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Every year, couples around the world celebrate their love and commitment through their nuptials. Our job is to document it in the most beautiful way possible.

- Sal Cincotta

**ABOUT THE IMAGE:** In New Zealand, winter doesn’t just arrive with the first snow. It bides its time and comes on in waves, sometimes many little waves in an afternoon. Michelle and Zac got to experience this first hand as a befuddled sky first dowsed us all in brilliant sunshine then serenaded us with dramatic rainbows before turning the air around us into the workings of a swirling life-sized snow globe. It made for the perfect canvas, and these adventurous souls were the ideal muse to our artist’s hearts. Once at the top of the hill, we suggested they run along without a care in their hearts. As we photographed them, their laughter was filling the air around us. We created this image for this gorgeous couple to reflect this sky less ordinary.

**THE COVER**

**TITLE:** four seasons in one day  
**PHOTOGRAPHER:** tinted photography  
**WEBSITE:** tintedphotography.com  
**CAMERA:** sony a9  
**LENS:** sony 24-70mm f2.8 gm  
**EXPOSURE:** f15.0 @ 1/1000 iso 320  
**LIGHTING:** natural light  
**MODELS:** Michelle and Zac
WHEN DISASTER STRIKES
WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHER NIGHTMARES

with Sal Cincotta
Unless you have been living under a rock, you know the entire world is dealing with Covid-19 and the aftermath of this has yet to be realized. Panic and desperation are challenging small business owners around the world. So much uncertainty. So much still to be realized as every day delivers more bad news. If you are like me, I am just looking for some positive news. Any glimmer of hope that things will return to normal sometime soon.

As of this writing, nothing even close to that is occurring. Every day is more bad news. People are dying; brides are panicking, wondering if their dream wedding will occur or not; venues are panicking because with each passing day, they are losing tens of thousands in revenue that will never be recovered; and the list goes on and on.

As wedding photographers, we need to figure out what to do in certain situations, how we can ensure our businesses survive this pandemic, and what the future looks like for our businesses. Here are some real-time things we are doing at Salvatore Cincotta Photography to help put our customers at ease and prepare for the future.

This is the reality. You have a contract with your customers. That has to mean something. We don’t just throw agreements out the window because of the pandemic. Do you understand what would happen to the entire economy if we did?

Real talk. You have contracts with vendors that you need to adhere to. And your customers have contracts with you, that they need to adhere to. This is how the world works. Contracts exist for when things go wrong. Well, everyone, things are going wrong.

Now, that doesn’t mean compassion goes out the window. It doesn’t mean that you can’t take each situation case by case and make mutually beneficial decisions to keep everyone happy. But see, that’s the key: “keep everyone happy.” What you cannot do is allow your business to be destroyed—that’s not being nice, that’s being foolish. If you own a real business and this is how you provide for your family, I’m sorry, but what in the world are you thinking? For me, I have staff to pay, they have bills and mortgages to pay, they have food to put in their families’ mouths. So, how am I being responsible if I just say “screw it”?

So, here is what I recommend for you and your customers. First, if they have to reschedule dates, allow them to move them without penalty. We have already rescheduled several weddings and other shoots, no harm no foul. If you own a real business and this is how you provide for your family, I’m sorry, but what in the world are you thinking? For me, I have staff to pay, they have bills and mortgages to pay, they have food to put in their families’ mouths. So, how am I being responsible if I just say “screw it”?

Second, if you are booked on the new date, give them a full refund. I know this is not what you want to hear and I know you are not contractually obligated to do this, but this is that “compassion” I am telling you about. It’s not their fault and no it’s not your fault, but shit happens. We have to work together to find balance.

An alternate option would be to subcontract the new date so you still own the event, the post-production, the album, etc. So, yeah, profits might be cut, but it’s a potential win-win. Another option might be to not refund the deposit (you keep cash in your business) and offer them the ability to apply it to a family session, etc.

The key here is finding balance. Protect your business. You are not a bad person because you are enforcing your contracts which exist for this very reason. So, get that out of your head.
I'm going to be honest, this event, as horrible as it is, is showing me what people are made of. I'm not talking about photographers, I'm talking about humans that are just paralyzed by fear and uncertainty. GET UP. GET OFF YOUR ASS. This will pass. Yes, of course, there are parts of the country hit harder than others, but we have a decision to make. It's a mental decision more than anything else. We have to decide to survive. Do you want your business to exist when this is all over or are you indifferent to that? If you want to survive, it ain't gonna happen sitting on the couch watching the news feeling bad for yourself. There is only one way out and that's to lean into this.

What does that mean? It means use this downtime to do something positive for your business. Think of all the tasks you have been sitting on for years (guilty by the way) because you had no time. Well, now you have time and plenty of it.

So what am I working on?

Website. Man am I behind on this. My blog is so behind. My images need to be updated. I'm just pissed at myself for letting it get this far behind.

SEO. You know we all need to relook at our search engine work and make sure our sites are ranking properly.

Samples. We just refreshed our sample albums. We ordered 8 new albums. Sure, the labs are closed, but when they open, I will have new albums in time for the fall bridal shows.

In addition, check out our preview room. We took every picture off the wall and are starting from scratch. It's time for a complete refresh in the room. We are big believers in In-Person Sales, and what's on the walls matters.

Editing Style Refresh. All of our styles have evolved. From the way you shoot to the way you edit, it probably needs to be updated to ensure we are attracting the right clients.

Gear Purge. Sell your old crap! Get it on eBay, etc. and get rid of it. Make money. You will end up spending it on new gear anyway. You know who you are.

Vendor Relationships. Your vendors are panicking as well. Start reaching out and planning for collaborative projects you can work on together.

Marketing. Yeah, you know that word right? The one you suck at. Well, now is the time to focus on it. What does marketing look like for the rest of the year? Magazines? Facebook ads? Bridal shows? Etc.
Get your plan together so that the minute this thing starts to recede and people are upbeat, you will be poised to grow your business and get it back on track.

Look, we are all in the same boat. Some worse than others, but the reality is the same for all of us. The situation sucks, but we will make it past this. Step back, take care of your family, and then put your focus on the thing you spent years building and investing in: your business.

Stay positive—you can do this.
Why the Bug Out Bag by Salvatore?

The Bug Out Bag from Salvatore is the last shoulder bag you will ever need. Designed by professional wedding and portrait photographer, Sal Cincotta, it has been designed to be a working field bag. Meaning, your bag should make it easier for you to work and move around with your gear in the field.

Key Features

- Weather-resistant construction
- Shockproof foot cushion
- Quick-release buckle for easy access
- Reinforced lens-swap pocket lined with microfiber for extra lens protection
- Strong, adjustable nylon strap with shoulder pad for extra comfort
- Available in Standard and Extended
  - Standard-External dimension: 14 x 4.5 x 10 in (35.56 x 11.43 x 25.4 cm)
  - Extended-External dimension: 19 x 4.5 x 11 in (48.26 x 11.43 x 27.94 cm)

For more information, visit www.salvatorethestore.com/bug-out-bag
BUILDING A TEAM TO SUPPORT YOUR STUDIO

with Michael Anthony

Image © Michael Anthony Photography
There comes a time for any successful photographer when they have to think about growing their business. In the beginning, as a solo entrepreneur, you are handling the services (photography, videography), marketing, sales, operations, production, and communications. As your business grows, it will become very evident that no matter how hard of a worker you are, there will never be enough time in a day to accomplish all of the tasks required in your business.

This is the point in your business when you probably begin to ask yourself, “Is it time to hire some help?” When you get to that point, it’s usually already too late. Now I want to start by letting you all know that I understand your reservations about hiring employees. No matter how much money you spend on equipment in a year, it will probably never be close to what you invest in an employee. People are inherently expensive, and the workload involved in having employees is also very stressful at times.

However, no empires have ever been built by an individual, and if you want to continue to grow your business, you will need the help of other people.
Before we look at hiring employees, let’s first talk about outsourcing. Let’s do a practical exercise. Take all of the tasks in your business and write them down on a piece of paper. Cross out the functions that you love to do in your industry. Those tasks will undoubtedly include the actual photography portion, but it may consist of other items such as sales. Whatever you have left, those are the things that you have to look at finding outside help for. Before you hire an employee, first consider what you can outsource. In 2012, I decided to outsource all of my post-production to Evolve edits. This was a fantastic decision at the time for me because it allowed me to free up more time doing the things in my business that I needed to do. Because post-production is going to be your most time-consuming task, I recommend looking to outsource that item before hiring internal help. But I have written many articles on the benefits of outsourcing your editing, so I’m not going to dive deep into that today.

The next thing that is likely bogging you down is communications. I know at the beginning of my business, I struggled to maintain a quick response time, which for today’s brides, is becoming more and more critical. There are many instances where we have received not-so-pleasant emails from failing to respond to a client email within a 24-hour timeframe. I learned early on that this was an essential component of the client experience. Hence, the first employee that I hired was a studio manager who was responsible for handling all client communications.

HIRING YOUR FIRST EMPLOYEES

Now, I’m going to tell you that hiring your first employee is both critical and very time-consuming. The person who’s going to be in charge of client communications will be the person who is in charge of the client experience. If you choose the wrong person, it will cost you real money. There are a few traits that you need to look for when hiring a studio manager. The most important one is how much they want to be there. You have to hire people who are looking for work for the right reasons, which means that during your interview process, you have to weed out the people that are just looking for something temporary and look for people that genuinely care about helping others.

Our current studio manager came to interview with us for a photographer position. In talking with her, I quickly realized that she had a strong skill set in communication, was very organized, and also had sales experience. While I wasn’t looking for a salesperson at the time, I knew that at some point when my studio grew, I would want my studio manager to be able to take over the sales process. Nearly five years later, and she has become a highly valuable asset to our team.

When you’re hiring employees, you have to look at their entire skill set and find people that will fit the needs you currently have as well as what you’ll need in the immediate future. You also want to look for people who are looking for a career path in the photography industry. This will allow you to give them opportunities to move up within your company as your company grows, giving them longevity and giving you peace of mind.

Let’s talk about the next position that you may look to hire. After editing and communications, the most time-intensive task in our business is production. I’m not talking about the actual editing of files. I’m talking more about processing print orders, designing albums, and retouching anything that a client purchases. Believe it or not, this is an incredibly time-intensive job in our business. It’s also very important to consider that the person who is ordering prints may tend to make mistakes at the beginning, which costs a lot of money. Therefore, it’s essential to find somebody who’s organized and pays attention to detail.
YOU HIRED EMPLOYEES. NOW WHAT?

Now, let’s talk more about the logistics of the hiring process. Understand that everything I’m going to write to you here comes as a result of experience. I didn’t go to business school and never worked in corporate America, so I have good insight as to what is relevant in our industry as a business owner who has hired both good and bad employees. Let’s first talk about compensation. I am not a fan of paying minimum wage to people in sensitive positions. I think that to attract excellent talent, you have to be willing to pay a little bit more for a specific skill set. You will see a difference in the quality of applicants between trying to hire somebody at minimum wage and paying $2 to $3 above that.

Next, it’s essential to institute a training period and implement benchmarks that your employees have to hit before becoming permanent with your company. I typically will give them a small raise for completing their probationary period. During this training period, you have to challenge them and make sure that they can think critically. You will not always be able to judge an employee’s ability to work under pressure just from an interview itself. However, when you give them essential tasks with deadlines, you will see quickly if they are up to the challenge. When training a studio manager, you may want to have them make client calls and listen to them on the phone. It’s essential to have patience in the beginning, as they will make a lot of mistakes. However, the errors are not what you are testing: you are testing their ability to learn from them. If you have to retrain somebody nine times on the same topic, they’re probably not a good fit for your company.

Lastly, I want to talk about the most crucial element of building your team, and that is to document processes. Everything in your business has a process associated with it. That could be responding to leads, filling out post-production order forms, or scheduling engagement sessions.

I’m going to go out on a limb here and say that most photographers don’t have a process manual in their business. If you are in that category, start making one today. I use Microsoft OneNote to store our business processes and can make updates to it whenever I need to. When we hire a new employee, we provide them with the process manual so they can figure out how to deal with a situation on their own. This will eliminate 75% of the repetitive questions you have to answer when training a new employee.
Building a Team to Support Your Studio | Michael Anthony

The last thing that I want to go over before closing out this article is how to build an environment that encourages a productive team. You will likely be hiring creatives because that is who will be attracted to your job ads. That means that you have to promote their use of creativity in your business. As an owner, you should always be open to ideas from your team and implement strategies with guidance from the people who are working directly on those issues. For instance, if I’m doing a particular pose that clients do not tend to purchase in the salesroom, then I need to be open to listening to my salesperson when she says we need to look at a different strategy here. By listening to your team and implementing their ideas, you are helping them to become part of your business. This is essential for creating longevity in your business and having happy employees. Happy employees will be productive, and productive employees will make you more money. Other things you can do are implement employee benefits like healthcare and a retirement plan, and plan activities for your team. Rather than working on a project by yourself, assign a member of your team to be working on it with you. That’ll allow you to collaborate with them because two minds are almost always better than one. Surround yourself with a fantastic team, and that will pay you back in dividends even though employees are incredibly expensive.

If you implement the strategies that I laid out above, you will build a reliable team that will put you on the right track toward achieving your business and financial goals.
Product Spotlight | Sigma 85mm 1.4 DG HSM Art Lens

Why the Sigma 85mm 1.4 DG HSM Art Lens?

In terms of portrait lenses, the 85mm is a definite go-to choice for professional photographers. The Sigma Art lens lineup is known for top-notch quality matched with an unbeatable price point, and the 85mm 1.4 is a piece of glass that sits at the top of this lineup.

The Sigma 85mm 1.4 DG HSM Art is the latest addition to the world-renowned Sigma Global Vision Line and ushers in a new era of quality and performance for this popular fast prime focal length. Designed and engineered for unparalleled image quality, the Sigma 85mm 1.4 Art employs a completely new optical design and premium components that include:

- Stellar optical performance.
- A 9-blade rounded diaphragm that creates beautiful background bokeh to isolate and accentuate the subject.
- Updated Hyper Sonic Motor with 1.3x the Torque of previous generations for fast and efficient autofocus.
- Designed and tested for high megapixel cameras.

For more information, visit www.sigmaphoto.com/85mm-f14-dg-hsm-a
A SIMPLE WAY TO
CONTROL COLOR
FOR THE PROFESSIONAL
PHOTOGRAPHER

with Douglas Weittenhiller
Understanding color output is an essential part of professional photography. However, there are limits to what you can control. You can’t determine how images look on people’s devices. However, you can ensure that you’re giving them the best chance to view your work in the way you intended. More importantly, having consistent color across your workflow creates the very best print products for your clients who love sharing your beautiful work digitally and with prints.

There is not, of course, an easy answer to what is best. While there are color standards—sRGB, Pantone, Munsell—there is a mixed application of those standards, which creates inconsistencies across screens, printers, labs, software, and even in the implementation of them. This variation is apparent when prints are produced with significantly different results from various labs, all claiming to be using the same color system.

This article comes nowhere near exhausting all the permutations of color control options, but rather it seeks to create a template that works for many professional photographers.* There are three domains where you have the most immediate control: your working color space, the calibration of your screen, and the setup of your printing labs.

* I do not pretend to be a guru of color control. I’m presenting ideas that I have found produce consistent results for client work. For a more comprehensive resource, I strongly encourage taking a course with Eric Joseph, Senior VP at Freestyle Photographic. (www.freestylephoto.biz)
WORKING COLOR SPACE

There are two principal techniques to define the color you come across as a professional photographer. The *screen color* of your monitor, tablet, or phone is a mixture of red, green, and blue phosphorescence (RGB) and the *print color* from your labs or own devices is a mixture of cyan, magenta, yellow, and black (CMYK). In the early days of computer-generated print press, there lacked a way for the screen and print color to even talk to each other, resulting in enormous problems for producing consistent prints (https://99designs.com/blog/tips/FRUUHFWÀOHIRUPDWVUJEDQGFP\N6WDQGDUGVRUFRORUSURÀOHVHPHUJHGEXWWKHUHZDVVWLOODQHHGWRFRQYHUWVFUHHQDQGSULQWWRHDFKRWKHURIWHQ\with mixed results. It can be a bit like Google translating song lyrics from one language and then back again, often to hilarious effects.

The simplest working solution is to have **consistency** in your color working space across all devices. You can link your camera, software, and monitor (more on this later) to the same color space. Two standard screen color spaces for photographers are sRGB and Adobe RBG.

Adobe RGB, as the name implies, is Adobe’s attempt to support more colors that should lead to images that more closely resemble what the human eye can perceive. It’s gaining in popularity across all devices but is still not universal across all mediums (https://fstoppers.com/pictures/adobergb-vs-srgb-3167). While it’s a larger color space than sRGB, it can complicate your workflow, and the goal here is to produce a reliable and straightforward process.

sRGB is the much older, more common, and significantly smaller color space. While it contains less color when compared to Adobe RGB, its ubiquity translates to a universal color system. In almost all practical applications, this should be the preferred color space for photographers seeking a no-fuss setup with color. Almost every screen, printer, lab, and camera supports it and can accurately display it.

An argument can be made for either color space. However, in the mindset of what is the most straightforward, sRGB is the better choice since it displays the same online and across all devices, it can be easily calibrated, and it’s supported by most print labs.
SCREEN CALIBRATION

Out of the box, your computer monitor is set for the best viewing experience. Manufacturers try to make
time-of-day considerations with auto-dimming features or improve viewing experiences with glossy displays
that create pseudo-richer contrast. Screen technology is continually improving, from older and bulky CRT
tube-style monitors to newer OLED and Wide Gamut screens. While some purists argue that only properly
calibrated CRT screens can provide accurate color, most professional photographers can produce lovely and
acceptably accurate colors from almost any modern screen. The key is to purchase and use a screen calibrator.

Many options exist, such as Datacolor’s Spyder5 (www.datacolor.com/photography-design/s5-welcome/) or
X-Rite’s i1 Display Pro (www.xrite.com/categories/calibration-profiling/i1-display-pro). Using any calibrator is
vastly superior to leaving this to chance.

Calibrators are simple to use and generally require little maintenance. Here again, the case can be made to
implement the same color spaces you used before. With light standardization being challenging (https://sciencing.
com/how-to-convert-lux-to-candela-12751786.html), the output of screen brightness and the amount of ambient
light in the working environment can play havoc with the final color. Therefore, it’s essential to calibrate in both
an optimal working environment free from color casts and hotspots as well as consistent color spaces while
producing imagery.

Remembering what was essential from the last section, calibrate your screen to be in the same color space as your
camera and software to create seamless consistency. Also, editing in the same amount and type of ambient light
helps keep your finished product more uniform across all mediums.
PREPPING FILES FOR YOUR PRINT LAB

Every press lab attempts to match to the intended color of the artist. Most have given up on demanding a print-defined CMYK space and accept files in color profiles, including screen-defined RGB spaces. This color-matching is where most photographers with inconsistent prints can improve.

Labs such as Millers (www.millerslab.com), ACI Lab (https://www.acilab.com), and Simply Color (https://simplycolorlab.com) provide support for photographers to calibrate their setup to what the lab uses. Many even have links directly on their page for preferred printer setups and ICC profiles that provide excellent results. Here again, sRGB dominates the color profiles, further making it a more optimal profile to use at large.

There are, of course, exceptions. Bay Photo, for example, prefers Adobe RGB for some print types (https://support.bayphoto.com/s/article/bay-photo-labs-icc-profile). It’s the responsibility of the professional photographer to connect with their preferred lab (or labs) to export edited images destined for prints in the correct color space.
CONCLUSION

The simplest thing you can do right now to improve your color workflow is to use a consistent color workspace for your camera, display, and print lab. Beyond that, the use of a screen calibrator, ICC printer profiles, and shooting and editing in consistent light significantly improves your finished product.

The best news for the working professional photographer (and even the amateur) is that implementing these steps is straightforward and relatively simple. The longest time spent is waiting for your calibrator to arrive. The work performed in the interim—determining and defining the preferred color space consistently and matching the output to the labs of choice—can be done once and refreshed annually. The results are immediate, and the impact of controlling color across your production pipeline is rewarding.

Douglas Weittenhiller accidentally became a photographer when his wife’s growing hobby forced him to quit his real job. Thankfully, he didn’t completely suck. With his newfound love of not having a boss (other than his wife), he applied his nerdy background in science to learning everything about the craft. He’s at his best with people who enjoy a good laugh, a tasty beverage, and an interest in the world around them.

twigandolive.com
THE MINIMALIST VIDEOPHOTER
WHY GEAR ISN’T EVERYTHING

with Rob Adams
More than 10 years ago, when wedding cinematography was elevated to a whole other level with the introduction of Video DSLRs, the world of filmmaking was infused with a flurry of new products and gear aimed at amateur filmmakers and wedding professionals. Sliders, Steadicams and Glidecams, jibs, loupes, external monitors and shoulder-rigs; there was just a ton of new equipment that allowed us to achieve cinematic-looking shots for a fraction of the cost of big-budget filmmaking. It opened all kinds of new creative doors and I dove in head-first.

My wedding kit ballooned from 2 cameras with integrated lenses and a tripod (the Dark Ages as I called it at the time) to the following:

- 3 DSLRs, sometimes 4
- 8 lenses
- 2 heavy sliders
- 1 Glidecam or Steadicam rig
- 4 audio devices
- 2 on-camera mics
- 3 monopods
- 3 tripods
- 2 viewfinder loupes
- 3 large ARRI lights

And let’s not forget all of the cables, batteries, chargers, and cases. It was ridiculous. I went from being able to carry all of my gear in the back of a 2-door Jeep Wrangler to having to buy a large SUV and it was packed to the gills on every shoot. My second-shooter would also bring a ton of stuff, so the staging area of the banquet halls we worked in were routinely covered in equipment much to the dismay of maitre d’s and banquet hall staff. It was like gear vomited all over the floor surrounding the DJ booth or bandstand.

Over time we learned to incorporate the use of this gear into our workflow and we were able to produce some pretty awesome work. The problem, however, was that the more gear we tried to use, the more time-consuming it became to set up and implement into filming in a run-and-run situation. It actually made it hard to capture moments that would pass in an instant. It also made us more obstructive on the wedding day and frankly more difficult to deal with in the eyes of other vendors. For a while I adopted an “I don’t care” attitude, but over time it started to become noticeable to the couple and our colleagues, and ultimately as more and more wedding filmmakers started to emulate this process, word got out that working with wedding “cinematographers” was an annoyance.

A few years into that mindset, I actually started to notice fewer and fewer referrals coming in from other vendors and that fewer and fewer brides and grooms cared about a complex wedding film production. By 2016, things had reverted back to the way they were before this so-called revolution and couples just wanted a wedding film that didn’t feel like a film-shoot the day of the wedding. The mystique of something new had worn off. Even same-day edits—which were all the rage from 2010-2014—were becoming passé. Times were changing and I also started to get tired of dragging a ton of crap with me on wedding days. Getting up in years didn’t help either. I’m 44 and I found myself getting more and more fatigued with the process. I decided I had had enough.

Thinking back, I know I could’ve been more creative and would’ve been able to capture more impromptu, emotional moments cleaner if I wasn’t hampered and hindered by cumbersome equipment hanging off of my body and my camera. Looking back at my previous work, it’s obvious. Shots that I had time to set up and shoot intentionally looked great, but shots where I needed to be adaptable and quick on my feet were shaky, sloppy, incorrectly exposed, or didn’t encompass the sweet-spot of the moment.

These realizations led me to rethink what I would bring on weddings from this point forward. This required some tough analysis of my process and, honestly, it was scary to cull down my kit because I always thought “what if?” What if I needed something that I would no longer have with me? But the first time I ever shot a wedding with a trimmed-down kit, I instantly discerned that I was lighter on my feet, able to capture moments quicker and with better focus and framing accuracy, and that I was ultimately more creative and involved in the creative process of capturing the wedding day.

Getting back into the studio and editing the films became an easier process, too. We were no longer sifting through 15 takes of a slider shot to find one that didn’t stick or shake and I wasn’t concerned about missed focus on a Glidecam or gimbal shot. We would lock down and nail a shot repeatedly and often times singularly. That made editing so much faster as we knew what to expect from our footage overall.
I no longer take a slider. I’m finding that I don’t need to shoot all my detail and establishing shots with a slider. One fundamental rule of filmmaking is that composition and letting the action of the subject provide the motion of a shot is more effective than camera movement. There is a true place for camera movement in filmmaking, but for weddings, I feel like it’s overdone by many of today’s wedding video makers and isn’t used intentionally, but simply because it’s available with sliders and gimbals. By simply locking down my detail shots and establishing frames, I’m able to capture more footage quicker and focus instead on the lighting of the shot and movement of the light to make the shot dynamic. The video that accompanies this article will illustrate this.

I’ve come to surmise that any gear other than a monopod, camera, and a tripod slows me down and actually keeps me from being as creative as I can be. I do bring a motorized gimbal along, but only one that can be carried with one hand. I don’t subscribe to a gimbal that has a roll-cage attached and requires two-handed operation or that draws too much attention. Having a simple, small handheld 3-axis gimbal with a compact mirrorless camera allows me to get a few slow-moving wide shots, which will help bring a small element of motion into my footage. This is useful in large, grand venues or settings. My drone operator will add another level of motion with his aerial shots, which play nicely with the static shots that make up about 85-90% of my other shots.

So, my kit now basically consists of a couple of cameras (my second-shooter will supply a third), a few audio devices for mic’ing the groom and officiant, and tapping into the sound systems for ceremonies and receptions. I bring about 5 lenses total and use 3 of them in rotation regularly: a 50mm, a 14-24mm, and a 135. I don’t even bring a 70-200 anymore since with the cropped sensor formats we shoot with I don’t need a longer focal length than 135, which is effectively a 200mm. I bring two tripods, one for me to use on detail shots and ceremonies and one for an unmanned camera or time-lapse shot if necessary. My second shooter brings one for him/herself along with a monopod which I also have. Between the two of us, we are now shooting on monopod or tripod most of the time. I’m quicker, lighter, and more agile now on wedding days. We have the ability to move from place to place with ease. We do carry a 2-light kit for receptions and stands for them. The lights are fully battery-powered as I don’t want to deal with running power cables. The lights and the stands are carried in one large case, a ThinkTank Production Manager 50, which also houses the gimbal, the audio, and some other gear we don’t need at the ready. This brought our kit of 5 or 6 cases down to two. We load-in to venues faster and during jobs in the inner-city we can move around in Ubers with relative ease. Add an assistant and the second shooter into the mix and I can completely concentrate on filming and not logistics. This is my perfect place for filming weddings.
I honestly feel like my work has improved and I’m able to look at light and shadow and the beauty of a shot without being weighed down by gear. I’m able to whip-turn fast and get parent reactions and grandma tearing up. I’m free to move around and adjust focus quickly, yielding me more quality shots to use in editing and tell a better story. I’m also less of a nuisance to work with in the eyes of photographers.

The production value and quality still remains, but at a cheaper cost to my body and my wallet. I used to lose gear all the time on weddings. We would move from place to place so quickly that often times equipment would get left behind. Sometimes we could retrieve it and other times it just wasn’t worth traveling 3 hours to recover. We now rely on the built-in electronic viewfinders of our Panasonic Lumix mirrorless cameras for focus and exposure accuracy outside and for greater stabilization, rather than having to use an external monitor or hood loupe attached to the back of the camera. Today’s technology and improvements to these camera features make this possible. Hood loupes would always fall off and get lost. I don’t even use external mics on my cameras anymore. I simply rely on the built-in camera microphone to capture reference sound and ambient voices.

Take a look at a film we recently shot and count how many shots are actually static still frames that allow the subject or light to provide the motion—and you’ll see what I mean. I believe it’s an example of quality wedding filmmaking that doesn’t require hundreds of pounds of gear or cost precious minutes of setup to achieve.
How to Get Consistent Color Between Cameras in Lightroom Classic

with Dustin Lucas
How to Get Consistent Color Between Cameras in Lightroom Classic | Dustin Lucas

When it comes to using multiple camera models and manufacturers, images photographed in the same place and time look different. As photographers, we focus on controlling this variance of brightness and color of light in a multitude of ways. Whether that’s using Auto, Priority Modes, or Manual settings in-camera, we constantly worry how this will look on the computer screen as well as images side by side. Regarding exposure specifically, we have standardized ways to keep this in check in-camera using blown highlight preview mode or showing the histogram on the display screen while shooting. Color consistency between multiple cameras is a whole other monster.

Now, if you have already created a custom profile with a Macbeth chart or the X-Rite Color Checker software, this article would not benefit you, although there are some useful tips to share along the way. While this is the proper method used by professionals, it is difficult to control color to this extreme during a wedding. For the majority of photographers shooting in a multitude of light sources that don’t have time for an assistant to hold a chart in front of your client per lighting change, let’s explore how to get clicked in with color in Lightroom Classic. We can start by choosing the right Camera Profile for accurate colors. Then we can dive into the Camera Calibration panel per camera to adjust RGB Primaries. After each camera is dialed in, we can create Presets and set Lightroom Preferences so these are applied as default settings per camera model.

Let’s take a look at the RAW vs. Adobe DNG color rendering.

**RAW VS. ADOBE DNG & CAMERA PROFILES**

Contrary to popular belief, converting RAW files to Adobe DNGs are a thing of the past. Those who are still doing this refuse to upgrade their Lightroom version while buying new cameras that are no longer supported. Adobe recommended this a while back to offer universal profiles between camera models and manufacturers to offer a level of calibrating them faster. You will notice the Adobe Raw profiles listed in the Profile Browser. These are available to use without having to convert to a DNG. (Fig. 1) Moving on from this dinosaur-old conversation we can move into Profiles to get the camera closer in color and tone.

The first thing I like to do is synch the White Balance between both shots in the same lighting taken within a few seconds of each other. Doing this will provide a standard base for each camera so we can start to select profiles per RAW file to more closely match the true color. (Fig. 2) Oddly enough the Nikon looks warmer and more red than the Sony after Temp is set to 5500 and Tint to 0. (Fig. 3) Both RAW files are set to Adobe Color, which is the default profile for Lightroom Classic. Moving into the Profile Browser, I would start with the Sony file to apply different options to add some warmth to the skin. (Fig. 4) Comparing the profiles Adobe Portrait and Camera Portrait, there are huge changes in the skin tones. Adobe’s profiles tend to be quite cool and almost desaturated whereas the Sony Camera profiles are heavy on contrast, warmth, and redness. (Fig. 5)
How to Get Consistent Color Between Cameras in Lightroom Classic

Dustin Lucas

I think the one most closely matched for the Sony is the Light profile under Camera Matching and for the Nikon it’s the Camera Portrait. (Fig. 6) Keep in mind that if you’re having massive discrepancies with Adobe Color or Standard as well as the camera matching profiles, you can go to a third-party profile company to apply a more stylized look. Many photographers prefer these since every camera model has a specific profile made and accommodated for. Here are a few options available to use and you can see they provide relatively matched results. Let’s move onto the Calibration panel in Lightroom to adjust RGB Primaries.

CAMERA CALIBRATION

The Calibration section was the hub for adjusting camera color and how these were represented in Lightroom. (Fig. 7) Originally this is where camera profiles were buried until Lightroom Classic began utilizing these further. Now they are the first thing you adjust because they are in plain sight at the top of the Basic panel. This section is still widely used to shift how you see color represented through the Reds, Greens, and Blues as well as the tint of your shadows. Adjusting shadows is much more straightforward for shifting the tint more green or magenta. I typically leave this at 0. Adjusting the RGB Primary is a bit more extensive.

This is different than adjusting color in Tone Curve or HSL panel. This is specific to how each color is mixed in the pixels. So, if you are adjusting the blue primary hue you will see the skin tones shift contrary to adjusting the blue hue in HSL. (Fig. 8a) This becomes helpful to reduce the green effect a Nikon camera has or the cast of blue in the suit in the Sony. Hue is a bit more complex than saturation, in that it shifts the color mix from magenta to green. I typically look for warm green tones in the skin and will drop the red primary hue to remove. This works better than desaturating the red primary because I don’t want skin to look dull or grey in any way. (Fig. 9)
Looking at the Sony camera and seeing blue cast in the suit is a tricky change as well. I can lower blue saturation in HSL or in Calibration. Lowering this in Calibration adjusts more than just the blues and will affect the entire image. (Fig. 11) It’s important to adjust this as part of a global change. You can target specific colors later in HSL. Now we are ready to build a preset and set up preferences. (Fig. 12)

BUILD A PRESET & CUSTOM PREFERENCES

Once you dial in the cameras you will want to build a preset for each of them. This is so you can quickly recall these settings in the future and not have to spend the time remembering each one or building a matched style for every job. Of course, you would want to do this per camera model to ensure you are dialed in. Creating a preset is simple: you can hold shift and command while striking the “n” key. (Fig. 13) I recommend setting up a new group so you can quickly recall this preset from a short list rather than User Presets. (Fig. 14) Also, you will want to exclude white balance, exposure, graduated filters, radial filters, lens correction (since we used custom vignettes), and transform. (Fig. 15)
Once the preset is created, we need to go into Lightroom Preferences to setup camera defaults. Once Preferences is open, go to the Presets tab which is new to Lightroom Classic v9 specifically. (Fig. 16) In this tab you can choose a specific camera model and the preset you wish to apply at default. (Fig. 17) Once you find the right preset, you have to Create Default. Keep in mind this sets the preset as the default settings so when you import files this will not be applied. Only when you reset an image will it revert back to these settings. (Fig. 18) If you want to apply the preset at import you can as well. This helps to see the before preview in Develop applied with the preset.

THE RESULTS

That’s it. You are ready to fine-tune your images now that the color is consistent between cameras. The formula is pretty simple: apply a Profile, adjust the Calibration sliders, apply HSL for local color, save a preset, and set camera defaults. Many of us want consistent color between multiple cameras no matter the brand or model. Take the time to get clicked in with color and the results will be fool-proof. Of course, if you want to use a Macbeth chart or X-Rite Color Checker systems you can. On a wedding day, it’s not ideal as you will have to create 15-20 profiles and remember to hold the chart in front of the bride all day.

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

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HOW TO BUILD YOUR PHOTOGRAPHY WEBSITE WITH WORDPRESS IN 2020

with Alicia Simpson
There are tons of platforms out there that photographers can use to build a website. At one point or another, you probably heard that WordPress is the “best” for SEO. Maybe you tried to get started on a site and promptly began to pull your hair out from frustration. What theme should you pick? Why doesn’t it look like the screenshots you saw? How do you get a decent looking gallery? How do you make it load faster? Shit, you activated a new plugin to help and it broke everything.

Wordpress is a platform with the power to build almost anything you want, but all that freedom makes it really tricky to navigate. Until I found the right tools through a lot of trial and error and crashed sites, I found it frustrating as well (in fact, as I write this, we’re dealing with the headache of switching the ShutterFest site to a new server). In this series, I want to save you all those headaches and show you the entire process of building a Wordpress site for your photography business, from beginning to end.

In this article, I’ll touch on hosting, and we’ll get our theme and basic styles set up.

**CHOOSING THE RIGHT HOSTING**

If you take one thing away from this section, it should be this: don’t cheap out on hosting. Choosing a decent host is key to making sure your website is as fast as possible. You can optimize your site all day long, but if you have a slow host, you can only get so far.

We use Liquid Web for our hosting. I’m no server expert, so I don’t want to get too into this, but here are some things to look for:

- Can you get a dedicated server? Basically, this means that the only website on your server is yours, and your site won’t get bugged down just because other websites are experiencing high traffic.

- Does the host have a “managed WordPress” option? This will make things way easier on you and is well worth the money. Often, managed WordPress includes services like routine backups, SSL certificates, and automatic updates. Sometimes they can even help you migrate your website to their system.

- How is their support? Do they have phone and live chat, or just email? Are they available at any time?

**PICKING A THEME**

Okay, you’ve got a good host and WordPress is installed. The next thing to do is install a theme! I’m going to take a different approach than most people and tell you not to mess around with finding the coolest “photography theme” on Envato. Don’t even go look. What you really need out of a theme is something minimal and fast that has a full-width layout option, a good looking header, footer, and blog. Our page builder is going to handle everything else. Yes, even the galleries.

My two favorite themes are OceanWP and GeneratePress. I think OceanWP is the prettiest out of the box, so I’m going to go with that. On your WordPress dashboard, go to Appearance > Themes, click the Add New button at the top and search OceanWP in the search box. When it comes up, hover over the thumbnail and click Install, then Activate.
Next, we’re going to install a plugin called Ocean Extra that adds some, well, extra functions to our theme. Go to Plugins > Add New, then search for and install Ocean Extra.

At this point, you’re probably seeing a lot of notices cluttering the top of your screen. Go ahead and dismiss all of them.

Now, it’s time to get started!

Go to Appearance > Customize. This opens up the theme customizer, and we are ready to get going. On the left-hand side of the screen, there will be a list of sections on the site you can control. I like to go straight down the list to make sure I hit everything.

**CUSTOMIZING THE THEME**

**SITE IDENTITY**

First up is Site Identity. This is important for SEO and social media—it shows up at the end of every page and link shared. For Sal’s site, we made the site title the keyword that matters most to us—St. Louis Wedding Photographer—and set the business name as the tagline. In this section, you can upload a 512x512 site icon as well. This is also called a favicon. It’s the teeny tiny icon that shows up next to your site name in a browser tab, so keep it simple.

*Pro Tip:* Hit the Publish button at the top after you’re done with each section to push your changes live.
Now let’s make our menu. In the Menu section, click Create New Menu. Give it a name, like Main Nav, and check Main so that it displays at the top of your page. Click Next, and a button called Add Items will show up. When you click it, you’ll be able to start making new pages and adding existing pages by clicking the plus button to the left of the page you want to add.

I’m going to add Home, and create pages called About, Weddings, Seniors, Blog, and Contact. Now we’ve got a good menu with a search feature, too.

I know I said I go straight down the page, but as it turns out, I lied. I’m going to skip the Widgets section and go to Homepage Settings. This is an easy one. Set your homepage to display a static page (set it to Sample Page) and set your posts page to Blog.

Under General Options > General Styling, set your brand colors. Pick something darker for your primary color, and a lighter (but still visible) color for the hover and border colors. Leave the background color as white, and set your link colors to something that will stand out from the text. Don’t worry if you’re a little unsure of what it’s all going to look like—we can always change these later.
In General Options > General Settings, we’ll set our layout styles. I like to keep the main container at 1200px, and keep the content and sidebar widths as-is too. For Page layout, I select 100% full width, so that any backgrounds we make in our page builder can stretch as far as possible. Leave everything else as-is.

In General Options > Page Title, set the visibility to Hide on Tablet & Mobile, leave the heading tag as H1, and set the style to Hidden.

In the Scroll to Top section, I’m going to uncheck the scroll up button. It’s nice for sites with lots of information, but I don’t think we need it here. If you do want one, this is where you would customize the icon and color of the button.

Skip Pagination for now, and we’ll come back to it when we set up our blog. Next is Typography.

I won’t go into detail on all these settings—but you will need to hit Body, All Headings, Heading 1—Heading 4, Main Menu, and Mobile Menu for now.

My advice is to find a Google font (fonts.google.com) that matches your brand, has upper and lowercase letters, and has at least 3 weights. That way you can have headings that are bold and light for contrast, and an in-between weight for regular text.

Set the font family you chose in the Body section. By setting the font in this section, it will carry through to all the other typography settings, and you won’t have to waste time selecting it in each section. I’ll also set the font color here, matching it to my primary color from the General Options section.

A good size for body and main menu text is 16px. For headings, I like to start with Heading 1’s at 40px, and go down from there for headings 2—4. Again, we can override or come back and adjust these sizes when we start building the pages. If you want all your headings to be uppercase, you can set that in the All Headings section.

**Pro Tip:** Use the device buttons at the bottom of the page to preview your site and see how your mobile menu settings look.
How to Build Your Photography Website with WordPress in 2020 | Alicia Simpson

TOP BAR

Next, go in to the Top Bar section. This is a great spot for social media links and a phone number. In Top Bar > General, you can customize the colors and change which side the social media links are on. I’m going to leave all that alone and go to content. I want to add a phone number here. If you want to make it clickable (so people can tap to call on their phones), you will have to add a tiny bit of HTML code: `<a href="tel:800-555-5555">800-555-5555</a>`

In Top Bar > Social, add links to your social media pages and set the colors of the icons.

HEADER

Now, jump back to the Header section, and go to Logo. Click Select Logo and upload a high-res logo. The dimensions of it don’t matter, but the file size should be under 200KB. If you upload one that’s at least 500px wide like I did, you can safely skip the Retina logo option. After you upload, it will give you the option to crop or skip cropping. Then you can set the Max Width of your logo. Scale it until you’re happy with the way it looks.

SEO Tip: Name your image according to the top keyword you want to rank for, and add alt text to the image when you upload.

Go to Header > General to pick a header style. Minimal is the default, but you can go transparent, stacked, full screen, or even vertical! Keep in mind, you might have to adjust your colors.
Next, navigate to the Blog settings section, and click Blog on your menu in the website preview so you can see how your changes look. On the left side of the screen, go to Blog > Blog Entries. You’ll see options for the layout of the page. You can have a sidebar on the left, right, both, or no sidebar. I don’t recommend 100% full width, because it leaves no breathing room on the page. I’m going to leave the right sidebar layout selected.

You can reorder how the content shows up on mobile. I am going to select Sidebar/Content so that the search bar can be at the top on mobile. Leave the heading tag as H2. H1 is an option, but best practice is to only have one H1 per page.

Next, you can set the style of each blog post. I’ll go with Large Image and set the length of the excerpt to 150. Then you can set the visibility and order of the elements in each blog post. As you can see in the image, I placed my title and meta (a fancy word for the date and category) above the featured image, followed by the content (a fancy word for the excerpt) and Read More button. I also turned off the visibility of the author and comments, because there’s only one author and comments are disabled.

Now, click in to the sample blog post on the right, and go to Blog > Single Post on the left. This is where you could design the layout of your posts, but we’re going to have some fun later and use our page builder for that instead.
How to Build Your Photography Website with WordPress in 2020 | Alicia Simpson

We’ve finally reached the last two sections. (If you’ve stuck with me this far, you are truly a majestic unicorn.)

In Footer Widgets, un-check the checkbox next to Enable Footer Widgets to get rid of that section. Now, go to Footer Bottom and in the Copyright box, enter your NAP: name, address, and phone number. This is incredibly important for SEO if you want to show up in local search results like “Photography in [Your City].” It’s also good to include a contact email here. This is another section you’ll have to include a little bit of HTML code in order to create links, but don’t worry, I got you. To create a telephone link, type `<a href="tel:800-851-0520">800-851-0520</a>` (replace the two phone numbers with your own). To create a link that opens up a new email, type `<a href="mailto:team@cincottaemail.com">TEAM@CINCOTTAEMAIL.COM</a>` (replace the two email addresses with your own). Set your padding and colors, and you’re good to go!

The last thing we need to do is set up our blog sidebar, in the Widgets section we skipped over way back at the beginning. Go to Widgets > Default Sidebar and remove the Recent Comments widget. I like to add Categories so people can browse by wedding, engagement, etc. If you’re a Mailchimp user, OceanWP also includes a Mailchimp widget you can use to collect emails—you’ll just have to follow the directions to set it up.

Click Publish one last time, and you’re done!

ACHIEVEMENT UNLOCKED: WORDPRESS THEMES 101

Well, friends, we did it! It’s not the most exciting thing out there (yet), but it’s got a fast theme, a nice header and footer, and a blank canvas for us to start designing on. I hope this helped you navigate the basics of setting up a WordPress site and saved you some headaches. Be sure to check out my next article, where we’ll get into the fun stuff and start designing pages and galleries!
THE WEDDING EDITION

Featuring

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5 WAYS TO MAKE AN EXTRA $2K PER CLIENT
with Makayla Jade
As a wedding photographer with a young family, my weekends are sacred to me. I always knew I never wanted to be “high volume,” but of course I wanted to make as much as possible per client to scale my business. Over the years I’ve learned a number of ways you can increase your client accounts while receiving raving reviews and not giving up more weekends! Hint: if your clients are spending more with you, it doesn’t mean they’re unhappy clients. The experience and value you provide just needs to match the price.

1:1 ORDERING APPOINTMENTS, VIRTUAL OR IN-PERSON SALES

Even if you don’t have a studio or a place to meet with your clients in person, meeting “virtually” 1:1 after each photographic experience is a great way to help guide your clients through the image selection process, show them all the product offerings, and ease them through the decision making process. While just sending out a gallery may seem convenient and easy, it can lead to the client becoming overwhelmed by options and pushing off making any decision. Most consumers don’t know the difference between lustre or deep matte, and they aren’t familiar with what frame sizes would work well above a couch or an accent wall. This is where our guidance can be of service to them. It’s also easy for people to be more self conscious or worried about the way they look in the photos when they are viewing them by themselves behind a computer screen. By helping the client 1:1, you can answer any questions they have, be a resource for them, boost their confidence, and get them excited about their photos and all the ways they can showcase them.
5 Ways to Make an Extra $2K Per Client | Makayla Jade

ENGAGEMENT SESSION SALES

If you’re charging a flat fee for your engagement session and just sending out the digitals afterwards, you’re missing out on a lot of additional revenue. I used to charge $950 for an engagement session with the digital downloads. I figured this made sense for a few hours of my time plus an editing subscription. Not every couple would add it on, but maybe 15 or so each year, which meant roughly an additional $14,250 in revenue. What I realized, however, was the couples I did engagement sessions with I felt more connected to, comfortable with, and was more excited for their wedding day when the time came. I wanted to do more engagement sessions but I didn’t want to decrease the price. I decided I would just build the session into my base collection as a “complimentary” add on, meaning everyone got it. Because it was complimentary they could remove it, but wouldn’t get any money off the collection price. I also explained that the pre-session planning, photographic time, and 1:1 ordering appointment was included, but any prints or digitals from the session would have to be purchased separately. By building effective print collections and pricing my digitals appropriately, my average post-engagement session sale was around $2,600 that year (engagement album, wall art, prints for parents, save the dates, digital downloads). $2,600 x 30 couples = $78,000 in additional revenue just from engagement sales. By including the engagement session for free, it made it a no brainer for every couple to do it. From there, I was able to build trust and credibility plus hype them up about prints and albums and all the things they could do with their engagement photos, so by the time we did our 1:1 ordering appointment, they were actually excited to buy. Not to mention, now they are well versed in the process, so when they come in after their wedding they know exactly what to expect!
5 Ways to Make an Extra $2K Per Client | Makayla Jade

PRE-DESIGN EVERYTHING

I hate the idea of feeling pushy or salesy, so when I got started with virtual/in-person sales I would let the clients pick the images they wanted for their album, then I would design it and send them an online proof. Big mistake. The problems with that were:

1. It would take the client *forever* to select the images because they loved them all and it was so overwhelming to choose.

2. Oftentimes the images they picked didn’t tell a full story… they might choose one image from the cake cutting and 27 sunset shots. I found myself with layouts and designs that didn’t make sense. Some pages felt redundant and other pages felt like something was missing.

3. If the album in their collection included 65 images, most people would just select 65 images which meant $0 in upgrades, and now I have to order a $400 album.

4. They focused only on the album because that was included in their collection, and never purchased anything else like wall art or gifts for parents. By pre-designing an album, wall art, and thank you cards for your clients it does a few things:

   a. Once they see the pre-design or “mock-up,” they’re able to visualize it and fall in love with it, meaning it’s a lot harder for them to say no. This means more beautiful things in their life and more sales for you.

   b. It’s a lot harder for people to remove photos than it is to add photos. By intentionally over-designing the album to 100+ pages, you instantly open up the opportunity to upgrade. It will be very difficult for them to take pages out once they’ve already fallen in love with the design. And let’s be honest, we say over-designed, but these are their photos. It won’t feel that way to them. Also, I’ve found that every couple is different and prioritizes different parts of the day. Some couples may want a lot of family portrait combinations, others may want a lot of dance floor photos. By providing a robust design covering every part of the day, I’m giving the client the opportunity to see everything and then they have the option to choose versus me choosing what should be excluded from the album.

   c. The story feels full and beautiful because you (as the expert) designed it in a visually appealing, well-balanced way.

   d. If they weren’t initially interested in wall art but you show them a beautiful collection of their most meaningful moments, now they may consider that as an upgrade. Same goes for other add-ons like thank you cards.
**REACH OUT TO PARENTS OF THE BRIDE/GROOM**

It’s a big day for the parents of the bride and groom as well. While I used to think “they’ll reach out if they want something” I’ve learned there’s a lot of additional revenue that can be earned if you establish a relationship with the parents from the beginning. In the initial consultation, you can ask your couple about how involved their parents are in the planning process to get a sense for if it would be appropriate to reach out or not. From there, we ask our couples to provide us with their parents’ names and contact information when they finalize the wedding agreement with us. We let both the clients and the parents know that while the couple is our main priority, we also understand that this is a big day for mom and dad as well, and we would like the opportunity to get to know them and their family better so we can serve them in the best way possible. After obtaining the parents’ contact info from the couple, we send out an introductory email to all involved parents introducing ourselves and letting them know we are here to help. Then, about 3-6 months before the wedding we will reach out again and let them know that we’re in the process of building out the timeline and family photo combinations with the couple and that they should coordinate any specific requests with them at that time. We also offer the opportunity to hop on a call with us. On this call we will answer any questions they have and ask them if they’d like to pre-purchase a parent album, wall art piece, rehearsal dinner coverage, or anything additional we feel may be of service to them. Not all parents will invest in lots of add-ons, but we usually get about 20% of parents who will spend anywhere between $2,500-4,500 on parent albums, wall art, or additional upgrades. At 30 weddings a year, that’s 8 parents’ accounts spending on average $3,500. An extra $28,000 sounds nice right?
5 WAYS TO MAKE AN EXTRA $2K PER CLIENT | Makayla Jade

5 SAME DAY SLIDESHOWS

The thought of producing a slideshow of images the day of the wedding can seem pretty terrifying. Keep in mind, it doesn’t have to be perfect—you’re just going for impact here. This is one of the most effective ways to market your business to your ideal clients and get add-on print sales from wedding guests. Here’s how to make this happen:

1. Set up the wedding gallery before the wedding day (feel free to add in an engagement photo for the cover image).
2. Add that URL to the back of your business cards so guests know where to find the photos.
3. During cocktail hour or another “downtime” during the wedding day, send your second shooter to shoot detail shots or group photos while you select 50-100 of your favorite photos (or vice versa).
4. Throw a quick preset/exposure adjustment on these images and export.
5. Use a digital picture frame to display the photos near the bar for people to watch while they wait for their drink.
6. Stick a business card holder on the picture frame and use the business cards with the URL on the back to send guests back to your website to view the gallery when it’s ready.
7. Capture their emails when they enter the gallery, send them an announcement when the images are ready with a discount off loose prints in the gallery, and then add them to your email newsletter.

Maybe not every one of these will work for your business and I don’t want to downplay the amount of work involved. Each of these will take hard work. So start by implementing 1-2 of these ideas to help increase your client accounts and boost your revenue this year, and then come back to try new ideas.
5 WAYS TO USE
OFF-CAMERA LIGHT
ON A WEDDING DAY

with Justin Haugen
Weddings are commonly acknowledged as one of the toughest specialties of photography. You’re confronted with rapidly changing lighting conditions and are tasked with documenting authentic moments artistically, while under major time constraints. You’ve got a good wedding day workflow under your belt, but now you realize it’s time to add something new to your toolkit that is going to separate your images from the competition and help you overcome difficult lighting situations. In this article, I’m going to share with you 5 techniques to help take your wedding photography to the next level.

Before we begin, let’s talk gear. Every image I share is possible in some form with your average speedlight. We’re living in the golden era of off-camera lighting options and we’ve come a long way from pricey first-party options that cost as much as modern day strobes. In most of my examples I’m using a flash that is three times more powerful and efficient as a speedlight, but rarely am I operating the flash at full power. My objective is to keep the gear as minimal as possible and have it hand-holdable so it can be carried and manipulated easily. Even if you’re working with an entry level speedlight, you should be able to achieve similar results.

It’s also essential that we modify the light to achieve our creative objectives. When I work with OCF, my objective is to keep the light compartmentalized to my subjects by minimizing spill with a MagMod grid. I also prefer a round light pattern by using a MagMod Sphere. Some speedlights even have a round head like the ProFoto A1. Lastly, I like the option of adding color into my images, so my MagMod Gels play a big part in my creative lighting setups.

My best piece of advice to you on a wedding day is to employ the help of an assistant. Not only will they help you wrangle gear you’re bound to leave behind as you move from space to space, but they can also hand hold a flash and point it at intended subjects quickly. When photographing people, I tell assistants to draw an imaginary line from the middle of the flash to the eyes of my subjects and to keep the light slightly above eye level as a starting point. I always want the hottest part of the light to hit dead center on my subject’s eyes. This way the light pattern will transition to darkness as it moves away from their face and you’ll have this pleasing effect of spotlighting your subjects while keeping unnecessary spill from reaching the floor or nearby objects. The closer your light is to your subjects, the tighter the light pattern will appear.
SHOOTING DETAILS

With an assistant on-hand and a flash in-hand, you’re going to breeze through detail photos. Typically we’re shooting indoors for the preparation portion of the wedding day, and you’ll be battling already dim conditions compared to shooting outdoors. These are ideal conditions for using OCF to highlight details in these dimmer conditions. I love to position lights in more creative ways that you don’t typically observe with natural light.

Instead of a filled-in scene with light striking every surface in the frame, we can position a flash directly overhead and just out of frame to get a dramatic top-down lighting effect as if a light fixture is hanging over this table. Add a MagSphere or use a flash with a round head to achieve a pleasing circular light pattern.

When performing macro photography for detail shots of the rings, the light placement is very close to your subject so you can achieve very narrow apertures and at your max sync speed. In the ring shot above, the flash is just out of frame with a MagSphere. Even at an ISO of 80 with an aperture of F/11 and shutter speed of 1/250th, I can shoot at a relatively low power with a faster recycle. When shooting macro images, your focal plane is very thin so a slight breath can throw off your focus from your initial moment of capture. Because of this, I tend to rapid fire these ring shots hand held, making a fast recycle even more critical.
REFERENCE LIGHTING

One of my objectives when using off-camera flash is to reference ambient lighting in the scene and mimic it with my OCF. If I do a good job, the light I’ve introduced into the scene is believable and I can convince the viewer that the light was there all along.

In these photos, I referenced the beautifully warm golden hour light sweeping across the backgrounds. Shooting at daylight white balance during golden hour will produce warm tones in your images, but our flashes are very close to daylight white balance so the tones they produce tend to be very neutral. By adding a 1/2 CTO or 1/2 straw gel, I can mimic the glow of golden hour and produce light on my subjects that matches the scene.

Using a red creative gel on a second light positioned to the right and slightly behind the couple, I’m able to reference the red glow emitting from the neon sign. The couple was about 40 feet from the sign, much too far to get the actual glow of neon to reach them in this scenario. With considerate placement and gel use, we can still reference the light in the scene as a critical part of the creative result.
SMOKE AND SPRAY

If you really want to kick things up a notch, remember that any particulates in the air between the camera and a flash pointed toward it will catch light. With practice, you can get some fun and creative effects. Think hair spray, perfume, champagne, or cigar smoke. These are all things you’re likely to encounter on a wedding day, and they all make for some intriguing effects.

Bridal prep is a great time to take risks like this. Give yourself plenty of time to experiment on a wedding day and show up early to bridal prep. I like to ask the hair stylist and makeup artist when they’ll be using hair spray or makeup setting spray, and ask that they give me a heads up so I can position light.

I’ll position a flash with MagGrid at least 3 feet behind the bride, and then I position the flash head to aim for the area in front of the bride’s head. I use a grid here to keep the light pattern tight and just around the head of the bride. You’ll want to underexpose for the ambient light at least a stop so that when you introduce the flash into the shot, the effect it has on the exposure will be apparent. Because we’re in tight quarters with the flash relatively close to your subject, you should be able to pull off lower power flash pops, allowing you to rapid fire through the duration of the shot so you can choose the best frame later.

As an added bonus, if you manage to get a conveniently placed stylist’s arm in front of the bride, or if you get enough spray in that area, you’ll get some nice light bounce-back onto the bride’s face. After observing this unintended effect over several weddings, I started to give the stylists some guidance on hand placement and where to spray so I could achieve this effect on purpose.

Another low-pressure time to experiment with OCF is when the groomsmen step outside for a celebratory cigar. In this image, I positioned a flash with MagSphere and a lime creative gel behind the groom and pointed toward the camera. With careful positioning, I was able to block the view of the flash. I asked the guys to “light ‘em up” and puff incessantly. After a few test frames I decided the groom needed just a kiss of light to his face to highlight him as the most important part of the image. Just out of frame and to the left of the groom, I positioned a flash with two MagGrids stacked on top of each other. This narrowed the pattern of light to just a sliver of an area around his head and upper shoulder. The key here being that I didn’t allow any light to spill on the groomsmen just behind him.
SILHOUETTE ANYWHERE

An early wedding photography trick for natural light shooters is to underexpose your subjects while bringing out rich tones in a killer sunset, leaving two intimately silhouetted figures in the foreground. With OCF you can silhouette anywhere.

The formula is simple:
1. Position the flash behind the subjects.
2. Point the flash toward a nearby (or not-so-nearby) background surface.
3. Underexpose the ambient light.
4. Trigger the flash.

When I saw this incredible mansion the day before the wedding, I told my friend, “I’m going to light the entire mansion up with one light.” I positioned the couple several hundred feet from the mansion and the flash was positioned about 20 feet behind them low on the ground and pointing upward toward the mansion. I had a magenta creative gel in the gel holder of the MagSphere. I chose the MagSphere for this situation because it allowed for a wider spread of light, and I’d need all the reach I could get to have the colored light spread to every inch of the mansion.

An unintended effect of using the MagSphere was that I also had light spilling out of the back of the sphere, casting unfiltered light toward the couple and making for a beautiful rim light, haloing their bodies. I love giving couples fairytale moments at the end of a long wedding day. It’s the perfect way to impress your clients just before you make your exit.

Pro Tip: Michael Anthony of Michael Anthony Photography told me his secret to getting these types of photos with no stand visible in the shot. Have the bride or groom hold the flash in hand and pointed toward the wall. With a little guidance on positioning, you can get a perfect silhouette anywhere!
5 Ways to Use Off-Camera Light on a Wedding Day  | Justin Haugen

HIDING LIGHT IN PLAIN SIGHT

We’re not just photographers on a wedding day, we’re artists. Give yourself some creative license to make something special, even if it means stepping out of your comfort zone with a little post-processing.

I love to shoot environmentally. My number one objective when photographing couples in a big scene is to make sure they’re the first thing the viewer sees when they look at the image. Because speedlights are underpowered compared to strobes, they may not have the reach to effectively light your subjects in a scene. Also consider that the further you move your lights from your subjects, the spread of light will grow. If your goal is to have tight and compartmentalized light with little spill, you’ll often find you need to keep the light closer to your subjects.

How do we achieve this effect when we’re shooting large scenes? The easiest answer is that we can creatively position our subjects in a frame and use nearby objects or obstructions to block the view of the light. The difficult approach is that we simply don’t even hide the light at all. With a little light-handed cloning and healing work in Photoshop, we can zap a flash, light stand, and assistant out of an image with relative ease. Frame your images with this process in mind and you’ll minimize the post-process work you loathe.

Another easy method is to shoot one frame with your assistant/light in the shot, and then have them leave the photo entirely and take a second image. If you’re working without an assistant, you can have your subjects grab the light stand and walk it out of the subsequent shot. You won’t even need a tripod for this. Just be mindful of keeping the focus point in the same location for the photo and you’ll easily be able to bring both images into the same Photoshop workspace, select both layers, and auto-align layers under the edit dropdown in Photoshop. Position the assistant/light stand layer on top of the blank layer in the layers palette. Click on the add layer mask button for the top layer and then select the paint brush tool and the black color in the palette. You’ll paint in the black mask over the light and erase it away, revealing the blank layer below. If all of this sounds like too much to tackle yourself, you can always send it off to Evolve for a Signature Edit.
CONCLUSION

Now that you’ve read 5 different ways to approach your off-camera lighting on a wedding day, it’s imperative you get out and practice. You can easily practice these concepts on regular objects around the house or on a planned practice session with one or two people. Some of these concepts are easier to pull off than others, and with great planning and preparation, you can allot yourself the time to experiment on a wedding day. Introduce off-camera flash slowly at first, while leaning on your natural light work to get the safe shots. Once you feel confident you have a strong body of natural light work to lean on, you’ll have less pressure on you should your OCF images not work out. I make a point to not show the back of the camera images to couples if I’m not confident in the end result. The last thing I want to deal with is a couple feeling like they are missing images you showed them on their wedding day.

Justin is a Wedding and Portrait photographer currently living in Tucson, Arizona. Starting his career photographing motorsports and feature cars for automotive publications, it wasn’t long before he found his passion in connecting with people and capturing their stories on camera. His current obsession is teaching photographers how to use off-camera lighting and will be teaching at ShutterFest 2020. Justin is sponsored by Tamron USA, MagMod, and HoldFast Gear. justinhaugen.com

Image © Justin Haugen
5 TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL WEDDING

with Justin Yoder
There are a lot of elements that go into making a wedding successful from a photographer’s perspective. A lot of times we feel that if the client is happy, then mission accomplished! But if that’s your only gauge of whether a wedding was successful or not, then there’s a lot you’re missing out on. I want to help challenge you to look at other aspects of a successful wedding day, from before you even book a client to getting bookings from guests at the wedding. Once you finish this article, I challenge you to make a list of items that define a successful wedding for you. But first, let’s jump into my top 5 tips for a successful wedding.

1. MEET WITH YOUR PROSPECTIVE CLIENT BEFORE YOU BOOK THEM

To me, this should be obvious, but I’m amazed at how many wedding photographers don’t do this. If you are currently doing In Person Sales (IPS), this is the first step to big sales at your IPS session. If you aren’t doing IPS (I highly recommend it), I still recommend meeting your prospective clients before sending out a contract. Obviously, we all want to make money, so it’s easy to think the first step should be to get a signed contract as quickly as possible. But consider this: if you’re booking clients that make you hate photography, that isn’t a healthy way to run your business.

If your prospective client doesn’t want to meet with you, explain to them that their photographer will probably be spending at least eight hours with them and their families on a wedding. Encourage them that no matter who they book, you recommend meeting them first to be sure they will enjoy working with them. Worst case scenario, do a video call with them. During the meeting, find out how they met. Ask about the proposal. Find out if they grew up where you are located. Really get to know them. You want to make sure no red flags show up. Most importantly, start building a good relationship with them. After all, if they do book you, there’s a good chance you will be doing their engagement session, bridal session, wedding, and IPS session and this is the foundation for making all those connection points go smoothly and build trust.
2. DO A SHOOT WITH YOUR COUPLE BEFORE THE WEDDING DAY

Wedding days can be a stressful time for the couple and all involved. Part of a great photographer’s job is to help relieve stress for the couple. If you have never met before the wedding day and you’re walking in as a stranger who is now trying to give them directions while attempting to capture their day beautifully, their natural stress can easily shift to aggravation with you. However, if you have met with them before the booking and had a fun shoot with them before the wedding, you are a safe, comfortable, familiar face to them. They know you know what you’re doing and that you can be trusted. This helps relieve a lot of stress for the couple, which translates into them being easier—and more fun—to work with.

If they don’t want to do a shoot beforehand, tell them you will do one for them for free. This is time only—they see how you work, and that brings so much value and comfort to a couple on their wedding day.
3. SIGNATURE SHOTS TAKE TIME

Most of my wedding shoots are accomplished by capturing things as they happen. Sure, I will give some direction while things are happening, but it’s usually not a “Let’s stop everything in its tracks for a photo!” situation. However, if you look at my website, what draws my clients in and what they expect of me are those impactful, dramatic images which would make beautiful art for their homes. To be able to accomplish this, I set the expectation at our consultation that these shots take time. I usually tell the client and the planner that I want an hour with just the couple. (Realistically I end up with 30—40 minutes if I’m lucky.) If I’ll be shooting in an unfamiliar venue, I will arrive early to look around for the location for these shots, so I know exactly where I’m going to do them after family photos. I have my assistant get the lighting all set up and ready so there’s little to no downtime. My first shot is for the epic signature image. After that I can relax knowing that shot is secure, so if the planner cuts us off early I still have the signature image.
At a wedding, there are a lot of eyes on you. The way you treat family and guests and how you present yourself can mean the difference between booking future clients from a wedding or not. I have actually had four sisters that all hired me for their weddings because they saw how I worked at each wedding and loved my style. I also won their mother over and think she cried when viewing the photos each time. Making moms cry—in a good way—is always a huge bonus!

Aside from how you carry yourself and act at a wedding, there are two other things that can help turn bridesmaids into clients. In my top package, I offer a Same Day Slideshow. I shoot in RAW and JPEG. During the reception, I have one of my team members use the JPEGs to create a slideshow that we show during the reception. This is always a huge hit! The couple, the family, and guests love it every time!

I also create a surprise for the couple. I have my team member put the slideshow on a Playbook from PhotoFlashDrive and give it to the driver of the getaway car to give to the couple on the way to the hotel. It’s presented nicely with a handwritten card from me congratulating them on their wedding and saying this is a small gift from me to them. Then, they have the slideshow that they can take with them on their honeymoon that they will rave about on social media. It’s a win-win for me.

I have an additional “gift” that I do for all my wedding clients. During my dinner break, I use my camera’s Wi-Fi and send 2 or 3 images to my phone. Using mobile Lightroom, I edit them and place my logo on them. Then, I text the edited images to the couple and all the vendors. They all absolutely love this and share and rave over this like crazy. The bridesmaids will also notice this and it will be something they remember when they get married.
5. BACK UP THE FILES IMMEDIATELY

I get it, this isn’t a fun tip, but it’s so critical for a successful wedding. I shoot on two cards. When I get home, one set goes on my desk while I start dumping files to my hard drive. The backups go into a small, sealed manilla envelope with the couple’s name on it and then into an unlocked fireproof safe in my closet (unlocked because I don’t want the whole case stolen if someone thinks there’s money in it). The backups stay there until I am completely finished with that client. Only then will I take them out and format them. Just recently, I’ve started experimenting with Amazon Photos. If you have a Prime account with Amazon, you have free unlimited photo storage. This is another way to protect them against fire or loss.

On the way home from a wedding, if you stop for any reason, it’s important to keep your cards on you. I can’t tell you how many times I have heard of photographers’ cars getting broken into and their gear stolen with the cards in their bags or cameras. Gear can be replaced, but wedding photos are irreplaceable, and you never want to have to make that phone call.

I hope these tips help make you a better photographer and make your weddings more successful. I would encourage you to take time right now to go over your wedding steps and find ways to improve the success of your weddings.

Justin Yoder is the award-winning owner of Justin Yoder Studios based in Dallas, Texas. He is a professional photographer, educator and humanitarian. At age 16 he had his first image published and credits much of his success to being able to land clients like American Airlines, Chipotle and the Wounded Warrior Project within his first few years of business.

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CAPTURING MOMENTS ON A WEDDING DAY
with Raph Nogal
After 11 years of photographing weddings, I see similarities in how I capture moments. There are 5 key things I do in order to help me and I want to share them with you below. It’s time to snap out of the routines and embrace the senses.

1. BE CURIOUS

I believe wedding photography is a lot more involved than most other genres of photography. What I mean by “involved” is that a wedding day usually lasts 8—12 hours and has many moving parts and we, as photographers, are involved in it all throughout the day. We are also involved in the wedding much earlier. Our relationship with the client starts months before the big day and sometimes years earlier. As a boutique studio, I go out of my way to get to know my clients and what is important to them. How can I know what they love and want if I don’t ask? I’m genuinely curious. So on your next potential client meeting, make sure you ask. This is one of the most vital pieces of information because it will lead you to take images that are important to your clients. My curiosity has led me to photograph so many amazing moments, like the one below.

This is probably the most meaningful image I have taken to date. Prior to the wedding, I learned that the bride’s father was terminally ill. I knew this was a special situation and really wanted to document the relationship between the bride and her father. This moment was captured as the bride and her father embraced after the recessional at the beach of the church. It was moving to see the subtle embrace between them and how he held her hand. Three days later, I learned that her father had passed away and that’s when it really hit me—“Wow, we have so many opportunities to do something meaningful for our clients.” Had I not known the backstory, this moment may have been captured very differently or not been captured at all.
2. BE MINDFUL

Being curious helps you succeed in this next step—being mindful and anticipating the action. Once you know what is important to your client, you’re able to focus and predict some of the action to photograph. It’s almost like you’ve been told a little secret, like the location of a treasure on a map, and now it’s your job to try and find it.

During this particular wedding day, the groom’s nephew was involved in the getting-ready portion of the day. I took the time to ask if he’s been walking and was told “not yet.” I kept that in mind as I photographed them. To get the photo above, I was seeing that his nephew was standing and was excited about the commotion of the day. I anticipated any movement of him walking away and what do you know? I was able to photograph his very first steps. How amazing?
3. BE PRESENT

Being present means not just being there physically, but also emotionally, and in the right headspace. Trying to think about how a groom must feel seeing his bride for the first time allows you to change your perspective as a photographer—it becomes more personal. Being present and observing family dynamics also gives you perspective. It may reveal relationships between family members, between siblings, between the wedding party, and friends. This information can help you capture some amazing moments for your clients.

The photos below were taken as a groom first laid eyes on his bride as she walked down the aisle. Being curious and anticipating what he might do, and being present, allowed me to capture this moment. Throughout the day, that groom mentioned how excited he was about seeing her for the first time and jokingly mentioned he was an “ugly crier,” with the wedding party confirming. I knew this was something I needed to capture. So, as the bride started walking towards the groom, I made sure that I focused my attention on the groom’s reaction.
4. BE IN CHARGE

Being in charge may initially sound counterintuitive to capturing moments, because you may think of moments as being 100% organic. I don’t believe that is the case. There are times during a wedding where if you left things to chance, things may not happen, or you may not have the opportunity to capture certain moments. Sometimes being in charge allows you to control the situation—not set it up or fake it, but rather control it so that it will allow for organic things to unfold.

In the image below, I first had to make sure the path was relatively clear for the couple as there was no clear path for them to exit the church. People were excited and scattered all over the place. By being in charge I was able to control where the couple would come out and prep everybody to make sure they threw the rice at the right time. Being in charge allowed me to get everybody ready and allowed me to have the composition and timing that I wanted for the shot.
5. BE FLEXIBLE

Sometimes as photographers we become a little bit obsessive when it comes to composition, lighting, and making sure things are perfect—Death By Perfection. Don’t. Allow yourself flexibility. Not everything will always go as planned and you will not have control of every aspect of the wedding. You may not always know all the ins and outs of the family dynamic and you will miss anticipating something that leads to the exact moment that you’re trying to photograph, but don’t beat yourself up over it. Having flexibility allows you to be more fluid. If you get 4 out of the 5 steps above, that is totally fine... Go with it—it create memories for your clients. Don’t let perfection be the cause of not capturing a beautiful moment that may mean the world to your client.

The photo below was taken during a moment between moments. I was giving the clients some direction for a few more posed shots, and once I got the shots I needed I just told them to relax and wait for me to grab another lens. They started talking to each other and eventually she leaned into his chest and closed her eyes for a few seconds. Click! And there it was. A beautiful serene moment that captured how she was feeling about the day. Going back to all the 5 tips above: being curious, being mindful, being present, and being flexible allowed me to take the shot without them even noticing just before I went to the camera bag to change the lens.

The photo below was taken during a moment between moments. I was giving the clients some direction for a few more posed shots, and once I got the shots I needed I just told them to relax and wait for me to grab another lens. They started talking to each other and eventually she leaned into his chest and closed her eyes for a few seconds. Click! And there it was. A beautiful serene moment that captured how she was feeling about the day. Going back to all the 5 tips above: being curious, being mindful, being present, and being flexible allowed me to take the shot without them even noticing just before I went to the camera bag to change the lens.

Keep these 5 tips in mind on your next wedding day. You will be surprised how they can change your perspective.

Raph Nogal

Raph Nogal is a professional wedding photographer of 11 years based in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Raph’s style can be best described as a fusion between photojournalism and art-focused editorial photography. Best known for his creative off-camera lighting approach, Raph is an active photographer, educator and speaker, and proud ambassador of Profoto Canada, MagMod, Vision Art, Sprout Studio, and Spider Holster, and is an Educational Ambassador for SLR Lounge. As a 24-time recipient of WPPI Honours of Excellence Awards, Raph is also a Fearless Photographers Award winner, Shutterfest Print Comp Award winner, as well as a PPOC Winner and Loan Collection participant in National and Regional Image Salons in Canada.

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HOW TO SHOOT AN
ENGAGEMENT SESSION
with Vanessa Joy
How to Shoot an Engagement Session | Vanessa Joy

Everyone has their own creative process. It’s all well and good when you’re shooting and feeling inspired and creative and motivated. But what happens when that falls flat? When you’re standing in front of your clients (or rather, hiding behind your camera) and hoping something starts happening? There’s nothing quite like the panic of being paralyzed by lack of pose ideas.

As much as we’d all love to only photograph our subjects when we’re feeling artsy, being a professional photographer simply doesn’t leave room for that. We have to work when we’re tired and feeling bland and still produce the same results as when we’re at our photographic best. At least to the point where our clients can tell anyway.

What I propose is that you have a system for engagement shoots (or really any shoot). Maybe you’ll only have it in the back of your mind and bring it up on the uncreative days. Or perhaps you’ll just use it as a starting point to get everything flowing from there. Either way, having a go to process in my head has helped me on numerous occasions. Posing guides are great, but having a method in the back of your mind will be much faster to access.

Here’s my method and process of how I shoot my typical engagement session and how I interact with my clients and pose them. My sessions are slated as hour-long sessions, usually shooting about an hour before sunset so I have the best natural light and can maybe even snag a sunset or twilight picture or two.
GETTING STARTED

Because this is usually the first time that my clients have been in a professional photo shoot, I try to start off with easy poses. My initial goal is to stay a little bit further away from them than I normally would. I’ll typically use a Canon 135mm 2.0 lens so that the distance between us is more comfortable than shooting with say a 50mm lens right off the bat.

Posing-wise, it’s wise to start by having them do things that are natural, like walking and holding hands. I have them start walking away from me, then turn around and walk towards me. In the beginning, as they’re walking away from me, I won’t direct them too much because that’s when I’m usually solidifying my settings and the photos aren’t usually too great (since it’s just their backsides anyway). When they turn around and walk back towards me, I’ll direct them to be a little bit flirtatious and start looking at each other and interacting with each other, rather than interacting with the camera. After that warm-up to make them a little bit more comfortable, I’ll have them start looking at me for some photos and then I’ll have them interact with each other with a little more affection than just holding hands.

When I pose a bride and groom, I love it when a groom’s hands are on the bride’s arms and her arms are just tucked in nice and close with him. I usually tell them to snuggle in close like she’s cold and he’s trying to warm her up. It’s a great way to add movement to a pose and get them a bit more relaxed. Overall, it just looks so much more connected for me than the typical “arms around the waist, arms around the shoulders” look.
After I feel that my clients are comfortable being photographed, I’ll move in, typically with my Canon 50mm 1.2 lens and photograph a bit tighter and capture some more of the details. Photographing the bride, I’ll have her look at me, look at her fiance, and maybe some of the details like the ring or anything else that would make for a cute photo. I do like to photograph the groom as well, so I try to make sure I pay attention to both of them, even though a lot of the attention does tend to fall on the bride-to-be.

In general, anytime you can add movement will benefit your images. Think of yourself as a videographer if that helps. Videographers don’t want to shoot someone standing still. It’s just not interesting. Learn to add movement to any pose that you typically do and you’ll get a ton of natural-looking photos, plus it helps loosen up the couple.
GET CREATIVE

From there, we'll change positions and try a few different things, or walk to different locations to keep things moving. I like to vary poses that have them standing, seated, and always adding movement to any position. Anything to deliver a good variety to my clients. After all, a goal of mine is to provide them with an engagement album, and that won't be easy to do if the photos all look similar.

Having them interact with each other is great. These tend to be the pictures that my clients like a little bit better and will blow up or make big pictures in the albums. The pictures of them looking at the camera tend to be the ones that mom and dad hang on their wall. I want to make sure I get both of them, both far away and then both close up. Think of that every single time you shoot. Get side, medium, and close up. It helps tell the entire story when there's field-of-view variety.
Another great tip is to distract your couples by giving them some kind of task. Tell them to draw a heart in the sand with their feet. Or maybe you’ll have them line up their fingertips together. It doesn’t actually matter what the task is because you’re not photographing it. You’re just using the tool of distraction to get them to be less camera-aware, resulting in more natural and relaxed expressions.

Even though my style is a little bit more light and airy and soft and romantic, I do try and step out of that style every once in a while. As long as I have enough of my-style-type photos to fulfill their expectations, there’s no reason not to experiment. Same goes for you. Every shoot, after you get what you’ve promised your clients, try something new. Maybe it’s a new pose, or a new type of lighting. There’s no reason why you can’t use real couples to try out new photography skills you’re looking to learn or hone in on.

The biggest goal in my sessions is to show my couples that being in front of the camera doesn’t have to be a stiff experience. It can be fun and will most definitely ease their minds when it comes to photography on the wedding day. Be sure to check out Behind the Shutter’s YouTube channel for a few more tips on engagement sessions I have for you.

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

vanessajoy.com
TRANSITIONING
FROM SHOOT & BURN
TO IPS
with Gary & Kim Evans
My business was at a turning point. I would often say to Kim, "We need more weddings, we need more weddings, we need to make more money!" Was booking more weddings the only way to make more money? I was already so busy! Maxing out the peak times of the year with weddings and being bogged down with editing... There had to be something more that we could do. What was I missing? Follow our journey from a flurry of light bulbs going off at my very first Shutterfest in 2018 to where we are now.

By transforming our business from a shoot and burn model to a full service IPS photography studio, we took our income from a yearly average of $70K to $195K in one year. I’m not going to lie to you— it was hard work. We revamped our logo, our website, thought about what we could do to elevate our client experience, and most importantly, added IPS. We realized we were leaving so much money on the table and we weren’t helping our clients where they needed it most. Here are 6 actions we took to get the ball rolling.

1. CLIENT EXPERIENCE

How you treat your clients, how you communicate with them, how you speak to them, and your overall brand message combines to provide your client experience. Without providing our couples with that next step of prints and albums, we were unknowingly pushing our beloved clients off a cliff at the end of our wedding process, leaving them to fend for themselves and find their own printing and album companies. We had convinced ourselves that we were doing them a favour and actually sold this as a benefit where they were free to do what they liked with their images after the wedding. In hindsight, we were really doing them a disservice.

When we revamped our client experience, we tried to put ourselves in their shoes. How could we anticipate questions, provide more information, make them feel valued, and give them all the attention that they deserved? A huge part of our client experience is our studio.

Our studio is a dedicated space we have for our clients. It’s stylish, professional, intimate, and located in a beautiful historic building downtown. It’s a space for private meetings with our clients where they can view our artwork and albums and it’s where we conduct our IPS sessions. There are no kids, no distractions, and we can focus on our clients and provide them with an experience that isn’t offered in our area.

Another tool to provide our clients with a superior experience is our client management software. We’re big fans of 17hats. Automating our workflow gives us the ability to have many more touchpoints with our couples and helps us stay organized. We’re not simply sending contracts and invoices, but there are intro emails that set expectations, thank you’s, scheduling, and many other messages that would fall to the wayside if you were trying to keep it all happening on your own. Our clients don’t need to print or scan—they can digitally sign their contract and submit payments. And, we can reply to leads quickly on the go. All making our business run infinitely more efficiently.
2. COST OF GOODS

Running a business is hard. Without knowing your cost of goods and pricing accordingly, running an effective and efficient business is just not going to happen. We have firm COG percentages that we stick to. Our packages have been developed with those numbers in mind and we don’t stray from them. We know what we’re worth and we charge accordingly. We set clear financial goals based on our averages that we’re projecting per wedding, and per IPS session. We hustle hard to reach them. Unless you have a clear grasp on your financial reality, there’s no way to reach your dreams.

3. SHOOT TO PRINT

When we’re shooting our couples, either at a wedding or on an engagement shoot, we’re actively thinking about what the end image is going to look like. We’re trying to create next-level artwork that will be impossible to say no to. It needs to be big, bold, and dramatic. Our signature portraits encompass all of these and are unlike anyone else’s style in our area. So many couples comment that they haven’t seen anything like our signature images before. They can’t wait to see them and really look forward to seeing them as soon as they’re in their viewing. It’s always the image that we showcase on the big screen when they come into the studio, and they are dazzled, often not believing it’s them.

When we’re shooting a wedding, we know we’ll be designing an album afterwards, so we actively shoot images specifically for the album, getting the showstoppers that will become the couple’s centerpiece. We stress less about what will never make it in there. We get everything we need to be able to design a beautiful album that tells the story of the client’s day: the details, the bridal party, family formals, and our main priority is always the couple.
4. GETTING STARTED WITH WARM IPS

If you don’t have IPS as a part of your business process with your couples and want to start, I suggest you check in on your past clients. Major lightbulbs went off when we ran into a past couple at a bridal show. We had a chat and we asked them what they did with their wedding photos. The answer was shocking. Nothing. They didn’t know where to start, where to go, and just didn’t get around to it after the married life took over. This conversation drove us to reach out to a few more couples from the previous two years. We got a lot of similar answers. In fact, there was only one couple that we contacted that had actually printed some photos. It was a little disheartening that I spent so many hours editing the wedding for nothing to be done with the images apart from a few Facebook and Instagram posts.

Having never done IPS before, we thought of a perfect way to start and get Kim’s feet wet. It was winter in Canada so we were still a few months from our first wedding of the year. But we had clients. In fact, we had amazing clients who were actually already fans of ours. And we knew from speaking with a handful of them that it was rare to have a past couple who had actually done anything with their wedding images.

We designed an email, highlighted our products, personalized each email with their wedding photos and an image of an album with their photo on the cover, and invited them into the studio to view our samples.

For the couples that chose to come in, we knew they were interested in either prints or an album (or sometimes both). They were already interested and by coming to view the products had committed in their minds to purchase something.

Were we nervous? Hell yes. But we loaded their weddings into N-Vu (our IPS software) and hoped for the best. We had a great catch up about what they had been doing since the wedding and we showed off our new products, took them through our vision, and talked about what would work in their homes and how they had always hoped to display their wedding images. We listened to them and we sold both albums and prints. In the winter of 2019, a time when business is usually slow, we added over $30K to our year from our past couples. We didn’t hard sell. We provided a service to our clients that was an extension of the already great job we had done for them. And they thanked us for it.
5. SUGGESTIVE SELLING THROUGH YOUR PROCESS

We took a lot of care choosing our print and album suppliers. We went through a lot of samples before settling on the range that we offer. We’re now confident and excited to provide excellent quality and one-of-a-kind items to our couples—items they can’t find online themselves and products we can stand behind. We are excited about our products and we can’t keep that excitement to ourselves.

Throughout our interactions, meetings, shoots, and emails, we are always talking about printing. Our mission is sent out in emails before they sit down for their initial meeting with me. We talk about helping them create their family legacy and how we’re creating more than just digital files, we’re creating memories to display in their home, not just for them but also for future generations.

When we are shooting with them, we’re talking about their home and where they would display the images, and having some fun creating that “one for the wall” while we’re out on location. We’re building their excitement to come into the studio to see their images—where they’re going to view and order their favourites. We reiterate the words “view” and “order” many times throughout our interactions so that it comes as no surprise when they come into the studio.

Throughout their process, we’re working with them and talking about our prints, albums, and how awesome it’s going to be to have them in their home. They are coming into each sales session excited and ready to choose a package to buy.
After a whirlwind romance that brought Gary to Canada from Wales, Gary + Kim have been building Gary Evans Photography into the full-service, luxury photography studio that you see today. As a husband and wife team, Gary is the Principal Shooter and Visionary; Kim is the Studio Manager, Social Media + Website guru and IPS Whiz. Together they are driving their business forward, all while balancing a hectic home life with two boys.

6. OUTSOURCE WHAT YOU CAN

If you’re going to start offering IPS, maybe with a partner or on your own, the one thing you will need is more time. By adding IPS to your business model you’re going to be adding more client meetings and those meetings can end up being quite long. The downside is time, but the upside is that you will add to your income considerably. To find the extra time needed to do IPS, outsourcing something simple like your editing is a great way to keep your turnaround times quick and give yourself more time in the day. Working with a great team like Evolve is a lifesaver and I wholeheartedly recommend it. As a business it’s crucial to spend your valuable time on activities that make you money. Marketing, IPS, Client meetings, Networking. We view Evolve as an extension of ourselves, a business partner that gives us back the time we need to be effective. No one likes accounting, right? So you have an accountant. Outsourcing your editing is like that. If you can make more by outsourcing your editing, why wouldn’t you?  ■  

garyevansphotography.ca
10 TIPS FOR WEDDING PHOTOJOURNALISM

with Matthew Sowa
10 Tips for Wedding Photojournalism | Matthew Sowa

When I started my career as a New York wedding photographer in 2004, I was told that wedding photography is not about me. It’s about seeing the world through the eyes of the bride and groom. They’ve designed this beautiful day—their perfect vision. My role is to apply creativity and style to create images that document and honor the scene, mood, and emotions that they’ve created.

My style is based on a unique approach and strong confidence. As a wedding photographer, I’m an art director, photojournalist, and portrait photographer—capturing every aspect of the day. I stylize the central focus and pay close attention to the details and background of every photo. Each image should be interesting, fresh, and well-composed. I strive to always create pictures that have movement, power of emotion, and modern style.

PHOTOJOURNALISM

Wedding photography is about the bride and groom: capturing their memories rather than simply documenting the day. Many couples want to capture their candid, spontaneous moments with a journalistic style.

I would love for all of these images to happen organically and without any participation from the subjects; however, it’s not always possible. I’ll let you in on a trade secret: pure wedding photojournalism does not exist. The wedding day is a short time frame, and some stylistic direction is required to cover it properly. When expressive moments don’t happen on their own, some interaction with the subjects can create opportunities for great authentic photos.

THE MAGIC MOMENT

In the image above, I used available wedding props to evoke emotions. It was a rainy October day in Long Beach, New York, and I had given my bridal party a bottle of champagne to celebrate during the preparation. When I stepped out to photograph them in the windows, I saw a local surfer running by and used the opportunity to layer the bridal party, surfer, and hotel sign together (the name of the hotel, “Alegría,” means “Joy” in Spanish), and got the shot I was dreaming about.

I want every image to be real and with as little intrusion as possible, but sometimes a little interference is called for. I call this interactive photojournalism. I interacted with the bridal party to get my shot; however, their expressions were authentic and the surfer was spontaneous. The resulting image perfectly captured the mood of the day.
1. USE THE RIGHT TOOLS

Get your cameras set up properly. Use a wide aperture to isolate the magic in the image. Focus is a tool used in the photojournalistic style to draw attention to the relevant subject. If you’re an inexperienced wedding photographer, I recommend using the smallest aperture possible to get a wide range of focus. The narrow depth of field is the key. I also recommend turning off the automatic focus on your camera and keeping the focus set manually on your subject. Automatic exposure is optimized to average lighting. Take control of your camera by using manual settings so that you can capture the moment right when it happens.

2. PAY ATTENTION

The best moments happen randomly—pay attention! Traditional shots such as the first kiss, first dance, and first look are fantastic, but sometimes the very best moments happen when you least expect them. Before, after, and in-between these planned moments, stay alert—I guarantee something amazing will happen, and you won’t want to miss it. Be like a hunter: trust your instinct, move quickly, and wait for your perfect shot to emerge.
10 Tips for Wedding Photojournalism | Matthew Sowa

3. CREATE LAYERS

You can use multiple elements in a shot that has front to back sharpness to really shout your message, or you can have one main subject and use more subtle layers in the foreground and background. This usually means using a little bit of creative blur so the viewer can still see the other elements, but understand that the photo is still mainly about the object/person who’s sharp.

4. SHOOT FROM YOUR BOOTS

Putting your camera on the ground and taking shots of your subject from that low angle introduces a completely new and often random point of view for your shots. You (and your viewers) will see the world from a new perspective, add interesting foregrounds to shots, and even capture a few surprising subjects along the way.

5....OR FROM THE TOP

...
6. USE MOVEMENT

At the extreme end of bulb settings, astronomy photographers will leave the shutter open for long periods of time (hours) to capture star trails. To do this on a smaller scale, you’ll need a small ISO and small aperture. Just be aware that on many cameras this technique will drain your batteries significantly.

7. FOLLOW THE FUN!

The bride and groom will want to remember the fun and laughs that were had at their wedding. Dancing, drinks, and laughs... follow the fun! Don’t forget to include several candid shots of bridal party members—the best time to do this is often when they are having fun.
8. BE INVISIBLE

Being invisible may sound like I’m advising you to hide that you’re taking photos, but this isn’t the case. Feel free to photograph openly, leaving the opportunity for the photographed people to acknowledge that you are taking images. However, you should try to attract as little attention as possible. Using a flash can spoil a moment.

9. USE THE RIGHT CHOICE OF LENSES BASED ON LOCATION

Different times of the day call for different lenses and techniques. For example, during the bride’s preparation, I typically use 35mm 1.4, 85mm 1.4, and 24-70mm 2.8 lenses, and I take most of these images with as open of an aperture as possible. This creates a gentle blur in the background, eliminating unnecessary subjects in the room, and allows the focus to remain on the bride.

10. PLANNING IS KEY

The most important thing to bring to your work as a photojournalist is careful planning. If you haven’t been to the location in advance, you might not choose the right equipment or be in the right spot when something important happens. Visit the location in advance or arrive early to shoot a bit before your couple arrives to be sure you’ll create images that are timeless, compelling, and true.
10 Tips for Wedding Photojournalism | Matthew Sowa

CREATIVITY IS ALL ABOUT CAPTURING THE MOOD

I love that when I start a wedding, I never know what to expect. Every couple is different and every wedding presents new opportunities. Creativity is all about highlighting people’s expressions, mannerisms, or interactions. Lighting, shadows, other subjects, or other elements can also make the image unique. Everything is based on using what you have in the location. I look into my psyche and trust my instinct to get the shoot I want.

The image above was taken right before the first look, at Grand Central NYC.

A FEW WORDS ABOUT POST-PRODUCTION

I miss old darkroom processing techniques. I’ve spent a lot of time in the past processing B&W images with different fine art techniques like solarization or graphics, as well as color standard techniques like C-41 or even E-6 process. Today, many photographers rely on PS and Lightroom. The digital market is saturated with special effect presets, and this is one of the reasons I don’t overuse them. While presets can add to an image, I believe that less is more. I prefer my images to be as simple as possible, without distractions, allowing the viewer to see and appreciate the realism. If you overuse presets, you are taking away a lot of the real world.

Whether you’re a novice or a professional photographer, documenting a wedding all is about the couple. Know the location, pay attention to your subjects, and be open to creative opportunities to capture the essence of the day.

“Don’t be a slave to photography rules... break the rules and take a risk! There’s always a new perspective.”

Born in Poland, Matthew Sowa earned a degree in photography from the Warsaw College of Photography and has received additional training and study at the Institute of Art Photography in Ostrava, Czech Republic. Matthew has been a New York City-based wedding photographer for over 15 years, covering more than 800 weddings. His documentary approach is balanced by contemporary portraits created in dramatic style. He infuses his work with enthusiasm, spontaneity and a fresh original eye. His passion and unique perspective are reflected in strong and simple compositions, very often in black & white form, leaving nothing between the content and the viewer.

matthewsowaphotography.com
INSPIRATIONS

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

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LOW-COST LOCATION LIGHTING

with Michael Corsentino
As much as I love working with strobes on location or in the studio, I realize not everyone owns flash equipment, let alone portable strobes. If you’re just starting out or find yourself without strobes for whatever reason, I don’t want you to think you can’t still rock your location lighting. With a minimal investment, far less than the cost of any strobe equipment, you can arm yourself with the tools necessary to control light on location.

When we talk about location lighting we’re talking about ambient light. More often than not, that's natural light, otherwise known as the sun! When you’re working with light from the sun without modification to shape and control its intensity, you’re locked into what mother nature decides to provide. This can and will shift from hour to hour and day to day, so being prepared and having a plan for all contingencies is key.

A few tried and true rules of thumb when working with natural light: the sun is least harsh in the morning and afternoon/evening when its position is lower in the sky. This position also makes creating directional light and accent light significantly easier. Midday the sun is typically positioned somewhere close to directly overhead. Here it’s at its most harsh and generally to be avoided if possible. However, that’s not always possible, which is why I decided to make this very situation the focus of this month’s tutorial. The one caveat going in is that you will need a sunny day to successfully carry off these techniques. No sunlight, no illumination, it’s that simple. That said, onward!

Successfully controlling the harsh light from the sun requires two inexpensive tools: a diffusion panel to soften the light and one or more reflectors to bounce light, fill in unwanted shadows, and create accent light. Both of these tools are available in a wide variety of models, build qualities, features, sizes, and price points. The good news is you can pick up basic models of both tools that do the job well for around $100. Not too bad for professional location lighting! Ideally you’ll also want a light-duty stand to use with the reflector and a sandbag or two to keep things stable in the event of windy conditions.

For the shoot featured here I used a Lastolite 3’x3’ diffusion scrim and a Sunbounce Micro Mini reflector with a reversible white and silver fabric panel. I favor these pro-level collapsible tools because they travel well and have rigid internal frames when assembled, which makes them much easier to work with, especially in the wind. That said, Lastolite’s inexpensive line of pop-up diffusers and reflectors are also excellent options. As I mentioned above, both can be had for around $100. You’ll see clearly from the before and after example images I’ve included that these tools are the difference between success or failure in controlling the sun.

With the sun directly overhead, harsh, deep, and unflattering shadows are created. This is why modifying the light is essential when it comes to creating a pleasing, balanced, evenly lit portrait light with the sun. In the next 3 easy steps, I’ll show you how to go from horrible midday sunlight to awesome light—all without breaking the bank!
PREPARE

Step 1 for me is to arrive early to set up and assess the situation by asking the following questions: What are the prevailing lighting conditions? Where is the sun relative to where the subject will be? Where are the shadows falling? What is the quality of light on scene? What tools will I need to use to create the light desired? Naturally, I’ve researched the weather forecast previously and loaded my car with plenty of tools to provide options if conditions change unexpectedly.

Once I’ve decided where I’ll place my subject, I take an unmodified set of captures to obtain my starting exposure. This way I’m ready to rock when everyone arrives.

FIGURE OUT WHAT WORKS

Step 2 is placing the subject in scene and confirming the starting exposure. Expect harsh light during this unmodified step. Next, I have an assistant hold a diffusion panel over the subject to cut the sun’s harsh overhead head light and dramatically even out and soften the prevailing light. When it comes to diffusion panels, aka scrims, the bigger the better as it’s easier to control where the open shade it creates begins and ends. You’ll want to pay special attention to this, making sure the scrim is completely covering the subject with no unmodified bright spots or scrim lines on the ground or background. This is key. That said, for 3/4 length and tighter portraits, medium-sized diffusion panels work perfectly.
Michael Corsentino is an Orlando, Florida-based editorial fashion and portrait photographer. In addition to his busy shooting schedule, Michael is a passionate educator, teaching workshops domestically and internationally. He is an author of two books, writes a monthly lighting column for *Shutter Magazine* and is a regular contributor to *Photoshop User* magazine and *JointheBreed.com*.

**FINISHED PRODUCT**

Step 3. See the addition of a reflector below the diffusion panel, generally under the subject’s waist. This is done to bounce light back toward the subject’s face, opening up shadows created by overhead light in the eye sockets and under the chin. This fill reflector also helps add a catch light to the subject’s eyes, giving them a sense of life and sparkle. Reflectors typically come with some variation of white, silver, and gold fabric to reflect light. I start with white and work from there, building intensity as needed. I very rarely use gold as it’s usually much too warm for my taste. The one exception to that rule is African American complexions, which in some cases do better with warmer fill light. I settled on silver fabric for the fill reflector as it provided the right level of illumination and contrast for this series of natural light portraits.

The over-and-under diffusion and reflector arrangement described above is a classic lighting pattern known as Clamshell Lighting. This is a tried and true method for creating flattering lighting on location or in the studio. Use it with natural light, use it with strobes. It’s a keeper with a multitude of uses. Check out the step by step and BTS images for additional insight. See you next month!

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*Image © Michael Corsentino*
final inspiration

photographer  |  photographer  | Michael Anthony
image title   |  image title   | top of their game

website       |  www.michaelanthonyphotography.com
exposure      |  f/1.2 @ 1/3200 iso 160
lighting      |  Profoto A1
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