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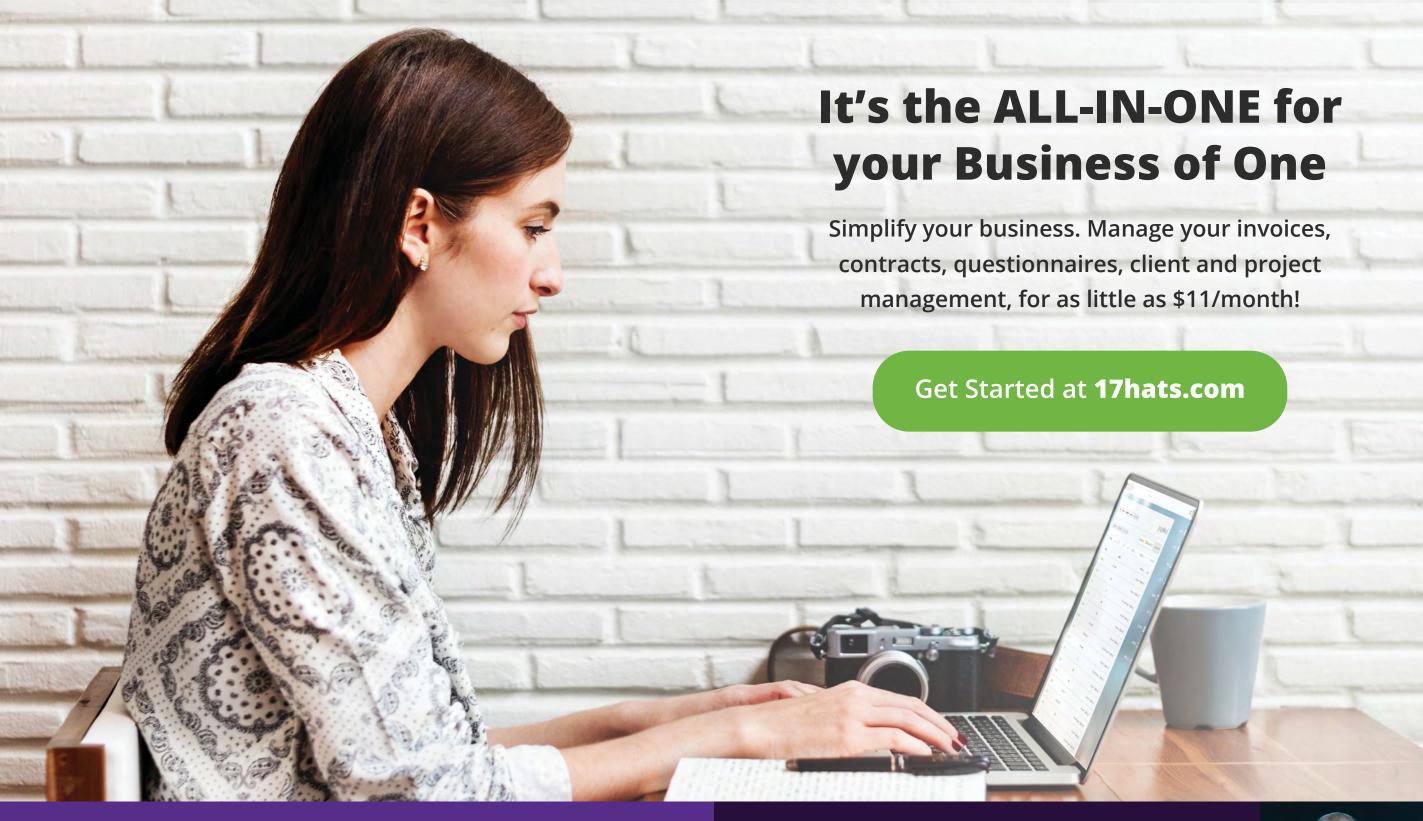




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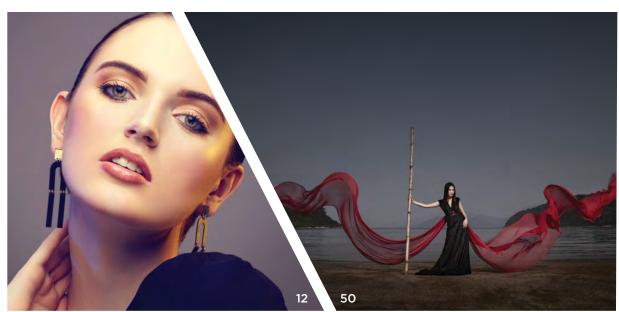
"17hats has been a complete game-changer for our business. The ability to streamline and automate our workflows allows me to focus on shooting and the experience I provide for my clients while 17hats handles the rest." - Sal Cincotta



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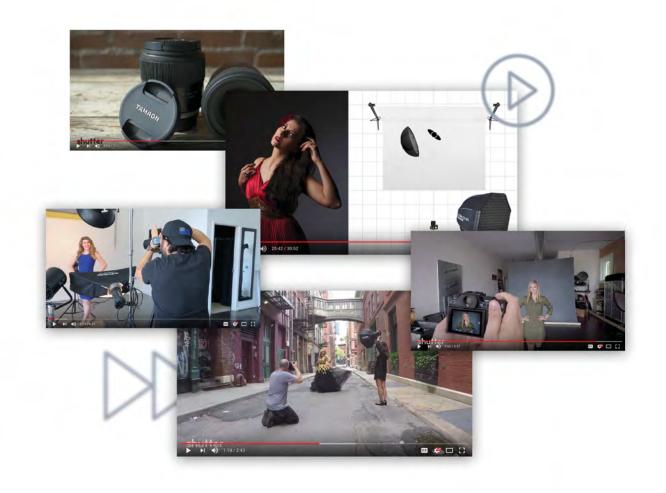
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Shutter Magazine's focus is on photography education. Our goal is to provide current, insightful and in-depth educational content for today's professional wedding and portrait photographer. Shutter uses the latest technologies to deliver information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

Shutter Magazine: By photographers, for photographers.

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THE COVER

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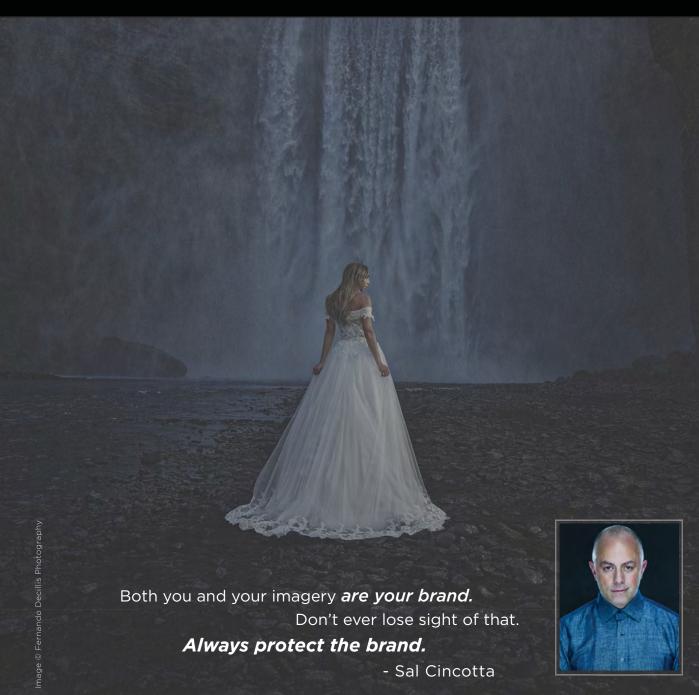
ABOUT THE IMAGE: This image was taken at Skogafoss,

near Vik, Iceland in August 2017.

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LAUNCH POINT

A message from the editor-in-chief







ADVANCED BEAUTY LIGHTING

with Michael Corsentino

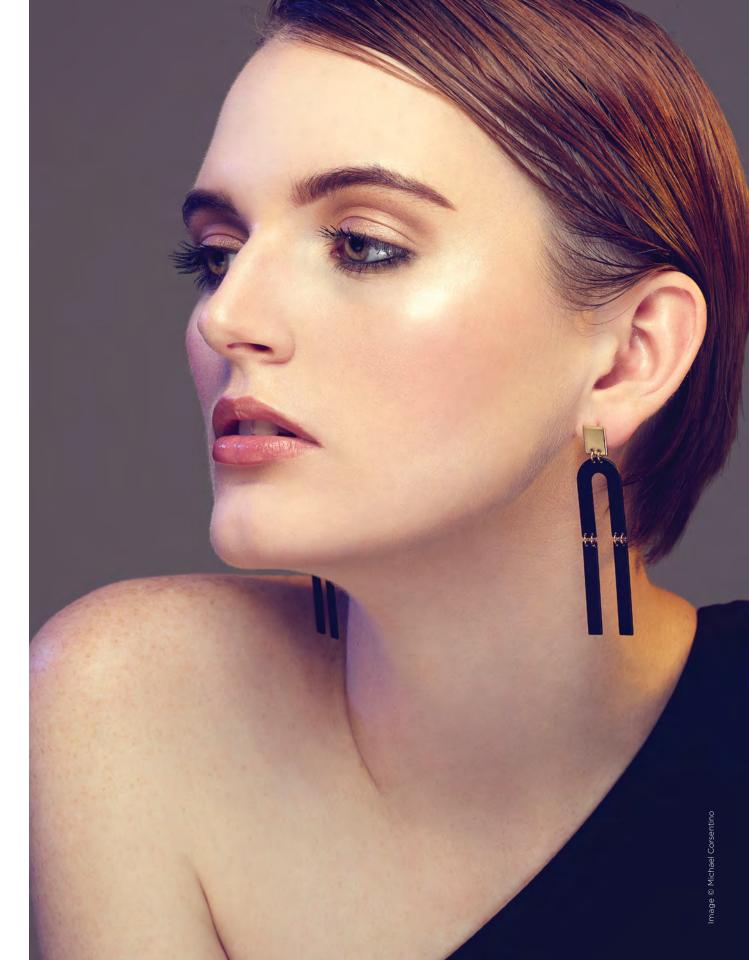
I covered the basics of beauty lighting several months ago. This month I take you on a deeper dive into beauty lighting. We'll look at a more advanced setup I used recently to produce two killer looks for the same model.

Calling it advanced belies how simple and straightforward this setup of a key and multiple accent lights actually is. I call it advanced because anything outside the use of one light seems to be categorized that way, but don't let the term intimidate you. Let's start with the basics.

There are constants in beauty lighting: a strobe with a beauty dish acting as the keylight, a reflector or second strobe to fill in the shadows from the keylight, and classic clamshell lighting. Add a stellar creative team, additional accent lights to amp up the look and maybe some colored gels for that extra wow factor.



mage © Michael Corser





KEYLIGHT

My go-to keylight for beauty and lots of other jobs is a Profoto strobe paired with a Mola Softlights 22-inch Demi Beauty Dish, with or without its companion diffusion sock. I'll throw on the sock when I want extra-soft light. Since the keylight for beauty lighting is used very close to the subject, a 500-watt/second strobe provides more than enough power to shoot at f16 and a 100 ISO setting. These are the settings I typically use. 100 ISO creates a nice clean file, and f16 delivers the front-to-back detail you need without any of the lens aberrations that you can get at smaller apertures.

The height and angle of the keylight are critical settings when determining the amount of catchlight you want in your model's eyes. Using the strobe's modeling light makes it easy to find the sweet spot for the keylight. You'll want the key directly in front of and above your model, angled down approximately 45 degrees.

FILL LIGHT

Clamshell lighting employs a fill light source below the keylight to open up shadows cast from above. This can be another strobe modified with a softbox or octabank, or a white or silver reflector. I chose a white reflector because I wanted a softer look than a second strobe would provide. I also used an adjustable three-panel Lastolite Triflector, one of my current favorite tools for clamshell fill light.

ACCENT LIGHTS

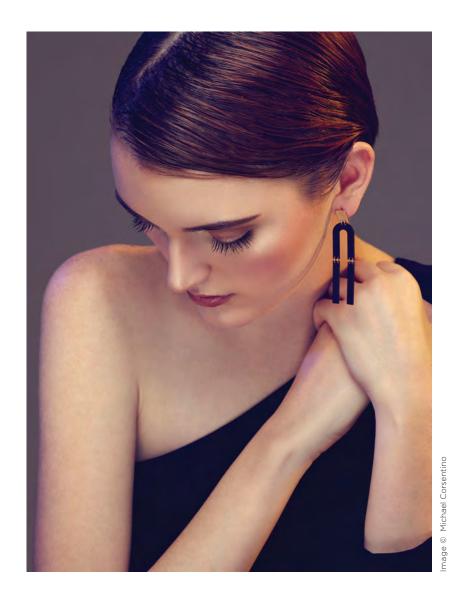
Adding the three accent lights and gels is the X-factor that makes these images pop. I placed one strobe on either side of the model and one overhead to create a more interesting, layered and polished effect. The keylight and fill reflector go a long way, but they can take an image only so far. The strobes take the image to a new level. The strobes used for the left and right accent lights were the Profoto 500-watt/second B1 airheads, and the overhead hair light was a 400-watt/second Elinchrom Quadra strobe powered by a Quadra power pack. I like to use these super-lightweight strobes for overhead accent lighting because they're easy to use on boom stands. All the lights were triggered when metering and shooting using PocketWizard Plus III radios.

ACCENT LIGHT MODIFIERS

For accent-light modifiers, you're limited only by your imagination. There are a few tried and true pieces I use. For soft accents, try small to medium strip, octa and softboxes. To create harder light with increased contrast and a tighter beam of light, try small silver reflectors. You can add a honeycomb grid spot to the front of the reflector to further constrain the light to a specific area. The same is true for softboxes and other tools, except these grids, known as egg crate grids, are made from soft fabric.

For the two looks pictured here, I used a 7-inch silver reflector on each of the two accent lights positioned on either side of the model. This produced a specular (contrasty) light with a fairly confined spread and a directional beam of light. I'm also using a strobe fitted with a small square softbox overhead for a softer hair light accent on top of the model's head.

It's fine to mix both hard and soft qualities of light in the same image. There are no rules. Let taste and creativity be your guide.



WORKING WITH GELS

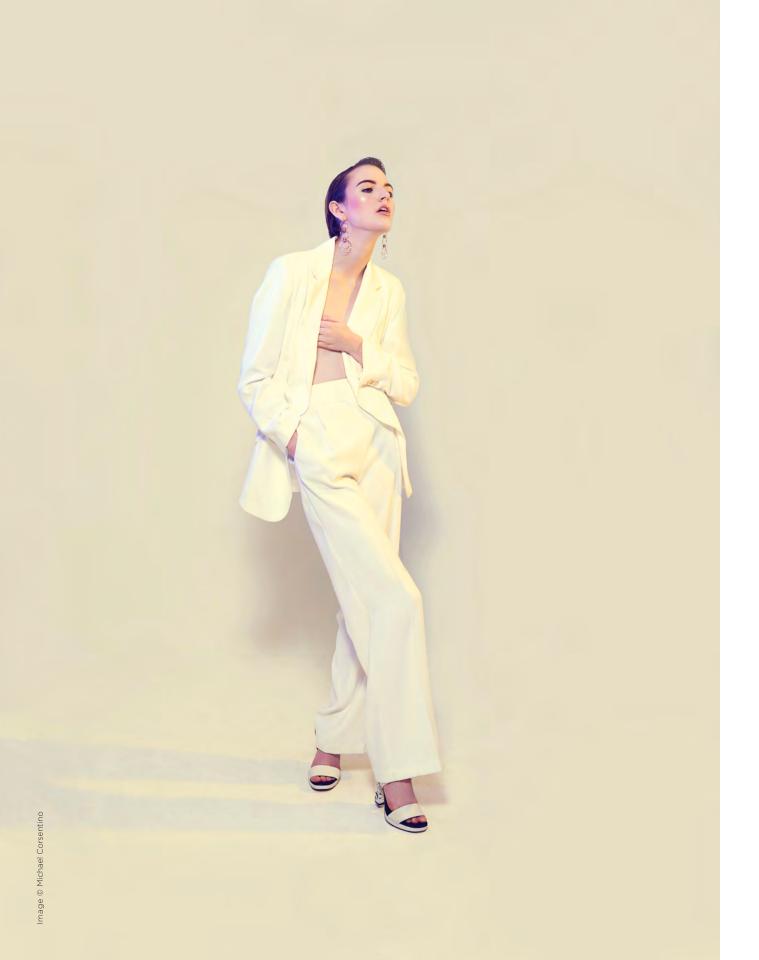
Gels add drama and mood to beauty images, from subtle to bold statements. Here I've opted for a soft and subtle look. I'm using gels to add color and tone to the accent lights. They can also be used to add color to the light illuminating the background.

I choose gel colors that complement each other and the model, wardrobe and accessories. I think about the mood I want to create, and choose colors that support that vision. These can be primary or secondary complementary colors. You can also think in terms of shadows and highlights, and choose different colored gels for each.

For these images, I used two 12x12 gels in the color of 15 Deep Straw (for the light, warm color), and 4990 CalColor Lavender (for the darker blue/purple color) from Roscoe's Digital After Dark and CalColor kits, respectively. I placed one of the gels on each of the two accent lights positioned on the sides of the model. We taped them to the front of the 7-inch reflectors being used to modify the light from each strobe.









FULL-FIGURE CAPTURES

Switching to full-figure captures for both looks was easy with a few tweaks. I removed the Triflector fill reflector and relied on the white floor in my studio for fill, moved the keylight back and to the side and added a strobe with a strip box under it to add fill light on the figure. Even when I'm shooting beauty, I like to add variety and options for editorial layouts, and so my stylist can use them in her portfolio. Call it beauty/fashion.







POST-PROCESSING

With beauty images, the quality of the retouching is paramount. You'll likely spend more time retouching beauty images than any other type of photography. I'm a fan of Retouching Academy's Beauty Retouching Panel Photoshop plugin. This useful tool handles much of the heavy lifting and repetitive tasks needed for professional retouching.

When I'm working with gels, there are typically a few additional steps I take in post to finesse the colors. These involve the application of masked Hue and Saturation Adjustment Layers, which I use to paint in increased localized color saturation for the gel colors.





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.

michaelcorsentino.com



Welcome to the end-of-year change of pace. For most photographers, this is the time when business is slowing down and daily to-dos start to shift from being out in the field on photo shoots to hibernation in front of our computer screens. Now is the time to hunker down and plan for the success in the year ahead. It's too easy to get lazy instead. Slacking off will hurt your business because busy season will return faster than you imagine.

Here are a few ideas you can implement to make the most of your down time.

PUT A PLAN TOGETHER

Take a whole day to figure out a plan for the upcoming year. This doesn't have to be a two-week project. If you take too much time doing it, you may not do it at all.

Whether you work alone or with a team, lock yourself in a room and map out the next three months. We do this every year. Sal talks about it constantly. Going through the steps of a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) forces you to lay out the good, the bad and the ugly. It helps you determine the next steps to building a healthier business for the year ahead.

This makes you acknowledge the bad so you can implement immediate changes to fix any issues. If you end up with a monster list of strengths and only a few weaknesses, there's something wrong. Poke holes in everything you are currently doing. Find what's wrong so you can make it right. This isn't to make you feel good about yourself. You should feel as if you are teetering on a fine line between enthusiasm for the future and fear of the amount of work ahead of you.

I am a big advocate of the mantra "If it's not broken, don't fix it." But staying up to date with tools that will make you more efficient (and, in turn, more profitable) is crucial.

Again, laying this groundwork is not meant to be fun and exciting. It's hard work that requires an unbiased stance so you're able to acknowledge any inefficiencies. Do this exercise with your team. If you don't have a team, simply grab your significant other, a friend or family member, and have that person take a look at what you're doing from an outsider's perspective.

You have to stay open-minded and optimistic throughout the process. No one likes to hear their work critiqued, but your internal processes are just as important as your photography. Don't forget this. This is why it is so important to flush out any of the kinks that may be slowing down your business so you can get back to doing what you love.

I cannot wait for the next few months. I look forward to sitting down and revamping our workflows within 17hats and start implementing all of the new in-person sales tools that we'll be launching from N-Vu. None of this is possible without putting in the legwork initially to make sure it's done correctly from the beginning.

FIND WAYS TO INNOVATE

This is where things start to get fun. Now that you've got a plan for the upcoming year, it's time to take a look at what you and your brand offer to clients and what sets you apart from the sea of faux-tographers.

Is your client experience lacking? Map out your current client journey and find ways to add personal touches throughout the process. Are your products getting stale? Do you want to start selling larger wall art? Research new products and tools to help with in-person sales so you can start selling larger to your clients. Do you feel your photography style is getting boring? Take workshops or online courses to learn new techniques so you can revamp your style.

Don't forget to stock up on samples this time of year. Your past year was spent creating beautiful images. Now, print those images on new products you want to start offering. Remember, you've gotta show it to sell it.

RE-INSPIRE YOURSELF

This has always been important to our studio this time of year. It's easy to get sucked into the feeling of burnout at the end of a busy wedding season. What are you doing to make sure you don't lose your creative spark over the next few months of slow business?

We spend this time of year learning new lighting, posing and compositional techniques on personal photo shoots. These shoots are not for paying clients or commissioned work. We invest the money in a hair and makeup artist, wardrobe and a model, and give ourselves plenty of time to understand what we are doing at a pace that isn't rushed or on deadline. We can take our time with each shot to perfect these new skills we are learning.

It's also not a bad idea to attend a conference or a workshop during the slow season. Surrounding yourself with likeminded people is always a great way to find inspiration once you're heading down the path of burning out. Having a community of other artists you can bounce ideas off of and collaborate with makes the process of creation so much more rewarding.





TAKE A DEEP BREATH

People are not wired to run on adrenaline for an eight-month window and not need a break and some quality R&R at some point. It's okay to slow down and take a deep breath. Use this time to reflect on the past year, on everything you've accomplished. From there, the list of goals for the next year will generate organically and will come from a place of excitement instead of fear.

Our slow season in the Midwest starts in the beginning of December and runs through the end of February. Sal and I know that first week of December is when the business starts to shift. The number of emails dwindles, deadlines are not as frequent and our days normally spent out in the field can now be spent sleeping in and staying in our pajamas if we want. Enjoy this. But don't take this time of year for granted.

Remember to breathe. When the road ahead is long and daunting, filled with tasks and to-do lists, don't forget to take care of yourself first. Your business won't be a business if you're not around to run it.



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

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There are two must-haves for me in the booth. First, a killer display. I don't sell frames. I don't sell a DIY style. I sell an image. I sell an experience. I want to showcase my work in a clean visual way. My booth is 100 percent the Xpozer system from Bay Photo. It's clean and simple to set up, and the matte finish on the images showcases my work even in the most adverse lighting conditions, like a bridal show.

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< h 1 >

how to

SEARCH-ENGINE OPTIMIZE

a blog post

</h1>

with Justen Hong

I review a ton of photography websites and see a lot of failed attempts to search-engine optimize blog posts. I see SEO techniques from 10 years ago. In this article, I uncover bad SEO trends and provide guidelines for optimizing a blog post. My wedding example can be applied to any genre.

POST TITLE TAGS

One of the most important onsite SEO factors is still the post title tag. Make it an attention grabber. Stop writing titles like "Smith Wedding | Chicago Wedding Photographer." Not only is this boring and not attention grabbing, it tells search engines that the page is optimized for "Chicago Wedding Photographer," and if all your blog posts are similarly named, Google doesn't know which of your pages to rank for "Chicago Wedding Photographer." This is called keyword cannibalization. It means too many pages are optimized for the exact same search term. It makes a site look like spam, which has a negative effect on your rankings.

What should you be naming your blog post? Something more specific and eye-catching/clickable. If you saw two blog posts come up in search results and one was named "Smith Chicago Wedding Photography" and the other was "Smith's Stunning Wedding at Beautifully Decorated Chicago Ritz-Carlton" or "One of the Most Beautiful Outdoor Weddings We've Every Photographed," which one would you click? In years past, I would have made sure the word *photography* or *photographers* was in the title, but Google already knows what your site is about. It's not necessary on every post. What's most important nowadays is that the post title is attention grabbing.



TIP: KEEP YOUR TITLE UNDER 60 CHARACTERS. A PLUGIN LIKE YOAST SEO TELLS YOU WHEN YOUR TITLE GETS TOO LONG.

META DESCRIPTION

Your meta description should be even more descriptive. Something like this would be appropriate: "Check out the stunning, beautifully decorated Smith wedding we had the honor of photographing at the Ritz-Carlton in downtown Chicago." Or: "Jane & Jack Smith's outdoor wedding in downtown Chicago was one of the most beautiful weddings we've ever photographed. View photos from this event." See how I used some keywords without making the description read as spammy?



TIP: KEEP YOUR DESCRIPTION UNDER 160 CHARACTERS.

BODY COPY

Don't just add photos. Write about the day, the event locations, the other vendors, something funny that happened that day. Something. Blog posts with no copy come off as spammy. Here is where finding your brand voice is important. You should have a consistent tone and be able to write articulately about the day. Even if you're not the greatest writer, as a business owner, it is a skill you must develop. Improve it with practice. If you have trouble, find help. Ask a friend or family member to proofread what you write. Keep in mind that typos and poorly written, thin content can negatively affect your site's rankings.

I also see photographers add the bride and groom's name, wedding date, locations, vendors, etc. in a list form. This is good, but you should also write actual body copy. Also, if you do this list, add links to the list. Link to the churches, hotels, the florist, DJ and other vendors. Google likes to see outbound links. It is a sign of a quality site. Don't be afraid to ask the other vendors to link to you also. This is one of the easiest link-building strategies. Inbound links and content are the highest, most important ranking factor. Build relationships with the other vendors. Let them use you photos and ask them to link to you.

Keep in mind that Google is also looking for related words and terms in your body copy, words like *bride*, *groom*, *ceremony*, *reception* and *bridal party*.

Name | Ely + Sarah

Date | 9.9.17

Ceremony | St. Francis Xavier College Church

Reception | Windows on Washington

Wedding Photography | Sal Cincotta & Alissa Zimmerman

DJ/Band | Complete Music

What a day this was. Ely and Sarah were amazing to work with and their day was filled with tons of personal touches, making it so special for their friends and family. We were fortunate to be able to document this impressive wedding, but what put this day over the top was how their friends and family made us feel like part of the family.

As many photographers know, it's important to connect with your clients and immerse yourself in their group. I knew this was no ordinary wedding when I had the family make silly faces for the camera and everyone, including Mom, got in on the action. I knew I was with my people.

Congratulations to Ely and Sarah! And thank you so much for choosing us to document your big day. It was incredible.

NAMING YOUR IMAGES

What you name your photos can help a little with rankings. I would name my photos something like "smith-ritz-2017-wedding1.jpg," "smith-ritz-2017-wedding2.jpg" or "smith-ritz-2017-wedding3.jpg." If you have time, be more specific: "smith-wedding-first-kiss.jpg," "smith-wedding-outside-church.jpg" or "smith-bridal-party.jpg."

IMAGE ALT TAGS

It's important to add alt tags to every single image. You can use your keywords, but it's more important that the alt tag describes the actual photo. Make every alt tag unique to the image.





IMAGE FILE SIZE

Make sure your images are crystal clear and, for search engines, the smallest size possible. File size is extremely important, especially on photography sites, because they affect load time. The load time of a site has become more important with every Google algorithm update. To check the load time of your website, there are free services like Google PageSpeed Insights, GTmetrix, Pingdom Website Speed Test and Varvy SEO Tool. Ideally, you want a load time of under three seconds.

Services and plugins that can help with compression include tinyjpg.com and WordPress's WP Smush Pro plugin. Photoshop's Save for Web & Devices gives me the best control. So if you are using Lightroom to output your blog images, I would still use Photoshop to get the files sizes down since it's better with compression than Lightroom.

People often ask me why their images look crystal clear on one monitor and blurry on another. The most common cause for this is a Retina screen. Retinas have a higher resolution, so a standard-size image will look a little blurry on them. Optimizing images for Retina screens is an entire article in itself, but I found the easiest solution is to make the images a little larger. For instance, if my blog is 1,000 pixels wide, I make my images 1,500 pixels wide. This makes them look sharper on a Retina, but it does increase the load time. It's all about finding the right balance of quality and speed.

Load times are decreased by properly optimized images, a fast-loading site, a quality hosting company, a content delivery network (CDN) and lazy load.



DELMONICO STEAKHOUSE LAS VEGAS: A COMMERCIAL SHOOT WITH SAL CINCOTTA

TAGS: COMMERCIAL PHOTOGRAPHY, VIDEO
☐ Commercial Photography / Recently On Behind the Shutter

BLOG POST CATEGORIES

Properly organizing your blog provides a better user experience, which can help with rankings. WordPress allows you to set up blog post categories. These can help users find what they are looking for. If you shoot weddings, families and seniors, a bride may want to just go through and look at your wedding blog post. Allow her to click "View Wedding Post" to improve the usability and experience. Just don't have too many categories, which can be overwhelming.

POST TAGS

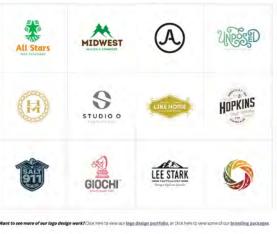
Blogs allow you to type in tags to identity posts. Don't go crazy with keywords. Limit them to specific phrases that directly relate to the post.

CALL TO ACTION

At the end of each blog post, I like to add a call to action, or a lure, to get users to dig deeper into my site. I'll end a wedding post with something like "See more photos in our wedding gallery, and click here to learn more about our wedding photography pricing." This adds internal links (another ranking factor), and also gets users to visit more pages on your website. When a user visits more pages, it improves your click-through rate and can improve your rankings.

Here's a great example. A while back I did a blog post about photography logos and shared it with a large group of photographers. I then used Google Analytics Real Time Reports and watched the traffic come in. I was getting a ton of traffic to that post, but visitors were leaving directly from that page. Halfway through monitoring, I went in and added a link at the bottom of my post that read, "View more photography logos here." This directed users to other photography logo blog posts. Instantly, my site was getting multiple click-throughs.







PRINT YOUR PORTFOLIO: SOFT PROOFING IN LIGHTROOM CC WITH DUSTIN LUCAS

① July 1, 2016



14 AVOIDABLE
CHALLENGES IN
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PHOTOGRAPHY WITH SKIP
COHEN

① September 2, 2016



TRIBE BUILDING: TURNING
YOUR CLIENTS INTO BRAND
AMBASSADORS WITH
PHILLIP BLUME

November 1, 2016

RELATED POSTS

I have found that adding a "Related Posts" section at the end of posts increases click-through rates. This feeds similar blog posts into the footer of the page. This is yet another way to entice users to visit more pages on your site. For photography websites, I always use a featured image, which increases the likelihood of it getting clicked.



Justen Hong, the owner and head eye-catcher of Visual Lure, is an award-winning branding and marketing specialist. He's an expert in logo and graphic design, web design/development and search engine optimization (SEO). His work has been featured in publications like *Logo Talks II*, *The Big Book of Packaging* and in more than half a dozen *LogoLounge* books.

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Photographers understand that competition is hitting us everywhere we turn. I have some bad news for you. This isn't going to change any time soon. Welcome to being a business owner. For too long, photographers enjoyed this artificial barrier to entry. Photography was hard. It was complicated. This gave us an advantage in the marketplace. We were able to have a mini-monopoly of sorts, with artificially high prices.

Well, those days are gone. Today, everyone is a photographer. Camera and lighting manufacturers have made it their mission to make everyone a photographer, to create as many customers as they can.

I don't really care. The more the merrier, I say. We have the greatest job in the world. Every day I realize how lucky I am to wake up and do what I love. Don't you? Shouldn't everyone enjoy photography?

With that being said, we can't just roll over and give up. We are businesspeople first and foremost, and we need to understand how to stand out and how to compete.



Your vision is your number-one competitive advantage. Not your gear, not your fancy camera strap or your quirky logo or company name. You and your work. When someone lands on your site, they are drawn in by your imagery. Next, your personality comes into play. You nail those two things, and you will book the job.

So, what does this all mean? How do you translate any of this into something actionable? Let's get started.

Do something unique.

Be unique. If your work looks the same as every other photographer's, why would I pay you a premium for your services? It makes no damn sense. You make these buying decisions every day at the grocery store, the car lot, hotels and restaurants.

Consumer behavior is the same regardless of the category. Think like a consumer. I can't tell you how to be unique, but I can say it's about making your work stand out. Are you a photojournalist? Are you a studio photographer? Whatever your style is, make sure it stands out.

Love or hate my style, but one thing is for sure: It's unique and recognizable. This gives me incredible recognition in the wedding and senior communities. That is empowering to me and my business. Invest the time to create a unique body of work, and you will start to see people come to you for your vision. When that happens, they won't be haggling with you over \$500. I guarantee it.







Be consistent.

The worst thing you can do for your business and career is to be all over the place creatively as you find yourself. If you want your clients to see the value in what you do, you have to be consistent. Would you pay more for a steakhouse dinner if every time you visited your steak came out differently? Have you ever heard anyone rave, "OMG, it's amazing, it's a surprise every time we go"? No. People want consistency.

That consistency starts with the way you shoot, light, edit, pose and create an image. All these things matter. It's in the way you present these to your clients. Sure, I shoot every aspect of the wedding day, but I don't show shoe pictures on my site's portfolio. Why would I? That's not why people book me. If you go to my portfolio, you will see a consistent set of images. There is no confusion in what I offer. I do large environmental portraits. That's why people come to me.

I am consistent in the way I shoot, the way I edit and the way I present these images to my clients and in all my marketing. I am not trying to position myself as everything to everyone.







Show what you want to deliver.

This is Common Sense 101. If all that a car dealership showed on its lot were a bunch of white cars, guess what they would attract and sell? People who are primarily interested in white cars.

So, why in the world do you show every single type of shot on the planet on your website and in your studio? It makes no sense. I can never wrap my mind around this when I see it. Who are you? I often ask my students. Our clients are not that smart. They are easily confused about photography. Don't add to their confusion.

Be clear on who you are and what you offer. If you like emotional and soft images, then show emotional and soft images. If you like big dramatic photography, show big dramatic photography. This is how you train your clients and potential clients on what you offer and what to expect from you. There is then no confusion after the event when you show them your final results. Everyone should be happy.

Explain your work to your clients.

Clients are not photographers, and usually aren't artists. They either like your work or not. It speaks to them or it doesn't. It is binary. We tend to overthink the whole thing. No, the client's not going notice that your white balance is off by 100 points. No one knows and no one cares. Sure, as professionals, we can see all the subtleties of our work—composition, leading lines, rule of thirds—but the layman has zero clue.

If you have done your job and created something unique and consistent, invest some time in educating your clients on what they are seeing and experiencing in your work.

Sound crazy? Well, don't tell that to a wine sommelier who explains the wine process and taste across your palate, or how the wine perfectly complements the flavor profile the chef has created. See my point? If what you do is unique in any way, shape or form, it is ignorant to expect our clients to immediately pick up on that. They won't. It's almost impossible. Every once in a while, I am pleasantly surprised by a client who walks in and says, "I love the way you incorporate architectural elements into your photographs." What? I love you!

Explain to your clients what you do and why you do it. Explain how you see these images being displayed in their homes or in an album. Invest in their education—it will go a long way. This can be done face to face or on your website. Find a way to dummy down what you do and put it into lay terms. Clients appreciate it. I know I love when a chef explains to me why he chose the ingredients he did, and what I should expect to taste. It makes it all the more enjoyable.





Offer products that showcase your work the way it should be showcased.

When it's all said and done, people have to do something with all this incredible art you have created for them. Have you ever made something so gorgeous that it needed to be huge somewhere in their home, only to have the client come back and order an 8x10? You are not alone. Many of us face this challenge day in and day out. The solution is to follow the steps above for starters, but then finish what you started.

What do I mean by that? First, stop handing over digital files. To assume your clients know what to do is ridiculous. Clients are not interior decorators. Clients are not artists. They don't understand color theory. They don't understand that you can't zoom in 300 percent on your image and print it as a 30x40. You are the expert. Be the expert.

Showing clients products that match my vision and style of photography helps the sales session and helps complete the cycle of the experience for them. For example, I shoot large, dramatic, very modern-looking art for my clients. I would never present this in an 8x10 white ivory frame in my studio. Instead, I show these images in large metals and acrylics in my studio that are 20x30 and larger.

I am the expert. You are the expert. Act like an expert. Show your clients how these images they trusted you to create should be displayed. Tell them what they want. How else will they know? If they don't follow your expert advice, you both lose. The client won't be able to enjoy the fruits of your labor in the way that you envisioned, and word of mouth won't be quite as good as it should.

Hold your clients' hands. Tell them and show them what they want. That is how you build a unique brand that stands out.

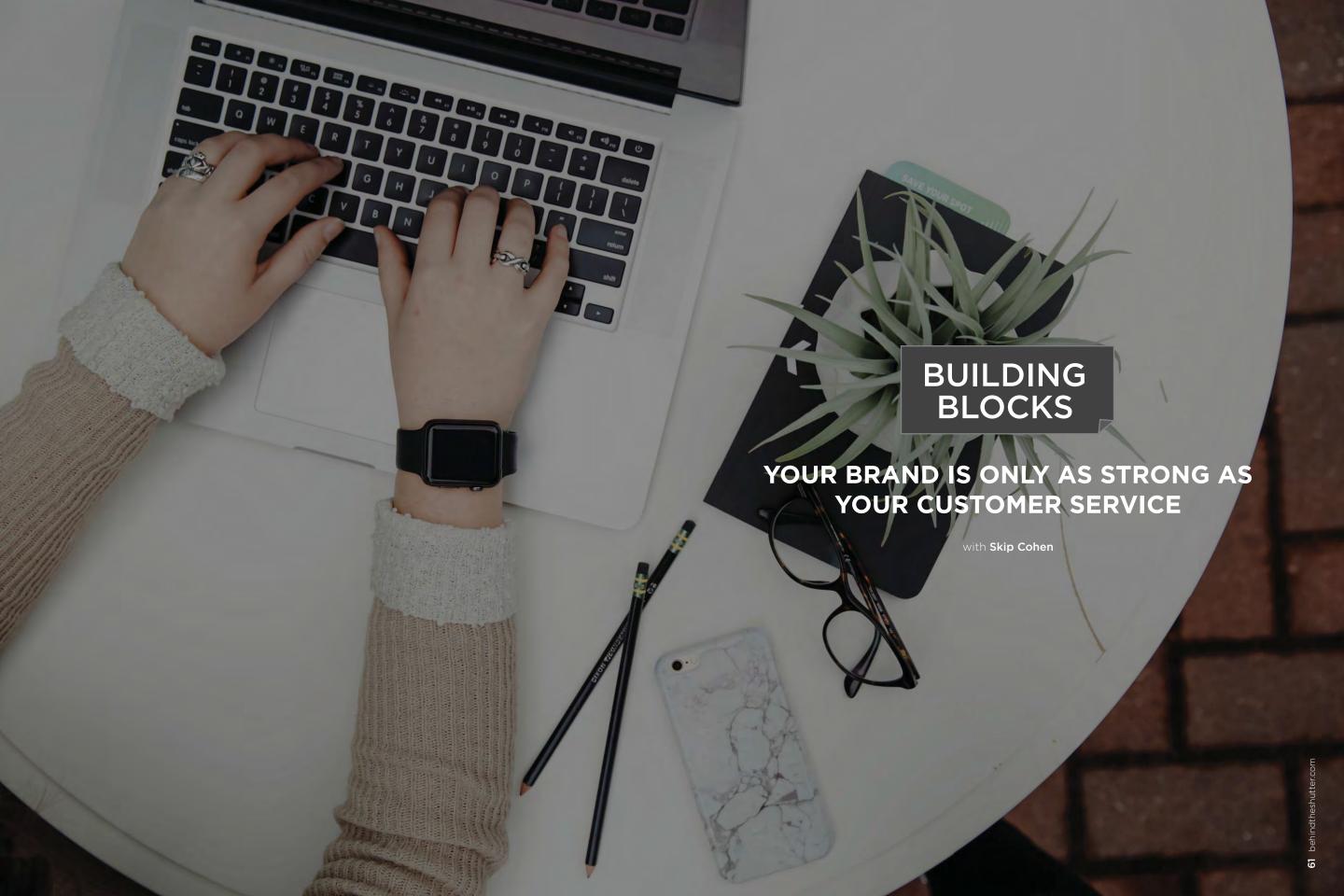




Sal Cincotta is an international award-winning photographer, educator, author and the publisher of *Shutter Magazine*. Sal's success is directly tied to the education he received in business school. He graduated from Binghamton University, a Top 20 business school, and has worked for Fortune 50 companies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

salcincotta.com





The theme for this month's issue is branding, which makes me smile because everything I've written for the last five years has fallen under the branding umbrella.

Too many business owners think branding is their signage, logo, stationery, business cards and site/blog design. They believe all the visual cues to their identity are the key elements of their brand. That's true to an extent. But let's talk about the core features.

Your brand defines everything about your business, from the quality of your work to your involvement in the community to your reputation. It's about the power and frequency of word-of-mouth advertising and the experience people have working with you.

Let's compare Macy's and Nordstrom. I can buy the same Polo short-sleeve shirt at both for the same price, but that's the only common denominator. At Macy's, I'm going to have to hunt to find a clerk to help me. Depending on what day of the week or time of day I'm in the men's department, the inventory is typically a mess. If the color or size I want is out of stock, I've got some work to do, often with little or no assistance.

Now, take the same venture at any Nordstrom on the planet. First, I'm going to be greeted as I come into the department. It's rare somebody lets you wander for too long without offering to help. Second, I'm going to find everything in order by size and color, and always in the same area. Third, if I need help, a clerk is going to check the selection on the floor, and then in the back if it's not on the floor. They might also ask if I'd like them to find it at another store. Last on the list, when I buy what I want, they're going to come from behind the register, thank me by name and hand me my purchase.

Several years ago I interviewed Tim Walden on a podcast for SproutingPhotographer.com. Tim and his wife, Beverly, who have a studio in Louisville, Kentucky, are two of the finest portrait artists in our industry. Tim once told me something I'll never forget: "We don't sell photographs, we create an experience."



66 We don't sell *photographs*,

we create an *experience*.



That brings me to the heart of one of the most critical components of your business, customer service—but not in the sense most of you think of a service department at any retailer. Think about the way you communicate with every client, and the experience they're having while working with you.

CREATE AN EXPERIENCE

Let's look at Tim Walden's statement. What are you doing to make each client's experience with you unique?

It starts with your personality and your love for the craft. Every client needs to feel special, and it can be done with a combination of your listening skills and attitude. Yes, it's almost that simple. This is about making time in front of the camera fun. Remember fun? It's too often lost today under the baggage of the day-in/day-out challenges of business.

This is where you can build on your reputation in your community. You want to be known for giving back, being easy to work with and being the best at what you do. Here's how Tony Corbell describes himself when he started out: "I may not have been the best photographer in town, but I was determined to be the nicest." If you know Tony, you know he's never strayed from that philosophy throughout his career.

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

There's no such thing as a one-hit wonder in photography. If you did an excellent job with a client, even if they never need your services again, they may share the experience of working with you over and over again with friends, family members and colleagues. You have to treat them as part of your family, no matter how small or large the assignment. You need them to feel appreciated and valuable. That means it's important to follow up after the event. Keep in contact and check in with them now and then - not to hard-sell, but just to show your interest and appreciation for their business.

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BE PROACTIVE

This is about doing your homework in advance with each client. A little research can go a long way in building a solid foundation with customers.

Matthew Jordan Smith has a great story about his longtime relationship with Aretha Franklin. The first time he photographed her, he researched things she liked. He discovered she loved yellow roses, so a few days before the shoot, he sent her a dozen of them with a note saying that he looked forward to working with her.

Her response was over the top. She called Matthew directly to thank him. That first action by Matthew set the stage for a relationship and friendship that's lasted most of his professional career, right through to today.

Apply Matthew's approach to a bride, commercial client or family/portrait sitting. What can you do to surprise the client and exceed expectations?

FAST RESPONSE TIME

Whether you've been contacted via email or phone, the faster you respond, the more impressed your potential client will be. Formatted text inquiry forms on your website don't do any good if you don't respond the minute they come in.

I met Myrtle Beach wedding photographer Gene Ho years ago. His message system is set up so the client gets a response in less than an hour. He's often able to lock in a bridal client before his competitors have even opened their email.

Customers should never feel invisible, even when they walk through your door while you are busy, when they're on hold while you finish another call or when they're awaiting a response from an inquiry. How you respond is critical to their first impression.

THE TWO-PERSON RULE FOR PROBLEM SOLVING

I shared this in an article two years ago. I'm a huge fan of WalkTheTalk.com and their books on customer service, leadership and communication. Their 1999 book, 180 Ways to Walk the Customer Service Talk, describes the "two-person rule" like this:

Adopt the TWO-PERSON-RULE. Never make a customer talk to more than two people to resolve a problem. If you're the second person to deal with the customer, you "own" them. Either solve the problem immediately or get a phone number and a convenient time to call back.

KEEP YOUR PROMISES

Whether it's the time you promised to call or meet with somebody or a special offer as a solution to a problem, it makes no difference if you don't keep your promise. We've all heard the expression "Underpromise and overdeliver." That's your goal with every transaction and encounter.

No one magazine article can help you with everything you need to remember about customer service and how it contributes to building a strong brand. But just in case you're questioning the wisdom behind each suggestion, here are some great tidbits from an article on customer service from Inc.com.

- Customers are three times more likely to tell their friends about a negative experience.
- It takes 10 to 12 positive reviews to offset the damage from one negative review.
- Eighty-one percent of the people who switched to another company because of a bad experience say the company could have prevented it.
- Totally satisfied customers contribute 14 times more revenue than somewhat dissatisfied customers.



There is only one boss. *The Customer.*

And he can fire *anybody* in the company

from the chairman on down, simply by spending his money

somewhere else.



- Sam Walton

The bottom line to this month's article goes directly to your bottom line. Build your brand on a reputation for being great to work with, caring about your clients and being helpful, cheerful and grateful. Use your blog and social media to reinforce your passion for the craft, business and clients.

As Sam Walton once said, "There is only one boss. The customer. And he can fire anybody in the company from the chairman on down, simply by spending his money somewhere else."





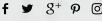
Skip Cohen is president and founder of Marketing Essentials International, a consulting firm specializing in projects dedicated to photographic education, marketing and social media support across a variety of marketing and business platforms. He founded SkipCohenUniversity.com in January 2013. He's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

skipcohenuniversity.com



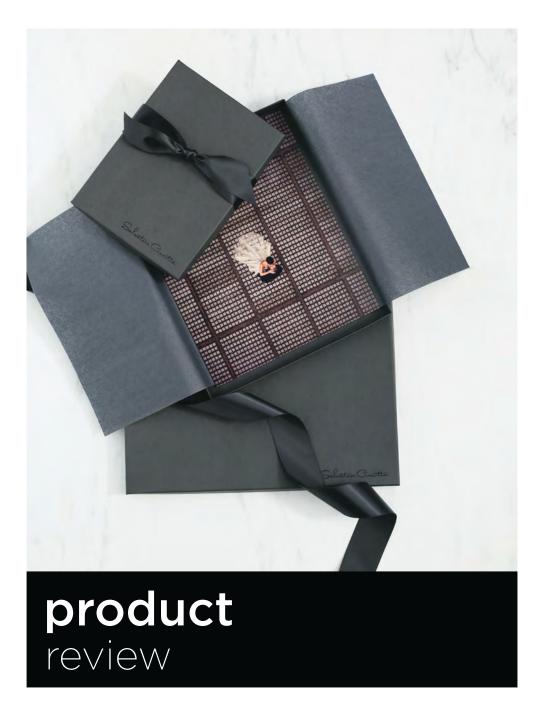
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Featured Image by Salvatore Cincotta

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Why Tyndell Photographic Deluxe Portrait Boxes?

Packaging is one of the key ways to make an impact on clients. Just ask Louis Vuitton or Apple. If you look at any major brand, packaging is that final step in delivering a gorgeous product to clients. If you expect clients to value what you do but then deliver it in half-ass packaging, how does that make sense?

Be proud of your final products and deliver them in style. There are so many options for you to build your brand and give your clients an incredible final product. You have no excuses.

Here are some of the details of Tyndell's cool new boxes.

- · Boutique photo packaging for stylish, high-end delivery; perfect for delivering fine portraiture to clients
- · Sturdy rigid boxes wrapped with high-quality art paper in a variety of colors and textures
- · Raised lid for high-end delivery
- · Available in three sizes: 5x7x3/4 inches, 8x10x3/4 inches and 11x14x3/4 inches
- · Available in Matte Black, Black Leather, Chocolate or Slate with a black interior; or in White, Kraft or Robin Egg Blue with a white interior.

Visit www.tyndellphotographic.com/boxes/portrait-box for more details.

Special: Get 10% off your next online order over \$150 using the code "shutterLOVE" (offer valid until Dec. 31, 2017).





Can a website update really double your bookings? Eileen and I (the Blumes) are about to find out.

In case you don't know this chapter of our story already, in 2009, my wife, Eileen, sat down after her Starbucks shift one day and hand-coded our first photography website. She had never coded before, and the result wasn't pretty by today's standards. But it served its purpose: a simple gallery where we could share our hobby photography with family and friends.

What happened next was a shock.

We began to receive phone calls. Phone calls from complete strangers inquiring about our photography services. We got online at a time when some businesses—even photographers—were still using the yellow pages. And we realized that people might actually pay us to do what we loved. Thus, Blume Photography was born out of a happy accident (our ugly website), and we left our day jobs to pursue photography full-time within the first year.

The Internet hasn't worked quite so easily for us over the last few years. But should it? Isn't today's Internet a battlefield? Every photographer is online competing to be seen. Do you feel as lost as I have inside the maze of HTML, SEO jargon and social media strategy? I'm a photographer, and I understand business. But I'm not a tech genius.

The last time we upgraded our site was in 2011, to a popular WordPress theme. Despite its ease of use, our careful lead tracking made it clear that some pretty major roadblocks must be preventing Internet traffic from reaching us. Let's look at some of those roadblocks—and how to fix them on your website.

By the time you read this issue of *Shutter*, our brand-new Showit site will have just launched. We've invested a lot this year to sit down with many of the most successful web marketers in our industry. And we kept hearing the same tips about effective website design.

Check out the new site at www.theblumes.co, and you be the judge of whether it measures up to the goals I've laid out below.

1. BE YOUR BRAND

Once upon a time, a professional logo and Web address were enough to brand your business. Not anymore. Potential clients aren't impressed because you look like a "real" business. Professionalism is expected—but hundreds of other photographers already have that going for them. What makes you different?

Professionalism doesn't make you stand out. Personality does.

As I write this, our homepage is a mess. It is a typical splash page with a portfolio slideshow directly above a hodgepodge of logos from publications that have published our work (Fig. 1).



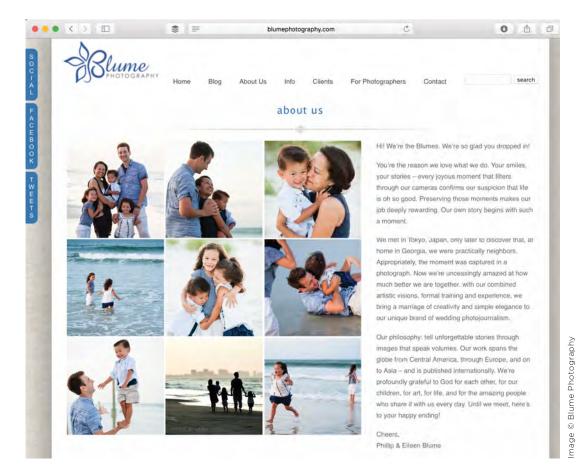
Fig. 1

You've probably experienced consumer retreat. When we find too many options online, we click away. It's why I still haven't purchased a sparkling-water maker even though it's remained the only item on my wishlist for the past five holidays. I can't decide which one to buy.

The solution? Move your About page to your homepage.

As people retreat from things in our modern world, they gravitate back toward relationships and people. This excites me, and I think it's incredibly healthy for a post-consumer culture. Introduce yourself the moment a prospective client lands on your page. Show pleasant photos of yourself at work and play. Come up with three words that describe you best, and make them your slogan.

If you visit www.theblumes.co now, you'll see more of the personal info we've been hiding on our About page (Fig. 2) out in the open. Now, instead of offering a product line, we're offering a handshake. And who's going to refuse a handshake? When that bond is made, it's natural to pull someone through the door.



Home Blog About Us Info Clients For Photographers Contact search

Fig. 3

2. CURATE YOUR WORK

Of course, it isn't enough to offer just a handshake. Try to sell me a car without a test drive, and I'll interpret your handshake as less than forthcoming. Yes, I've learned we still need to show our work on the homepage. But less of it.

It comes back to consumer retreat. I imagine a client might be impressed by the quantity of my work. "If she leaves our site without seeing that one amazing image that speaks to her, she'll never book us," I convince myself. It's almost an obsession, as if I want my website to tell my entire life story and reveal every destination location where we've had the honor to shoot.

The old adage is true. Less is more. You think you've curated your work down enough? Curate it tighter.

I know, curation is hard. That's why professionals like my sister in London are paid well to parse down museum exhibits. It takes practice and courage. I've been a coward up until now. Our current portfolio slideshow has 30 images (Fig. 3). My email reply to new inquiries provides five links to blog posts with 100 photos each. Talk about overstimulation. If anything, I'm projecting desperation to clients with all those "look at me" antics.

The most successful photographers' sites I'm studying now reveal only three or four portfolio images on their homepage. Crazy, right? Beyond the homepage, they provide links to just three or four featured weddings or portrait sessions.

It seems counterintuitive. Will visitors think you're inexperienced because you have only three weddings to show? Take a step of faith and curate. Most visitors assume a greater breadth of work if your samples are fewer and consistent in style. The limited number of images will remain burned into their memories more effectively. And they'll reach out to you because you focused on introducing yourself with confidence, not on parading your work.

3. HOLD THEIR HANDS

Websites can be a maze. That was cool in the early, dark days of a younger Internet, when surfers had time to kill finding Easter eggs and backdoors between the net's far fewer websites.

Visitors have zero time to kill on your website. They don't want to play games. They're looking to make a quick connection, solve a problem and move on. How can you help them?

From now on, I'll be thinking of my website not as a store, but as an in-person sales encounter. Imagine what that encounter might be like if you owned a physical studio and a cold prospect walked in to request information. Would you ask their name? Offer advice? Provide an informational brochure? Suggest a next step?

Yes, all those things. And in the process, I bet you'd get their business card or contact information so you could follow up. But most of us do none of those things on our website. That's a missed opportunity.

Branding is all about providing an experience, and often that simply means leading a horse to water. You don't have to give clients a foot massage. Just help them find what they're looking for, and the experience they have will feel rewarding.

So offer a carrot. There are lots of cheap or free tools that allow you to exchange digital info for an email. Create an eBook with your best wedding planning advice, or a mini-guide to help mothers photograph their children better. By providing value to strangers through your website (Fig. 4), you've already made a connection and earned the client's trust through a positive experience.

What's more, you've gained an email address where you can follow up strategically and convert more leads even many you never knew were visiting your website before.

Pro tip: Use a studio management tool like 17Hats to build more personal contact forms (Fig. 5) that reply automatically to help convert leads. Free starter accounts from Mad MiMi or MailChimp are excellent for building email follow-up campaigns.





Fig. 5

4. VIDEO IS KING

As of this writing, all our personal bio videos live in a hidden corner of our website (Fig. 6). Even so, a huge percentage of our most solid leads mention these videos when they inquire. We always knew video would become important one day, but I didn't realize how powerful it would become.

You better believe we'll be working on at least one bio video to feature front and center on our new www.theblumes.co site. If today's clients are making such strong connections through video, imagine the results if more cold leads landing on your site actually saw those videos.

Here's your homework. If you don't have a personal bio video, consider paying a talented videographer to create one for you. In the meantime, you can create some amazing videos yourself with almost the same effect in minutes. Just plug your own photos and text into a video template at Animoto.com. Their new Marketing Video templates are amazing (Figs. 7, 8). They also provide an interactive "call to action" that you can embed on your website in seconds.



Fig. 6

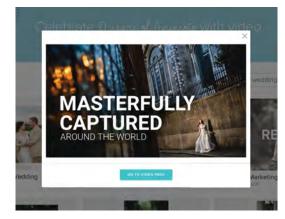


Fig. 7 Fig. 8



Fig. 4

Consumers have always gravitated toward brands they trust and whose ideals they identify with. To paraphrase author Simon Sinek, people don't buy what you do, they buy why you do it.

Yes, it always helps to feature a few awards or recognizable magazines where your work has been published. Recognition from fellow professionals lends credibility. Include it wherever you can. Even our ShootProof photo gallery page lets us do it (Fig. 9).

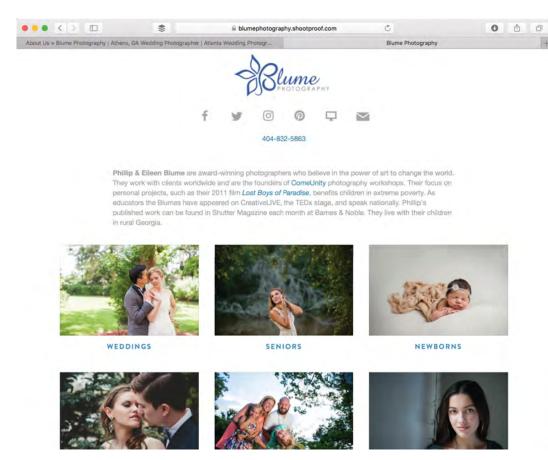


Fig. 9



Fig. 10

On our next attempt, though, we'll try harder to display accolades in a more branded, less colorful way than you see here. Let's just say if a magazine features your work in a swirling psychedelic layout, don't bother sharing it on your website like we did (Fig. 10).

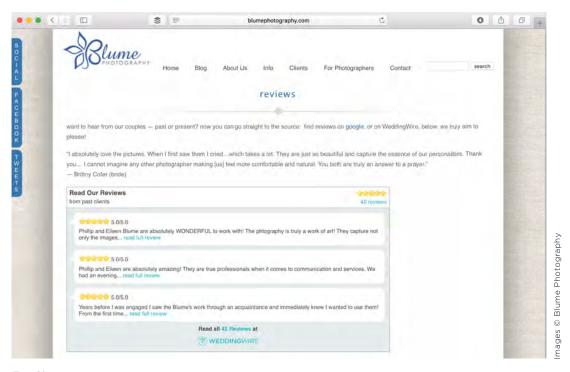


Fig. 11

But the most powerful credibility you can provide is social proof. Let future clients hear from past couples and families. Don't just provide a link to online reviews like we did (Fig. 11). Sure, we had the right idea. But get more serious about reviews. Don't be shy. Ask your best clients for this favor. Make graphics with their best quotes attached to their best photo. Get creative and collect video reviews. Incorporate them throughout your website, not just on a reviews page.



Fig. 12

CONCLUSION

Website design is now more important to your brand than ever before. Strong word-of-mouth has allowed our business to thrive despite a poor website. I didn't even mention how poorly our old site performs on mobile, which now accounts for the majority of Internet traffic. Yes, you read that correctly: Up until now, most people on the Internet couldn't even make our site work, no matter how good it looked.

The Showit 5 design technology is amazing. It allows us to design our own site with drag-and-drop interface rather than coding. But more importantly, it's made for mobile. So Eileen can design a custom look for our site on mobile phones in a window adjacent to our new desktop design (Fig. 12).

We have friends whose bookings more than doubled the week after they updated their site to Showit. You can use a similar tool, but Showit is the only platform designed just for photographers—and you can redesign your WordPress blog with it, too. Whatever the outcome, our new site is sure to look a lot better than our first one.

Let the Blumes know what you think. Click over to www.theblumes.co, where we're giving away lots of awesome photo prizes to celebrate the new site launch this month.





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

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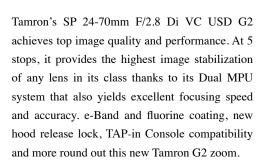
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Shutter Magazine . November 2017



Everyone can produce great photography now. Don't get me wrong, offering excellent photography skills is important, and I'm a huge supporter of learning new lighting techniques and improving your craft. But being a great photographer with an amazing portfolio doesn't equate to being an unforgettable brand.

There are five major points to master if you want to be a brand that's irresistible. Get these right, and you're on your way to standing out in your marketplace, no matter how crowded it is.

As you read the following five points, think of the theme running through them.

- 1. Create an irresistible attraction at the first point of contact (brand statement/elevator pitch, aka your "why"; brand tagline; brand visuals).
- 2. Lead your marketing with an unforgettable purpose (your manifesto, belief system and the back story of your brand).
- 3. Create an unforgettable connection by sharing your irresistible personality (the human behind the logo; your authentic voice).
- 4. Share unforgettable experiences with clients, who in turn share your brand with their friends and social media, all based around how your brand makes a client feel when they've experienced it through your products and services.
- 5. Throw an unforgettable after-party (to create an unforgettable continued relationship after the sale).

From the moment you first attract an ideal client all the way through to the sale and beyond, your brand must be unforgettable. Relationship building is the number-one priority in creating an unforgettable brand. It starts with the first contact, and basically never ends.

The sales are in the relationships you build, the connections you make and the transformation you offer to your clients through the experience of your products and services.





O1. IRRESISTIBLE ATTRACTION

You must have a message to share that clearly defines your purpose and mission. My last two blog posts addressed this. Until you have a well-defined branding statement and tagline, your marketing will be lost in a noisy world online. It will basically be a mass of posts, one after the other, all without clear direction and purpose.

The few photographers who actually have a brand statement and a tagline rarely market with them. If they have one at all, their brand statement sits stoically on their website, never being used as the amazing marketing tool that it can be.

The unforgettable attraction might happen when someone sees your post on Instagram or Facebook for the first time, or it might be a blog post. Your visuals (logo, fonts, colors), combined with how you market your brand via a tagline and/or branding statement, will impact a potential client immediately.

If someone on Instagram clicks over to your profile for the first time, they will size up your brand in five seconds or less. What you've listed in your profile (who you are, what you do, what you're about, what's in it for them) combined with the aesthetics of your posts and branding will help them decide whether or not to follow you.

This happens constantly online—via your website and on social media. No matter where you are seen online, your brand must create an unforgettable, irresistible pull that attracts potential clients.

Spend time creating your business brand statement and a tagline. Use these on social media. Lead with them. Market with them. Use them to attract your tribe.

But don't stop there, because you've only just begun.

Do you have a manifesto? It declares you and your brand's core belief system. When your brand's core beliefs align with a clearly defined purpose and you combine that with the story of your brand, you have a winning combination that can take your potential client to the next level in the relationship.

A manifesto can be used to market the culture of your brand. Try it. You'll be among the most successful and unforgettable brands: Apple, Levi Strauss, Google, Nike, Lulu Lemon, Martin Luther King Jr., the Holy Bible.

One of the standout differences of younger growing brands is that they stand strong on their core beliefs. These brands put their beliefs out into the world for all to see, as in the form of a manifesto.



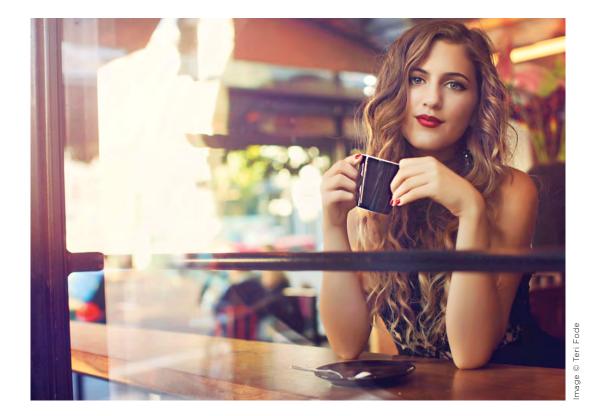












O3. UNFORGETTABLE CONNECTION BASED ON YOUR IRRESISTIBLE PERSONALITY

Don't throw your hands up and tell me you don't have much of a personality or that you're boring. You're not boring. You have a personality. There are people only you can reach and connect with in this world. There are people who want to be around the authentic you.

Now that we've tough-loved through that, let's talk about how it actually works in the world of marketing: You need to get out in front of the people you want to connect with on a personal, authentic, face-to-face level. You need to be yourself. Your true self. Not the one you hide behind.

Do you hate the thought of Facebook Live or video? No worries. You don't have to do live streams or video to be successful. But it will take you 10 times longer to connect with people these days.

I'm guessing you don't want to spend 10 times longer to build your online relationships, so more tough love here: Get over it and just do it if you are a business owner. Or you can find someone to be the face of your brand. That's a perfect solution as well, but it needs to be consistent.

Here are some tips on how to share your personality to form an unforgettable connection.

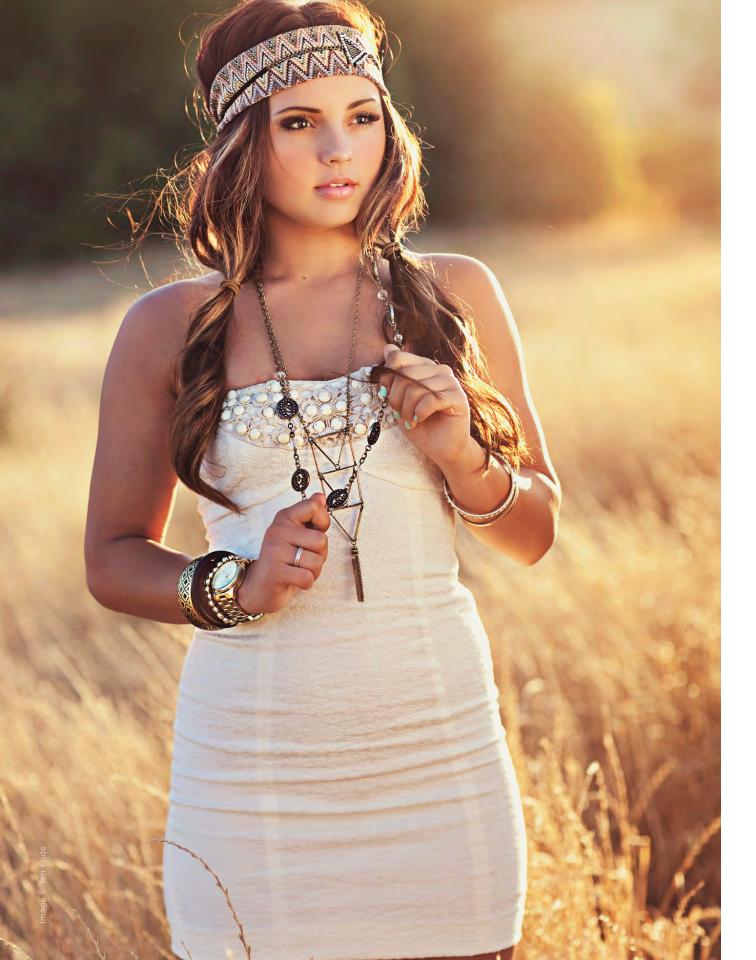
- Your face. The fastest and easiest way to connect is to get your face on Facebook Live, Instagram and Instagram Stories, Twitter, Snapchat or a prerecorded video on your business Facebook page.
- Your voice. Stop overthinking what you post on social media. Write in your own voice. Talk to me on your Instagram post like you would if we were sitting in Starbucks together having a latte. I see too many photographers talking in a "I'm cool, this is how I talk on the Internet but not in real life" voice, and it's a fake personality. It won't work. At some point, you will be found out (especially when a client meets you face-to-face).
- Your social media habits. Invest your time in socializing on social media. Post and like and share on the Internet. Spend 15 minutes a day doing this with potential customers. Get your personality out there, and you will start connecting at an accelerated rate. Do this with your photography friends as well since interacting helps you in the algorithms.

People like to hang out with people like themselves. This is true in real life and it's also true on social media. Once you start posting in your real voice, you'll start connecting authentically with people. They'll be attracted to you. They'll feel connected to you and be open to learning more about you by simply hanging out with you on social media.





Images © Teri Foo



04. UNFORGETTABLE EXPERIENCES

People tend to buy from brands based on the transformation they offer. They consider how they will feel if they hire you to photograph them. Unforgettable experiences are talked about. Written about. Shared.

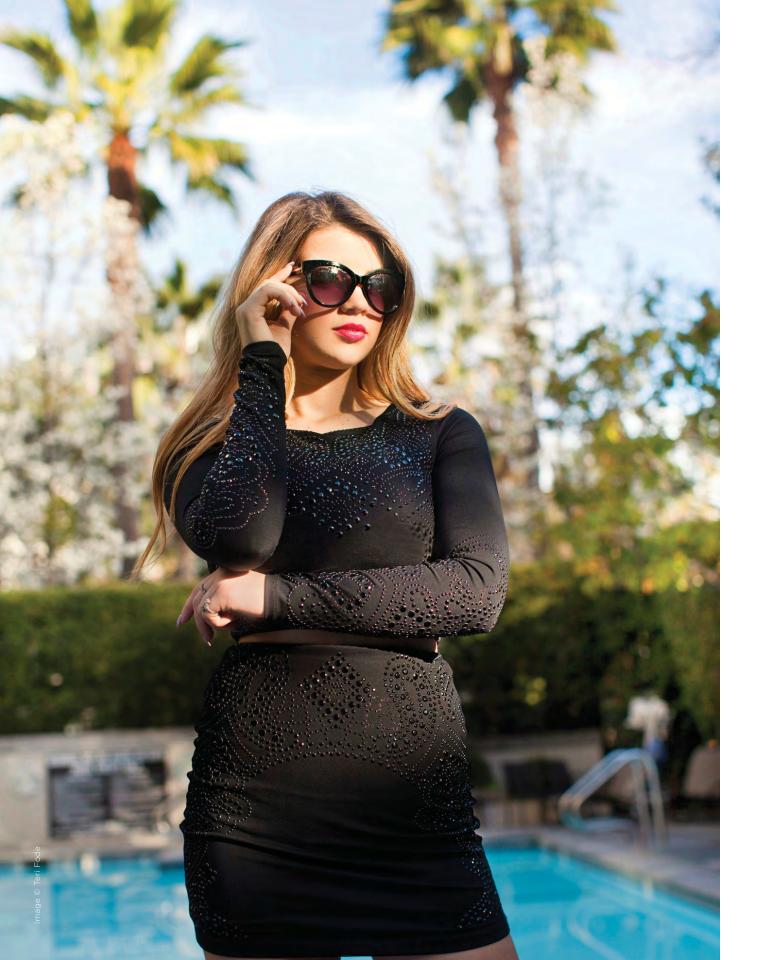
One of the best ways to take charge of this is to pull back the curtain of your brand experience and share it via Instagram Stories, Snapchat, Facebook Live and video. This isn't a new concept in 2017. Many photographers are doing it. The key is to become more creative, do it consistently and show up with your own face in those shared moments.

Client video testimonials offer an opportunity to share the unforgettable experience of your brand. Plan this after the shoot or after the sales presentation.

I'm guessing you have created an amazing experience for the client during the photo session. But are you consistently sharing it via the amazing opportunities available on social media platforms? Are you thinking outside the box and sharing the other experiences of your brand?







05. UNFORGETTABLE CONTINUED RELATIONSHIP

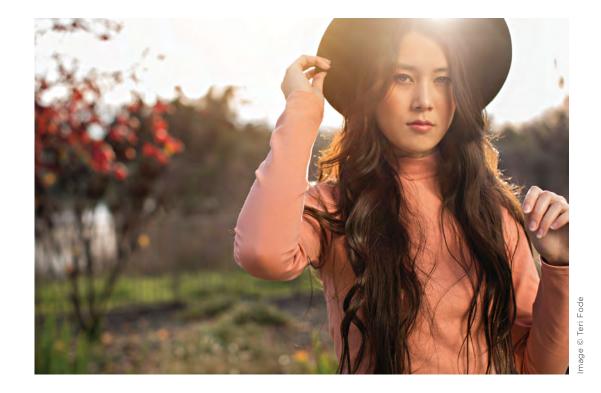
All of my "VIP Clients" are invited to the "after-party." Anyone who spends money in my studio is a VIP Client.

Most photographers fall out of touch with clients after product delivery. Clients are forgotten two years down the road when a repeat-client opportunity arises, but the client chooses another photographer.

Here's how to continue the relationship.

- Create a client email list that allows you to continue the relationship. Contact them a minimum of four times a year (more if possible, but no less than once every three months).
- Make your clients the heroes of your brand. Write about them on your blog. Share about them on your social media, even after the sale.

Do you want to remain unforgettable for life? Want a solid foundation for years to come? Create a system to keep in touch with every single person who spends money in your business.



So there you have it. What steps do you need to take to become unforgettable in a sea of sameness? Do you have your brand statement down to where it rolls off your tongue when someone asks what you do? Are you marketing with your tagline? Do you market with your overall manifesto?

That's step one, and probably the step that takes the most investment of time and energy. You have to get it right. Nail that, and you're on your way to being an unforgettable brand.

For a free download on how to create your own tagline and brand statement, check out the top header at VoiceYourBrand.com.



Teri Fode specializes in stylized teen, senior and family portraits. She started 13 years ago with a small in-home production studio, and recently opened a boutique storefront studio. She is the founder of VoiceYourBrand.com, which teaches photographers how to build and market their brand.

voiceyourbrand.com





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Shutter Magazine . November 2017

When I got started in photography, I had no idea there were different styles. I thought this picture was pretty and that picture wasn't. In a way, that's how consumers view photography. They don't know the difference between good and great photography. They usually just know the difference between "good" and "bad," what they like and what they don't.

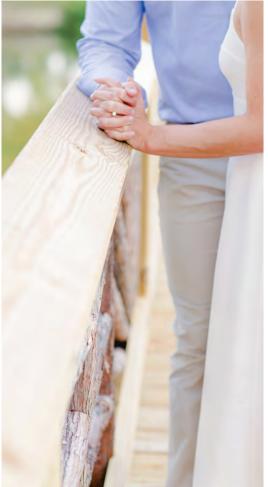
One aspect of photography that has come into play in recent years is much more prevalent to photographers than it used to be. In fact, it's now a crucial element for all businesses, big and small. It's the brand.

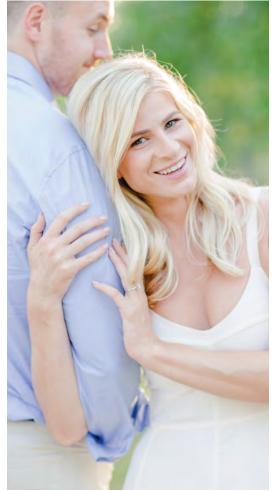
While most consumers don't know the difference between good and great photography when looking at a single image, they now instinctively know it when looking at a collection of images. Thanks to social media outlets like Instagram and Pinterest, most consumers have been passively trained to appreciate a good, consistent brand image—and recognize a bad one.

What does that mean for photographers? It means we need to step it up a notch. I could talk to you about how to create consistent work across the board, as I did in the lighting edition of *Shutter* in August. But branding is much deeper than that. It's about more than how the photography is presented.



Image © Vanessa





GROW YOUR BRAND WITH YOUR PHOTOGRAPHY SKILL

Photography as an art form, and now also a digital platform, is continually evolving. With changing technology and photographers' need to keep growing their skillset, it's only natural that your brand move forward as well.

Your photography should keep getting better as you advance in this field. One thing I like saying to couples who come in and mention my work on a wedding from years ago is, "I'm so glad you like those images. I'm even better now!" They get a kick out of it, but it's the truth—and it's one of the reasons I charge quite a bit more than I did a few years ago.

As your images improve, your imagery and editing will become more intentional. When choosing what images to show in your portfolio (printed or online), showcase images that slowly show your growth. Avoid abrupt changes. If you're learning off-camera flash, pop in a picture or two with it, but don't let it become your entire body of work overnight.

This brings me to my next point.

AVOID BRAND CONFUSION

Ten years ago, photographers didn't have to worry about brand confusion like we do today. Consumers are better trained to see brands. Our brands are available at all times with a few clicks of a mouse or a couple taps on a phone. Brand confusion is subliminally recognized by most consumers, and something we want to avoid as business owners.

Brand confusion occurs when an out-of-norm product, post or experience happens. For example, if you're a "light and airy" photographer and you post a heavily shadowed image on your Instagram, that goes against your brand norm. It also happens if you like to redesign your logo or website every six months. These things can cause brand confusion and ultimately lead to a lack of trust in your brand from prospective clients.

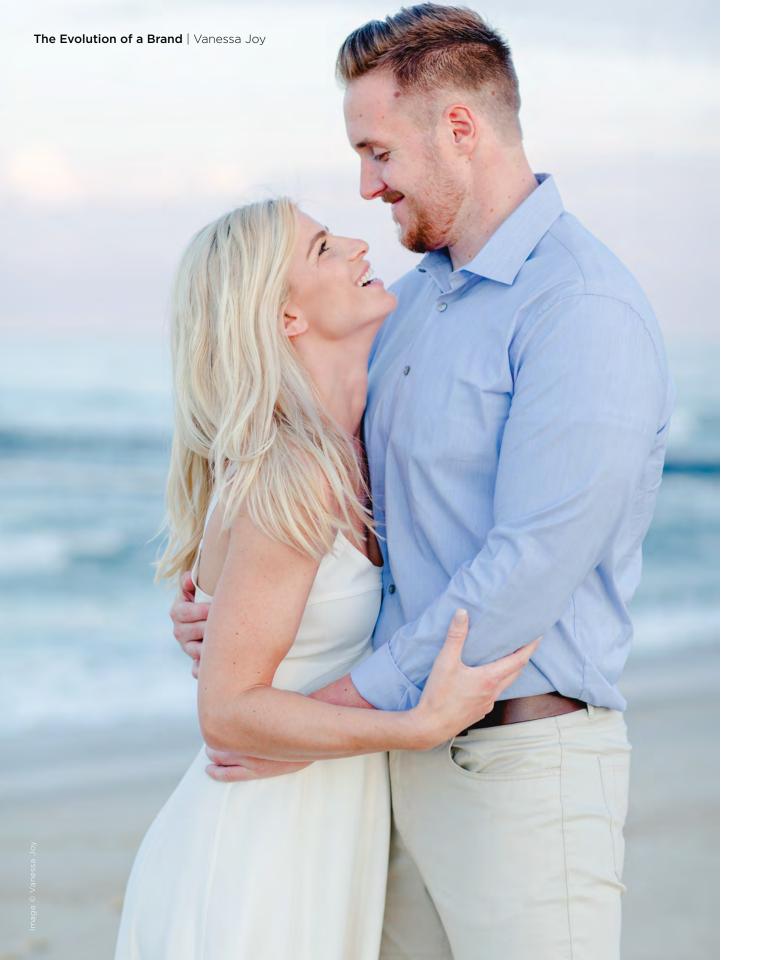
To avoid brand confusion, try these three steps:

- 1. Decide on a consistent lighting and editing style, and only post images that are in line with that style.
- 2. Make any public changes to your business slowly rather than abruptly.
- 3. Keep your brand an extension of who you are to maintain a natural consistency.









CREATE AN ATTRACTIVE PERSONALITY

I was recently ridiculed for a Shutter video by someone who claimed that pretty people with good personalities go further in life because it's easier for them. While the "pretty" part made me want to smack the commenter's pretty little face with my pretty little hand, the second part of his statement is actually true.

If you're a photographer, you deal with people. People hire you, give you money and then get in front of your camera, which is a vulnerable place to be. Having a personality that makes all of those things easier for your clients is a plus, and a part of your brand.

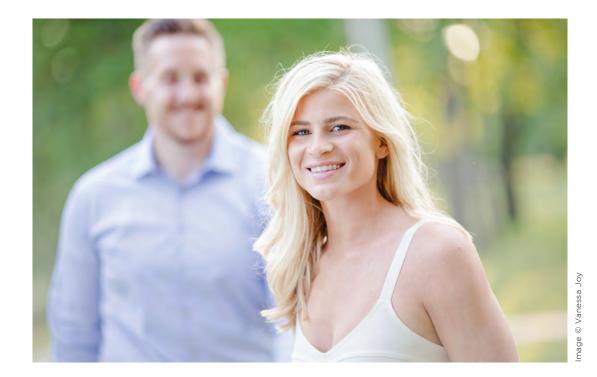
If you met a bubbly photographer who dressed in light colors and smiled a lot, what would you guess their imagery looked like? Dark and moody? Probably not.

Think of Steve Jobs. He lived and breathed the Apple brand. Apple, a sleek and chic company that embraced black, white and silver as its main colors, was complemented by Jobs, who wore black every single day. On the other hand, Google, a company that loves colors and changes its logo daily, is known for an innovative, creative work environment that can be a bit off-the-wall at times. (Hey, I'm all for nap spaces at work!)

The term attractive personality comes from the book DotCom Secrets: The Underground Playbook for Growing Your Company Online, by Russell Brunson. He talks about identifying your personality strengths to use in business. The book has little to do with photography, but it's worth a read for how he talks about finding and creating your personality. Your brand has every bit to do with your personality. It's part of what makes you relatable to your clients. And here's the best part: You can learn to create a personality.







The reason that guy's YouTube comment irked me so much is because he was picking on me for something he thought I was just born with. I was homeschooled for nine years growing up, and didn't learn social norms until way later in life. To this day, I'm not a natural social butterfly at all. I'd rather Netflix and chill any night of the week rather than go out and have forced conversations.

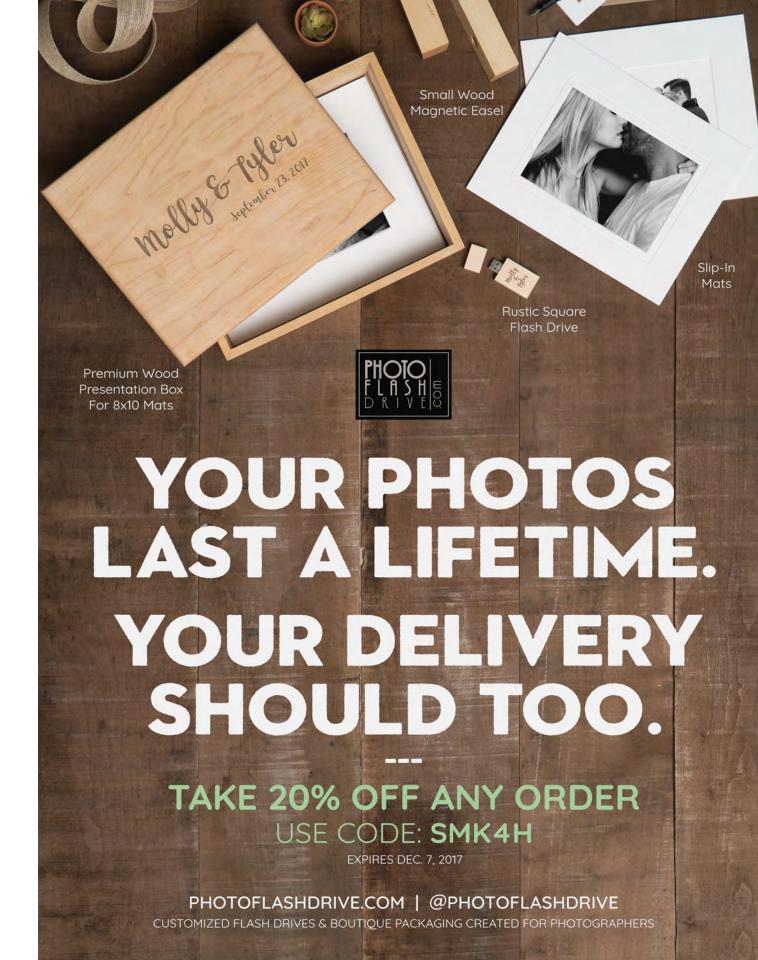
We aren't born with a personality. We develop one. To do well in my field, I knew I had to come out of my shell and create a personality, so I did. Check out this video to see how I practice it in one of the weirdest of places.





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







Sweet Nectar Society was started by two photographers with heart. Our focus was on medically fragile children, and the goal was to provide as many free sessions to families as we could. What did we want the brand to convey? Hope, courage and strength—a simple concept with an incredibly meaningful mission.















nages © Swe

We have spent countless hours working on our brand—everything from identifying our purpose, to networking and building relationships, to becoming a recognizable symbol in our community. Before our organization took flight, we had to establish every detail, including behind-the-scenes administrative aspects of running a charity and then photo style, color scheme and everything in between. We were laser-focused on the concept of giving through the art of photography.

Whether you want to give by creating your own nonprofit or by aligning your business with an existing cause, we'd like to share with you some insights based on our experiences.





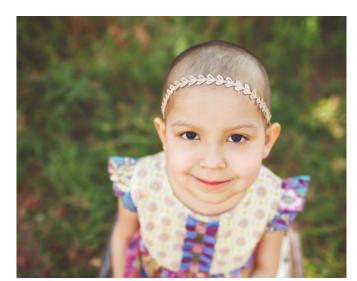


CAUSE: IDENTIFY WHY YOU WANT TO GIVE BACK

There's no shortage of causes. If you feel passionately about a cause, then you are qualified to give. Whether it is by donating your time, offering your talent or contributing monetarily, you can make a difference. It's as easy as that. A little heart goes a long way.

Pablo Picasso once said, "The meaning of life is to find your gift. The purpose of life is to give it away." We found our gift in photography. It is a fulfilling experience to capture our clients' stories and then give them something tangible that will help them remember moments in time.

We cared about medically fragile children, and wanted to tell their stories, which often go unheard. We find it inspiring and rewarding. Families often tell us that the photographs we took of their child are the only photos they have, and sometimes they are the last images they will ever have of their loved ones. Stories like these fuel our fire and motivate our team to share their gifts with Sweet Nectar.





















COMMITMENT: UNDERSTAND YOUR INTENTIONS

It takes a lot of heart and time to maintain a nonprofit organization and stay committed to a cause. We encourage anyone considering a partnership with a charity to make sure you are emotionally invested in the cause first. It is easy to lose focus and fizzle out over time if you do not believe in the purpose or do not feel a connection, or if it does not align with your brand.

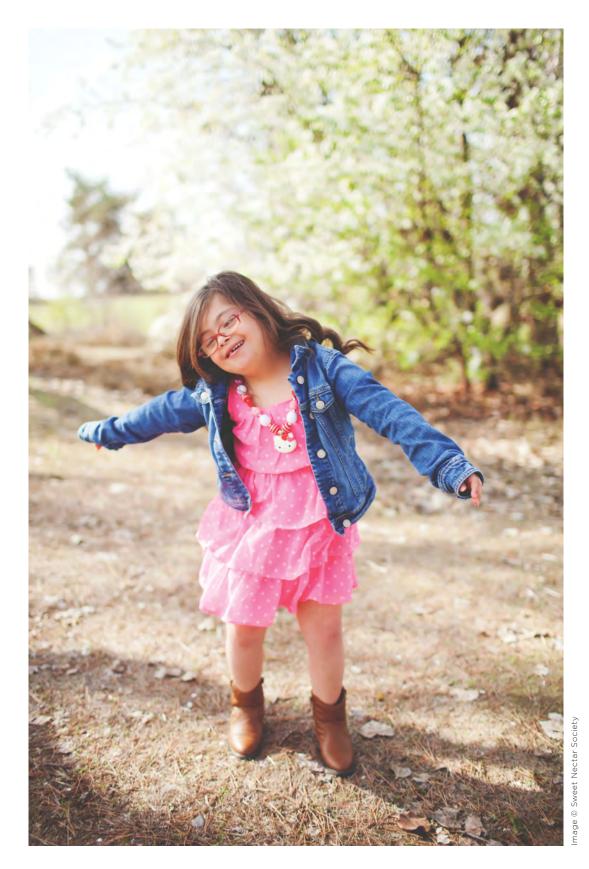
From a charity's operational standpoint, the commitment of others is vital to maintaining a productive workflow. Unfortunately, staying committed is hard. Life gets busy and duties get put on the backburner. If you have invested your time, energy and resources in something you believe in, you will be dedicated long term.

There is no time like the present. If your heart is pulling you to give, do it. There will never be a better time than now to volunteer, donate or start up your vision of giving. Regardless of the time or dollar amount you are able to give, it is important to remember that every minute is impactful, every dollar counts, every commitment makes a difference. Start small, and watch your vision go from there. Start giving and see where that opportunity leads you. You won't know exactly how you will feel until you get out there and start connecting, so take a step and see where the journey takes you.

Another major factor to consider is your motivation. If you are expecting something in return, then you probably do not have charity's best interest in mind. This is not the right cause for you. You should be thinking about what you can provide for others, not the other way around. Nelson Mandela said it best: "There can be no greater gift than that of giving one's time and energy to help others without expecting anything in return."

We encourage you to give with the intention of making a difference rather than expecting to be rewarded. At Sweet Nectar Society, we are rewarded in abundance with the pure love and thankfulness from our Sweeties and their families. The gifts they have given us go far beyond fame, monetary rewards or validation. With an honest, giving heart, you will receive so much more than you can ever give, we promise you that.





Th

CONNECTION: INVEST IN RELATIONSHIPS THAT MATTER

If you are in the market to start giving your services to a group, start networking and making meaningful connections. Building relationships that last is imperative to any business. These relationships give you a better understanding of the people you serve, the community you reach and the obstacles you run into.

Once we started giving our Sweeties photo sessions and learning of their journeys, we immersed ourselves in their communities. We nurtured our connections with their loved ones, built working relationships with their doctors, nurses and teachers, then partnered with other charities that dedicate their time to our Sweeties. We were not forming these bonds because we had to, but because we generally care about our kids and their wellbeing.

By building these relationships, we are able to better serve and reach more families, and build a strong brand with a firm foundation based on giving.

If you want to contribute to an existing charity, do your homework. Make sure the organization's values and direction line up with your business model, and that it is something you strongly believe in. As a small nonprofit, we rely on donations from our community and our colleagues, and appreciate any form of support. When we were just starting out and had zero funds, we reached out to Bay Photo Lab and Pixieset about our mission. It encouraged us when they supported us with products and services. Years later, we are still filled with gratitude by their ongoing generosity. Every chance we get to highlight their businesses or direct clients to them, we do so, even though they do not expect anything in return.

If you don't know where to start, begin by sharing your ideas. Ask for feedback and suggestions. Talk to people you respect and trust. You'd be surprised how one small idea can spring into action. The world has a way of opening doors like that. A few spontaneous sessions turned into a hundred, which a little over five years later has turned into almost 600—all because of a conversation with a like-minded photographer about an idea to give back.





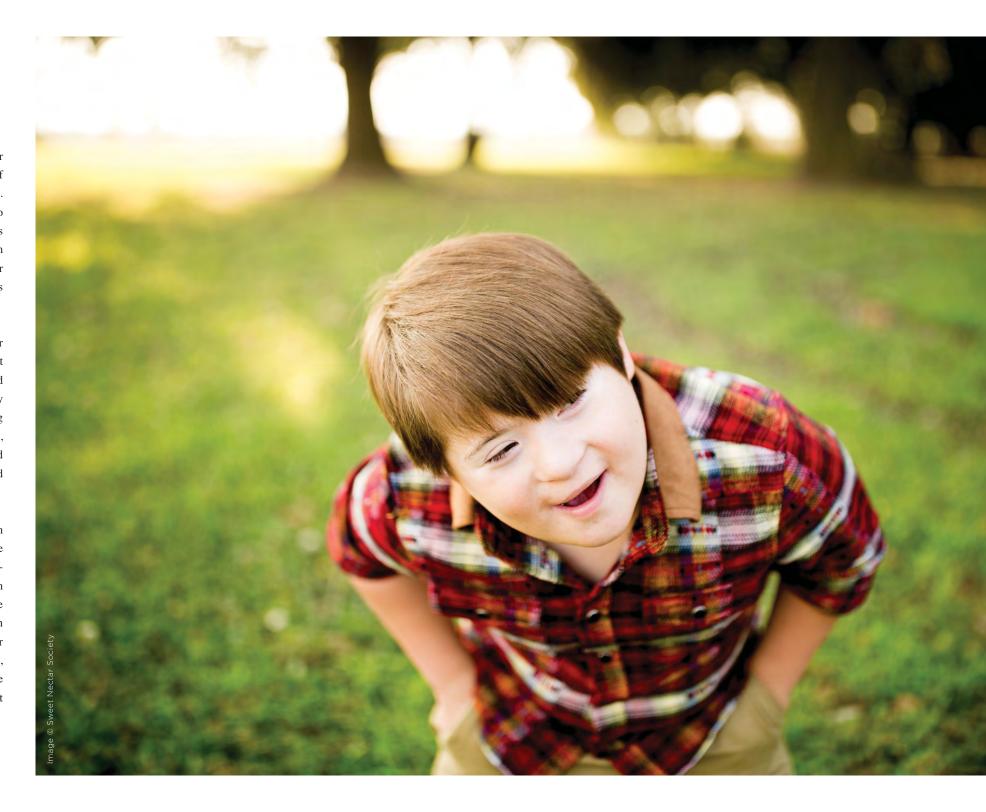


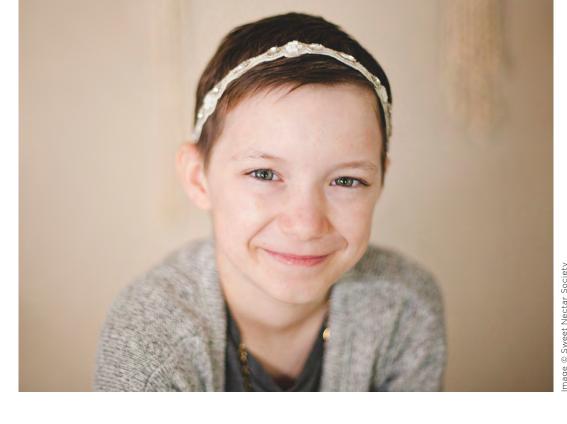
CONSISTENCY: BUILD A STRONG FOLLOWING

We don't just photograph our clients. We invite them to be a part of our movement. Giving these kids the "Sweetie" moniker makes them part of a club of brave children who defy odds, never give up and inspire others. We want them to feel like they are part of a bigger purpose. Everyone who knows this child and has seen their journey feels the same way, and shares the same sense of pride. We follow up with them on social media, invite them to our events and show our appreciation for letting us be a small part of their story. We truly care, and put our all into showing our audience what makes these kids so great.

Creating a strong, recognizable brand will set up your organization for success. We pay close attention to ensure every photo, post and product we attach our logo to has the same high quality and style. The care and consideration we pay to these details gives our supporters a feeling of security knowing our Sweeties are receiving the very best. When our followers log on to their social media accounts and notice our little hummingbird logo, they immediately know what to expect: a beautiful image of a strong and brave Sweetie. Donors know these kids will receive galleries of images and a special book made possible by their support.

This endeavor includes brand recognition. We want our name well known in our community, and use every available resource to achieve that. We show up at events that relate to our charity, volunteer our talents to likeminded organizations, get our story told on the radio, on television and in newspapers. We leave our fliers every place that might interact with one of our kids. Doctor's offices have photos of the children we photograph hanging on their walls, which we provide free. Even though we are not for profit, we still need to invest in marketing our brand to the right audience, not only to help with sponsorships, but to foster the belief in what we are doing and find people who are willing to come along for the ride. We want our name and brand to be well known and spoken often.





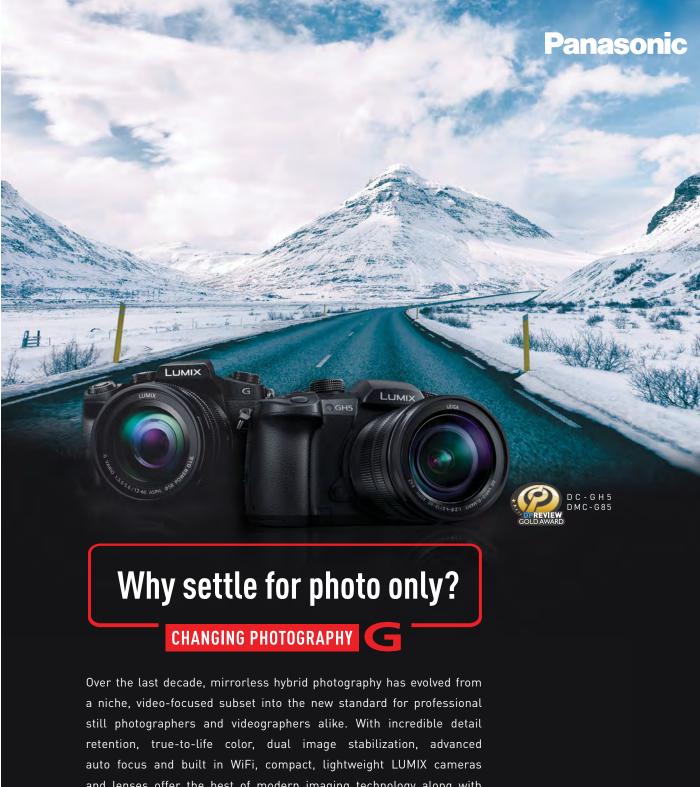
Finding the drive and ability to give back doesn't happen overnight. Having a clear plan will help carry your idea into action. Thoroughly think things out and make a plan for both your giving and your time. Go into it with as much information and support as you can get. Study how successful charities do what they do. Connect with others who share the same desire to give. Talk with people who are in need. Gather your experiences and go forth with positivity.

The world needs people who are willing to put it all on the line to make just one person's day better. We can all help. We can all change lives if we only look within ourselves and find the strength, hope and courage to try.



Brittany Wilbur and Carrie Anne Miranda's Sweet Nectar Society has provided hundreds of children and their families professional photography sessions at no cost since 2012. The mission of these Central California-based photographers is to spread awareness of and support for families dealing with medical trauma through the stories of the children they photograph.

sweetnectarsociety.org



and lenses offer the best of modern imaging technology along with the unlimited possibilities of 4K video frame capture and editing.

We've changed photography. Now it's your turn.

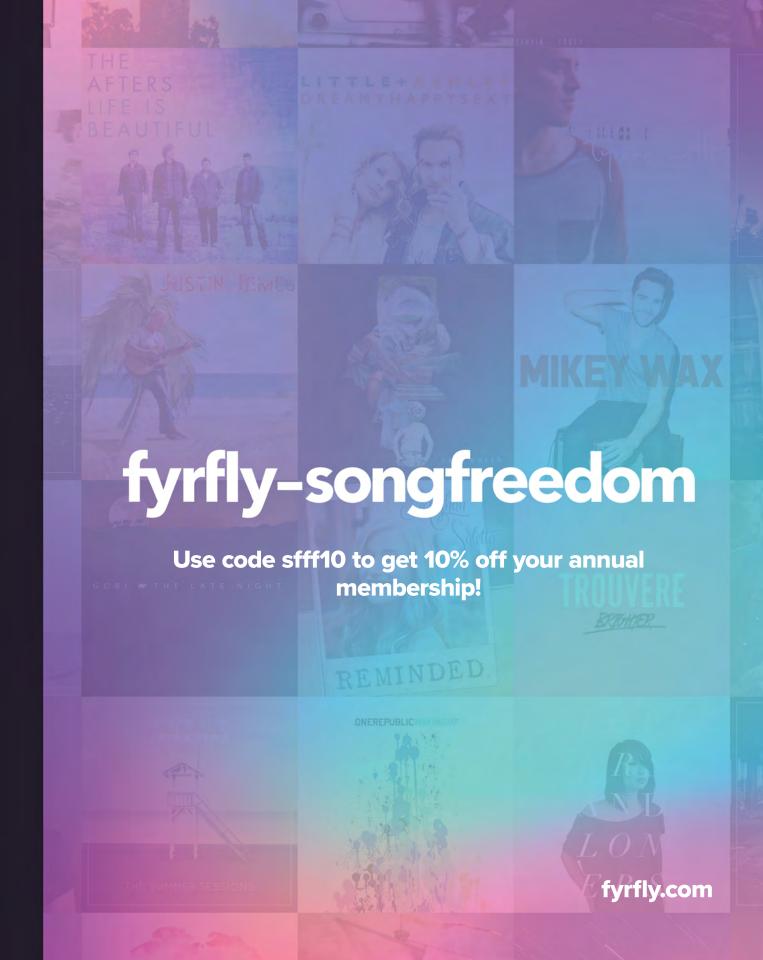




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Kids want to be many things when they grow up: firefighter, baseball player, doctor, nurse, Taylor Swift, ninja, and, yes, some lovely souls want to be sanitation engineers.

Our mission at So Many Angels is to use photography to transform children battling cancer into whatever they want to be when they grow up.

We are still in the launch phase, and I want to share some of the steps we have taken to hopefully become a brand that is recognized for being the best at what we do. It's not easy to think of photographing children with cancer and marketing/branding in the same paragraph, let alone the same sentence. But if I don't, we will never be able to reach the number of families we wish to serve.

This article is not about the legal stuff you need to do to be recognized by the IRS as a 501(c)(3) charitable organization. These are just some thoughts that are fresh on my mind since the year I started sharing my dreams of this organization with others. Hopefully something here will help start you on your way.

Concept

This is where it all begins. It can be a light-bulb moment or something that strikes you so powerfully that you would swear you've just been struck by lightning. It's the seed that's planted in your mind to start a nonprofit. Once you realize that it's moved beyond the "I should start it" category to the "I need to start this," start writing things down and getting organized.

A few years ago, I was taking photos at a Make-a-Wish event and started to wonder, what if I could get a couple of photographer friends and Photoshop artists together, take photos of children who are battling cancer and edit the photos to movie-poster quality? Then, what if we could gift the families wall prints of the images?



66 Our mission statement is simple:

We use photography to transform children battling cancer

into whatever they want to be

when they grow up.



Mission/Goal

Say it clearly, and don't take all day to get the words out. What does So Many Angels do? Kids battling cancer dress up like who or what they want to be when they grow up. We take their photos. We go through all the photos, choose the best ones and use Photoshop and other tools to produce a piece of art. Then we send the families a canvas print of the final artwork. While this is all accurate, it doesn't make for a good mission statement.

Our mission statement is simple: We use photography to transform children battling cancer into whatever they want to be when they grow up.





The name So Many Angels came about as I was explaining to someone the process of forming this charity. Although sometimes calls and emails were not being returned and I would get a little discouraged, there were also times when people would pop up here and there to offer help. It was almost like the universe was sending so many angels to push and guide me. The funny thing about the universe is the more work I put into So Many Angels, the more the universe wants to help move us along.



Logo



If you're a photographer, you may seethe silently when you see photos of real estate properties that are less than ideal. Have you ever seen great chefs post not-so-great photos of their incredible food? Are you cringing because you think you could do better? Well, that's what goes through the minds of graphic artists and logo designers when they see photographers post 18 different versions of their homemade logo on social media and ask, "Which of these are best?" For the ones where you can actually read the letters, do the colors match your brand? Do the colors work with each other? Do you even know that colors should work with each other?

Justen Hong at Visual Lure knows all these things, which is why he is the person we wanted to work with. It's his job, and he's dang good at it.

Look around and take notes of not just logos you like, but logos that speak to you. Contact those organizations and ask who did their logo. I bet they'll be happy to refer you. Find a designer whose work you love, and work with them to convey what you want in your logo.

I explained to Justen what I wanted to say with the logo for So Many Angels. I wanted it to speak with the spirit, heart and determination of the children we would be photographing. I wanted superheroes, angels, princesses and a certain *je ne sais quoi*. That's French for "I can't really describe what I mean, but you're the pro, you figure it out!" I wanted something that would work for the website, social media, lip balms and T-shirts, because I want that shirt to look good when I'm on *The Ellen Show*!

So Many Angels's mission is quite different than what I focus on in my normal photography (bodyscapes and fitness). I wanted to work behind the scenes to get things done. I made an "elevator pitch" video, about a minute long, that used stock footage with a few composites by my friend Mickey Webster. I showed the video to friends, and they loved it. I started showing it to more people, almost always in person, because I wanted to see their reactions.

Earlier this year I was showing my friend Ryan my idea video at a conference in Florida. He loved it, and asked if we planned on photographing only children battling cancer. I asked him if he wanted me to photograph Logan, his son. I asked if by chance they would be at ShutterFest, and if so, we could do this. He was. We did. Logan rocked his photo session, and Mickey rocked the edit.







can't not do?

Want Help? Find Partners

One of the first potential partners I showed my video to was Miller's Professional Lab. They were all in. Immediately. My first reaction: "Holy crap!" Actually, that was my second reaction; my first reaction was to cry. The tears came because I had someone willing to accompany me on this journey.

Did I just start emailing the biggest pro labs in the country hoping one of them would get back to me? Hardly. I already knew people at Miller's, which made it much easier. Miller's was already sponsoring me and my fitness and bodyscape workshops and speaking engagements. You may be thinking, well, I don't have sponsors and I don't know anybody. Yeah, so? Change that. Get your behind to conferences and meet people. Go to trade shows. Support the vendors.

If it's not a photography-related charity you're thinking of, find charities that are doing something similar, and add something they are not doing. There are plenty of charities that take photos of children battling cancer. Some of them are very well established, and many of them are very well run.

I wanted to add a bit more to the experience. Miller's is helping that dream become a reality. If you believe in your cause enough, you'll find a way to get things done. You may also find that it's so much easier approaching people and talking about your charity than it is talking about yourself.

What is the work you can't *not* do?

Ready, Fire, Aim!

As much as you want everything to be perfect when you launch, it won't be. In two years, So Many Angels might look nothing like I envision it right this second, and that's okay. I think it will morph into exactly what it needs to be. I think the families and kids will help us get to where we need to be.

And if the universe is listening, please send me a four-year-old trash man to photograph!



Matt Meiers is a bodyscape and portrait photographer who loves to use lighting to highlight people's features and beauty in ways they've never seen before. He currently resides in Lewes, Delaware, and has an affinity for creating uniquely ridiculous hashtags.

somanyangels.org

INSPIRATIONS

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

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

Sal Cincotta, Editor-in-chief

BEST IMAGE OF YOUR BRAND







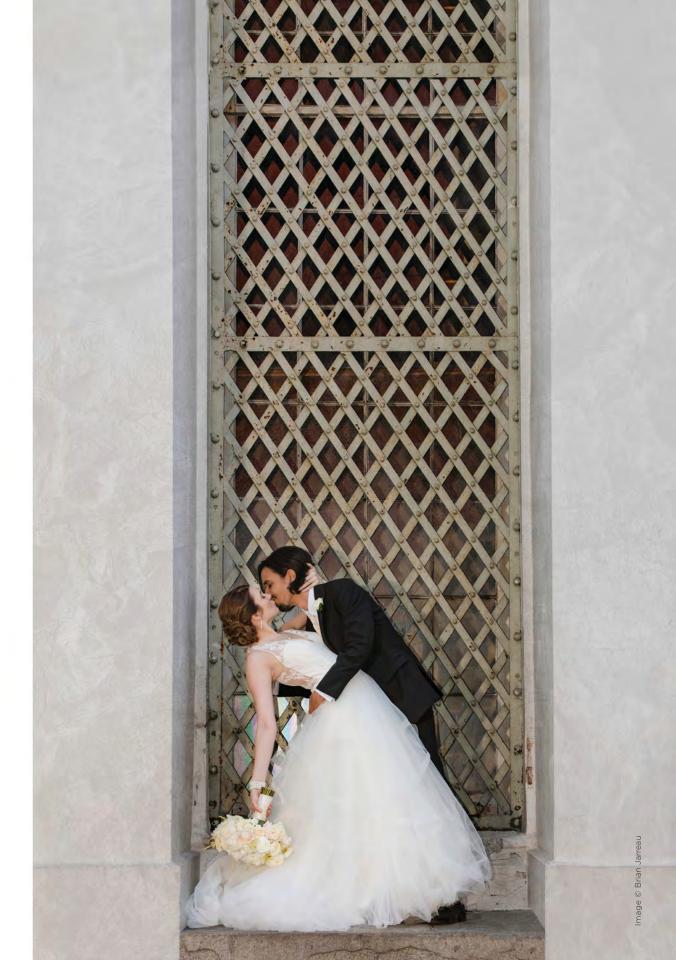




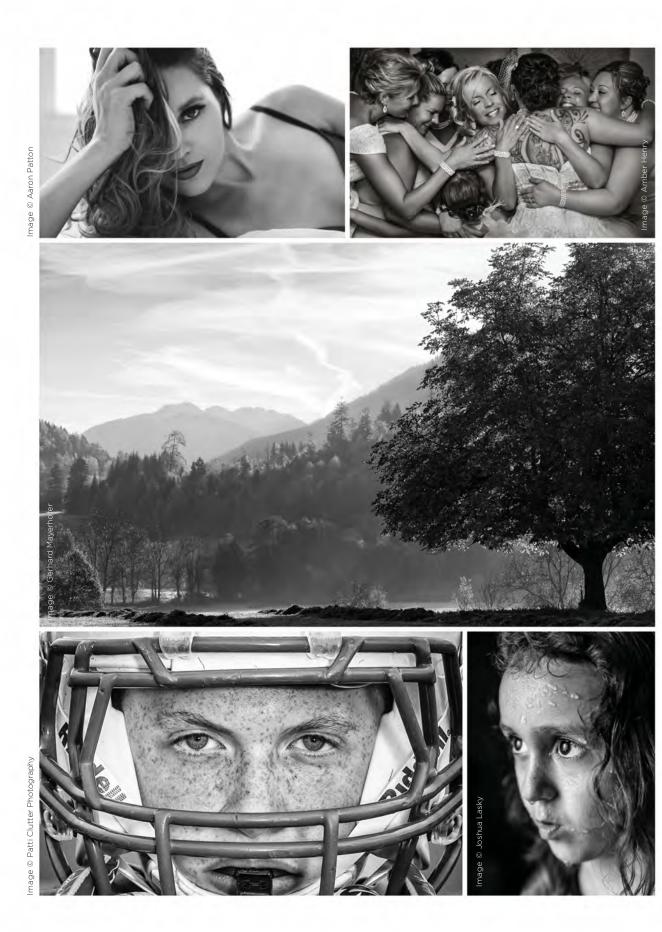


















Inspirations | Our Readers











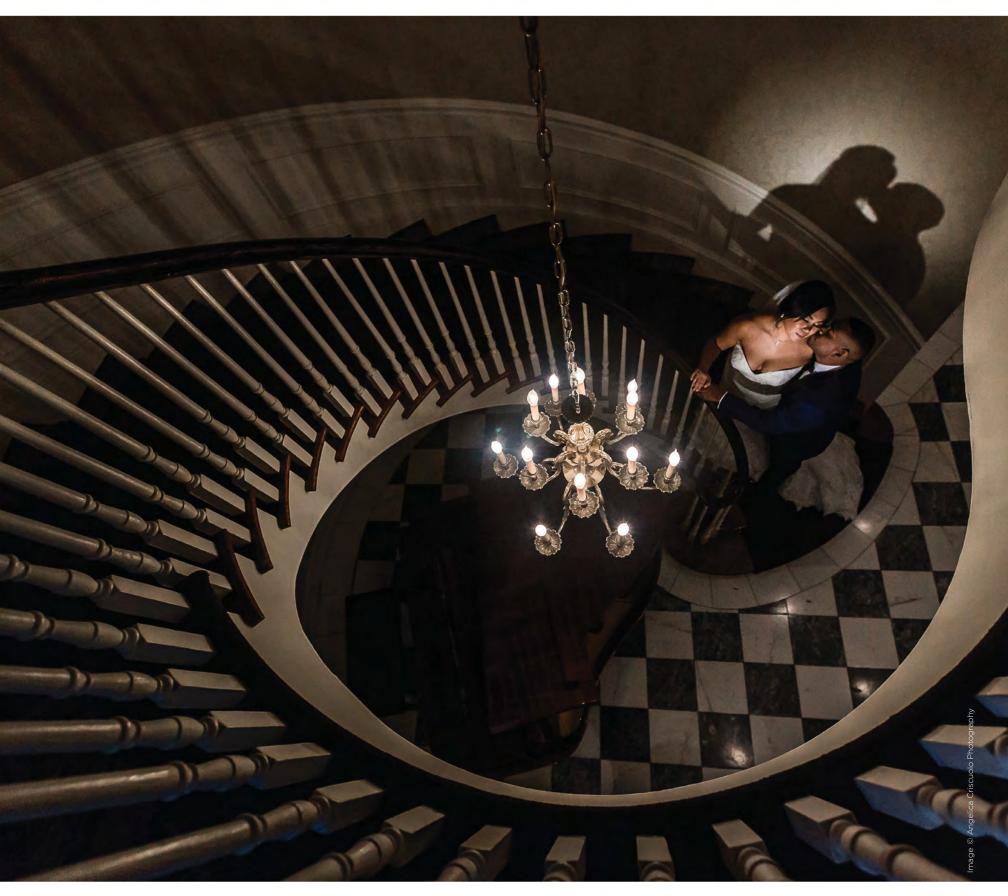
















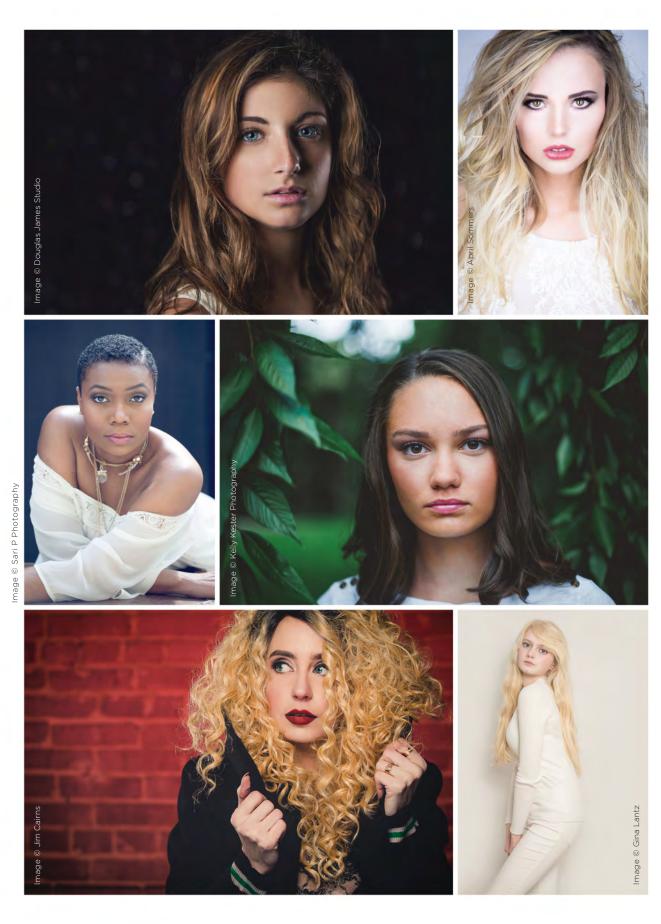






















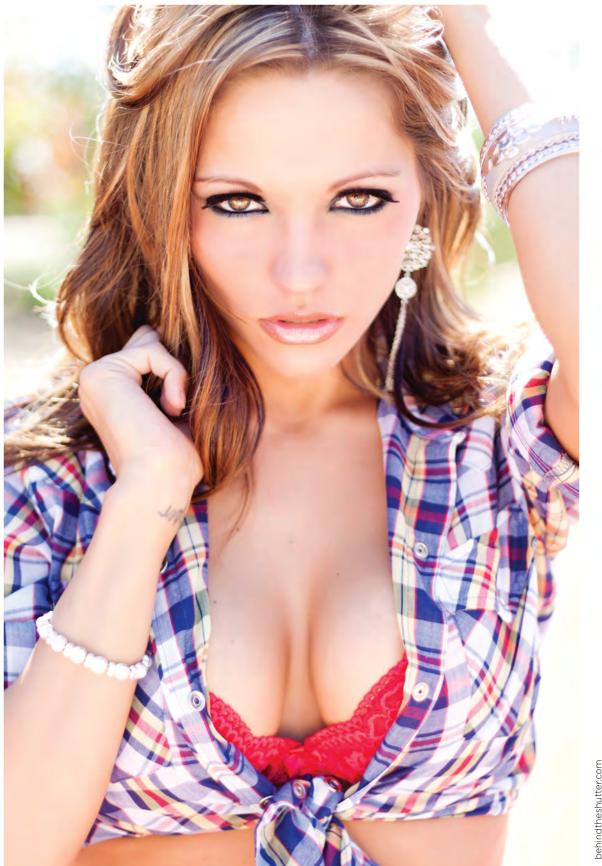
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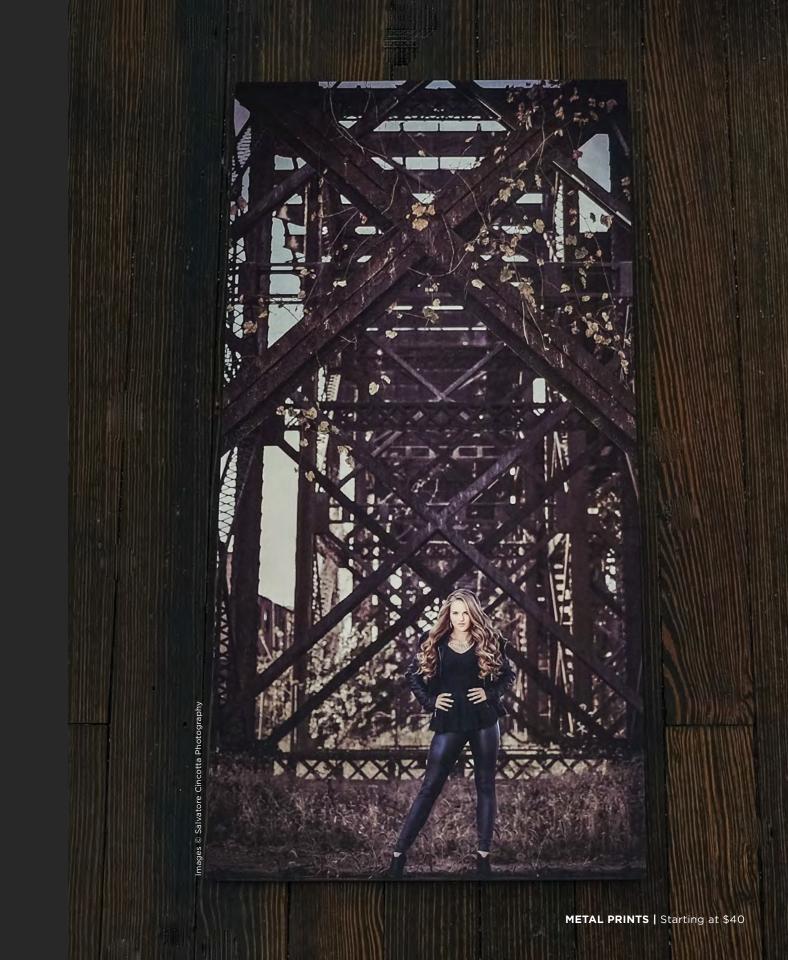




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— 5 WAYS TO SPEED UP YOUR LIGHTROOM CLASSIC CC — WORKFLOW —

with Dustin Lucas

After shooting a wedding or any eight-hour-plus event, I dread spending countless hours working in Lightroom. Lightroom can be a huge time suck: waiting for my memory cards to ingest, waiting for each Raw to load for culling, waiting for adjustments to render in the Develop module. Are you struggling with the same post-shoot stress? If so, this article will forever free up these worries and let you get to work—at the pace of your computer's speed, of course.

My first instinct when Lightroom is acting up is to check my Adobe Creative Cloud app for an update. Lo and behold, I discovered multiple updates and a brand-new version of Lightroom just after I filed this story, so I had to go back in and add fresh content.

WELCOME TO LIGHTROOM CLASSIC CC

The first thing I noticed was two versions of Lightroom listed in my Creative Cloud app. Install Lightroom CC or Update Lightroom Classic CC? Do not install Lightroom CC if you intend to keep older versions of Lightroom installed. Instead, click on the Update All option. In the pop-up box, click the arrow next to Advanced Options and uncheck the box next to Remove Old Versions.

For now, we will skip installing the new Lightroom CC app since I will be discussing this in a future article. Wait for everything to update, and we're ready to go.

Open our newly updated Lightroom Classic CC and get to work. Luckily, the import module has not changed, and it all starts with building Previews. These are the lifeline for preparing your catalog to work in. As many of you know, culling in Lightroom can seem like the dumbest choice an editor can make. I will set you up with the right workflow to make this as painless as possible. From Previews to Preferences, these simple settings can make all the difference, whether you are on a \$500 or \$5,000 machine. Starting with your ducks in a row is essential to saving you seconds of load time per image, which adds up when you have thousands of images to go through. Managing your time in Lightroom means managing your workspace and multiplying your efficiency.

Let's jump right in to prepping your catalog with Previews.

1. PREP WITH PREVIEWS

Regardless of where you ingest your files, you should back up Raws to an external offsite source. It depends on your computer's power, choice of port, hard-drive speed and ports, Internet speed for network and offsite drives, etc. I don't have a magical solution to shave time during memory card ingest other than to invest in at least USB 3.0/3.1 devices and for Mac users to save via Thunderbolt. You should be working on fast drives while importing into Lightroom.

Let's move on to some key choices to make when importing images into your main catalog.

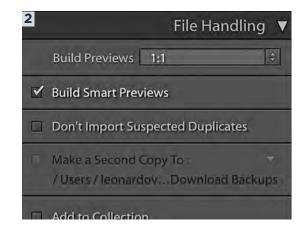
Let's assume you work in a single master or main catalog for all the work you shoot this year. (I will come back to catalog management later in the article.) When you open the Import module, you'll notice a panel called File Handling on the right-hand side. Drop this panel down, and we have Build Previews as our first option. (1ab) When I started working in Lightroom, I had no clue what these options meant, and was always told to choose Minimal to save time importing the images into Lightroom. That option is great if you've preselected your images and do not need to edit in the Develop module. Not the case for most of us using Lightroom.





My standard process for importing images into Lightroom requires me to go have a coffee or a beer while I wait. Follow these steps to save time: Choose 1:1 in the Build Previews dropdown options and check the box next to Build Smart Previews. These two options are crucial for fast culling and heavy-handed editing. Your images will import and automatically build 1:1 and Smart Previews. (2)

The reasons you should do this are simple. When you cull, you need to zoom into actual pixels (1:1) to check that your subjects are tack-sharp. If you are working on a slower machine, Smart Previews



helps with performance and portability, and in the end, you get speed, speed, speed. (3ab) To give you an idea of how long this process takes, I was able to instantly import 10 Canon Raw files from my MacBook Pro SSD and wait 20 seconds for the Smart Previews and 40 seconds for the 1:1 Previews to build simultaneously. That's pushing almost six hours to wait on 5,000 files. Once this is done, you're ready to get set up to select.

Why not use Photo Mechanic before importing into Lightroom and save all the hassle? Well, Lightroom Classic CC frees you from having to wait hours to start culling. Instead of building 1:1 and Smart Previews when importing your images, choose Embedded & Sidecar. (3) Import and preview building takes only 30 minutes for 5,299 Canon 5D Mark IV Raw files. I love that you can start selecting as it's building because it builds three per second. (4) A job like this would take me two to three hours to select the best of the best.



Here is a crucial point about using the Embedded & Sidecar previews: They may look different than your Raw due to in-camera settings. They are not as detailed and sharp as 1:1 Previews, and when you are ready to edit in the Develop module, you have to generate a standard preview. (5ab)

Let's jump into selecting from Smart and 1:1 Previews to see the difference in my workflow.



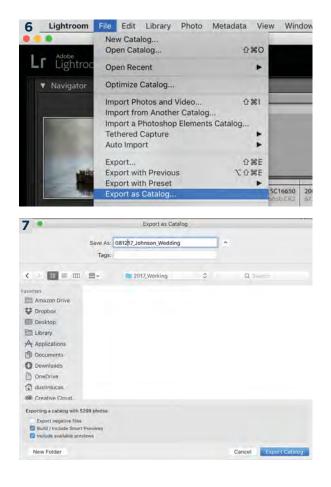




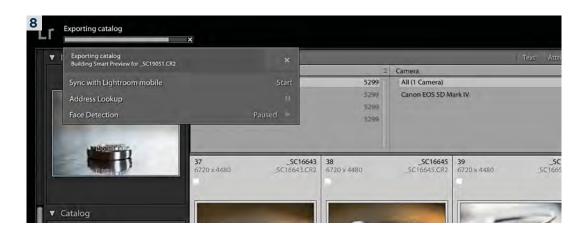
2. SET UP FOR SELECTION

I live by the workflow to create separate catalogs per shoot when I am ready to start working on the images. I name these working catalogs and save them directly on my local SSD to maximize performance. Here is how to do it. Select all the Raw files in the folder, navigate to the menu bar and choose File < Export as Catalog. (6) In the dialog box, you have three things to do: Name the catalog, choose the destination and include files/previews. Make things simple and organized by naming your catalog like this: "date_clientname_EVENTNAME." Store it in a new folder named "YEAR_Working." It should look something like this when you set up your file management structure. (7)

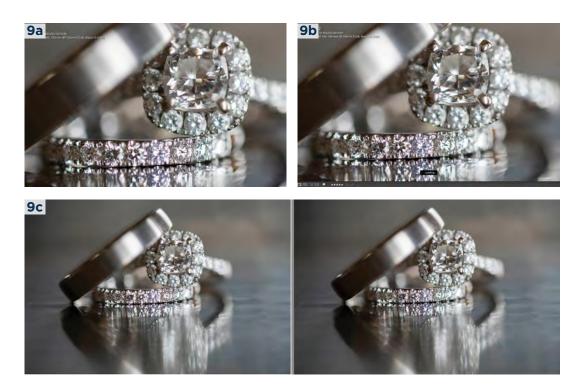
For the check box options below, you'll notice the default options automatically have "Export selected photos only," "Export negative files" and "Include available previews." We need to check everything except "Export negative files." Exporting negative files is useful if you



want to make copies of the original Raw/JPEG files and store them in the new location with the Lightroom catalog and previews. You'll notice that we can Build Smart Previews at this stage, which is nice if you are missing them or forgot to build them at import. Not to worry. This will correct that for you, but you cannot build 1:1 Previews while exporting as a catalog. This has to happen before or after, and, since we built both types of previews at import, this export-as-catalog process is super quick so we can get started culling. (8)



Let's open the working catalog and begin culling this event. You'll notice that cycling through image-to-image is fast when we are zoomed to fit. Even when we zoom to 1:1, there isn't that pesky "Loading" message where our image preview pixelates. (9abc) I do notice some lag when we cycle faster and get farther into the catalog. To make sure we optimize our catalog, we'll check out some catalog and general Lightroom preferences, but first let's compare the 1:1 to embedded previews on quality and speed.



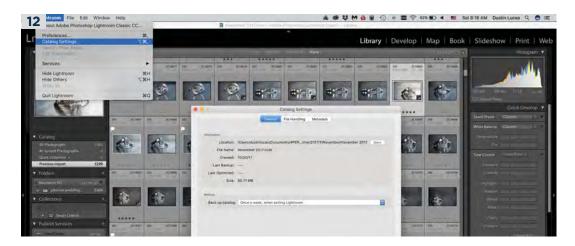
Right out of the gate, my 1:1 Previews lack tonal density and look unprocessed, while the embedded previews look saturated and have more tonal density. This is to be expected as I am comparing a Raw to an in-camera processed JPEG. (10) It's interesting that the embedded JPEG has minimal artifacts and pixelation, which comes into play when zooming into an image during selection. (11) There is little lag with the embedded previews, but is that enough for you to make the transition? You have ask yourself if you want to save time up front or at the end.

You can jump into culling during import from embedded previews, but you have to generate standard and 1:1 Previews when going into Develop to edit. That saves you time upfront. If you want to select, edit and export consecutively, stick with Smart and 1:1 Previews build at import. It's your workflow, choose previews wisely.





Continuing from my Smart and 1:1 Preview workflow, open your catalog preferences from the menu bar and choose Lightroom < Catalog settings; or hold Option and Command while striking the comma key. (12)



These settings allow us to determine how our catalog processes certain functions in the background while we work in Lightroom. Mind you, these default settings can hurt your performance and are reset back to defaults whenever you make a new catalog and/or export as a catalog. Let's go into the File Handling tab and review our options. Here you'll see that Standard Previews are mentioned, which we haven't yet discussed. (13)

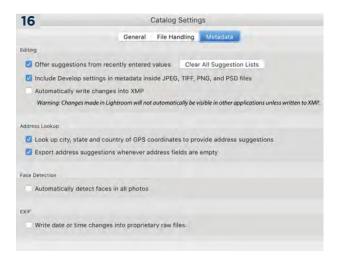
Standard Previews are the automatically generated previews that Lightroom constantly is running in the background until all changes have been applied to the image previews. That doesn't sound bad-we don't have to do anything to generate them. Any processes running in the background can reduce performance, so it's important that we adjust the size and quality. First, you need to determine the long-edge dimensions of your monitor. My Retina screen is set to 1920x1200, so we need to choose an option right around 1920. (14) That requires me to click on Auto (3840px) and set it to 2,048 pixels. (15) Almost half the size needs to be generated since we built 1:1 to handle zooming into our image.



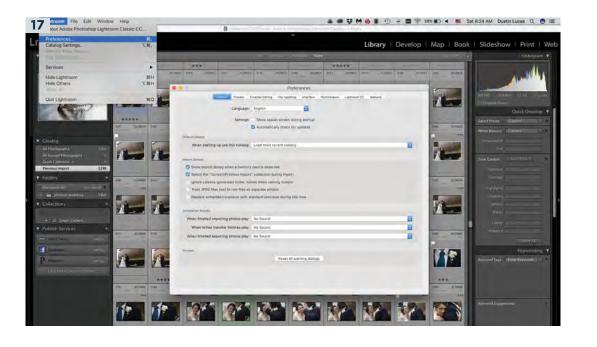




As for the Standard Preview quality setting, I always go with low because these are always running in the background and you simply do not need to waste performance here. The main thing you need to remember is that whenever changes are made to the image in the Develop module, they have to be automatically generated. So if you sync multiple images at once and continue moving through the catalog, you want there to be as little lag as possible. Automatically Discard 1:1 Previews usually stays at the default setting of After 30 Days. The last setting I make sure to uncheck is in the Metadata tab: Automatically Write Changes Into XMP. This is another useless process that runs in the background and is hailed by backup fanatics. (16)



Let's move on to general Lightroom preferences, where we can start to make additional performance tweaks. In the same menu bar dropdown, choose Preferences or hold Command and strike the comma key. (17) You'll notice there is a performance tab for everything we need.



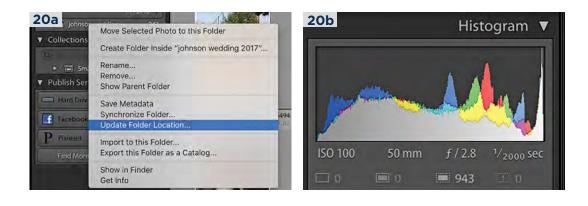
Lightroom implemented this tab in its past updates, the issues surrounding it were terrible. I remember having one of the early 5K iMacs that ran so slow I had to boot up my older iMac (non-thinline). Even unchecking the Use Graphics Processor didn't make much of a difference when cycling between images trying to make basic corrections. (18) This feature supposedly got better and is geared more for Retina, 4K and 5K monitors, but I have yet to receive any increased speed from keeping it checked. As far as I'm concerned, it will be forever unchecked.



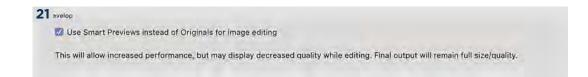
Next, increase Camera Raw Cache Settings from 1 to 100GB if you have the disk space. (19)



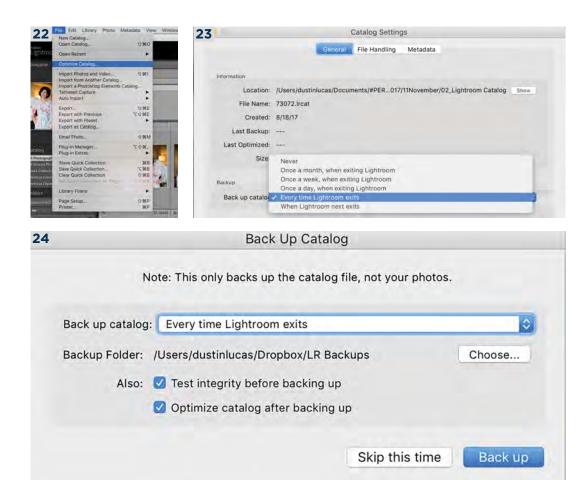
Check the box for the Use Smart Previews option for the Develop module. This is what was promised over and over again, and it has finally been rolled out as an enhancement. I got the same efficiency out of Smart Previews because I knew I needed to disconnect from my originals. (20ab)



Keep this setting checked at all times so you can keep Raws connected, gain a performance boost and negate having to relink files to save XMPs. It's a great update for Lightroom users...finally. (21)

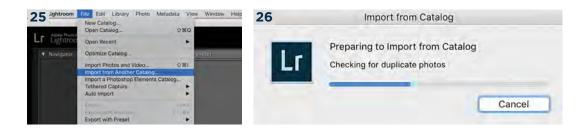


Another useful tip is to Optimize Catalog whenever you close it. This option can be checked in the backup catalog dialog box along with Test Integrity when backing up. (22) To turn on the catalog backup pop-up box every time you close Lightroom, go back into Catalog settings in the General tab and choose Every Time Lightroom Exits as the Backup catalog setting. (23) In the Backup catalog dialog box, you must choose an external location to back up to. If you are saving backups on your local drive, this is a Lightroom 101 mistake. (24) Last but not least, check the Generate Previews in parallel option, which I leave at default settings.



4. MANAGE YOUR CATALOG(S)

The biggest decision to make when you start working in Lightroom is to continue working from a single master or main catalog, typically a default titled "Lightroom Catalog" when you first open the program. Many take this approach and wonder why their Lightroom catalog runs really slow over time. It's because you have hundreds of thousands of images in one place, requiring Lightroom to index files, generate previews and continually purge the Raw cache. Save yourself some time and aggravation from your main catalog getting used and abused over time.

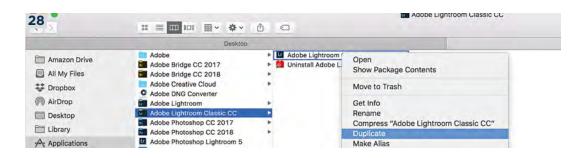


Once the next dialog box pops up, select all files and see if any new files were found; choose what to replace on the current files. I recommend replacing only the metadata and develop settings, and unchecking both options below this section. (27)

In your main catalog, you will be making changes to your Raw files like renaming, custom ordering from capture time sync, exporting files and publishing to client proofing sites. Make final output changes in this catalog to keep everything organized. I also duplicate my Lightroom application to allow me the



flexibility of keeping multiple catalogs open. This becomes very handy as I'm exporting files in the archive catalog and starting to select in another. It's simple to duplicate: Go to your applications folder, right-click the Adobe Lightroom Classic CC icon and choose Duplicate. (28)



Now you can double-click it so it opens another copy of Lightroom. Save it to your dock. I've been able to keep three copies running at once without corruption. (29) Be careful how many duplicates you run, which may affect reliability.



5. MULTIPLY YOUR EFFICIENCY

As you start to generate a laundry list of presets, be aware that your Lightroom catalog has to create previews for each image in the Navigation panel of the Develop module. Adobe recommends purging presets when you get into the thousands (since these can rack up fast if you constantly transfer presets from older versions of Lightroom) and updating the third-party ones you've purchased. It's not a major concern for most, but this is useful for those preset hoarders out there. (30)



Something I recently came across was how Adobe recommends the order of specific Develop settings to maximize accuracy and performance. If you touch up your images in Lightroom with the Spot Removal tool, this is best done before making any other Develop adjustments. I save any necessary pixel manipulation for Photoshop once I'm done in Lightroom. It is important to apply certain settings to your images globally before editing.

Lens correction is a common starting adjustment best applied prior to editing in the Basic panel for exposure and tone settings. Why is it so important? It changes the appearance of the image by correction distortion and vignette. (31) If you prefer the vignette, this can be applied at the end and adjusted per lens. (32ab) After making your Basic panel adjustments, apply Sharpening and Noise Reduction.







There is an awesome plugin called Bulk Develop Settings created by Jeffrey Friedl that allows you to apply bulk Develop settings with parameters based on ISO, exposure and shadow recovery values. (33) This includes Luminance Noise Reduction, Color Noise Reduction, Sharpening Mask, Contrast and Clarity.



This is worth checking out because of its ability to adjust in response to how you increase ISO, exposure and shadows recovery. All of these things will increase the noise in your images. (34abc)







FINAL THOUGHTS

Taking the time to understand Lightroom by building Previews and changing Preferences can be the game-changer for your workflow. For some users, the lightning-fast capability to ingest and cull images right away with Embedded Previews might be their new favorite import option.

Lightroom has to create previews at some point—you may as well build the bulk of them up front to prepare for selection and other tasks. Remember, every change you make to your images in Develop requires Lightroom to rebuild image Previews. Speed is something many Lightroom users seek, and many come to realize it's way faster than Adobe Camera Raw, so they either deal with the workflow hang-ups or jump to another culling program. Hopefully the changes in Lightroom Classic CC keep your images organized all in one place.

Learn Lightroom and take the time to set up your workspace so you can finally save time editing. Check out my column in next month's *Shutter Magazine* for some new features of Lightroom Classic CC.





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

evolveedits.com





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Sales is a dirty word in our industry. What's even worse is having no idea how it's done. While there are many factors that go into providing amazing service to our clients, the actual act of photographing them with product in mind is one that is most often overlooked. You may be surprised to read that shooting for sales does not involve creating the most epic photos anyone has ever seen. In fact, it's much less important than the things you cannot see at all.

KNOW YOUR PRODUCT OFFERINGS

To stay in business and continue providing your clients the amazing experience that you do, you have to be profitable. The first time I wrote out all of my costs, I was surprised to find that I was not profitable. You need to know your cost of goods, retail pricing and net profits on each product. You also need to know the answers to any question your clients ask, like sizing, materials used and how to install. As the studio owner, you need to know your products inside and out.

Now that you know your pricing, show only the products you want to sell. In my studio, I show four custom wall art collections in canvas, a stunning acrylic cover 12x12 album and a hand-crafted timber portrait box with a glass window that holds up to 20 matted prints in its plush velvet interior. That's it. I do not show single prints, smaller albums or smaller print products. Because I love my products, I am able to sell them.

Give your clients pricing information well before the photo shoot. I give them general product pricing before they even book their session to ensure there are no surprises during the design consultation.

KNOW YOUR CLIENT

Now that you know what products you are shooting for, the next most important thing is to know your client. Clients are going to be investing in this experience with you, so you need to invest your time in them. Talk to your clients. Find out what is important to them. It can be as simple as asking them, "What would you like me to capture for you?" And it can be as deep as finding out about the special details of their relationships with their loved ones.

Make this experience special for them by focusing on the things they reveal to you. For example, a father I photographed recently told me how he loved roughhousing with his son. When it came time to photograph the two of them together, I whispered into the son's ear, "Want to go jump on your dad?" Of course the son wanted to. At my cue, he ran over to his dad and their play ensued. I gave zero direction after that, and captured beautiful photographs that show what is special to them. There is nothing more meaningful.













PHOTOGRAPH LIKE A CINEMATOGRAPHER

Cinematographers shoot for the edit. They film multiple angles of each scene so that when they are bringing it all together into one final film, they can cut between camera angles to tell their story. For photographers, our final "film" is our clients' artwork that will hang on their walls and be displayed on their coffee tables. These wall art collections and albums should tell a story just like a film. To be able to tell a story for our clients, we need to capture multiple angles of each scene. For that father and son who love playing together, I took photographs that captured their play from wide, medium and tight perspectives, at opposing angles. This gives me so much freedom when I design the artwork later.

In addition to photographing each scene from multiple angles, I photograph each client in many different ways. This means that for a family of four, I am photographing them all together, the mother with both children and then with each child individually, the parents together, then the father with both children, then each individually and all together. That is eight different scenes for that family. Then I do a few more of the whole family along with any requests they may have.

Having all of these options makes it easy for me to design artwork for them, and puts the focus and energy into each relationship. That's meaningful to our clients. It's a reminder and a celebration of those relationships, and it's what makes our job so special.









mages © Christine Yodsul

Now we need to design artwork that we know they will love. You should already know where

in their home they want to display their artwork so you can create predesigns that you think will fit in those rooms. Put your cinematographer hat back on as you create your predesigns. I design a wall art collection based on each relationship. For my family of four, I create a predesign of each child, each parent with the children and the family as a whole. One family may not end up buying that many collections, but by showing them what is possible, I have opened their minds to all of the possibilities.

I have two sizing options for all of my wall art collections, a large and a medium. This allows me to predesign a collection for my client knowing that one of the sizes will fit perfectly on their walls. Keeping my wall art collections down to only four designs makes decision making simple, and offering two different sizes for each collection makes it customized for their home. A confused mind will not buy. A confused mind also will not sell. If you are confused by the long list of products you offer, your clients will be confused too.

THE DESIGN CONSULTATION

This is the most exciting part of the experience, both for my clients and for me. It is the culmination of all of the hard work, planning and fun leading up to it. I get so excited knowing that my clients are about to design their dream artwork for their homes, and that once this session is over, they will have it on their walls in just a few short weeks.

I start my design consultation by showing them a highlight of the photographs we created together at their photoshoot, followed by the predesigns. They always have an instant favorite that they want to start designing with me. Our job during the design consultation is to be a facilitator. We are the experts on photography, artwork and design. They are the expert on what is meaningful to them. If we combine those, the result is over-the-top-happy clients, which results in an over-the-top-happy photographer.

Once you have designed your client's artwork with them, confidently remind them of the price. Be prepared to design more artwork if they want more. Once they have created all of the art that they want, build their order into your client management software, take their payment and put their art into production.



ge © Christine







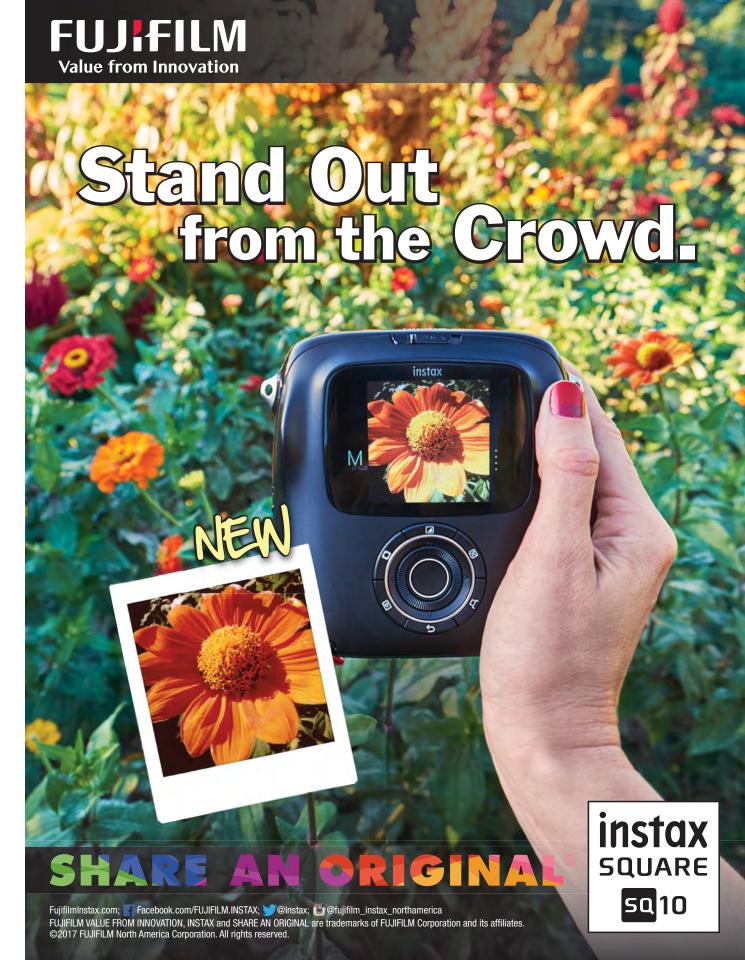


We all have a print packed away somewhere that instantly fills us with emotion the moment we pull it out and hold it in our hands. Imagine if that photo were in your hands every single day, filling you with happiness and comfort as you power through each day's triumphs and hurdles. This is what I give to my clients. I give them a way to celebrate what makes their lives beautiful. I give them a way to choose happiness every day.



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

theyodsukars.com









We have many decisions to make during client sessions. Many of us tend to overuse clichés in our storytelling. If we're going to call ourselves storytellers, we should be able to come up with an original vision and execute it in a way that best helps *tell the story*.

Whether you are a wedding or portrait photographer, you have the ability to influence the mood of viewers of your work, which is the first step in creating a lasting connection with the viewer.

There are three elements that are essential to creating this connection: light, composition and story.

















Lighting is the first ingredient that a storyteller uses to make an image. Without light, it is impossible to create a photograph. Our options for creating amazing imagery are expanding at a rate we never would have thought possible 10 years ago. Technology is changing and making our job easier, and education has never been so abundant, with amazing free resources like *Shutter Magazine*, YouTube and CreativeLive.

But just because you have the tools at your disposal and you have read all the lighting books doesn't mean you can create lighting setups that tell the story you are envisioning. For that, you need to have vision and practice executing that vision in a variety of situations.

Light is the easiest of the elements to understand because it is the most well-documented and least subjective of the elements.

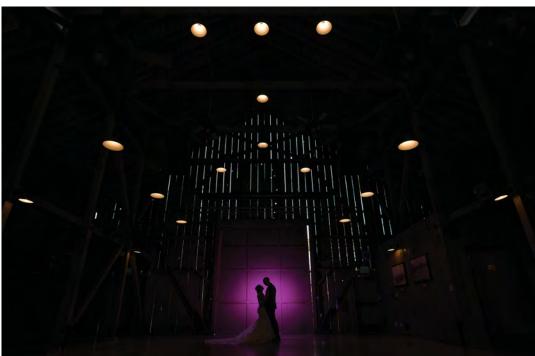
Our style of lighting is romantic and edgy, so we accentuate highlights and shadows, and use short lighting on both of our subjects. Short lighting, which comes from the side, adds definition to subjects. When correct light is used with correct posing, the effect can be slimming and flattering on all body types.

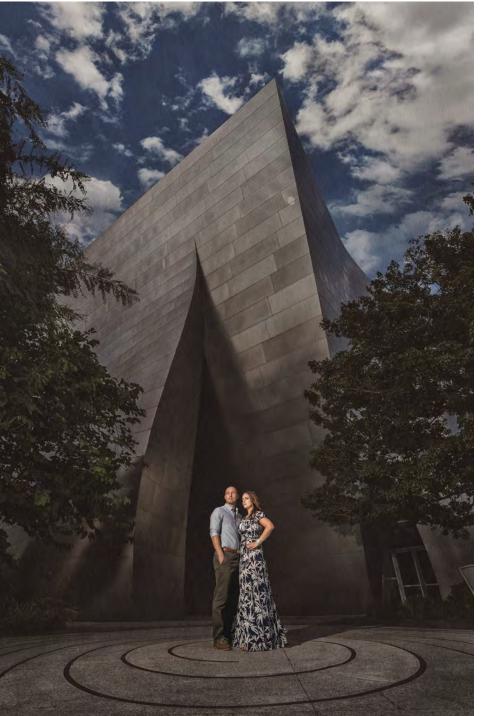
When getting into light ratios, we keep our subject brighter than our backgrounds. That adds to our edgy style. But if your style is lighter and more airy, you can use flat lighting with an even light ratio between your subject and background.

The trick to being a good storyteller is knowing when you need to alter your typical vision to best suit the needs of the story. See the images below from a recent wedding. You can see that when we are photographing the couple, we switch between more dramatic images and ones that are lighter and more airy, depending on what is needed on the clients' album spreads.

Light can be used to add drama or romance, or influence the overall mood of your images. That is why light is the main ingredient in creating a lasting image that your clients will remember.

Look at the image below. This is a simple silhouette, but we are using leading lines, triangles, circles and negative space to lead our viewers where they need to go. The image is simple but romantic, and uses the colors of the client's wedding to help bring the album together. We are also framing the couple inside the circle we created with light.





Compositions get more advanced when you are not working with silhouettes. In this image, we are using the triangle ceiling, circular floor and framing to bring our viewers to our subjects.

Compositions can be tough to practice because what looks good to the eye is so subjective. But what doesn't look good is very easy to spot. We want to make sure that our compositions are clutter free and lend to the overall story. An image that appears choppy or off balance can detract from an image.



CHECK YOUR COMPOSITION

With complex compositions, one trick I like is to draw an imaginary vertical line through half the image. Assign all elements of the image an equal weight, and if the image were to theoretically "tip" to one side or the other, then there is a good chance your image is off balance.

Another trick I do is to bring an image into Lightroom's library module and close my eyes. I press Command (Control for PC users) and the semicolon key twice, which flips the image vertically. Then I open my eyes and note where my eyes go first. If my eyes don't go immediately to my subjects, then something is likely off with my lighting or composition, and it should be easy to tell which one is causing the problem.

If you have the first two of the three elements in check, then congrats—you probably have a solid image. These are the images that should make up the majority of your client's album or print order. They are the ones that will define your style. The tipping point in an image that goes from good to great will always be in the final element: the story.

I have been entering image competitions since 2013, and I want to be very clear: I don't enter with the intent of winning first place. Do I want that? Sure, but the real reason you should enter competitions is to grow as an artist. It's not the winning that I learn the most from. It's the 79's. Let me explain.

Over the past few years, I have learned that to capture an impactful image, I need to do more than take a photo of a pretty subject in a pretty place. You have to give that pretty subject a reason for being in that pretty place if you want the judges to connect with your images. If a panel of judges connects with your image, your clients are likely to as well.

I will never forget the moment that put me on this path last year. I had an image come up of Jen in front of the Eiffel Tower before a panel at WPPI. The panel convened and came back with a score of, you guessed it, 79. The chairman is an extremely talented photographer, so I took his advice to heart. He said, "The lighting, posing and composition are all very well done, but we have seen many images of a bride in front of the Eiffel Tower. We need to be challenged more."

Note taken and game on. I had an epiphany. I needed to look past what I considered good and figure out what my clients considered great. Instead of challenging the judges, I would be challenging myself.

Trust me: Just because an image has 500 likes on Instagram doesn't mean it will have everlasting impact on a client. Image competition is the Oscars. What movies win at the Oscars? Those with the best storylines that navigate viewers through the complex emotions of the film.

Conversely, the films that sell the best are often the big franchise blockbusters like the *Transformers* and Marvel series. These popcorn flicks are like your epic bread-and-butter images.

Once in a while, an epic blockbuster is able to win over the hearts of critics, and that is where you need to play when developing the stories in your final images.



age © Micl

This year, we have made an effort to develop the stories of our clients' creatives during their wedding day. Mostly we are looking for a reason to have them posing where they are posing, and in the way they are posing. The goal is to have a concise vision before you press the shutter button.

We as aspiring storytellers have to nail the lighting, posing and post-production to capture the story of the image. What story do you see in this image? What is the bride doing? Where is she going? Once you start to think about it, you start seeing the story develop.



Now it's time to put this into practice. Create an image with a solid story to be told. Before you press the shutter, ask yourself, "What is the message I am conveying to my viewer?"

Challenge yourself to become a better storyteller, and you will see amazing results.





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

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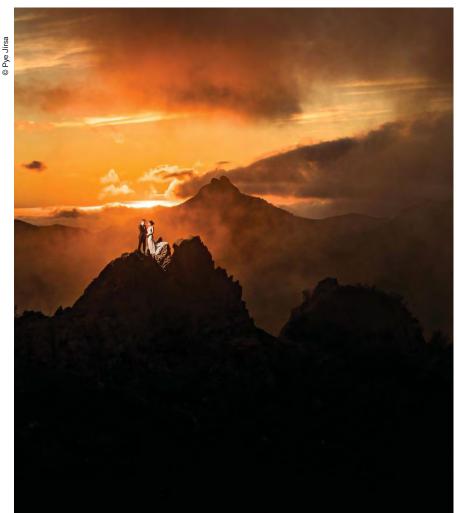
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