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# LAUNCH POINT

A message from the editor-in-chief

Don't underestimate the **profitability** of **wedding photography.**

*There is gold in those hills.*

- Sal Cincotta



Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography





The Art of the Scrim:  
**DAYLIGHT PORTRAITS**

with Michael Corentino



It's just as important to know when to use strobes as when not to use them. There are things you can do with scrims and natural light that are difficult if not impossible to replicate with artificial light. A case in point is this lovely daylight portrait series of model Willie Demi Spink shot at New Smyrna Beach, Florida.

### SCRIM AND SUBTRACTION ALL IN ONE

For this shoot, I used a Sunbounce Cage, a five-sided 8x8-foot popup scrim/subtraction panel tent that becomes a portable daylight studio anywhere I go. People always ask why I don't just shoot my studio-style on-location portraits in a studio in the first place. That's a great question. The soft wrapping quality of light I can create with a large scrim and the sun is like nothing I've ever been able to create in the studio. Scrims are super portable, easily packed onto planes and into cars. I can take my studio with me. I don't have to worry about electricity, I can capture environmental and studio images during the same shoot if desired, and, as you'll see, there is no shortage of lighting options available, all without ever powering on a strobe.



Image © Michael Corsentino

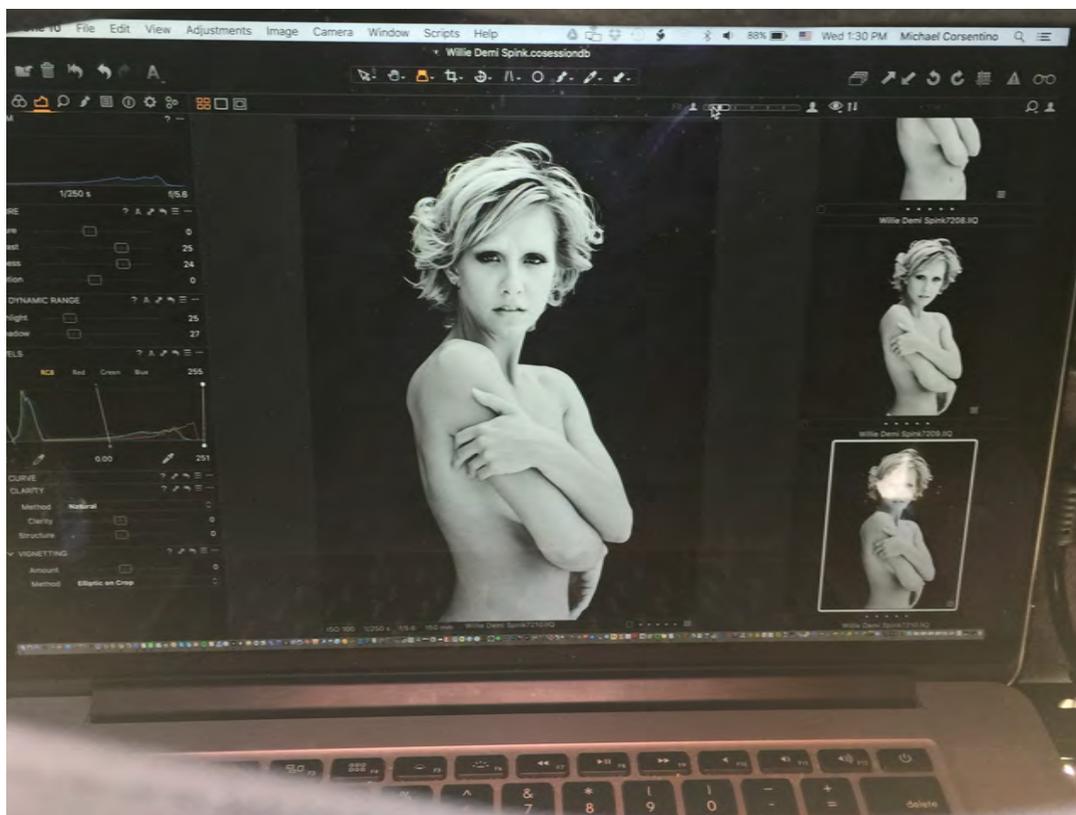
*HMUA Audra Seay works with Willie during look 1. Note the diffusion fabric on the top and right sides of the Cage.*

## POSITION IS KEY

The way in which the Cage or any similar tool is oriented in relationship to the sun plays a key role in the quality of light created. Couple that with the wide variety of ways the Cage can be configured to control quantity and quality of light, as well as its direction and intensity, and you end up with an extremely versatile tool.

For our first look, I worked with the diffusion panel on the right side of the Cage. I did this for two reasons. Earlier in the day, the sun was lower in the sky, providing directional side light. Audra Seay, our talented HMUA, had styled model Willie's hair flipped to the left side. This meant there would be no shadow cast from the hair when lit from the right. It's not a hard and fast rule I followed the entire shoot, but for the majority of images, it was the look I wanted.

In addition to the 8x8 diffusion panel on the right side, I used the diffusion panel on the ceiling of the Cage. This created a soft hair light. My assistant simply unzipped the black cover on the ceiling as we were setting up. Each surface of the Cage can be used with either black fabric to block light or diffusion fabric to let light in. In addition to this different-colored background, fabrics can be used to create a variety of looks. Here I used black infinite cloth for a classic portrait look. I also chose black because I knew it would help accentuate the porcelain quality I wanted Willie's skin to have after the black-and-white conversion was applied to the files. All said, the goal of this first look was to create a soft and directionally lit portrait.



*Proofing captures and the black-and-white conversions as we shoot the first look.*

Image © Michael Correntino



Image © Michael Correntino



Image © Michael Corsetino

Assistant Michael Fried setting up the Cage for look 1. Note the ceiling panel being zipped out to reveal a scrim and the right diffusion panel used for soft side light.



Image © Michael Corsetino

Shooting tethered is a great way to check exposures, wardrobe, HMUA and posing, and to preview color grading as you shoot. Here I'm using a Nine-Volt tether table and sunshade to make viewing captures on my laptop easier.

When it was time to move on to our second look—with a more dramatic, flat-lit, specular lighting effect—the Cage needed to be repositioned to make the best use of the sun. When you're working with scrims, it's important to determine the path the sun will follow as it rises and sets; plan what order makes the most sense for the looks planned. We also zipped the black blocking fabric back in place. The only open surface, aside from the front, was now the top diffusion panel. The way the scrim is oriented in relationship to the sun has a direct impact on the quality of light created. Our first look was soft and side lit because the sun was coming in from the side at a relatively low position in the sky.

For the second look, the sun was now very high in the sky and had moved behind my camera position. We spun the Cage around to get more overhead light coming directly into the Cage via the top diffusion panel. In this position, we were able to introduce a silver reflector to provide fill light from below and the side. By rearranging the position of the Cage, the rim light on Willie's hair light was now much brighter; with a silver reflector in place, our dramatic specular look was ready to go.

### FILL REFLECTOR

Adding the silver reflector from below or from the side for our second look introduced directional fill and a prominent catchlight in the lower half of the model's eyes. This worked well in this situation, but you do run the risk of creating an overly harsh and distracting catchlight, so be careful. This can always be softened, along with the rest of the fill light from the reflector, by simply switching to a white-surfaced reflector.

### SHOOTING TETHERED ON LOCATION

If you follow my work or read this column regularly, you know I'm a proponent of shooting tethered whenever possible. This shoot was no different. Here I used a Nine-Volt laptop table on a C-stand, which provides a stable base on surfaces that aren't level. To shade the laptop and make it infinitely easier to view the screen, I used Nine-Volt's collapsible laptop sun shades.

Rounding out my tethering setup were Tether Tools' 15-foot USB and 15-foot USB extension cables, along with a portable SSD drive for backing up files in the field. Shooting tethered allowed us to see large previews of what I was shooting, check exposures, monitor posing, position Rachel Velez's awesome wardrobe and accessory styling as needed, and also dial in the black-and-white conversion for the shoot in real time. This way, every image coming up on screen was the black-and-white look used for the finals.





## WORKING WITH MODELS

It's essential that your talent know they can trust you implicitly. This is especially true with nude or implied-nude modeling. Trust is critical for a male photographer working with female models. Models need to feel safe and comfortable. They're vulnerable, and need to trust that you've got their best interests in mind. There needs to be zero "creeper" vibe. That means no awkward jokes, no staring—you need to be a total pro at all times. I also like to have an assistant ready to drape the model in a robe between looks or during breaks. My models understand that I would never publish any capture that they aren't comfortable with.

## POST WORKFLOW

My post-processing workflow started in Capture One Pro 10, where I chose my selects, adjusted exposure and tweaked the black-and-white conversion and digital "film" grain that had been applied in the field. I opened the images in Photoshop CC and retouched them using Retouching Academy's Beauty Retouch Panel, my go-to. One of the benefits of applying digital grain to simulate the look of Kodak Tri-X black-and-white film stock is that retouching becomes much easier. The grain covers up a multitude of sins.



Image © Michael Corsentino

Here you can see the position of the sun. Repositioning the scrim allowed us to use the stronger overhead sun for our second more dramatic, specular lighting look. Note the new Cage configuration used for look 2; now, only the ceiling has a diffusion panel exposed. The right panel, formally diffusion for look 1, is now black block fabric.



Images © Michael Corsetino

Using a large overhead scrim and a reflector placed below the model creates a classic flat-lit clamshell light. The silver reflector creates more contrast and a more pronounced catchlight in the model's eyes. Note the new Cage configuration used for look 2; now, only the ceiling has a diffusion panel exposed. The right panel, formally diffusion for look 1, is now black block fabric.

### A SCRIM IS A SCRIM

Remember, just because you might not have access to a Sunbounce Cage doesn't mean you can't get close to the effects I've created for this shoot. Scrims and black block panels are affordable, and can also be DIY'd using PVC pipe and a variety of common fabrics. ■



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

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Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

# THE BIG SHOT

with Sal Cincotta

Getting the big shot looks easier than it is. Over the years, it has become a signature shot for my studio. Clients and photographers alike recognize our style. Clients pay a premium for that perfect signature shot of their day.

Let's explore what goes in to creating that epic shot for your clients.

## SEEING THE SHOT

It all starts with vision. My style is architecture-heavy. Find your own style and look for that big shot that best represents it. I prefer scenes that are somewhat clean—clear of clutter and other distracting elements. Some of that can be edited out in post-production, but there is only so much you can do.

If you are looking for an urban location, find a scene clear of people, trash and cars (mostly). That's one of the big mistakes I see people make when shooting big. You are showing everything in the scene, so it's very hard to block distracting elements. Cars are the most difficult thing to remove from a scene, and nothing will date your photo faster than some shitty cars in the background.

If you are looking for more of a landscape scene, don't go too big. That is another challenge. Your subject will get lost. Keep your subject above the horizon line. If you shoot in a big landscape like in the mountains or a giant park, and your subject is below the horizon line, there won't be enough separation, and your subject will be lost in the final shot.



Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography



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## LIGHTING THE SHOT

I almost always use artificial light in the scene to create separation from the background. I also like more directional light versus flat light directly on the subject. This gives a more realistic and pleasing look overall.

I use the Profoto B1 in the field, especially on a sunny day. I also use speedlights, but on a sunny afternoon, your speedlights don't have enough power to light the subject. Something much more powerful, like a Profoto B1, is the better choice.

I also use natural light. If I am working on a wedding and the wind is coming from a direction that forces the bride to look toward the sun, I use natural light. This ensures the wind gives me a gorgeous blow of the veil, and it keeps my lighting setup simple. I love when this happens because it makes the shot that much easier to see—and, of course, less editing is always better.



## COMPOSITION IS KEY

Poor composition is by far the easiest way to screw up your shot. If you're careless, you can wind up with poles coming out of your client's head, a crooked horizon line or a horizon line through a head.

Composition is meant to drive your viewer's eye to the primary element. It's about the arrangement of elements in your frame that best expresses the goal of your image. In a wedding image, the main goal is to showcase the primary element in the shot, the couple. How you arrange the elements can make or break the image.

Is there a path leading to the client? Where does your eye first go when you look at the image? Is it where you want the viewer to go? If not, you might have a problem. What about brightness? Your eye tends to go to the brightest part of the scene. Is that where you want the viewer to go?

Hone your composition skills. It is one of the quickest ways to become a better photographer.

Here's a trick I still use that can help you immediately. While looking at your image, close your eyes and open them. Where is the first place your eye goes? If it's not your subject, you need to fix it. This can be done via lighting, posing or cropping. Second, look for natural lines in the scene, like a staircase, horizon line or railing. Look for ways to use that to drive your viewer to your subject.



Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

## THE DEVIL IS IN THE DETAILS

Now you have the lighting and scene right. Perfect, right? Wrong. Time and again, I see otherwise amazing images posted that lack the most basic of details or that have details that don't make sense, such as an errant sun flare that looks completely fake, or emotion that doesn't look sincere.

So, you are trying to create this gorgeous bridal portrait, and your couple looks like they can't stand each other. Who would buy that for their home? What I love even more is when photographers are shocked that they can't sell these images or that their clients don't love them. Of course they don't love them—they are lacking any connection whatsoever. Show your couples in love; that's what they want to celebrate. This is not only in their facial expressions, but in their body language. If they look uncomfortable in real life, they will look even worse on camera, and they will notice that when they see your final images.

Spend time on the details and make things perfect. Perfect is not just lighting or the scene. Stop tinkering with your gear all the time. Lift your head to engage your subjects and get them relaxed on camera. Their expression and pose are seemingly small items, but so crucial in the final image.

## SELLING THE BIG SHOT

After making the image, you're still not done. You have to sell it. What's the point of having this incredible image if it dies a horrible death on your hard drive? You have to sell it, and sell it big. One thing that has helped us sell big prints is to ensure we have large prints, metals, canvas and acrylics in our studio. If you don't, how in the world can you expect your client to have enough vision to see how it will look in their home? It's impossible.

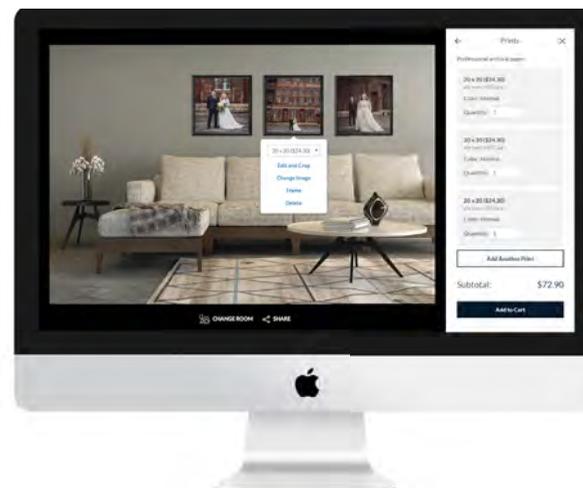
Big dramatic shots are meant to be displayed big. When clients try to buy them as 8x10s, I immediately tell them no. I explain that it will look ridiculous, and then show them the size of an 8x10 on our wall. They see that they will be the size of an ant in the frame.

Something that has helped drive this message home visually is the new N-Vu platform (at N-Vu.com). It has a free built-in tool called Room-Vu. A client takes a picture of a room in her home, and with Room-Vu, she can see what various sizes of an image will look like on the walls.

GALLERY WRAPS



PRINTS



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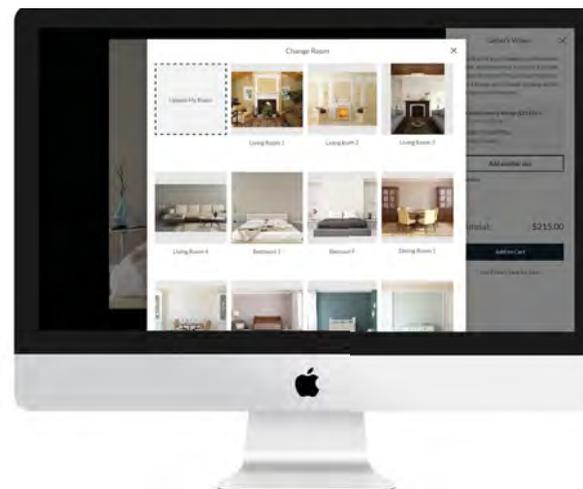




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The best way to improve your skills and wow your clients is to get out and practice. Push yourself hard to look for your mistakes. We all love to celebrate our victories, but the details matter. Every time you shoot, ask yourself, what did I miss? What can I fix the next time I do this? This is the quickest path to success.

I should know. I have been pushing myself for 10 years, and I have gotten better and better every year. It's a journey, not a destination. ■

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

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# MASTERING THE SECOND SHOOTER SHOTS

on a Wedding Day  
with Alissa Zimmerman



The second shooter plays a crucial role on the wedding day. The most important shots below apply to anyone in the wedding photography business, whether you're a secondary shooter, a primary photographer who hires a second shooter on a wedding-by-wedding basis or a studio with a full-time second shooter on staff.

Use these four key shots as your foundation on a wedding day. Train your second shooter to understand their role and what is expected.

## #1: CANDID SHOTS

The most important skill of a second shooter is the ability to capture candid shots in a unique and artistic way. Anyone can grab a camera and take a few snapshots of the bridal party, family or guests interacting. It takes true talent to master timing, composition and an understanding of the "who's who" on a wedding day, to turn an ordinary snapshot into an impactful candid image that your client will cherish forever.

It's always nice to be on a team with a primary photographer who knows when to make a group of people laugh to set up the perfect shot for their second shooter.

Candid images can get stale or boring. Layer your subjects and shoot wide open to make an image more interesting. Use eye candy (objects in the foreground of an image) to add a little extra something to your candid.

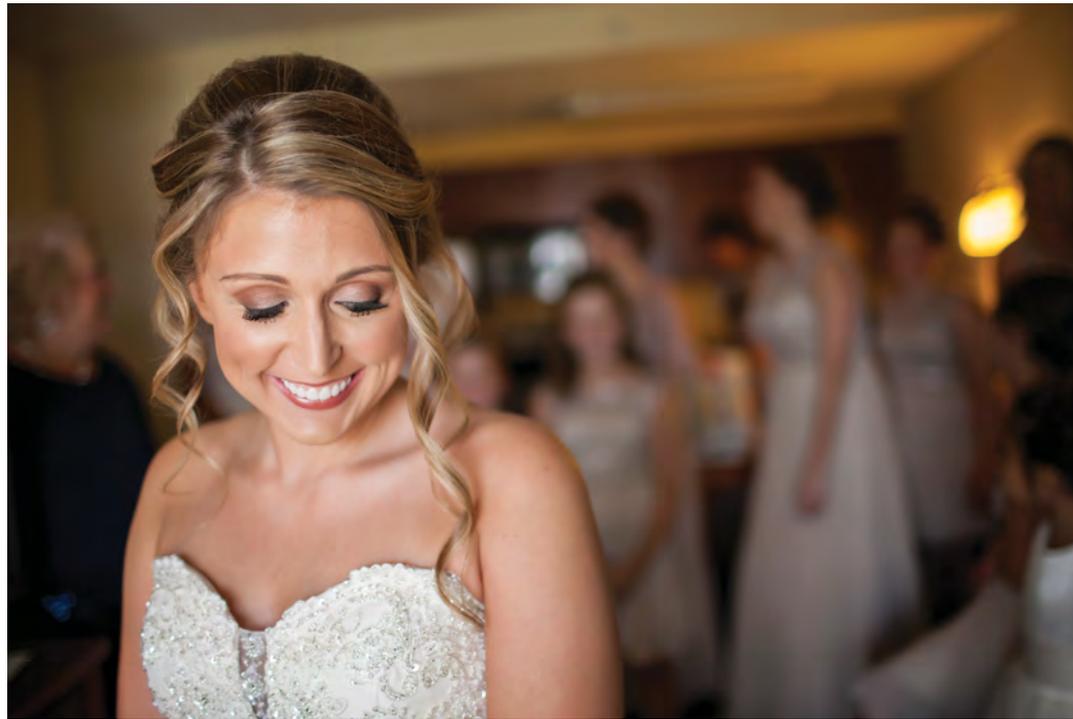


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## #2: DETAILS, DETAILS, DETAILS

There are specific detail shots the primary photographer is in charge of at every wedding: Isolating the bride and groom's details in the morning while they are getting ready, the program and any extra decoration done for the ceremony and reception, and, of course, the impact ring shot.

There also are plenty of times throughout the day when the primary photographer needs to focus on getting through the timeline as efficiently as possible, and so may not have the time to shoot other details, such as the groom and groomsmen's boutonnieres, the bride and bridesmaids' bouquets, and any other special piece of your client's wedding day. The second shooter needs to capture any detail the primary shooter does not.

"Details" doesn't always mean the second shooter needs to be photographing details. This also pertains to those moments when the primary photographer is setting up a big, dramatic shot. It's the second shooter's responsibility to make sure every little detail of that scene is flawless: The bride's hair should be perfect, her dress should be lying right, the groom's suit should be adjusted correctly and so on. Paying attention to details like this for a big shot you intend to sell as a large piece for their home can make or break the sale.



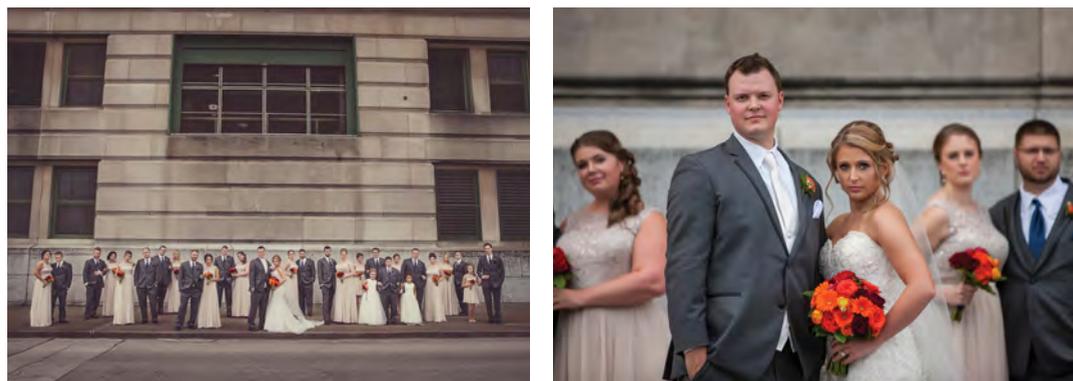
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### #3: COMPLEMENTARY IMAGES

I cannot stress enough the importance of building a wedding-day formula between the primary photographer and the second shooter. During any part of a wedding, no two photographers should be using the same focal length. Nor should those two photographers be standing in or around the same area to capture the same subject.

Understanding the art of working side by side with another photographer and getting to know their habits and workflow is crucial to the success of a second shooter. I know what lens Sal will be using and where he will be standing to get the shot during every part of a wedding. I know what lens I need and where I need to be standing to get the complementary shots that will give our clients images that capture every part of their big day.

Follow this rule: If the primary photographer is using a wide lens, the second shooter should be using a mid-to-tight range lens, and vice versa. Understand that not every scene lends itself to a wide/tight formula, so learn your gear so you know what to use during each part of a wedding day.



Images © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

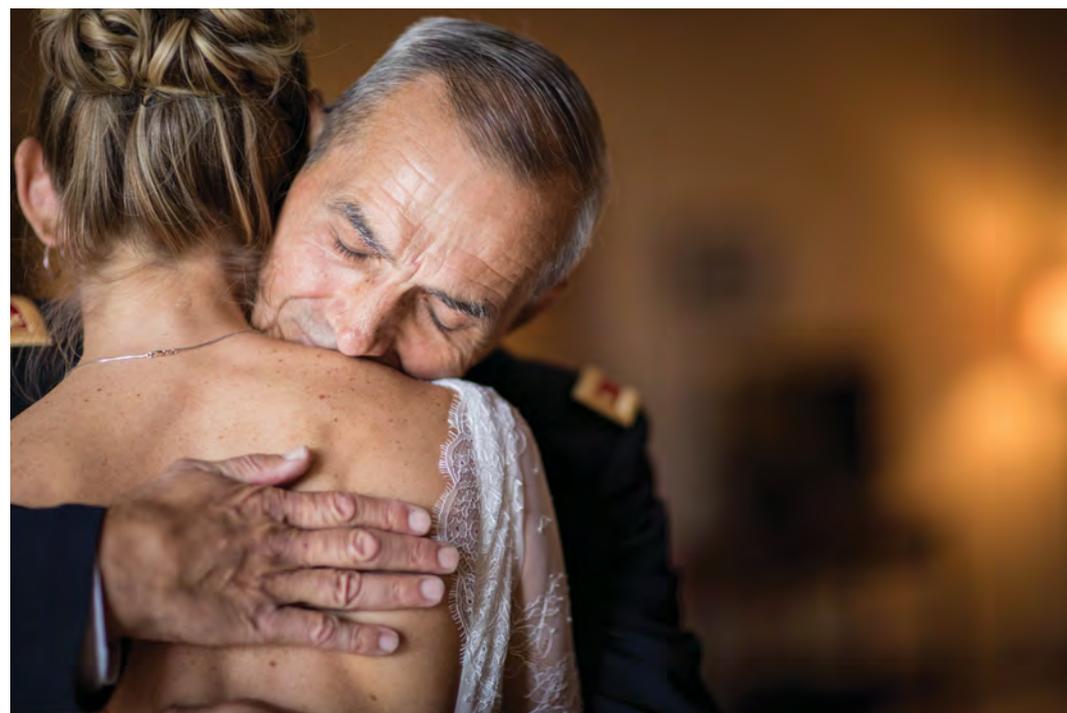


Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

### #4: CAPTURING EMOTION

This is my favorite part of being a second shooter and the number-one reason I love photography. The ability to capture emotion and freeze that moment in time for your clients is priceless.

No bride on the planet wants to see images of herself ugly-crying, regardless of how emotional the scene may be. No bride on the planet wants to see an image of herself sharing an emotional moment with someone if it was shot at an unflattering angle.

These moments happen in the blink of an eye, and you won't always be able to capture them perfectly. Take the time to learn the basics of a wedding day, and you'll be able to anticipate these moments and be more prepared for that one great capture. You'll always want to capture the father/daughter first look, for example; this is guaranteed to be an emotional moment. Control the situation ahead of time so they are perfectly staged and you are in the right spot with the right light, using the right gear.



Images © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

Control your destiny when you can, and allow the rest of the emotional photojournalistic shots unfold naturally throughout the day. ■



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. [salcincotta.com](http://salcincotta.com)

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May 5, 2017

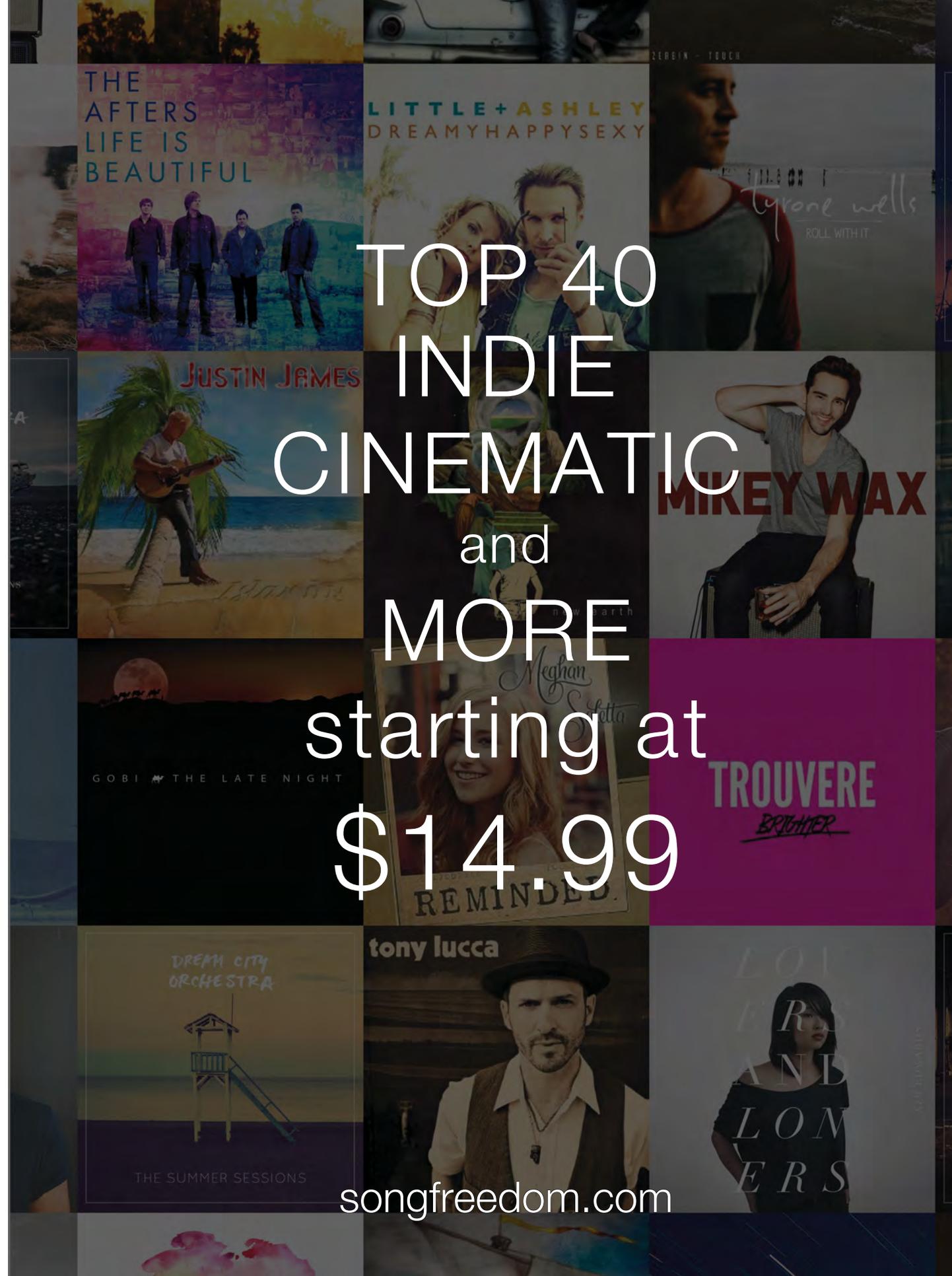
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# Reshape Your Wedding Market

4 Tips for Making Couples Want ONLY You  
with **Phillip Blume**



Image © Eve&Ever Photography

It may be the most common complaint we hear from wedding photographers: “My market is just too *cheap*. No one’s willing to pay real money for photography.” It’s a frustrating feeling, and I’ve felt it, too. There’s no doubt photographers (and “faux-tographers”) are everywhere—entering and exiting our markets with bargain prices and shiny new cameras they got for Christmas. How can photographers like us, who want to run legitimate full-time businesses, ever compete?

*Compete* is the operative word, isn’t it? We all tend to obsess over, scope out and compare ourselves to “the competition.” For good reason...right? I mean, isn’t it basic supply and demand? We’re afraid too many photographers will drown out our voice, and there won’t be enough newly engaged couples to go around. If you’re dealing with meager bookings and high advertising costs right now, your fears will seem confirmed and reinforce this pessimistic narrative about the “bad” market.

I’d like to preach some good news to you a better-informed narrative about how the market really works. It may give you hope. But more importantly, it will give you some practical direction in how to increase your income. After we got our heads around this concept, we found Blume Photography couldn’t keep up with all the inquiries we began to receive. To keep up, we had to open a new studio, Eve&Ever Photography, with more photographers, whose photos you see here.

Let’s look at four steps you can take now to reshape your approach to a poor market and discover new clients. After reading this, you may decide you need two businesses to handle the traffic.

## 1. ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY

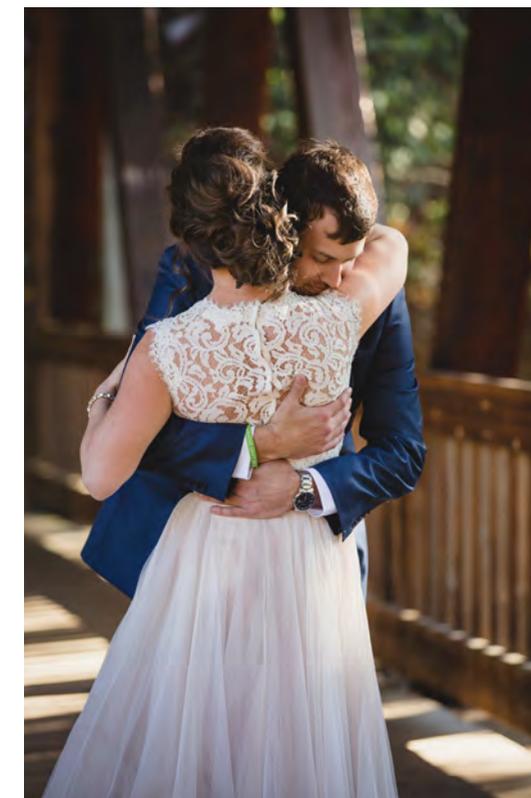
As a husband-wife photography team who got our start in 2009, Eileen and I can relate to fear of competition. Back then we were the new kids on the block. When Blume Photography’s first amateur website went live, I bet studios in our area rolled their eyes and sighed, “Here come the newest low-balls to ruin our business and sink the industry.”

That wasn’t how we felt. We were starry-eyed newlyweds looking to make our own way through the dream of self-employment. Soon, though, fear set in for us, too. Work was endless yet didn’t cover our bills. Then came a final crushing blow. We learned a cold fact about our local market that we’d been oblivious to. It was saturated with young photographers from local colleges (not a unique problem) and boasted America’s highest poverty rate (a unique and big problem). Our already small market was much smaller than we’d thought. We didn’t want to move away from our hometown and families. But how could we make a living here?

We didn’t give up on our market. Instead, we got smart. Because, guess what: The problem with our business wasn’t our market; it never is. The problem with our business was us. That’s hard to admit, but this fact tends to be eye-opening for many photographers we coach one-one-one. None of us can change our markets. But we do have the power to change ourselves and how we do marketing. Keep in mind that relationships with fellow photographers are your greatest asset, so overcome your fears and focus on community over competition. This is a choice you have to make. Reach out to your fellow photographers. If you offer an olive branch, they’ll become your best allies, lead sources and friends.



Images © Eve&Ever Photography



## 2. UNDERSTAND LUXURY CLIENTS

The closer we grow to other photographers, the more we understand that we are not all competing for the same clients. Upstart photographers often make the major mistake of marketing their service as if it were a commodity. You are not Walmart. Stop acting like it. If you market a luxury service based on “best price” or even “quality of work” alone, then you are advertising “things.” Things (or commodities) can be purchased anywhere from anyone who has the same things to offer. If you advertise this way, you will be competing against a lot of other photographers for the same bottom-of-the-barrel clients. The wrong clients.

But who is the right client? And how do you reach her?

Researchers have known for decades that humans, for both psychological and physiological reasons, make important purchasing decisions in the limbic, or emotional, brain. The rational brain barely enters the equation.

There’s a huge, almost magical, business application here. Don’t miss it. There are people in your market who deeply value photography and will pay well for it. You may never have met them, but they are there. It’s precisely because they value photography that your discounts or facts and figures don’t attract them. They are seeking emotional value, not a bargain commodity. So you have to woo them with emotional marketing.



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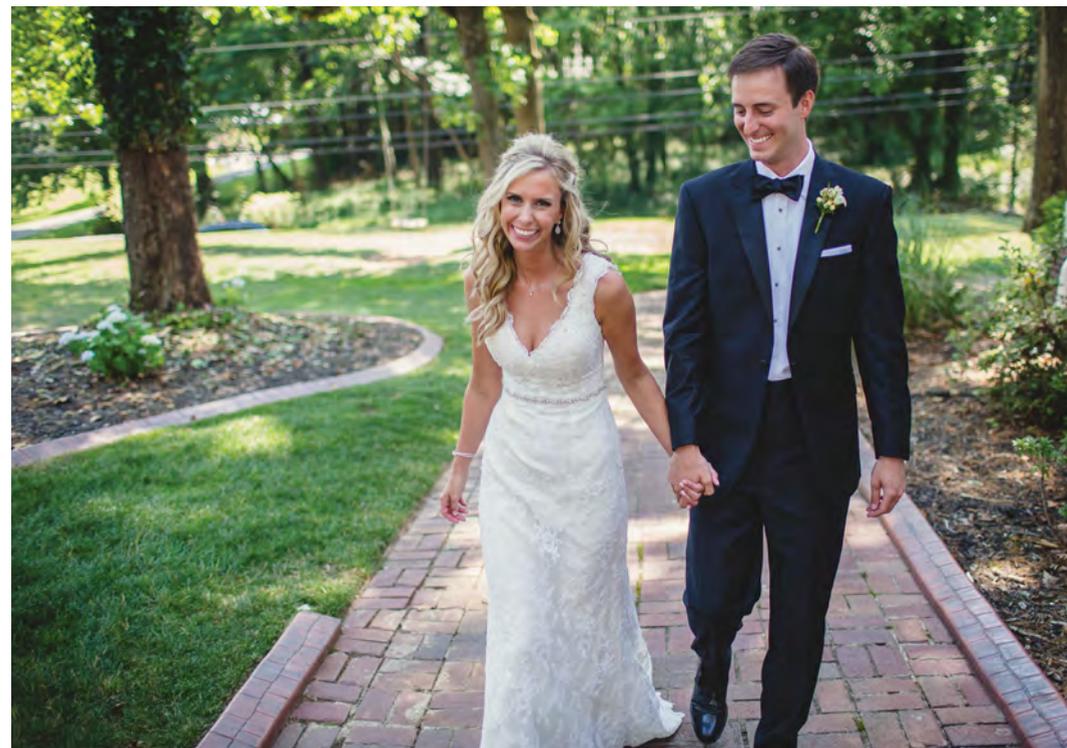


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Have you unintentionally been targeting the very people who don’t care about your craft? Sure, everyone knows they have to find a photographer for their wedding, along with the cheapest chair rentals. (In fact, they may care more about the chairs.)

The solution? Am I saying a price increase will automatically bring you high-end clients? No. In fact, if you hike your prices without grasping this point, you’ll sink like a stone. The point is, we all need to stop talking so much in terms of price, discounts and the “amazing archival paper” our images are printed on. That’s all stuff. Talk instead about emotional experience.

Tell and show personal stories about your past clients on Instagram. Use your website’s About page to sell yourself and explain why photography matters. Use your talents to give back to community charities, where you’ll meet and connect with local change-makers over causes you all believe in. Invest the time to reach an audience that values you, rather than wasting money to run an expensive ad that desperately screams, “Please hire me!” to the unwashed masses.

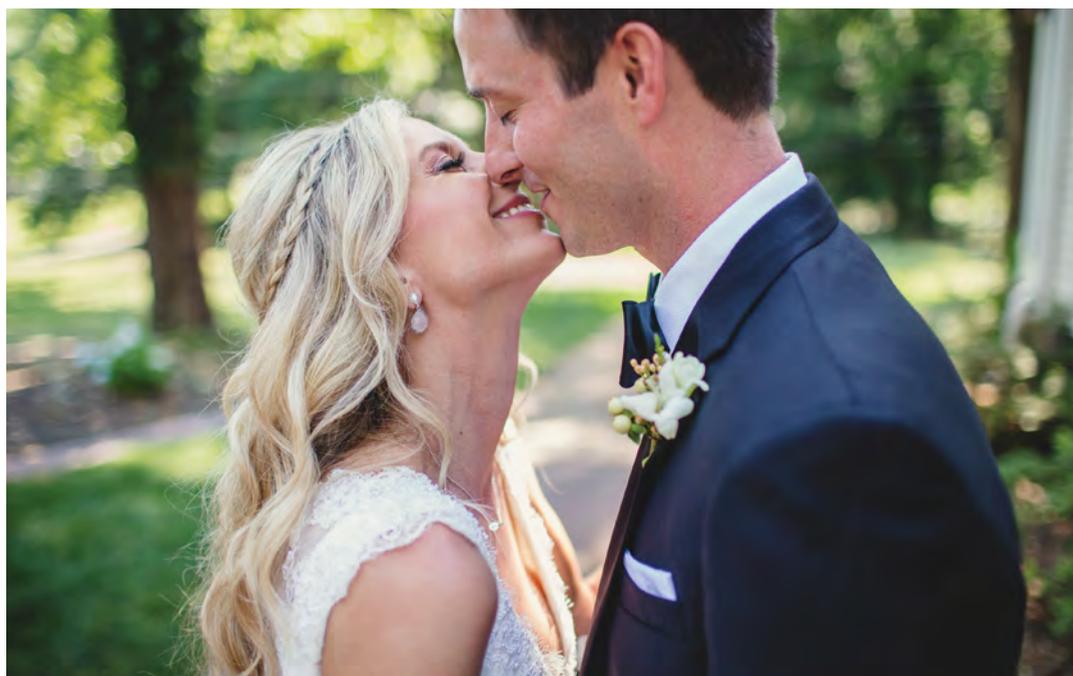


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### 3. DEFINE YOUR STYLE

This seems easier said than done. Defining Blume Photography’s style has been our biggest challenge. For one thing, I’m constantly honing my technique, so my style is always in flux. Then consider trends. How can I stick to the same old thing if I’m also trying to stretch and meet popular demand?

I don’t pretend to have all the style answers. But I do see how powerful brand consistency is in the marketplace. Consistency gives your ideal clients the sense they “belong to” your brand (like a club) even before they inquire about your services. That equals very high conversion rates for new inquiries.

Our friends the Youngrens have done a fabulous job of this. They own three studios in the San Diego area that all take wedding clients. The fact that their first brand advertises specifically to “black tie and ballroom” clients keeps the brand consistent and attracts more people who like upscale weddings because they relate to what’s shown on the website. Their other brands target outdoor barn-style weddings and edgier affairs for hipster kids who like artsy images.

What kind of weddings do you love to photograph? Use this as a starting point in specializing, and you’ll be surprised how effectively you can now attract more of the weddings that look similar to your defined style.

### 4. PEEL BACK YOUR MARKET’S “LAYERS”

For our Eve&Ever associate studio, we’re starting the process of differentiating by style. It helps that we’ve already differentiated our pricing. Remember those couples who care about photography almost as much as they care about rented folding chairs? They may represent the bottom rung on the client ladder, but don’t snub them or the photographers who shoot their cheap weddings. There are three or four “layers” in every market where different consumer classes dwell—and they all need to be served.

As my friend and world-class photographer Scott Robert Lim asks, “If you offered a simple shoot-and-burn package for just \$1,500, do you think you could book 50 weddings per year? If yes, you could essentially earn \$75,000 for one day of work per week. That’s the best job in the world.” Before you decide to structure a business this way, you need to ask a lot of big and very personal questions. For example, would you feel emotionally satisfied shooting so many low-end weddings? Different weddings offer photographers very different creative opportunities.

But the jobs are there. And there are layers in between the low-end and high-end markets. What matters is that you shape the service you offer to fit the price. Do the math. Let’s say you want to include a wedding book for all your clients because, like us, you want to ensure your work lives on as a legacy for families. You know you can’t afford to include a wedding book in a \$1,500 package. So you increase your price to \$2,400 and start including the book along with client “welcome gifts” and small items to improve the customer experience and increase word-of-mouth referrals.



Image © Eve&Ever Photography

Uh-oh. You may have made a big mistake. The middle-of-the-road market is often the hardest to crack. A more limited number of consumers exists in this budget zone, and even fewer of them care about a wedding book. But if they do like your offerings, your lower profit margin could put you out of business before you know it. Yikes.

Pricing strategy is powerful but complex. It's a topic we talk about a lot with our students. At the very least, you need to make sure your wedding package prices fit both your local economy and the market layer you want to target (considering your values and goals). A great place to start researching your market in detail is [www.theweddingreport.com](http://www.theweddingreport.com). There is a fee to access the report, which is rich in information and worthwhile if you're ready to strategize this way.



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### CONCLUSION

It's become clear that virtually no market is a bad one. If there were a poor market, it would be ours—yet opportunity exists here. There are extreme exceptions. You probably can't run a very successful studio in a two-horse town or on the moon. (Although if you're a great entrepreneur, you could probably find a way to attract clients there, too.)

If you begin to feel as though all the leads you receive are “unqualified,” it's time to reshape your market. Take the proven steps to attract qualified leads, and then enjoy the fruits of working smarter rather than harder.

Explore our free online photography group ComeUnity at [www.blumephotography.com/photographers](http://www.blumephotography.com/photographers). Watch the below video for a conversation between Phillip Blume and Scott Robert Lim about market layers. ■

SM

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Phillip Blume is an international award-winning photographer and, with his wife, Eileen, cofounder of Blume Photography Studios and ComeUnity Workshops. In addition to photographing weddings and portraits worldwide, the Blumes focus their efforts on personal projects to help those suffering extreme poverty. As educators, the two have appeared on CreativeLIVE, and speak to thousands of photographers every year. They live with their children in rural Georgia.

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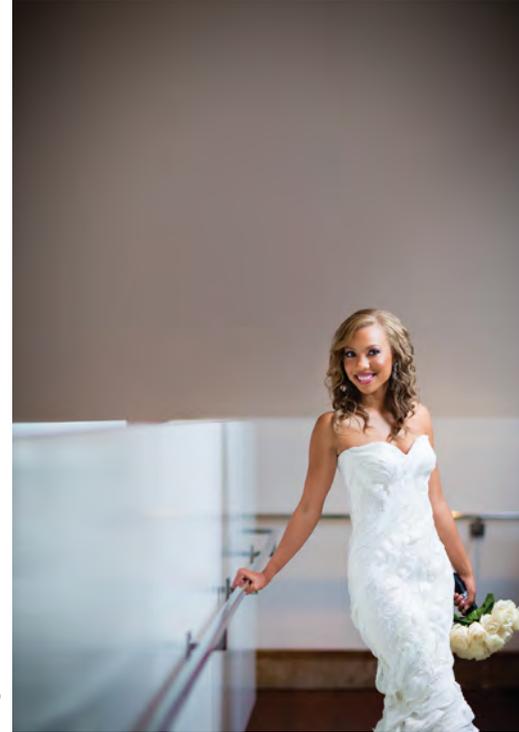
with Moshe Zusman

Shooting weddings can get to the best of us. Maybe it's when we are waiting for all the family members to come together for a big family photo in the middle of a wedding reception. Perhaps it is one of those moments when your bride turns against you. Or maybe the lifestyle of a wedding photographer has just become too much. Whatever it is, all wedding photographers face deep frustrations.

For me, this realization came around the time my first kid was born. I was shooting 40-plus high-end weddings a year and second-shooting as well. In addition to weddings, I photographed high-profile events and portraits.



Image © Moshe Zusman



Images © Moshe Zusman



Two months before Noah was born, I was living on top of the world, running a successful photography business in Washington, D.C. I was about to become a dad and was working harder than ever to get ready for it. I had doubled my prices and my bookings every year for the past few years to get my wedding photography business to where I wanted it. The first few years of being a family of three were life-altering, but not in the way most people describe. Sure, your Lexus is now a baby-mobile, and there are those sleepless nights too.

But the biggest change is the rest of your life. Weddings suddenly occupied a bigger part of my life than just another Saturday night. I was in denial that I'd become disenchanted with shooting them.

I was ready for a change.

I was getting that undeniable urge for an all-in moment to make a better life for my family and me. That's when I decided it was my photography that needed to change. I had built this wedding photography business from scratch after moving to the U.S. from Israel, but now I had my wife and son hiding in a closet while I was trying to meet with clients. Noah was only just learning to walk, and I knew I never wanted to miss his baseball games.

Aside from the burnout of shooting weddings, this just wasn't the lifestyle I wanted anymore. I wanted to be able to call out sick and not get sued for it. I wanted to be there when my kid was sick, and for it to be just a matter of rescheduling some clients for another day and not missing the most important day of someone's life.

The idea of breaking into a new genre was terrifying. I wasn't just afraid of failing, but afraid of failing my family. I knew that shooting in the studio would allow me to create my own weekday schedule and take control of my time. That's when I started moving into fashion, portraits and headshots.



Image © Moshe Zusman

If I were to talk to someone doing what I did, I would tell them to treat this new business like pulling off a Band-Aid. First, get your portfolio together. Learn what you need to about studio photography. Unlike wedding photography, you don't need to spend time second-shooting and doing styled shoots because you can practice headshots a lot more easily than you can practice weddings. You need only about 12 images, maybe 20, to create a full headshot portfolio.



Images © Moshe Zusman



Image © Moshe Zusman

It takes endless practice, but the learning curve is way shorter with headshots and portraits—primarily because of the difference in what I call “liability.” For weddings, you pay a great price for small mistakes. With studio work, it’s different. I called my friends, family and even past brides to come in and let me experiment with their headshots, all in one day, creating a portfolio I used on my website.

From there, I created a pricing, scheduling and a workflow structure that was seamless and hands-off. I changed the look of my studio to look more fashion-based, and started building my business from there.

I used Squarespace to design my website because it was fast and easy, and I was already using it for my wedding photography. I got a separate URL, [HeadshotDC.com](http://HeadshotDC.com), for headshots and business portraits. I’ve created such a streamlined system that it takes me only an hour from the time the client looks at my website and decides to book me until I photograph them and deliver their final headshot. I make about \$500 an hour this way, which is way better than photographing weddings. Weddings require a total of 40 to 50 hours from start to finish. I limit my bookings to a month or two out, eliminating that daunting feeling of being committed to jobs for the next two years.

Moving to studio photography was one of the best things I’ve done for my business and my personal life. If you have the chance to get to hear me speak at places like B&H Event Space, PhotoPlus Expo or Headshot Bootcamp, you’ll hear more about my story and how I get clients to book, pay and show up without having to send out a single email. When they come in for a basic headshot, I spend 10 to 15 minutes with them as they select their final images on the spot. I send the selected images to my in-house retoucher, who delivers the images in 24 to 48 hours. That’s it. No more culling through hundreds of images or waiting up to eight weeks to deliver proofs. And there’s no more chasing down clients for album choices years after their wedding.



Images © Moshe Zusman

In the studio, I shoot with a Canon 5Ds and the Canon EF 70–200mm f/2.8L IS II USM lens. I use Profoto D2 and Profoto light shapers, Savage Universal Backdrops and Tether Tools. There is a little crossover in switching from weddings to studio work. Your existing camera and lenses will be a good start, but it's the lighting you'll want to invest in the most.

I don't hate weddings. I still do a few every year, and have recently rediscovered the fun of second-shooting, which is how I got started. But wedding work is the most physically and mentally challenging genre of photography. They demand too much of my most precious asset: time. Now, I spend most of my time photographing headshots for politicians, businesspeople, yogis, pageant contestants and health professionals in the D.C. area. I get to spend more time being creative on each individual picture, and that inspires and pushes me to be a more fine-tuned photographer.



Image © Moshe Zusman



Image © Moshe Zusman



Image © Moshe Zusman

If you're ready to spend more time living than working, I recommend taking a look at headshot photography. Start out like I mentioned. Rip off the old like a Band-Aid, build a website and start marketing—which you can do in as little as 48 hours, like I teach at Headshot Bootcamp.

Grow your new business while stepping back from your other. Maybe you'll love it, maybe you won't. Maybe you'll decide you still want to shoot weddings and do headshots on the side, or maybe you'll change your life altogether.

The best thing about being a photographer is that we aren't stuck doing something we no longer enjoy. We have the freedom to explore any genre we like and mold our lives how we please. ■

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Moshe Zusman is recognized for his innovative, bold use of light and color with a distinctly modern edge. The Washington, D.C.-based Moshe has been shooting for more than a decade, and specializes in weddings, portraits, headshots and events. He has been featured at numerous workshops and conferences, including WPPI, PhotoPlus Expo, ImagingUSA and ShutterFest, and also hosts his own workshops at his D.C. studio.

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# Engagement Sessions

with Craig LaMere

Engagement sessions are one of my favorite sessions to shoot for a few reasons. You get to use almost any shooting technique you want. You can shoot in natural light or in the studio. You can shoot with off-camera flash. You can shoot editorial style. Another reason I love shooting engagement sessions is because the clients are so in love. They want to show the world, and are eager to try about anything at the shoot.

The engagement session offers one of the best ways to build rapport and trust with your future bride and groom. It's a fantastic calling card for future business. You have to do engagement sessions with a strict game plan, or they can get away from you. Let's look at four big things to keep in mind when shooting future married couples.



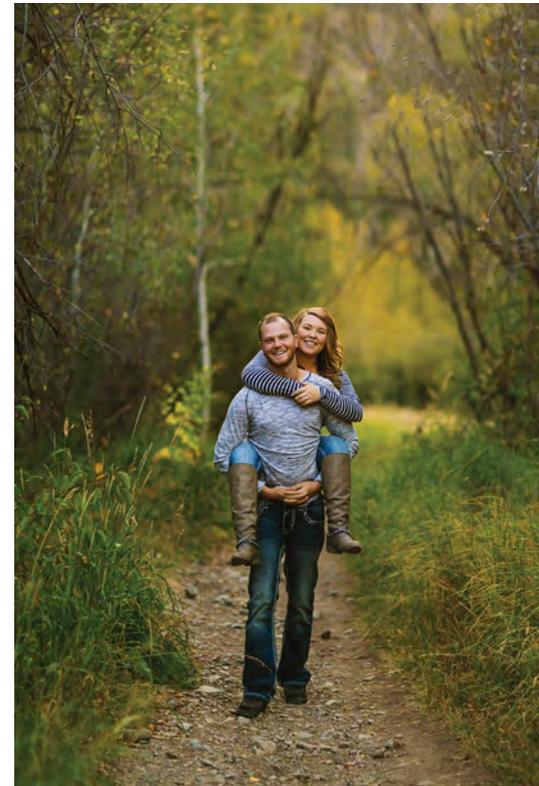
Image © Craig LaMere

## DIGITAL VS. PRINTS

One of the biggest gaps in photography is between shooters who are cool with selling digital files and those who are not. My studio is product-based. A tangible product is far superior to a digital file. As technology progresses, digital imagery is likely to become obsolete in its current form. Eight-tracks, cassette tapes and compact discs are gone. But digital images have a place on our menu. For me, engagement sessions are one of the genres where digitals make more sense to sell than prints.

When I first started shooting, I was firm on not offering digitals to engagement and wedding clients. Without fail, each person who contacted me wanted to know about digital files. They all wanted them for their announcements. I would tell them the studio offers announcements. They would be so excited right up to the point of finding out what their investment would be on the 400 announcements they wanted. I lost a lot of business because I held tough to not selling digitals. Then I realized if I wanted to capture some of the business that was walking away, I would have to change what I was doing. I decided to offer digital files to my engagement sessions.

I implemented a per-file rate, with price breaks on volume orders. The files were formatted so they would only print up to an 8x12 before they started to break apart and pixelate. My clients could use the images for announcements and to print out images to place around the reception tables, but they could not use them to make large prints. I decided that if my clients wanted big prints, they would have to go through the studio.



Images © Craig LaMere



## APPETIZER VS. MAIN COURSE

One of the other pitfalls I fell into was spending way too much time shooting sessions. When I started shooting engagement sessions, I treated them like a main course and not an appetizer. I had my clients bring three to four clothes changes and we would go to a bunch of locations. I shot 300 images per session. After culling the images, I was showing 100 to 120 images at the view session. What I did not understand was engagements are just a teaser to the wedding, and the wedding is the big show. I was putting all that effort and time into the engagement session and putting my clients through it all too; I found out pretty quickly that it was not the right approach for a couple of reasons.

One of the reasons this approach was bad was because I was asking so much of my clients. They were stressed out about all the clothes they had to bring. The time investment was hard on my clients. They would come to the studio all pumped up, and by location three, they were pretty tired. At the view session, they were overwhelmed looking at that many images; they quickly started to all look the same, so my clients started to second-guess. The biggest problem with my approach was that my clients did not want the number of images I thought they did. In my mind, I was shooting the session to sell an album, which at my studio would be around 20 to 30 images. My clients wanted just five to 10 images. I found that my clients didn't budget a lot for the engagement because they were allocating the lion's share of their money to the wedding and the wedding photography.

Nowadays, instead of four clothes changes, we do two. One is casual and the other is formal or semiformal. We go to two locations and we shoot around 60 images for the entire session. The session is an hour or less. At the view session, I show no more than around 40 images. My clients are happy and I'm happy.





Image © Craig LaMere



Image © Craig LaMere

### **MAKES THE WEDDING DAY EASIER**

I love shooting engagements, but the goal is to book and shoot the wedding. I look at the engagement as one of the best ways to set yourself up for a successful wedding shoot. I have shot weddings where the bride and groom had someone other than me shoot the engagement. But shooting the engagement is a fantastic lead into the wedding day for a couple of reasons. When you shoot the engagement, you establish a rapport with the couple. The day of the wedding will be crazy, and it helps when they trust you are going to take good care of them.

The engagement session also prepares you for their personalities and tastes. Time is of the essence at a wedding, and with nerves and stress levels so high, it is a huge advantage to know how the couple likes to be shot, how they take direction, if they like structure or if they are more in the moment. All these factors help you use the time you have to your best advantage.



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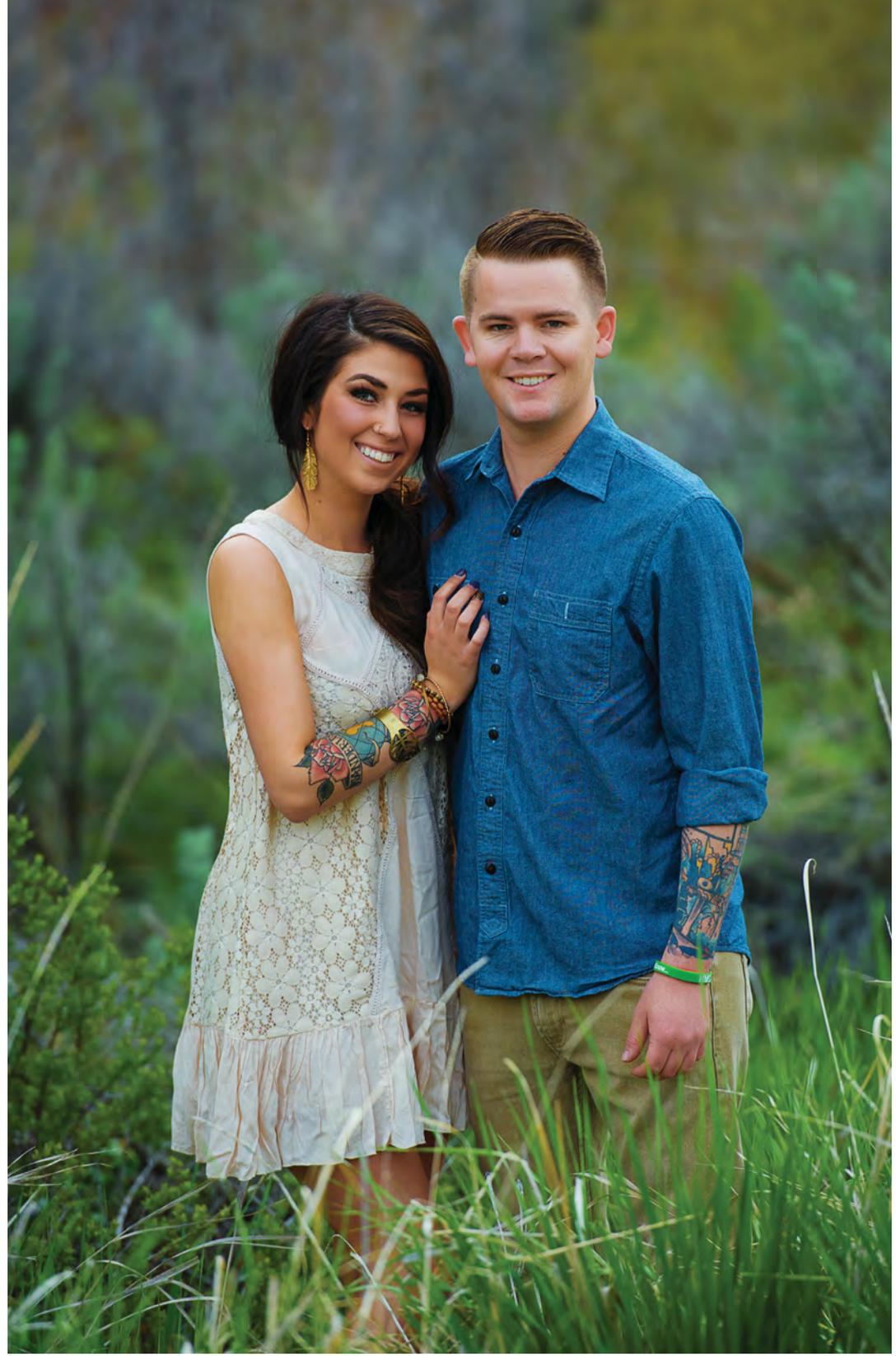


Image © Craig LaMere



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### INCENTIVIZE THE SHOOT

Because shooting the engagement is so important and because our end goal is to book the wedding, we use the engagement session as an incentive for clients to book the wedding. In some of our packages, the engagement session is built in. Or, if my client is at a certain spending level, I offer the engagement as a bonus after they have booked.

I know it seems strange to give something away once they have agreed to pay for it, but I know I'm going to do well with the wedding and I think it goes a long way for a value-added experience. Giving away a few hundred dollars is worth the word-of-mouth returns. ■

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

4 Tips for Avoiding and Dealing With Client Catastrophes  
with **Vanessa Joy**

The first time I had a bride complain about me was when I shot my first wedding, for which I'd charged just \$500. Long story short, the bride didn't like the pictures. Looking back at those pictures now, nine years later, she certainly had every right to complain because they just weren't that good. It was also my fault because I didn't provide her with clear expectations of what she should expect from my photography.

If you've ever had a client upset with you, you know that it can flip your life upside down. You can't sleep at night. All you do is worry about it and talk about it to people who really don't want to hear it. Thankfully, there are a lot of ways you can avoid client catastrophes, especially with brides. There are ways to handle these unfortunate events that will leave your bride happy without letting her walk all over you. Brides can be the most difficult clients, but if you follow the steps below, you'll be able to breeze through transactions with or without confrontation.



Image © Vanessa Joy



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Image © Vanessa Joy

## SET REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

Setting expectations is where it all starts. If you set expectations for your photos, your customer service, your product delivery and anything else that involves clients and what they receive, you won't have a problem meeting those expectations. If you don't set them, you run the risk of your client subconsciously setting them for you—and likely setting them beyond your capabilities.

Setting expectations starts with your website. The second they come to your site, they subconsciously create expectations about your brand, your photos and what they can expect from their wedding pictures. When I meet with clients, I talk about their wedding day and show them pictures that look like what I envision for their final product. If they're having a church ceremony, I show them how I photograph in that setting. If they're not doing any of their photos until after sunset, I show them a winter wedding.

Setting expectations early on means you will be able to communicate with your clients more effectively and they will have realistic expectations of what you're going to deliver to them. Set expectations for quality of the product and turnaround time as well.

Always give yourself a buffer in turnaround time. I tell my clients their proofs will be ready in around three to four weeks, even though I know I'll have them done in one to two weeks. This gives me two possible outcomes. I'll either deliver the product early to them and they'll be happy that I've exceeded their expectations, or, if some things are holding me up on the backend and I deliver past my normal one- to two-week turnaround, they will still get their photos "on time." It's a win-win either way.



Images © Vanessa Joy



Images © Vanessa Joy



Image © Vanessa Joy

## KEEP LINES OF COMMUNICATION OPEN

Your clients should always be able to get a hold of you via email or phone. You should also be easily approachable. If they're having a problem, you want them to feel comfortable coming to you. When they come to you at the beginning of a problem, it's easier to resolve it. It also ensures that your client isn't getting madder and madder, while you are completely unaware something is even wrong.

Throughout your relationship with the bride or groom, email them asking how things are going and if there's anything you can do to make things better. This may open up a can of worms, but it will help diffuse problems before they begin—and it gives you the chance to rectify existing ones. Create a client exit survey that can help you avoid problems with future clients.



Image © Vanessa Joy

## SYMPATHIZE AND LISTEN

When a client comes to you with a problem, you need to be able to respond favorably. I realize that half the time clients come to you with a problem, their expectations or demands are petty, and you want to roll your eyes at them. Don't do that.

When they talk to you about their concerns, sympathize with them. Tell them you understand how they feel and you are sorry about it. Repeat what they say back to them in different words so it's clear that both parties understand what is going on. (These techniques will not only help you with your client relationships, but pretty much any relationship you have.)

## ASK THEM WHAT THEY WANT

It might seem like a really bad idea to ask a hypersensitive, emotionally unstable bride what she wants. Give clients the benefit of the doubt. When you ask a client how she wants you to compensate for a problem, verbalizing the problem will help make them more rational. Ask them what you can do to make things right, and you'll often arrive at a practical solution.

When you do reach a reasonable solution, overcompensate. Offer an additional free canvas or some extra pages in their wedding album. Your goal is to turn unhappy clients into very happy clients, and one of the best ways to do this is by overcompensating.



Image © Vanessa Joy



Image © Vanessa Joy



Image © Vanessa Joy

If you've never had a bridal bomb explode in your face, trust me, you will. I've been in business for almost a decade, and I've had my share of client confrontations. These methods have helped me manage clients in a way that keeps them happy throughout our relationship. ■

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

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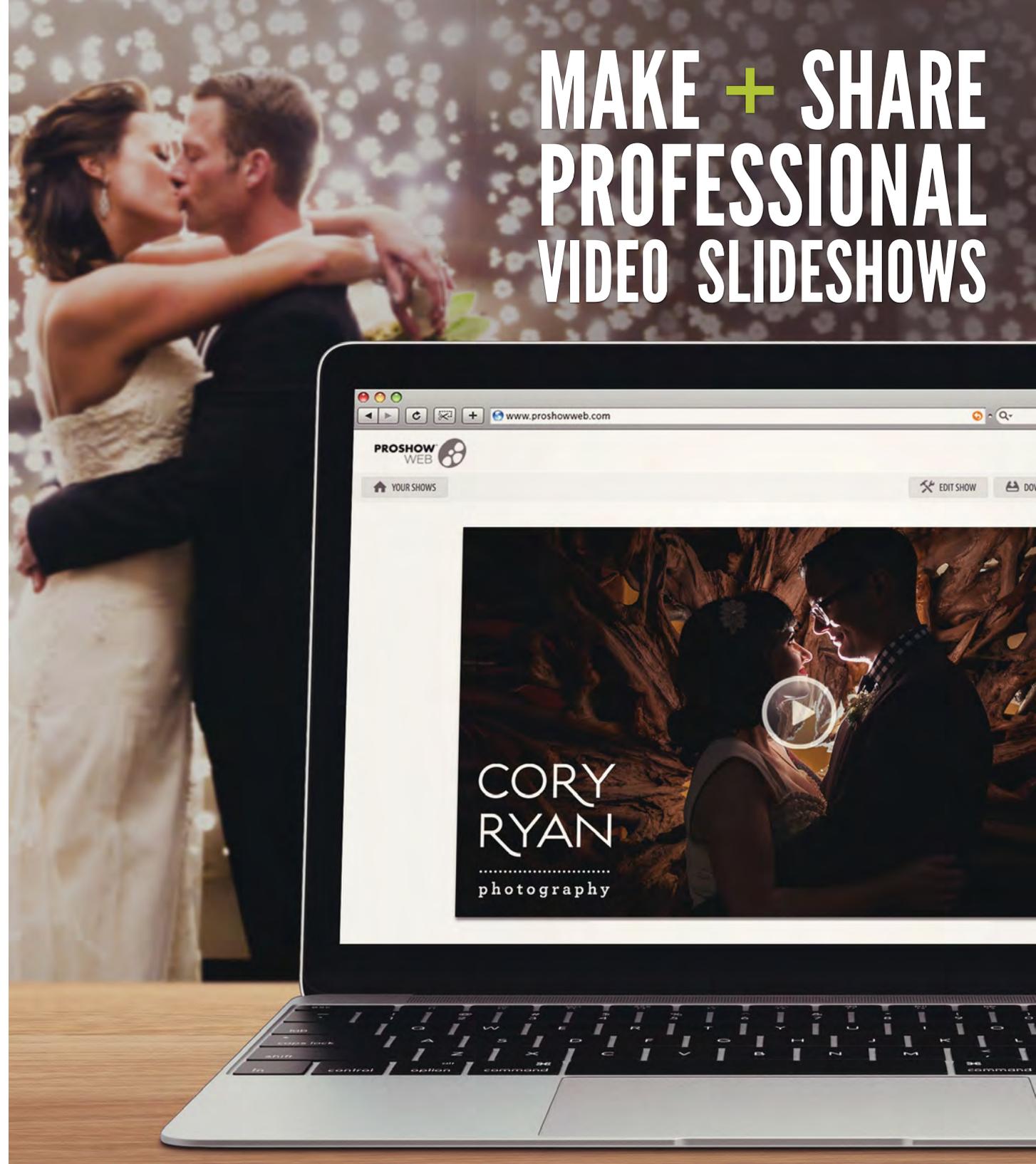


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**PHOTODEX**

# MAKE + SHARE PROFESSIONAL VIDEO SLIDESHOWS



Adapting to

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# CHANGES

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in the Wedding Photography Industry  
with **Michael Anthony**





Image © Michael Anthony

Change happens. Some of us love it and others hate it. Change can impact your business for the better or worse. Change can be something as small as new colors that are trending at weddings or something large, like the rapid transition from film to digital that occurred in the early 2000s.

Now, the thing about change is that it benefits some and is detrimental to others.

I don't write about business a lot, but we have a very healthy photography business, shooting over 100 weddings a year. In business, I have learned one thing, no matter what: Change is inevitable. Those who learn to adapt to changes quickly are the ones who will have the most longevity in our industry. Think about businesses that failed to adapt to change, such as Kodak, Blockbuster and BlackBerry—the list goes on and on.

I had an ex-employee who used to complain about the number of changes I'd make to our studio policies. As a business owner, I keep my ear in tune to even the slightest shift in consumer behavior. If something seems off in your business, trust your instinct, because you're probably right. That employee didn't understand that the changes I made to our policies were in response to the consumer behavior I was sensing.

If something is broken, it needs to be fixed, and sometimes the fix is staring you right in the face but you fail to see it. My pet peeve is when a business takes too long to fix something that is obviously broken. I am guilty of violating my own pet peeve, and my business has suffered because of it.

After we started our associate program Studio 23 last year, there were glaring problems with the structure of the program that needed to be fixed, specifically regarding personnel. We had problematic employees who were causing our clients grief. I had already assigned these employees to shoot weddings, and didn't want to switch them out on our clients. But waiting until it was too late to make a change could have severely damaged my company. In the end, it worked out, and we changed Studio 23's structure, while at the same time cutting down our costs and providing a better-quality product. Had I held out replacing my bad staff, it could have caused irreversible harm to our business.

Changes in the wedding photography industry are happening swiftly, and those of us who are not ready for change could get left in the dust. I run a very active wedding studio and believe that anybody you learn business from should be running an active and profitable business, so understand that the trends I point out below are from my own experience.



Image © Michael Anthony

## WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHY IS GETTING MORE EXPENSIVE FOR CONSUMERS

This is a good change—for you—but you must understand that regardless of trends, when prices go up, so do client expectations. According to The Knot, the average price of wedding photography is up 8 percent this year, which is ahead of the rate of inflation. This is a good sign for photographers, and can be attributed to people like Sal teaching photographers how to run a profitable business, along with an exodus of people who are not running a profitable business.

While this is seemingly a good thing, let me explain why you need to be concerned. With anything in life, if the price goes up, the value needs to go up with it. Clients' perceived value of your product can be objective to them, but you need to address their needs so that clients feel like they are getting a lot for their money.

When a client tells everyone you are expensive—and if you are charging a profitable rate, they probably will—it must be followed up by, “They were totally worth it.” If that is not the follow-up that you receive, those potential new clients won't reach out to you. Nobody wants to pay too much for anything. It doesn't matter if they are wealthy or not: Clients want to feel they are getting value for their money.



Image © Michael Anthony



Image © Michael Anthony

## CLIENTS ARE BECOMING MORE DEMANDING FOR A PROFESSIONAL LEVEL OF SERVICE

Gone are the days when you could respond to your clients in two to three days. You have a life, maybe kids and a lot of other clients to deal with, but in your bride's mind, she expects to be your only client. This may be a result of generational mentality, but I think it must have more to do with the fact that big businesses are providing value with exceptional service to justify increasing costs. This is good for the consumer, but a single photographer doesn't normally have the resources to provide immediate service. When a big business like AT&T runs into customer service issues, they are often a result of a misunderstanding or mishap, and are sometimes the fault of the consumer or the business. AT&T understands that keeping a customer happy is a better option than having an upset customer (but keeping a \$49 activation fee).

Today's consumer knows this, and many push for a concession that is ultimately granted by a large company that benefits more from a happy customer than the small charge being disputed.

Bring that back to photography. If there is a misunderstanding on your pricelist or with a delivery time, most photographers aren't in the position to give away a print or album for free, because we often work on low volume and high margins. You can't simply say no to a client without offering a reason and a solution.

If that solution is not a form of concession, it is more difficult to maintain a happy client, regardless of whether you are right or wrong.

If I told you I didn't run into customer service issues, I would be lying to you. You simply cannot always operate at 100 percent efficiency. Clients are less forgiving than they once were.

The answer isn't simple. You must increase the efficiency in your business and be extremely responsive to clients. Many brides like to be contacted weekly, and if that means setting an auto reminder to shoot a client an email to check on them six months before their wedding, then so be it. Understanding this trend is the first step to getting ahead of it. Larger markets like New York City and Los Angeles see these trends before smaller markets, so keep that in mind if you are not seeing the same thing.

Here are a few things you can implement to bump up efficiency. First, get a solid CRM. 17Hats is amazing at helping you get the job done, and Ally, its lead management, will help with your responsiveness with prospective clients. Next, automate everything that you can. We use email templates for everything from initial inquiry, to follow ups, to upselling parent albums. We have some available on our website for photographers.

## AESTHETIC PREFERENCES ARE CHANGING

The days of rustic and vintage weddings are dying—slowly, but still dying. The film-look craze that has replaced natural-light shooting is also on the way out. Clients are looking for more cinematic, romantic and artistic imagery that is technically well executed, well lit and with modern post-production. To be clear, I am not saying clients are looking for off-camera flash in the middle of an epic scene. I am saying their taste in photography is improving, and they are looking for photography that stands out. Vanessa Joy and Sal Cincotta both have completely different styles of photography, but they both produce images in line with all of these qualities.

Clients are more in tune with what makes a good photograph. They are not always correct, but they are paying more attention. “Fake it till you make it” doesn't work anymore. You need to up your skillset and push yourself to try new things to stand out.

This means you need to practice, and if your portfolio from your paid shoots is not keeping up with aesthetic trends, you need to stylize shoots. We stylize bridal sessions bimonthly to make sure we are creating good content for our clients. Those sessions feature dresses, lighting and scenes all in line with the modern aesthetics.

Here lies the threat to your business. Other photographers are seeing the shift in clients' preferences to be more in line with that of the photographic community, but that means increased competition.

Off-camera flash is getting easier and easier to learn, and simply underexposing a background and correctly exposing your subject with flash isn't enough to make your work stand out. Like Sal says, innovate or die.

## AN ALBUM IS NO LONGER AN ALBUM

Including a wedding album in your packages is no longer an add-on, it's an expectation. I used to get inquiries from people who told me they did not require an album. In recent years, those inquiries have turned into people requesting an album. That means your competitors are all offering albums. If you are not offering albums, you are selling your clients an incomplete story, limiting your profitability and not standing out among your competitors.

Your albums must be different, just like your photography. I am talking paper options, larger than normal sizes, multiple cover choices, etc. Most important, your storytelling ability must be on point and able to evoke emotion in your clients.

Our studio uses a combination of Signature Collection Albums, Graphistudio Wedding Books and MillersLab.com for our different levels of albums. All three offer unique albums with exceptional customer service.

## TRADITIONAL ADVERTISING IS A TURNOFF TO THE MODERN BRIDE

I will get flack for writing this, but you need to modernize your marketing. The days of paying for a magazine ad are over. Your bride is not finding you on Channel 7 during *Judge Judy*, and you are certainly going to turn off a lot of people if your ads are pretentious (“We care about you, the bride, not like all those other photographers who only care about their portfolio”).

What works today? You need a well-rounded strategy based on (but not dependent on) multiple sources of lead generation. Let's look at some popular ad methods.



Image © Michael Anthony

## SOCIAL MEDIA AND GOOGLE

Facebook was very successful for us in 2013 and 2014, but, as it became more popular to advertise on Facebook, users have become numb to it. This is an example of traditional advertising. The problem is that the same ads are displayed repeatedly to the wrong people, and that's ineffective.

Where Facebook and other online ads do work well is in retargeting people who have visited your website. This can be done by installing Facebook Pixel on your site.

If you have a large following of other photographers or have nontargeted people visiting your website, this could be a difficult strategy, but there are workarounds you can explore to make sure you are showing ads to the right people, such as targeting visitors to a landing page.

Instagram ads are the way of the future. Organic reach is still high, but I have found that as of today, these ads are ineffective.

What's more important than where you advertise is how you advertise. People want to get to know your brand and studio. Bombarding them with offers and discounts does not work like it used to because they see that all the time. Consider making a promo video offering free advice for wedding planning, and offer that to brides in exchange for their email. Once you have the email, you can use it to retarget your brides and send your offers and discounts. They will be more receptive this time because they already know you.



Image © Michael Anthony

## REFERRALS AND VENDORS

Word of mouth is your best friend, but vendor referrals can sometimes fall on deaf ears. You want your past clients talking about you. If you are like me, you don't have time to go on a weekly tour of your community with cookies and gifts, hoping to get on a vendor list that more and more venues are charging to be on.

While it's a good thing to work closely and be referred by vendors, if you invest too much of your time with that, once that catering manager is replaced, you must start all over. Instead, make sure you are talking with your good vendors once a month, but don't expect anything from them in return. Sincerity goes a long way, and if you are friendly and helpful with your vendors and clients, they will be more likely to refer you. People base referrals on their experience with you, your brand and your team. It may seem like shop talk to bad-mouth that difficult client to a wedding vendor, but you are placing doubt in their mind as to whether you can handle their client.

Treat your clients like gold. Spoil them. Take care of their timeline and don't let them have a single bad experience on the wedding day. If you do it right, they will refer you to their friends and family like clockwork. Referrals are by far our best source of new leads and bookings.



Images © Michael Anthony

## PAID DIRECTORIES

Directories like WeddingWire and The Knot can work if your price point is lower than that of your competition and your quality is higher than average. These websites pit all vendors against one another in a free-for-all; without getting to know your brand, all they have is your imagery and your price, which both sites encourage their vendors to display because research shows that clients want to see price before shopping. The problem is that when price is a talking point, it will be highly considered in the decision process. Without showing value through your products and personality, it will be hard to charge an adequate amount for your services.

These websites work in conjunction with other marketing techniques to provide confidence in your brand and products. But they can be expensive, and shouldn't be used for starting your ad campaigns.

## EMAIL MARKETING

Email marketing can be incredibly effective, but first you need a quality list to send to. It takes a lot of time to build a list, and because of the nature of what we do, brides will need to be moved to a separate list after their wedding. Use free content to encourage brides to sign up for your list. Your content must be engaging. Brides who don't care about what you are offering won't sign up with you.

## THE INDUSTRY IS BECOMING MORE COMPETITIVE EVERY DAY

When I was the new kid on the block five years ago, I remember being dismissed by local photographers. We are now one of the largest Los Angeles wedding photography studios by volume and sales. This came from hard work, perseverance and making tough decisions. It also came through relentlessly adapting to changes in the market.

I see many competitors that have the same fire and determination that I did. The difference is that I do not dismiss them. I watch my competitors every day to make sure that wherever they are going, I am already there. It may sound harsh, but business is cutthroat.

In a first-season episode of *House of Cards*, Kevin Spacey's character breaks the fourth wall and says, "The higher the mountain you climb, the more treacherous the path." It's great advice, and so true.



Image © Michael Anthony

When Jen and I were starting MPhoto, we looked to the larger businesses to see what they were doing, and went unnoticed by many of them. Today, we can't make a move without every photographer in L.A. knowing about it. It has been harder and harder to get help or advice from local colleagues since we are seen by many as one of the targets to knock down. We have heard stories from vendors about other photographers badmouthing us (we make it a point to be in those venues with prints on the wall). We have had clients tell us that competitors and ex-employees were badmouthing us (we always book those clients).

Once you're successful, others will try to tear you down. You must resist the urge to sink to their level. If you are reading this article, you care about the success of your business, and that means you must do everything to protect it, even if it means swallowing your pride when you run into these situations.

Hopefully these tips will help keep you in tune with today's market and bride. Stay in tune with the market, and you will see continued success. Don't be afraid to make changes when things aren't working. ■



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](http://michaelanthonyphotography.com)



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**BUILDING  
BLOCKS**

**IS IT TIME TO EXPAND  
YOUR PRODUCT LINE?**

with **Skip Cohen**

The hierarchy of why people hire a professional photographer in the portrait/social categories goes brides, babies, pets. With brides in the number-one spot, weddings represent a huge potential for a never-ending demand for your work, plus an incredible opportunity to sell new products and services.

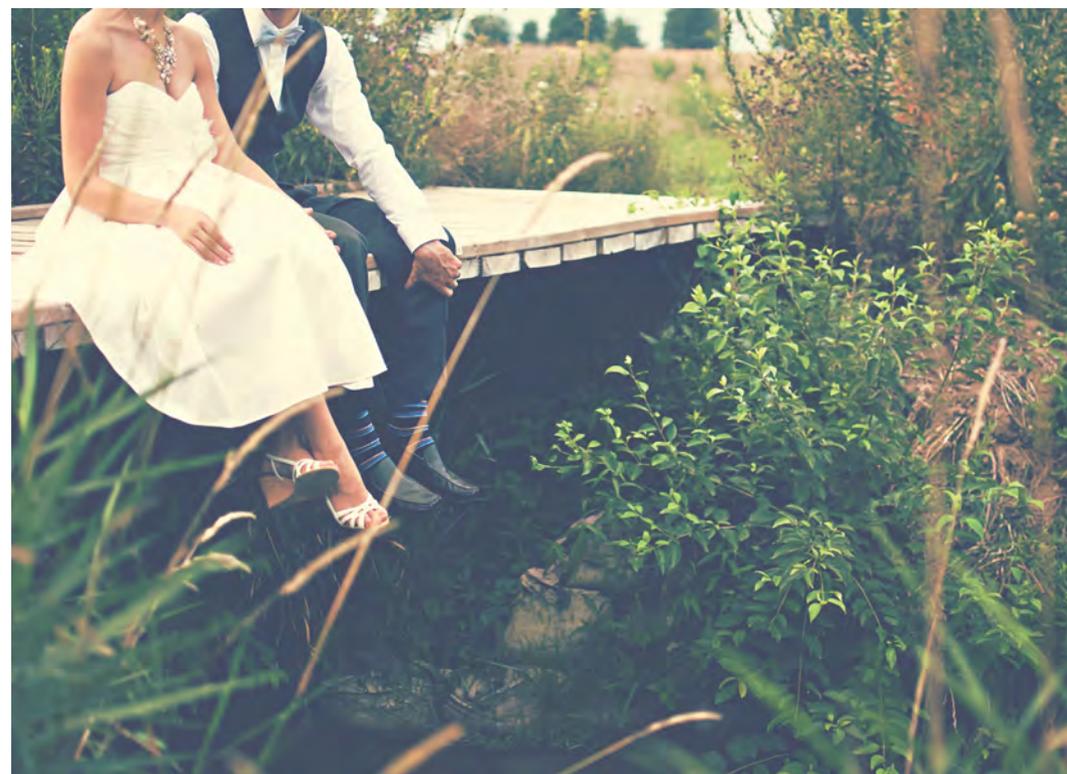
I want to get you thinking about some fresh ideas along with a few tried and true standbys to increase your revenue. Let's offer your clients a greater selection of add-ons.

Before I hit you with a list of things you should be offering, let's talk about pricing. I bet that at least half of you have priced your product too low. As Sal Cincotta once said in an old video, and I'm paraphrasing a little, there's no greater way to screw up your business than to wrongly price your products and services.

Review all your costs. Compare what you're offering with your competitors. Understand the margins you need in order to eat something other than macaroni and cheese every night. Expanding services and products won't help your business grow if you're already running below an acceptable level of profitability.

This is a shameless plug for my Lynda.com videos: Search my name on Lynda and check out my video on pricing. I had a lot of fun doing it, and it's loaded with solid tips and other resources to get you on the right track.

If you don't have a solid profit foundation to start, none of these ideas will help you very much.



## ENGAGEMENT SHOOTS

Not every idea I want to share this month is new. Here's an old idea—one that I'm amazed more photographers don't use.

The primary reason to always do an engagement shoot has nothing to do with expanding your product line. It's about establishing trust with the client. An engagement shoot gives you and the couple the chance to get to know one another. It's about relationship building. On the wedding day, you've already established trust, so you're more likely to get the natural expressions you want during the shoot.

## VIDEOS/POSTERS/SAVE-THE-DATE CARDS/STATIONERY

If you do a great job on the engagement shoot, you should have plenty of images for the couple to share on social media. Here's your chance to demonstrate pure creativity.

- **Engagement Videos:** It's the perfect extension of your storytelling ability as a wedding photographer. I'm a big fan of Photodex and ProShow Web. Create a slideshow from the engagement shoot, and you've got a great first chapter of the story of a new couple. What's even more exciting is taking full advantage of technology and bringing together a few short video clips with still images and great music.
- **Posters:** Two years ago, Marathon Press launched Bella Art Prints, which offer a great way to promote the love story you've been hired to capture. Think about a Hollywood movie poster starring your bride and groom. If you don't have the design skills, find somebody in your community who does. Bella Art Prints gives you a way to create an affordable poster that becomes an extension of your product line and an amazing surprise gift to your clients.
- **Save-the-Date:** Use your still images to create a postcard, video or stationery in a format your clients can mail. I know this isn't a new idea, but it is if you take control of the process. You're the one who implements the idea, working with a local printer/design company. Marathon can help you through each step of the process.

## HOLIDAY CARDS

A holiday card is the perfect addition to the albums you're going to create for the client after the wedding. As you're shooting the engagement and wedding images, look for that opportunity to shoot something spectacular for the couple's first holiday card.

## SHOOTING FOR THE SILVER FRAME

I'd love to take credit for the idea, but it belongs to wedding photographers Justin and Mary Marantz. The "silver frame" refers to an image that's so outstanding it can stand alone, outside of the album. It's the image the parents will have on the piano or fireplace. It might be a classic portrait or simply something unusual. This is a quality image with impact that shows off your skillset.

## "WHAT'S NEW?"

All it takes is one phone call to your lab to ask that question. Labs are always coming up with new products and ways to share images, but you won't know about them if you don't ask. While walking ShutterFest gives you a chance to see new products firsthand, you don't have to wait until April every year.

## "WHAT'S OLD?"

It's not a typical question you'd ask your lab, but while you might be tired of canvas prints, many of your clients have never seen one, let alone owned one. I have two oversize canvas prints in my home, and I'm always surprised by the response from friends who visit.

We might be tired of canvas prints as members of the photographic community, but the public isn't close to getting bored with the idea—especially when they're the subject in print. A great lab can print on virtually anything. This is an opportunity for your creative skills to shine.

## ONE BIG PRINT

When a couple is scheduled to come in to see their proofs, wedding photographer Joe Buissink creates a special surprise gift. He picks one of his most favorite images and prints it nice and big. He frames and hangs it in his studio before the couple comes in. It's his gift to them before they even begin thinking about their album.

Here's one more piece of brilliance from Joe. He always signs the print. Why? Because he wants them to remember he's an artist, and artists always sign their work.

## JUMPS, DRIVES, PROOFS, PRINTS AND IPADS

Technology has given you the ability to do whatever you want with digital files. One of my favorite digital content companies is PhotoFlashDrive.com. It offers an ample collection of creative ideas for the packaging of jump drives, prints, etc. You're the only one who can create the excitement around the services you provide. If you don't elevate the value of the images to the level they deserve, nobody else will.

## FIRST-ANNIVERSARY SITTINGS

Here's an idea I learned from photographer David Ziser years ago. He would do his best to contact every bride within a reasonable travel distance of his studio on the couple's first anniversary. He always wanted to be the first to wish them a happy anniversary. His special gift was a complimentary portrait sitting.

The younger the bride, the more friends she has who will be getting married. This is a word-of-mouth business, and a surprise call from the photographer who shot the wedding is going to spread to every friend and family member of the bride. You couldn't ask for better PR.





All of these ideas can help you build a stronger wedding business, but don't forget your skillset comes before pricing. You'll never be able to justify your pricing if your skills aren't better than Uncle Harry's. Your clients deserve the very best, and so do you. You're not just working to be an outstanding artist, but, in the wedding world, the ultimate storyteller. ■

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

**Panasonic**

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**Explore New Frontiers.**

CHANGING PHOTOGRAPHY **G**

Photo Credit: Daniel Berehulak





100-400mm F/4.0-6.3

product  
review

**Panasonic** with *Salvatore Cincotta*

# LUMIX



12-60mm F/2.8-4.0



8-18mm F/2.8-4.0

## Why the LUMIX Leica Vario Lens?

Talking about cameras without talking about glass is an incomplete conversation. Sure, in recent news, Panasonic is stealing the show with its new and incredible GH5, but the new lens lineup being released is nothing to ignore.

In this month's review, we check out three killer lenses: the new 8-18mm F/2.8-4.0, the 12-60mm F2.8/4.0, and the 100-400mm F/4.0-6.3

### Features include:

- Splash and dustproof lens bodies with compatible LUMIX G cameras
- Legendary performance of the LEICA lens
- Suitable for hybrid shooting in either 4K video or high-resolution still photography
- Reduced exposure shifting during video capture
- Compatible with Dual I.S. 2.0 when used with compatible LUMIX G cameras



For more information, visit [shop.panasonic.com](http://shop.panasonic.com)



— 5 —  
COMMON  
WEDDING  
MISTAKES  
with **Melanie Anderson**

This month, we look at how to keep your gear lightweight, items to pack for care kits for your bride and you, one of the most important mistakes that wedding photographers make, and how to showcase images and create suggestions of products at the sales session.



Image © Melanie Anderson

## PRECONSULTATION

A preconsultation is so vital in wedding photography. This is the only genre where I meet with potential clients before doing business with them. This is the opportunity to find out if we are a good fit, to learn their needs and personality, and to educate our clients on the power of the print. Showcasing albums and wall portraits allows us to presell products and create an awareness that not only are you there for the day of the wedding, but that you actually care about creating heirloom products for them. Explain how important it is, that years from now the investment will be one they will not regret.

I pour everything into the wedding day—this is a day that I too cannot get back—so I want to know that my investment in time is worth it. I also want to ensure that I actually get along with the potential clients.



Image © Melanie Anderson



Image © Melanie Anderson

Occasionally I learn that our product prices are too expensive for a potential client. This is a perfect time to suggest a gift registry for the after-the-wedding sales. We create a custom link with graphics for the couple to share on social media via their custom website if they have one. Most couples create these so their friends and family can keep up to date on wedding plans. Brides use them for journaling their experience. These custom sites are a great place to link a registry directly or via a link. We can link to our website and create a shopping cart in any denomination. This money is tracked and used for their albums and wall portraits. It's a win-win for your studio and your bride and groom.

Encourage parents of the bride and groom to join in on consultations. They are often the ones paying for the wedding, and if you can make a connection with them, chances are they will be willing to increase their budget and include parent albums in post sales.



Image © Melanie Anderson



Image © Melanie Anderson

## GEAR

The gear musts for me include the Spider Camera Holster. I use the strap as well as the holster system. I had the company create a dual unit for me so I can carry two camera bodies at the same time. I don't shoot without it. The Holster is an extension of me. Having my gear at my hips saves my lower back, shoulders and neck, and allows me to be hands-on with my clients. I can fix their hair and position them more easily. It alleviates having to set down my camera or having it swing from my neck all day.

Having two camera bodies lets me keep a 24–70 lens on one and a 70–200 on the other, giving me versatility throughout the ceremony and reception. The other lenses in my bag are a macro to capture the detail shots, a wide angle or fisheye for more creative and cinematic imagery, and an 85mm for portraits. I like the 85mm, which I shoot wide open, allowing me to photograph anywhere.

I bring speedlights, which are portable, lightweight, durable and dependable. I like to have three speedlights so I can capture depth; I set up two or three side by side to overshadow the sun, creating more cinematic images and allowing the sky to shine through. Some lightweight stands, extra batteries and MagMod systems round out all that you need for any lighting conditions.

One last piece of equipment I always bring is a stepladder. It's useful for special dances and cutting of the cake, where I might want a higher angle.



Image © Melanie Anderson

## SELF-CARE

Lack of self-care is one of the most important mistakes photographers make. We stay so focused on the bride and groom along with everything around us that we might forget to eat and hydrate. You are no good to anyone if you don't feel well. I keep Pepto and Advil in my arsenal. An extra set of clothing is a good idea. Accidents happen. Someone could spill something on you, clothing could rip or you could sweat through. Changing before the reception keeps you looking and feeling professional. I also keep water, soda and small snacks on hand.

I also keep a mini notepad and pen for any last-minute changes that I need to remember, such as a family member requesting special shots that the bride and groom had not mentioned, and that I will do my best to accommodate if time permits.

## BRIDAL CARE

I keep a bridal care kit with me that includes bobby pins, safety pins, clear nail polish and hairspray. I also pack small snacks and water for the bride.



Image © Melanie Anderson



Image © Melanie Anderson

### POST-WEDDING

This is the most common mistake wedding photographers make. Always invite your bride and groom and their parents to come back to your studio to view the art prints and album options. Otherwise, you are leaving money on the table. You can make more money from product sales than the wedding coverage. It starts with educating your client at the consultation, where you explain your process and the importance of printing their images and creating heirloom products.

### ACTION PLANS

- Create a gift registry.
- Create a self-care kit.
- Create a bridal care kit. ■

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

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3 Steps for Coaching  
*Emotion*  
With Wedding Clients  
with **Mariea Rummel**



Putting emotion into your images can set your work apart. There is something magical about an image that tells a story. Whether that story is about passion or laughter, people are drawn to these images. It's so simple, yet very few photographers can tap into this with clients.

My journey to photographing emotional images started six years ago when I was tired of using the same poses with my wedding clients over and over. "Smile. Now don't. Pretend you're dancing." Ugh. The feeling of being stuck and uninspired spurred me to change. I knew I needed to alter my photography style, but how?

It was when I dug deep that it finally hit me. I didn't need to "pose" my clients. I just needed to help them tell their love story.

And so I started building a style of photography that would drive my whole brand. Here are the steps I took to create emotional photos and build trust with clients so they could relax and become vulnerable in front of the camera.



Image © Mariea Rummel

## STEP 1: BUILD YOUR RELATIONSHIP

Trust and time are the keys to getting your clients to open up. Meet with them face to face when booking them. If they are out of town, use FaceTime or Skype. Let them talk. Get them to tell you their love story.

After booking, I send out a small questionnaire titled "Getting to Know You." These few questions help me understand their personalities. I refer back to them right before their engagement session or wedding.

1. How did you meet? I want details.
2. What was the first thing you thought of when you saw each other?
3. What do you love about your future bride/groom?
4. Tell me about the proposal. I want details.
5. What does a perfect day together look like?
6. What are your hobbies? What do you like to do together?
7. Who's the extravert? Who's the introvert?
8. What are you both looking forward to the most during your wedding?

If your clients feel you are truly invested in and care about their relationship, they will feel more comfortable with you. Adding an engagement session into their collection is a great way to build a stronger bond before the wedding. They see how you work behind the camera, and you see how they are in front of it. On the wedding day, they are relaxed because they know what to expect.

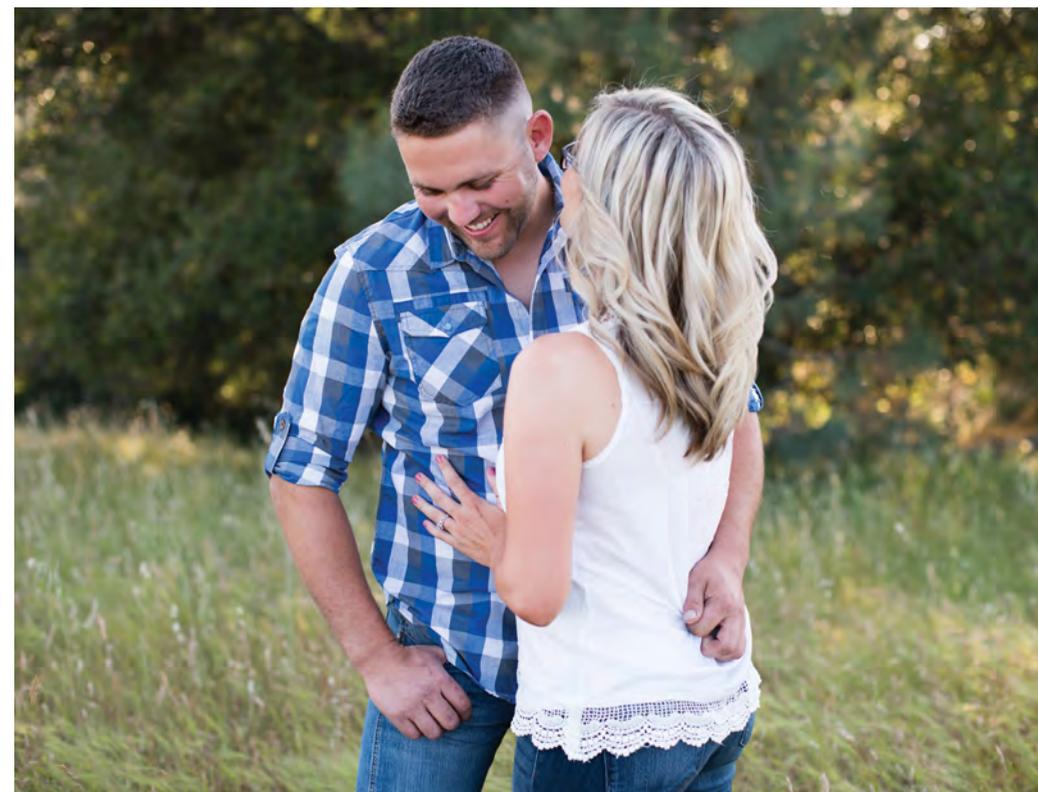


Image © Mariea Rummel



Image © Mariea Rummel



Images © Mariea Rummel



## STEP 2: COACH YOUR CLIENTS

Having photos taken, for the average person, is a little nerve-wracking. Our clients aren't all models. If we threw them in front of the camera and said, "Do something," they would freeze up. They want to know that you have this under control. Before most of my engagement sessions, I take them out for happy hour. We chat and laugh, and I get them to relax before their sitting. I'm watching their personalities a bit more so I can plan the best approach for the shoot and sales. I reassure them that I will help every step of the way and that we are going to have an awesome time. I give them a funny example of my coaching method so they completely understand.

Be confident. Be witty. But remember that what works for one couple might not work for another. I don't tell a more reserved couple to yell out their favorite cuss word. Evaluate your coaching topics for each couple.

When talking to your couple during a shoot, keep it simple. Let them relax between coaching topics. Don't throw the whole book at them. You'll overwhelm that poor couple and yourself. For your own sanity, make it a goal to try one new coaching topic every few clients.

We have a million things going on in our heads during a shoot. "Where's the sun? F-stop, ISO, WB...is that dirt on her dress? Where did this wind come from?" Stop. Breathe. Don't get ahead of yourself. Focus. You got this. Now you are ready to deliver.

Just like an actor, you are setting the stage, and delivery is everything. When you are coaching, take the camera away from your face. No one can hear you behind the camera, and your voice and facial expressions set the mood. I walk right up to my clients, inches from their faces, and whisper, "Luke, kiss Sarah like it's the last kiss you will ever give her." The whisper and the closeness is a perfect delivery. If I stood 15 feet away and loudly said the same thing, the outcome would be far less emotional. You want to take the shots right after you offer suggestions. Those reactions contain the true emotion you are looking for.

Here are a few of my coaching topics.



Image © Mariea Rummel



Image © Mariea Rummel



Images © Mariea Rummel

## SUGGESTED TOPICS

### *Love coaching*

- Without saying a word, show how much you love each other.
- Say what you love about each other.
- Close your eyes. Think about what a blessing you are to each other.
- Close your eyes and touch foreheads. Breathe in and out together, and think about when you knew you were in love.
- Cuddle tight like you're trying to stay warm. Close your eyes and, at the count of three, slowly open your eyes and look at me. (This is three reactions in one.)
- Tell each other three things you are most thankful for.
- Cuddle with just your faces.
- Wrap your arms around your future spouse. Without words, show that you are here to always take care of this person.

### *Laughter coaching*

- Say the first thing that comes to mind when I say: *honeymoon, sexy time* (in your best *Borat* voice), *bridezilla, your best man*.
- Whisper something sexy in the other's ear.
- Go in for a kiss but don't let the other kiss you.
- Tickle your partner's neck with just your lips.
- At the same time, yell out the color the other was wearing on your first date.
- Who's the saver? Who's the spender?
- At the count of three, yell out your partner's favorite cuss word.

Yes, you will act like a fool and you might feel a little out of your comfort zone. But your images will be amazing, and that's all that matters. My clients always say their time with me was a blast.

This form of coaching isn't only for your couples. You can tweak these suggestions for the bridal party and other photo opps.

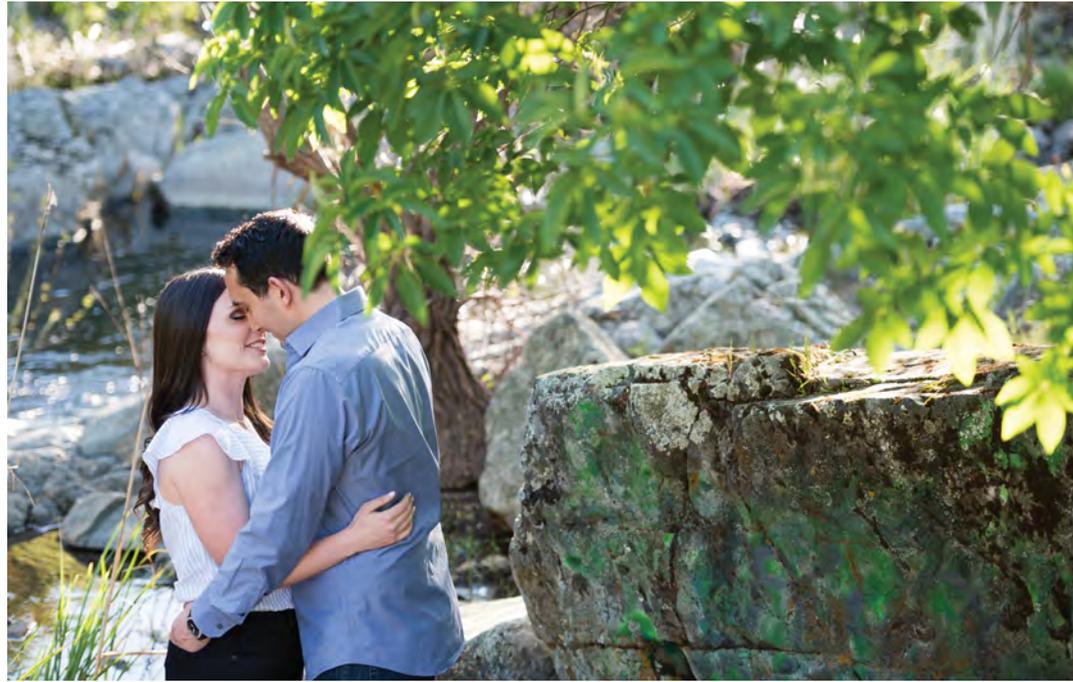


Image © Mariea Rummel

### STEP 3: EMPOWER YOUR CLIENTS

Throughout the engagement session and wedding day, remember to praise your clients. Sometimes we are too deep in our own thoughts that we forget to empower the people we are photographing. Tell them often that they are doing a wonderful job. Whenever they might feel awkward, give them praise. Don't be afraid to show them the back of the camera. Instant visual gratification is a confidence booster.

Don't overwhelm yourself trying to memorize all of these coaching suggestions. Pick one or two and perfect them. Use them to break the ice or when you feel stuck. Challenge yourself to think outside the box and create your own suggestions. ■



Mariea Rummel is a wedding and portrait photographer based in Northern California. In her 13 years as a full-time photographer, she has found her niche as a "lifestyle" photographer focused on capturing true emotion. When she's not writing about herself in the third person, Mariea loves spending time with her family, hiking and traveling, and is a dedicated foodie.

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# Curating the Editorial Wedding

with Bobbi Petersen & Doug Weittenhiller



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Wedding photography began shortly after photography was born in the early 1800s. Queen Victoria and Prince Albert get credit for not only the first wedding photograph but also the first “re-created shot.” At that time, wedding photography was reserved for royalty and the wealthy due to the tremendous cost. It was not documentary photography as we know it now, but a single photograph. This severely limited any storytelling elements about the wedding day. Due to the bulk of cameras, most wedding photography of the 19th and early 20th century was relegated to the studio using traditional poses. Modern wedding photography became commonplace after World War II with the commercialization of smaller SLR and rangefinder-type cameras. Today we are seeing a further modernization of the genre: editorial wedding photography.

A traditional modern wedding photographer turns out classic, posed images of people and places. There are hefty doses of direction from the photographer to organize family photo groupings, the wedding party and portraits with the couple. Some studio equipment may also find its way into the fields and streets of the wedding as specific lighting conditions are masterfully created. In contrast to this, a photojournalistic methodology is very hands-off. There is a greater emphasis on storytelling; a photojournalist observes and records rather than interact with people and details. The results are more emotional photographs that highlight the feelings of wedding participants.



Image © Twig & Olive Photography

Most photographers today blend some of these two approaches in their telling of the wedding story. Editorial wedding photography unifies elements of posed fine art with the details of a documentary. Its roots are in fashion photography, with expressive compositions being mixed with dramatic lighting and shooting angles. The locations for portraits are a point of emphasis, such as never-ending landscapes or a bustling metropolis, and many details of the wedding are recomposed in a way that seems illogical. For example, a table centerpiece can be photographed as a setup for a conventional shot, or can be moved to a location with better lighting, more texture and other details, perhaps outside. Couples who would otherwise smile for the camera in front of a tree or wall can instead snuggle together at a campfire wrapped in quilts.

Portraits and details take on new, beautiful meanings, with layers of variety and splendor—which blog and magazine editors love. There exists a certain liberty to photograph beyond the specific constructs of the wedding: a blue sky matching the bride’s eyes, the local flora at the venues or rain droplets on a window of a dressing room. And therein is the appeal. No longer is the wedding narrative just pictures of the couple marshaling through the timeline; rather, it’s their story interwoven with those of friends, family, places and accoutrements.

An editorial wedding narrative—and by extension the client’s experience—needs to be created by the photographer. This begins long before the first client contact, through a combination of strategic marketing on social media and the true storefront of a modern business: the website. These images are intended not to retain current clients but excite new ones. Published images should reflect a consistent style and brand. The attraction of potential clients to editorial photography begins with a bride holding a wedding cake in the middle of a field at sunset. Consultations are no longer about showing off products but instead finding connections between three human beings. This simple change alone helps personalize the experience for everyone.

None of this matters if there isn’t a specific wedding experience before, during and after the wedding day. A consistent product is made much stronger with a consistent construct for every client. A common mistake new photographers make is to change their shooting style and approach to deliver a product the client requests. While this sounds like good customer service, no favors are paid to anyone. Unnecessary time is spent trying to figure out what is needed instead of what can be created.

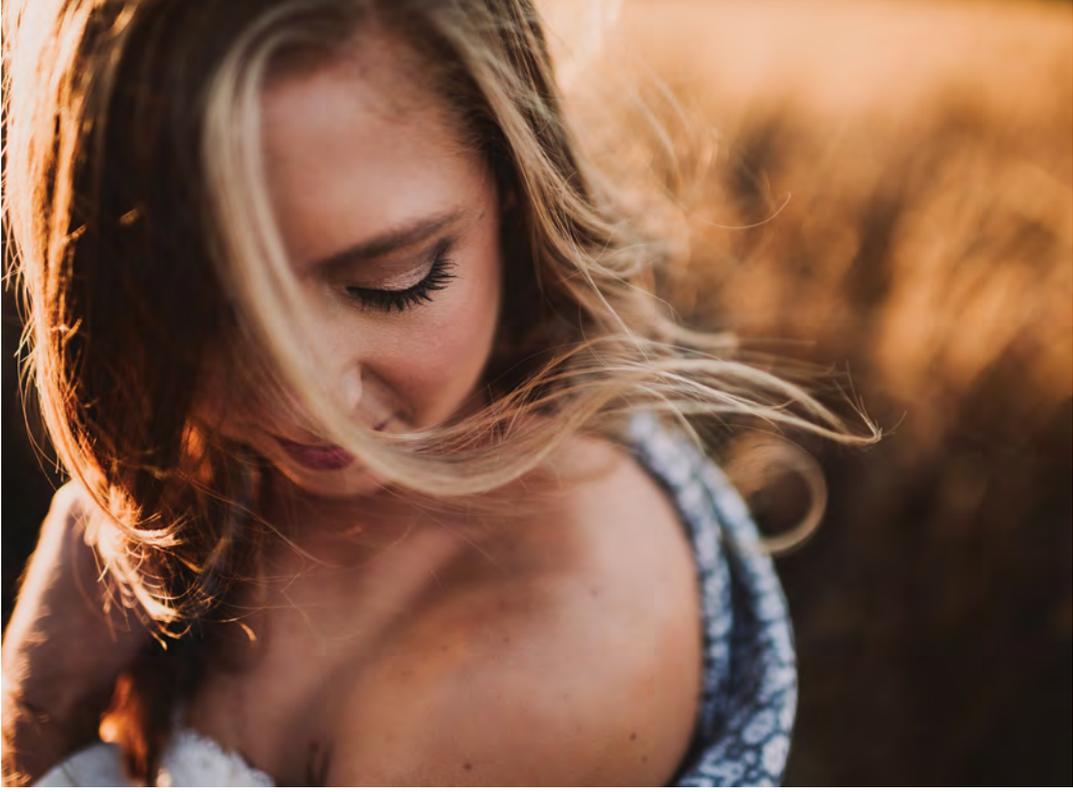


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A wedding timeline must take advantage of lighting conditions. Editorial wedding photography requires adequate time allotted during certain portions of the day. Sunset can be an important factor in the creation of a timeline. If a warm sunset glow is part of the documentary, go over this in detail at consultations. Set aside however much time is needed to discuss required detail shots. It helps set the tone and allows for more successful client management.

Once a contract is signed, execute a planned workflow that prepares the client for the needs of the editorial process. Give them a gentle nudging a year before the wedding to discuss vendors, timing and family concerns (before the invitations go out). This can help avoid pitfalls that derail the wedding. Planning too much time for photographs at midday can wear out the couple before the beautiful light begins. On the other hand, unfavorable locations or unnecessary stops in the timeline can inhibit the creative process. Engagement shoots give the client a taste of editorial photography. A prewedding questionnaire offers an easy way to organize the final details, and is a tool that reiterates a cadence for the wedding day that will create a beautiful narrative. This time investment makes for happier clients and a much less stressed photographer.

All this setup makes sense on the wedding day. The clients trust the brand and have a clear understanding of the needs this approach demands. It's not about client or photographer needs any longer, but about what can be done to serve the editorial process.



Image © Twig & Olive Photography



Image © Twig & Olive Photography

The wedding narrative 100 years from now will look completely different than it does today, because of technological advancements or breaks with tradition. Curating an editorial wedding narrative takes time and trust, careful marketing and communication. It starts before any contract is signed and continues long after the client has received the finished product. Making a desirable brand, be it editorial-based or otherwise, is the easy part. The challenge will always be in the creation of a unique experience for every client. ■



Twig & Olive Photography is a fine art studio specializing in custom editorial weddings and portraiture. Bobbi, Courtney and Doug bring an authenticity to the genre that sets them apart from the competition. They're based in Sun Prairie, Wisconsin, with a satellite studio in Winter Park, Florida, and are available worldwide.

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# WEDDING VIDEO FOR PHOTOGRAPHERS

5 Tips for Getting Started

with Ning Wong



When I started my wedding photography business seven years ago, I never imagined I would become a videographer as well. The Canon 5D Mark II had recently been announced, and the DSLR video revolution was born. When Canon added the ability to capture video on the DSLR, it was a game changer: Now you could create cinema-quality films using your DSLR, lenses and accessories.

After a dozen or so requests for video, I felt that I should start adding it to my business. I was tired of losing these leads to others. So, about five years ago, I went for it, and it was one of the best decisions of my life.

I apprenticed under a local videographer, took workshops and learned through trial and error. The learning process never ends. Even now I am still learning new techniques and ideas that help elevate my wedding films to another level. I encourage you to reach out to fellow videographers. On-the-job experience is extremely valuable, teaching you things you can't read about online.



Image © Ning Wong

If I could go back in time and give myself five tips for getting started in wedding videography, here is what I would tell myself.

### **KNOW YOUR GEAR**

Knowing the ins and outs of your gear is crucial. You don't want to be fumbling around on a wedding day trying to figure out how to change the ISO or white balance. If you know how to use your gear, you can concentrate on shooting the wedding.

If you aren't confident with your gear, practice whenever you can. Go out, shoot stuff, read the manual, look for tutorials. Practice makes perfect. Look at it like this: If you were a concert pianist, you would spend countless hours practicing your music before a concert. You wouldn't wait until you got onstage to start practicing.

Think of the concert like your wedding. Don't practice when you are "performing" at the concert. Spend all the time before your event to practice so that when it comes to your client's wedding day, you are ready to perform.



Images © Ning Wong





Image © Ning Wong

### USE A TRIPOD OR MONOPOD

Shaky footage is not your friend. One of the biggest beginner mistakes is to not use proper support for your camera. Whether it's a tripod, monopod or gimbal, use something that will help keep your footage steady.

If you want a simple way to add production value to your film, keep your footage stable. While you're at it, once you have a good shot lined up, focused and exposed on your tripod, leave your tripod and camera alone. Quit fidgeting with it—you don't want to ruin a perfectly useable shot just because you couldn't keep your hands off your camera.

### SHOOT FOR THE EDIT

When you're shooting different kinds of shots throughout the wedding day, keep in mind what each shot will be used for. Don't just take a shot that doesn't have any purpose. You want each shot to help drive the story of the wedding.

Shoot for transitions. That means using a slider or a pan/tilt movement to bring your viewer into the scene.

I encourage everyone to edit their own footage. That way, you can critique your shots and work on improving. If you do the editing yourself, you'll quickly learn how to shoot certain shots and shoot for transitions, and how to make your life easier.

### ANTICIPATE THE UNEXPECTED

A wedding photographer should be able to anticipate when the moments happen—things like the first kiss, a relative crying during the vows and the first look.

Shooting video is tougher because you have to be ready to shoot the moment something happens. If you always keep your eyes peeled and ready to go, you'll be able to anticipate the unexpected.

Of course, make sure you still shoot the safe shots first so you get what the client expects. But you also want to wow them with those creative shots they weren't expecting.



Image © Ning Wong

## SHOOT B-ROLL

B-roll (for “background roll”) is extra footage that is used to enhance your film. Some great examples of B-roll are audience reaction shots, your groom/bride getting ready and funny bridal party portrait shots.

B-roll boosts your storytelling. Instead of having talking heads yakking throughout the film, cut to B-roll for depth.

B-roll also helps you cover up messy transitions or unusable shots. You can cut from your main shot to B-roll, and then back to your main shot. That allows you to smooth over a jump cut or missing footage. You can also use B-roll during a voiceover to control your storytelling.



Image © Ning Wong

## BONUS TIPS:

### SHOW UP EARLY

The early bird does, in fact, get the worm. If you want to get a head start shooting the day, show up early.

You’ll quickly learn that videography takes a lot more gear and prep than photography does. Take the extra time to get your gear ready, to shoot B-roll and details, and to establish rapport with the wedding party before anyone else gets there.

### USE LICENSED MUSIC AND CONTENT

When you create your client’s wedding film, you may be tempted to use the latest song on the radio. But if you can’t properly license that song, don’t use it.

Musicians are artists, just like us. How would you feel if someone ripped off your work? Don’t do that to someone else—use only licensed music.

Several websites offer great licensed music. One of my favorites is SongFreedom. They offer mainstream artists like One Republic, Imagine Dragons and Lady Gaga, along with a plethora of new and upcoming artists.

Images © Ning Wong



Image © Ning Wong



Image © Ning Wong

I purposely didn't tell you to know your audio and lighting, because these are basic things you should know before you start offering videography to your clients. These two elements are just as important as knowing how to shoot video on your camera. Learn how to properly capture audio, and use lighting to mold your wedding films.

Hopefully these tips will help you get started in the world of wedding videography. There will be so many things you'll have to learn and adapt to, but if you're willing to do it, you'll be able to start offering wedding videography to your couples too. ■



Ning started full time in wedding photography and cinematography in 2010. He enjoys capturing people at their most emotional moments. He's a people person who brings an air of positive energy, kindness and empathy to every job he does. When he is not behind the camera, he enjoys spending time with his beautiful wife and daughter, family, friends and dog (Ewok). He loves what he does and can't imagine doing anything else.

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**Sal Cincotta**, *Editor-in-chief*

BEST WEDDING IMAGE





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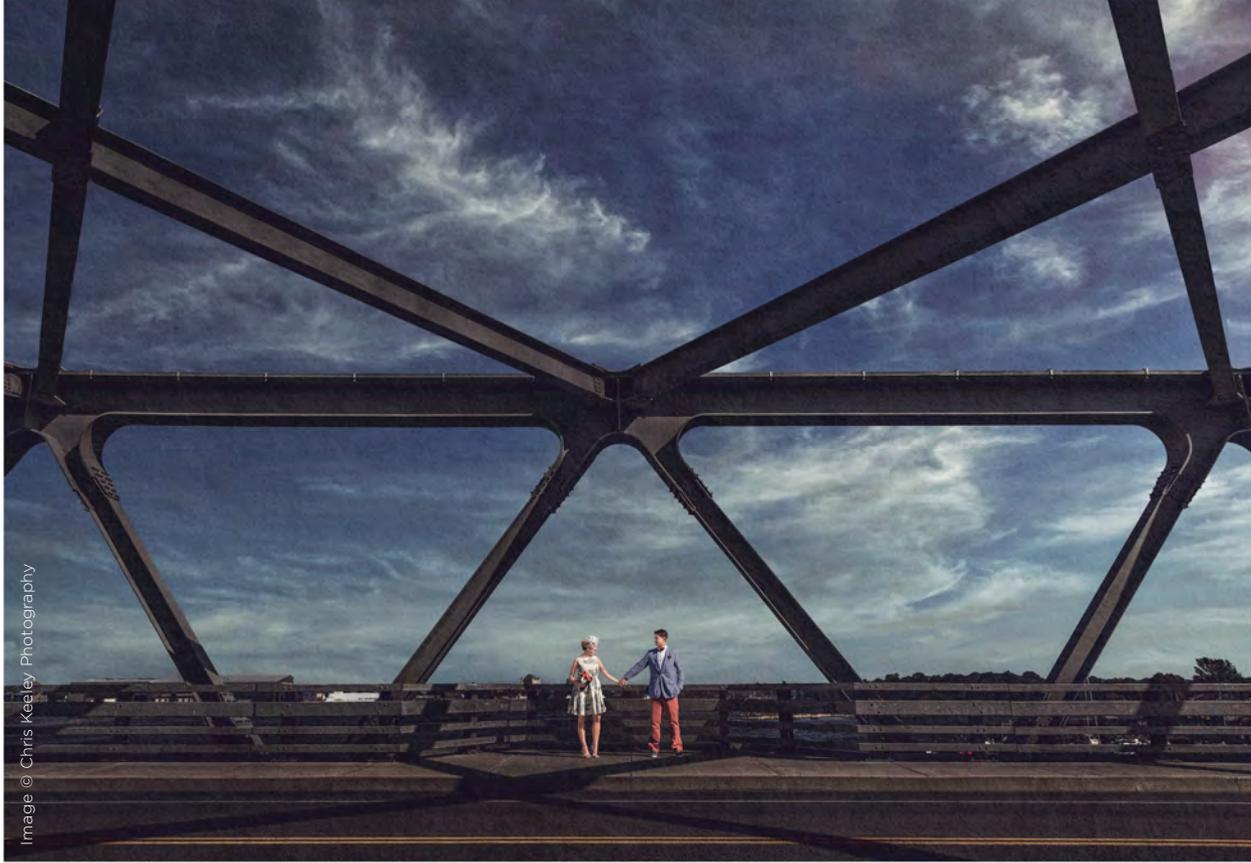


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# It's not just about apps anymore —

I get it—

When I founded [StickyAlbums](#) way back in 2012, we pioneered the marketing strategy of creating custom mobile apps for your clients.

Today, in 2017 there are several companies that now offer similar *mobile app* functionality.

In building [StickyFolios](#), I knew it was time for us to lead again.



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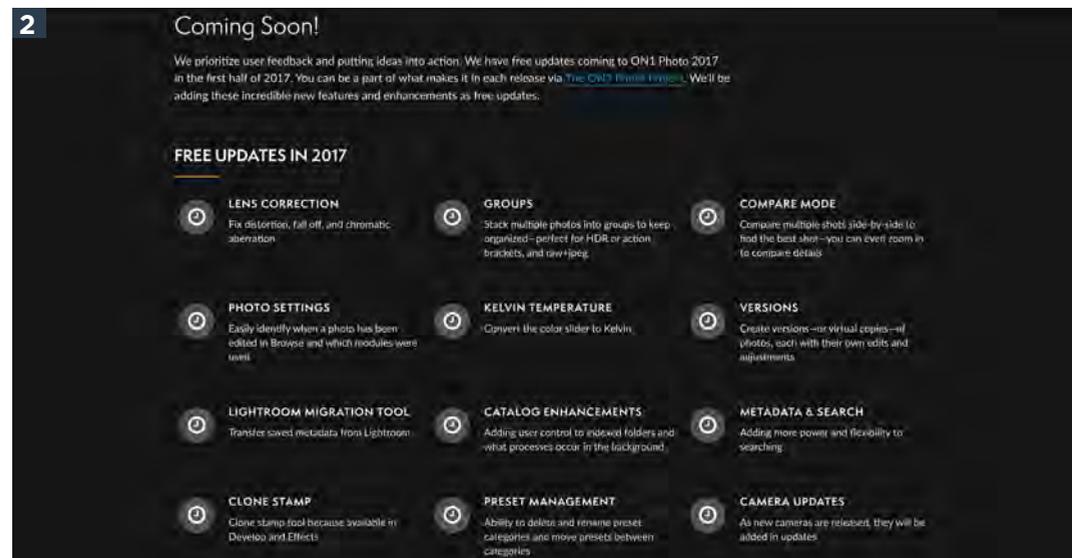
We all want to stand out in some way from the competition to stay in the competition. Trying new editing styles and processes must be on your radar at this time of year. You should have already put up new work on your website by now. Go to your inspiration place (such as the magazine you're holding). See what others are creating for a glimpse of what is considered a good image versus a masterpiece in the industry.

Of course, image competitions are one of the most resourceful ways to get feedback on your work. Enter your best images, sit in on critiques and learn something. I don't know it all and neither do you. Don't be afraid to be a student of photography. Because, let's face it, you are getting in your own way. Even peers will be nice and say they love your work. Who cares as long as you make sales and your clients love you, right? That may be true, but what are you learning from them, and what can you do to step up your imagery?

## GET INVOLVED IN ON1 PHOTO PROJECT

Did you get inspired? Ready to start showcasing some styles? Perfect—let’s head to the ON1 website and see what they offer with their RAW 2017 software. Again, try out the software or just stop dragging your feet and buy the damn thing. It’s \$100. On1 RAW is becoming my new best friend for creative post-production.

That’s why I am so excited about their customer support program called On1 Photo Project. (1) This is a forum-style area on its website where you can share ideas for how to improve On1 RAW, and get your friends to rate your ideas. The ON1 development team then reviews the ideas. This is where you have a voice and can let your Lightroom-molded mindset roll out in the user interface of a better software. I love the before-and-after develop panel view when editing, and Kelvin values for white balance, Lens Correction and better preset management. With user feedback, these sorts of options are becoming available with the next rollout update. Yes, preset management is a must for saving your stylized settings and rapidly applying them to multiple images. (2)

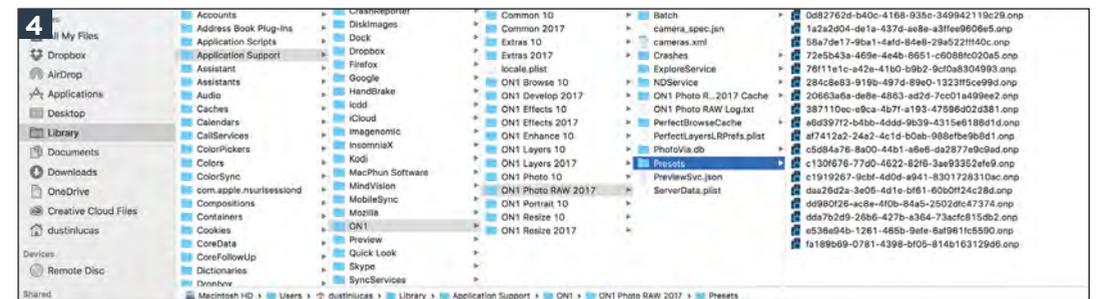
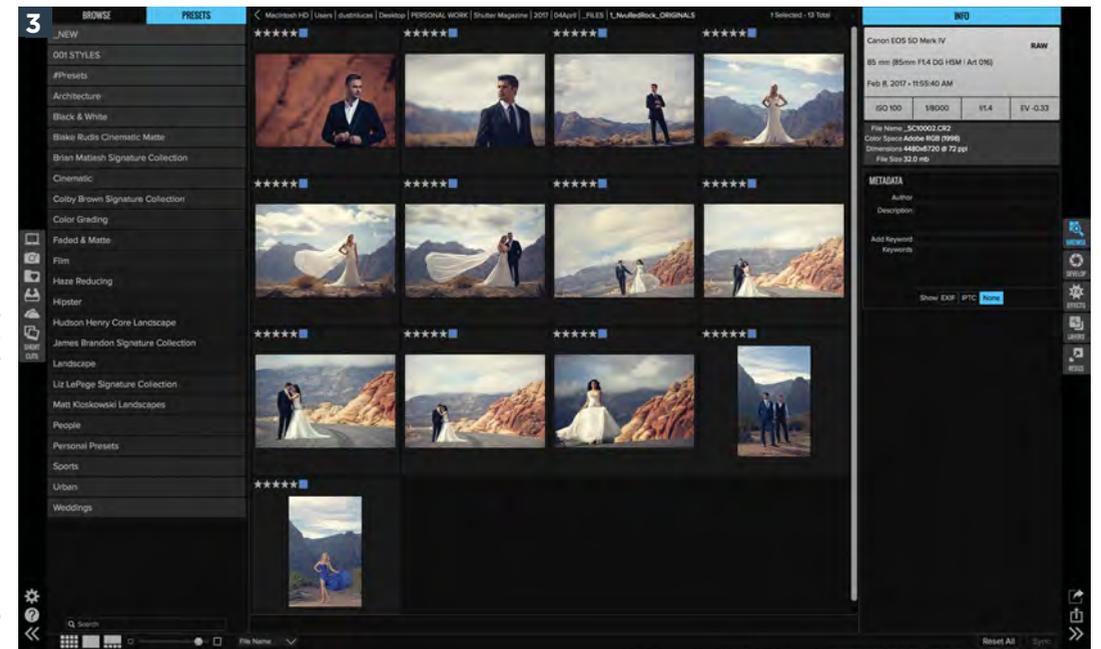


## PRESETS AND CUSTOM PRESET PACKS

Much like in my last article, it took a lot of prep time to build and organize these presets. ON1 has an extensive collection of prebuilt presets for portrait and wedding work. Let’s jump into ON1 RAW and look over some of them. (3)

At first glance, the preset management felt limited. Since I am used to Lightroom, I move sliders to a good starting point and save my presets by holding Shift + Command and striking the ‘N’ key. Also, I can quickly save and store them in Finder for better organization. This allows me to drag and drop multiple presets into Lightroom without clicking the Install button in every dialog box that pops up.

You have similar functionality in ON1 RAW to access presets in your user library folder, and can zip files together to package them into a set or preset package. (4)

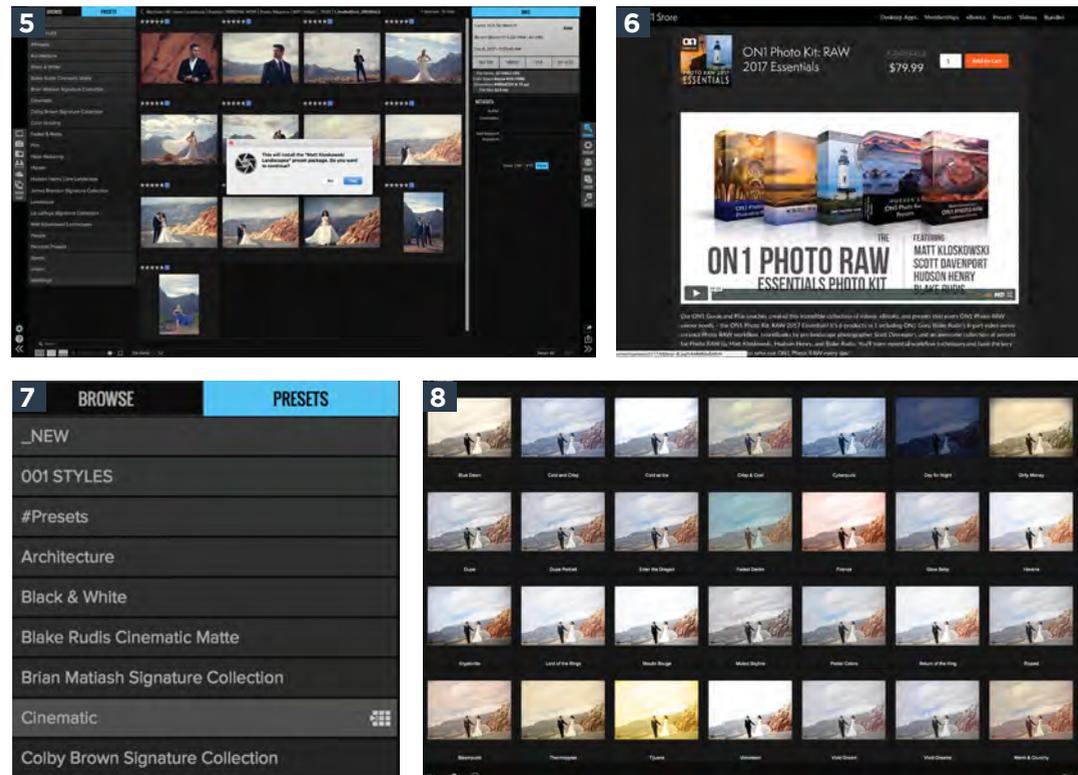


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The last step is to change the .zip file extension to .ONPreset; from there, you can drag and drop this file into ON1 RAW to install multiple presets at once. (5) This is how I installed the Guru Signature Collect Presets seamlessly. This includes 15 presets from four different ON1 Gurus, for a total of 60 free presets. (There are more options at [www.on1.com/store/category/presets/](http://www.on1.com/store/category/presets/).) (6)

Creating presets and customizing are simple as well. Let's review some of the prebuilt and custom presets to dial in some of our own favorite recipes. Open ON1 RAW in Browse and click the Presets in the upper left-hand corner of the screen. Make sure you have an image selected in the Browse window, and select any of the Preset Packs listed below. The prebuilt ones include: Architecture, Black & White, Cinematic, Faded & Matte, Hipster, People and Weddings. Select the icon to the right of the pack name to explore the gallery of presets. (7)

This feature is awesome. Instead of having to click and see like in Lightroom, you get a grid preview of your image from which to pick your favorites. Now we can experiment and start mixing styles. (8)

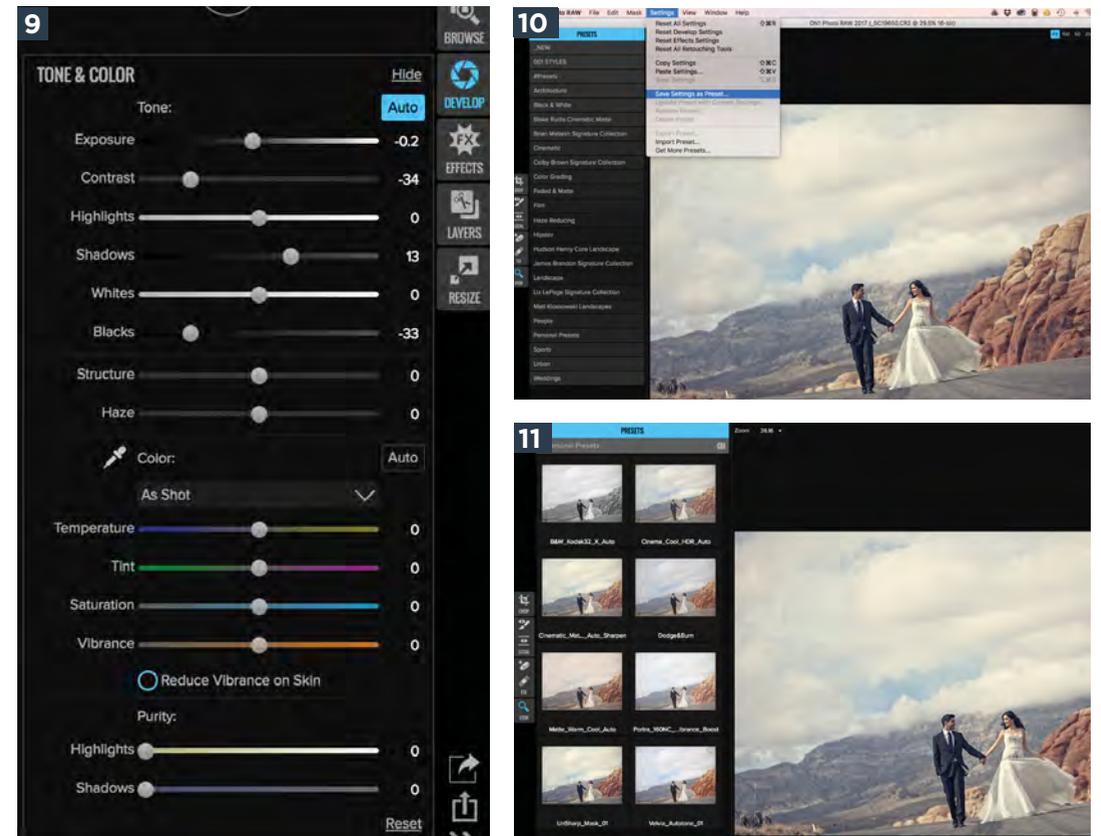


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## EXPERIMENT, AND ALWAYS MIX THINGS UP

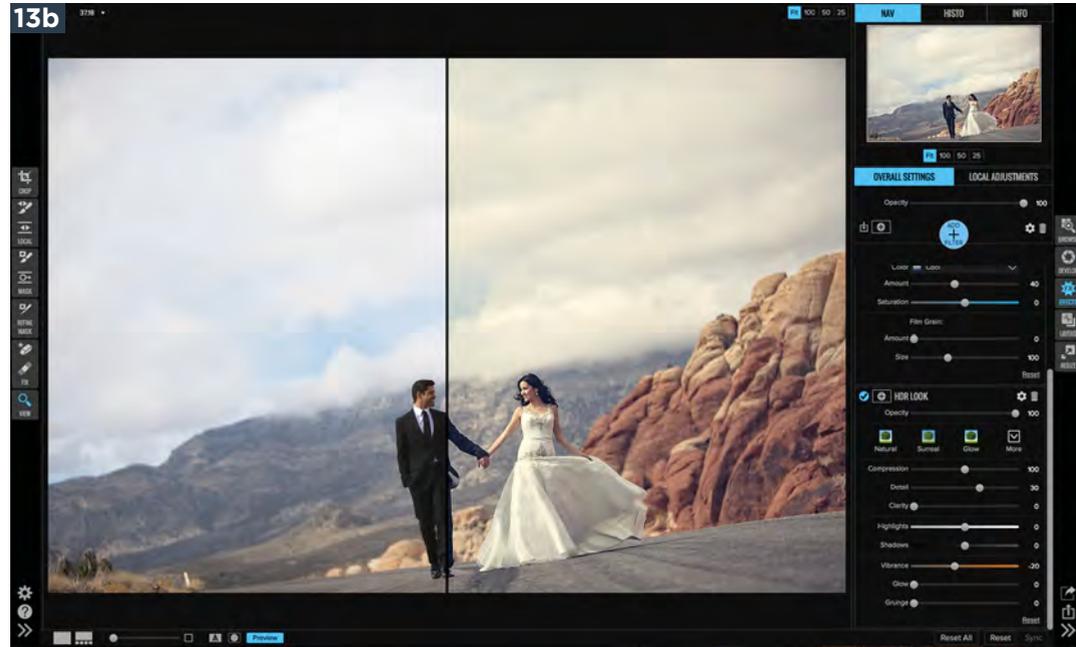
My favorite presets are Cinematic, Faded & Matte, Film, Hipster and Weddings. I like to create Auto-tone versions of the presets to give me quick client-ready proofs and to get the images headed in the right direction. (9) It's simple to customize any prebuilt or purchased preset to your liking. Click on the preset you want to apply, make Develop and/or Effects adjustments, click on Settings in the menu bar at the top of your screen and choose Save Settings as Preset. (10) Why not just update the prebuilt preset? Doing that requires you to export the preset to transfer it to another program, which damages the default presets.

Saving a preset lets you start organizing favorites into one preset pack. This is a must for processing multiple files quickly, and previewing a gallery of your customized presets is a mouse click away. Currently, exporting every single preset is a pain in the butt, but ON1 saves these custom presets automatically in your user library folder. (11)



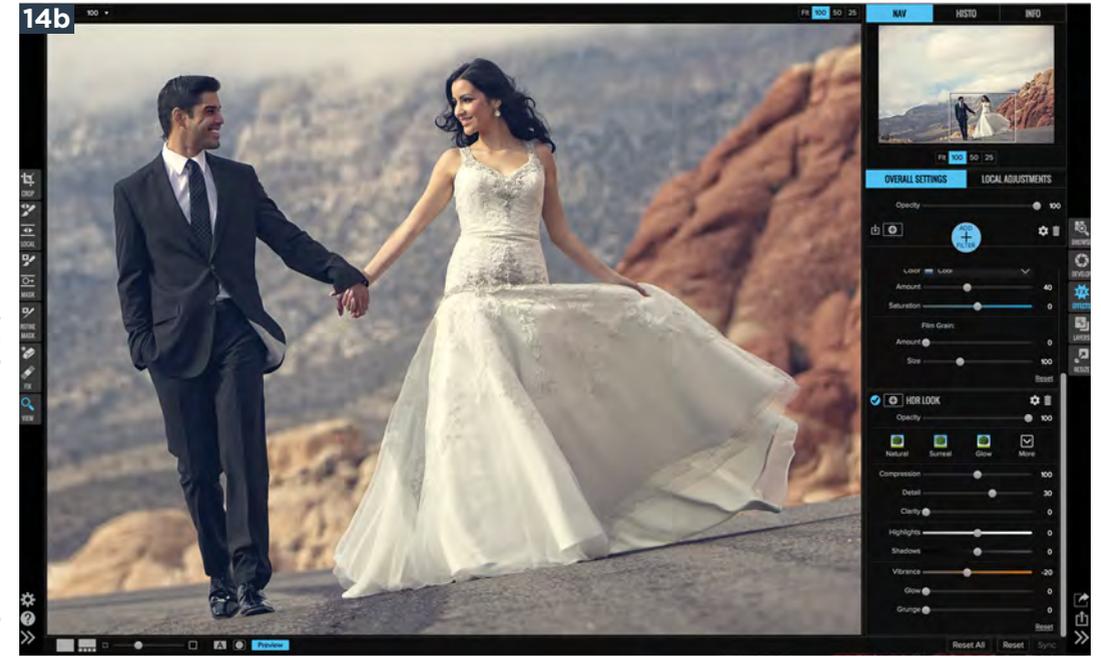
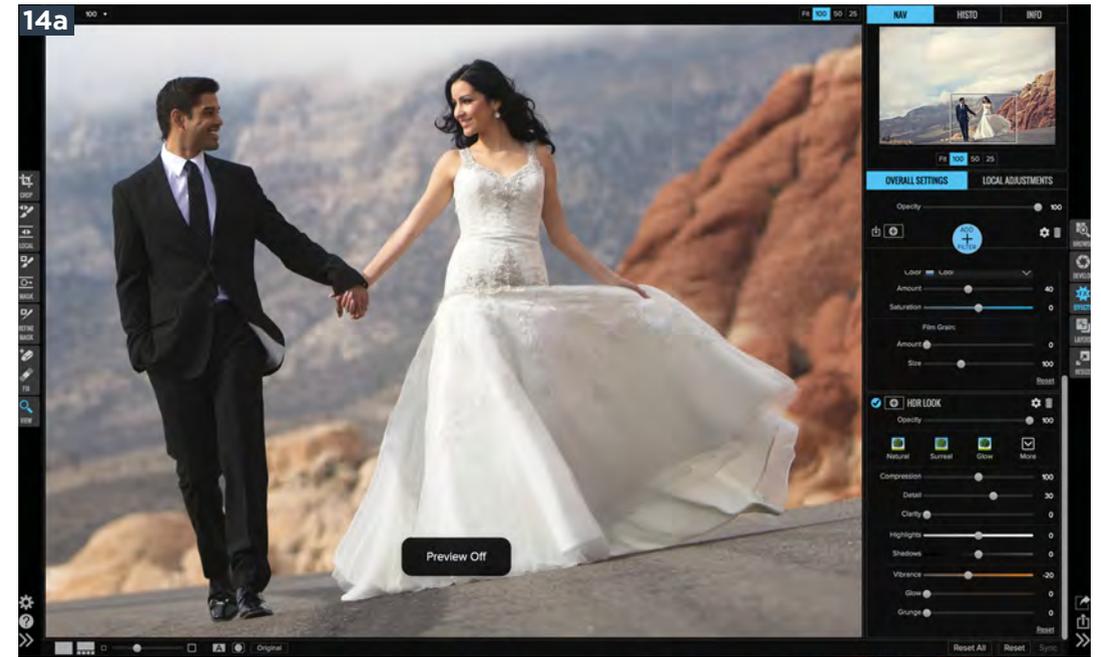
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What I love about creating presets in ON1 RAW is I can include adjustments made in Develop and Effects. (12) This doesn't limit me to develop sliders only; I can apply prebuilt filters and fully customize them to different image needs. After applying the Crisp & Cool preset in the Cinematic preset pack, you will notice no Develop sliders have moved. So where are the settings adjustable? You need to go to the Effects panel, where you'll notice the filters are applied. Now let's get working. (13ab)



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Something I noticed right away were the details brought out in heavy recovery of this preset. (14ab) I prefer a less HDR look, but retaining highlight and shadow details is important.



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Lowering the Compression slider between 50 and 75 in the HDR panel is a useful approach. (15) We can always tweak that later and finish off by adding a Tone Enhancer filter. This gives us settings like the Develop panel to add a matte look to the recovered tones. (16) Now we can decide if adding Auto-tone is a smart move. I am going to apply it for this preset. Now let's save these settings to our Personal Presets pack, making sure we include Develop and Effects settings. Go to Settings in the menu bar at the top of the screen and choose Save Settings as Preset. Naming can be helpful when sifting through presets; I chose Cinema\_Cool\_HDR\_Auto. (17)

What I like about the customization of my presets in ON1 is the ability to mix and match styles as well as preview my image with all the available presets in the pack. One thing you must consider when applying multiple presets to one image is that you overwrite all the settings in that panel. For instance, if you apply filters in the Effects panels, Auto-tone to an image and then a Sharpening preset, this overwrites the Auto-tone settings applied in the previous preset. Otherwise, fire away and build your presets as you see fit.



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## WOW YOUR CLIENT WITH FINAL TOUCHES

Now we can work with custom Develop settings and Local adjustments to get the image fixed beyond the click of a preset. I typically toggle the Auto-tone on and off to see where that takes the image. From there, I bump the exposure and sharpen the image. Not much needs to be done at this point but some dodging and burning.

For skin, I like to even out the harsh contrast of highlights and shadows as much as I can so it doesn't look fake. In order to get the editing flexibility with the Develop settings and masking, I use the Tone Enhancer filter in the Effects panel. I have a dodge-and-burn preset already built that is like a Photoshop action. After clicking this prebuilt preset, you'll notice it resets my stylized edit. Not to worry—we can add filters to this image manually. (18)

Starting with the dress, we need to burn down some areas where detail is completely lost. Recovering too much with global adjustments makes the skin look terrible. That's why we need to brush in the small details to get things looking much better. (19) We can now burn down the sky. Gradient filter to the rescue. Simply add a gradient filter, drag it down to cover the entire sky, rotate to even out the effect parallel to the mountain line and you're done. (20)



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Applying my go-to presets to large batches of images allows me to move fast in ON1 RAW. Why haven't you tried it out yet? Stop hesitating and mix it up. ■

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Dodging shadows on the subjects can be a tedious and less effective adjustment. We want some contrast in the image, but there is a fine line between removing this distraction and destroying the skin tones. (21) Again, I like to use the Tone Enhancer to fine-tune my recovery. (22) With some subtle dodging, we are there.

### REMARKABLE RESULTS

You can customize the crap out of your image with prebuilt presets. ON1 makes it so effortless to see what your image can look like with them applied at a click of your mouse. This is helpful when getting together some client-ready creative proofs.



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

[evolveedits.com](https://evolveedits.com)

# final inspiration

photographer salvatore cincotta  
image title anticipation  
exposure f2.8 @ 1/125, ISO 200  
lighting profoto b1, profoto b2  
location lisbon, portugal  
gear phase one iq3 | schneider 55mm f/2.8





# Sue Bryce creates her own natural light Profoto B1



**"I started seeing studio lights the way I see, use and master natural light. I bounce and zig-zag it the same way I do with natural light. The B1 is extraordinary, and it has the ability to dial down to low, soft light with big modifiers so I can create the exact same daylight I have been working with for the last 27 years. I can shoot at any time of the day and still control the light."**

**- Sue Bryce**

What sets a professional photographer apart from everyone else is the ability to create the perfect light. The Profoto B1 is a powerful battery flash that enables you to create images with the natural looking light you want at any time. With TTL, HSS and over 150 Light Shaping Tools to choose from, there's no limit to your creativity.

**Now!** Buy a B1 or B2 kit before April 30, 2017 and get an Air Remote TTL or Air Remote for free.

**Learn more:** [profoto.com/suebryce](http://profoto.com/suebryce)

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