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with your business not  
because of what you  
offer, but because of  
who you are.”*

—Phillip & Eileen Blume  
Professional photographers  
& 17hats members

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october 2018

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magazine



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# Understand Your Client Journey



Hi there. It's us again: Donovan Janus and Amanda Rae, the CEO and COO of 17hats. We're on a mission to make business easier! Today we'd like to invite you to take a few minutes and think through your client's journey. *Not client experience, but journey.* As you do, you'll realize that your client experience is a merely a part of (and should be informed by) that bigger client journey.

## 1 How does client journey differ from client experience?

**Donovan:** A client journey likely centers on an event – a wedding, graduation, or birth of a new baby. A typical journey leads up to the event, includes the event itself, and even extends past it.

**Amanda:** Right. Meanwhile, your client experience – from the moment they first contact you to your final thank you – can occupy a small window within that client journey. The more you understand your client's journey, the more you can tailor your client experience to fit.

## 2 OK, how can I understand the client journey?

**Donovan:** Put yourself in your client's shoes. Then, start at the beginning. A wedding, for example, follows a pattern. A question is popped. Family and friends are told. A date and venue are selected, and, finally, a photographer enters the picture. No pun intended.

**Amanda:** (Laughs.) Yes, and emotions run the gamut along the way. Your client might go from excited, to nervous, and then to stressed as the big day approaches. Understanding your client's emotions can pay dividends in a relationship.

## 3 I get the journey now. How does that fit with client experience?

**Donovan:** Provide the right complement to what your client is experiencing. If she's excited about her wedding next spring, match that enthusiasm. We can help you there: With 17hats, that excited bride-to-be (and client-to-be) receives an automatic reply, expressing your eagerness to capture her special day.

**Amanda:** But closer in to the wedding, that same bride might be frazzled, and just needs to know that all the details are taken care of. That's when professionalism and project management are key ... and when your 17hats automated emails kick in, to reassure the couple that you have everything under control!

**Donovan:** 17hats helps you answer questions before clients even have them. And they can access your Client Portal anytime to check the status of their project. So they know you have the details handled.

**Amanda:** By using 17hats to organize and systemize your client experience, you will make your part of your client's journey a big success. Organize. Systemize. Grow. It's that easy!

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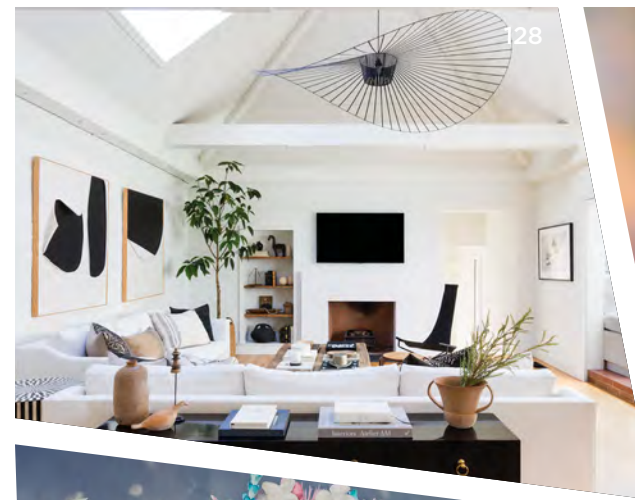


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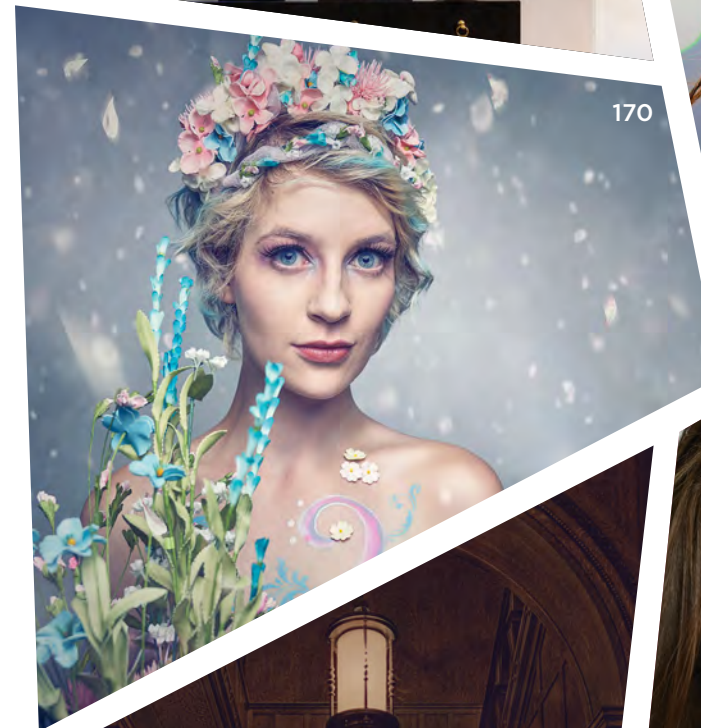
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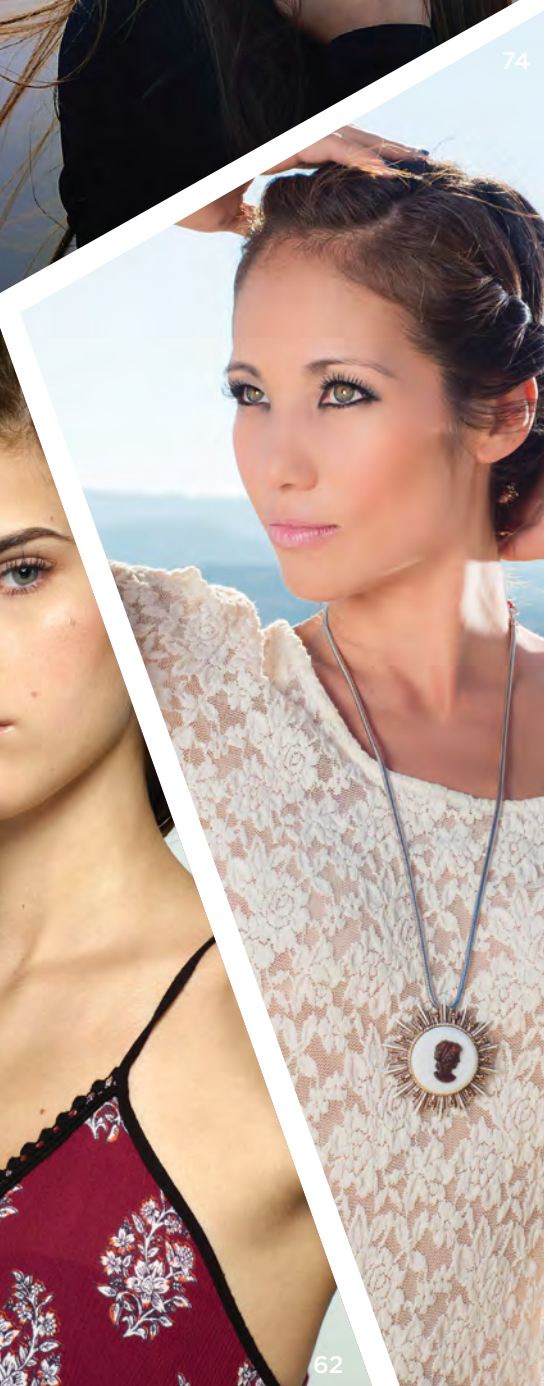
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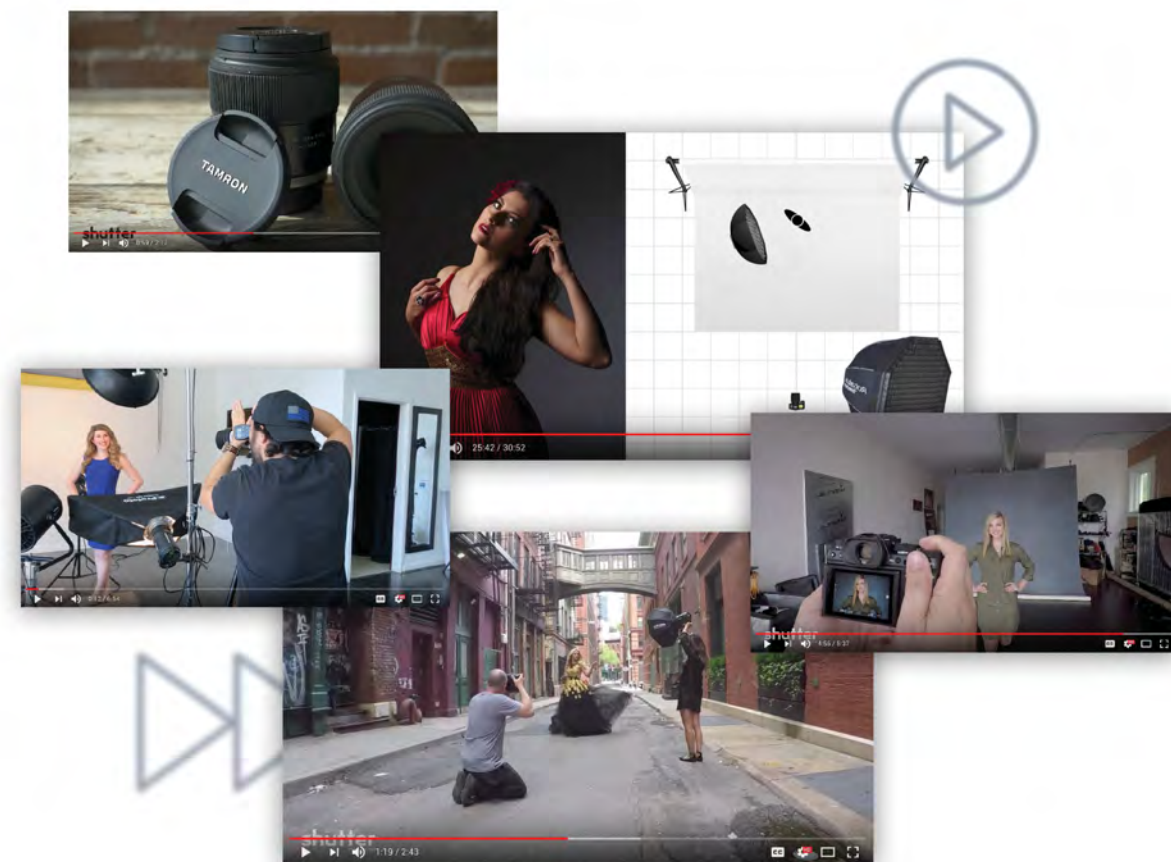
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## MISSION STATEMENT

*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

**PHOTOGRAPHER:** Sal Cincotta | [salcincotta.com](http://salcincotta.com)

**CAMERA:** Canon 5D Mark IV

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**EXPOSURE:** f16 @ 1/160, ISO 100

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# LAUNCH POINT

A message from the editor-in-chief



*Businesses are booming and they are  
**ready to spend** on marketing and advertising.  
Are you ready to capitalize?*

- Sal Cincotta



Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography





RIISING TO THE CHALLENGE:

# 5 TRUTHS ABOUT TOP-PERFORMING PHOTOGRAPHY BUSINESSES

with Michael Anthony





Most photographers know our studio for its creative lighting and amazing moments on a wedding day. While we've focused on photography educational ventures, we excel at the art of business and we have a lot of fresh content to offer photographers who are looking to expand their brands. Our studio is growing consistently at a rate of 10% to 12% a year.

While it seems that good photography is the biggest factor behind any successful studio, nothing could be further from the truth. Yes, you have to produce consistently good imagery and offer a great customer experience, but that is just part of the equation. This month, I provide you with five truths to help you build a brand that outperforms your competitors.

**Truth 1: Once you believe you have achieved success, you will stop working for it.**

This is the most important one. It's romantic to think that owning a photography business is all about traveling the world taking photos. But that comes only after years of hard work. There is no shortcut to success. You continually have to redefine your definition of success so that when you achieve your original goal, you can pivot to a new one.

You always need to stay hungry. Sal taught me a long time ago that if your business is not growing, it is dying. I have gone up against hundreds of studios, from small local competition to the largest wedding photography studios in Los Angeles, and we are now one of the top-performing studios in Southern California. I define success as being the best in everything we do. This is a very hard goal to accomplish, but if you don't set those lofty goals, good luck reaching them.

Whenever I start looking backward at my competition, I stop keeping my eye on the goal, which currently is to build the largest wedding photography studio in Los Angeles. We have been doing this for only six years, but I have no doubt that with the right amount of work, it is attainable.



**Truth 2: You have to develop and implement a consistent marketing strategy.**

I am talking directly to the studio owner or general manager. You cannot delegate the most important task in your business, which is generating new clientele. I have tried to delegate my marketing to staff and outside agencies.

It is not possible. The reason is that the driving force of your marketing requires you to be in tune with every aspect of the business, from the art to the post-production, sales and client experience. There is not a single employee you would be able to delegate all of that to.

A better strategy is to delegate parts of your marketing operation while overseeing the whole thing. When dealing with local vendors, it's important to make the relationship personal. If you lose a key employee, they won't take the business that they accumulated with them.

Relationships are the most important piece of a successful business. When you let relationships slide, you will see business decline. Focus on your relationships with peers in your industry and with your clients, and you will succeed. For more information on building relationships, check out Skip Cohen's article in the September 2014 *Shutter*.

On social media, it's important to stay consistent and current in your marketing strategy. Facebook is quickly becoming a dying platform for generating new business as Instagram becomes more popular. But don't ignore less competitive social platforms. We are seeing success from Pinterest over the short time we've been growing it.



**Truth 3: Successful businesspeople never stop learning.**

Ego will get in the way of your success. As an educator in our industry, I feel that it's so important to never stop learning. I put money every year into my photography and business education, and will invest in a course from a photographer I like 10 times before I would buy a new camera. If we are focused on learning new techniques in both business and photography, it will keep us hungry to try new things.

Don't be afraid to attend workshops, even if you are beginning to educate other photographers. Our industry has this rock-star status surrounding top photographers that I have never understood. Many photographers get stuck in their own ways and refuse to learn new things. One thing I am not afraid to do is shift the style of my photography to better correspond with the market and my clients. Be willing to adapt to change and try new things.

As you continue to see more success, pay it forward to the photographers who are motivated and learning. Don't view them as a threat. Our skillset does not correlate with our generosity. The latter is far more important to both your personal and professional success than the former. In the beginning, one of the largest sources of referrals we got was from local photographers who were booked on the date of a new inquiry.



**Truth 4: Your success depends on the people you surround yourself with.**

“Show me your friends, and I will show you your future.”

Pitbull didn’t say it first. It’s a concept with roots so old they were written in the good book. There is a saying in Proverbs 13:20: “Walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm.”

Hiring the right people is crucial to your success. Don’t be fooled by the interview process. You want people with an education and relevant experience. Don’t settle for unqualified employees. A good book on learning how to hire is *You’re Not the Person I Hired!: A CEO’s Survival Guide to Hiring Top Talent*. People can fool you in an interview. Put top talent on your team, and reward them for their loyalty and your company’s success.

As you grow your team, implement a formal training plan. Learn from my mistakes. Implement formal training, even if it’s only a few weeks long. When a new employee makes a mistake, add that portion of training to your training manual. That way, you can expedite the onboarding process for new employees. It’s also important to constantly improve your training program.

We’ve just overhauled our associate program, and our new photographers will be some of the best trained in Los Angeles. It’s crucial for you to make sure your team members benefit from the work they do for you, even in their own businesses. Running an associate photographer studio has proven to be more challenging than I thought was possible, but with the right training, it is doable.

**Truth 5: You have to be willing to work longer and harder than your competitors.**

This topic could take up an entire book. I won’t sugarcoat it. My typical workday starts at 5 a.m. I usually do SEO and social marketing until 8 a.m., head to the gym and am in the office from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. shooting, writing, responding to email or organizing production. When I go home, I work on my creative edits until 10 or 11 p.m. This is the price of success for me. If it were easy, everyone would do it. If you feel like you don’t have work to do, you are not properly strategizing your business.

You don’t have to work 12-hour days six days a week, but depending on your business, you may need to put in that amount of work. As our business has grown, I have been able to delegate certain tasks, but if you look for it, there will always be work to do.

It’s important to find time to step away. You will know when you need that time. Take it, but have the discipline to stay motivated and get back to work once rest time is over.

Our industry is filled with many rewards: world travel, financial freedom and making money doing what we love. But because of those rewards and the low barrier to entry, you are in one of the most competitive industries in the world. If you are this far along in this article, then I know you are willing to put in the work required for success, so it’s likely that you just need help focusing it. One thing that has helped me is to maintain an active to-do list that includes things that are of immediate necessity and future tasks.

My favorite tool for organizing my work tasks is Wunderlist. Use it to keep focused and stay on top of your daily tasks, and sometimes, you may just get done a little early.







Image © Michael Anthony

The most important truth about building a top-performing business is that it takes a desire to do it. Your motivation will be different from mine. I walked away from an excellent career with a generous pension, good salary and extraordinary benefits. The fact that there is no guarantee of success motivates me to pursue it harder every day.

Whatever your motivation, use it as a guiding light to pursue your dreams and goals, and when you achieve that success, adjust it to keep yourself motivated and hungry. Never let it go. ■



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

I do not like photographing families. It's just not my thing. Call me crazy, but I prefer dealing with adults I can connect with, not children I have to manipulate to get to do what I want. The same goes for teaching. I love teaching photography and business, but hated teaching elementary-school Spanish.

As much as I like to concentrate on photographing weddings, every once in a while a family comes along, and for whatever reason, I just want to photograph them. Whether you're like me and try to stay within a niche or you're a photographer who dabbles across the world, staying true to your brand can be difficult when you cross genres. Whether you're shooting portraits, weddings, headshots, products or seniors, here are some ways to keep consistency throughout your photos.



SHOOTING STYLE

It all starts with how you snap the picture. Choice of lens, aperture, shutter, ISO and white balance all come into play in keeping a consistent look no matter what or who you’re photographing. I love the compression of a longer lens, so I tend to shoot everything at 50mm or longer.

I also enjoy a lot of bokeh and softness in my images. Unless I’m photographing product shots that need a ton of detail from front to back, I’ll have my f-stop set around 2.5 to 3.2. Combine that with a longer lens, and you’ve got backgrounds like butter for days.

If you’re not sure what your shooting style is, hop into Lightroom or Photo Mechanic and start looking at your favorite images and their settings. At what apertures do you typically shoot? What are some similarities between your favorite portfolio images? Reverse-engineering your style can help you learn a lot about what you’re trying to achieve and get you there even faster. This method is one of the reasons I came up with the Posing Inspo Guide I give away free here: <https://bit.ly/2DMLUdm>. It came about mostly from me taking a good look at my shooting style.

Don’t neglect the types of things you photograph. I’m a detail person, and on weddings, I love photographing all the little details. Photographing family sessions is no different. I concentrate on florals, wardrobe and breakdowns of the family members. If nothing else, it’s more material that’ll be great for telling a complete story in an album afterward.



Image © Vanessa Joy



Image © Vanessa Joy

LIGHTING

Lighting is the backbone of all photography. Photographers need to look for light before anything else. Understanding how you want your photography to look and then applying a lighting style to realize that vision is the mark of a professional photographer.

I shoot with a fairly flat light on my subject’s face and rim light coming from behind at a 45-degree angle. Sometimes I let the sun peek its way into my shot to lower the contrast and give it a beautiful flare. I do exactly the same thing when I shoot families, outdoor headshots and seniors. The result is that my photos have a similar feel that my clients—and soon-to-be clients—recognize right away.

You’re not limited to natural light. If you’re not familiar with off-camera flash yet, don’t be afraid to dive right in. You’ll make a million mistakes, but eventually you’ll be able to create consistent lighting no matter what the sun feels like doing.

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EDITING

After the shooting is done, you still have work to do to maintain consistency. There’s an infinite number of ways to edit a photograph, and, while that seems like freedom, it can be a restraint.

In the first decade of my photography career, I would edit my photos myself, and they would pretty much be the equivalent of a mood ring. If I felt particularly solemn that day, you’d see a lot of black and white. If I was peachy and cheerful, my vibrancy setting would be through the roof. And then every once in a while, I’d make the mistake of discovering some awful preset that I thought was edgy and cool and slap it on whatever I felt like. I look at those photos now and think, gosh, what color is that?

Don’t make that mistake.

I made the decision a long time ago to start sending my photos out for post-production. It was one of the very first things I outsourced, and I haven’t looked back since. I still like editing my favorite photos myself, but if I put them side-by-side with the finished product from my editors at Freedom Edits (amazing editors I discovered in the UK), I quickly realize I still haven’t gotten over my photographic mood swings.

If you haven’t started outsourcing your post-production work, I highly recommend it, especially for consistency. A good post-production house can help keep your brand on track and make sure you’re putting your best non-moody foot forward.



Image © Vanessa Joy



Image © Vanessa Joy

PRINTING

Don’t leave out the most important part. Printed images are powerful. I’m happy to say that I’ve seen the pendulum start to swing away from digital and back to tangible. My clients are starting to grasp the reality that a digital image is quickly forgotten unless it’s printed. If your clients don’t get that yet, just ask them to scroll back three months in their phone’s photos and ask if they see any moments they already forgot about.

When I first started photographing non-wedding images, I was tempted to offer a different set of products than I offer families. While there are some items that families may want that wedding couples don’t, I decided I wanted to offer them the same quality and style that I provide across the board.





Image © Vanessa Joy

I offer my portrait and family sessions the same album options my wedding couples receive. I use PictoBooks, FLORIColor (an incredible Portuguese album manufacturer I just discovered that I'm in love with) and MillersLab (which does all my other printing as well). Providing my clients with the same high-end products makes me proud of doing a great job from start to finish. The family photos I give my clients are just as much of a legacy as their wedding photos, so I want the quality to be top notch so they last lifetimes.

No matter what kind of job you shoot, no matter how big or small, it's an opportunity to strut your stuff. A ton of people will look at any given shoot you've photographed and decide whether or not they'll contact you for their next photographable life moment. Give every client work that you'd be proud to show off in your portfolio. ■

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

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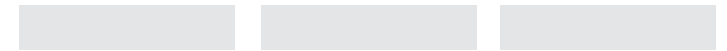


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## How to Book New Clients With Facebook Ads

with Phillip Blume



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Question: What do you call a person you’ve never met but whom you’re desperate to turn into a paying client?  
Answer: a cold lead.

There’s nothing funny about a potential client going cold when you’re starving for work. Sadly, warming up a new inquiry into a hot client (or even getting a prospect to contact you in the first place) is the Achilles’ heel for most young businesses.

As a photography and marketing educator, I meet a lot of photographers who feel stuck in the mud when it comes to booking. They can’t seem to fill their calendars with enough photo sessions to pay their bills. Have you been there? It’s a dark place where you start to accept your fate as a starving artist rather than reach for greater success.

Don’t stay in that place. Success is more than attainable for you if you’re open to learning. Warming up a cold lead is intimidating. In this article, I introduce you to a few basic strategies that will help you attract and convert new clients through Facebook ads.

You may have tried Facebook ads before with little success. If so, you probably just skipped one or two of these easy-to-miss (but important) steps.

Let’s review the steps now, and at the end I will show you how to get your photography studio’s engine roaring with yet another very powerful tool.

SET UP YOUR FACEBOOK AD

Let’s start with the most basic part of this strategy: purchasing the ad. Actually, creating an ad should not be your first step. But for many small business owners who are new to social media advertising, this is where they start.

The new Facebook Ads Manager is a robust tool—much more intimidating to newcomers than it was just a year ago. It reminds me a bit of Photoshop. It’s a great program that can handle any job, and it offers so many possibilities.

The good news is, Facebook has created a less complex path for those of us running simple ads for small businesses. This is the “boost” method. Instead of entering the full Ads Manager, I recommend you create a simple post on your Facebook page first. This will become your ad later, but starting at the post level allows you to edit and tweak the design more easily (Fig. 1).

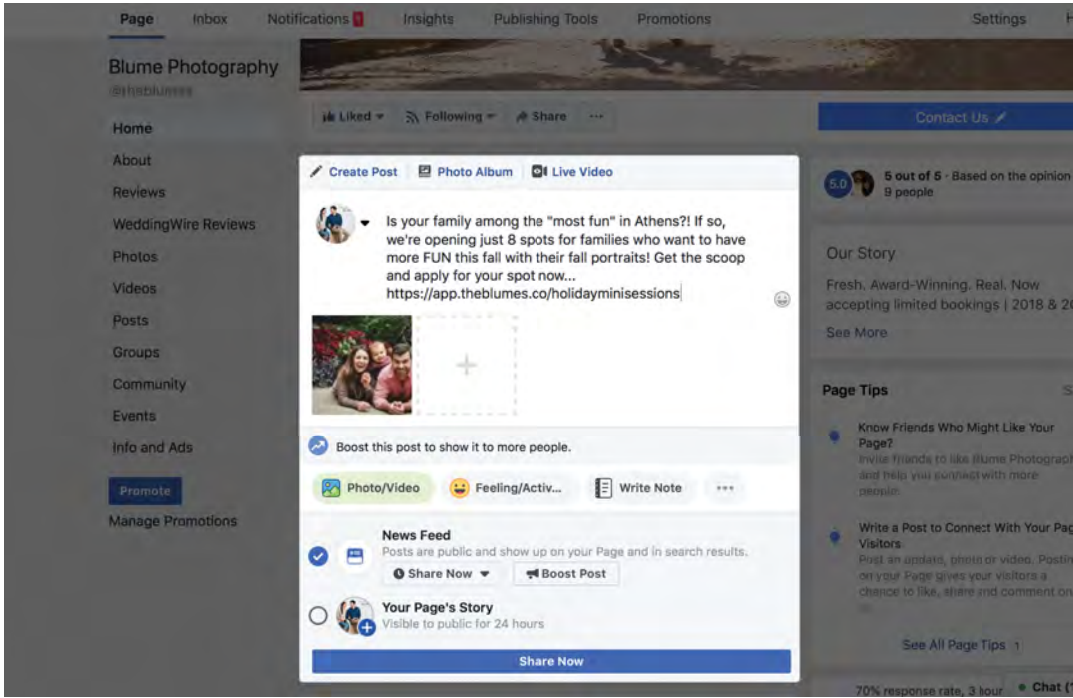


Fig. 1

Like Comment



AD IMAGES

Use a relevant image in your post. According to tests run by Consumer Acquisition, images account for 75% to 90% of an ad’s performance. Don’t miss this. The stat didn’t surprise me since it almost matches the statistic I learned 15 years ago in journalism school: Newspaper stories containing an image get read 60% more than those without. Your clients are visual creatures. You’re a photographer, so this should be easy for you. Choose an image that communicates: a. the genre and b. the mood of the session you’re offering.

Once you publish your post on the page, click the Boost Post button to get the party started. Now you get to hone in on your target audience (Fig. 2).

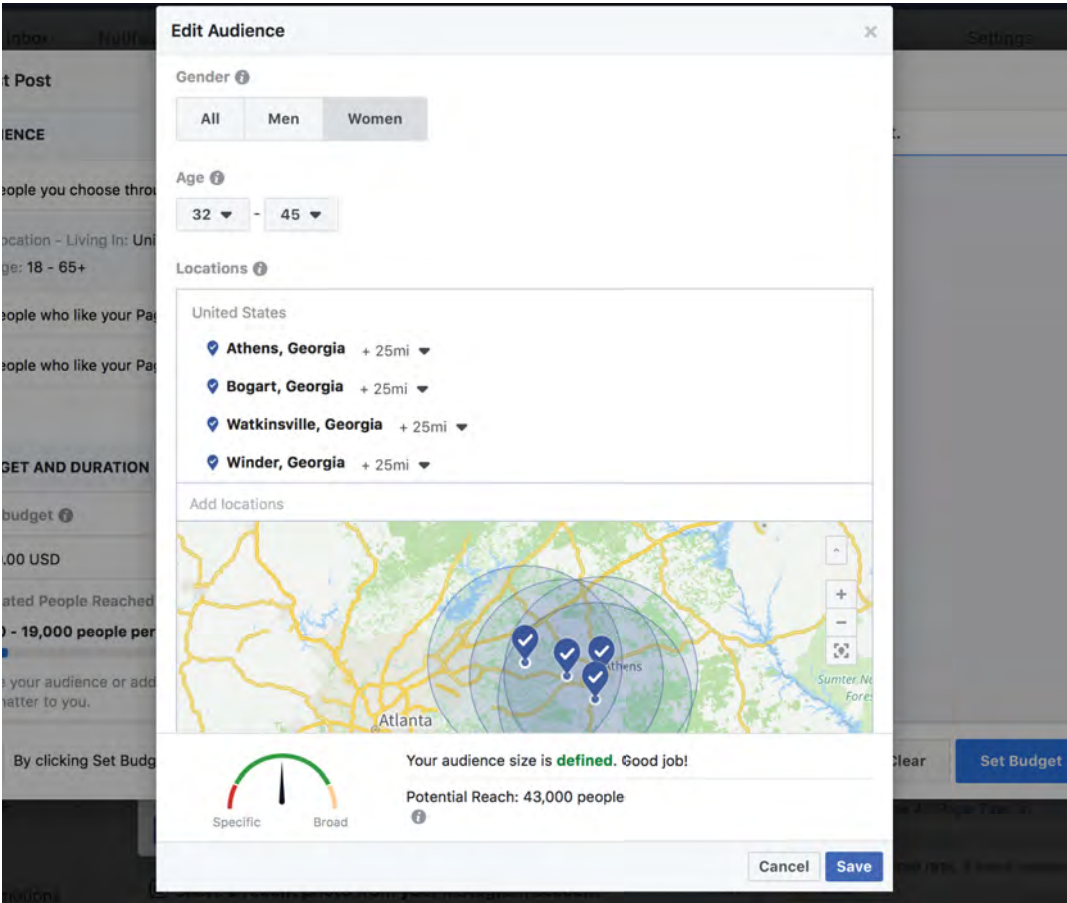


Fig. 2

TARGETING

In Figure 2, notice I selected women between the ages of 32 and 45. Since my ad is for family portraits, I’m going after the real decision-maker: Mom. Facebook is wonderful for portrait photographers because 82% of all women are active there, and the majority falls in this age range. I can exclude anyone else without narrowing my audience too much.

It’s easy to narrow too much when you live in a less populated area like I do. Ideally you want a highly refined audience, but you also can’t launch an ad without a minimum number of people targeted: tens of thousands. So you may need to broaden the age range or add nearby cities (as I did) to open it up. Locations overlap and don’t stretch too far outside our travel area.

There are three common outcomes here, and none of them is good: 1. You enter the Facebook Ads Manager and notice it appears way too complicated, so you give up; 2. You do a good job at creating a targeted ad, but you leave out strategic ad content (which we’ll address below); or 3. You create a beautiful, well-targeted ad with all the right ingredients, but you forget to implement a follow-up strategy.

Narrow by the interests of your target audience. Start with enough people in your geographic selection to do this, which helps you find ideal clients by personality. Want to target a session to military families? Choose interests that include active service people or veterans. Does your ad image feature a puppy? Choose interests that include dogs. You’ll connect more easily.

For our upcoming fall mini sessions, I focused on parenting and motherhood (Fig. 3).

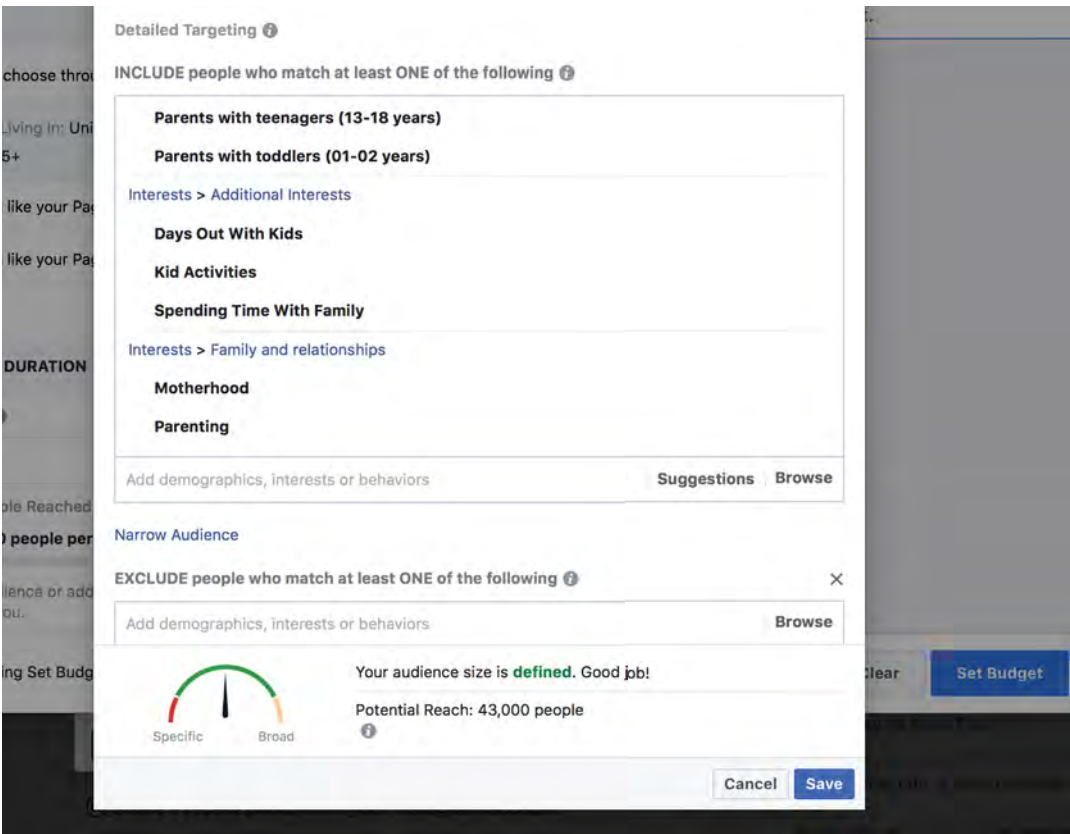


Fig. 3

After browsing selections for yourself, take some of Facebook’s follow-up suggestions, too. Click Suggestions below. It’s really smart.



BEHAVIORAL ALGORITHMS

Facebook Ads is far more advanced than it used to be. It’s almost scary. Before you run your ad, go back to the top and select an Objective (Fig. 4).

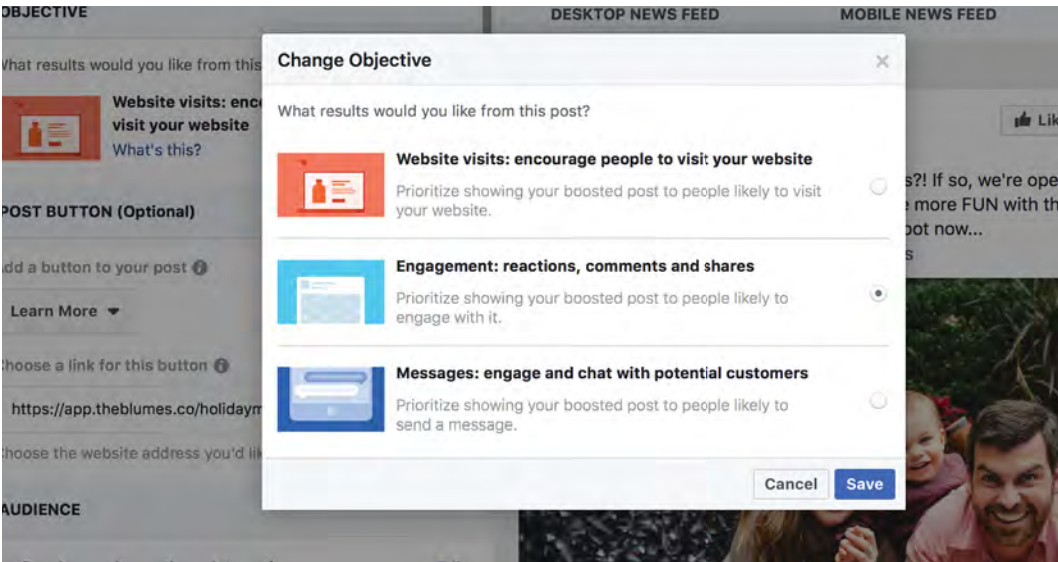


Fig. 4

Beyond demographics, Objectives allows you to target your audience based on subtle behaviors. In other words, you can basically choose an audience based on the way you hope they’ll react to your ad.

If you want a potential client to click over to your website and book you immediately, you might choose Website Visits as your priority. This sounds the most appealing, but as we’ll discuss below, it might be better for product sales—not ideal for service-based industries like photography.

Instead, I chose Engagement as my priority. As a result, my ad will be shown to people who tend to engage with posts more, leaving comments and asking questions. That’s what I want, for reasons we’ll go into.

Like

Comment

BUDGET AND TIME

These are totally up to you. But as a guide, for specific portrait events, I usually start with about a \$30 budget over the course of one week (Fig. 5).

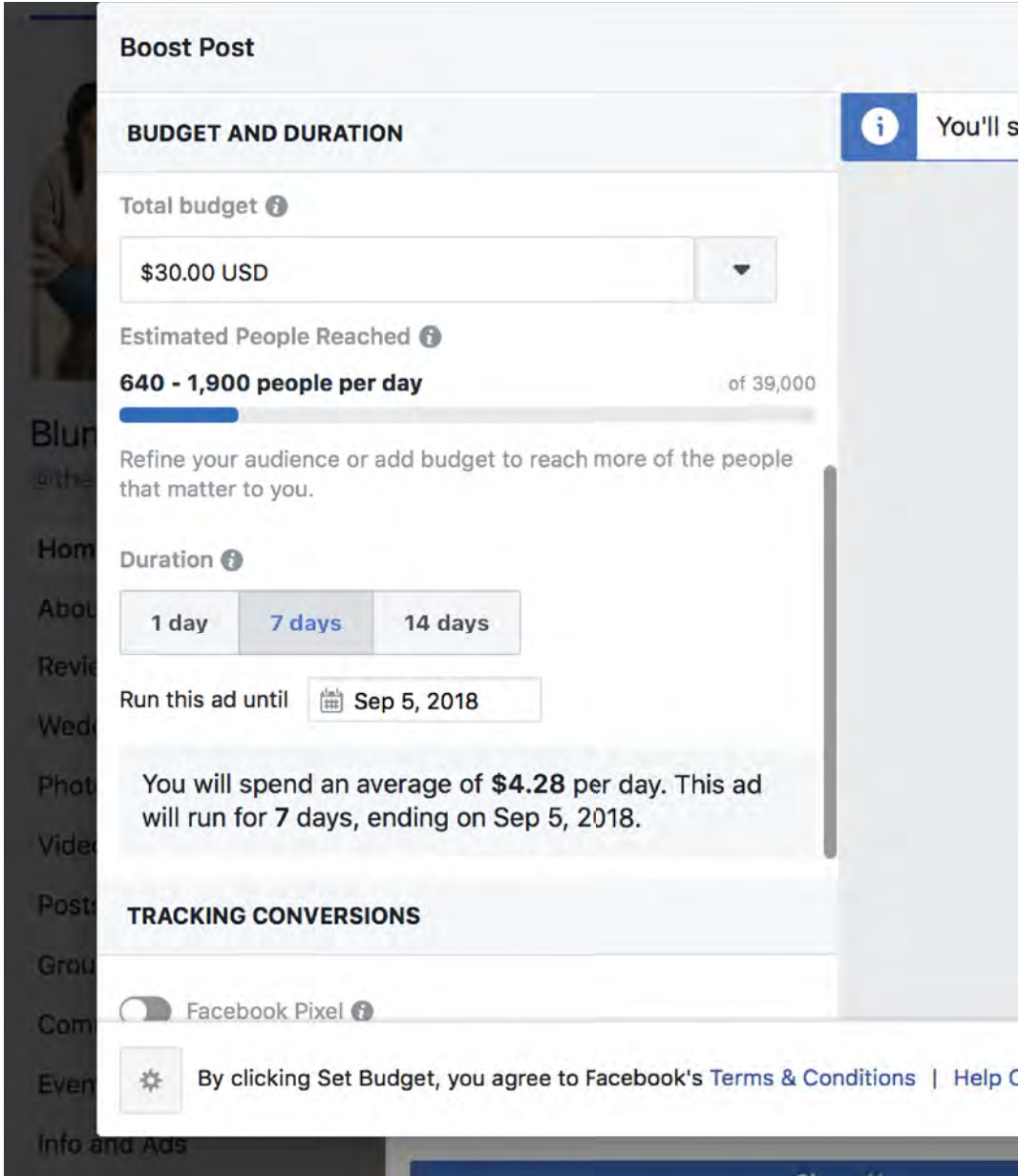


Fig. 5

As you run more ads, track your stats to see how it’s going. I average a \$5 to \$6 ad spend per client booked. That means I hope to book four to five clients at that budget. (That’s incredibly cheap and worthwhile, wouldn’t you agree?)



MAKE YOUR CLIENT THE HERO

Here’s where the rubber hits the road, far beyond the technicalities of setting up ads. This is the beginning of real marketing psychology, which will make your ads thrive.

How you write your ad copy matters. Ads that make you the hero don’t work. Don’t talk about your awards, camera gear or how passionate you are about photography. Your clients don’t want to become photographers, so you’re telling them the wrong story. You need to understand what they’re looking for and talk about them.

Notice in Figure 1 that I begin, “Is your family the ‘most fun’ in Athens?” Using this technique—even with very few words—I accomplish a lot. First, I make the story about the client’s family. Then I ask a question that forces them to become mentally engaged, not passive to the ad. I want to engage families who really do enjoy fun, because that’s what our portraits are all about. They won’t like the experience we provide if they’re too stiff. Finally, I drive home that this is a local ad by mentioning our hometown, Athens. Remember, you know your ad settings are local, but readers don’t unless you make it clear.

Making the client the hero becomes evident when you look at our full landing page from this ad. The landing page is the missing key to your Facebook ad success.

USE A LANDING PAGE

In the absence of a landing page (Fig. 6), your Facebook ads fall flat. Why? Because you have to make it easy for people who view your ads to take action. In front of a screen, people are in a mentally passive state. Your ad might create an impression, but alone, it will almost never inspire action.

Instead of sending a lead to your general website—where there’s too much to read, the contact form seems daunting and clients click away after three seconds—you’re going to deliver them to a highly strategic, handheld experience that tells them over and over again, “Book this specific service now.” A landing page is an assembly line for bookings.

Look at Figure 6 for one small section of our mini sessions landing page built on StickyFolios software.

There are other companies with free trials available that allow you to build landing pages. But most trials are extremely weak versions of the full service, which is very expensive. Don’t get me wrong, the software from some of these services is powerful. But most photographers can’t afford the several hundred dollars per month I pay for ClickFunnels, for instance. It is an amazing (and amazingly complicated) program for my bigger businesses, but I don’t recommend it for small photography studios.

StickyFolios, on the other hand, is so affordable and easy to use that I can build my photo landing pages with it in about 20 minutes. It’s designed for photographers, so it’s everything you need and nothing you don’t—plus, it’s incredibly powerful. I recommend using it before you create your next Facebook ad. You won’t regret it.

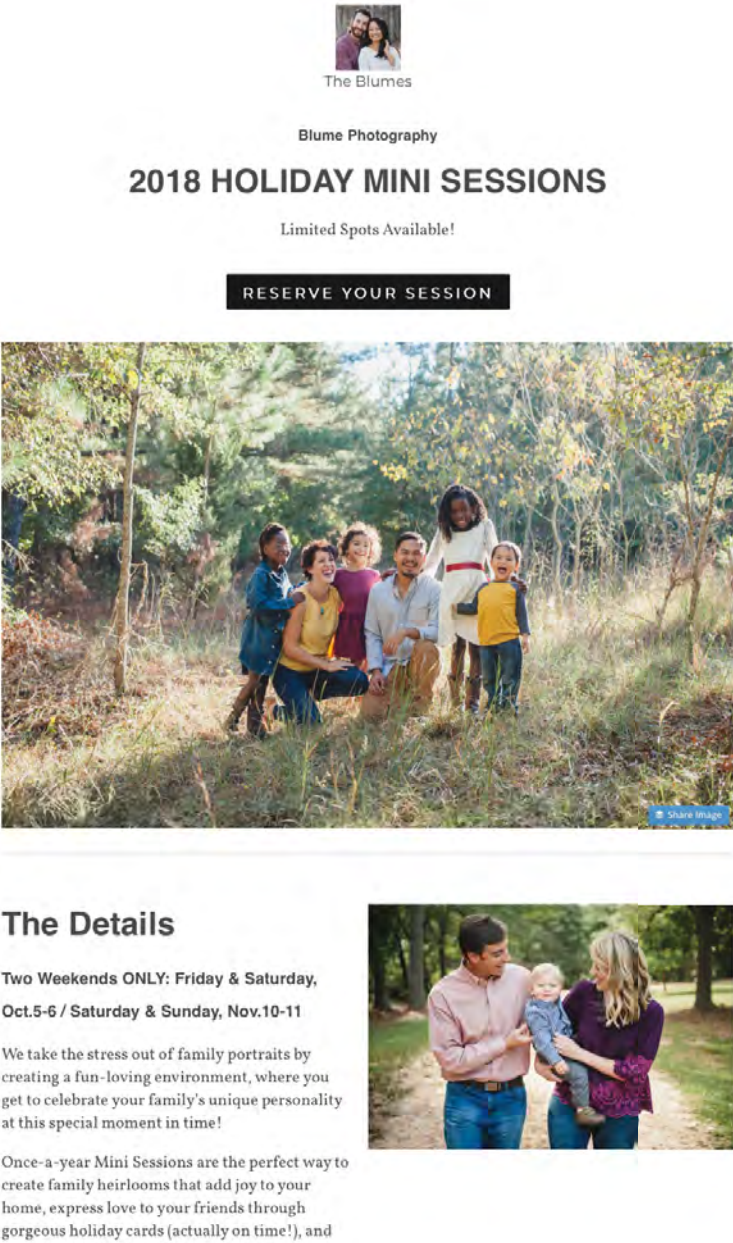


Fig. 6



CREATE SCARCITY

Every great ad requires scarcity. This is Economics 101. Notice how clear my sample ad is: Eight spots are available. By saying we’re “opening more,” it’s implied that there is demand, so you must hurry to get something other people want.

And demand there was. Thanks to strategic repeat marketing after our past ads and promotions, our calendar books up faster every time. We sold out the first weekend of our mini sessions the same morning we opened them, prompting us to open a second weekend and run the follow-up ad you see here.

There’s more to creating scarcity than just the ad copy. But that’s the beginning, and it’s how potential clients know to take serious action.

CALL TO ACTION

Include a call to action in every ad. Make the first action easy and noncommittal, whether it’s to “get more info” or “view available times.” I don’t recommend “book now” as an initial call to action in any ad. You can use it later, perhaps on your landing page. But go easy. If you can get a potential client to take one small step, research shows that his or her first action will make a second action much more likely.

Finally, get ready to serve clients who interact with your Facebook ads. The pay-to-play model is here to stay, and it’s not all bad. But old-school methods of social interaction are still needed to seal most deals. Just take a look at our inbox after we began our promotion (Fig. 7).

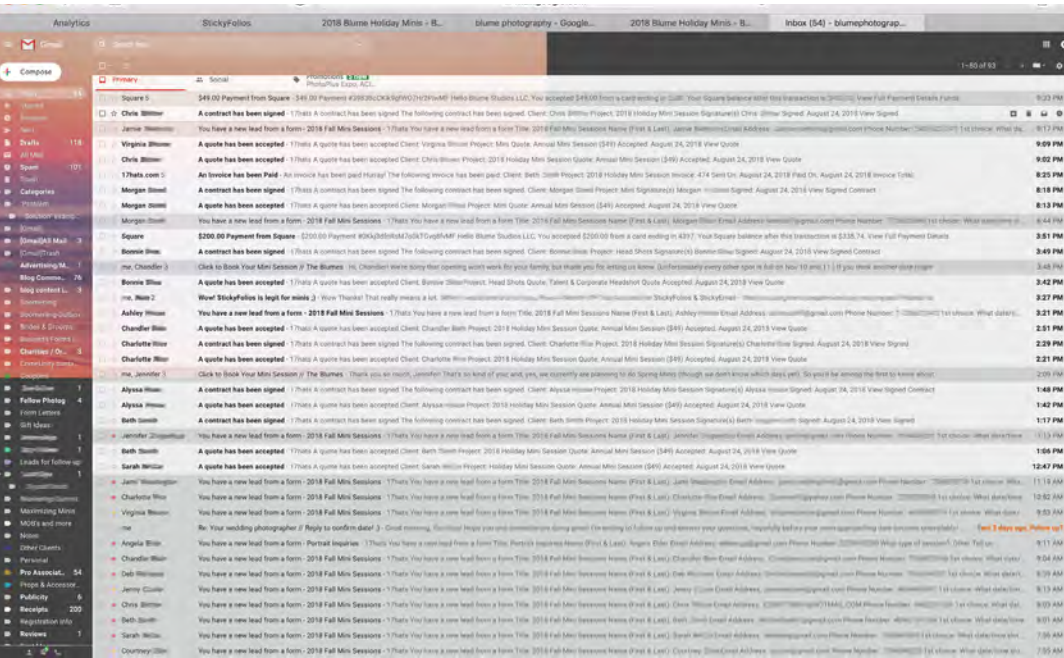


Fig. 7

If you want to succeed, you better get ready for some old-fashioned hard work.

CONCLUSION—AND ONE MORE VERY POWERFUL TOOL FOR HIGH-PROFIT BOOKINGS

Facebook ads are a great marketing tool, but marketing is a small piece of the puzzle of business success. Anyone can use Facebook. So how can you stand out?

I’m not just talking about a unique style or brand. I’m talking about a proven system that makes it possible for photographers around the country (and world) to double profits in almost every imaginable market.

It first worked for us eight years ago when we were struggling to keep our business alive. It led us where we are today, and we’re humbled now to see our homegrown strategy making a difference for thousands of photographers like you. I’ll give you this one clue: Now that autumn is here, right now is the right moment to try this strategy. Visit [bit.ly/blume-minis-free](http://bit.ly/blume-minis-free) to learn it. The training is free, and this month we’ll send you the companion eBook, too.

If you can’t attend our in-person workshop tour this year, I invite you to register for this free 90-minute web class this month at [bit.ly/blume-minis-free](http://bit.ly/blume-minis-free) (you’ll notice it’s a landing page). We’ll see you online to discuss why \$10,000 per weekend and raving clients should be normal. Get ready to put all your new Facebook ads knowledge to work. ■



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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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# THE COMMERCIAL EDITION

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# BUILDING

MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL

# VENDOR RELATIONSHIPS

with Sal Cincotta





Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography



Images © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

After 12 years working as a professional photographer, I realize now more than ever the value of having working relationships with industry vendors. We all have a job to do, we all want to be successful, we all want to make money. I see a lot of businesses take an isolationist approach, which can be detrimental to the success of your business. Instead, I find ways to foster mutually beneficial relationships with vendors.

Recently I was looking at where my wedding referrals were coming from when I noticed that a venue I used to shoot at several times a year had completely fallen off my radar. We had not shot a wedding there in almost five years. How could that be? We picked up the phone, scheduled a meeting with their team and did something about it.

Below is how we went from an afterthought to front-runner—and rebuilt a relationship and our portfolio along the way.

### Know what you bring to the table.

We are creatives. All businesses need creative talent. They need graphic design, photography services, video services and also someone with vision and the ability to execute ideas.

There is great value in what we bring to the table, and we have to parlay that into a winning situation for ourselves. That's why we are doing this. Be transparent. I know I was.

We offered to stylize a commercial wedding shoot and promotional video in exchange for premium placement in this venue's sales room. It was a lot of work to commit to, but in the end, it was a great way to position the studio as a premier partner. I was doing something no other photographer was willing to do. I bet correctly that the images we produced would drive new business to our studio and galvanize our relationship with the venue.





Images © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

Think about what your vendors need.

Anyone involved in this project needs something. We are all in business to make a profit. Most vendors don't have time to help you with a stylized shoot if there is nothing in it for them. We all need to be a little selfish here, and that's ok.

So, what do they all need? Updated images for their marketing. This includes social media, print advertising and billboards—all of which require images. It's easy to just photograph for yourself and not think about the other vendors involved. That's a huge miss.

For this shoot, we delivered new prints for their sales room, a multipage flyer highlighting both the venue and my photography to be handed out to all new brides, and a video commercial. Of course, I got some incredible images for my portfolio to showcase at the next bridal show.

Own the concept and idea. Every piece of it.

This is your idea. Own it. If you want to just be a heartbeat with a camera, then let someone else run the show—but all you will have accomplished is to prove you are nothing more than a nerd who knows how to use a tool.

Instead, own the concept from beginning to end and showcase yourself as the director, producer and vision of the project. You will be bringing incredible value to the team. Who wouldn't want to work with a rock star? Once the word gets out that you and your team pulled this off without a hitch, you will be received with open arms by any vendor on future projects. Screw this up, and, well, you know what will happen. But hey, no pressure.

We owned the entire concept from beginning to end. For more on this, read Alissa Zimmerman's article in this issue, where she talks about pre-production and production the day of the shoot. There are a lot of moving parts to something like this, and you need to stay organized.



Images © Salvatore Cincotta Photography



**Deliver on your promises.**

Don't you dare come this far and screw this up. You better deliver on all your promises, and deliver fast, none of this six-month delivery time. We had our images ready in two weeks from this shoot. We were sharing and tagging vendors in less than 24 hours after the shoot. Do not half-ass this. If you do, the resulting negative publicity will not be forgotten anytime soon. These are vendors that you have to see week in and week out.

Invest the time and energy needed to complete the project. Hire someone, outsource if you need to, but do it right.

Stay connected to vendors on social media. Thank them for their involvement. Share behind-the-scenes images and stories. You are doing this to keep the excitement and momentum going post-shoot. This is something everyone invested a lot of time and energy into, and you need to do everything in your power to make it worth their while and ensure no one leaves with a bad taste in their mouth. If they do, they will never do it again.

**Bring in your tribe.**

We all have vendors we like and who we have a good relationship with. Involve those people. This is the trifecta. You now add and galvanize your relationship with existing partners who want to be part of everything you do: florists, limos, tuxedos, models, hair and makeup.

We expanded the shoot to include a bunch of vendors we have relationships with. This shoot had a little bit of everything, so we needed help from our partners. In return, they got imagery. See how easy this is?

Bonus points: Once our local bridal magazine found out about the shoot, they wanted in as well. They gave us an eight-page editorial in their upcoming issue. Now, not only do we create incredible images for all our partners, but all our partners get free publicity in our top magazine. Again, who doesn't want to be part of a winning team?

For this shoot, we enlisted the help of these partners:

- Venue: Missouri Athletic Club
- HMUA: Makeup Artistry by A&C and Hair by Hopper
- Dresses: Clarice's Bridal
- Tuxedos: Savvi Formalwear
- Florist: Poppies Design Studio
- Limo: Best Transportation
- Bridal magazine: St. Louis Bride and Groom







Image © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

It doesn't need to be complicated. Is it a lot of work? Yes, but trust me, the results are well worth it. Once you find your rhythm and formula, repeat it all over again.

Dominate your local market. ■



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

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

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SWITCH

“Having the right tool for the job is critical to creating the perfect image. Knowing that I can easily switch between light sources and modifiers by simply changing inserts, now that's true power and control!”

SAL CINCOTTA



PHOTO © SAL CINCOTTA

# How does Sal Switch?

Sal Cincotta switches light inserts on his Rapid Box Switch between studio strobe when he wants more power and speedlights when on location.

The new Switch Series for Rapid Box and Beauty Dish offers 13 interchangeable light mount inserts for 9 versatile light modifiers. Pair with new egg crate grids for total lighting control like never before.

*When will you make the Switch?*

**FJWESTCOTT.COM/SWITCH**



**SAL CINCOTTA**  
TOP PRO PHOTOGRAPHER

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Images © Salvatore Cincotta Photography

# product spotlight

bayphoto.com with Salvatore Cincotta



## Why Bay Photo Foil Cards?

Do something unique for your clients this holiday season. As crazy as it sounds, now is the time to start promoting your holiday cards—and they are the perfect way to generate some extra cash.

Your images complemented by Bay Photo’s foil will make your clients’ greeting cards stand out from the rest. Foil cards are double-sided press printed cards printed using the highest-quality press printing technology available.

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Image © Michael Corsentino

# ONE-LIGHT HEADSHOTS

with Michael Corsentino



Headshots come in many flavors, from clean and commercial to more nuanced, moody affairs. Different kinds of clients need different kinds of headshots. An actor or model's needs are very different from those of a Realtor or executive. Sometimes you need to create a variety of looks for the same client, especially actors and models.

In last month's tutorial, I walked you step by step through an awesome four-light headshot setup with three accent lights that produced killer results. While working with multiple lights is preferable in many situations, allowing maximum flexibility with independently controlled lighting zones, it's not realistic for everyone's budget. This month, I take a different approach, showing you how much you can do with just one light.

When I'm shooting with agency models, as I did for this shoot, I prefer lighting that's clean and even and backgrounds ranging in tone from white to gray. Sometimes I add in shadows by simply moving my keylight to the right or left of my camera position—it really is that easy. It all depends on what my clients need, the type of work they do and how much time I have with them. Providing a variety of looks gives my clients the range of options and combinations they'll need for the comp cards and websites they use to market their services.

Whether you're working with one light or a dozen, it comes down to the keylight and the modifier used to shape and control the light. In any scenario, the keylight is your dominant light source that sets the overall tone for the quality of light in the image. The role of the keylight is important because it is the sole source of illumination. When you're working with only one light, its position and angle in relationship to the model and camera position, and the modifier selected to use along with it, are all important choices.







Top: Bare flash only. Bottom: Bare beauty dish.



Beauty dish with diffusion sock.

My go-to light source for headshots is strobe. I recommend at least 500 watt-seconds to provide the power necessary for shooting with the smaller apertures you'll likely want in the studio. Smaller apertures increase depth of field and provide more sharpness from the foreground to the background of your images. If you don't have a strobe, you can get by with a speedlight as you grow your business and acquire additional tools.

For most studio headshots, my preferred f-stop falls between f/11 and f/16. I pair the strobe with a beauty dish, my other go-to tool for portraits and a variety of other subjects. The beauty dish, a reflector, is an extremely versatile modifier. I recommend the Mola Demi 22-inch beauty dish. These reflectors create a quality of light that strikes a balance between soft and specular, delivering just the right amount of contrast or sparkle. A beauty dish can be used bare or with a diffusion sock over its face to further soften its light and lessen contrast.

I start with the beauty dish bare and work from there. For the final lighting setup with this model, I got the most pleasing results for her complexion using the diffusion sock. I've included an image captured using bare strobe alone as a starting point to illustrate the before and after impact of a beauty dish. If you don't have a beauty dish, no worries: You can get great results with a shoot-through or bounce umbrella in a pinch.

The first step in great-looking headshot lighting with one light is setting the position and angle of the keylight and beauty dish. To create even lighting with very few shadows, I placed the beauty dish directly in front of the model and above my camera position using a light stand with a boom arm, which is known as Paramount light. I angled the light and modifier 45 degrees down toward the model's face, which is a good starting point. Next, fine-tune the angle of the keylight by stepping behind your subject, looking at the angle of the beauty dish relative to their face and adjusting the angle as needed so they both line up. You want the center of the beauty dish pointed down and lined up with the center of your subject's face.





Beauty dish and sock with silver center, left and right reflectors.

Now let's look at the techniques and tools we can use to squeeze every last drop of nuance from our single light. Just as I used additional strobes as accent lights in last month's portrait tutorial, now I'll use reflectors to accomplish the same. When you use reflectors rather than additional strobes, the changes from one step to the next may appear subtle. As you can see here, the final lighting result is greater than the sum of its parts.

After the keylight is set up, it's time to move on to fine-tuning with reflectors. Just like strobes, I like to work one reflector at a time and slowly build as I go. Working this way allows you to accurately assess the impact each reflector is making rather than throwing in everything at once.

I add the first reflector to create fill light under the subject's chin and inside her sockets. I put it directly under the keylight and below the model's face. The height of the reflector depends on your face, how much fill light you want from the reflector and the intensity of the fabric used on the reflector. Sometimes it's chest level, sometimes waist level. You'll need to season to taste.

Adding this reflector turns what was previously Paramount light into an over and under lighting pattern know as clamshell lighting. I start with white reflectors and add additional contrast and intensity by switching to silver as needed. My favorite tool for this is the Lastolite Triflector. It has three adjustable reflector panels on articulating arms, which allows you to fine-tune the amount of reflected light under and around the face. Panels are reversible, with white on one side and silver on the other. I started with white for all three panels, then tried silver on the left and right panels and white in the center, and finally settled on silver for all three panels. This was the sweet spot for this model. Your mileage may vary depending on your subject's complexion.



Beauty dish and sock with white center, left and right reflectors.





Once I'd dialed in the keylight and fill reflector, I wanted to create fill on either side of the model's face. This serves two purposes: It heightens the bright, even lighting I wanted for these headshots and it throws more light onto the background when I move the model closer to it for images with a white-ish background. To accomplish this, I added two white V-flats, one on either side of the model's face. These squeezed even more illumination from our keylight and created subtle fill on both sides of the model's face. Adding fill below and on either side of the model stepped up the lighting.

The next step was to vary the distance between the model, lighting and the background. By moving the light and reflectors closer to or farther away from the background, you can control how bright it is and vary its tone from gray to nearly white. I started at about 8 feet away from the background for the images with a gray background. Once satisfied with a set of gray background images, I moved the keylight, reflector and V-flats as close to the background as I could. I shot some test captures to assess the tone of the background and illumination on the model. To create an even brighter background and a more specular look, I replaced the white V-flats with 4x6 Sunbounce silver reflectors on each side of the model. This threw even more light onto the background and gave the images the extra punch I wanted on white.





Images © Michael Corsentino

I again moved everything away from the background and finished the shoot with a set of gray background images, this time using the silver reflector panels for side fill light. I had created the variety of images my client needed, and the shoot was a wrap.

With just one light and a little knowhow, I created images on gray, images on white, punchy images and softer images. I’ve only scratched the surface in this article, but hopefully it shows you that one-light headshots rule. ■

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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](http://michaelcorsentino.com)

# SP70-200mm F/2.8 G2



© Thomas Kettner Focal Length: 200mm Exposure: F/2.8 1/125sec ISO: 400

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# From *spec* to *sold*

with Christine Yodsukar







Image © Christine Yodsukar

Wouldn't it be amazing if your dream company hired you for your ideal gig? They love your work, they think you're the perfect person for the job and they pay you your rate, no questions asked. This does not have to remain a fantasy. One powerful way we have made this happen in our business is by creating spec projects.

A spec is when you create content for a company that hasn't actually hired you, but you create it as if they had. You research their brand messaging and current marketing efforts, and figure out what they are missing. Have you ever looked at another business's website and seen the most awful photos and thought, "They could really use new headshots. I would do such a better job for them"? You've found a major hole in their marketing: poor headshots that do not instill confidence in the consumer. The solution is professional headshots by an expert: you. Once you've found the hole in their marketing, you have struck gold. You can now create content that solves their problem, makes their job easier and, hopefully, brings in more revenue.

We started creating specs for companies before we knew it was a thing. We just thought it would be cool to create videos for products that we loved, like the Nutri Ninja, Doritos and AT&T. In the beginning, our biggest mistake was that after we created the content, we didn't do anything with it. We showed it to our friends and family, but we didn't believe we could make something happen with it. Clients would come to us saying they wanted to work with us after seeing our videos. It dawned on us that if we shared the work we produced for clients to bring in new clients, we could also share these specs to bring in a new kind of client. It took us a while to figure it out, and I am so glad we did.



Image © Christine Yodsukar



One of my favorite spec stories happened last year. Our clients hired us to create educational content for their businesses that they could sell online to their consumers. Filming these was great because it involved creating gorgeous lighting and perfecting the sound. Creatively, it left us wanting to do something else. We wanted to do something that had a script and actors, something different.

We decided to create a commercial that Shutterfly could use to promote the importance of printed products because we believe in the importance of printed products too and they needed some help with their video campaigns. We also thought it would be freaking cool to work with a huge company.

With our client in mind and the hole in their marketing that we found, we set off to create a commercial that would knock their socks off. We made a budget and a production timeline, cast actors, wrote a script and produced a commercial. After finding out that Shutterfly is unable to take any unsolicited materials for legal reasons, we knew we had to find a new client to create this for.

We showed it to companies we thought would be interested because they also believe in the importance of printed products and they don't have a video campaign. Two companies showed interest in the commercial. One of them bought our spec, asked for some small edits and ordered two additional commercials—and they built an entire campaign around our idea. It was our biggest contract to date. What began as a yearning to create something exciting turned into our being hired by an amazing company and meetings with another big company, an opportunity we never would have dreamed of.



Images © Christine Yodsukar





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That was an example of selling the exact piece of content we created, but it doesn't always work out this way. Here is another instance from the past year that was different, but that also ended with new clients.

So much of the work we do is meant for prequalified viewers to watch. This means the viewer already knows something about the business whose video they are watching, and they know they are interested. The video content needs to look amazing, sound amazing and give them a ton of value. What it doesn't need to do as much is catch their attention for the very first time in a sea of other attention-grabbing media. We wanted to create something that could act as that attention-grabbing video that made you stop scrolling and watch, like and share—that made you feel something when you watched it. Naturally, we made a commercial of our car.

This wasn't just any car commercial. It wasn't selling a car as much as a lifestyle. Instead of telling people what they could do with this car if they bought it, I wanted them to imagine themselves in it. The music was important to this edit, and the footage was handheld and free. Instead of telling you that this is a great car for adventuring in, you see closeups of my arm hanging out the window surfing the air and my hair blowing in the wind. Instead of telling you that it's a great family car, you see a closeup of my son's feet kicking and dancing over my shoulder as I look at him in the backseat. Instead of telling you it's a good car for a millennial, you see me putting a reusable canvas shopping bag in the trunk, pressing a button and walking away as the trunk closes.

The day I posted the video, I got a message from a business owner wanting to hire us. She booked us. The next week, we got an email from a past portrait client saying she had shown the video to her marketing director, and they wanted to hire us to do their video content. They already had a video team, but wanted to bring us on instead.





Image © Christine Yodsukar

There is so much power in creating something that gets you excited. It can bring a return on your investment if you make sure the right people see it. Pick a company that you would love to create content for. Research them and their brand and find the holes in their marketing. Create a budget and a project timeline, and produce the heck out of something amazing for them.

And don't forget the last and most important step: Show it to them. ■

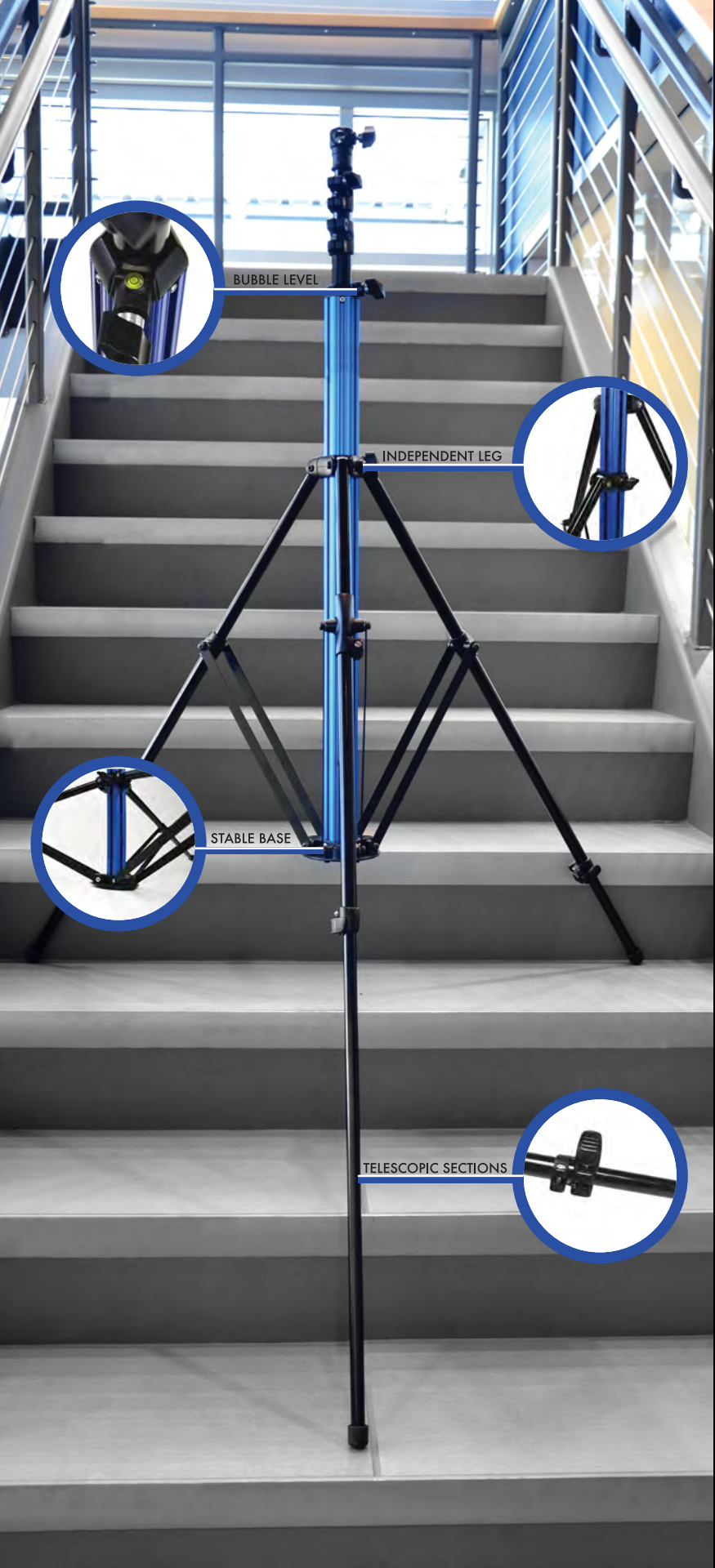


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[youtube.com/btsShutterMagazine](https://youtube.com/btsShutterMagazine)



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


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Planning & Executing  
**Stylized Commercial Shoots**  
with Alissa Zimmerman

3:30

5:00

6:00



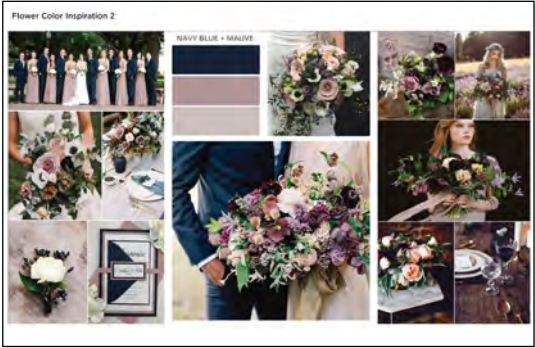
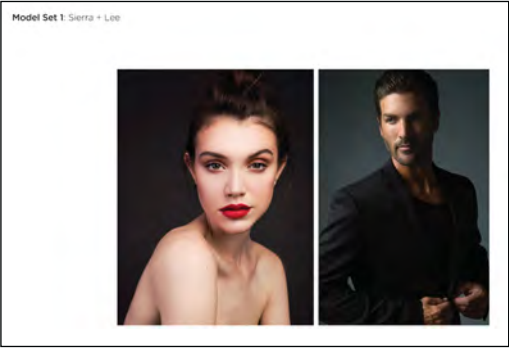
Stylized commercial shoots offer a great way to collaborate with vendors to create something over the top for your portfolio, as well as theirs. You earn goodwill and build relationships that become mutually beneficial over time. We like to put together two or three of these shoots every year to keep images fresh and relationships alive.

The planning process can be a bit overwhelming, especially if you’re thinking you can do it alone. Here are the key elements of planning and executing a stylized commercial shoot.

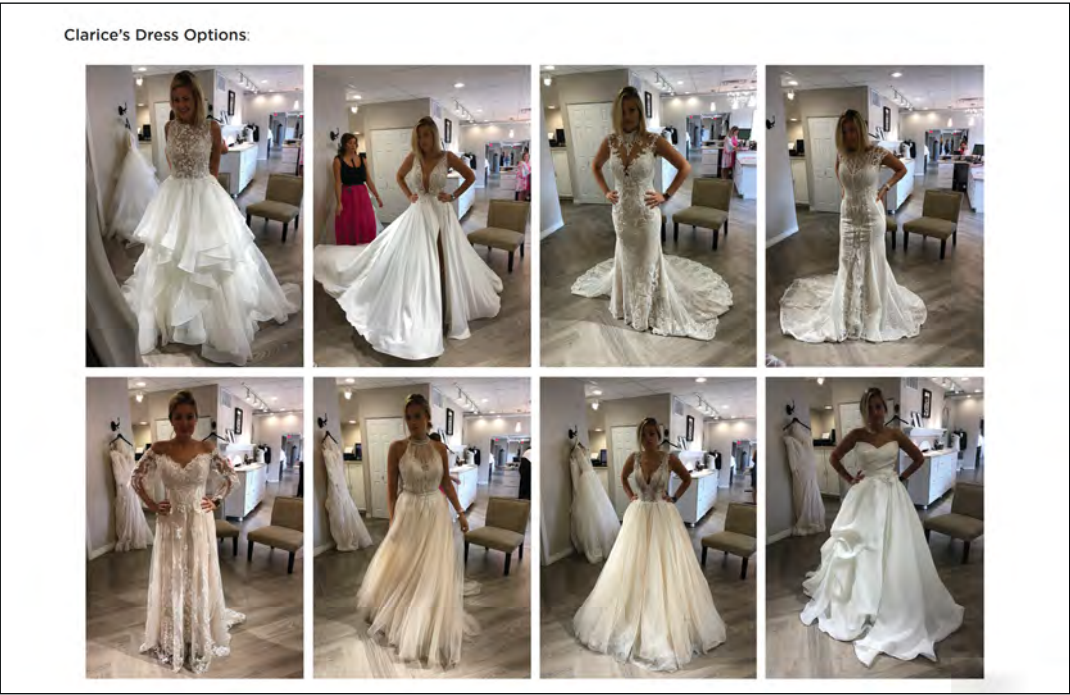
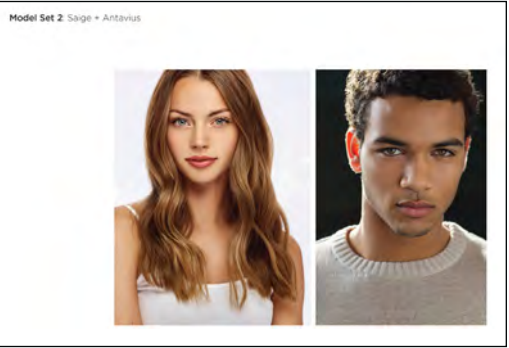
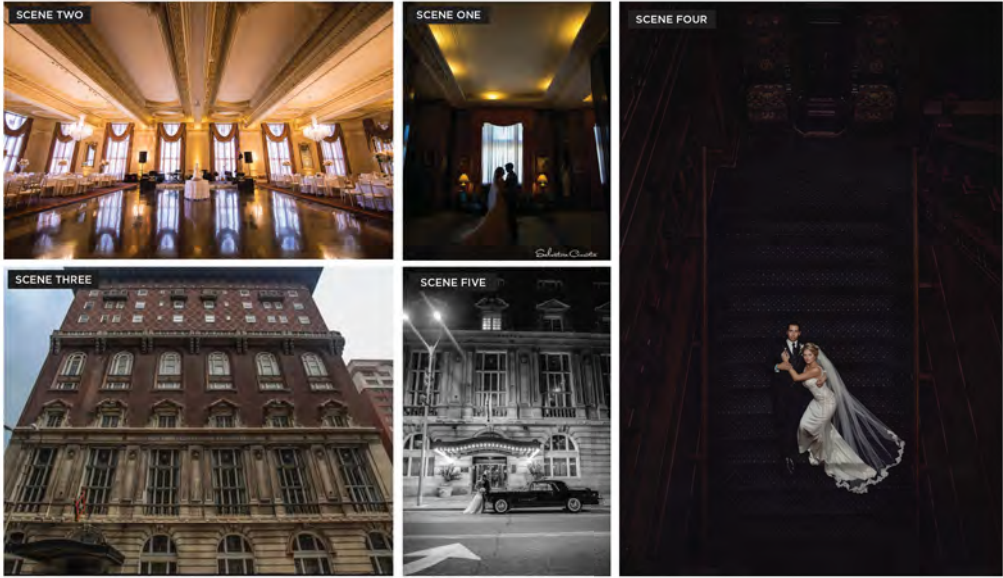
Mood Boards

Mood boards are the heart and soul of all successful photo shoots. We used to plan photo shoots without them, and always ended up scrambling on the day of the shoot. Mood boards are the foundation, but you can always tweak in real time during the shoot.

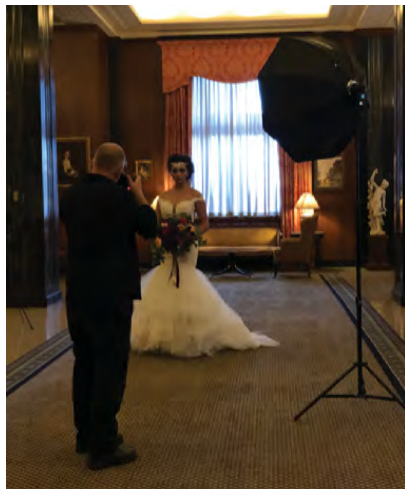
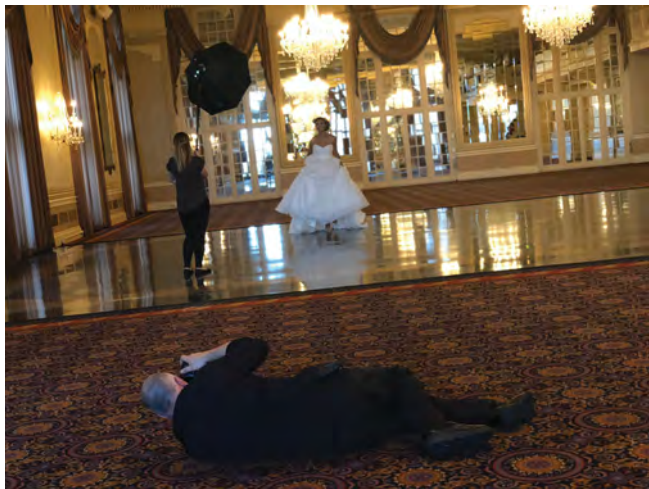
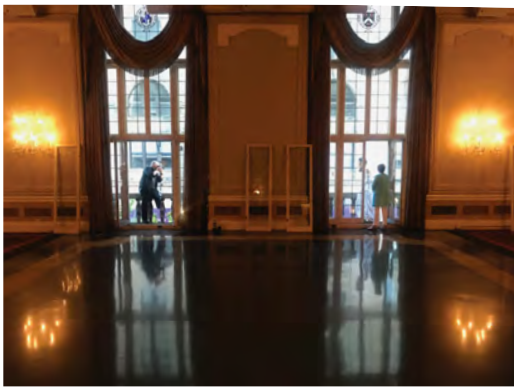
I use Adobe InDesign to lay out my mood boards, and I keep them as clean as possible. I create an opening title page with the details to make sure I don’t get all of my mood boards mixed up. Big and visual is the way I like to create them. What’s the point of a mood board if the images being used to inspire are too small for the details to be seen? Some people argue that having to scroll through a multipage PDF is a nuisance and having all the details on one page is better. I disagree—especially if you’re trying to convey a complete thought and a vision while still getting the people involved excited. See below for screen shots of the mood board I put together for the most recent stylized commercial shoot we did in St. Louis with a group of local vendors.



Location: Missouri Athletic Club | 405 Washington Ave, St. Louis, MO 63102







## Timeline

Once the mood board is final and all the vendors and models are confirmed, you can start working on the timeline. I attach the final timeline to the last page of the mood board when sending out final emails to the vendors before the shoot.

What I'm about to say is going to sound like a contradiction, but hear me out: Your timeline for the shoot should be somewhat loose, but also as detailed as possible. You need to be realistic with time between each vignette to allow for setup and teardown, and give yourself some wiggle room in case something goes wrong or a shot takes longer to set up than anticipated.

And in a situation like the recent shoot we did, where the timeline was six-plus hours, you have to remember to allow yourself a break. No one wants to work with a hangry photographer.

Being diligent putting together the timeline is so important. You're controlling the day and the outcome of the final images. If you plan on taking your very first shot at 3 p.m., you need to set the timeline to have the hair and makeup artists arrive at 1 p.m., and the models arrive at 1:30 p.m. This allows the crew 30 minutes to set up before the models arrive so they aren't sitting around waiting and wasting hours that you're paying for. Strategically thinking through every part of the shoot (before, during, after) ensures your day runs as smoothly as possible.

## Taking the Lead

A lot of photographers and assistants have a difficult time stepping up and running the show. This is your moment to shine. This is your shoot—not the florist's, the dress designer's or the venue's. Own it. From vision to execution, step up and take the lead.

Collaboration is a beautiful thing, but only when it's done right. Establishing roles from the beginning is key so no one is stepping all over you and your vision throughout the process. This is established from the very beginning when you reach out to the vendors you want to be involved. It all comes down to communication and how you start the process.

### TIMELINE

- 1:00 pm – SCP Team wheels up
- 1:30 pm – SCP Team arrive, scout locations and start setting up vignettes with lights
- 2:00 pm – Poppies arrives, start setting up solo table in grand ballroom
- 3:00 pm – West female models and Rory/Charmaine arrive, start hair and makeup
- 3:00 pm – Clarice's arrives, bring in dresses to staging room
- 3:00 pm – Photograph table setup in grand ballroom
- 4:00 pm – Set up scene one.
- 4:15 pm – Photograph **SCENE ONE: 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Ballroom**, Bride alone (Carla)
- 5:00 pm – Tear down scene one lights and move to scene two.
- 5:15 pm – Set up scene two.
- 5:30 pm – Photograph **SCENE TWO: Grand Ballroom**, Groom alone to start, Bride alone, then Bride & Groom. (Saige & Antavius)
- 6:15 pm – Tear down scene two lights and move to scene three.
- 6:30 pm – Set up scene three.
- 6:45 pm – Photograph **SCENE THREE: 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Balcony Windows**, Bride & Groom ONLY. (Sierra & Lee)
- 7:15 pm – Set up scene four.
- 7:30 pm – Photograph **SCENE FOUR: Staircase**, Bride & Groom ONLY. (Sierra & Lee)
- 8:00 pm – Tear down scene two lights and move to scene five.
- 8:15 pm – Set up scene five.
- 8:30 pm – Photograph **SCENE FIVE: Outside Street Shot with Rolls Royce**, Bride & Groom ONLY. (Saige & Antavius)
- 9:00 pm – WRAP



Communication

Ah, communication, the bane of every artist’s existence. There is nothing wrong with being a strong voice to establish dominance from the beginning—and I mean that in the nicest way possible. Again, we are all creative minds, and when you bring five to 10 different types of creatives together to plan and execute one single vision, ideas and communication will inevitably be all over the place.

As the lead, it is your job to dial everyone in and keep the circus focused. And it all starts with the first email.

This concept came together with one email about 10 months ago. A St. Louis venue we work with, the Missouri Athletic Club, reached out to us about advertising in its quarterly magazine for its members. We had previously run two ads with them and hadn’t seen any return or received any contact from potential brides. So that’s when we started to get creative.

After agreeing that the single print ads were not working for us, here is how I approached them:

*Hi Emma. I want to do something bigger with you guys. I spoke with Sal and we want to do a stylized shoot, hire models, etc. We would Facebook Live the whole shoot, tagging MAC. We would sponsor the post after it’s live, throw some money behind it and target brides in the STL area.*

*Are you the right person to talk to about this? We would love to come downtown and take you and whoever else would need to be involved to lunch to discuss more details.*

*We want to get as creative as possible—advertising to the MAC membership list is not something we are seeing success with. Let’s do this right for both of us.*

Being aggressive and rude are two different things. You have to understand that if you are reaching out to a venue, bridal shop or any other type of vendor with an idea you want to create, there has to be something in it for the other party. Would you give up your time and resources for free if there were nothing in it for you?

Communication throughout the process is crucial, but don’t send a million email updates. Don’t overcommunicate. Be clear and concise when sending your emails and do so in an organized way. I can’t stand it when people start new threads every time they send an email, especially if it’s an email pertaining to something that’s relevant in another thread. Don’t start littering everyone’s email inboxes—that’s the quickest way to ensure each party will not read the details and will ultimately end up frustrated with you when things don’t go according to plan.



Images © Salvatore Cincotta Photography



Delegate Tasks

This is one of the most difficult parts for me. I do not let go of tasks because I want to be in control of everything.

The only way these things are successful is if you have a team (or at least one other person) that can take some of the tasks off your plate so you can focus on the bigger-picture items—like making sure everyone has been communicated with properly.

I make a list of every key piece that goes into the shoot: venue, models, wardrobe, staff, flowers. From there, I break out all the tasks that need to be done to secure and finalize each piece.

Here’s an example.

- Venue**
- Lock in venue
  - Finalize shooting locations
  - Get access to balcony across the street for window shot
  - Confirm venue point person for day of shoot
  - Put each location into timeline based on time of day and type of light needed
- Models**
- Select models with Sal
  - Confirm models with agency
  - Send male model measurements to tux rental company
  - Send call sheet to agency for each model
  - Get contact info for each model
  - Assign models to locations

Once I have everything broken out into subtasks, I start delegating the smaller items to someone else to make sure things continue moving at a quick pace.

We use Asana to track internal tasks like these with bigger projects so we are all in the loop on what’s getting done (and, more importantly, what’s not). This has been a game-changer for our planning process. It holds you accountable once you take the time in the beginning to do a brain dump and get everything laid out for what needs to get done. ■



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

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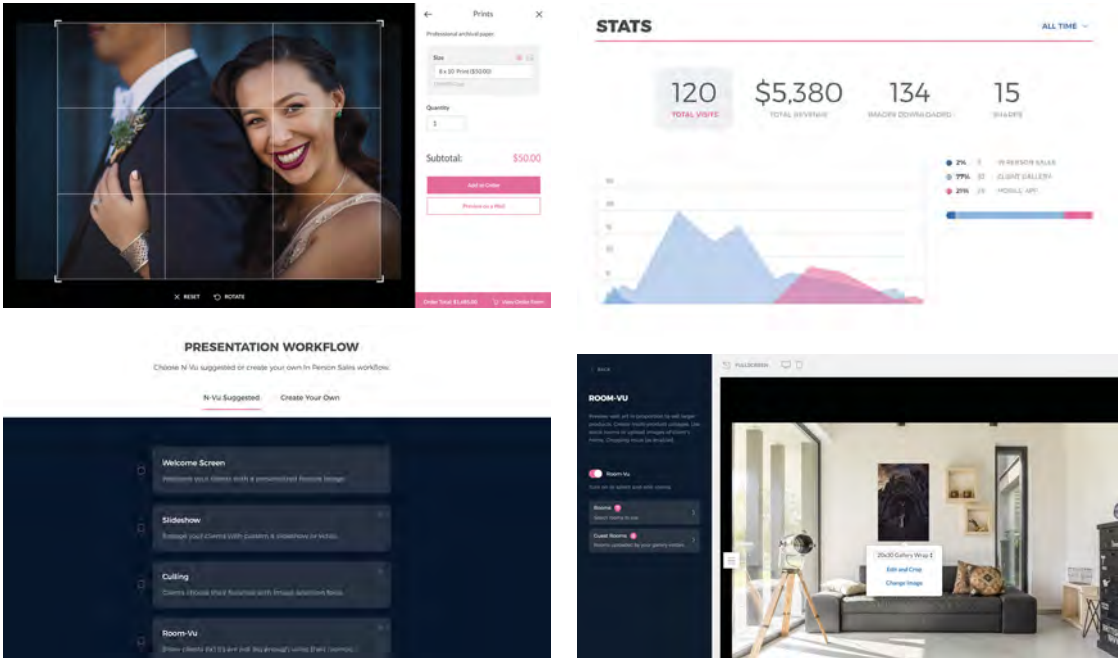




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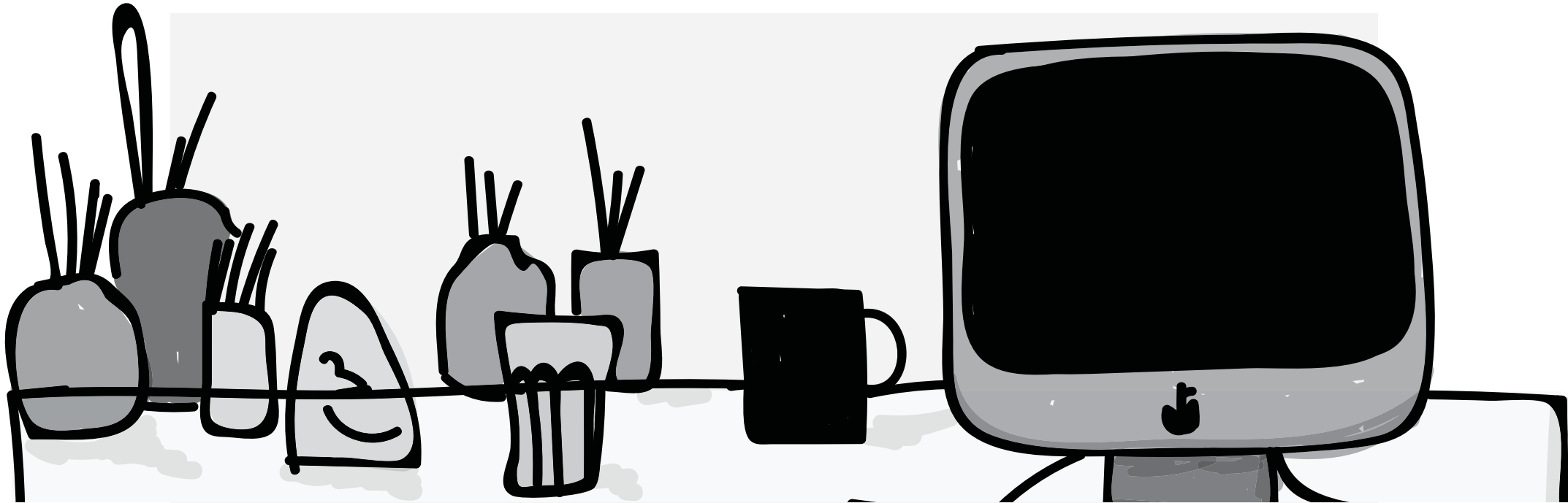




Admit it: Your website needs some help. Don't take it too personally. Your website isn't about you. Being a photographer means struggling with the overwhelming desire to create and put oneself out there while simultaneously being terrified that everyone hates you. I call it insecure narcissism.

And there's no cure. Life as a creative entrepreneur is a constant series of naked plunges into ice-cold water, and there is nothing you can do about it. You can quit or you can jump. It's uncomfortable to self-evaluate, but it's impossible to make significant and positive change in your business without taking an uncomfortable plunge.





**RULE ONE**

No matter how many people tell you they love your site, if it isn’t bringing in sales, it needs some work. Making changes to it isn’t going to hurt you.

If you are unsure whether you need to make a change, try this exercise. Open your accounting software or your studio management program and look at the last three months. Make a note of which of those paid clients booked you through your site. For the portrait and wedding crowd, it is possible to have good bookings come from other places, like venue and planner referrals. In the upper echelons of high society, there may be portrait clients who take referrals only from their country club pals and don’t even use the internet, but the rest of us who photograph normal folks need a website that works.

Photographers from the commercial and business worlds often understand something that portrait and wedding photographers don’t: Your website needs to be more than a portfolio. Here are five things your website needs to be relevant.

**BASIC INFORMATION**

I bet that 75% of the photographers reading this are missing something critical on their website: their email and phone number. That’s just for starters. Make sure that all of your relevant contact information is on your site: business hours, location, expected amount of time to respond to inquiries and anything else that someone might need to know. One big mistake I see is that photographers don’t have a clickable phone number. Since the majority of web traffic comes from a mobile device, it makes sense to have a one-click way to call or message you on your website.

**FEWER IMAGES, BETTER COPY**

Most of you are running multiple social media accounts that showcase your latest and greatest work. There is no need to have dozens and dozens of images on your website anymore. The function of a website has changed since 2001. It is no longer the only place to showcase your images. In fact, it’s not even the best place to do so.

Why not focus instead on conveying your strong brand message and personality with really good copy? Your website’s primary function is as a vehicle to convey information to a potential client. Tell them who you are, why you are different than your competitors and why you are the right choice for them. Even though the content of your site contains a lot of information about you, it’s really all about them. Cut your galleries back to the essentials that convey your style, and build content that helps your potential client make a choice.

**SOCIAL MEDIA INTEGRATION**

Making your social media an active part of your site instead of just a string of buttons at the bottom can have great benefits. There are loads of widgets and plugins that allow you to show off your latest Google reviews, Instagram posts and more. You can give your potential client a quick and easy tour of your online presence without them ever leaving your page, and it can also give them a sense of connectedness that gives you authority.

By the time a client comes into your studio, they should be talking about how they see you everywhere. Part of my overall social media strategy is to use all my platforms to drive traffic to my website. A stream of traffic from multiple platforms increases your domain authority for search engines and might just bump you up the results ladder.



YOUR BLOG

A blog used the right way can have powerful benefits. When you create content that your potential client might find useful, you become a more engaging brand. Forego the show-and-tell of cute babies in buckets. Write an article on baby safety during photo shoots instead. Include behind-the-scenes photos showing how you care for the little dumplings, and finish it off with great examples of your work.

See the difference? You are creating SEO-friendly content that can simultaneously be used on social media to drive traffic to your website. Ask yourself what your audience wants to know about. What could help them? Then create it. Make sure your blog is hosted in the same place as your website so you get the benefit of all that juicy content when Google indexes it. You can also create articles from your most frequently asked questions and repurpose them to provide clients with great information during the booking process.

PRICING

Most photographers are crazy for not putting their prices—or at least an idea of their prices—on their website. With almost 15 years of experience in the business, I can tell you that the number-one question you are going to answer over and over is: “How much does it cost?”

You can argue that when a client gets in touch with you to ask you that, it gives you the opportunity to draw them in and educate them. That is true, and sometimes clients will spend more than they thought they would because of your awesome sales techniques. But consumers are changing, especially the younger ones. We are used to Amazon and Google, the whole world of information at our fingertips. You must know the feeling of going to a website and not being able to find the information you need. For visitors 35 and under, that can cause a negative reaction that could cost you. For every one person who bothers to contact you and ask you what you charge, there could be five or 10 who visited your site and went elsewhere because they didn’t find the information they were looking for.

If you are protective of your prices because of your business model, try this experiment. Add some pricing information on your site and back it up with a short video showing what makes your product so special. See if that doesn’t net you a few quality clients. If your website isn’t bringing in business, what have you got to lose?

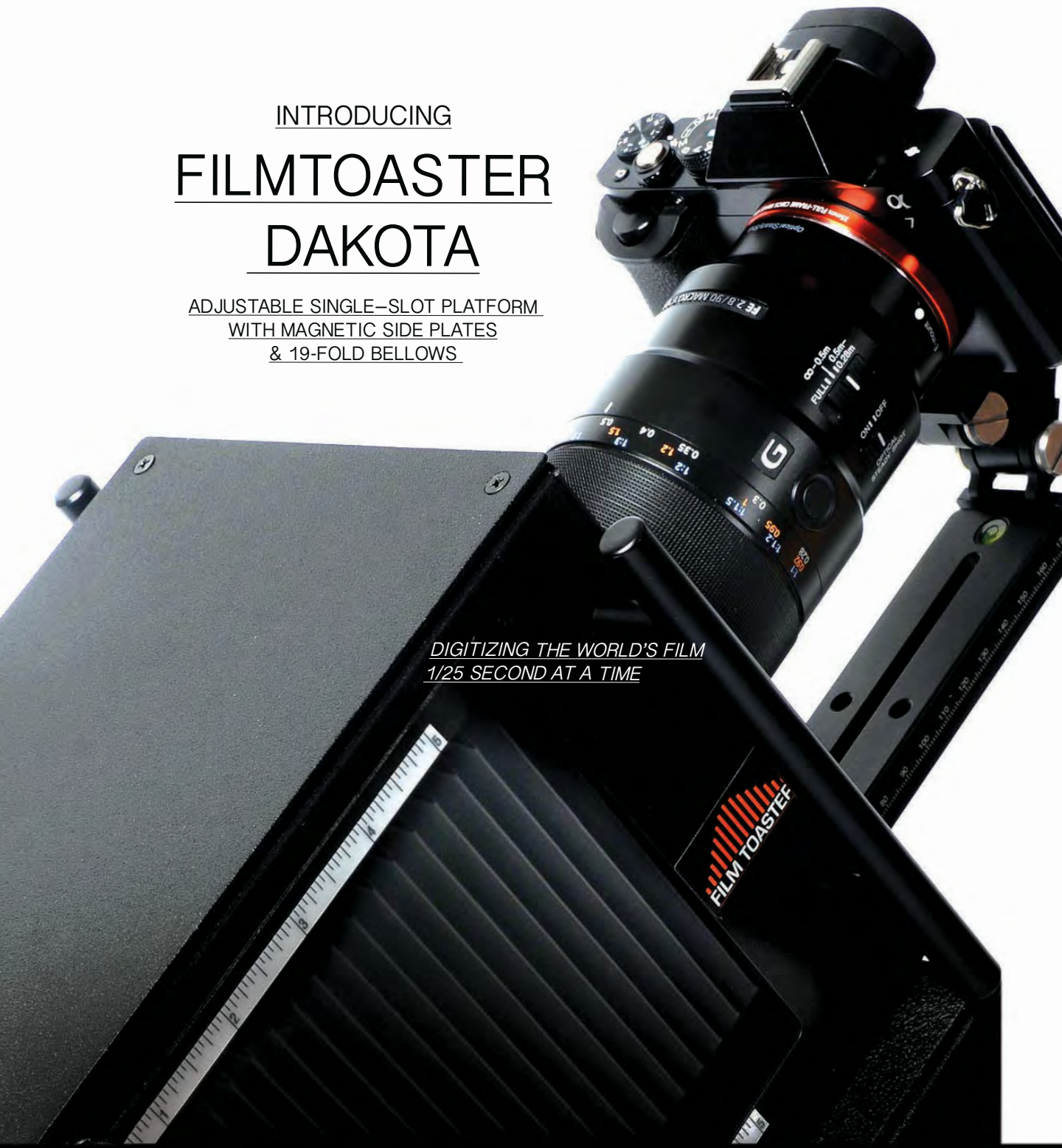
Design a website that tells visitors everything they might want to know about your business, and remember that it’s not about you. Your brand exists in the minds of your audience, not in your logo. Create a home where they can get questions answered and get in touch. It’s that simple. ■



Master photographer, lecturer and author Gary Hughes has become one of the industry’s leading headshot shooters. His work has garnered local, national and international awards, and has been featured in *Professional Photographer* magazine and *Huffington Post*. He founded Hughes Fioretti Photography in Orlando, Florida, with his wife, Julie, in 2008.  
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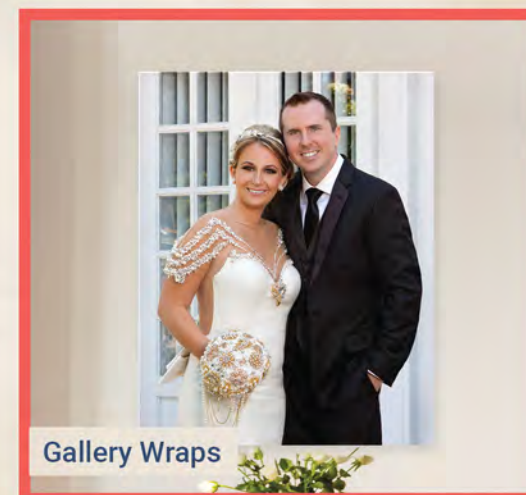
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Once upon a time, a photographer in any genre would try to get the attention of magazines, newspapers, clothing designers, automakers, restaurants, hospitals, sports teams and music venues in hopes of landing a gig. Whether it was a one-off campaign or steady work on a retainer, the holy grail of good-paying commercial work has always come from big companies.

And while the dollar amounts of these major-client jobs is still highly desirable and worth the effort to land, there is a new type of commercial role that has emerged in the last few years, and it's exploding by the hour: social influencer.

Now, if your immediate response is that the major brands are already on social media—and are influencing their customer base on a daily basis—you'd be correct. But these companies are simply using social media as an extension of their existing marketing (for better or worse) to sell their products and services. This will continue, and because these global powerhouses have large budgets, you will continue to be inundated with ads for laundry detergent on TV, websites, radio, streaming video services, billboards, magazines and Instagram.

When the internet was in its mainstream infancy between 1995 and 2000, it was regarded by many as the great equalizer in terms of giving anyone a platform to say, do or show almost anything to a (potentially) global audience. It was so exciting to every single industry that it imploded before it achieved stability. The bursting of the dot-com bubble in the early 2000s was a total financial collapse across many fronts, but the major brands survived because they'd had their corporate hands in dozens of diverse business buckets for many years preceding the internet. Internet startups in this era started explosively, gained a ton of momentum (and investors) and then summarily collapsed on themselves owing to that rare business phenomenon known as “No one had any clue what the hell they were doing.”

It was all too new to be fully understood at that time, but the allure of reaching potential customers in a personal, direct manner was too much to ignore. Despite the bubble bursting, the internet was here to stay. It just needed to find its place in society—no easy task.

Enter social media.

While MySpace.com had become popular among the teens and twentysomethings by around 2003, its power was not initially appreciated by most global industries. Where MySpace quickly succeeded, perhaps by accident, was in the independent and local music scenes. Bands and producers from all over the world made MySpace pages to showcase their music at no cost, on a platform where they could connect with new fans. (I was a busy musician in this era, and had my own MySpace page for my various projects.) Many bands went from essentially invisible to commercially viable due to their MySpace fanbase alone. If major record labels weren't paying attention to MySpace at first, certainly every local musician with a demo was. Some MySpace users accrued tens of millions of friends on their accounts who hung on their every word, every post, every photo, every rant or rave. It didn't take long for the labels to jump on board when they saw the potential of such a community.

Advertising is influencing, and if you can influence millions of people, you're valuable in advertising. This is the premise of celebrity endorsements in ad campaigns, product placement in films and more. Having 20 million MySpace friends meant your own simple opinions could sway the buying habits of absurd numbers of people. Companies were keen to cash in on this idea, but swooping in to dominate and control this emerging market wasn't as easy as they initially thought—and there was a very good reason why. This new social media made it so simple to put content online and attract people that the classic corporate middleman was essentially cut out.

While would-be MySpace competitors were popping up all over at that time, the major tour de force of what would become known as social media hit the scene shortly after the dot-com bubble implosion: Facebook.

Facebook had carefully observed where MySpace failed: absurd numbers of friends per account, modifiable page layouts that 99% of users had no idea how to use properly, a questionable business plan and more. By tweaking its approach based on those failures, Facebook went from a collegiate platform to a global powerhouse within a couple of years. By 2007 or so, Facebook had learned all of the hard lessons from the bubble burst and the MySpace collapse, and understood what society wanted from social media. Facebook gave the world what it wanted, and was rewarded by becoming a multibillion-dollar company almost overnight.

How did they do it? Quite a lot of it came from advertising revenue. Most came from the major companies everyone already knew. But what Facebook users immediately did was exactly what people have done for decades: mostly ignore major-brand advertising. Scroll by an ad, click Skip Ad, and (in more recent years) employ ad blockers. Users didn't care about ads on Facebook any more than they cared about ads pasted on the walls of subway stations.



Major advertising is interesting to most of us only during the Super Bowl. Advertising is annoying. It's added cloyingly to free video games to bother players until they pay for the ad-free version. Major companies realized during Facebook's initial boom that social media made it fairly easy for users to avoid their ads, unlike the captive audience watching TV or driving by massive billboards on the freeway. What could they do?

On the heels of Facebook's immense initial explosion came YouTube, which at first didn't start as a socially focused platform, but instead simply a place to upload videos. YouTube evolved into one of the most socially influential platforms in the world, with some channel owners boasting tens of millions of subscribers. This was not overlooked by advertisers, as many hyper-successful YouTube channels yield millions of dollars of revenue for their owners from advertising alone.

Then along came Instagram, which exploded because of its return-to-simplicity approach that social media started as, and Facebook swiftly bought it out.

In 2018, the merits—and pitfalls—of social media are clear to the billions of users of the major platforms. But what very few saw coming was the emerging industry of social influencers, and how even the most mundane account could blow up into an advertising behemoth from the staggering number of people they could interact with.

But this was true with MySpace, right? Not exactly. The difference between MySpace and Facebook had to do with not only a better business plan, but better technology. One could argue that the basic nature of MySpace limited user interaction and the type of content that could be shared because the technology hadn't caught up with user demand yet.

The social influencer concept came to fruition in the last half decade or so, and something was very different this time: Big companies weren't the ones spearheading things. In fact, many big companies were reaching out to large social accounts, more or less begging them to take their money to endorse their products or services. Companies knew that influencers who grew their fanbase organically—because their followers took a personal interest in them—had far more power over their audience than any banner ad across a website. Where users ignored major ads, followers paid close attention to influencers' posts.

This was more or less an unrestricted and unregulated sub-industry of social media—until the Federal Trade Commission started cracking down on undeclared paid sponsorship of social influencers, citing concerns that this method of advertising could be manipulative or deceptive. With the new FTC regulations in place, social influencers suddenly had to become more transparent about their sponsored posts for larger brands.



Image © Nino Batista

Social influencers have evolved further in recent times by simply being modern advertising vehicles for the larger brands. They work on many levels and in many industries. For every social influencer with 23 million followers on Instagram who is posting about major brands on a schedule (mixed in with their own personal posts), there are countless Instagram users with more modest numbers doing the same thing at regional and local levels.

An independent world traveler with 132,000 followers on Instagram can share sponsored content that promotes independent clothing designers, boutique hotels, startup luggage companies and just about anything that fits squarely in the small business realm.

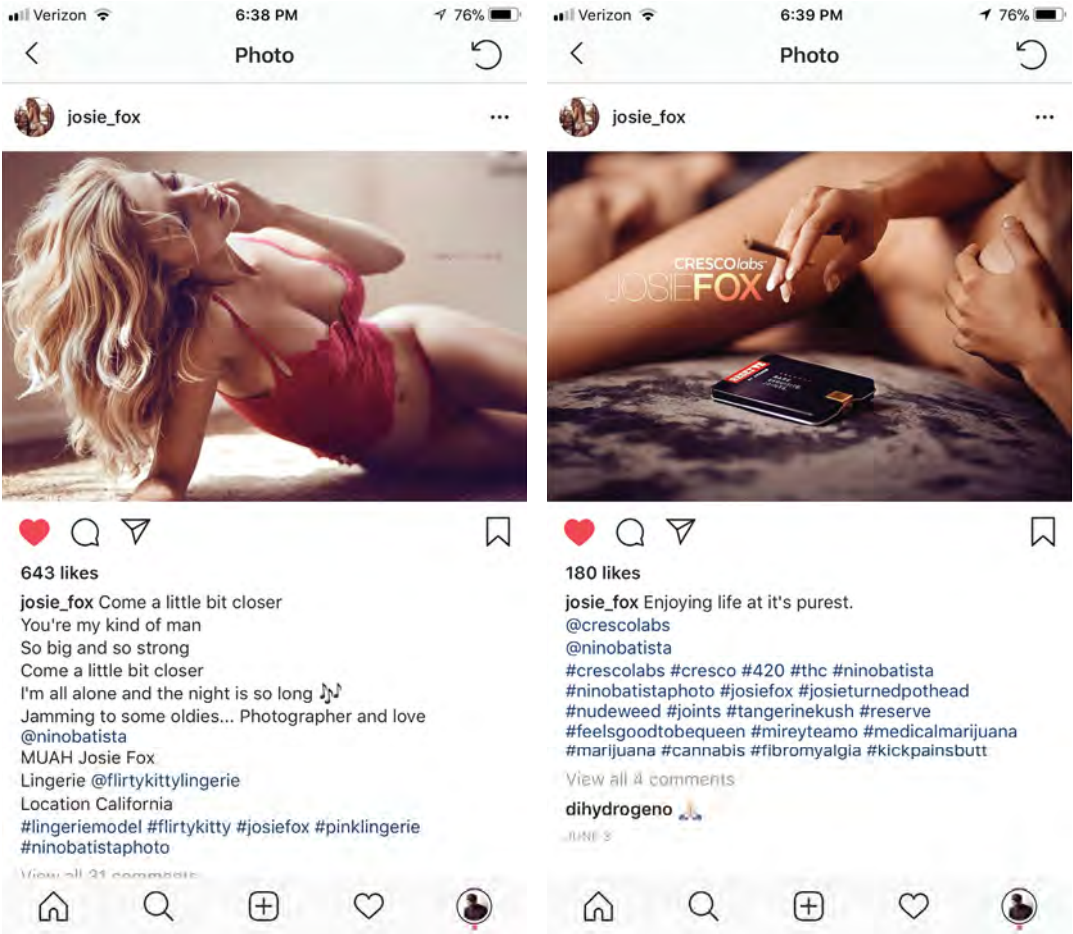
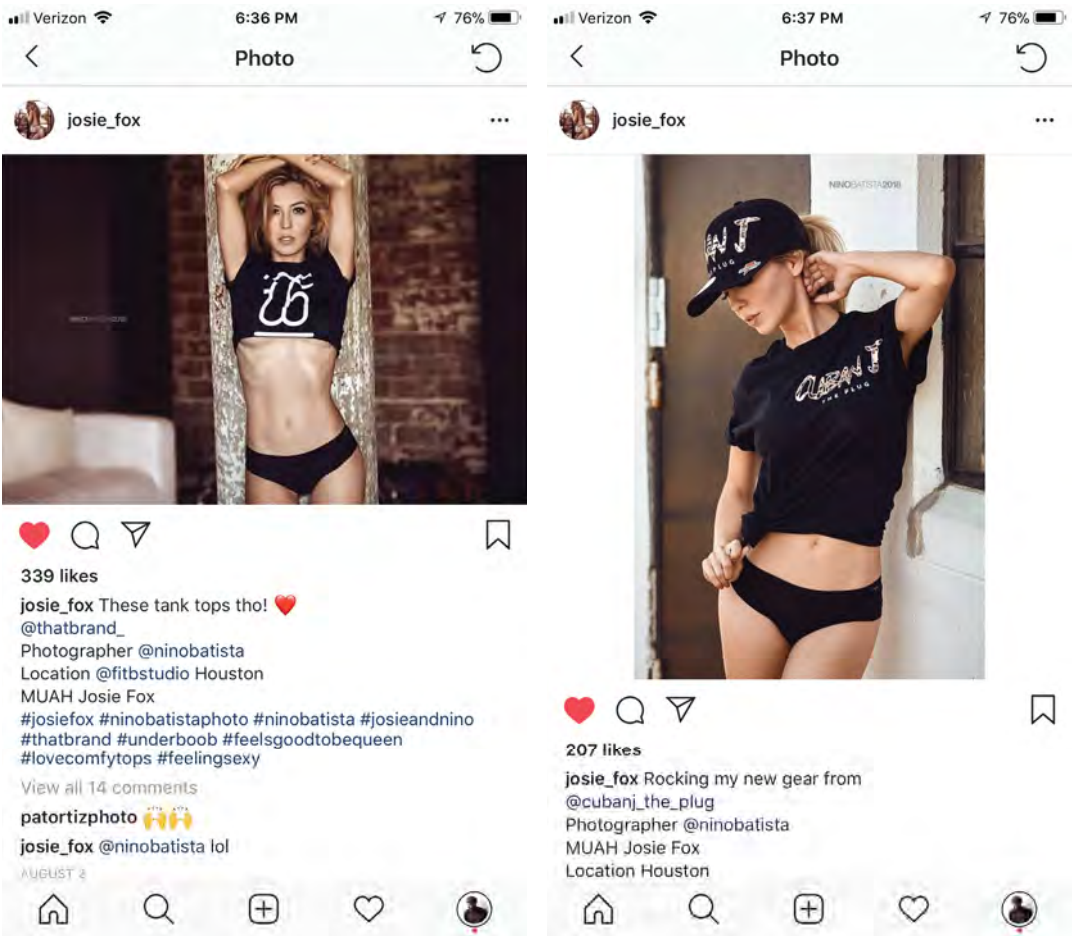
An independent fashion model with 25,000 followers can share posts showcasing new clothing lines or fashion accessory lines started by individual designers, perhaps to the point where the designer gains a significant following that kickstarts interest on a regional, national or global scale.



This is where photographers and videographers come in. Almost every form of advertising requires photographic or video content. And while the major brands pay well, smaller social media influencers are starting to realize the value in great photography. Selfies can take you only so far.

Small companies tend to have little or no advertising budget. Successful social influencers who collaborate with these small companies (essentially trading goods for advertising) are learning the value of decent photography: It attracts larger companies to their accounts.

Don't ignore the social aspect of social media. There's power in the personal posts and the vested interest followers have in these influencers. Followers want to feel connected to their influencers. Influencers understand that high-quality visual content makes a difference and keeps their follower numbers growing. This is where photographers can capitalize.



Social-influencer photography jobs don't take long. They can be done on a smartphone. You can knock out more projects at a far lower budget in a month than a single Guess campaign. Don't discount the smaller markets. A lot of the rules have since been shattered in the social media explosion. If a blue-haired British kid can make millions of dollars playing video games on YouTube, then all bets are clearly off.

There are likely some social influencers in the 10,000-to-250,000-follower range near you. Try to connect with them and show them how you can help their Instagram account look far better with your photography. If you get on board with them at 10,000 followers, imagine if they kept you as their photographer when they hit 10 million.



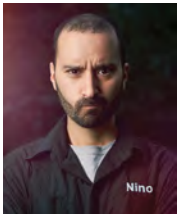


Image © Nino Batista

It's a new world, and it's a good idea to get up to speed and create new opportunities for you and your camera.

I've added few images from my own recent work I've done with Josie Fox, a fashion model and photographer who represents brands ranging in size from sole proprietors to international companies via her Instagram account. She's pushing 15,000 followers as of this writing.

These are some simple ways social influencers showcase their partnered brands. Hopefully you can see how decent photography can make all the difference. ■



Nino Batista is a commercial glamour and exotic automotive photographer based in Texas. His work is regularly published in lifestyle and men's publications all over the world, and he is regarded as one of the premier glamour photography and retouching educators in the United States. Nino is a senior writer at FStoppers.com.  
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# THE SECRETS *of* COMMERCIAL PRICING

with **Audrey Woulard**





Image © Audrey Woulard



Image © Audrey Woulard

To a lot of photographers, the various parts of commercial work can be extremely confusing. Many struggle with how to break into commercial work, or figure out how commercial work differs from editorial work. The one thing that's not often talked about is how to price commercial work. One reason is that it is almost impossible to talk sheer numbers. Commercial jobs all have different budgets determined by the business, project and location.

When I began photographing high-profile commercial assignments, I was lucky to not only work with a photographer's agent, but I was highly desired by creative directors. They wanted me to photograph the assignment I was bidding for. I became good friends with the creative director I worked with at Williams-Sonoma. Having those relationships made navigating the unknown very easy.

Don't price yourself too low. The client will wonder what's wrong with you or your work. Clients care about your work and how easy you are to work with. If you're priced too low, it raises a red flag. If you're priced too high, you may lose the bid. Here are some key points to keep in mind.

It is not uncommon to ask a potential commercial client what their budget is. If a commercial client contacts you to submit a bid, ask what their budget is. The answer helps you allocate resources within the quote so you can come up with a price range that you can work within. If you are someone who worries if you will price yourself too high or too low, this is the perfect lead-in question.

Creative directors like to see numbers their own way. Some prefer to have their quotes broken down line by line, and want to know how much you're spending for everything involved. Line items include the fees for the photographer, models, assistants and location. Other creative directors prefer to have everything presented as one fee. Within that one fee, the photographer is responsible for covering all costs involved. Which one do you choose? It's partly up to you. If you start quoting potential commercial clients with line-item bids and you're not being chosen, try submitting quotes as one lump sum.





Image © Audrey Woulard

What you include in your quote is another question that many struggle with. You should charge for your time and the images. These two things are completely separate. Commercial clients usually do not need a ton of images, but they want to have all the images upfront so they can choose those that work best with their collateral. For portrait photographers, this may seem strange, like you’re giving up a full gallery of images that they aren’t paying for. This is why your photographer fee shouldn’t be cheap. It should be at least four figures.

What you charge for the images depends on the usage. Some companies want to use images for just a year. If you have a client who wants a one- to two-year usage agreement, that means they will use the images for up to two years. After that time, they may hire you to reshoot, or they may pay you for another one- to two-year usage. There are also companies that prefer unlimited usage. An unlimited usage agreement should be priced a lot higher than the former.



Image © Audrey Woulard

What should you charge for your images? That is a loaded question without a one-size-fits-all answer. The variables include how long they plan on using the images, what the images will be used for, whether the images will be online and how popular their website is. Images used for Target.com will be priced a lot higher than headshots for a Fortune 500 company because the images on the Target website have a much higher reach.

FotoQuote gives you a ballpark figure that can help you price the actual images. It is used for pricing stock images, but the thought process is the same. Enter parameters to find what a particular image is worth. Most of the money made in the commercial world is from selling images. It is the same premise when a portrait photographer sells prints.



Another line item that many forget to add to a quote is the post processing. With larger commercial jobs, an individual called a digital tech is often on set. This person is responsible for post-processing the images for the client. When shooting on a large set, the photographer is often tethered to a computer. The digital tech receives those images. This person works with the creative director to choose the best pictures while you're shooting. Of course, this person needs to be paid. Their fee comes out of the four figures. If you have a much smaller job with a lower budget, this fee would perhaps be a bit lower, but the takeaway is that it should be a line item in your quote. If you are your own digital tech, you'd also charge for the post processing.







Image © Audrey Woulard

As you can see, the commercial world can be hard to navigate, and pricing can be a mystery. Hopefully this article answered a few basic questions and encouraged you tackle commercial yourself. ■



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

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# SHOOTING HOMES FOR INTERIOR DESIGNERS

with Amy Bartlam

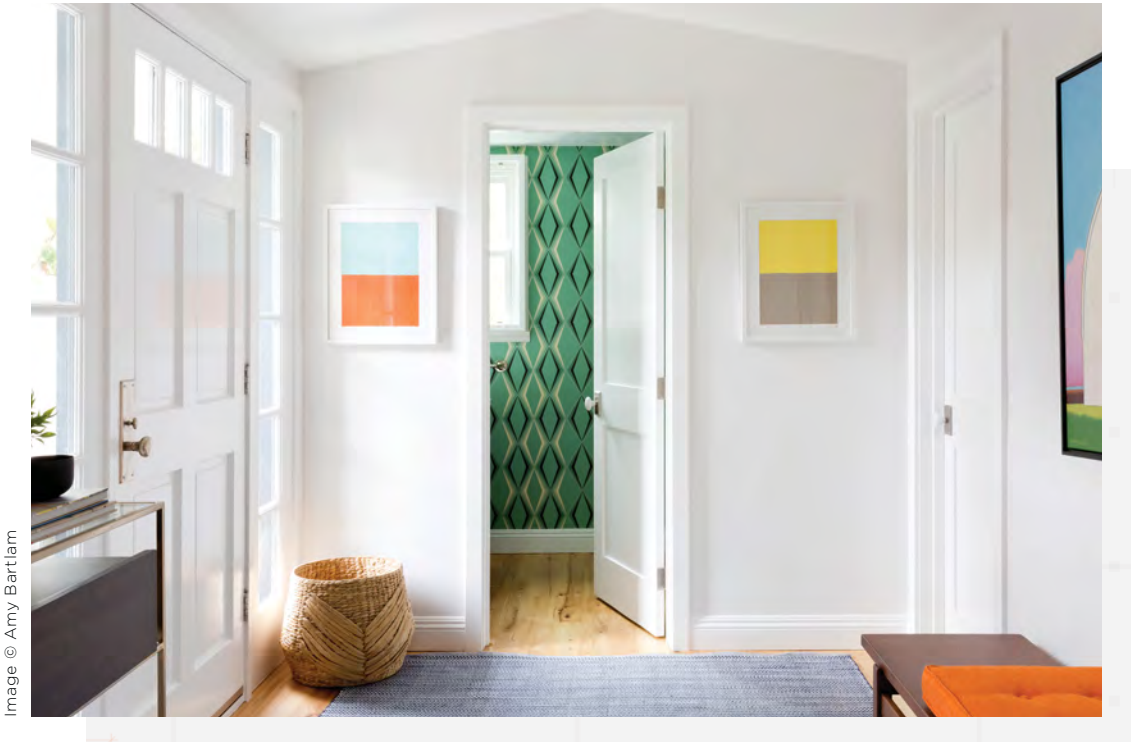




There are a lot of moving parts in shooting a home, and while you may be acquainted with what it takes to shoot a house for real estate, shooting for an interior designer or magazine brings a slightly different set of requirements. Here's my guide to shooting an interior with an editorial slant.

EQUIPMENT

- Tripod
- Full-frame DSLR
- Lenses ranging from around 17mm to 70mm (or a zoom lens with a similar range)
- Laptop
- Tether cable



WALK-THROUGH

The first thing I always do is walk through the home with the designer and make a plan for the order to shoot the rooms in. It's best to avoid sunlight streaming directly through the windows, which can create hot spots, so I use the compass app on my iPhone to check the direction of the windows in each room and plan accordingly. Obviously, overcast days eradicate this problem, but those are few and far between in Southern California. The walk-through is also a great opportunity to learn about the project from the designer. I find out which aspects of the project they love and which are important for them to showcase, which helps me prioritize what to shoot.



SETUP AND SETTINGS

I use a tripod, low ISO, small aperture and very slow shutter speeds, and I tether to my laptop. It's important to use manual mode because you need control over all your settings; you'll find in-camera metering is generally way off for interiors, especially if you're in a room with windows in just one wall. A small aperture (such as f/18) is required for full-room shots. I use a bigger aperture (such as f/4) for tighter vignettes and details. Live view gives me a rough idea of whether my settings are correct. Aperture and shutter priority modes don't work well for anything other than detail shots, but I recommend using manual for those too.

Live view drains your battery fast. Always bring a couple of spares. On a full-day shoot, I go through three or four batteries.

LEVEL

A common mistake I see with interior photography is images that have been shot at eye level pointing to the ground, resulting in converging lines and distortion. An important part of an interior shot is having all your vertical and horizontal lines parallel, which means you'll need to shoot perfectly level and at around waist height. I use live view, grid and the levels on my tripod to get this as accurate as possible in camera. I also use the Upright adjust tool in Lightroom and the Skew and Warp tools in Photoshop to correct any wayward lines. If you've got the budget, a tilt-shift lens will help get this more precise in camera; for a more affordable option, buy a level with a hot-shoe mount.

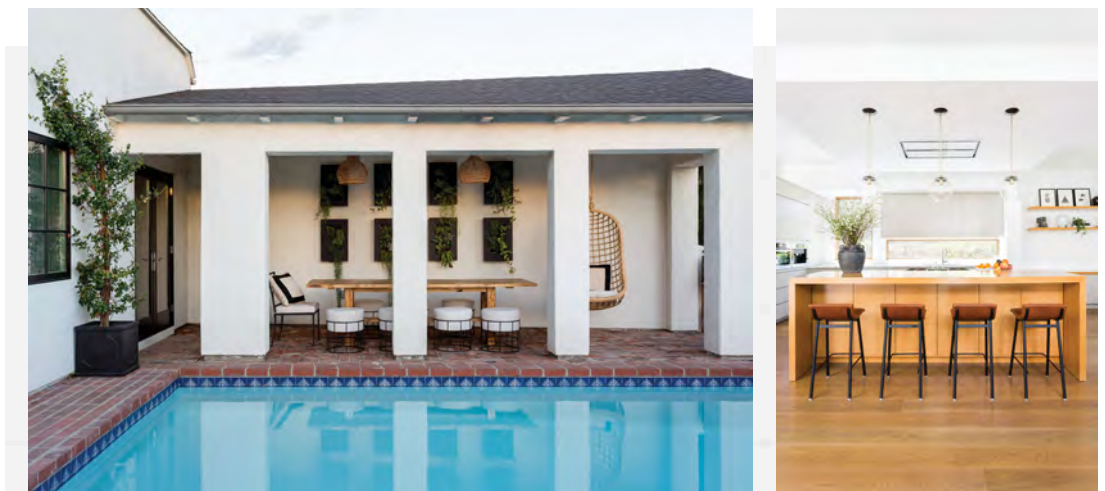




## ANGLES

When deciding which angle to shoot a room from, I try a straight-on first, which design magazines and blogs often prefer. I find severe angles a little distracting. This isn't always possible—sometimes the room layout literally backs you into a corner and sometimes a client pushes for it.

When shooting wide/full-room shots, stand as far back as possible and zoom into the shot, which minimizes distortion and avoids the overly wide feel common in real estate photography. This is helpful in shooting exteriors too (since it helps avoid the toppling-building feel) and also bedrooms: Beds are big and fill a room, making them prone to distortion. If there isn't enough space for me to stand far back and zoom in to get a wide bedroom shot, I use a strong vignette instead; a favorite is to take a vertical shot straight on of one side of the bed, incorporating as many features as possible (headboard, sheets, pillows, rug, lamp).



## PORTRAIT VS. LANDSCAPE

If you've shot real estate, you know landscape shots are generally preferred. While it's not uncommon for my clients to request a few horizontals (since these fit a lot of website templates nicely), I shoot more portraits. Magazines prefer verticals because they fit the page better, and Pinterest and Instagram, which both favor portrait shots, are key platforms for many of my clients' businesses.





### TURN OFF THE LIGHTS

I always turn off overhead cans and lamps, which may feel counterintuitive, but having them on while using long exposures can get you harsh spots of blown-out highlights and odd color temperatures. It is also common in real estate photography to leave lights on, so it's an aesthetic I try to avoid. I make exceptions for light sources the client wants to showcase.

### NATURAL LIGHT

There is a trend in the industry toward the natural light look. Open all shades and drapes to let in as much light as possible. Closed window treatments can make it look like you're hiding something outside. I shoot entirely ambient light, but this is more a preference than anything else. You can light a space with strobes, but I prefer to bracket and work with layer masks in Photoshop.

### BRACKETING

Shooting a couple of stops under and over is always a good idea. You may need to shoot more than that depending on the range of light in a room. I use this method to recover window details or shadowy areas. If I have a client who wants some lights on in a shot, I shoot a separate image, exposing for the lights, and layer it in afterward in Photoshop.

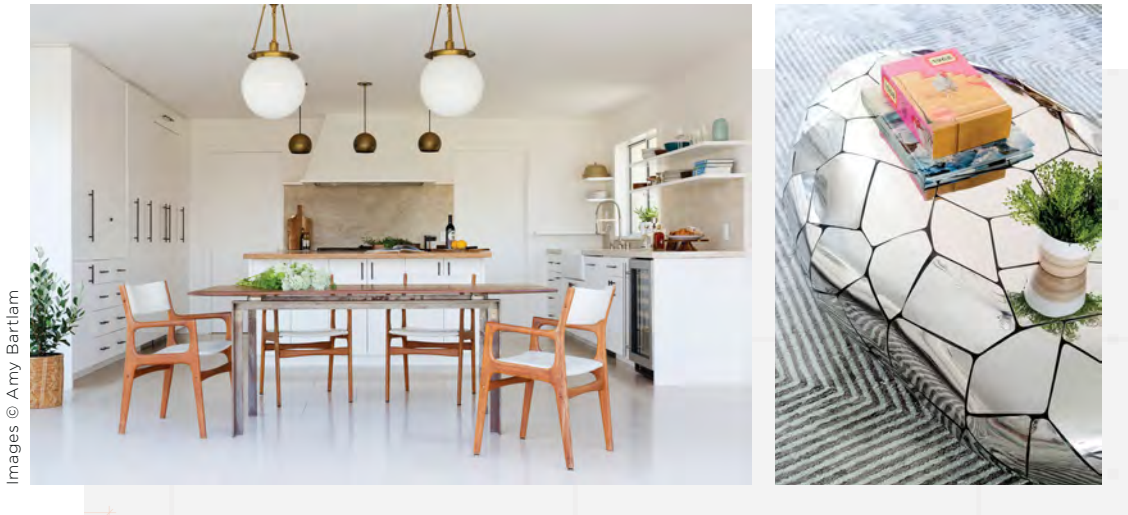
### TETHERING

I use a five-pin to USB tether cable for my Canon kit. It's worth investing in JerkStopper clips. Your cable will accidentally get pulled out of your camera from time to time, and the connectors can be delicate and easily damaged. JerkStopper clips prevent stress, dislodging and damage.

There are a couple of software options for tethering. If you have Canon equipment, you have a copy of EOS Disk Utility, a great option for tethering. You can use it to link up live view. Lightroom is commonly used as well but has a tendency to drop out for no reason at all; Disk Utility is more reliable. Some cameras aren't compatible with Lightroom's tether software, but Capture One also has tether capability. Check your equipment's compatibility with the software before making a purchase.

Tethering can be a big help for a number of reasons. It gives you a better idea of whether you are exposing correctly. My clients love to see the images on a larger scale, and they can use it to check the positioning of furniture and all the nuances that make an interior shot go from good to great.





DETAILS

Until I started shooting with interior designers, I didn’t realize the extent to which furniture and accessories are moved for each shot—from completely removing pieces to pushing a vase an inch. I move things to compensate for the foreshortening created by the lens. I may have to move tables and sofas into what seems like strange positions in real life to make them look normal in camera. My clients like to try different accessories and flowers until we get the perfect composition.

KEEP IT TIDY

Save yourself a lot of bother in post by tucking away unsightly items such as wires. I carry painter’s tape so I can keep wires out of sight. I wish I’d known this when I first started shooting interiors. Remember to also be wary of reflections. In an interior, there are often many reflective surfaces, even subtle ones like a gloss finish on a cabinet. Be mindful where you or anyone working with you is standing.

An important difference between interior photography and real estate photography is what the images are selling. With the latter, the aim is to sell a house, so making it look big and bright is paramount. With interiors, you are selling a lifestyle and showcasing high design and luxury, so that is what you need to keep at the forefront of your mind when you’re shooting. ■



Amy Bartlam was born in the UK and graduated with a B.A. in photography and visual communication from Birmingham Institute of Art and Design. She moved to Los Angeles in 2013 and specializes in shooting interiors for designers and magazines. Her work has been seen in the *Los Angeles Times*, *LA Home*, *California Homes* and *Luxe*, and on the design blogs Architectural Digest, Elle Decor, Domino and Dwell.  
[amybartlam.com](http://amybartlam.com)

A dramatic, high fashion campaign for leather goods brand, Bone Feather, required dimension, tone, and a sophisticated ambiance that could only be created by shaping the light.

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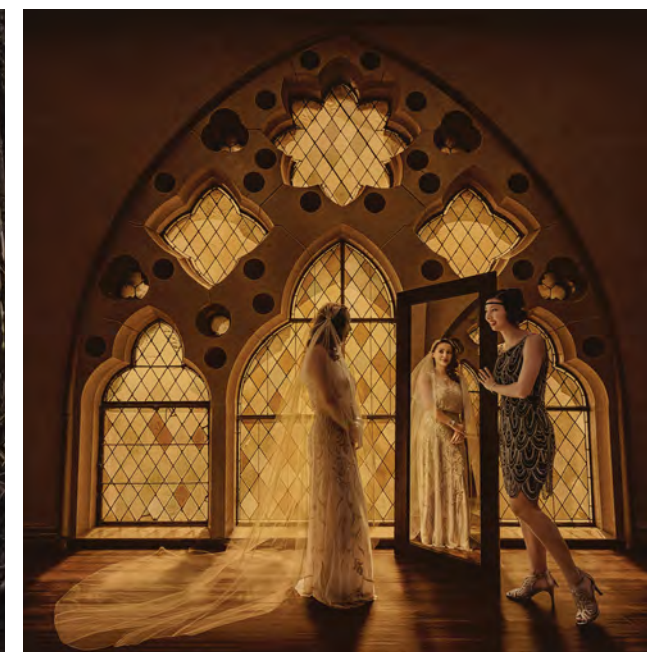


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## INSPIRATIONS

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

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

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

BEST COMMERCIAL IMAGE





Image © Cristian Serrano

Image © Jeff Petersen Studios



Image © Jeff Petersen Studios

Image © Giancarlo Pawelec



Image © Giancarlo Pawelec





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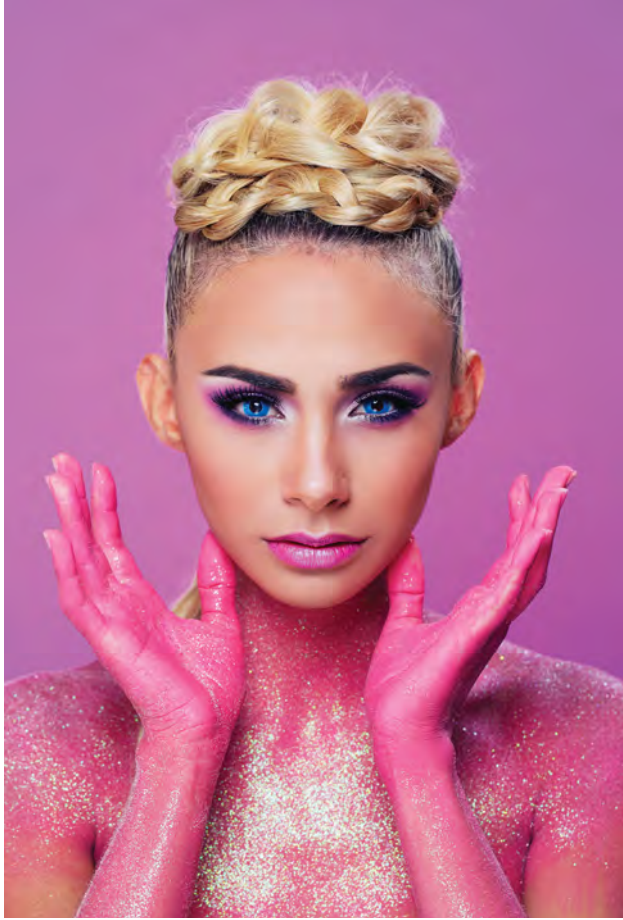


Image © Noel Del Pilar



Image © April Heckemeyer



Image © Joey Thomas



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Image © Rachael Polglaze Photography



Image © Meredith Ryncarz Photography



Image © Abbie Miller



Image © Joey Clinton



A black Profoto A1 studio light is shown from a low angle, attached to a camera. The light head is circular and illuminated, with the Profoto logo and 'A1' and 'AirTTL' markings visible. The background is dark.

## The world's smallest studio light Profoto A1

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A black Profoto B10 off-camera flash is shown from a side profile. It has a cylindrical body with the Profoto logo and a series of four vertical indicators labeled 4, 3, 2, and 1. The background is dark.

## The power of small Profoto B10

Size matters. That's why we made our latest off-camera flash as small as a camera lens, yet more powerful than five speedlights. It's also a video light, a smartphone light and it's compatible with more than 120 light shaping tools - so it delivers beautiful light. The Profoto B10; this is light unleashed - you unleashed.

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**In the beautiful chaos of India.  
Around the blue city of Jodhpur.  
Joseph Radhik and Two Mann  
Studios embark on an adventure.  
With contrasting styles, and one  
small but powerful light.**

**“The light we created; we  
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# The power of small

## With Two Mann Studios

### The shoot

Erika and Lanny Mann of Two Mann Studios are leading wedding photographers with their own unique style. Here, in the beautiful blue city of Jodhpur Lanny and Erika were shooting fellow photographer Joseph Radhik and his wife Devika using the Profoto B10. Their style tends to be spontaneous and organic, finding the frame as they work. Here in the blue city, there was so much to discover. Every twist and turn in this maze of endless alleyways seemed to present an image waiting to be found.

### The challenge

The streets and alleyways were filled with people making it difficult to shoot, it was hard to contain passers-by and curious onlookers, so The Manns had to work and think fast. Add to that, the narrow alleyways with all their twists and turns presented extremes of light and shadow, which with the B10 the Manns were able to use to their advantage.

### The solution

They happened upon a passageway with a sharp turn at the end. Lanny to position himself just out of shot just around the corner, holding the B10 by hand. Erika was standing at the other end of the passageway shooting Joseph and Devika as they walked through the turn approaching the camera. With a half CTO gel on the B10, they fired warm light on to the back wall silhouetting Joseph and Devika against the warm orange tones. In the foreground, Erika was able to place one of the many dogs that roam the city to add shape and interest. Sometimes you need a little luck to get the shot and Erika got it with the dog that just took a break from investigating garbage long enough for her to get the shot.

### The gear

- 1 x Profoto B10
- 1 x OCG Gel (CTO)



# The power to be creative in more ways than ever before

## Profoto B10

### Big light from a small package

It's small, just a little bigger than a medium-sized zoom lens. That said, it punches significantly above its weight delivering five times the power of a speedlight. Light that's natural and beautiful with a gentle fall-off.

### Shoot still and video

Beyond the still image, the B10 allows you to shoot video with its highly effective continuous light. And you can adjust both brightness and color temperature to blend the light perfectly with the ambient light.

### Ease of use and flexibility built-in

The clean and minimal interface makes it easy to use straight from the box. The battery is quick and easy to switch in and out, and you can also charge it while it's in use. You can just as easily mount the B10 on a camera tripod as on a light stand, and because it's super lightweight, you can use it handheld.

### Endless light shaping possibilities

Choose from a dozen light shaping tools in Profoto's compact and lightweight OCF family, and beyond that, there are 120 more available in the full Profoto range. The tools allow you to shape and create any kind of light.

### Seamless control

We've made working off-camera easy because you can trigger and control the B10 from up to 300 meters away wirelessly with any Profoto AirTTL remote, or the Profoto A1. Point and shoot with TTL and enjoy the freedom to switch to manual at any time. Profoto AirTTL remotes are available for all major camera brands.

### Shape light from the palm of your hand

With the B10 connected to the Profoto app you have a smart remote that allows you to view and control all the light settings and access all the latest updates from your smartphone. And with the built-in Profoto camera you can play with light and shadow, and capture images with complete creative control.



### Photographer

©Two Mann Studios  
www.twomann.com

### Location

Jodhpur, India



# The power of small

## Profoto B10



© Joesph Radhik

**Location**  
Thar Desert, India

**The gear**  
1 x Profoto B10  
1 x OCF Magnum Reflector



© Two Mann Studios

**Location**  
Stepwell, Jodhpur

**The gear**  
1 x Profoto B10  
1 x OCF Gel (CTO)



# The power of small

## Profoto B10



© Joesph Radhik

**Location**  
Thar Desert, India

**The gear**  
1 x Profoto B10  
1 x OCF Magnum Reflector



© Two Mann Studios

**Location**  
The Blue City, India

**The gear**  
2 x Profoto B10  
1 x OCF Grid 10°  
1 x OCF Gel (CTO)







Image © Katrina Winter



Image © Luis E Torres



Image © Mary Burgy



Image © Giancarlo Pawelec



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HOW TO RECOGNIZE & PREVENT

# PHOTOGRAPHY BURNOUT

with Skip Cohen



In blog posts and workshops over the years, I’ve written and talked a lot about recognizing when you need a break. I always get great feedback, but it’s ironic how often I miss the signs myself and fail to follow my own advice.

One of the hardest things to do as a small business owner, especially artists, is to recognize when you’re approaching burnout. It’s all about your passion for the craft and your definition of success.

Too many of you define success only in financial terms. We all work hard to support our families, lifestyle and zest for life, and it takes money, but so often we miss the true meaning of success. For me, it’s evolved into waking up every morning with incredible enthusiasm and a smile on my face. And it’s taken me a lifetime to learn that.

Sometime after you read this article, think through your definition of success. What do you enjoy most about the business? What do you want things to look like a couple of years from now? What do you need in your skill set to achieve your goals?

All of us experience stress. Nobody is sailing through life on smooth waters all the time. Things happen that slow us down and blur our focus on what’s most important.

If you Google “signs of burnout,” you’ll find endless articles. The following five points are from an article on Healthline.com.

- Everything about your job starts to annoy you.
- You have zero energy to give.
- Work/life balance is nonexistent.
- You eat, sleep and dream work.
- You’re an irritable mess.

Here are my five, some of which overlap, but they tie more to photography.



1. APATHY

It’s the first sign of burnout and needing a break. You feel blah about whatever you’re about to photograph. When you lack enthusiasm, odds are you’re going to lack creativity too.

2. FRUSTRATION

You did everything right, but the images don’t match what was in your mind’s eye as you were clicking the shutter.

3. ANGER

You seem to have a short fuse about anything that’s not planned.

4. LOW ENERGY

You’re tired and can’t seem to get excited about what you’re doing. Your camera bag feels like it’s getting heavier.

5. DISTRACTED

Your mind seems to be everywhere but whatever you’re working on. You’ve noticed you don’t want to answer the phone and don’t want to deal with clients.



The signs are always obvious when we talk about them, but they’re not when they’re happening. I can’t figure out what’s wrong but I know when I’m off my game. That’s often where my wife, Sheila, comes in—and your own family can be very important in helping you, too.

Here are some strategies to think about.

**YOUR FAMILY**

You’ve got to keep your family in the loop. They can’t understand your frustration if they don’t know what you’re working on. They need to be a sounding board for your ideas, both the good and the bad. The more they know about your business, the more they can help, even if it’s just to be a sounding board.

**CLOSE FRIENDS IN THE INDUSTRY**

These are the people who are at the core of your network, the ones you trust the most. Don’t be afraid to share your frustrations and seek their help to get back on track.

**TAKE TIME OFF**

It’s taken me years to figure this one out. I’m great at taking short breaks from the business, but horrible at taking longer quality time off. And even when I take time off, I still work every morning checking email and writing blog posts.

**QUICK CHARGES VERSUS REBUILDING**

When I think of the need to step away from the business, there are two kinds of breaks. The first is just a quick charge. The signs for me are my lack of creativity, writer’s block and my inability to focus. A quick charge can be anything as long as I’m stepping away from what I’m working on. I just need to do something different, like go out to lunch with Sheila, take a walk on the beach or listen to some great music.

For many of you, just taking your camera out and shooting for your own enjoyment or stepping away from photography completely might be the break you need. Whatever works for you. It’s a quick charge of your battery, and then you go back to what you were working on a few hours later.

The complete rebuild is a lot harder to figure out, but it’s worth it. This is about going off the grid—at least regarding your business and photography. It’s about taking a vacation. So often over the years, especially when I was in the corporate world, I’ve heard people boast about how long they’ve gone without a vacation, as if it’s some badge of honor that they have vacation days they’ll never use. Actually, they should be embarrassed.

Here are some more strategies to think about.

**BACKUP**

You’re familiar with backup gear—but what people are your backup? When you need to take a more extended break than just a quick charge, who’s stepping in to run the business? And if you don’t have anybody, isn’t it time you trained somebody to step in? Or how about building a relationship with another photographer so you watch out for each other when needed?

**FRIENDS OUTSIDE THE INDUSTRY**

Don’t underestimate the importance of spending time with friends who are involved in businesses outside photography. It’s incredible what you can learn, but even better how much fun it is to spend time talking about something other than imaging. Build those relationships in your community. Participate in networking events. Build a segment of your network with people you enjoy being with, but not as business associates.

**SHOOTING FOR THE FUN OF IT**

When was the last time you had a camera in your hands for no other purpose than to play? Remember your roots and go back to those things you photographed that got you into the business in the first place. For me, nothing beats chasing butterflies with a Lumix.

**COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

Here in Sarasota, Florida, I’m involved with a nonprofit called the Friendship Centers. Being involved with charitable organizations boosts my energy and can often get me out of a rut. It’s about doing something that makes a difference and at the same time is entirely outside my business. For many of you, it might serve a dual purpose: building brand awareness while enjoying the satisfaction of being involved. Remember, you want your community to be good to you, so you better make sure you’re good to your community.

**DIVERSITY**

Burnout can come when you’ve been doing the same thing for too long. I’ve got a good friend who’s been a wedding photographer for a lot of years. He’s incredibly bored, and although he’s one of the very best, he’s lost his passion for it. He’s recognized the importance of a change before he burns out, and we’ve had some great conversations about what he might do next. Sometimes, just talking about a change has therapeutic value. The energy that goes into planning becomes a diversion that can pull you out of a rut.





### GET ENOUGH SLEEP AND EXERCISE

Sleep and exercise have a crucial impact on burnout, but they're often the last thing we think about. Everyone has a different level of sleep they require. When I'm running low on sleep, it's like being overdrawn on a bank account. You've got to get in the sleep and replenish your account. Don't underestimate your need for more sleep.

It's so hard to stay focused and turn exercise into a habit. Sheila and I started walking every morning 16 months ago. If I had been doing it by myself, I know I wouldn't have kept it up. If you have a partner, it's so much easier to stay focused. Many of us spend all our waking time at a computer. Just following through on an exercise program isn't enough. The recommended time sitting at a computer is one hour with a five- to 10-minute break to get up and walk around.

Learn to recognize when you need a break. When you're working with your clients, you've got one essential goal: Exceed their expectations. That means the images you capture need to pull at their heartstrings. And you can't create photographs that tug at people's heartstrings if your own heart isn't in it. ■

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

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



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LUMIX



Why the Lumix LX100 II?

Are you a photographer? Do you have a gear problem when you travel? I do. You know what they say, the best camera is the one you have with you. As a working professional, I loathe traveling with my gear when I don't have to, but I also want more than just an iPhone photo.

The Lumix LX100 II is the perfect companion, lightweight and powerful. Check out the specs.

- 17 MP [4:3 aspect] high-sensitivity multi-aspect four thirds MOS sensor. 4:3, 3:2, 16:9, 1:1 multi-aspect modes taken from 21.77 megapixel total count
- Leica DC 24-75mm lens (F1.7-2.8), with POWER O.I.S. (optical image stabilizer)
- 24p/30p 4K video and exclusive 4K photo modes plus focus stacking
- Electronic viewfinder EVF (2,764k-dot), and large 3-inch touch-sensitive monitor (1240k-dot)
- Classic external manual exposure and camera operation controls

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# How to Find Photography Inspiration

with Scott Detweiler





Image © Scott Detweiler

Just like writers or painters, photographers can run into creative blocks and get stuck in a rut. These creative ruts can last days or even weeks, and in extreme cases of creative drought can also lead to loss of interest in photography altogether. But even if you are always busy with photography, new sources of inspiration can energize and invigorate your spirit and take your work in a new and unexpected direction.

## AVOIDING ENNUI

“Ennui” basically means world-weariness. It’s when you get bored doing the same thing each day, and there is little to no excitement to make your life interesting. It’s that “sleep, eat, work” pattern when we notice we need a vacation. The same thing can happen in photography. Shooting tons of weddings or portraits can lead to a sense of repetition and the feeling of “wash, rinse, spin, repeat” that starts to set in and suck at your soul. Looking for ways to stretch creatively can add lifeblood back into the thing that drew you into photography to start with.

This article might help in ways you never expected. Keep in mind as you read it that I enjoy a more dramatic type of photo, so if you are into something more subtle, these ideas will apply but my examples may leave you shaking your head.

## SHOOTING OUTSIDE YOUR COMFORT ZONE

Consider working with atypical subject matter. If you are a wedding photographer, shoot in a studio or in a controlled setting, like some fashion or bridal boudoir. If you are a portrait person, work with product shots or pets. Seek unique challenges. These exercises help keep things fresh and can lead to happy accidents. Over the past year, I was shooting a few products on the side for a small company, and I discovered so much more about lighting that it has opened a lot of creative doors in my portrait work. Lighting has a lot of nuances at the product level that are not obvious in a portrait, and that was an unexpected and enjoyable discovery.

Another fun exercise is to work with equipment that is new to you so you have to push yourself. Challenge yourself to shoot a portrait with a 16mm lens or light a scene with a speedlight and an empty spaghetti box. Using equipment that is comfortable is lovely for when things are going well, but when you need that break from reality, see what you can discover.



KEEPING ORGANIZED

Before we begin the process of building a morgue of ideas (yes, that is actually the term), we need to ponder its organization. Having a ton of great ideas for inspiration isn’t useful if they are buried in random places and we can’t find them when we need them.

When you’re working with a client and know there are other shots you should consider, that is not the ideal time to wrestle with an unorganized Dropbox of thousands of images. I break my ideas down into generic folders that are specific enough to get me into the right neighborhood (boudoir, themes, lighting, poses, makeup, hair). I have no issues with the same inspirational image living in more than one folder. An image might be in the boudoir folder as well as the poses folder because I find it inspirational on both counts.



HOW TO USE IDEAS

Imitation is the highest form of flattery, but we all know how it feels when someone copies an image. When you find something that inspires you, make it your own. When I see an inspirational image, it’s usually for one specific reason—maybe the pose, lighting or post-production gives me an idea.

I open images in Photoshop and make annotations on the image. Almost always, the aspect that is the spark for my idea has nothing to do with what that image looks like. It might be one specific thing I love, and the rest may not be interesting to me. A lovely photo of a geisha in a Japanese garden might be inspirational because I like the foreground of falling cherry blossoms, and that’s it.





PINTEREST

Pinterest is an excellent tool for creatives. Not only can you find great ideas to spark your creative fire, but many of its tools help you find images with a similar look or feel. Pinterest is a great place to store my ideas in private or on shared pinboards.

I have even created inspiration boards with clients, but I make it clear these are for inspiration only and not our shot list. That is quite an important thing to point out, or you might face a nightmare situation. We have all heard of or encountered the client with the massive pinboard of shots they want, but don’t let that dissuade you from using the product.

The other reason I love Pinterest is that it allows me to organize my ideas for easy access from my phone. Keeping your morgue of ideas organized is critical. You need to be able to get to them when needed. I prefer it to Dropbox.



COMIC BOOKS

Nothing beats the dramatic angles used in comic books. Artists in this industry are godlike in their ability to portray so much using just pen and ink.

Not many of us look to comic books for creative scenes, angles and poses. But the perspective, color and image balance in comics are done so well that they could be textbook examples photographers use as departure points for dramatic work. Many comic books and Japanese comics (manga) are available in digital format so your kids or neighbors won’t know about your secret addiction. I find many of the Japanese animated movies (anime) to be excellent for the same reasons. Some great examples are *Akira* and *Ghost in the Shell*.





PAINTINGS

As I covered in my session on composition at ShutterFest 2017, painters show you how images can be built from the imagination. Painters use a physical medium to create scenes where every single item is placed with purpose. Unlike photographers, who might miss a random gum wrapper in the foreground of an image, a painter needs to place it into the scene. There are so many reasons to look to artists for guidance in composition. Find an artist you like and check out their entire body of work. When you find an artist you enjoy, you might see that your work tends to carry a few of those same flavors as you grow and mature as a photographer.

MOVIES AND TV

Many films and TV shows offer great lighting ideas. I loved the show *Supernatural* because the light was so inspiring. The dark and moody scenes made the show worth watching. Movies like *Fight Club*, *Inception* and, of course, *The Matrix* are just epic to me.



PEERS

We all have our photography heroes, those fantastic visionaries who set the bar we hope to attain. Keeping pace with them is a frustrating but rewarding experience.

Find people who move you and follow them on social media. Go a step further and become interactive. Many of us are just happy mashing that like button, but a comment goes a lot farther. I have become friends with my creative motivators, and getting comments from them about my work makes my day. Don't be shy. Get out there and be interactive. Just keep it friendly and avoid those pesky restraining orders.

PRINT COMPETITIONS

Although sometimes frustrating, print competitions are a great way to get a measure of your skills. We all know about the person with the nice camera down the street who's apparently a great photographer, according to the neighbors. Putting their work through the rigors of a print competition separates the wheat from the chaff. Taking criticism constructively is probably the hardest part of an image competition critique. You need to keep your mind open and trust that many of those opinions are valid. Those are places where improvement can be gleaned.

If you would like to see what the best of the best looks like, pick up a copy of an International Print Competition Loan Collection book from the PPA's annual competition. This hefty tome is an excellent source of inspiration for just about every aspect of photography and a worthy investment.

We all hit creative blocks or get bored at some point, and I hope my list of ways to wiggle out of it comes in handy. If you think of another remarkable example that works for you, reach out and let me know. ■

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Scott is a conceptual portrait photographer based in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Along with his original approach to portraits, he excels at fashion and boudoir, and is an amateur body painter. When he is not shooting, Scott turns his studio into a classroom where he holds workshops on lighting, conceptual work and boudoir. Follow him on Instagram @sedetweiler and visit his website at [www.sedetweiler.com](http://www.sedetweiler.com).  
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**DON'T FEAR WEDDING SEASON**

TOP **10** TRICKS  
— TO EDIT IN —  
Lightroom Faster

with **Dustin Lucas**

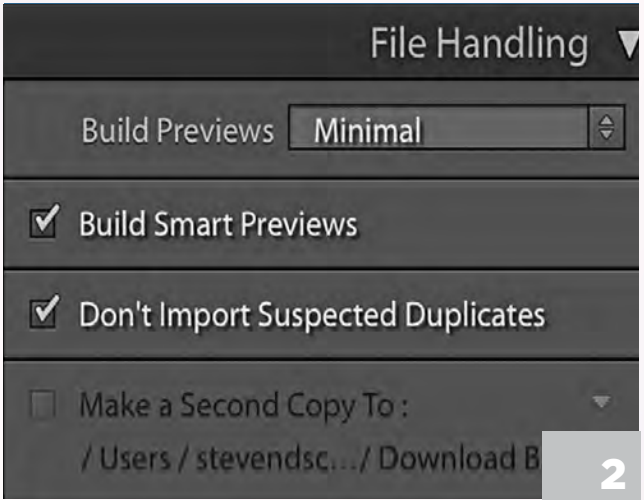
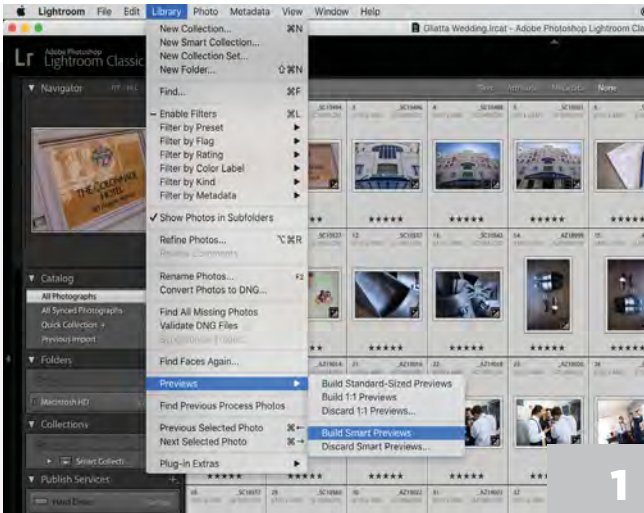


You know that feeling you get when you finish a shoot and realize how many hours you now have to work in post? Wouldn't it be nice to just import in Lightroom, click a few presets and export files? That's the point of Lightroom's efficiency, but there is some additional finessing required to ensure your images are consistent while maintaining your look and feel. Here are 10 tricks to help you get through this grueling season and edit faster.

We start with prep: smart previews, preferences and simplifying your workspace. Then we move into Develop and look at auto tools and sync settings. We will cover a lot of ground quickly. Match total exposure with shifting sequences of images along with the White Balance selector tool to get things started. Turn on white and black clipping to make sure you've got a nice dynamic range. The next best thing to auto tools is the Target Adjustment Tool for HSL and Tone Curve. We can get local with the Gradient Tool and toggle our Erase brush. Last but not least, I walk you through the Crop tool and how to navigate through multiple images faster than ever.

1. EDIT SMARTER WITH SMART PREVIEWS AND PREFERENCES

First things first, you gotta work with smart previews and tweak your preferences. (1) You can build smart previews at import or after; I recommend doing it at import so you can go have coffee and come back in an hour after 1,000 images finish. (2) These are a fraction of the size of your Raw files, and you can quickly run through your images. I disconnect my Raws many times when doing my Color Corrective adjustments. (3) Here are the preferences you need to tweak as well. (4)

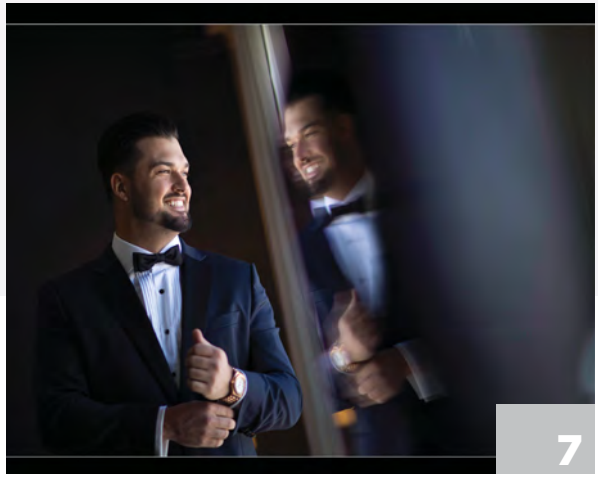
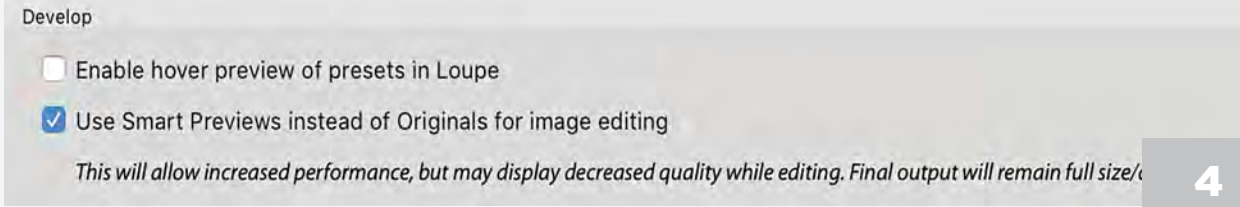
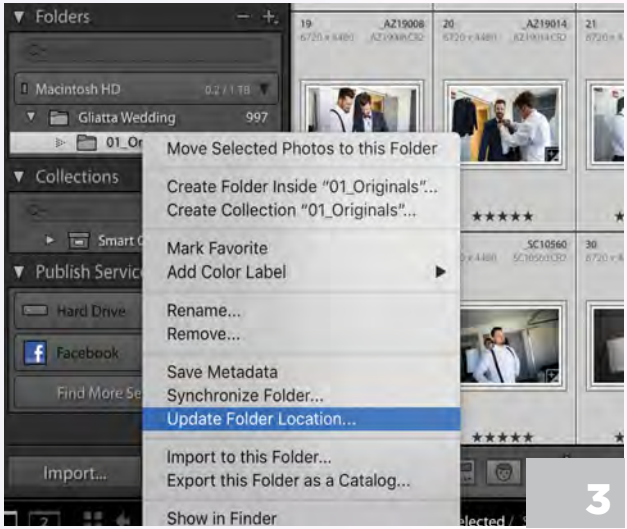


Working in Lightroom Classic, everything I need is under Performance. Here's a Lightroom 101 tip. Turn off the setting Use Graphics Processor, which is likely the reason your catalog has been dragging. Set your Maximum Size for Camera Raw Cache Settings to around 100GB—you'll thank me later. Most importantly, check the box next to Use Smart Previews instead of Originals to take full advantage of these once they're built. Take this to the next step and ditch the Original by Updating File Location and choosing where the Raws aren't saved. Now we are ready to simplify things when we edit. (5)

2. SIMPLIFY YOUR WORKSPACE

When you are looking at an image or a grid of them, seeing all the panels can distract you and take up a lot of computer screen real estate. To rid yourself of these panels, simply hold Shift and strike the Tab key. (6) Repeat this to bring them all back, or click any of the arrows to isolate a specific panel. This is useful when you want to edit on a laptop.

I also like the Lights Out tool when I want to zero in on an image. Tapping the L key in Library or Develop mode pushes away everything except the image. You can now check your exposures against a solid black background. I like to cull images in this mode to help keep me from being distracted with all the crap in Lightroom. (7)



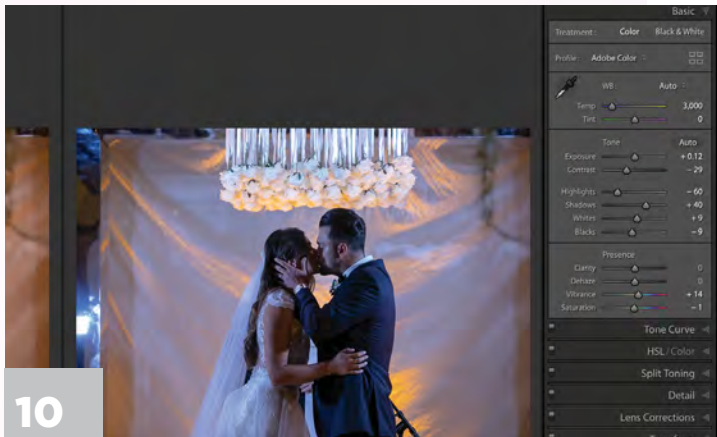
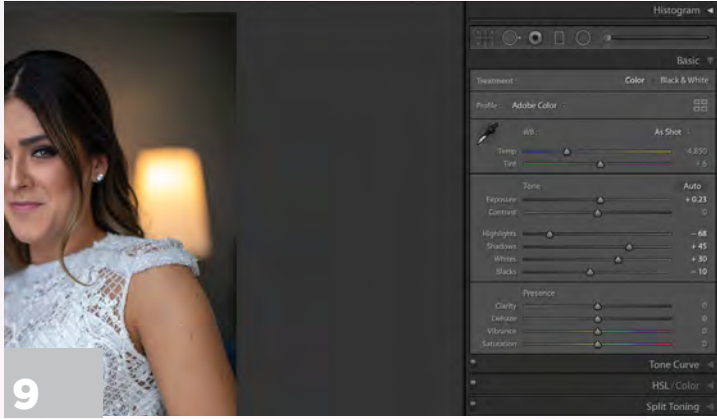
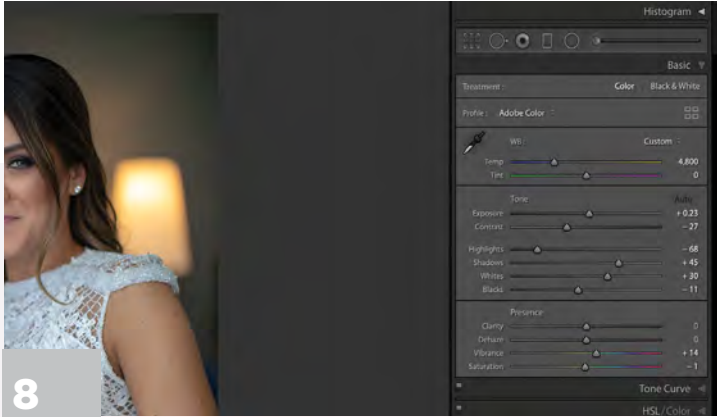


3. USE THESE QUICK-CLICK AUTO DEVELOP TOOLS

I am not an auto person. I rarely use auto, but it’s important to know how to break the rules and utilize these features to save time. Auto Tone is garbage and I stay away from it, but I will hold Shift and click on the Basic Panel tools to get a quick glance. (8)

Hold the Shift key and double-click any setting that would normally be adjusted during Auto Tone. These include temp, tint, exposure, contrast, highlights, shadows, whites, blacks, vibrance and saturation. (9) These adjustments are based on the histogram as well as Adobe Sensei, and don’t affect skin tones. These auto tools can be useful in some situations, but you can’t always depend on them. (10)

I am terrible with tint adjustments. Instead of relying solely on my camera, I use my daylight rule. Daylight-balanced scenes should be +10 in tint and, when using auto, tend to go to 0. The process is similar for temp at 5,000K for direct sun and 5,500K for flash. I find myself playing with this range rather than trying to find the colorcast visually, if that makes sense. If you want auto white balance, hold Shift and Command and strike the U key. But this won’t solve all your problems. (11)

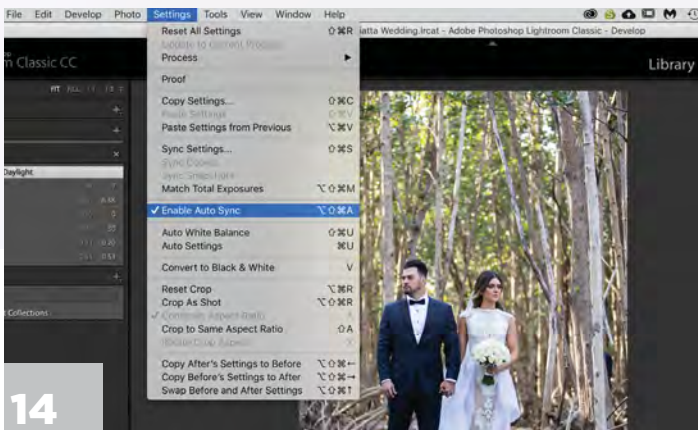
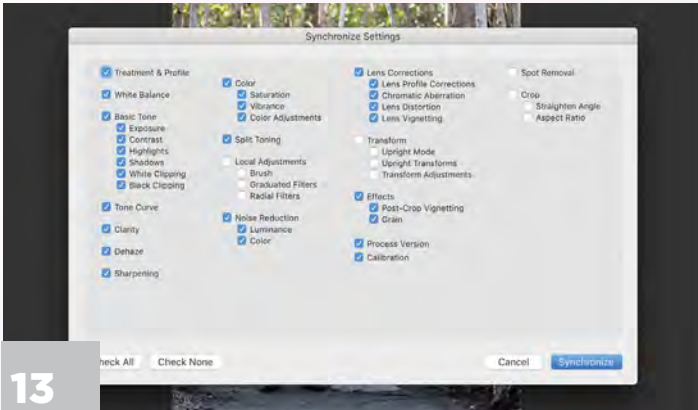


4. SYNC DEVELOP SETTINGS

Many of us use presets, which are essential to editing fast in Lightroom. When you make individualized adjustments in Develop, you need to be able to quickly copy and paste these adjustments to images in the same scene. It’s simple to do—just edit the first image and select all the remaining images in a similar sequence. Then hold Shift and Command while striking the S key. (12) This opens a menu where you choose which settings to sync. I recommend always unchecking Local Adjustments, Spot Removal and Crop. (13)

Be sure that Auto Sync isn’t turned on. With Auto Sync, anything you select will automatically sync to the adjustments made after selecting images. So if you edited prior to selecting them, the images won’t be altered until a new adjustment is made. (14)

Another great thing about Sync Settings is it remembers your last settings so you can fly through images without having to reselect settings.

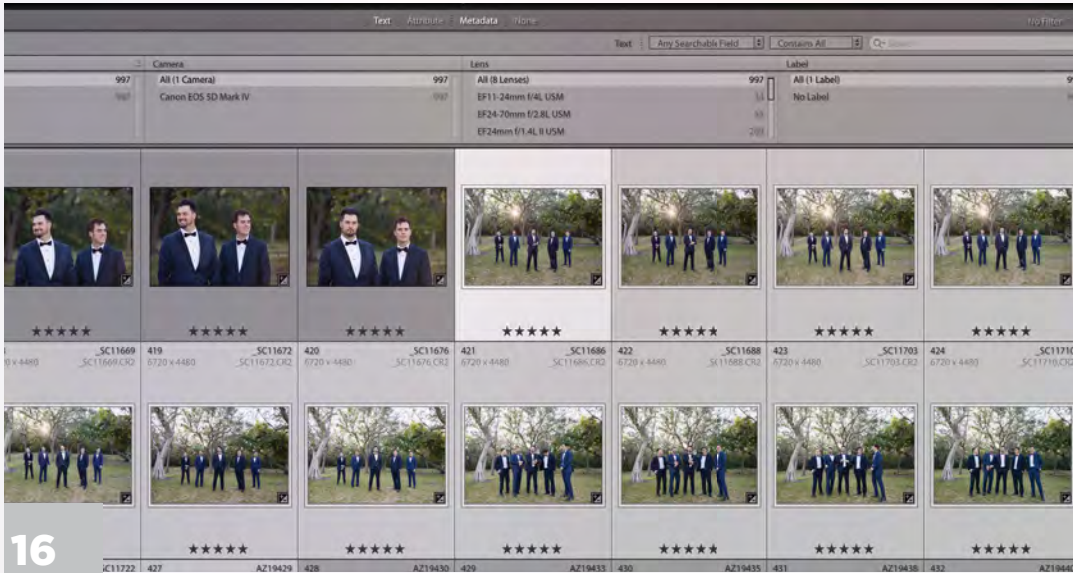
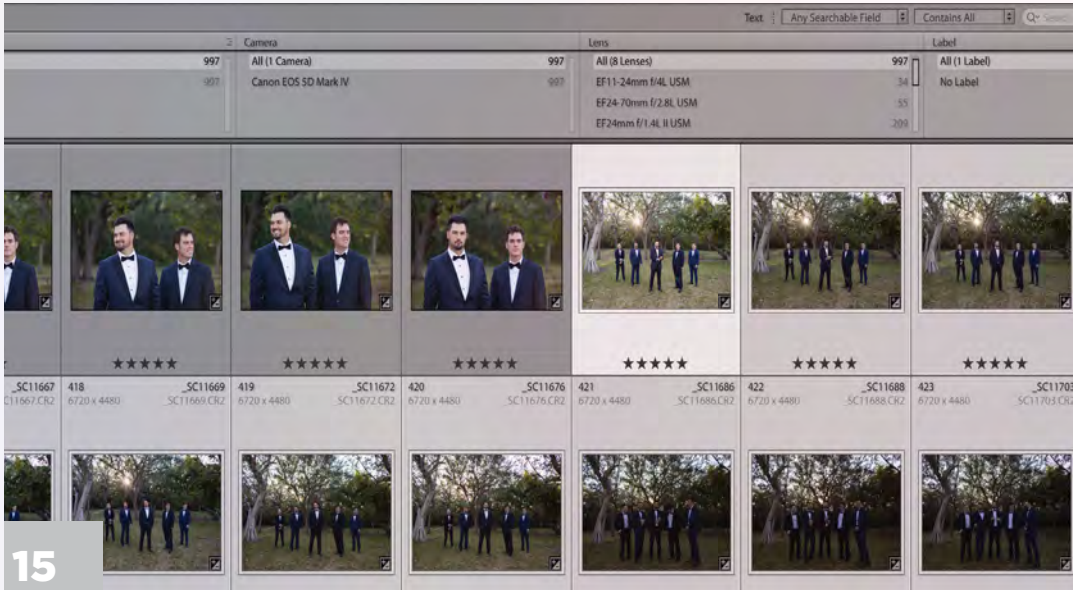




5. MATCH TOTAL EXPOSURE

This tool is helpful when shooting serially. If you shoot in manual mode and fire in large sequences, you will love this tool. It takes your target images and matches the overall exposure to the selected images. This can be done simply by editing the first images and dialing in the exposure. (15) Then select the sequence of images and hold Shift, Option and Command while striking the M key. This little trick goes a long way for situations where the lighting shifts in a scene and you shoot manual exposures and they are off in sequence. (16)

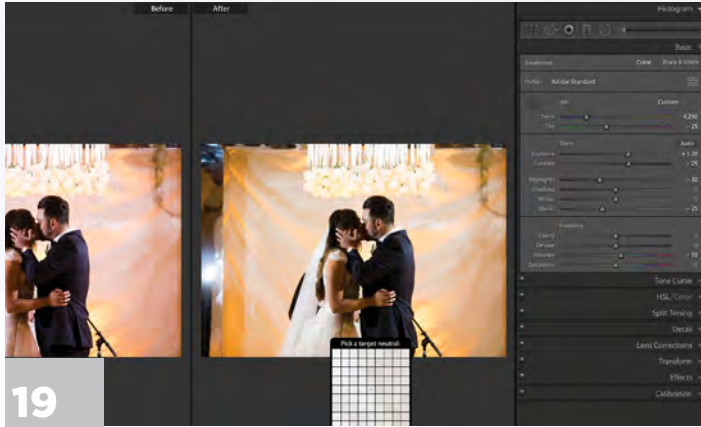
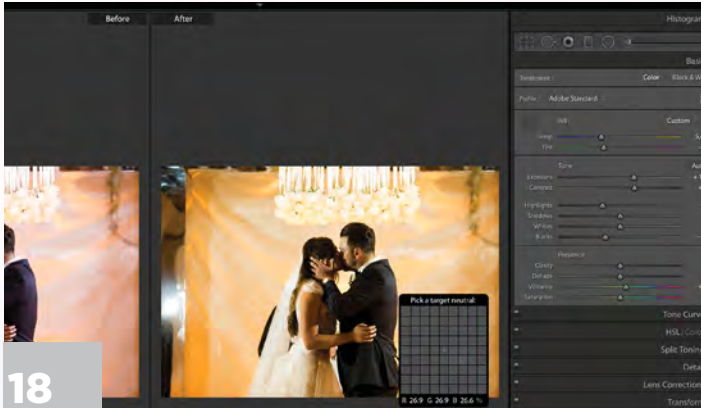
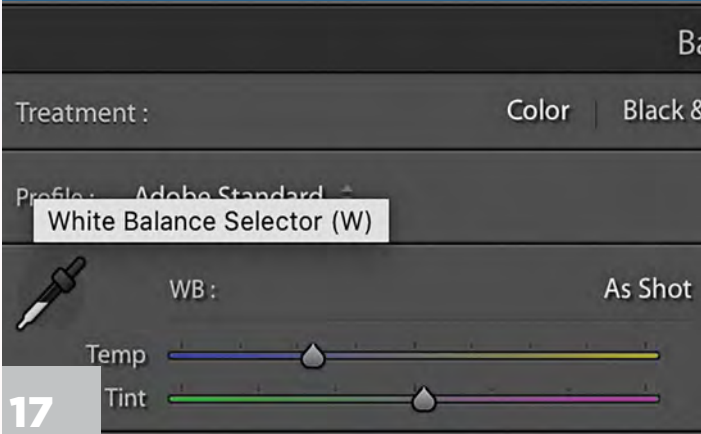
I have had success editing from images shot in aperture priority or Auto ISO to compensate for the changing light. Studio and flash-lit sessions are bound to find use for this tool as well.



6. USE THE WHITE BALANCE SELECTOR TO FIND NEUTRAL

To access this tool in Develop, strike the W key to turn your cursor into a color picker. (17) For the best results, you'll need to find a true neutral tone to click on. It's easy to know when it's not neutral because the entire image will shift yellow, blue, pink, green, etc. You can choose a wedding dress, but it will mislead you into thinking you're done. A wedding dress is not typically white, and when you choose this, it becomes a starting point for white balance.

Clicking on a groom's blazer is misleading because it usually has a shade of blue or is actually blue, as in this case. (18) This tool is tricky and you must understand the limitations to use it successfully. Stick with neutrals and, when in doubt, grab the highlights on the bride's dress. (19)

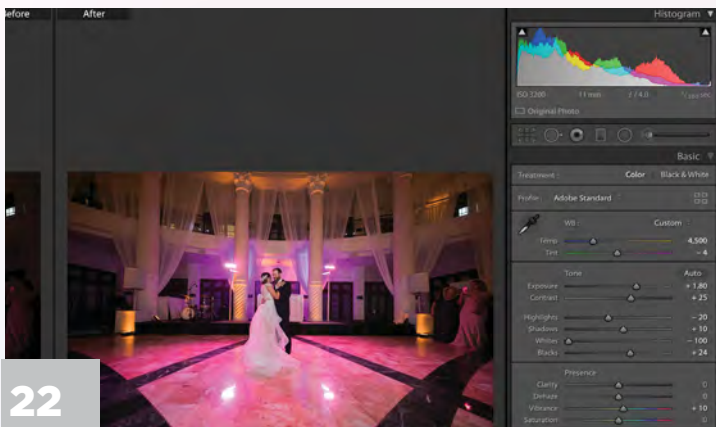
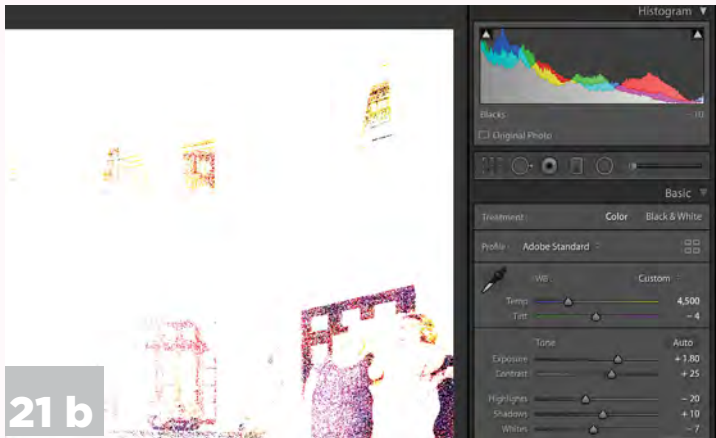
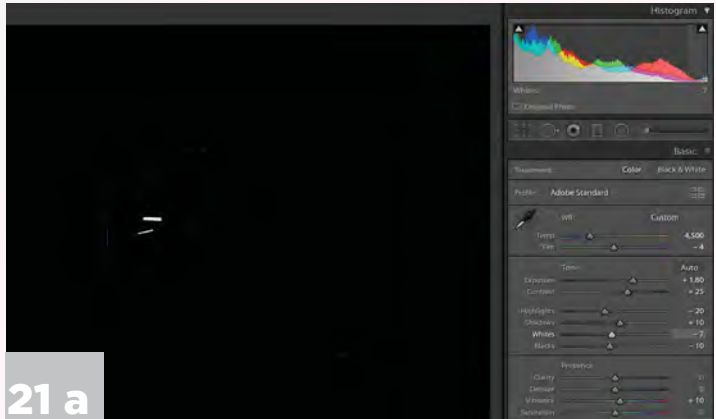
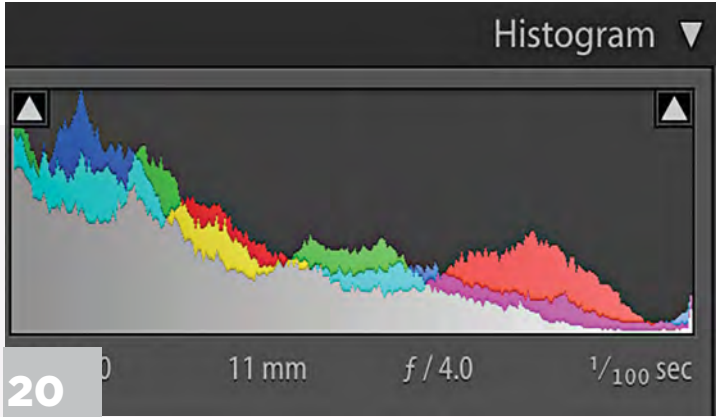




7. SHOW HIGHLIGHT AND SHADOW CLIPPING

You may have noticed the triangles in the upper corners of the histogram and how they relate to the edge of your histogram, looking like a wall. This is due to highlight and shadow clipping. (20) You can monitor clipping by striking the J key to see blue masked-over clipped shadows and red over the highlights. This can help you choose exposures and recover tones. Another shortcut is to hold the Option key while dragging the white and black sliders to see the clipping overlaid on your image. (21ab)

With auto settings, hold Shift and double-click whites or blacks next to the slider to adjust them just to the point of clipping. This is the fastest way to manually adjust image to image with a proper amount of density. (22)



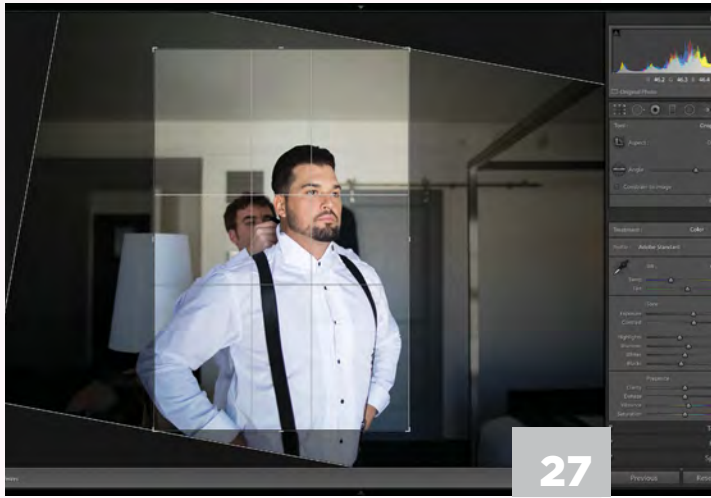
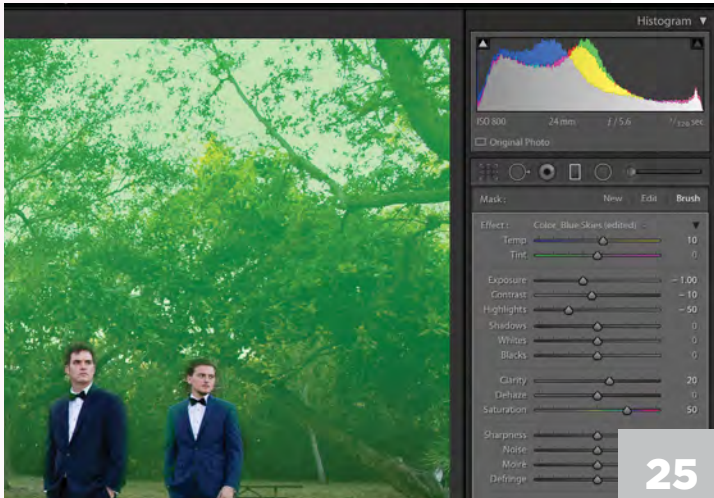
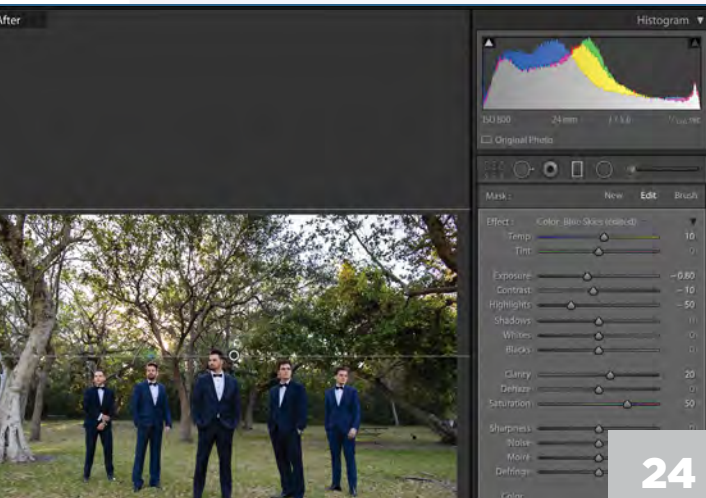
8. USE THE TARGET ADJUSTMENT TOOL FOR EASY SYNCING

This is a highly underused tool to quickly adjust HSL, Tone Curve and Black & White mixing. To access it, hold Shift, Option and Command while striking the H, S, L, T or G key. Then click in an area and drag the cursor up or down to adjust the image. This makes it simple to pull blue tones out of the dress or drop the saturation in the grass. Then you can sync the Color Adjustment settings to images in the same sequence. (23)



10. CROP AND STRAIGHTEN

Access the Crop tool by striking the R key. You can adjust the image with the tool in the panel and quickly toggle the orientation of the crop by hitting the X key. Cycle between images by holding the Command button and arrowing right/left. To straighten, hold Command and click and drag to level the image. (26-27)



9. USE THE GRADIENT TOOL WITH THE ERASE BRUSH FOR EASIER ADJUSTMENTS

Local adjustments can add a lot to your image, especially when applying a Gradient Filter to darken skies, windows and other bright areas of an image. (24) Strike the M key to use this tool. Efficiency is in the hotkeys, and toggling with the brushes is important to erase the effect from the faces of the subjects. Hold Shift and strike the T key to access the brushes, and then hold Option to access the Erase Brush. You can sync these settings and move the Gradient Filter with the pins. (25) This tip will save you a lot of time per image for those outdoor formal shots.

THE RESULTS

These tips can make the difference between 10 hours of editing and two. Implement them into your day-to-day editing to see if they can shave some time. You don't have to fear wedding season. Own it with better editing. ■



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

Your Dream Studio:  
Understanding & Controlling  
Overhead Expenses

with Jeff & Lori Poole







Image © Indigosilver studio

HIGHER PROFITS THROUGH REDUCED SPENDING

In last month’s Business Corner, we discussed controlling one of the two types of expenses in your business: general expenses, also known as overhead. Overhead is the money your studio spends to be in business, but is not directly tied to a client sale. Examples include rent, utilities, office supplies and gear. A well-run home-based studio limits its overhead to 30% or less of its gross sales; a retail studio spends 40% or less. Limiting expenses in this way allows you, the studio owner, to keep more of what you make in the form of profits.

To learn more about how to keep your general expenses under control, see last month’s article (September 2018, “Your Dream Studio: Understanding and Controlling Overhead Expenses”).

DEFINING COST OF SALE

This month, we examine the other form of spending, cost of sale. Cost of sale includes all money you spend serving a client. Here are some of the most common cost-of-sale expenses.

**Cost of goods.** The item you’re selling, such as a canvas, album or USB. Be sure to include any upgrades, studio logo fee and shipping from your lab/supplier in this cost.

**Delivery/presentation.** Consider costs such as boutique packaging, delivery to client or shipping to client as an additional expense.



Image © Indigosilver studio

**Job-associated costs.** Odds are that the job will cost you in some form. Common expenses include mileage to and from the shoot location, meals, props, client refreshments and location rental.

**Merchant fees.** These are fees associates with taking credit as payment via platforms like Square and PayPal.

**Contract labor.** This is help that you hire on a per-job basis, such as a second shooter, retoucher or album designer. This is different from an employee, which would fall under general expenses.

**Your time.** In business, time is money. If you are not charging for your time, you are working for free. Let’s look at this more in depth.



YOUR TIME HAS VALUE

Time is your most valuable resource. It is the one thing you can never have enough of, and it’s the one thing you can’t order from your lab. In order to understand why it’s important to charge for your time, let’s look at a typical retail scenario. Let’s say you own a clothing store. You buy a t-shirt wholesale for \$2.50, and you mark it up to \$10 retail. The limiting factor on your profits is the number of shirts you can buy. If you can buy more shirts, you can sell more shirts.

Now let’s imagine that you make the shirt from scratch. The materials to make the shirt cost \$2.50, but it also takes you two hours to make the shirt. You can no longer sell the shirt for \$10 and make a living. At two hours per shirt, you can make only four shirts in a workday. Time, not goods, is your limiting factor. To be profitable, you must factor your time into the price of the shirt. Naturally, your hand-made shirts will be priced higher than factory-made shirts.

Similarly, in photography, time is our limiting factor. Time limits how many shoots we can do, how many images we can retouch, how many albums we can design. Therefore, our product prices are going to be much higher than those of Walgreens and Shutterfly. Those places are selling ink and paper; we are selling our time and art.

If you are not including your time in your prices, you are working for free. The lab isn’t free. The camera isn’t free. The computer isn’t free. The software isn’t free. Your second shooter isn’t free. Your retoucher isn’t free. At what point did you decide you will be the only person not getting paid for your photography?

EXAMPLE COST OF SALE CALCULATION

Here is an example of how to add up all of the costs of sale for a given product.

Product: 10x10 Portrait Album

HARD COSTS

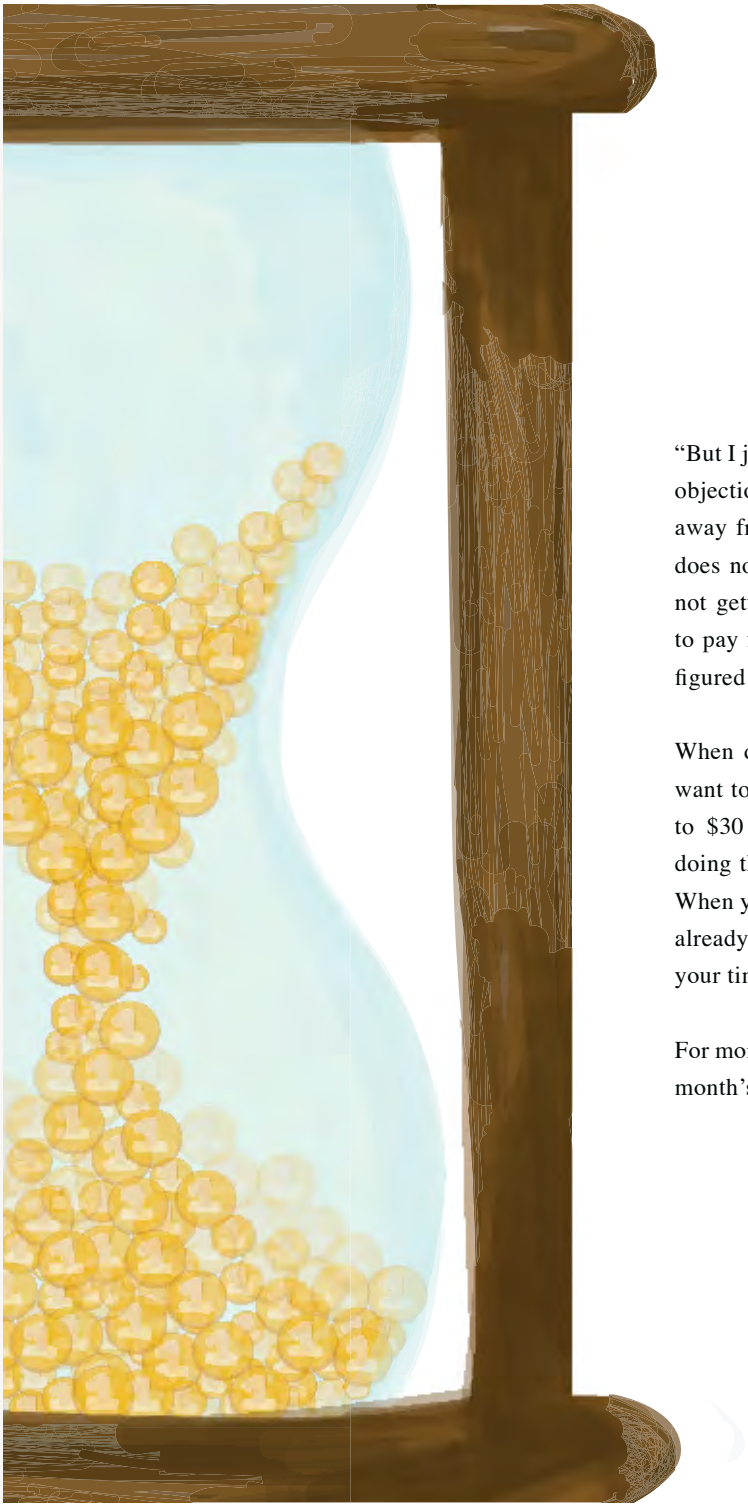
Cost of album from lab:	\$180
Studio logo imprinted inside cover:	\$10
Shipping from lab to studio:	\$15
Packaging (tote, tissue, ribbon, card):	\$3
Merchant fee (2.75% of \$1,100):	\$30
Ship album to client:	n/a

TIME COSTS, AT \$30/HOUR

Export selected images (10 minutes)	\$5
Design album layout (40 minutes)	\$20
Retouch album (30 minutes)	\$15
Place order with lab (10 minutes)	\$5

TOTAL COST OF SALE	\$283
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**Tip:** Make your Cost of Sale calculations easy by setting up a spreadsheet. View the bonus video at the end of this article for a how-to demo.



“But I just edit while my kids are asleep” is a common objection. Do you ever want to stop taking that time away from your family? If your dream studio vision does not involve you sacrificing your free time (and not getting paid), then at some point, you will need to pay for some help. The cost for that help must be figured into your cost of sale.

When deciding on a rate, consider what you would want to be paid to do it. A good starting point is \$25 to \$30 per hour for contract labor. When you are doing the work, that \$25 to \$30 goes in your pocket. When you’re ready to hire or outsource, that money is already figured in for the help. You can then reallocate your time to running your business.

For more on outsourcing, check out the video with last month’s article.





Image © Indigosilver studio

IS IT POSSIBLE TO REDUCE MY COST-OF-SALE EXPENSES?

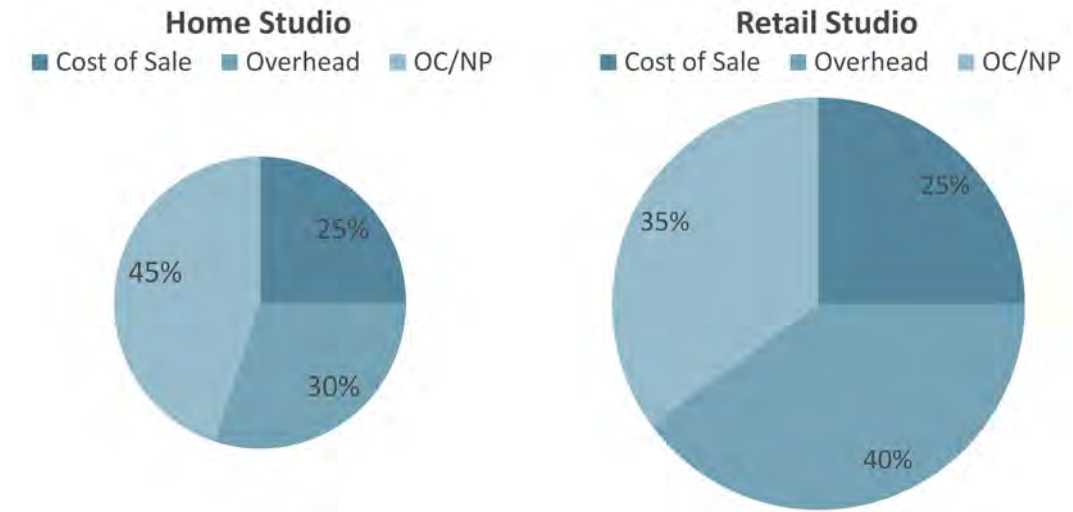
Yes, to an extent. Within reason, it is possible to price-shop your lab costs or search for a lower bid on contract labor. But you’ll get what you pay for. You may end up sacrificing quality for a lower price. Where each photographer falls on the quality-price spectrum is a matter of preference.

Jeff and I recommend price-shopping your merchant services. While companies like Square, PayPal and Stripe are popular and convenient, they do not offer the best rates. Visit CardFellow.com, where you can compare the rates of different merchants based on your needs.

One factor that you can learn to control is the amount of time you invest in each job. Photographers have a wide range of time they invest in their work. Jeff and I have mentored photographers who spend over an hour retouching each image, while others spend five to 10 minutes. Some design every album from scratch in Photoshop, and others have learned the time-saving value of design software like Fundy Designer. Learn efficiency. Learn to work more quickly, minimize distractions and invest in time-saving tools to keep your time-costs down. See last month’s video for more time-saving tips.

MANAGING COST OF SALE THROUGH MARKUP

If you’ve been following our last couple of articles, you’ll remember that we’ve laid out some basic numbers for your studio budget. Of your total gross sales, you should be spending no more than 30% on general expenses for a home-based studio and 40% for a retail studio. You’re hoping to take home at least 45% of your sales as owner’s compensation (35% for retail owners). That means that you have only 25% of your budget left for cost of sale.



While there are limited ways of controlling cost of sale by cutting costs, it’s important to remember that cost of sale is a percentage of total gross sales. On a per-product basis, each product’s cost of sale should be 25% or less than the retail price of the product. In other words, the most effective method for keeping cost of sale low is to have sufficient markup on your products.

To keep your cost of sale at or below 25%, you need to mark up your cost of sale by a factor of four or higher. In our example album (see sidebar), our total cost of sale is \$283. To keep our cost of sale at 25% of retail, the album needs to retail for at least \$1,132.

$$\$284 \times 4 = \$1,132$$

Of course, \$1,132 is not a round figure. On your price list, you may list the item for \$1,150 or \$1,199, or some other number that makes sense to you.





Image © Indigosilver studio

FOLLOW THE MONEY

In school, when you finished a math problem, you were taught to check your work. Let’s go back and see where that \$1,132 gets allocated:

\$1,132	Gross sale
\$283	Cost of sale
\$339	Allocated for overhead
\$510	Net profit (you keep)

Many photographers are taught simply to multiply the product cost by four. Remember, the lab cost for the album was \$180. If we multiplied that by four, we would have a retail price of \$720. Unfortunately, neither our cost of sale nor overhead goes down simply because we don’t account for them.

\$720	Gross sale
\$283	Cost of sale
\$339	Allocated for overhead
\$98	Net profit (you keep)

Ultimately, the only number that goes down is the amount you keep. That’s why it is so important to include the entire cost when determining your pricing.



Images © Indigosilver studio





Image © Indigosilver studio

COST-BASED PRICING IS TAILORED TO YOU

This method is called “cost-based pricing” because you determine your pricing based on your costs. It is an effective method because it takes into account the costs of the products you use and your workflow to make you profitable. It is not based on experience, emotion or what other people are charging. After all, we’re building your dream studio, not someone else’s.

There are more complexities to pricing, of course. Most notably, there are different strategies for cost-based pricing when you’re selling à la carte versus packages.

Next month, we will delve into some of these finer points. In the meantime, check out the bonus video for tips on making your price calculations easy. ■

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Just a few years after Jeff and Lori found themselves struggling to survive while living in the basement of their studio, back in 2012, they are the proud owners of a brand-new home on the coast of North Carolina. The owners of Wilmington’s Indigosilver Studio offer boutique boudoir portraiture and wedding photography. They are also the founders of The Shoot Space, their educational resource for photographers. Their *Shutter Magazine* column, The Business Corner, is dedicated to helping you grow your photography business.  
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# final inspiration

photographer | salvatore cincotta  
image title | scarlet



exposure | f8 @ 1/100, ISO 100  
lighting | profoto b10 with red gel  
location | city museum | st. louis, mo  
gear | canon 5d mark iv  
| canon 11-24mm f4.0L







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