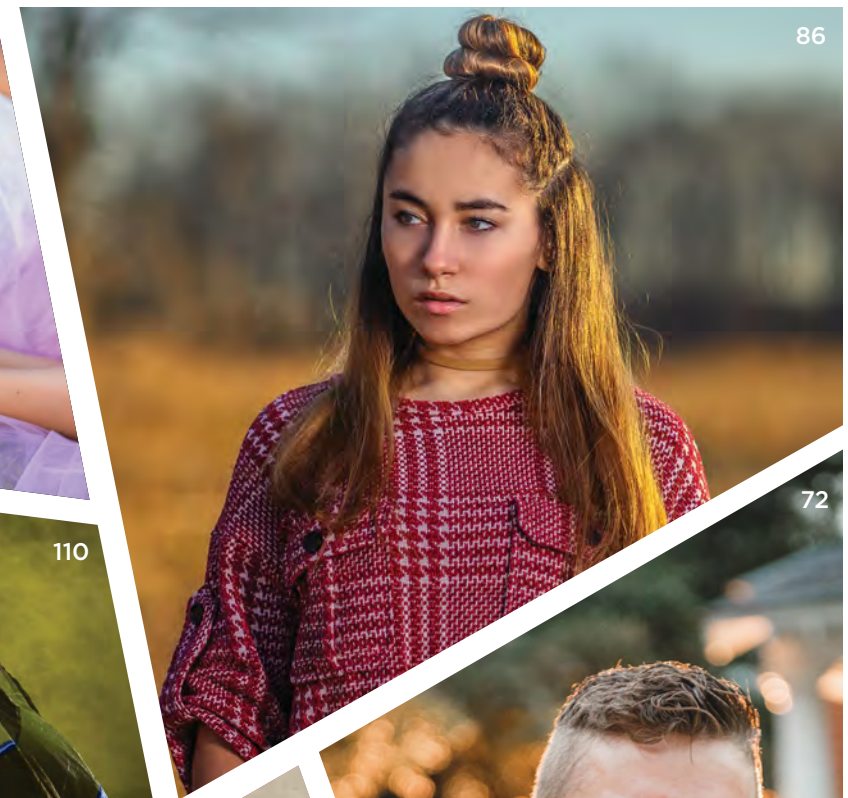
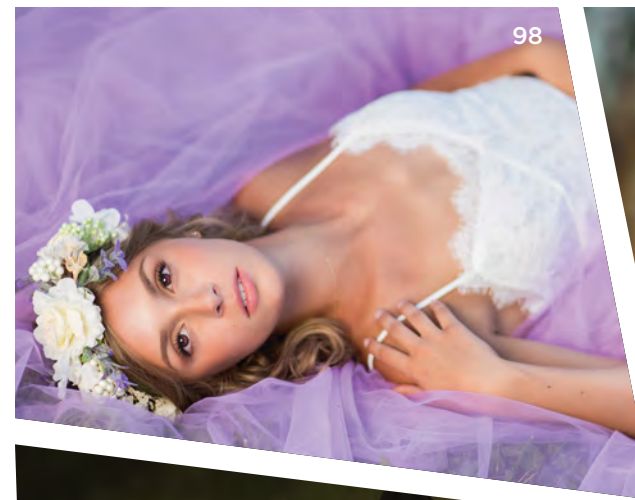


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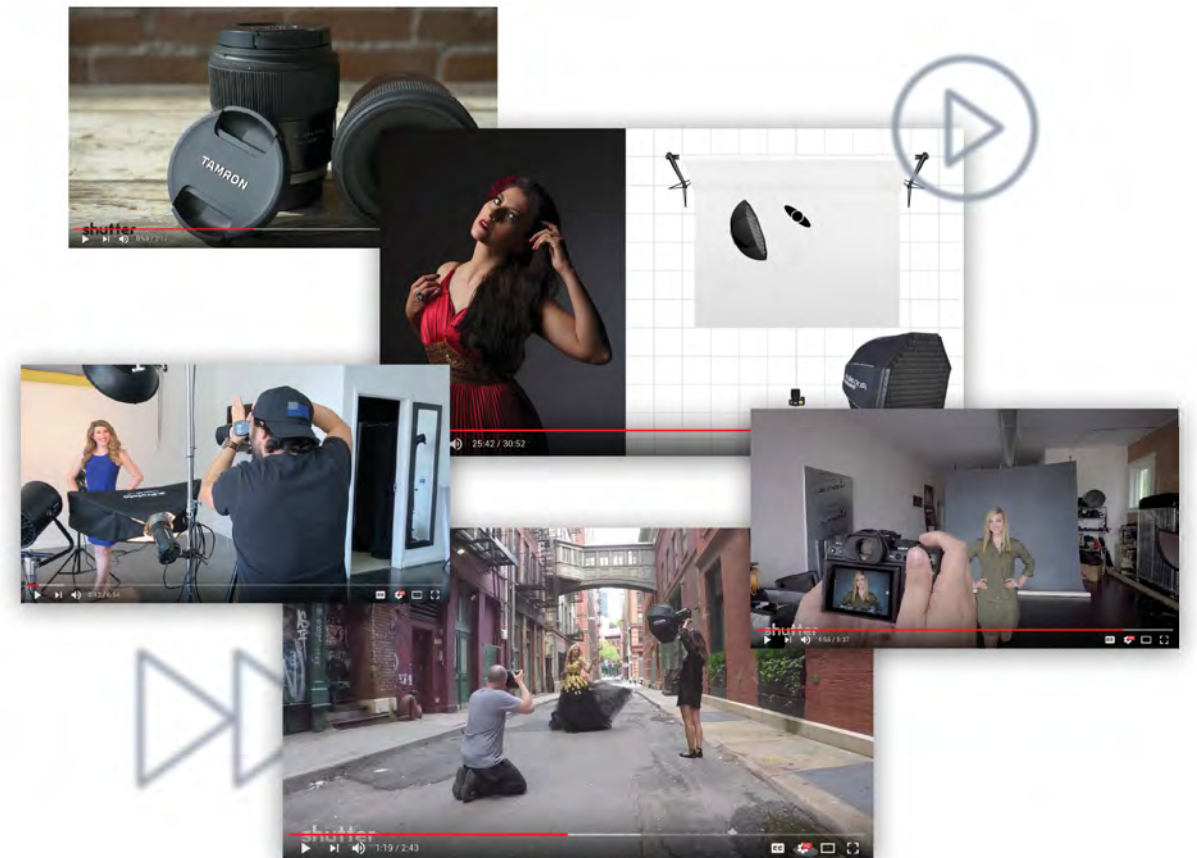
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Shutter Magazine's focus is on photography education. Our goal is to provide current, insightful and in-depth educational content for today's professional wedding and portrait photographer. Shutter uses the latest technologies to deliver information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

Shutter Magazine: By photographers, for photographers.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF / PUBLISHER
Sal Cincotta

CREATIVE DIRECTOR
Alissa Zimmerman

LEAD DESIGNER
Alicia Simpson

JR. DESIGNER
Ellie Plotkin

ACCOUNT SPECIALIST
Christine Gill

COPY EDITOR
Tom O'Connell

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

Vanessa Joy, Michael Anthony, Sal Cincotta, Skip Cohen, Jeff & Lori Poole, Christine Yodsukar, Alissa Zimmerman, Audrey Woulard, Cathy Anderson, David Beckham, Dustin Lucas and Phillip Blume



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LAUNCH POINT

A message from the editor-in-chief



Tweens, seniors,
teenagers and kids—
*are you maximizing your exposure
to this segment of the market?*
- Sal Cincotta

Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography





Image © Vanessa Joy



Image © Vanessa Joy

I entered the wedding industry at 20 years old. The very first photography meetup I went to was in the backroom of Peterpank Diner in South Amboy, New Jersey. There were 25 men and me. The industry has changed since then, but one thing that struck me was that a couple of the more seasoned professionals feared not being able to “do weddings when I’m 60.”

Weddings take a toll on your body. I’ve even made it a point to work on the longevity of my body (more on that at yogaforphotographers.com). How many of us have disability insurance in case we’re injured and can’t work for a while? I don’t. It’s crazy expensive.

I was recently ridiculed for using the term *minimum wage*. A stupid troll thought I was saying that people should be paid less than a living wage. It wasn’t what I was saying at all, but it did get me to start thinking. How many full-time photographers aren’t paying themselves a living wage?

In the wedding world, especially, it’s easy to think we’re making a ton of money because we take in a lot of money. The problem is that we need to spend it elsewhere. When was the last time you looked at your cost of sales, cost of business and how much time you spend? We end up making a lot less than we think we do, and there’s no way we’ve set ourselves up for the future. It almost makes you wish you had that 9-to-5 and 401k. (To see how I break down my pricing and packaging, download my free pricing video at breatheyourpassion.com/money.)



You may run your numbers and think, “I’m doing pretty good.” But look at how much you make per year (after expenses) and divide it by how many hours you worked to get it. Are you making a living wage or minimum wage?

A living wage allows you to save for retirement, and a lot of us fall short there. Photography is a tough business. It’s stressful, long hours, lots of equipment expenses, physically strenuous. Are you prepared to retire one day? Or are you hoping to have a second career?

Saving for retirement is no easy task. It takes a serious amount of planning and diligence over a long period of time. Dave Ramsey (I’m a huge fan of this financial guy) suggests that we save 15% of our income for retirement every year. That seems like a huge number when you’re currently saving 0%. But an even bigger number is the amount of money you need to have in your retirement fund to retire.

Chris Hogan, a colleague of Dave Ramsey’s and the author of *Everyday Millionnaires*, says: “Retirement isn’t an age, it’s a number.” Do you want to see what your number is? Take his Retirement IQ quiz at chrishogan360.com/riq.



Shocked? I sure was. Depressed? Yup. I didn't want this article to be all doom and gloom, but I did want to light a fire under your ass. No one talks about this, maybe because we love what we do so much that we can't picture ever not doing it. I'm with you there. But that doesn't mean that one day you won't want to travel more, work a little less and spend most of your time with the people you love rather than the people who pay you.

The best part of all of this is that you have control. You own your own business. You can immediately make adjustments to start cutting spending and increasing income so you can start down the retirement track, even if you're just starting out. It's never too late—or early—to start.



Image © Vanessa Joy



Image © Vanessa Joy

I’ve found a lot of answers to business and personal finances in two books by Dave Ramsey: *Entreleadership: 20 Years of Practical Business Wisdom From the Trenches* and *The Total Money Makeover*. I use tons of his advice in my business and in my home life. You may or may not like him, but the advice is solid. Another favorite is Jordan Page. She has a great YouTube channel full of advice on budgeting and getting out of debt and why you need seven bank accounts (well, not me, but she does have a point).



Image © Vanessa Joy



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Most financial to-do's are the same in business as in life. I follow Dave Ramsey's principles because they work for me and for a lot of people. But they're not for everyone, and some investors would even tell you they're completely backwards. I know that finance has to do with math, but it has more to do with behavior than anything else. Here are the basic principles I live by in business and life.

- 1. Know your numbers.** There's no excuse for not knowing how much money you have, will have and will have to pay out. If you don't have the means to figure it out yourself in Quickbooks or 17Hats, hire a bookkeeper in addition to your accountant (sometimes they're the same person).
- 2. Never go into debt—for anything.** I've made it a habit of thinking about my purchases in terms of whole numbers. If I want to buy a \$1,000 lens, I want to pay \$1,000. Not \$1,235 after I'm done with interest when I forget to (or just don't) pay it off in the six-months same-as-cash deal. Paying more than necessary for things is a quick way to lose in your financial life. I pay for equipment, staff and even cars based on what I can afford. If I want something bigger and better, I wait until I've saved up the money.
- 3. Plan for the unknown.** This may sound morbid, but plan for things like injury and death. I have three to six months of expenses saved up in case of an emergency. The last thing you want to do while your boat is sinking is to pour more water into it by going into debt (I think that's a Dave Ramsey metaphor). If you have people who depend on you, get term life insurance that's five to 10 times your salary. You never know, and it's better to leave a blessing behind than a burden.



Image © Vanessa Joy



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If you don't feel like doing a ton of research to get your financial house in order, no worries. Check out the video for this article, in which I outline the first steps to take to financial freedom. You'll be hitting your goals in no time and saying goodbye to financial stress and the thought of being forced to work until you die—unless you're Sal or me, and look forward to that kind of thing. ■

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youtube.com/btsShutterMagazine



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

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HOW TO SELL **DIGITAL FILES** LIKE PRODUCTS

with Christine Yodsukar



Image © Christine Yodsukar

I hear photographers in every workshop, every one-on-one call, every Facebook group and every in-person meetup say their clients don't want to spend money, don't want products and just want to pay a couple hundred dollars for the digitals. I feel you. I used to say that. I have a bomb to drop. The problem is not your clients. The problem is you. That is a lie we tell ourselves so we don't have to teach ourselves how to sell, so we don't have to face our fears, so we can continue to think we could be successful "if only."

There are two basic things I have learned in sales: Clients want what you tell them to want, and you can dictate what your clients want.

What your clients want is actually what your clients value, and what your clients value depends on how well you are serving them. If you do not serve your clients at all, they will value only what they know. They are not professional moment capturers, seasoned celebrators or expert documentarians. They know Shutterfly and Costco and buy-and-sell Facebook groups. They don't know what magic is available to them through a professional photographer. It is our job to help them see the possibilities of working with a full-service professional photographer.



Image © Christine Yodsukar



Image © Christine Yodsukar

I wasn't always able to sell digitals the way I sell products. In fact, the word *digital* scared me. I had put so much work into learning how to sell products and testing my approaches that I hadn't even thought about how to sell digitals.

Through learning how to sell products, I learned how to build value for the products I was offering. The albums and wall galleries were family heirlooms that served as a valuable daily reminder of what is most important to people. Having something in your home you can look up at every day and feel better about the troubles you're facing is priceless. I could sell that all day long to my clients because I understood the value of it. These products make your life better.

Once I understood the value of what I was able to deliver, I applied all of the sales techniques I'd learned through trial and error, countless books, private training (including with the amazing Steve Saporito) and through talking with colleagues. I learned that the first thing you must do is find out what is valuable to the client. Whether it is their toddler's chunky cheeks or the unveiling of their brand-new business, there is always a reason they want photos taken by a professional. Once I know what is valuable, I can connect it to the deliverable, which in most cases is the artwork. Through the artwork, the client can celebrate the thing that is valuable to them.

The final piece is asking for the sale. Once they value the artwork, I have to use actual sales and negotiation techniques, like many I learned from *Never Split the Difference* by Chris Voss: to ask for the sale that I want and that I know will serve them when the artwork is being enjoyed in their home.



Image © Christine Yodsukar



Image © Christine Yodsukar

Using this same gameplan, let’s swap out the artwork for digitals. We first find out what our clients value. If we have a client coming to us for branding photos, why do they want branding photos now? What is different right now than the last time they had photos done? Next, I need to link that value to the digital product. To do this, I need to know where they want to use their digital files.

Are they putting these photos in a header banner on their website? That tells me that I should photograph them in a way that fits in a banner layout. And when I get to the sales meeting, I can say, “And this one right here is perfect for the header banner on your website.” If they also need a photo for an Instagram post with a text overlay telling people to sign up for their lead magnet, I need to know that so I can leave empty space in the frame for the text and so I can point out this photo in the sales meeting and say, “This photo will help you build your list on Instagram.”



Image © Christine Yodsukar



Image © Christine Yodsukar

Knowing your client’s needs and being able to deliver on those needs is the basis of sales. If I do this, I can sell them anything as long as it solves their problem and I believe in it. A great example of this was when a client who had just had a family session with me bought multiple collections of artwork. He loved how the artwork honored and celebrated his family. A few weeks after they received their artwork, this client reached out to me for headshots for a major rebrand of his business.

The only difference was that he did not want artwork of his branding photos. He just wanted the digitals to use on his website and promotional materials. At this point, I still didn’t want to hear the word *digitals* because it scared me. I believed that the digitals were the best product for him. I wasn’t about to sell him wall art of his branding photos. So I decided to use the same exact process he had already been through with his family session, but replace artwork with the digitals he wanted. For the sales session, I had priced the digitals so they at least paid for my time and the hair and makeup artist, and took it as a test run. At least I wouldn’t lose money.

It turns out that I had done a great job at building the value because my first branding session with digitals came out to just under \$4,000. They got exactly what they wanted, they were over-the-moon happy and I met my sales average.

Sales techniques work whether you are selling artwork, digitals or a used car. I don’t have rich clients. I don’t live in a wealthy area. I don’t have rich friends. I learned how to sell.



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Don't let yourself believe the lies you see all over the Facebook groups that you can't sell digitals and be profitable. You can sell them and be very profitable consistently as long as you learn sales strategies that work for photographers. Find out what they need it for and get specific. Shoot for what they need and overdeliver.

If you want to sell a lot, provide a lot. In the sales meeting, use techniques you learn from books, highly regarded coaches and peers. And the next time someone asks you, "How much for just the digitals?" just remember that if you want the big sale, you have to ask for it. ■



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



Working with your significant other isn't easy. But it can be one of the most rewarding experiences you ever have if you figure out a way to make it work for both of you. I have worked side by side with Sal Cincotta for over seven years, but the relationship didn't become romantic until October 2017, so we didn't go into business together as a couple. Instead, we built a solid foundation by first learning how to complement one another at work.

I'm by no means in any kind of professional position to be dishing out relationship advice. But I've been looking at the life Sal and I have built in relation to our business together, and I've compiled some tips that have helped me find balance in my work/romantic relationship.



TIP #1: ESTABLISH ROLES AND STAY IN YOUR LANE

This is the most important piece of your working relationship. Make it a top priority to ensure you stay on track—together.

Every relationship is about balance and equal parts, each person pulling their own weight. This applies to your business as well. When the ship is not balanced, you get unnecessary tension and resentment, which ultimately leads to explosions between you and your partner.

The beauty of running your own business is that you get to create the life you want. So what do you want your roles to be? Take a step back and look at your business in terms of departments. Don't go into the minutia of tasks; just list every division of your business at a high-level view so you can start assigning roles. Our departments include finances, overall vision, photography/creative, sales, client experience and order management.

We operate off of 100% ownership when we assign roles and tasks. That means there is no piece of the business that is 75% my role and 25% Sal's role. It's all or nothing. I own the sales process for our studio 100% and Sal owns the photography and creative part of the business 100%. This is where staying in your lane comes in. There's no scenario where I will be the one photographing a session or handling the images with Evolve, our outsourcing company. There's no scenario where Sal will be the one running the sales session or ordering products. We have our roles and we function in parallel every day, marching to the same beat at all times. Staying in your lane also allows you to keep everything black and white (no gray areas allowed), and hold each other accountable if things get off track.

It's vital to establish the most crucial role that dictates almost everything in your lives together: Who is the alpha? Who is your quarterback? Who is the one making sure you are both staying focused on mission-critical tasks each and every day? Some may think this is ridiculous or politically incorrect, but here's the harsh reality: Every relationship needs an alpha. Every relationship needs a dominant force and a complementary supporting actor. This is the essence of balance in a relationship. Equality comes in the form of pulling your weight evenly, not in splitting the responsibility of vision and decision-making. Your business and your life together as a couple must be consistent.

TIP #2: OWN YOUR MISTAKES

Accountability to each other and to yourself is key to maintaining a sense of harmony in life. You can’t run from your mistakes, and you are going to make so many mistakes along your empire-building journey. You both will, and that’s okay as long as you own them.

Life is too short to waste your precious time fighting with your significant other, especially when it’s tied to something avoidable. Here’s how these stories usually pan out: Let’s say I make a mistake in the studio (I’m not talking about forgetting to put the toilet seat down, though this is a major pain point for a lot of couples). I’m talking about royally screwing something up, like scheduling a photo session and forgetting to add it to the calendar.

My pride would have me say to my partner: “Well, if you would have listened to me a month ago when I told you I needed a system that creates calendar appointments and sends out automated emails, we wouldn’t be in this situation.”

What your partner hears: “This all happened because of you. This is your fault.”

If there is one thing to take away from this tip, it’s that projection and deflection will destroy your relationship.

Instead, try this: “If I would have made that studio management system more of a priority a month ago, this would have never happened. I am going to carve out a few days next week to map this out so we can start using it and don’t end up in this situation again.”

Your partner hears: “I understand this was my mistake and I will take corrective action to ensure it doesn’t happen again.”

It’s simple: Problem, acknowledgement of problem, solution. Rinse and repeat. And get used to sucking up your pride, because this won’t be the last time you’ll have to follow this formula.

TIP #3: SPEAK YOUR MIND AND DON’T HOLD GRUDGES

This one is a doozy if you’re the type of person who hates conflict and avoids difficult conversations at all cost (I’m raising my hand high in the air as I write this).

Back to pride—it’s time to suck it up again. Maybe you’re seeing the trend here, maybe you’re not; but in relationships, time is the most valuable thing you have. Protect it. Stop wasting it on petty arguments that are nonsensical and tied to a simple miscommunication 99% of the time.

Two people are never completely in sync, especially if there’s a female in the mix (again, harsh reality that’s politically incorrect—sorry, not sorry). All logic goes out the window once a month for the majority of women, and we spend a lot of time twisting your words and actions in our heads into something blown completely out of proportion. This is when communication and understanding need to be at a critically high level for your relationship.

Frankly, communication (or lack thereof) is the reason most relationships fail. Whether it’s a marriage, friendship, family or another type of relationship, poor communication does not discriminate when it decides to wreak havoc on your life.

I don’t always practice what I preach here, but am thankful to have an Italian New Yorker as a partner who doesn’t understand how to live life any other way. Speak up. That’s all you have to do. When something is bothering you, say something to your partner. Most people can’t read minds, so if you choose to go an entire day, a week or longer without telling someone that what they did to you (or how you perceived something they did) was hurtful or impacted you in a negative way, that’s on you. By speaking up, you’re giving the other person a chance to acknowledge their action and how it made you feel. It also allows the other person to address your perception and set it straight by clearing up any miscommunication.

Once you lay it all out on the table and clear the air, move on. It’s a waste of time to dwell on issues in the past and hold grudges. Just don’t.

Image © Studio 23 Photography



TIP #4: LISTEN TO UNDERSTAND, NOT TO RESPOND

We live in a fast-paced world with an incessant need for instant gratification. You have to slow down with your significant other and take the time to understand each other.

Not everyone is a good communicator. Some of us don't know how to articulate our feelings. Instead of rushing through conversations with your partner, trying to finish each other's sentences, be a good listener.

If your partner is coming to you for advice, instead of jumping the gun as if you have all the answers to all of life's problems, listen to your partner's issues or concerns. Figure out where they are coming from. Don't wait impatiently for your turn to speak. That's not listening.

TIP #5: CELEBRATE YOUR WINS AND NEVER LOSE PERSPECTIVE

Success feels so good, especially when you get to share it with the person you love the most. When you are both laser-focused on the mission of building an empire together, the pace of everything tends to take control. Resist it.

When you have a win, celebrate it. Your version of celebrating could be as small as a high-five or as extravagant as a weekend escape to another city. Whatever celebrating means to you, don't forget to do it. Celebrate your wins so you know what they feel like in the darkness of all the failures (which, sadly, occur way more often than wins when you are building a company).

Always remember where you came from. Perspective can slip away when you're overwhelmed with business and everyday life. That's when you need to lean on each other and make sure you're both mentally on track. Understand that it's just short-term pain on your way to your goal. Never lose sight of that goal along your journey together.

TIP #6: STEAL AS MANY MOMENTS AS YOU CAN

Sal and I spend 24 hours a day, seven days a week together. That is not an exaggeration. There are countless blog posts and articles on the web advising us on how much time we should spend with our partner. It's all nonsense. There is no right answer when it comes to you and your time.

Time is the most precious asset you own, especially your time together as a couple. Value it. Fight to protect it. Never take it for granted. Steal a 30-second window for a long hug in the hallway.

It's easy to get caught up in the daily grind of running a business together, but you have to remember to make time for each other. My desk is right next to Sal's at our studio, but most nights when we finally get home from work, it feels like we've spent all day in different countries.

The work will always be there. Your inbox and to-do list won't nag you any more or less because you shut your laptop for a few hours to sneak away to the movies at midday.

Take advantage of moments like these. Cherish them. They give you the fuel you need to stay connected when it's nothing but chaos all around you.



Image © Studio 23 Photography

TIP #7: ABOVE ALL ELSE, BE EACH OTHER’S BIGGEST FAN

Always remember that you are in this together. Your business and relationship are only as strong as the weakest one of you. The support and encouragement you give each other makes it all worth it. Be each other’s cheerleader every step of the way.

No two people will ever get along perfectly 100% of the time. The sooner you accept that and stop fantasizing about the perfect—and unrealistic—partnership, the better your lives together will be. Through all of the bad days, disconnected days, petty fights, wanting to give up and uncertainties about where this journey may be taking you, just remember that you need each other more than you need anyone else.

Life is all about the yin and the yang, chaos and order. The ebb and flow of life as both business and romantic partners is all part of the path that will get you to where you want to be. You control your own destiny, and having someone you love by your side to enjoy it with you is priceless. ■



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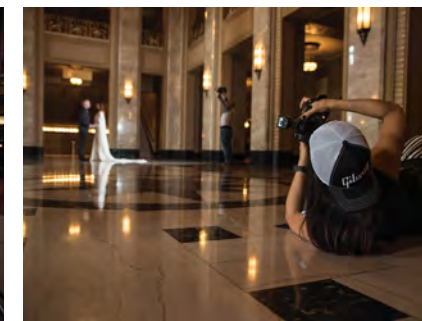
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THE **SENIOR** EDITION

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SENIORS

THE NEXT GENERATION

with **Sal Cincotta**





Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

You have probably already figured it out. Gen Z is taking over, and they are not like their millennial predecessors. Sure, teens will always be teens. They want unique, they want fun—they want, more than ever, an experience. This can’t be underscored enough. This is the first generation born with technology. They expect it to be everywhere and to always work.

Where does that leave us as photographers and business owners? Welcome to the world of reinvention. Senior portraits are different than they were 20 years ago. Heck, they’re different than they were five years ago. The kids are different, their personalities are different and the final product is different. Below are some ideas for thriving with a new generation of seniors.



CHANGE THE WAY YOU SHOOT

Sounds crazy, right? Think about it. Have you picked up a magazine recently? This is what the kids are looking at. Not some lame-ass picture of a teen leaning on a tree holding a rose.

They live in an Instagram world. Lifestyle and natural is what they crave. Sure, we still have to get those shots that Mom wants, the beautiful portrait, but come on—modernize the way you shoot. Stop convincing yourself this is your “art.” Unless you want to be broke, your art needs to evolve.

My point is simple: What was cool when you were a kid is not cool today. Innovate or die.



GO ORGANIC

This group does not want to be hit over the head with marketing. They want to be marketed to, but don’t overdo it. Confused yet?

Direct mail is still a thing, but that’s not going to impact the kids, that’s going to influence the parents.

I learned recently that kids are supposedly not using Facebook. Wrong. Study after study shows they are in fact still using Facebook, just not the same way as millennials. So don’t ignore this medium. Facebook has gotten a bad rap recently because of security and privacy—and make no mistake, Gen Z has watched their predecessors and their screw-ups. They want a little bit of privacy, which is why they love Snapchat.

Instagram and Facebook are still the way to reach them, but your ads can’t be ads, if that makes any sense. Keep them fresh, keep them organic. “Book now!”—stop this form of advertising. It is very short term. It will work from time to time, but it’s misleading and amateurish.

Long-term success requires patience, planning and adjustments over time.

Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

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YOU STILL HAVE TO WIN THE PARENTS

Parents still matter. I see businesses repeatedly forget to market to the parents for some reason. They are the ones with the money. Yes, the kids are influencers, but parents still pay the bills.

And believe me when I tell you, parents are as confused by Gen Z as we are. So, what Mom thinks is cool might not be what her daughter wants. We have to bridge the gap through messaging and education. We have to serve two masters. We need the kids to drive demand and we need Mom to pay the bill.

In our studio, we have taken a blended approach. We make images that are both traditional and fashion forward. Knowing that Mom will love some and the kids will love others, we are able to keep both camps happy. Trust me, this works.

MOBILE IS EVERYTHING

Gen Z live on their mobile devices. Get this through your head. Mobile first. Then laptop. Then desktop. They are a mobile generation. Everything they do is on their phones. If your website is not mobile friendly, you are screwed. If your website takes too long to load, again, you are screwed.

I know you might be wondering, “But Sal, how do I know if my site is too slow?” Google it! Help yourself. I know the answer. Of course I do. I am writing the article. There are tons of tools out there to help you measure your site’s performance and load times and how it looks and behaves on mobile.

What products are you delivering to your clients? Images on a thumb drive? Really? These people are on their phones. Mobile first. There is no thumb drive or CD or DVD slot on your phone. So how are you delivering images? Are you using slideshows? Mobile apps? These are other mobile deliverables that meet the demands of kids today. Prints are not dead. By no means am I suggesting that you should deliver digital only, but you need to deliver products and services your clients—kids and parents—want.



Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography



Images © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

Innovate or die. This is not just a saying. We have built our business on it over the past 12 years. Yes, it’s exhausting. Every day we try to be better than the day before. Every day we chase that elusive bar of perfection. Once you adopt it, this mindset will change your business forever. ■



Sal Cincotta is an international award-winning photographer, educator, author and the publisher of *Shutter Magazine*. Sal's success is directly tied to the education he received in business school. He graduated from Binghamton University, a Top 20 business school, and has worked for Fortune 50 companies like Procter & Gamble and Microsoft. After spending 10 years in corporate America, Sal left to pursue a career in photography and has never looked back.

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STANDARD



EXTENDED



POSING PROMPTS FOR MORE
NATURAL
SENIOR PORTRAITS

with Phillip Blume





Is your senior portrait client too cool for school? Or maybe too shy to give a single smile for the camera? Seniors come in every variety, and photographing them brings a variety of challenges. Even if your senior portrait subject is confident and cooperative, she probably isn't a professional model. She needs your posing expertise.

For more professional, flattering and natural-looking results (images that will boost her confidence and your income), provide more than rigid old posing. You need to direct her. When you connect and deliver an emotional experience during your photo shoots, the feeling your clients walk away with is priceless. Let's talk about a few of my go-to posing prompts to make your senior sessions more authentic and fun.



Image © Blume Photography



Image © Blume Photography

SPEAK LIKE A DIRECTOR

A foundation of trust underlies each of the prompts and “story scenarios” I use with my senior clients. No matter how bizarre my direction or how goofy my behavior, my client will keep playing along as long as she believes I’m getting great results. Remember, your senior can’t see the work you’re creating. Even if you give her an occasional glimpse of the back of the camera, she is mostly in the dark—but giving her a look risks the possibility that she may judge herself in the unedited image, shaking her confidence. So how do you keep her engaged?

Rather than rely on your LCD screen, speak for yourself. Tell your client what an awesome job she’s doing—then let her imagination take over. Even if I accidentally leave my lens cap on for the shot, you better believe I’m confidently reciting my script: “Yes, keep doing that. Love your expression. Perfect. You’re rocking it.” Even if my client is awkward and I’m screwing up the exposure and I know these photos are destined for the trash, I still exude positivity. The confidence I instill in my subject will soon nudge her to become a looser, more authentic version of herself. That’s when it all starts to click.

Avoid negative feedback at all costs. In photography, as in parenting, letting your kids feel they’ve disappointed you is a soul-crushing mistake. Even well-intentioned lines—“No, not like that, I meant your other left”; “That’s not working, never mind”—will set you back light years with the delicate teenage ego, preventing you from reaching your goal during the brief session time.

1. STATIC POSITIONS

Every standing-still pose starts by positioning the feet. Get the feet right, and the whole body will fall into place more easily. But, as you’ll see, I don’t stop there. I like to add a simple storyline to every pose: If nothing else, this keeps seniors engaged and helps them feel the poses I want instead of stiffly mimicking a set posture. Now the pose becomes theirs.

“PINKY AND THE BRAIN”

I never think about world domination without remembering these cartoon characters from my childhood. The Brain always bellowed to Pinky, “Tonight we’re going to take over the world,” dramatically rubbing his hands together as good villains do. Oddly enough, that’s exactly what I want from my senior guys.

Once he’s standing with feet shoulder-width apart, I’m not content for him to stuff his hands in his pockets like a bump on a log. As a director, I need to place him into a storyline, wake up his imagination however I can and create the possibility for expression. “You’re a master villain,” I say. “And a darn good-looking one, too. Rub your hands together like you’re plotting a world takeover. That’s it. Now a brilliant evil plan has just dawned on you, and your eyes get greedy as you look out over the horizon.” Who knows if he’ll act out a villainous cackle, break down laughing or just play it cool. Whatever happens, I love that I’m getting the real him.

“THE SASSY CHICKEN”

Here is a memorable way to describe teens’ go-to stance, especially girls. Just remember: The Sassy Chicken is “wing, breast and a thigh.” (Or if you’re a male photographer addressing a female subject, you’d be wise to use just the “wing and thigh” part.)

“First the thigh: Rest all your weight on your back leg (farther from the camera), then bend your front knee and use just your tip-toe for balance. Now your thigh is raised toward the camera—nice bodyline. Next the wing: Place one or both hands on your hips, closer in toward your belly button, and elbows slightly back in a flattering ‘wing’ position. Finally, breast/chest: Keep your back straight and bend at the waist so your chest and face lean toward the camera.” The result is a perfectly segmented body, softly bent joints and a flattering line that draws attention to your subject’s face. And she can always return here when you say “sassy chicken.”

After you get formal shots, have a little fun with make-believe hypnosis: I wave my hands and suggest, “Now you really are a chicken—cluck, strut, peck.” This is totally goofy, but I don’t care. As long as I give the direction excitedly with a smile on my face, I love the shock value. I urge them onward, but only for a few seconds, so I never overdo it. We stop taking ourselves so seriously, get some great shots (focused more on her expression than the actual chicken dance, by the way), then laugh together and move on.

“Pinky and the Brain”



"The Sassy Chicken"

Images © Blume Photography

“The Drunk Tightrope Walker”



“Mission to Mars”

2. STAY ON THE MOVE

Seniors have a lot of energy, and their most authentic moments are often when they’re in motion. So keep them moving. As you move from one background to the next, use the short walk to execute one of the following prompts.

“THE DRUNK TIGHTROPE WALKER”

I say to my subject, “Walk toward me like a tightrope walker, one foot in front of the other and arms held slightly out for balance. Now listen for my queues—because as you get closer to me, you’re going to become drunker and drunker.” As they near me, I say, “Okay, now you’re just a little dizzy but still having a great time. Now you’re a little more drunk. You fall forward with a few quick steps and catch yourself. Okay, now you’ve definitely had one too many; you don’t even realize you’re on a tightrope anymore. You’re wobbling back and forth, but just so happy about it. No fear. You think you can fly.” The results include a few throwaway images, but also a whole lot of keepers with great expressions and free body movement.

“MISSION TO MARS”

Want to set a more stoic mood? Every teenager seems to understand immediately when I say, “You’re walking down the tunnel to board your ship on a mission to Mars.” It’s a cultural meme that works great. It doesn’t matter if you just finished a series of hilarious games that had you laughing out loud—your senior will suddenly be struck with a thoughtful determination in his eyes as he walks in slow motion toward you. Toward his spacecraft.

For a twist, have girls who take the mission to Mars walk away from the camera, dropping one foot heavily in front of the other catwalk-style. Then tell her that as soon as you shout, “Oh my gosh, it’s you. Can I get your picture? I’m your biggest fan,” she will stop dead in her tracks and throw her head back over her shoulder to look at you super dramatically. Yell, “Action,” give the prompt, reaffirm that she did great, then call “take two” and do it again with some small adjustments in the hand placement. With every take, she’ll get better at it, and . . . you may have created a monster.

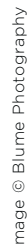
3. GAMES AND OTHER SCENARIOS

Do games work with teenagers, or are they too cheesy? In the professional opinion of someone who never grew up, games are not just for kids. Either way, don't hesitate to throw in an impromptu round of truth or dare, word association or even red light/green light. There are a ton of games your teens already know, and it's actually enjoyably nostalgic for young adults to revisit them. Connecting comes down to two things: attitude and technique.

First, attitude. I never try too hard to act cool. Kids see right through that, and the ones who are too cool for school know how inauthentic it is. Teens like authentic as much as you do. They crave it. My universal approach to attitude applies as much here as anywhere: Show true, big, bright-eyed enthusiasm about who they are and what they like. From there, I don't mind appearing goofy or eccentric (which is the real me).

Next is technique. Are you willing to model every position/pose before they do it? Laugh at yourself and admit that you feel awkward, but guarantee that it will look great on camera. That gives them permission to do the same without losing whatever cool points they thought they had to hold tight to.





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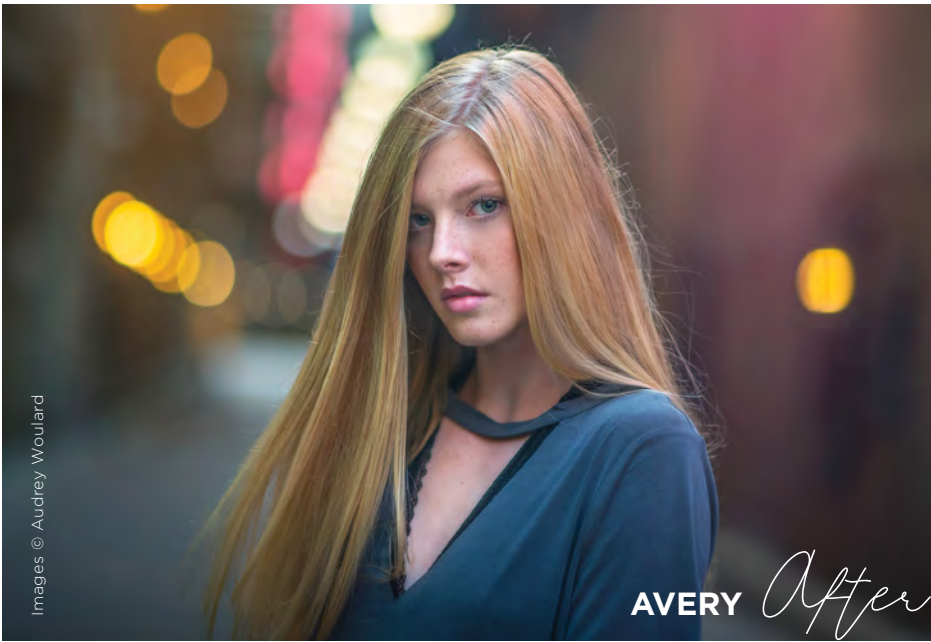
CLIENT LOYALTY

Relationships

ARE EVERYTHING IN BUSINESS

with Audrey Woulard





Photographers who have been around for a while are often asked what their greatest achievement is. I have accomplished a lot on the surface. I have been commissioned to photograph people all over the world, from Los Angeles to Australia and across Europe. I have photographed celebrities and shot high-profile, high-paying commercial work published in popular consumer magazines. When I began, these were always goals, but I started to realize they didn't fulfill me for some reason, and I didn't know why at the time.

Relationships are sacred to me because they can be hard to create and even harder to maintain. I admit that I am not the easiest person to get to know, but when I know you, I love you, and it will take the moving of mountains to get me to feel otherwise. Now that I have owned my own business full time for 17 years, I know how important and how hard it is to achieve loyalty in our relationships.



My single greatest business achievement is my return client base. They all are of means, and they stick with me year after year even though they have lots of options and they are informed consumers. Their unwavering support means more to me than anything I could accomplish photographically. New photographers coming up are very talented and competition can be fierce. The fact that my clients stick with me keeps me going. It forces me to level up my craft, my product offerings, my marketing.

I started off photographing babies and kids. Those kids have now grown into tweens and teens. I was a mother of tweens who are now full-blown teens. I took my knowledge of tweens and teens in my personal life and applied it to my business. I now photograph tweens and teens exclusively.



How do you know when you should pivot to a new genre? I looked at two things. What did I want to maintain? What made my heart sing? You need to wake up and deliver a great experience when your heart and mind might not be in the moment. Those who work for other people and have a 9-to-5 job have the luxury of owning their bad days, and it doesn't affect the end product. When you work for yourself, that luxury is gone. We are all human, and you may be having a bad day. Our clients do not need to suffer from our bad days. I found that I needed to follow my heart and pivot if I was going to remain successful as a portrait photographer.

Tweens and teens did that for me. Following this new trend fueled my spirit.



We must keep up with the latest innovations. Photographic products change all the time. Keep showing new products to your clients. This tells them you are on trend.

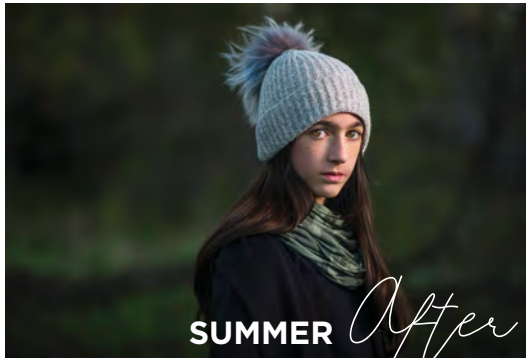
Show that you care about your clients. I took a page out of Frank Sinatra’s bag about loyalty. I send clients a message or a small gift on their birthday. You can also send something out of the blue just to show you care. It takes little to nothing to show people that you care.

Showing clients you care doesn’t mean you have to offer anything for free or discounted. If you want to do that occasionally, fine. You are a small business, not a big box retailer. Offer rewards sparingly.

If you shoot for magazines or websites, support those who support you. The people in the images I shoot for publications mean more to me than my photographic technique. Our clients, especially seniors, love to see themselves in magazines. I choose wisely. I have a tough time with articles where I showcase before and after shots (tween/teen and senior) of my clients. I am a very loyal person, and when I have opportunities to showcase my work, I think about who I am showcasing before I look at images I love. That’s not easy for me. This is another major way I build loyalty. Clients follow you. I take my ego out of the process.



Images © Audrey Woulard



I often see senior photographers pursue senior clients only after they’re seniors. A recent survey found that millennials crave authenticity. If someone is building on that before they even step foot into high school, how will that play out in the long run for senior photographers?

There isn’t an experience that a senior photographer can deliver that I cannot. The only thing I am doing differently is that I reach clients before they are in high school. Senior photographers need to think long and hard about that. If reaching kids who are nine to 12 is hard for you or if you think you do not need to bother, you will regret it in 2021 and beyond.

I am all about building relationships and a return client base. You can have a niche and excel within that niche, but think long term. How can you build on your niche? At ShutterFest 2019, my hands-on class will have only senior models. There will be no tweens due to my unique posing and lighting. Because I value relationships and loyalty, I was able to build off of my niche. I am not very vocal about how I do that, and as a result, my competition underestimates me. This just increases my revenue.

Regardless of your niche, I hope I’ve inspired you to build and maintain relationships and a return client base. ■



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

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THE ART OF THE
CLOSE-UP

with David Beckham



01 THE ART OF THE CLOSE-UP

One thing that separates me from the other photographers in my area is the client experience I offer. We go places, plan setups, and use creative and exotic outfits and secret locations. We shoot with cars, horses, pets, guitars, guns, buildings, bridges and friends. But when we sit down with Mom and Dad to order, you know what they buy? Close-ups. The ones that show all of that beauty, the expressions, the smile they invested so much in, the sparkle, uniqueness and joy. This month, I show you how I incorporate close-ups with every outfit and location I shoot.

LIGHTING IS EVERYTHING

I don't understand when I see some BTS shots and the OCF is 15 to 20 feet away from the subject. You wouldn't put it that far away in the studio, so why would you outside? I use a Mola Demi and an eVOLV 200 with the bare bulb attachment for my OCF photographs. It is usually set at 1/32 to 1/256th power. A beauty dish is most effective when it is close. The light is rarely more than 5 feet from their face. It is so close that I am always removing the feet of the stand from the image in post. I keep the modifier close and the power soft so the lighting doesn't look like flash. It just looks perfect. The outdoor photos in this article are taken that way.

02 LOOK DOWN. EYES AT ME. SMILE.

These three directions are how I begin every shoot with a first-time client. The young lady has seen my Instagram with all the great photos of the gorgeous girls I work with, and she walks into my studio gallery to find 100 more on my walls. She is nervous, self-conscious and maybe intimidated. She might be thinking, "Sure, you can take great photos of all of those beautiful people—but not me."

We need to prove to them that we are the expert. It is our job to help them through it and to enable them see themselves the way everyone who loves them does: flawless, unique and beautiful. The sooner they have confidence in me, the better the session will go. So I choose a spot or setup that I know will get the first three shots perfect. I say, "Drop your chin and look down." *Click*. "Lift your eyes to me." *Click*. "Smile." *Click*. Then I show them the photos. They see their face with their perfect makeup, looking down with their eyes almost closed. They are already envisioning that shot as their new profile pic. Then they see the next one with their eyes so big, and realize they don't have an RBF after all.

When they see the smile shot, they know that Mom is going to love it. Sometimes I show Mom the three images before I show them to my senior to increase the anticipation. You have them at that point. Find a way to prove to your client they are in good hands. If the first three shots look that good, the rest will be a breeze.



Images © David Beckham

LOOKING AWAY

Every teen follows fashion bloggers. The blogger posts lots of shots of her not making eye contact or looking as if she is talking with someone just out of the picture. Let’s take it one step further. We have perfect light and editing, so we get that feel, but better. I show them what I’m looking for. The first thing they do when you ask them to look away is to turn their eyes—which makes for a bad look, without whites on both sides of their iris.

I tell them, “Point your nose in the direction I want you to look and keep your eyes centered on your face.” Then I show them the difference by turning my eyes way to one side. They laugh and they now get the concept. I have them follow my hand until they have it down.

Then I can say, “Look at my hand” or, “Look at that sign across the street” to get them to turn their face. I give constant reinforcement so they know when they are doing it right. As you guide them in the pose, you are reinforcing the belief that you are the best at what you do. I show them the back of the camera frequently in the beginning to show that I am doing it right. Show them a shot where they did it wrong and then the shot where you corrected them, and they won’t make that mistake again. Ever.

The next step is to get them to laugh or smile when looking away. They will think it’s awkward at first and start to laugh for real. That’s when I say, “Eyes at me” and get that genuine smile shot.



Images © David Beckham

FOCAL LENGTHS MATTER

For years, my go-to lens has been the 70–200mm for its versatility, bokeh and ease of use. When I’m shooting a nervous senior, the zoom allows me to get close without them knowing. I get perfect proportions and zero distortion at that length. Shooting at 70mm allows me to get close enough to frame it the way I need to in tight spots. There is a slight distortion straight out of the camera, but it’s negligible. Recently I started using my 24–70mm for close-ups. Shooting at 35mm can be flattering for heavy people and downright awesome for lighter people. It produces an editorial feel for a change of pace, which clients love. But since I switched to Sony and Sony glass, I love my 85mm f/1.4 lens. It has perfect proportions with zero distortion.



Image © David Beckham

THE CROP

Ninety percent of the time, I frame the shot exactly the way I want it. That’s how my eye works. But with today’s 24–42K sensors and the great eye focus technology, you aren’t limited to the shot you take. Sometimes the perfect close-up shows itself during editing.

POINT OF VIEW

Changing the point of view changes things up a little in their photo album, but it’s also a mental trigger. Graduation is a sentimental time for Mom and Dad. A shot looking up at their child can remind them of the day she took her first steps, realized she could read, was saying she was sorry; that time your teenager looked up from her phone and said, “I love you” when you brought home Taco Bell for dinner. Get some shots looking down at them. I like short lenses for this. Keep the light coming from a flattering direction above her. The catchlights should still be above her pupils.



Images © David Beckham

REMEMBER THE HAND RULES

Hands should celebrate the face. They should draw attention to the eyes and facial expression. The hand is almost as big as the face, so keep the edges of their hands facing the camera. I like pinky side out. Keep their fingers long and elegant, not too stiff and never curled in a claw. I push their hands into their hair a little to hide them. I don’t want their fingers touching the back of their neck as if they have a migraine. Their forearm shouldn’t be pointing at the camera, especially if you are shooting 50mm or shorter. For ladies, no fist under the chin. Think class, daintiness, sophistication. Hands are usually a couple shades lighter than the face. So when you’re setting the light source, be sure their hand is not perpendicular to it.



Images © David Beckham

HATS ARE GREAT PROPS

They are fun and different and add personal flare. Whether it is a wide-brim hat, a slouch beanie or a worn-out ball cap, it will change the feel of the photograph. The most critical thing to remember when using a hat is the light source or placement. You don’t want a shadow to go through their eyes or hide them altogether. The light needs to be set under the brim of the hat without shining up on their face. Just above eye level works best. Have them wear the hat a little higher on their forehead. The hat can also be used to conceal. Hiding one eye or both eyes with the brim of the hat makes for a killer fashion look.



Images © David Beckham

HOODS ARE THE BEST

I like fuzzy hoods, hoodie hoods, lace hoods and raincoat hoods. Pull their hair through the hood so you can see that too. Turn their head inside the hood so only part of their face can be seen.



Images © David Beckham

THE BEST \$22 I EVER SPENT

I found this fuzzy infinity scarf at Target four years ago. I have photographed over 100 girls in it. This scarf is on a dozen walls and in 25 or more albums. It has been used in hundreds of Instagram, VSCO, Facebook and Twitter posts. I like to use it more like a hood than a scarf. The best shots I have taken have their face buried inside the scarf a little. Be aware of the shadows when using OCF. Sometimes I hide their mouth or one of their eyes for a dramatic look. Keep their hands and fingers hidden as much as possible so you don't draw attention away from their eyes.



Image © David Beckham

LYING DOWN

If they are on their tummy, it is easy. Their hands and arms can form triangles or leading lines, or they can conceal parts of their face to draw more attention to the features that are exposed. Remember some hand posing rules: no right angles in the wrist; we want soft curves and flowing leading lines. Control their hair and place it intentionally. There is nothing worse than missing a few strands because we were so excited to get the shot that we missed some details.

When they are lying on their back, it is a little harder. This position illuminates the line between senior and sexy. That line is blurry. I rarely pose them on their back. The most critical aspect is the lighting. Design the light so it's similar to the 5 p.m. sun when they are standing. We want to avoid up shadows on their face.



Image © David Beckham



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LET THEM BE GOOFY

It's fun to loosen them up, even if none of the photos of the loosening-up exercise are used. Put great light on them before you start just in case they choose one. Have fun with all of these options. Practice them with your model team. Pay attention to the details and watch your sales climb. ■



David Beckham makes his living photographing fashion-styled seniors out of his studio in Pickerington, Ohio. He is a four-time veteran of ShutterFest, runs the AskDavid education page on Facebook and teaches four workshops every year out of his studio. David is also in demand at conferences like SYNC and Twin Cities PPA. Follow him on Instagram at davidbeckhamphotography.

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ARE YOU READY TO

ARE YOU READY TO

Dive

INTO THE
SHARK TANK?

with Cathy Anderson

She once stood in a church at her first wedding as the hired photographer, sheepishly standing in front of a crowd of people with no clue what to do. Grippled with fear, she realized that the girl in charge knew nothing about being a wedding photographer. She was shy and knew a lot about the technical side of photography, but had zero experience with the people stuff.

Who is she? That's me. It was in that moment that my worst nightmare became the catalyst for the wildest ride of my life. I screwed up but never gave up, and became a fiercely confident and successful woman. I hope that what you're about to read will inspire you to quit being scared and to take some chances. We've all been there, but sometimes we need a kick in the pants to start chasing our wildest dreams.



Image © Cathy Anderson



I remember the first time I dove into my shark tank. I nervously walked into my first wedding, ironically set in a dark church, film camera in hand and no auxiliary lighting. I knew I had no business being there, and kept wondering to myself, “How in the world did I get myself into this?”

Fumbling around nervously, I reflected back to simpler days when I sat on my kitchen counter looking through negatives with my dad. He lit my photographic fire and took the first footsteps on my journey with me. Fast forward several years: I was alone at my first paid gig and I had the exposure triangle in my head, but I had no knowledge of how to command a crowd at a wedding. Why did I use film, knowing it was the hardest course of action?

Everything was fine until I reached frame 24. I was on autopilot and my mind shifted to my Pentax K1000 that manually rewind film, and my limbs naturally followed the familiar formula . . . except this camera rewind film automatically. I don’t know why, but I prematurely opened the back, not paying attention to the whirring sound. Oh, crap—I had exposed the film to light! I ran into the bathroom and shut off the lights, frantically trying to wind the film in the dark. It worked, and I steadied myself. Everything was going to be alright . . . until I did it again. What the heck? I know you guys are cringing right about now, but don’t worry: I salvaged plenty of film and she got her images.

My personal shark tank was stepping in front of a crowd of people I barely knew, trying to be charismatic and convince them that I knew what I was doing, even when I had no clue. That moment taught me that the sharks I envisioned really weren’t scary at all; they were the greatest teachers I’ve ever met—the unnamed souls who trusted me at that wedding and unknowingly gave me the courage to leap outside my comfort zone. I was insecure and had no business doing that wedding, but I am so glad I did.

I saw that it was okay to be authentic. I found that it was possible to communicate with people I had never met; they trusted me and wanted to listen to what I had to say, a foreign feeling. I lacked confidence because my teenage years had conditioned me to believe I wasn’t worth much. Little did I know, that leap into the shark tank was the best decision I ever made. I found that when I felt most alone, I was actually blazing a trail.

My wedding career spanned many years. I stuck with it because I made good money. I found myself stuck in a creative rut, searching for who I was as an artist. I did not know where to start, but I knew I was ready for another adventure that would shake things up. That’s when I found “sportraits” and adventure photography—the inspiration and creative outlet that reinvented me as a portrait artist.



Wikipedia calls art the process of “creating visual . . . artworks [that] express the author’s imaginative . . . ideas intended to be appreciated for their . . . emotional power.” Isn’t every mother searching for a way to translate their precious child’s personality into a piece of art that evokes feeling. Every time I see a tear roll out of a proud mother’s eyes, I know I have achieved that. I create art because it’s what I’ve vowed to give to my clients. I create art for parents and teenagers who are looking for something different than what other photographers have deemed the status quo. If you want to create powerful works of art that make your clients feel emotion, call yourself a portrait artist.



Image © Cathy Anderson

Seniors want an authentic experience that tells their story in a different way—one that captures their soul, personality, passions—but seniors have trouble finding an environment where they can fully express themselves. I make sure that my portrait sessions give them exactly that. I begin every session by looking directly at the senior and asking them: “What do *you* want?” Mom might be paying, but deep down, she craves a portrait that illustrates the soul of her child. I want to start their portrait experience knowing they can freely express who they are and that their session with me is a collaboration between us. Of course I’ll get the portraits that Mom wants (looking straight at the camera, smiling), but the wall portraits that go home are always the ones my seniors love.



Images © Cathy Anderson



“Sportraits” fuse the world of sports and portraits, giving seniors a dynamic and exciting athletic portrait ready to grace the cover of any sports magazine. The standard sports photographers in my community made athletes stand on a field and hold a ball, creating static portraits with no movement. These boring portraits were supposed to represent events full of excitement and movement. It was an oxymoronic status quo, and it needed to change. I wanted to redefine athletic portraiture, so I started mixing off-camera flash with interactive posing, and did it all straight out of camera. We collaborated with our athletes, developing exactly what they wanted, and sportraits became unique and action-packed portraits that spearheaded a new movement in photography in my community.



Image © Cathy Anderson

Most importantly, creating the magic in camera led to a new personal standard—it kept me honest and creative, pushing me to innovate and present the best version of myself to my clients. My two goals for each session became breaking barriers in order to translate a senior’s soul into a portrait, as well as creating raw artwork in camera using only the tools I had at the portrait session. There are composites, but they are not my goal. Suddenly, my seniors had the images that everyone wanted to copy (avoiding the dreaded words “I found an idea on Pinterest!”). I was frequently asked: “How did you Photoshop that?” My formula created a discussion about art. People were talking about art again and not asking, “How much does this cost?” Clients became more focused on quality than on saving a few bucks.



Image © Cathy Anderson

As my journey continued, sportraits morphed into stylized portraits of fashionistas, mad scientists and band nerds, and my clients loved seeing their inner selves defined in a portrait. As my confidence grew, I started photographing adventure portraits and extreme sports like highlining, whitewater kayaking, rock climbing and boxing, all with off-camera flash. I even joined a boxing gym and became a boxer myself. The sheepish, shy girl of the past transformed into a totally new woman who now lived in a world far beyond the boundary of where her comfort zone previously lay.

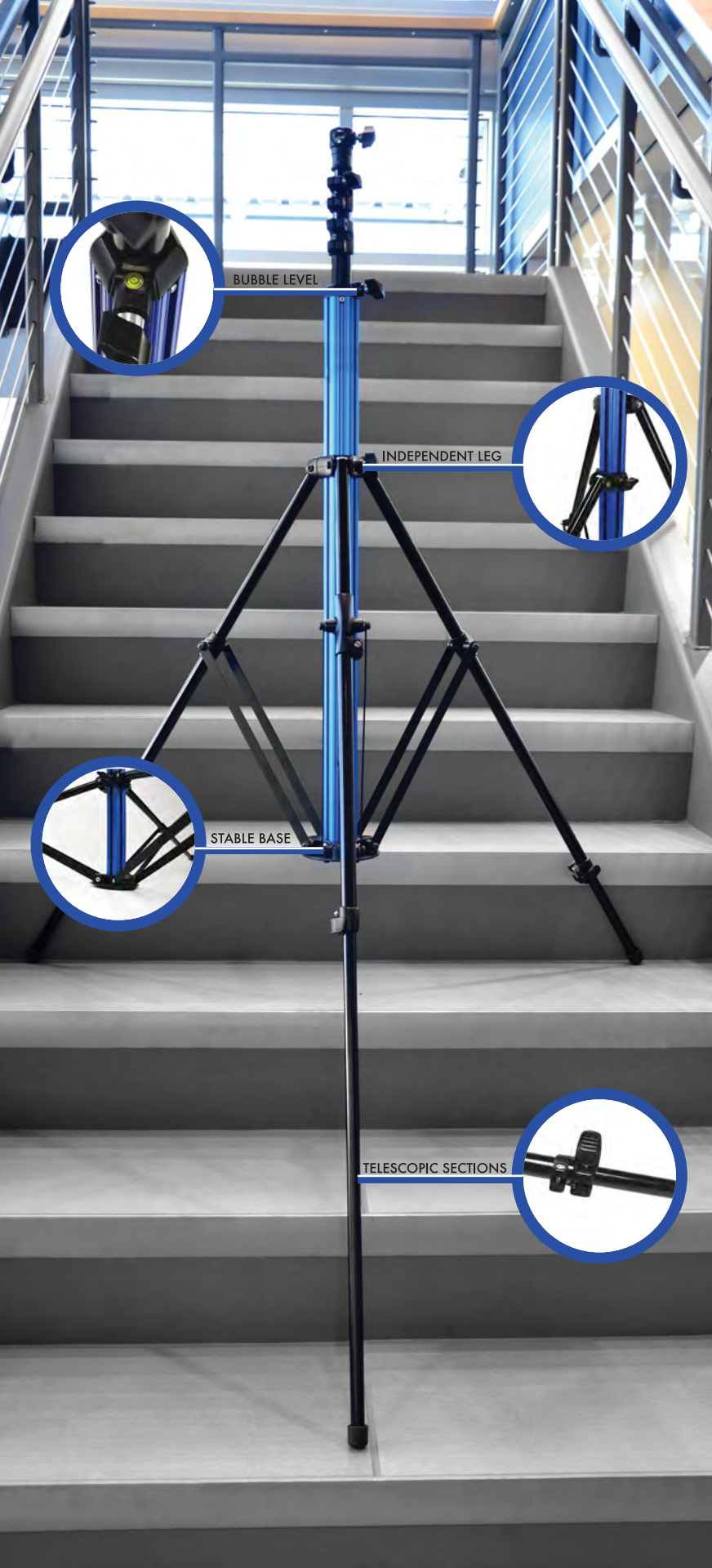
My life has been a crash course of jumping into the shark tank headfirst. With one giant leap, I’ve grown to become a fiercely adventurous woman and a confident portrait artist. I hang off of cliffs with hundreds of pounds of lighting gear, photograph and connect with amazing young athletes and am supported by a wonderful tribe of friends. If you find yourself uninspired, scared, insecure—define your sharks and leap headfirst into the tank, sailing past your comfortable boundaries. Be ready to conquer them even if you’re afraid, and remember that if you follow the crowd, you risk going no farther than the crowd.

You’ve got this. I know it’s scary, but your hard work will lead you to your wildest dreams. I hope that my story will inspire you to push past what you think you can achieve and give you the inspiration to go out and do it. ■



Cathy Anderson is a second-generation photographer and educator based in North Carolina. She earned her Certified Professional Photographer, Master Photographer and Photographic Craftsman degrees from Professional Photographers of America (PPA). Her award-winning work has been featured in national magazines, art galleries and in the PPA Loan Collection. Students have soaked up her wisdom at conferences like ShutterFest and Imaging USA. She shoots adventure, landscape and “sportraits,” and excels at in-camera artistry and dynamic lighting.

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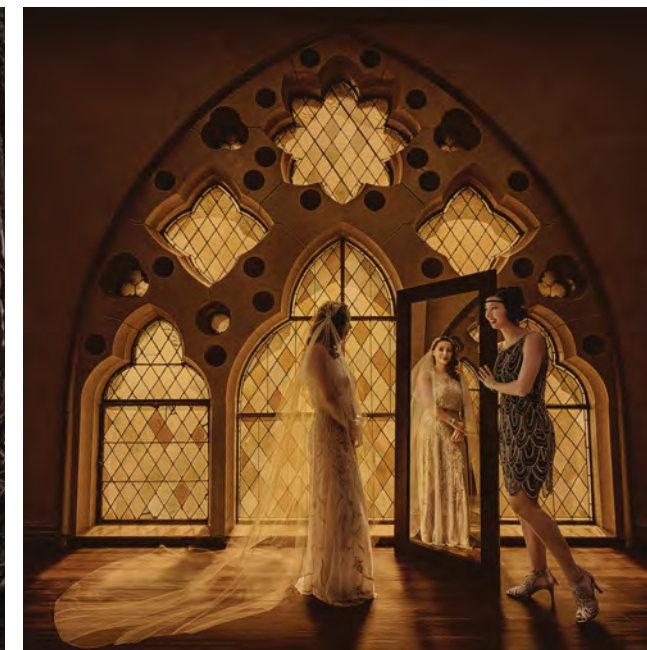


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INSPIRATIONS

Inspiration can come when you least expect it. As photographers, we are visual artists. We express ourselves through our camera and the images we create. Inspirations represents a sampling of our industry and the vision of professional photographers from around the world.

Congratulations to all our featured artists. Be inspired and create something that is *you*.

Sal Cincotta, *Editor-in-chief*

BEST SENIOR IMAGE



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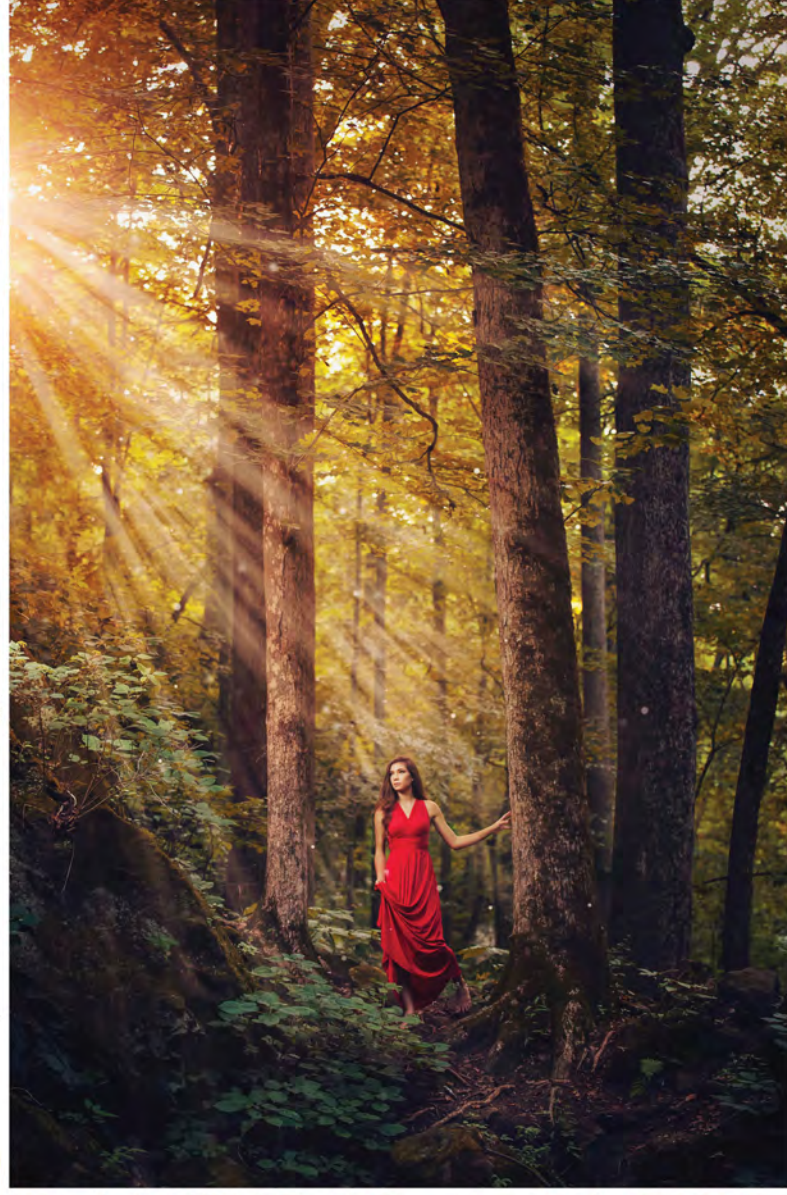


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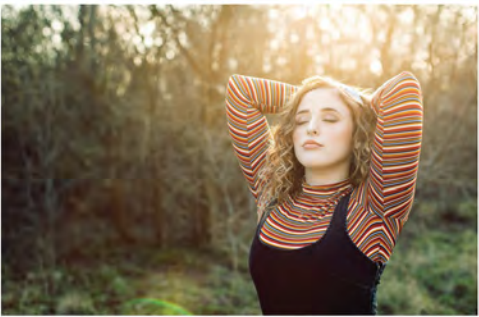


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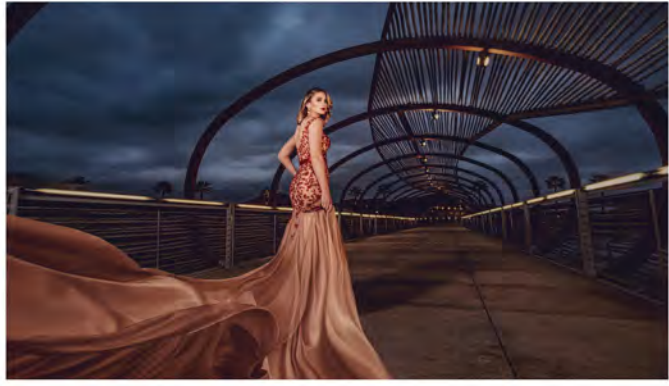


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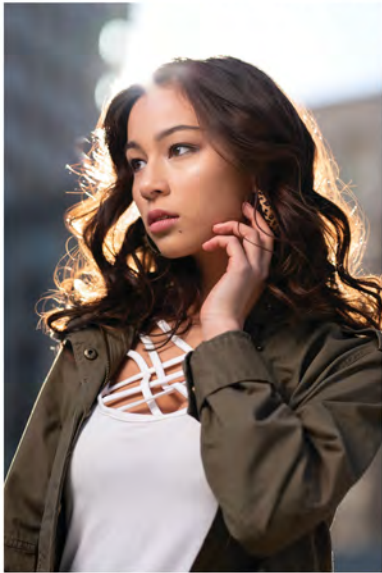


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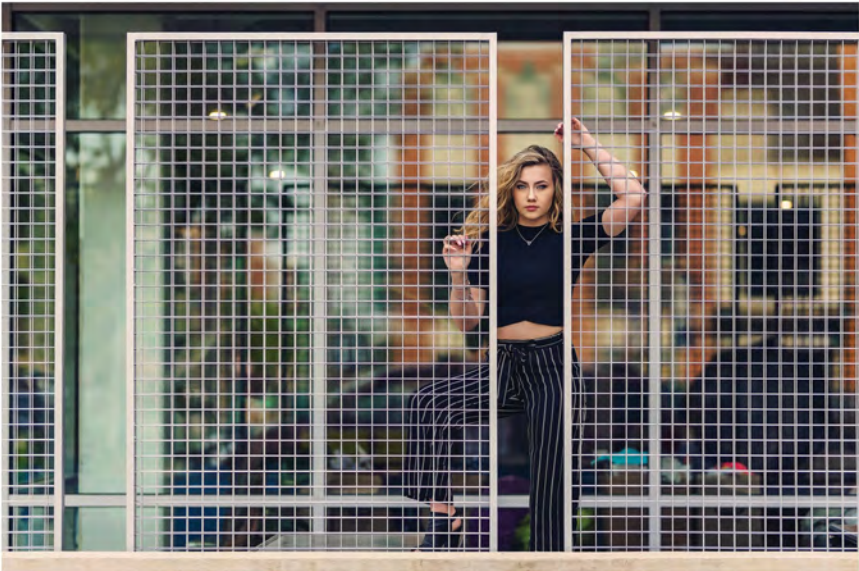


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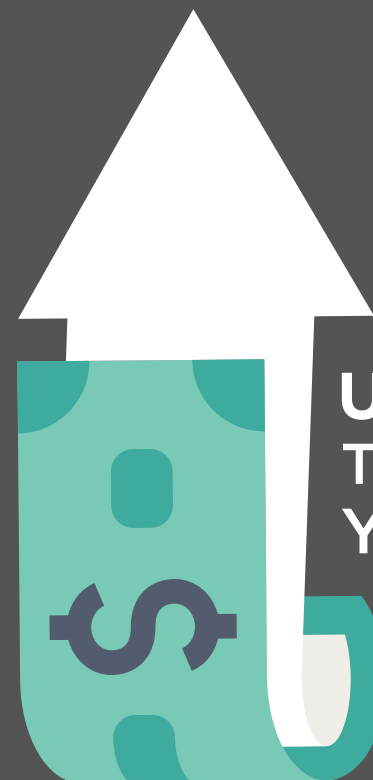


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NEXT MONTH
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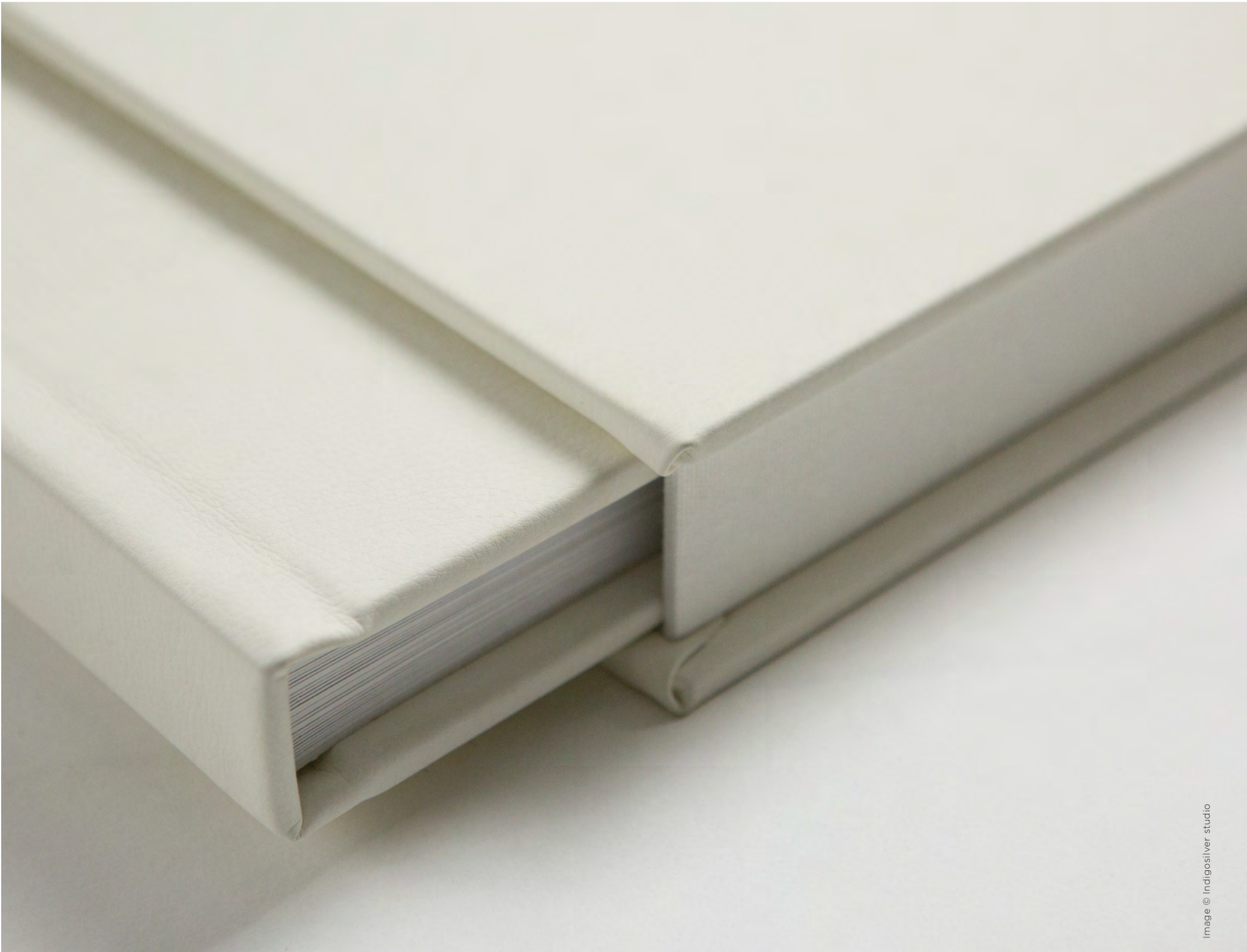
YOUR DREAM STUDIO: **UPSELL STRATEGIES TO INCORPORATE INTO YOUR SALES SYSTEM**

with Jeff & Lori Poole

**UPSELLING: ROUNDING OUT
YOUR SALES SYSTEM**

For the past several months in The Business Corner, we’ve been building your sales system from the ground up to help you reach your target sales average (see our August 2018 article to learn how to determine your target average). We started with cost-based pricing as a foundation (October), then looked at alternative pricing methods for products (November) and digital files (December). Next, we curated a svelte and profitable à la carte list (January), all with the goal of driving clients to shop from your bundled options (February). Our goal this month is to round out your sales system with clever and desirable upsell options to entice your clients to get the most out of their experience with you (and to get you the most profit).

A quick note about terms: In the strictest sense, *upselling* means selling the client a higher-priced product than the one they were considering. The terms *cross-selling* and *add-on sales* describe selling the client additional items beyond the one they were considering. It’s become commonplace to use the word *upselling* for all methods of achieving a higher sale. For the purposes of this article, we use the broader meaning of *upselling*.





UPSELL STRATEGIES THAT ARE BUILT INTO YOUR PRICE LIST

We’ve already covered some upsell strategies that can be used when building your à la carte and bundled options. Here’s a quick recap.

Pull-through: Incentivizing higher packages by offering desirable products that are unavailable in the lower packages. These products help pull your client through to the higher packages.

Good/better/best: By offering three or more options, clients will gravitate toward the middle. This allows you to strategically plan where the middle falls.

Whopper: An over-the-top item that most clients will not purchase but that adds another tier to your good/better/best offering, thus effectively moving the middle.

Quantity discounts: Offer clients a discount on additional items when more than one is purchased.

Gift with purchase: Incentivize the purchase of specific products by offering a gift item, a discount on an additional purchase or simply the ability to purchase a previously off-limits item.

Tiered discounts: Offering increasing discounts or rewards when increased levels of spending are met.

Ideally, the above options should be considered when you are first building your price list. They affect your product lineup, how you tier your bundles and how you lure clients into reaching your target sale. Keep these options in mind anytime you need to encourage a sale. It is not uncommon for a client to debate between a lesser and more expensive option. You can always sweeten the deal to help the sale along.

Example 1: A client is torn between her two favorite images for her wall portrait. Offer her a quantity discount on the second image so she can have both.

Example 2: Clients have chosen the product options they love, but are hesitating over the total invoice amount. You sense they just need a little extra sweetener to justify the price. Offer a gift as a value-added incentive that has a low cost of sale but high perceived value, and close the sale.



I don’t recommend using closers often or with every client. They can be perceived as a hard-sell tactic. Routine discounting and gifting can also hurt your bottom line and devalue your standard pricing. If you pay close attention to your clients throughout the sales process, you will know when a client wants to invest more but just needs a soft push to justify it.



ADDITIONAL UPSELLING STRATEGIES TO USE ON THE FLY

While the upsell strategies we’ve discussed so far are laid out within your pricing, there are other ways to upsell that will occur more spontaneously during the sales process. These on-the-fly upsells are generally easiest to offer with in-person sales, but if you are creative in your problem solving, you can find ways to incorporate these techniques with other selling platforms.

Suggestive selling during the shoot: You know how you get excited when you nail a shot during a session? Use your enthusiasm to your advantage. Show the back of the camera to your client while exclaiming: “This would look amazing as a large metal print to hang over your mantel! Look at the detail and texture!” Or: “Look at this series of expressions I just captured. These images would look great together on an album spread.” Don’t be afraid to suggest products your clients thought they weren’t interested in. Your artistic vision can help them see new benefits in a product they initially dismissed.

Product upgrades: These are essentially upgrades in style, size or quality, such as upgrading a wall portrait from photographic paper to metal or adding pages to or upgrading the cover style of an album. It is upsizing basically anything. Clients may initially book a lesser option, and decide they want more. Perhaps a client’s package includes the 8-inch album but they really want the 12-inch. If your chosen bundling method is preset packages, make sure the upgrade the client wants isn’t a part of your pull-though. If it is, sell them on the larger package. On the other hand, the create-your-own collection or base-product-plus bundling methods are designed for selling upgrades. If either of these are your bundling method, product upgrades are going to be your new best friend.

Impulse buys and other small add-ons. Every photographic niche has its own line of tchotchkes to sell. Cards/announcements, accordion minis, gift prints, ornaments and other novelty items are often difficult to sell profitably, and should therefore be omitted from the à la carte menu. But they make great add-ons to an already profitable sale. Once your client has chosen their primary product goals, it’s time to present them with your smaller options. “Have you thought about…” “Did you know we offer…” and “Have you considered…” are great ways to casually toss your impulse items into the mix.

While these on-the-fly upselling strategies may not add thousands to every sale, they will add hundreds to most sales. The incremental upsells add up to a higher average sale, getting you ever closer to your dream studio.



Images © Indigosilver studio



THE 1-2-3 PUNCH

These last few months have been devoted exclusively to making a strong sales system. Why? Because a strong sales system is the key to consistently meeting your target sales. Your total sales system has three components: a foundational à la carte menu, an irresistible bundle menu and enticing upsell strategies. Together, this 1-2-3 punch carefully guides your client through the purchasing process—casually rewarding spending, offering a path of least resistance and making their experience with you fun and exciting. ■

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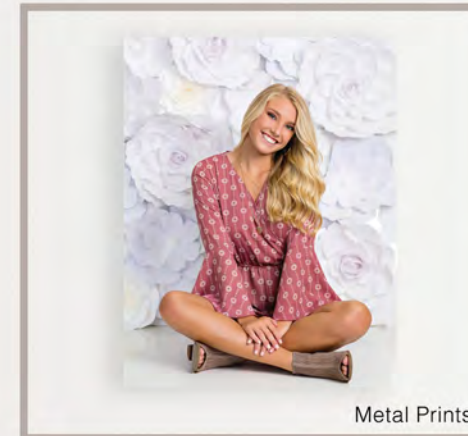
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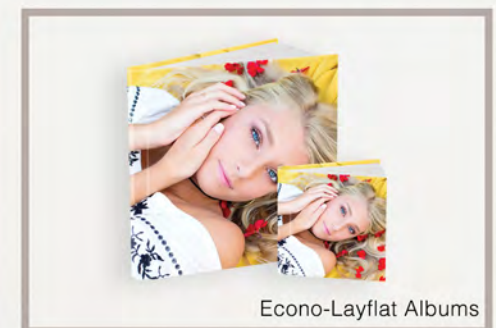
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FINE-TUNING YOUR —— **BLOG** —— FOR THE NEW YEAR

with Skip Cohen





“The first thing you need to decide when you build your blog is what you want to accomplish with it, and what it can do if successful.”

– Ron Dawson

It’s March, and we’re in the home stretch of the slow season. But as I’ve written for the past two months, that doesn’t mean it has to be quiet for you. Now is the time to be fine-tuning various aspects of your business to set things up for greater success in 2019.

A couple of months ago, I did a short podcast with Ken Sklute, an outstanding artist from Arizona. Ken talked about previsualization in photography—instead of going out with a camera in your hand and looking for something to photograph, he spoke about visualizing what you want to capture beforehand. You can apply that to marketing in the new year. Visualize how you want business to be in 2019. Rather than sit and wait for something to happen, use the tools you have to elevate your brand awareness in the community.

There’s no better way to lay down a foundation of brand building than with a great blog. Sadly, so many of you treat it as an afterthought when it should be part of your core business and planning. Sure, you can have a website and a presence without a blog, but why would you want that? Success in photography today is about relationship building, and a well-done blog can help your target audience get to know you better and build trust.

I know I’ve written this before, but your website is about what you sell and your blog is about what’s in your heart. This month I give you tips for building a stronger blog that works together with your website and skillset.

Consistency: If you’re not going to post on your blog at least twice a week, give it up. Posting once every full moon is not going to help you build a readership. Post two days a week at the same time each day. If you can post three times a week, that’s even better.

Be relevant: Good content is king. Be helpful and relevant to your readership with topics they can relate to. Ed Forman, an outstanding marketing and motivational speaker and writer from Texas, gave us a tip at a meeting over 30 years ago, which you’ve seen countless times in my articles: “If I can see the world through my client’s eyes, then I can sell my client what my client buys.” You’ve got to see the world through your readers’ eyes and understand what’s important to them. Use that understanding to build content they want to read and share to start the process of building trust.

Post lengths: You don’t need to write like Shakespeare every time. Keep your posts under 500 words; 100 to 300 is ideal. You can go longer, but length depends on its relevance to your readers. If it’s going to be long, use bullet points to break things up.

Know your demographics: There it is, one of the most ignored words in marketing by photographers. You need to know the demographics of the audience you’re targeting; for most of you, it’s women. Women in the portrait/social categories of photography make 98% of the purchase decisions. That means Mom in many cases. Share ideas on topics Mom is interested in.

Be a farmer: Use your blog to plant seeds of ideas. They should be about photography, but they can also be about community events or family activities. As you build loyalty with your readership, you’ll find you have a lot of influence. Use it wisely.

Call your lab: Technology changes every day, giving you the most creative tools in the history of photography, but it’s hard to keep up with these changes, especially in presentation. Your lab is introducing new products all the time.

Last year I wrote about Bay Photo’s Performance EXT Metal prints. I have a huge metal print of a sunset on the wall outside by our pool that doesn’t look any different than the day I took it out of the box. How many clients do you have with patios and back porches that could use a unique decorative touch of a stunning print? Don’t forget some of the old standbys—just because you’re tired of canvas prints doesn’t mean your clients won’t want them.

Show your images: Never share a blog post without a photograph. Even if what you’ve written has nothing to do with the image, always include one.

Quality: Never share a mediocre image in a post unless you’re using it to make a point. You’re the pro, and you’ve got to share images that are better than Uncle Harry’s.

Run a community calendar: You want the community to be good to you, so you have to be good to your community. Put a calendar on your blog where you share information about upcoming events. Events don’t have to be about photography. Remember your readership. Share content they’re interested in. Use your blog to demonstrate your support for the community and special events, especially for any nonprofits you’re involved with. As your readership grows, so will support from your community.

Build a stash: Not every post has to be written fresh each time you post. It’s the slow season, so write a couple dozen posts now. Before you whine about how there’s nothing to write about, I’m going to give you some ideas. But first, you’ve got to be committed to the process. Building a stash gives you content in the pipeline to draw from when you get busy. Remember the importance of consistency—your stash of material will help you stay focused on the regular timing of your posts.

10 Easy Content Ideas

- 1. Tips on Photography:** Help your readers become better photographers. They’re all taking pictures of their family and events, and there are things you do every day they don’t think about: posing, composition, lighting, storytelling.
- 2. Throwback Thursday:** Old images of your own family reinforce the importance of capturing memories. Use throwbacks to remind your readership that time never stands still.
- 3. Faces of the Community:** Do environmental portraits of people in businesses you frequent—restaurants, pharmacies, doctors, dry cleaners.
- 4. Pets of the Community:** Brides, babies and pets are three top reasons people hire a photographer.
- 5. Storytelling:** Give your readers tips for how to capture images that tell a story. Follow up with how to best display their images.
- 6. What’s New?** Share new photographic products from your lab.
- 7. Gift Ideas:** Share the latest photography products.
- 8. Community Events:** I wrote earlier about keeping a community calendar. Share blog posts about upcoming events and post images after the events. Link to the websites of the sponsors.
- 9. Tips for Hiring a Photographer:** Make it sound objective, but be sure all the answers lead back to you as an ideal choice.
- 10. Finding Balance:** Your readers wear multiple hats in life, just like you do. It’s okay to share things that are personal, but don’t go overboard.



Your writing skills: You’re an artist and a photographer, and didn’t sign up to be a writer. I get it, but I’m not letting you off the hook. If you hate to write, then get over to the local high school and talk to an English teacher. You’re looking for an A student who can moonlight for you translating your thoughts into print. You might even find a teacher who would enjoy doing it. You don’t have to spend a fortune, but if you’re going to have a blog, keep it filled.

Grammar: Even those of us who write for a living need a proofreader. For everything I write, I have three levels of defense outside my own skillset: spell check, Grammarly and my wife. I spell-check everything. Grammarly gets everything when whatever I’ve written is complete. But you can’t just drop things into the program and make all the suggested corrections. Grammarly doesn’t know what you’re trying to say. You have to look at every correction it suggests. I never question its punctuation, but when the software suggests different words, it’s often wrong. Still, it has helped me become a better writer. Last but not least, I get my wife involved whenever I’m writing something emotional or sensitive. I read it out loud to her, which helps me hear what I’ve written and at the same time gives me a feel for whether or not what I’m saying is easily understood.

Read it one more time: I always read everything one more time before posting. Even then, I don’t catch everything. I heard Guy Kawasaki talk once about the manuscript for one of his books. He had over 40 people proofreading it before he submitted it to his editor. He told the editor, “I’ll bet you’ve never seen a manuscript this clean before.” The editor came back a week later with 1,600 corrections. So don’t beat yourself up if it’s not perfect. Take your time and do the best you can.

Guest posts: A great way to keep the content flowing and stay consistent is to exchange content with photographer friends. Sharing content helps you stay fresh, and you all become a network of contributors, building each other’s brand.



**“Don’t focus on having a great blog.
Focus on producing a blog that’s great for your readers.”**
– Brian Clark

A good blog, just like your skillset, represents a huge commitment. You’ve got to be consistent and helpful, and contribute to your readership’s outlook on photography, the community and even life. Do it right, and it’ll help build your business; but go into it compromising on quality, and it will do nothing but waste your time and frustrate you.

And if you need help, you know where to find me. ■

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

When editing in Lightroom and Photoshop, I have presets and actions that make me have to bounce back and forth. From basic sliders for color correction in Lightroom to a more advanced color grading effect with a Gradient Map in Photoshop, I want a simple way to apply more effects in the program I work in. I want to be able to adjust my Lightroom sliders in Photoshop while working on an image. I want to be able to convert an action and apply the same look to an image inside Lightroom without having to translate the sliders into a preset.

Adobe Camera Raw is the solution for nondestructive editing from Lightroom to Photoshop using Smart Objects. This is useful for Lightroom to Photoshop, but what about Photoshop actions into Lightroom? Adobe’s recent improvements give us the ability to create Custom Color Profiles in Camera Raw, so we can flex our creativity with Photoshop actions and Custom Color Profiles by exporting Look Up Tables, or LUTs. This is a massive overhaul for Photoshop that makes our Lightroom workflow even more powerful.

Let’s get started with the basics in Lightroom by trying an Edit in Photoshop as a Smart Object workflow.

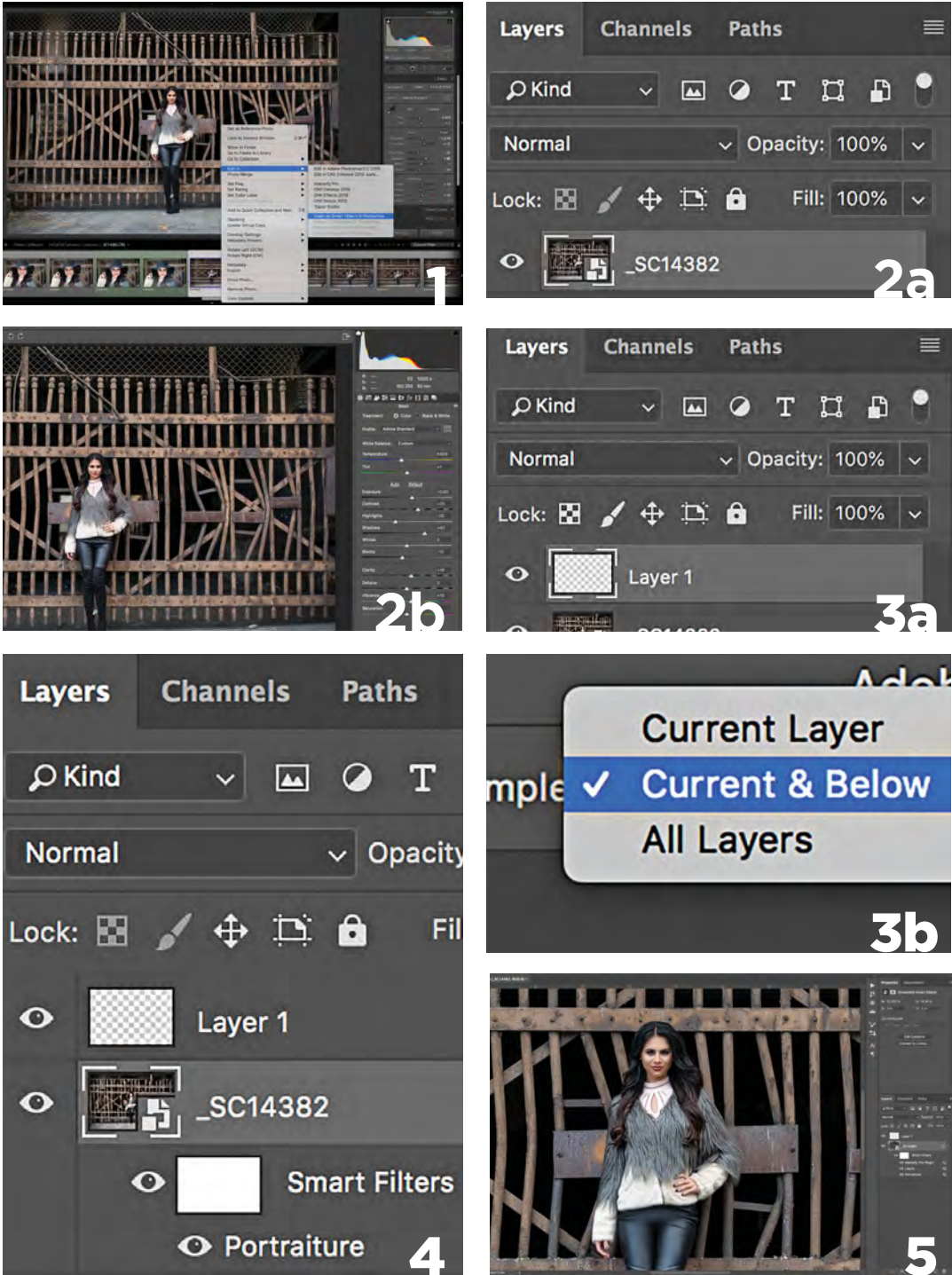
LIGHTROOM TO PHOTOSHOP AS A SMART OBJECT

Using the Edit In feature is nothing new to Lightroom, but it is important to note the options you have. If you want to change your sliders while working in Photoshop, choose Open as a Smart Object in Photoshop. (1) This immediately opens your edit into Photoshop, and at any point during editing, you can double-click the image layer to adjust your sliders. This is useful as you apply actions to your edit and make quick tweaks to exposure, highlights, clarity, etc. (2ab) These changes made in Camera Raw do not save back into Lightroom since you are no longer working on a Raw file, and there are limitations to editing in Photoshop with Smart Objects when doing heavy lifting.

Pixel manipulation like the Clone Stamp and Healing Brush won’t work. You’d have to create a blank layer and change your Sample setting to current and below. (3ab) When you make this type of change, you will have to ditch your nondestructive abilities since any future changes to the Smart Object would not apply to blank layers like this. That is why the Clone & Heal tool inside Lightroom can be great for editing. One additional benefit to Smart Objects is that it has Smart Filters offering another nondestructive way to apply plugins like Portraiture. (4)

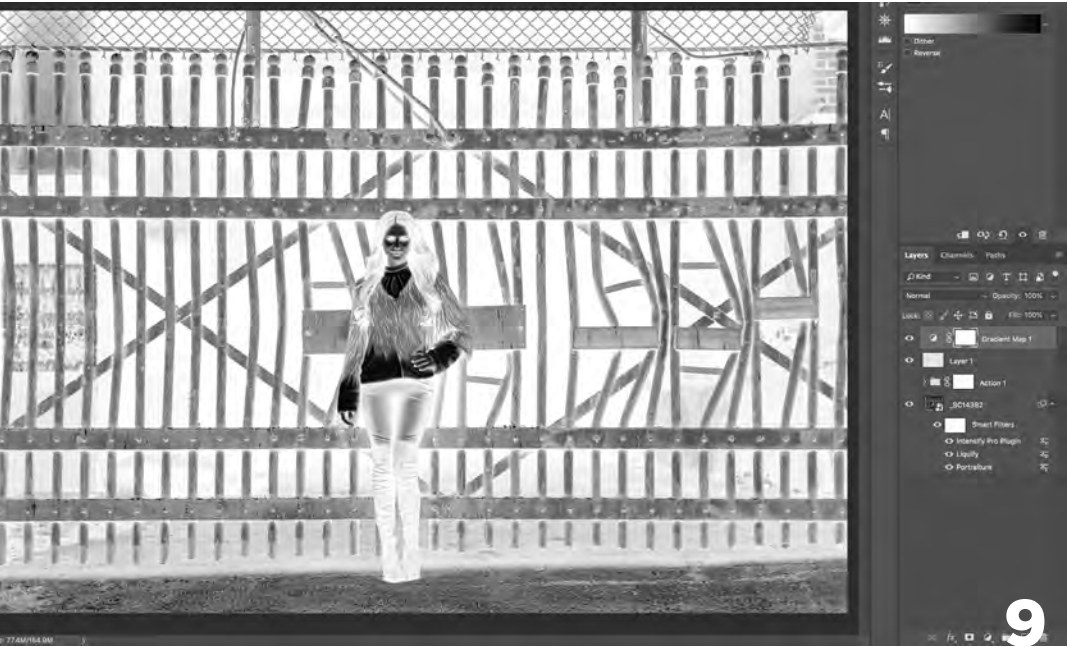
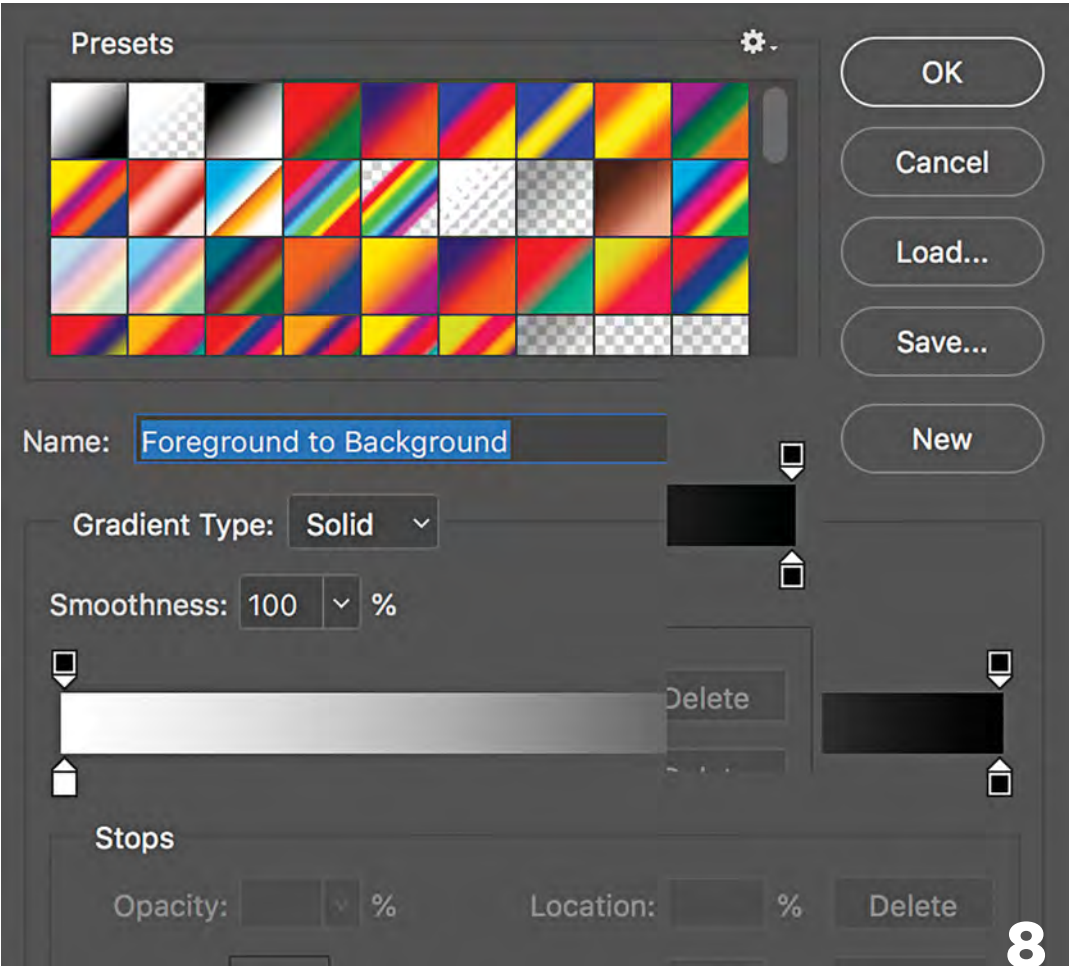
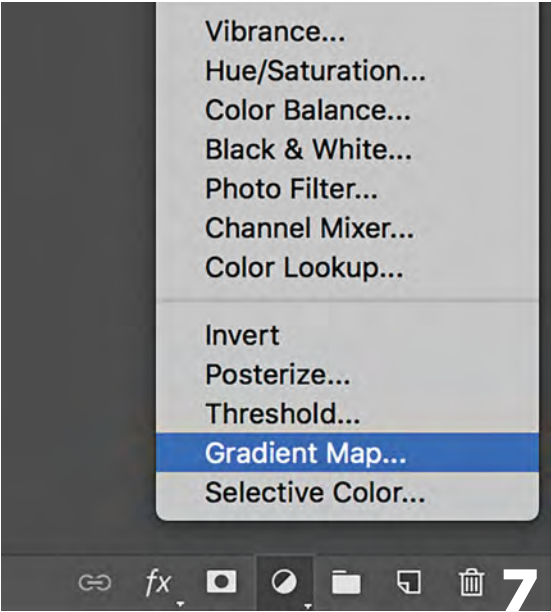
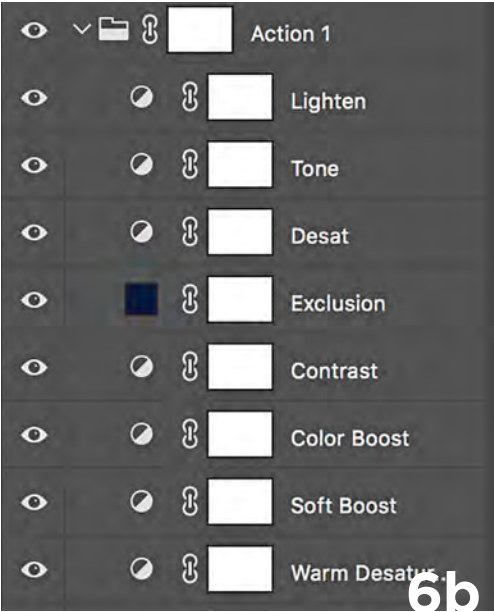
Why would that be beneficial? Just as we wanted the ability to adjust Lightroom sliders while in Photoshop with Smart Object layers, you can reopen third-party plugins like Portraiture to tweak settings. The same goes for other filters like Liquify when you are doing some body shaping. (5) Once you are done in Photoshop, save your copy and the edited file will update in Lightroom. If you want to continue editing this image later in Photoshop, retaining your layers, you will have to open it directly in Photoshop rather than use the Edit In technique.

Now that we’ve gone from Lightroom to Photoshop, let’s explore how to convert actions to color profiles by exporting LUTs.

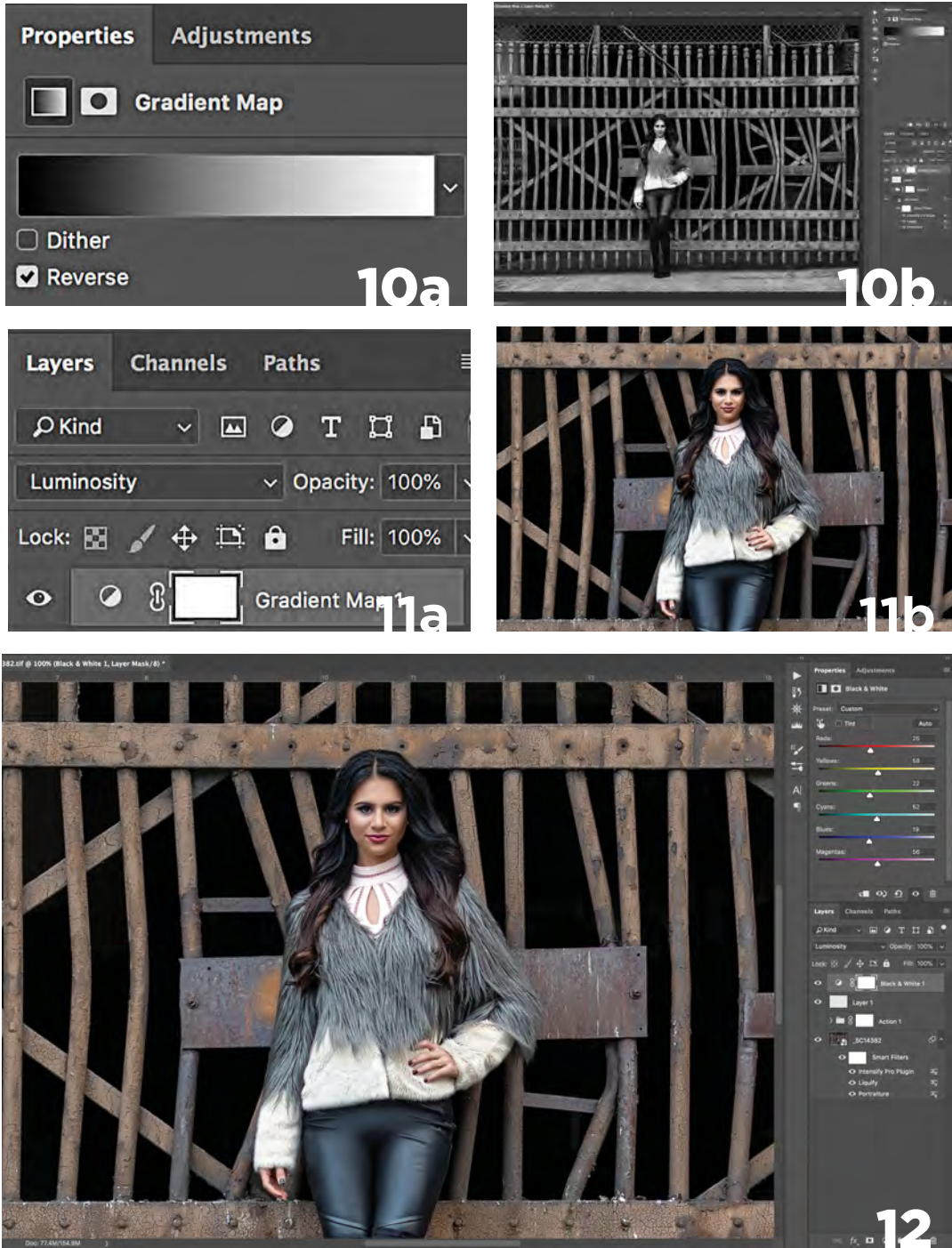


EXPORTING CUSTOM LUTS FROM PHOTOSHOP

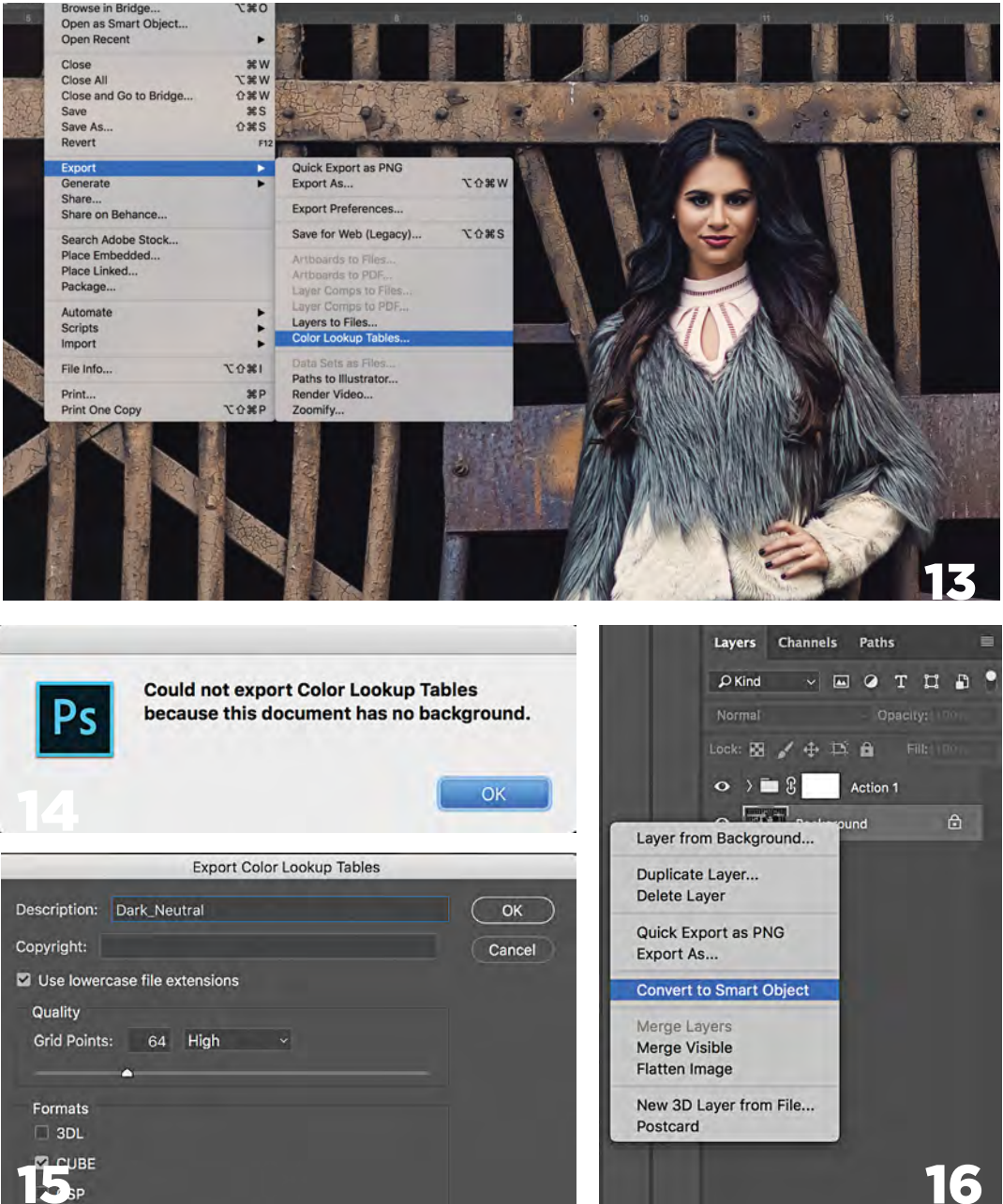
Before we get started, we need to be sure our actions contain only adjustment layers; image layers will not export as a LUT. (6ab) Find the layer adjustments at the bottom of your Layers palette by clicking the middle icon. (7) If you don't have an action built, don't worry—we can apply a few adjustments to get started. One of my favorite tools is the Gradient Map for converting to black and white and as a quick way to color-grade. (8) If you haven't used this tool before, add it to your list.



After adding a Gradient Map, you'll see that your image looks more like a negative. (9) This is simple to fix: Click the Reverse button so your gradient reads more like a standard histogram: The left side is black gradually shifting to the right to make white. (10ab) If you want to keep the image in color, change the Blend Mode to Luminosity, which keeps the tones and reverts back from a monochromatic image. (11ab) The same goes for the Black & White: Apply this to your image to quickly shift the luminosity of specific colors. (12) Once you have a few layer adjustments applied, you are ready to export as a LUT.



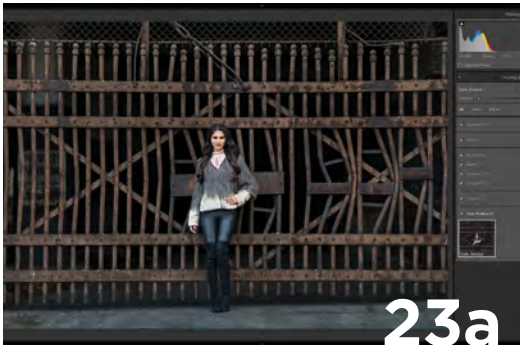
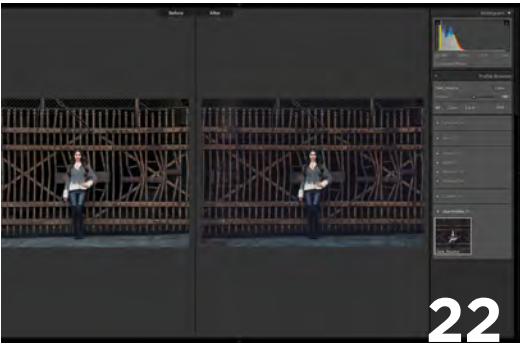
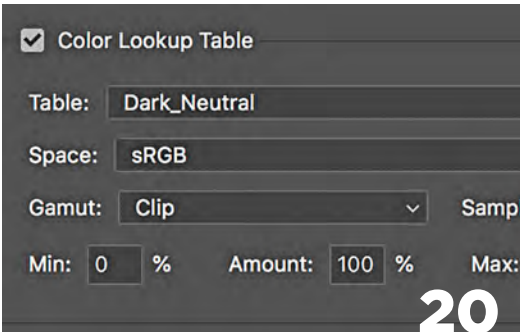
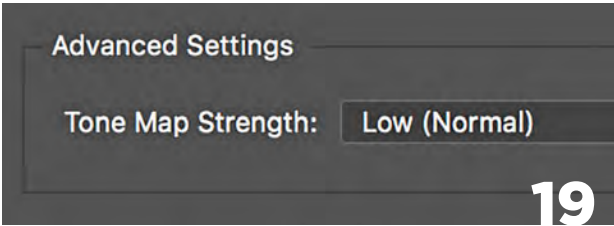
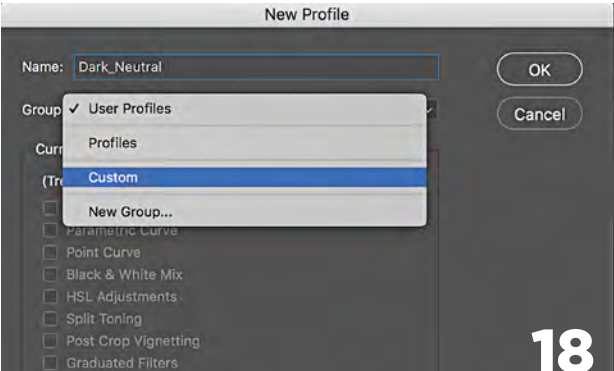
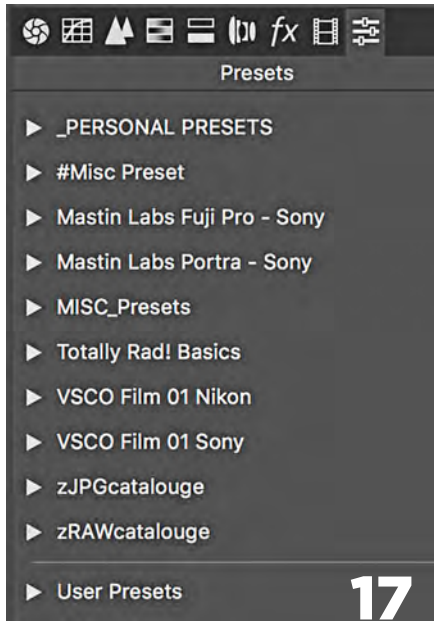
To export, go to File in the top menu bar, hover the cursor over Export and click Color Lookup Tables. (13) You will need to rasterize your base layer to complete these next steps. You cannot work from a Smart Object layer when exporting LUTs. (14) When exporting, I leave everything at the default settings in the popup dialog box. You can add a description, copyright, adjust quality to high and uncheck formats as you see fit. I will need only a .cube file for Adobe Camera Raw, so I'll select that option to reduce file clutter. (15) On the next screen, name the file and store it for later use. Now we are ready to jump into Camera Raw. Before we do, let's convert our Background layer back to a Smart Object—just right-click on the layer and convert. This lets us go back to our adjustment sliders later. (16)



WORKING WITH CUSTOM COLOR PROFILES

Now that we have our LUT saved from Photoshop, open Camera Raw and save it as a Custom Color Profile. Navigate to the Presets panel. (17) Just as we have done when creating a Custom Color Profile from our slider adjustments, we hold the Option/Alt key and click the Create Preset button at the bottom of the panel. (18) This opens the New Profile dialog box, where we can choose a name and storage location in the Color Profile section. I leave the Tone Map Strength at Low (Normal) and check the box next to Color Lookup Table. (19) Now I can locate that .cube file we created earlier and click OK. (20) We are ready to apply this in Camera Raw and Lightroom.

If you have Lightroom open while creating a new profile, you will need to relaunch it to select it. Find your profile at the top of the Basic Panel in Lightroom Classic version 8.1. (21) Find the set you saved it in and click the profile. (22) What’s awesome about using custom profiles is the addition of an Amount slider that allows you to lower or raise this effect. This starts at 100%, and you can drop down to 0 or lift to 200. (23abc) Now you can apply your creativity directly in Lightroom and keep things organized in one place. This is a game-changer for my workflow. (24 before, after)





THE RESULTS

That is it. You are ready to start exporting more LUTs, creating profiles and adding them to images in Lightroom to flex your creativity. Those Lightroom users who don't have a bunch of prebuilt actions to convert should explore tools in Photoshop not available in Lightroom, like Gradient Map and Color Balance for adjusting highlights, midtones and shadows separately. I work in both programs using Open as Smart Object when going into Photoshop. When I want to batch-apply creative effects for a down-and-dirty edit, custom profiles are the way to go. There's no reason to run a time-intensive batch process in Photoshop. Add this to your workflow, and you won't be disappointed. ■



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youtube.com/btsShutterMagazine



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



Let’s talk about a dirty secret in the photography industry. Photographers are bad at business. You probably already know that. Photographers spend much of their time learning how to take pretty photos, a little bit less time learning how to sell them, but almost no time learning how to snag the clients that the first two things bring them.

Building a proper infrastructure in your business is much more important than learning how to take pretty photos. I am not discounting the importance of being a good photographer by any means. I am saying that if you don’t have the processes in place to deliver an excellent overall client experience, eventually nobody will care about your pretty pictures.

That brings me to post-production and print delivery. This is the most important part of the client journey because it’s usually the last stage in the process. Without a good system in place, you will fail. Let’s break down our client journey, which starts the day after the wedding. As always, keep in mind that if you are not shooting weddings, the concepts still apply; adjust them as needed for your genre.



Image © Studio 23 Photography



Image © Studio 23 Photography



COMMUNICATIONS

Communication is the most important thing you can do after the wedding day. This is your opportunity to set your clients' expectations. Here are a few things you should be taking into consideration in the days following a wedding.

TIMETABLE

Give your clients an idea of how long it will take to get their images ready. If you bring them in for a preview of their pictures, which leverages the best possible client experience, send them dates and times or a link to your calendar to make it easier for them to schedule.

REVIEW AND SURVEY

Some people recommend waiting until the clients see their images to ask for reviews. You can do that, but if you know that they had an excellent experience, send them an email with a link to a survey if you are a multi-shooter studio, or just directly to a review site if you know they were happy. Automate this process with templates as much as you can. Surveying your clients reveals issues in the client experience that you can rectify in the future. Software like SurveyMonkey is free and easy to integrate into your website.

THANK YOU

Your email communication should include a thank you, but there's nothing like a handwritten note sent to your clients the day after the wedding. Use Bond.co to schedule letters to go out ahead of time. They are branded and handwritten.

POST-PRODUCTION

If you have been following my journey for a while, you know that outsourcing our edits was one of the most important things we did to scale in the beginning. Many of you don’t do this, so I will walk you through an example of how we set up our post-production workflow.

To do all of this and to make sure that you are holding yourself accountable, it’s essential to use software to track your progress and set due dates. We use Asana, which was recommended by Sal and his team. Other collaboration software includes Monday, Teamwork and Trello. We have been using Asana for three months, and it has changed the way we run our business.

1. Night of wedding or morning after: Download and cull wedding in Photo Mechanic
2. Back up files off site
3. Create file structure tree: Make sure this process is repeatable
 - a. Rejected Raws
 - b. Selected Raws
 - c. LR catalog
 - d. Edited JPEGs
 - i. Print res
 - ii. Web res with watermark
 - e. Album
 - i. Album selections
 - ii. Album project file
 - iii. Album spreads
 - f. Print order
 - i. 20x30 canvas
 1. My amazing couple – 20x30 acrylic.jpg
4. Import to Lightroom and render smart previews to edit
 - a. Use a preset to ensure consistency
 - b. Select creative edit images
 - c. Tag vendor images
5. Edit JPEGs in accordance with delivery deadline
6. Export at night
7. Upload to N-Vu, create galleries
8. Send images to vendors (after clients see them)

You can see why we outsource this process. You can do it in house as long as you, the owner, aren’t doing it yourself. The full post-production process takes our studio 10 to 12 hours—before we even get to the client meeting. So, unless you have a full-time production assistant, hand off that process to someone else. As your business grows, evaluate your needs and decide which route works best for you.

So now your client comes in and they love what they bought from you. How does the next stage in the process work? Many photographers who are new to IPS struggle with fulfillment. They lack the organization to be able to fulfill client orders, which upsets clients.

Aside from making you more money, in-person sales makes for happier clients because you are making the entire process easy.

I am not afraid to tell you about my failures in business. There is no better way to teach you than to tell you how I have failed in endeavors that we have tried to excel at. We dropped the ball on fulfillment. Our process is based on years of trial and error.

TRACKING

A tracking system is crucial. Just as you need project management for post-production, project management for product production gets things done.

Don’t forget that whatever system you use, include due dates. That way, nothing slips through the cracks.

In a multi-team environment, we make sure projects get done in a timely fashion and split the work up using Asana.





SALE

During the sales session, get all the information you need to fulfill their order immediately. We used to send clients home to choose images in their package, but we changed that process when too many clients forgot to do it. We were also running into issues when they forgot what they bought.

By having them select images there and then, you can guide them to the best photos and ensure the product order is placed immediately after the sale.

Use a purchase contract. This helps cement client expectations, ensures they feel good about their purchase and protects your business. No transactions should ever take place without a contract.

COMMUNICATIONS

The day your client makes a purchase, it’s crucial to outline all of the critical delivery dates and tasks they will need to complete. Ask them to choose album images if they didn’t have time to do it with you in the studio. Reiterate the timetables for your client. Include another thank you with this communication.

MARKETING

In an ever-growing social media–based business world, leveraging your client product purchases is essential. It sets the tone in our industry as more and more photographers move to full service, and allows us to show future clients how we take care of our current clients.

Building your production workflow doesn’t have to be hard. It takes time to set up, but with the right tools, you can take care of your clients by delivering beyond their expectations. ■



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



with *Salvatore Cincotta*

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