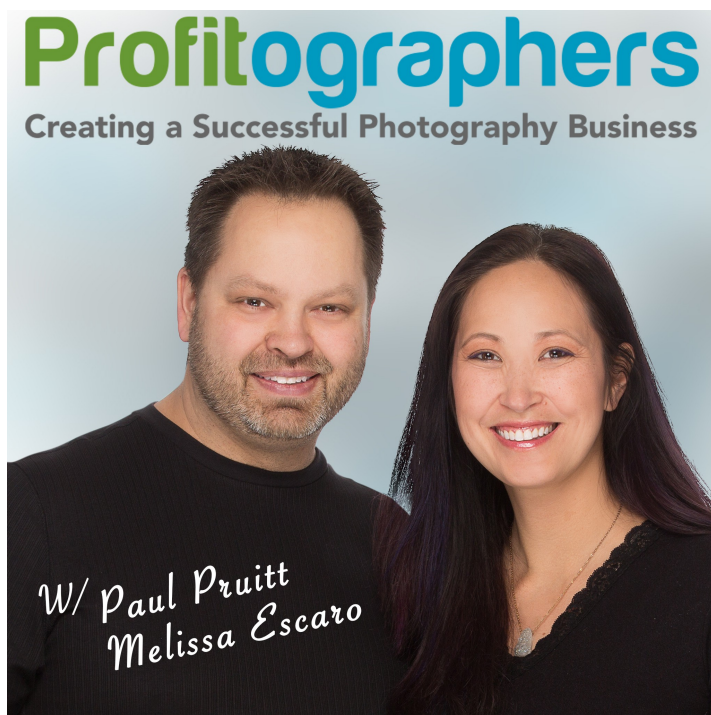


PROFITographers: **Creating a Successful Photography Business**



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**PROFITographers:
Creating a Successful Photography Business**

Paul Pruitt & Melissa Escaro

PROFITographers Publishing
2016

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Dedication

To all of those that have inspired me throughout my life: My father, Paul H. Pruitt, Sr. whose free spirit and positive attitude towards all aspects of my life have guided me in taking risks and reaching my dreams. To my son, David Pruitt, who reminds me everyday how the smallest of things in life are the greatest miracles. My fiancée, Melissa, who has helped me find true love, passion, and purpose in my life again.

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1. Foreword

Thank you for taking the time to read PROFITographers. I believe that this book will help thousands of people transition into a profitable business within photography, by providing you a foundation to work from and platform to move forward with.

This is NOT a book about your camera. This is a book about business. It's the starting point to make you take a step back and assess where you are now, and where you would like to be. I hope to help you think differently by stopping you from being caught up with the latest fads and hype and to actually build a business worth having.

I have personally taught tens of thousands of sales people around the world in the past 24 years about marketing, sales, branding, positioning, in person sales, presentations, handling objections, and more. Business is business, and the concepts, tools, and ideas I share with you here you can apply in any industry. First, you need to be open minded to know I am starting from the ground up to help you build a solid foundation to work. There are no shortcuts to long term success, so if you put in the time and effort you will find yourself on the right path.

In 2008, I had never photographed anyone in my state for money. I was flat broke living on a friend's sofa, as I had just lost everything financially. No one knew me as a photographer. I started from zero and in less than 5 years, I took the knowledge I acquired throughout my business life and was successfully able to position myself as the number one photographer in my marketplace. Last year in 2014, I photographed over 700 professional headshots, 35 weddings (of which I booked out by March of the previous year), and 132 specialized Santa Experience Sessions (That got me international attention this past year in USA Today, Rangefinder Magazine and other publications!) I am walking the walk, just like you. Again, this is no fluff. This isn't about you buying the latest Lightroom Preset or Ipad Presentation software. This isn't about buying the latest lens or camera. This is about building a successful and profitable business in photography.

I am looking forward to diving deeper into topics that are most important to you. I expect some feedback will be outside of the scope of this initial book. Your comments will help me design other books, webinars, and podcasts in the future, so please feel free to contact me at paul@paulpruitt.com. Your input is important to me.

I hope even this book expands some of your minds to think about your own business differently and help be the starting point to becoming a PROFITographer!

Thank you, Paul Pruitt

Important: The information and processes taught in PROFITographers: Creating a Successful Photography Business are real and work. However, Paul Pruitt Photography, PROFITographers, Paul Pruitt, Melissa Escaro, or any of our associates cannot, in any good conscious guarantee any outcome of financial gain from reading this book. Let's face it, if you are lazy and don't apply yourself with this new gained knowledge, you aren't going to get anywhere! :)

We can teach you everything we know, but we can't implement it for you. As it is in life, how far you go is up to you and your ability to implement what we teach you. It's stipulated by law and our good intentions for you that we let you know this. You'll get the most cutting edge business training on the market for photographers, and it's up to you to make it happen. We believe that the saying "Knowledge is power" is incomplete. "Knowledge coupled with correct actions is true power."

2. Introduction

My Story

As you begin reading this book, you'll quickly realize that you're not reading the typical book about running a photography business. I've put together a valuable collection of business tools, systems, and strategies that I have learned during my 24 years of experience, owning multiple, profitable businesses.

I have made plenty of mistakes and success was not something that came easily. If you talk to any successful entrepreneurs, they can tell you about just as many setbacks and failures as they can successes. The key is using those mistakes and setbacks to learn, grow, adjust, and move forward, using the new knowledge you've gained to fuel your future success. Here are the foundational pieces of my story that have brought me to the place I am today.

My Mentors

I consider myself very lucky to have had many mentors to guide me along my road to success. One of my very first mentors was Bob Pittman, current CEO of Clear Channel Media and iHeart Radio. Bob and I go back to the early days of AOL. At that time, I was a real estate agent moderating a weekly AOL chat for Century 21 agents and brokers. Bob had just left his job as President of Six Flags Great Adventure in order to put \$50 million of his own money into the \$200 million purchase of the Century 21 Corporation, of which he later became president.

Bob and I talked on AOL nearly every day, which was only the beginning of the many mentoring experiences I was able to have with incredibly successful entrepreneurs and business owners. Bob, however, was the first person to teach me about “branding” and “creating a brand identity”.

From a business standpoint, keep in mind that the information I am offering you on creating a successful photography business is coming from the knowledge I have gained from some of the top business, marketing, and sales experts in the world. The information I have learned during these years of my life has allowed me to reinvent myself successfully in less than four years. I went from never taking a photo in my marketplace to being considered one of the best and most sought out photographers in my state.

If I can do it, you can do it too!

My Early Life

As a child, I witnessed addiction first hand. My father wasn't in the picture, and my mother was dealing with deep addiction. My sister and I dealt with hunger, addiction, poverty, and homelessness when we were just kids. We spent our childhood moving from home to home, landing whenever someone allowed us into their homes temporarily.

Through this, I learned something very important from my early years of life – no matter what risk I took, the worst case scenario will never be as bad as the things I experienced at such a young age.

In 1981, all of our lives changed for the better. A man took our family into his home, and gave my mom the love and support she needed to recover. Since that day, I am proud to say that she has been clean. That man who took us in would later become my stepfather, and we were able to enjoy some stability for several years. However, when I was a senior in high school, job losses eventually led to foreclosure on our home, and we ended up being temporarily homeless yet again.

It was tough to see my family auctioning away heirlooms and anything else we had of value. Here we were again, starting from nothing, but we were a family of survivors, and in the years following, we would rise above this setback.

My Real Estate Career

After graduating from high school, I decided to take a real estate course. During my very first year working in real estate, I sold 23 homes, making over \$48,000 and was named Rookie of the Year. For a 19 year old kid fresh out of high school, that wasn't bad. After that year though, I never made less than six-figures a year again.

In 1997, I purchased a co-ownership of the company I was working for, and completely bought out the previous owner in 1998. The next three years found me aggressively growing this business through recruiting, mergers, and acquisitions. At the peak of my business, I had 8 offices and more than 200 sales and administrative staff members working for me. We brought in more than \$8 million in gross commissions.

During those years, the National Association of Realtors named me one of the “30 under 30” in the world. I was traveling the country, teaching workshops and seminars, and offering platform stage talks to thousands of sales people and brokers. Soon, the national real estate organization with which I was affiliated with hired me as a trainer. The company I had built went on to be ranked #83 out of the 8,300 offices in the world for the number of homes sold.

A Series of Life Changing Events

I was doing phenomenally well. Business was successful and running smoothly, and I felt that I was on top of the world. However, on May 14, 2003, I received a phone call that would change my life. I found out that my father had a heart attack while taking a nap, causing him to pass away suddenly. It was completely unexpected, and just when I was at one of the highest points in my life, that phone call threw me into a free fall, both mentally and emotionally.

My reality had completely shifted and I gained a new perspective. On a personal level, it took me about a year to get back to feeling myself, but even when I did climb out of that decline, I had lost the passion and flame I had inside for the real estate industry.

Over the next several years, I was the absentee owner of my own company. Even my broker's license was put on hold with the state. While I was not around, I had placed upper and middle management in charge of the company. This turned out to be a huge mistake, but at the time, all I was thinking about was finding myself and discovering my purpose once again.

I felt that everything I had worked so hard for was no longer important. I never did fully return to having the leadership role I previously had, and in just a few short years, a trusted family member had managed to use my company to launder money in my absence, thus destroying everything I had created.

On February 4, 2008, I received another phone call that would change my life yet again. I found out that the law firm wasn't able to process the escrow check from the settlement in the previous month. I knew the money should have been in the account. Since I was the owner of the company, it was my responsibility to know for sure that the money was there, but since I had allowed family members to take absolute control of the company, I didn't know that for sure. Unfortunately, they took money out of the account illegally without my knowledge.

Once again, I had lost everything. Once again, I was homeless. Thanks to a friend, I was able to crash on a couch, and in time, eventually rent a bedroom.

Opening My Photography Studio

During those years I was absent from my real estate company, I had opened a studio in South Philadelphia. In photography, I found my escape. I really enjoyed traveling the United States and the world, and I was mentored by some of the world's best glamour, fashion, commercial, and editorial photographers.

My love for photography goes back to my childhood. When I was just 7 years old, my grandmother gave me \$20, and with it, I purchased my very first camera, a Canon AE-1, at a community yard sale. I kept it at my grandmother's house, and whenever I visited, I would play around with it.

Photography was a fun hobby, and I took four years of photography in high school. In fact, my work from that time was displayed in traveling exhibitions.

There was only one real reason I had decided to not pursue photography right out of high school. One night, I had a terrible dream that I had failed as a photographer, and ended up at the local mall taking pictures of the Easter Bunny. Because of that dream, I had chosen to sign up for the real estate course (funny how things turn out, right?)

It's amazing how one small moment can change the entire path of your life.

In 2008, I started with nothing once again, and have gotten where I am today. Again, keep in mind that I had never taken anyone's photo for money in my marketplace before. I was a completely unknown photographer. I had to start at zero and completely reinvent myself.

Here I am today, telling you my own come-from-nothing “Rocky” story. I could take more time telling you about all the things that have happened in the past 7 years of my life, but I'll leave that for another time.

Now, enough about me – I want to help you. I want to provide you with the information you need to achieve the level of success you want and deserve. I share my story because, if I can do it, I know you can too, and I'm here to tell you exactly how you can create your own successful photography business.

3. Shoot and Burned Out - Photography Business Mistakes You Can't Afford to Make

Most photographers get started in photography by buying a camera and then spending some time experimenting with it. They have fun messing around with their camera, and they shoot a few pictures of their kids playing or take a few shots at a friend's wedding. Then, they post their best photos online, and soon they have 50 or 100 likes and multiple comments from friends and family members telling them that they should be a photographer.

At this point, it all sounds easy. Why not start a photography business? After all, those other photographers charge far too much. Why not do it cheaper? You can beat the competition by charging lower prices.

And so begins the story of a burned out photographer.

New photographers decide to charge much less than the competition, and since many new photographers don't have much business experience, they end up burning out. Not only do they burn out personally, but their business fails too. Unfortunately, most photographers don't realize that a successful photography business requires just as much business expertise as it does photography experience and expertise.

The digital revolution has made it extremely easy to start a photography business. However, while it's easy to start a photography business, most people jump into the business without the proper knowledge and background in running a successful, profitable business.

So let's start off this book by addressing the "down and dirty" mistakes that new photographers make, causing them to crash and burn. By avoiding common photography business mistakes, you not only avoid burnout, but you'll also be able to avoid business failure. Remember, most businesses fail in the first two years, so learn these lessons now so yours doesn't end up another failed photography business.

Once we make space by addressing these common mistakes, we will be able to build a more profitable photography business with a much stronger foundation. It's like building a new house. First we must knock down the old walls (common mistakes) and get back to a new stronger foundation, before building our new house (profitable photography business). Let's knock down these walls now and address these common mistakes!

Photography Business Mistake – Thinking Digital Photography is Cheaper

If you want to avoid burnout and business failure, don't make the mistake of thinking that digital photography is cheaper because there's no cost for film or film processing. Many people make this mistake. They think that digital photography is cheap, so they decide that they can offer their services for less money.

The reality is, digital photography is a lot more expensive than film photography. Before the introduction of digital cameras, you could purchase all of your photography gear at one time and that investment would last for years. Now, as technology continues to progress, digital cameras become obsolete very quickly.

If you have the idea that digital photography is cheaper than film photography, here's a look at some of the costs you'll encounter if you start a photography business using digital gear today.

Digital Camera Bodies

One of the big expenses involved in digital photography is the expense of digital camera bodies. While a film camera body might cost you a few hundred dollars, you will spend thousands on a quality digital camera body. Not only is the initial investment in digital camera bodies expensive, but many photographers have to keep changing their digital cameras to keep up with the latest developments in the quickly changing world of digital photography.

Digital Camera Lenses

Along with the camera body, you'll also need to invest in camera lenses for the body. Professional photographers generally need at least 2-3 different lenses, including prime lenses and zoom lenses. Professional lenses can easily cost as much as a couple thousand dollars each.

Memory Cards

Of course, while digital cameras have some memory, if you're shooting a lot of high quality photos, you'll also need to have memory cards to use in the camera. You'll spend a couple hundred dollars on quality memory cards to use with your digital cameras as well.

Other Accessories

Then, you have the other needed accessories that help you take professional photographs, such as filters, devices that ensure you get maximum sharpness from your lenses, flash heads, and triggers. For professional grade options, you can expect to spend another couple thousand dollars on these accessories.

Professional Grade Computer

Don't forget that you'll need a professional grade computer for your business. While you don't need to have the computer to shoot digital photographs, it's essential to have a quality computer for photo viewing, photo editing, sending photo files, and more. You may spend a couple thousand dollars on a quality computer, and that computer will be obsolete in a few years, so you'll need to replace it in the future.

Photo Viewing and Editing Software

It's important to have photo viewing and editing software for your photography business. Software programs, such as LightRoom or

PhotoShop, make it easy for you to tweak any problems in photos. Good software also makes it possible to eliminate blemishes, enhance skin tone, adjust exposure, and so much more. Of course, quality photo editing software is regularly updated, so expect to lay out money for updates to the software you purchase.

Storage Devices

You'll also need to have a way to store the files of the photographs that you take, and having storage devices that hold a lot of data is important, since cameras can shoot at 20 mega pixels today. Flash cards, flash drives, and external hard drives are all storage devices that you may need to invest in, and external devices are important, since all computers will eventually crash when they reach the end of their lives. You may even want to pay for cloud storage, which keeps your files protected in case a fire or flood damages the storage devices you have on hand.

All this digital equipment is necessary if you want to run a photography business, and the equipment will cost you thousands of dollars. Then, you'll end up replacing a lot of your equipment over time.

Don't forget, consumers today now own high level cameras. Many consumers own their own DSLRs, and this increases consumer expectations. After all, consumers can take amazing photos with the great technology available today, so they expect even more from you, since you're a professional photographer.

Photography Business Mistake – Shoot and Burn

Another big mistake that you want to avoid making is known as "Shoot and Burn." This occurs when photographers place all the value solely on the delivery of the digital files.

Many photographers do a photography session, and once the session is over, they deliver the digital files to the client, handing over nearly everything that they captured during the session.

Why is this a problem? Most clients look at digital files as something that they could have done on their own. This means that the client doesn't see a lot of value in the digital files you give them, which means they are not going to spend a lot of money for the delivery of digital files.

When you deliver those digital files to your client, it not only reduces the perceived value of your work, but you lose the ability to sell your client other products that will help you increase your profits.

Instead of delivering digital files to clients, you want to present the photos to your clients in a professional manner. Then, they can pick out prints that they want in different sizes. They can choose photo books made up of the photos. You can encourage them to purchase photo canvases of their favorite photos or collages of multiple photos. If your customers would like to have the digital files, you can offer the files on CD as part of a photo package.

Remember, to make money, you need to maximize the amount of money people spend on your products. Simply handing over the digital files won't offer you much profit. However, when you offer clients products that bring the photos to life, you're showing them something that has value, ensuring that you increase your profits for every photo session.

Photography Business Mistake – Setting the Perceived Value of Services Low with Friends and Family

Many new photographers get their business started and ask friends and family members to be models so they can build a portfolio of photos to show clients. They may shoot a free wedding here, a free family session there, and soon they're giving friends and family members free sessions all the time.

Why is it a problem to offer free sessions to friends and family members? Because it sets the perceived value of your services low with friends and family. If you're shooting for free, most people aren't going to value your work as much because they didn't have to pay money for it. Even if you're just getting started in the photography business, it's completely fine to set prices, even for friends and family members.

Your friends and family members can be a great asset to your business. If they're impressed with your work, they'll probably spread the word to their friends and family members, bringing you more business. However, if you immediately set the perceived value of your services low, they'll pass that perception on to other people.

You want people to value your services, so charging for your work is always important. When people have to pay for your work, they'll attach more value to it, taking your business more seriously.

Of course, building your portfolio of work is important. However, instead of shooting sessions free, consider offering products at a slightly discounted price to thank your models. Free photo sessions may be necessary if you're engaging in a "time for print" session. Time for print is an arrangement between models and photographers wherein the photographer gives the model the best photos from their session, and in return, the model provides a limited license to use the photos.

The images taken during these sessions can be used for advertising, in your portfolio, online, on business cards, and in other business situations. Just remember, if you decide to do a "time for print" session, you may want to use a model that will look at the session as a business agreement.

Photography Business Mistake – Failing to Take Care of Legal and Liability Issues

Failing to take care of legal and liability issues when you start a photography business can be a costly mistake. When starting your photography business, you'll need to consider many legal issues. Here's a look at some of the important legal and liability issues that must be addressed when you get started.

Business Name – When starting your photography business, you'll need to decide on a business name. It's important to ensure that the name you want to use is not already in use by another business. You can run a name search with the correct state agency, and if you find that your business name is not in use, it's possible to reserve that name while you're starting your business and focusing on other business issues.

Choosing a Business Structure – It's also important to choose the type and structure of business you want to use for your photography business. You have multiple business structures to choose from, such as a limited liability company, S-corporation, partnership, sole-proprietorship, corporation, or limited partnership. To figure out which option is best, consider the liability issues that may be associated with starting your photography business, as well as which option offers the best tax structure for your business needs.

Business Licenses – At a minimum, you'll at least need tax registration and a business license to start your own photography business. Local municipalities may have specific licensing requirements that you may need to meet as well. Before you start your business, make sure you have the business licenses needed to avoid legal problems.

Liability Insurance – You'll also want to invest in a general liability insurance policy. If a client suffers bodily injuries while at your studio, that client could collect for pain and suffering, lost wages, medical bills, and more. Your photography business can be liable for damages other than physical injuries as well, such as slander and libel. A general liability policy provides your photography business with coverage for judgments that relate to injury lawsuits up to your policy's limits, and these policies also cover the cost of legal defense. Many potential injuries to clients are covered by these policies, such as harm from a physical object on the business premises or slipping and falling in your studio.

Even if you have your business structured as a limited liability company, general liability insurance is still a good idea. While a limited liability company keeps you personally protected, a legal problem still could result in damages that would end up bankrupting your business if you didn't have liability insurance.

Contracts – If you plan to use contracts for your photography business, it's a good idea to have a good attorney help you write up a quality contract. Not only should an attorney write your contracts, but you should also use an attorney that understands the photography business. While it may be costly to have the contract written up by an attorney, you'll be able to use that contract again and again for your business.

Unfortunately, many photographers never think about the legal and liability issues involved in starting a business until they have a problem. Make sure you deal with these issues early to ensure that you and your business are protected.

Photography Business Mistake – Not Understanding the Costs Involved in Running a Photography Business

Previously, we talked about how expensive it can be to use digital photography, especially since most people have the idea that digital photography is cheaper than film photography. Not only is it important to realize all the costs involved in using digital photography, but you need to understand the costs that are involved in running a photography business itself. Most new photographers don't realize how much it can cost to get a photography business running, not to mention, the cost of keeping that business running smoothly.

It's impossible to run your photography business virtually. You can't simply start a website and start managing your business on the website. You'll need an office where you can get work done. Don't think that you can simply operate your business out of your living room.

Of course, you also need a studio where you can shoot photographs of your clients. If you need to rent space for your office and studio, you'll be paying monthly rental rates. You'll also need to pay for electricity and other utilities for your office and studio. Those will be other monthly expenses.

We already talked about some of the costs that come with buying equipment. After all, you'll need a camera, a quality computer, a tripod stand, reflectors, flash lights, lenses, curtains, and more.

If you take some photographs on site, such as wedding photographs, or you do viewing sessions at the homes of your clients, then you have to think about travel expenses. Not only will you have fuel costs, but you'll also be putting wear and tear on your vehicle, which will require maintenance. You'll probably have to eat while you're on the road a lot, which will become a business expense.

Here's a look at some of the other costs that photographers fail to think about when starting their photography business:

Cost of Incorporation – Don't forget, to get started, you'll need to pay to incorporate your business

Business Insurance – You'll need to insure your business, which includes limited liability insurance. You may also need insurance for your business property.

Client and Money Manager – It's important to have software that helps you to track clients and business finances.

Accounting Services – Dealing with taxes can be difficult if you're new to running a business, so you may need to pay for accounting services to help with occasional questions and year-end tax filing.

Product Samples – Clients are less likely to purchase your products if they can't see them, so you'll need to invest in samples of the products that you plan to sell.

Website Costs – A website is an important tool for your photography business, and you'll need to pay yearly fees for your domain name and hosting. If you don't know how to build a quality website, you may need to pay someone else to build the website for you.

Licenses – The licenses you'll need for your business aren't free, so you'll have to make an investment. Some licenses will have to be renewed periodically, so this can become a regular expense.

Phone Service – Whether you decide to use a landline or a cell phone for your business, you'll have to pay your phone bill monthly.

Credit Card Fees – If you accept credit cards, you may end up paying fees to accept credit cards.

Maintenance and Repairs – Don't forget that things break, and if something essential breaks, you'll need to have it repaired. Make sure you have room in your budget for emergency maintenance and repairs.

Why is it so important to understand the cost of doing business? If you don't understand how much it costs for you to do business, you won't be able to price your services so you make enough money. Fully understanding how much you'll spend to start and maintain your business will enable you to plan your prices so you cover your expenses and still have money to pay yourself the salary you want.

Photography Business Mistake – Not Having an Income Goal

Another common mistake photographers make is not having an income goal. If you don't know how much money you want to make, it's easy to float along without ever bettering your situation financially. If you want to grow your income, you need to start thinking about how much you realistically want to earn.

While it might sound great to make a million dollars in the first year of your business, you still need to be realistic when setting an income goal. You don't want to choose a figure that is so high that you know you'll never achieve it. However, you don't want to choose an income goal that undervalues your photography.

Having an income goal is essential for several reasons. First, setting goals for your business is important. They motivate you and help you reach for the things that you really want. Having an income goal will also help you to figure out how much work you need to do and the prices that you need to charge to achieve your financial goals.

Once you have your own income goal, you can figure out how many photo sessions you'll need to do to meet that goal. You'll be able to figure out how much you'll need to make from each session to meet that goal. Essentially, knowing what you want to make will help you plan other areas of your business that will help you make the money that you want.

If you never make an income goal, you'll never make your business succeed. You also won't know how hard you need to work to be successful. You won't know how to price your products and services to make a reasonable profit. Make sure you decide on an income goal early

and use it to achieve the success you want with your photography business.

Photography Business Mistake – Failure to Focus on In Person Sales

Many photographers who start their own business use the “shoot and burn” method we talked about earlier in this chapter. They simply shoot a session for a low fee and hand clients a disc with all the digital negatives. Along with the “shoot and burn” mistake, these photographers are also making the mistake of failing to focus on in person sales.

Don’t think that you are meeting the needs of your clients by handing them a disc of photos. Not only are you failing to meet your clients’ needs, you’re failing to meet your financial needs as a photographer. Your ideal clients, the ones who really value photography, want to preserve those memories. They don’t just want a disc of photos; they want someone who will help them find products that will preserve those incredible memories in unique ways that fit their lifestyle.

If you hand clients a disc of your photos, they probably won’t make a purchase. It won’t be because they don’t like the photos. They may not know what products to purchase. They may intend to make a purchase, but life gets busy and they forget. Your clients actually want to buy from you, but it’s up to you to make that happen. You have to focus on in person sales.

Why do many photographers fail to focus on in person sales? Some new photographers don’t realize that in person sales is the gold mine of photography. Other photographers are too scared to even try in person sales. It’s time to stop making excuses. Here are some of the common excuses photographers use to avoid in person sales:

- I don’t want to make my clients feel like they are being pressured.*
- I’m afraid they won’t like the photos and I’ll have to deal with my clients’ disappointment.*
- I don’t want to annoy or offend my clients.*
- I don’t have the time to sit down and do viewing sessions with my*

clients.

-I'm an artist and I don't want to learn to market and sell to my clients.

-My photography is good enough to sell itself.

No matter what your excuse is, you're wrong. In person sales is the key to the success of your photography business.

Let's look at some of those excuses and debunk them. The idea that in person sales pressures, annoys, or offends clients is silly. In person sales actually offers you a way to go above and beyond for your clients. In fact, many clients will appreciate you taking the time to walk them through the photos, helping them make decisions with your professional opinion.

Another invalid excuse is that you don't have the time for in person sales. The time you spend doing in person sales has the ability to significantly increase the amount of money that you are making. You won't have to shoot as many sessions if you engage in in person sales. The truth is, you don't have time NOT to do in person sales. In person sales will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 7.

Sure, photography is an art. You may be an artist, but if you plan to make money with your art, you do need to learn to market and sell to your clients. Marketing and selling are two of the most essential requirements you need to make a photography business a success. If you don't know how to sell and market and you refuse to learn, your business will go down in flames, no matter how amazing your photography is.

A Few More Photography Business Mistakes You Need to Avoid

We've already covered many of the big photography business mistakes that new photographers make. However, here's a look at a few more mistakes you should avoid if you want to run a successful photography business.

Failure to Think Long Term

Don't make the mistake of failing to think long term. This is a common mistake among people who tend to take every day as it comes, but you have to think about the future when you're running a business. Once you start your photography business and you start bringing in clients, don't start relaxing. The photography business is mutable, competitive, and requires that you constantly improve your skills, both in photography and business management.

Engage in activities today that will benefit your business in the long term. For example, you could give clients small gifts to thank them for their business, which can turn that client into a repeat customer. Take time to improve your skills, which will allow you to charge more for your skills in the future. Try shooting in new genres so you can branch out with your business. Don't just focus on today – focus on the success of your business today and in the future.

Keeping Prices Lower Than the Competition

If you want to doom your photography business, believe that keeping prices lower than the competition will make you succeed. Many new photographers try to break into the photography field with the idea that keeping prices lower than the competition will ensure they have plenty of business. They think that they'll make money with the large volume of business they'll have.

This is a horrible mistake, but most photographers don't have the business training and knowledge to realize how wrong this assumption really is. The key to success is not to make your prices lower than the competition. The secret is to charge as much or more for your work, to show the value of your work to your clients. You'll need to figure out how to sell your work.

Lowering your prices will make it difficult for you to make a profit, and dealing with too many clients will drive you to burnout in no time. Charge what you're worth. Spend time with your clients, selling them the best products available. You'll make more money with every client, you'll

make more money in less time, and you'll be proud of the services and products that you have to offer.

Thinking that More Equipment Improves Your Business

Sure, photographers generally love new cameras and all the cool new photography gadgets available. However, if you think that more equipment or the newest photography toys will improve your business, you're wrong. Yes, it is important to have high quality equipment so you can deliver a quality product. However, being the photographer with the most equipment and the latest gadgets won't help you succeed.

Instead of putting all your time into looking for the latest and greatest photography equipment, you need to spend more time figuring out how to increase your profits. You need to focus your efforts on in person sales and spend your time perfecting your sales presentations so you make more money. Your equipment won't make your business, although it is an important part of your business. Your business savvy is the real key to the success of your photography business.

Mixing Up Selling and Marketing

It's easy to mix up selling and marketing, but if you make this mistake, it will cost you. Here's an example of mixing up selling and marketing. A photographer allows the clients to post their photos online so they can show them to all their friends, thinking that this will give them more business because it's free advertising. Unfortunately, this is an example of "cross thinking," confusing the sales aspects of a photography business with the marketing aspects of the business.

After you shoot a photo session, you should be focusing on doing an excellent sales presentation that connects with your clients on an emotional level. This is all about making a sale. When you shoot a session for your clients, you shouldn't be focused on marketing, you should be focusing on making sales. Simply sending clients home with a disc of proofs or posting their photos for easy access online isn't going to get you the sales that they want.

Differentiate between selling and marketing when running your photography business. Use the photographs you take for a client to help you make a sale. You can use other marketing tactics. Don't get marketing and selling confused or you'll make bad business decisions.

Taking Advice from the Wrong People

When you start a photography business, everyone has advice for you. You'll begin getting unsolicited advice from friends and family members. The mistake is to take all the advice that you are given. Don't allow just anyone to influence you and your business.

Who should you take advice from? Take advice from people who are already where you want to be. If they're already successful and where you want to be, then they will offer you advice that you can really use. However, if you take advice from people who aren't where you want to be, that advice definitely won't help you get to where you want to be. Be careful who you take advice from, and don't let just anyone influence your decisions as you work to turn your photography business into a successful one.

Thinking That Success Will Be Easy

The reason that so many photographers fail is because they start a photography business with the idea that it will all be easy. They aren't prepared to do the hard work required to build a successful business.

The truth is that it's never easy to run a business, no matter what kind of business you want to run. There aren't any "get rich quick" schemes for photography businesses. There's not an easy way to reach success. While there are many things you can do to increase profits and achieve success, it all takes hard work.

Many photographers think that success will be easy because they love the photography side of their business. They love clicking the shutter and taking beautiful images. However, the actual photography is only a small part of running your photography business. You can be an amazing

photographer, but if you're not willing to work and you're not willing to learn the basics of running a business, your business is guaranteed to fail.

Only 20% of your business efforts will include clicking the shutter. The other 80% of your business efforts will include accounting, marketing, selling, and planning. These things may not be as fun as the actual photography, but they are essential to the success of your business.

To ensure your succeed, don't start your photography business thinking that it will be easy. Don't buy in to "get rich quick" schemes. Be ready to work hard. Be ready to learn. Be ready to run a business. Success is possible, but you have to want it, you have to work for it. It's not easy, but if you're willing to work hard every day, you can accomplish your goals and dreams in the photography business.

Yes, it's important to know what to do when you start a photography business, but it's equally important to know what NOT to do when you get your business started. Learn from the mistakes of others so you don't make costly mistakes yourself.

When you start your photography business, you don't want to fail within a year or two. You don't want to end up dealing with burnout because you work so hard without making a profit.

Build Your Business Foundation First

The information from this first chapter is a lot to download and may seem daunting at first. You may be feeling a little overwhelmed with all the first steps you have to take to build a successful and profitable photography business. Don't worry, you are exactly where you need to be, with beginning to prepare your business foundation. Make it your business to avoid these common mistakes. Simply avoiding the most common mistakes will increase the chances that your business will succeed.

Remember, we must first build a strong foundation by tearing down those old walls of common mistakes, to build a business that is successful and profitable. Now is the time to get your foundation set in place.

4. Setting Goals, Creating a Plan of Action, and Making a Daily Schedule

Now that we have knocked down some of those old walls housing common mistakes that hold us back from being truly successful, let's begin to build our “new house” of a successful and profitable photography business, starting with our goals and strategies.

One of the main benefits of starting your own photography business is the chance to be in control of your own income, time, and destiny. Being your own boss sounds great and being in control of your time and how you spend it sounds amazing! You probably love the idea of holding your destiny in your hands, but most photographers do not realize that the reality of running a business is much different from the perception of running your own business. In fact, most small businesses will fail within the first two years, and this fast failure is even more common in the photography industry.

If you want to make your photography business a success, you have to change the way you think about running your photography business. Successful entrepreneurs and business owners follow very specific systems, steps, and paths that are quite different from what you might believe.

If you start your photography business dreaming about the benefits of having no structure and all the time that you can take off, you are definitely going to fail. There is no magic trick you can use to make your photography business succeed. You will not find a get-rich-quick scheme that really works. Real success only occurs when you work hard using proven strategies and methods that other successful individuals have already used to achieve success.

Do not let your ego get in the way of your success. Do not think that you can take over the world, especially if you do not know the basics of running a business. You are the boss, which means you must hold yourself accountable. If you do not feel like rolling out of bed today, you

don't have to, but that choice is going to affect you and your business. That choice will be a step that puts you closer to failure.

Each day, you will make choices. The choices you make will either take you closer to business success or closer to business failure. The more time you spend being unproductive and unfocused, the harder it will be to make your photography business succeed.

Remember, every moment you spend working on your photography business should be treated like a billable hour. If you have a goal to make \$200,000 this year and you plan to work 2,000 hours this year, then every hour you're working has a specific value. With these numbers, an hour of time is worth \$100.

Every task you complete during your working hours should be at the \$100 per hour level. Take a minute and think about that. Spending your time commenting on your friends' posts on Facebook or checking out cool celebrity pictures on Instagram probably will not be considered the best use of your time if you're focusing on tasks that keep you at the \$100 per hour level.

This is a lot to consider...but here is the good news: You can succeed if you're willing to work hard and follow proven methods of success. This starts with the way we set our goals. Before we get into the nitty gritty of goal setting, I want to share this quote with you. Think about how it applies to the determination and perseverance you must have to run a successful and profitable photography business.

"Every morning in Africa, a gazelle wakes up. It knows it must outrun the fastest lion or it will be killed. Every morning in Africa, a lion wakes up. It knows it must run faster than the slowest gazelle, or it will starve. It doesn't matter whether you're the lion or the gazelle-when the sun comes up, you'd better be running."

-Christopher McDougall, *Born to Run: A Hidden Tribe, Superathletes, and the Greatest Race the World Has Never Seen*

Setting Goals for Your Photography Business

First things first with your photography business: You need to figure out your purpose. What do you want to accomplish? What are your short and long term goals? Setting goals for your photography business will help you create a successful business plan. The short term goals you set should help lead you on a path towards accomplishing your long term goals. Every business decision you make each day should be based on whether they help take you closer towards your goals.

Why Should You Set Goals?

You've probably heard a lot about setting goals throughout your life, but maybe you're not sure why setting goals is so important. Goal setting is essential for the success of your photography business for a variety of reasons. Some of the reasons you should set goals for your business include:

Reason #1 – Goals Keep You Motivated – Setting goals helps push you forward and goals will keep you motivated as well. When you write down your goals, you have a written representation of your inner desires, which constantly remind you of all you need to accomplish. When you begin working towards your photography business goals, it's easy to get excited and start working hard, but eventually, your motivation can wane. Having goals you can visualize and focus on will keep you connected to your business desires, helping you stay motivated to work through times when your focus begins to diminish.

Reason #2 – Goals Fuel Your Ambition – You will also find that goals can fuel your ambition. Goals aren't just about creating a plan for your business – they help give you the inspiration to accomplish great things with your business. If you want to accomplish things with your business that most photographers only dream about, you need to set goals and then work every day towards achieving them. As you set goals and see yourself making progress towards them, you will fuel your ambition and you'll ensure that your aspirations are more than just vague notions floating inside your head.

Reason #3 – Goals Help Keep You Accountable – Goals help keep you accountable. Having goals gives you a concrete look at whether you are accomplishing what you want or if you're slacking off. If you have goals and you look back and realize you have not made enough progress, you will be able to realize that what you're currently doing isn't working, which means you have to make some changes. If you do not make yourself accountable, you'll have a difficult time achieving success with your photography business.

Reason #4 – Goals Let You Know What You Really Want – Setting goals will help you figure out what you really want from your business. Wandering through life with vague notions of accomplishment and success will not help you figure out what really brings you happiness and success. Regularly asking yourself what you want and continually reassessing your goals will make it easier to figure out what you really want, which will encourage you to get out there, and work hard towards achieving those goals.

Reason #5 – Goals Help You Meet Financial Targets – Of course, sales is an intrinsic part of your photography business, and having good goals can help you to make sure you meet your financial targets. Setting proper business goals will help you figure out the effort that you need to make to meet your sales targets.

Reason #6 – Goals Attract New Clients – Setting specific goals for your photography business also attracts new clients. When you have goals for your business, they will let clients know that they can benefit from working with your business. Goal setting is very important in cementing relationships with your clients.

The Importance of Setting Specific Goals

When you start setting goals for your photography business, it's not enough to just set any goal. You need to focus on setting specific goals. Why should you set specific goals? Specific goals are more likely to be accomplished than general goals are. Specific goals incorporate the goal, an action plan, and a performance measure, which will let you know if you've successfully achieved that goal.

To set specific goals, you will need to use this formula:

“I will (the goal + performance measure) by (action plan).”

For example, if you want to increase the number of photo shoots you do each month, your specific goal would be:

“I will increase my number of photo shoots to 20 each month in six months by spending an hour a day searching for new leads.”

When you’re trying to set specific goals, you may want to ask yourself the following questions:

Who – Who will be involved in this goal?

When – What is the time frame for achieving the goal?

What – What specifically do I want to accomplish?

Why – Specific benefits, purposes, or reasons for accomplishing this goal.

Which – Constraints and requirements for the goal.

Setting Realistic, Obtainable Goals

Not only do you need to set specific goals, but you also need to make sure that you set goals that are realistic and obtainable. If the goals are not realistic and obtainable, you will never achieve them.

Realistic Goals – A realistic goal is a goal towards which you are able and willing to work. Remember, goals can be realistic and high, but you’re the only one who can figure out how high to set your goal. In some cases, a higher goal will be easier to achieve than a low goal, since low goals only exert low motivational force.

Attainable Goals – Once you identify goals that are important to you and your photography business, you will begin looking for ways to achieve those goals. You will start developing the financial capacity, skills, attitudes, and abilities you need to reach those them. You will even start seeing opportunities you previously overlooked to help you get closer to achieving those goals. If you plan the steps wisely and come up

with a time frame to carry out those steps, it's possible to attain almost any goal that you set for yourself. Goals that may have seemed out of reach and far away start moving closer and becoming more attainable, not because the goals have gotten smaller, but because you have expanded and grown to match them.

Make Sure You Set Business and Personal Goals

It's important to set both business goals as well as personal goals. Many driven business people make the mistake of only focusing on business goals, letting other areas of their life go. Unfortunately, this often leads to feeling unfulfilled later in life. You want to keep your life well rounded, so set business and personal goals that answer questions, such as: What do I want to achieve with my photography business? What do I want out of my life? What do I want for me and my family?

Business Goals – Your business goals describe what you want from your photography business. However, remember that your business goals are not an end in themselves. The whole purpose of setting business goals is to help you achieve your personal goals. For example, maybe you would like to increase your standard of living or make enough money to travel more. This may lead you to set goals to generate more money with your photography business. Some typical business goals that you may want to set include:

- Financial or income goals
- Skill building or learning goals
- Improving customer satisfaction
- Increasing your number of sales

Personal Goals – Establishing personal goals gives you a foundation for your business goals. For true fulfillment you need a balance between your work and personal life, so make sure you set good personal goals that reflect this. These goals should light you up! Some examples of personal goals include:

- Living a vibrant and healthy life
- Having an involved, active spiritual/religious life

- Having a circle of trusted friends
- Having a healthy mental and emotional mindset
- Being part of a loving family

Creating a Plan of Action to Help You Meet Your Goals

Once you have set your goals, it's time to start creating a plan of action that will help you to meet them. Many small business owners have to reach a point where they realize they cannot run their business emotionally. Business should be business. Trying to run a photography business with your heart is only going to lead to a heart attack.

Creating a good plan of action requires several steps. If you want your business to be successful, you will need to attract clients that respect and value your photography services and products. Here is a look at the steps you need to take to create a good plan of action that will help you achieve the goals you have for your photography business.

Assess Your Life Today

The very first step you need to take if you want to create a plan of action is to assess your life today. You need to know where you stand today and take ownership of your current life. It's not easy, but you need to let go of your ego and spend some time being honest with yourself.

One of the best ways to assess your life today is to spend some time writing down your strengths and weaknesses. Do not just list them in your mind – actually write them down so you have a visual representation and something you can look back at as you work to improve yourself. There is great power in written words vs keeping thoughts in your mind.

Make sure that you write down your strengths and weaknesses in all areas of running a business. What are your strengths and weaknesses in dealing with finances? What are your strengths and weaknesses when it comes to the daily tasks of running a business? What are your strengths and weaknesses when it comes to your photography skills? What are your

strengths and weaknesses personally that may affect your ability to run your photography business?

If you want to map out your journey towards your goals, you have to know where you're starting. You must know where you are today.

Make sure that you do not turn to others when you're assessing your life today. Not everyone is at the same place on the journey. It's easy to be influenced by other people that you trust, but when you're assessing your life, it's your honest opinion that is the most important.

Make a 1 Year Anniversary Goal

Once you have assessed your life and figure out where you are today, now it's time to make goals for the next year. Instead of working on a goal for December 31st, make a one year anniversary goal from today's date. It's important to have specific goals and a specific timeline for completing the goals, but your goals may require some assessment and adjustment along the way.

Why make a one year anniversary goal? If you make goals that start January 1st and end December 31st, it's more like making New Year's resolutions. Just think about it – how many New Year's resolutions are really achieved? Not many. The one year anniversary goal is a better choice that will help you create a specific date by which you want to achieve your goals.

Reviewing Goals Daily

When you set goals, it's important to make sure that you review them daily. Daily review is important for several reasons. First, daily review will help you keep those goals in your mind all the time. You need to be reminded of your goals each day so you know what you are working towards. Another reason that you need to review your goals each day is to see how you're doing on achieving those goals. Sometimes you may find that you're actually progressing ahead of schedule. In other cases, you may have dealt with an unforeseen setback. Both of these scenarios are

very common when you're working towards your photography business goals.

Do not give up on your goals! When you notice that you had a setback, don't let it shake your confidence. Celebrate the times you have made extra progress towards your goals. Simply take the time to assess where you are, make any adjustments that are needed, and then get your focus forward on achieving those goals.

Break Down Goals into a Scalable Reality

Now it's time to break down your goals into a scalable reality. You already know what your goals are, so you need to start breaking them down into smaller chunks or milestones that will help you accomplish your big goals. Simply saying that you want to make \$200,000 in a year seems like a huge goal. However, when you break it down into how much you have to make monthly and how much you need to make weekly to achieve that goal, it becomes much more realistic. Then, you can figure out what tasks you have to do each day to achieve those smaller milestones that help you finally achieve your larger goals.

Figuring Out the Net Amount of Money You Need to Make

Let's take a look at the financial goals that you have set for the next year. What does your net income need to be for you to achieve those financial goals? How much do you need to make each month to achieve that financial goal in a year? How much will you need to make weekly? How much do you need to make daily? Here's a look at how you can figure this out to help you achieve your goals.

To figure this information out, you need to know how many days you're going to work and how much time you're going to take off work. This is important information, since it affects your per day and per week value.

Next, think about the current client pricing model that you have in place. Do you have sessions or sales yet? If you don't, you will need to

create a base method that you can work from, depending on what you plan to charge for your services and products, which can be done at a later point (this will be addressed later).

Next, we're going to look at the NET amount of money that you must bring in after expenses are paid. Think about the percentage of different types of sessions that you want to do. Do you want to do 100% family photos, 100% weddings, or 100% newborn photography? Maybe you want to do 50% weddings and 50% families, or some other combination of different types of sessions. It's important to know this information so you can establish the time and net income restraints for what you want to do.

Now, you need to look at your yearly net income, and then divide that by the number of photography sessions that you plan to do in the coming year. After you know this, you can break this down further into the number of weeks that you plan on working. This will help you figure out how many sessions you will need to do for the year, for each month, and for each week to achieve your photography business goals. It will also help you figure out how much you need to net for each photography session.

Here's an example:

You're desired net income is \$100,000 for the year

You plan to spend 50 weeks working

You want to do a maximum of 200 photography sessions

If you are working these numbers, if you're going to make \$100,000 in 50 weeks, you'll need to make \$2,000 each week.

Divide your desired net income by the 200 photography sessions you want to do ($\$100,000/200$), and you will figure out how much you need to make per session. In this case, you would need to make \$500 on every session that you do.

Then, if you know you will work 50 weeks in the year and you plan to do 200 photography sessions in the year, you know that you have to do

an average of 4 sessions each week, which means an average of 16 sessions every month.

With this method, you are able to uncover exactly what you need to do every week and every month to make sure that you achieve your final goal of making a net income of \$100,000.

Discovering Your Cost of Doing Business

Of course, you also need to take a look at your current or planned business expenses so you can figure out your cost of doing business. Your business expenses will fit into two categories: fixed expenses and variable expenses.

- **Fixed Business Expenses** – Fixed business expenses are ongoing business expenses that are not going to change in the future. Some examples of these expenses include:

- Insurances
- Website hosting
- Business licensing fees
- Memberships
- Internet service
- Permits
- Studio rental
- Consistent, contracted advertising expenses
- Other annual, monthly, weekly, or daily expenses

- **Variable Business Expenses** – Variable business expenses are expenses that can vary and fluctuate over time. Examples of variable expenses may include:

- Hiring an assistant
- Gas expenses
- Cost of printer toner or paper
- Utilities
- Office supplies
- Equipment maintenance

- Equipment replacement
- Vehicle maintenance
- Cost of package items
- Estimated taxes
- Toiletries

After you come up with all your fixed and variable expenses, you will need to come up with a total of your estimated annual expenses. Then you can break this number down into the cost of doing business monthly, weekly, daily, and per photography session.

Pulling it All Together

Now, let's pull all this financial information together. Combine your cost of doing business with the net income that you want to make in the next year. This will help you decide the true base value that you must make for each photography session that you want to do.

Once you know what you need to make for every photography session, you will realize that you cannot take on photography sessions that will pay you less than your baseline. If you do, you will never be able to achieve the goals that you have set for yourself, and you'll work hard without having any quality of life or profit to show for all your hard work.

Creating Your Daily Schedule

To accomplish your goals, you need to start creating a daily schedule. Following a daily schedule is a technique that many entrepreneurs and small business owners have used with great success. If you do not focus on a daily schedule that helps you take steps towards your goals, you'll find it difficult to achieve both short and long term goals.

Every day, you need to start at zero. What does this mean? It means that every, single day, you have to come to work and work towards the future as hard as you do any other day. It does not matter how good you think your are. It does not matter how smart you are. It does not matter how busy you are. You always have to work hard – you can't afford to

slack off at any point. When you have this attitude each day, you will avoid many of the peaks and valleys that many small business owners experience as they try to achieve success.

What Your “Perfect Day” Should Include

What should your “perfect” day include? Here’s a look at what you want to include in each day.

Time for Learning – No matter how great you think you are at running a business or photography, you should always keep learning. Learning keeps you on top of new trends in your field. Learning helps you to discover new techniques that you can use to build your business. If you want to grow your business, you need to grow, and learning is the key to growing.

Practice Time for Your Sales Presentations – We have already looked at how important it is to spend time practicing your sales presentations. Regular practice will help you develop permanent skills, so make sure that you practice your presentations daily so you improve your skills and enjoy improved sales.

Business Building Tasks– You will also need to take time each day to take care of tasks that help you build your business, such as prospecting and tracking your results. Some of the essential business building tasks you’ll need to engage in daily include:

Lead Generation – While it is important to make use of the leads that you already have, you’ll need to spend some time on lead generation daily so you continue to grow your business with new customers.

Contacts Goals – Each day, you will need to spend some time contacting your leads. If you do not have contact goals each day, it will be difficult to turn those leads into paying customers that help you achieve your photography business goals.

Appointments Made – Part of turning leads into clients includes making appointments. You need to get leads to sign up for appointments. Spend time on this daily.

Sessions and Consults Performed – Most days should include carrying out photography sessions and/or photography consults. Remember, your sessions and consults are an important part of generating income for your business.

Appointments with Signed Clients – Of course, you already have signed clients that you will need to make appointments with regularly. This may include viewing appointments where you let your clients view the photos you have taken, presenting them with your sales packages.

In Person Sales – You should also engage in in person sales daily, which will help you to build a successful photography business.

Replying to Calls/Emails– Some of your time each day should be spend replying to phone calls and emails. This may include doing:

Lead Follow Up – Spend time replying to calls or emails that come from leads. It's also important to send emails or make calls to leads to follow up with them, even if they have not asked any questions or asked for assistance. Following up is always important. The more you follow up with your leads, the more likely you are to convert a lead into a paying client.

Client Follow Up – You may need to spend some time following up with current clients. If you have already done the client's photography session, you may need to follow up to schedule a viewing appointment. If your client has already ordered products, you can follow up, letting clients know when to expect their order to be delivered.

Past Client Follow Up – Don't forget to spend time following up with your past clients. Yes, new leads are important, but it's easy to get repeat sales from past clients who are already very happy with your work. Spend time each day following up with past clients, seeing if they have any new needs with which you can assist them.

Photography Editing – Your photography business is not just about doing photography sessions. You will also need to spend a significant amount of time editing your photographs. This is important, because you need to put your best foot forward when you show photos to clients. Take some time every day to work on editing tasks so you don't leave editing until the last minute. You do not want to rush editing, so plan editing time into every day.

Processing Client Orders – Processing your clients' orders will also take some of your time. It may require you to do some designing, printing, or you may need to send information off to other companies so the products are ordered promptly and delivered on time.

Recording Your Hours Worked

Creating and following a daily schedule is important, but you also need to make sure that you record all your hours that you work. Keep a log on paper or on your computer of all the hours that you work, whether you are spending time shooting a client's session, processing orders, editing photos, or looking for new leads. Your time is important.

Why should you record your hours? It's important to be able to track the numbers of hours you are working each week, month, and year. You also need to keep track of any other numbers. As you record your hours and other relevant information, it allows you to better track your personal effectiveness and conversions.

Tracking information is always a powerful tool because it gives you a closer look at how your business is performing. You'll be able to find areas where you can make improvements. Maybe you can find ways to automate tasks that will reduce the hours you need to work to make the same amount of money. Perhaps you will find that you're not making enough conversions, and you need to adjust your daily schedule to become more effective. Remember, the more information you have, the better equipped you are to track your progress and make any necessary changes, making it easier for you to reach those long term goals.

Focusing on the Business Leads You Already Have

Make sure that you spend plenty of time focusing on the business leads that you already have. Many photographers make the mistake of being so focused on generating business that they actually overlook the leads that they already have and failed to convert in the past.

Simply learning how to improve your sales presentation and sales techniques may help you improve your effectiveness, which would mean that you need fewer leads to get the same number of paying clients. You need to learn to work smarter with what you have. It will take less time and effort to improve your techniques to sell to current leads than it will to find and try to convert new leads. Do not let your mistakes or lack of knowledge make it harder for you to achieve your goals and the success that you want for your photography business.

Remember the house analogy? Now is the time to create new strong walls of goals, plan of action, and a daily schedule to achieve success with your photography business. Do not end up like many photographers who end up going out of business in less than two years. By using these techniques, which have proven to be effective for many other entrepreneurs and small business owners, you too can enjoy the success that you want. Remember, you have to be willing to work hard and you have to work hard every, single day. You have to set specific, realistic, and attainable goals. You will need to design a plan that will help you take steps towards those goals every day, every week, and every month. Then, you will need to create a daily plan that you can follow every day, ensuring that you complete the tasks that need done to enjoy reaching your goals.

You are on your way towards building your successful and profitable photography business. Don't give up putting up these new walls that will be the strength of your photography business!

5. Branding and Marketing You and Your Photography Business

You've got a new foundation by getting rid of old common mistakes. You've built new walls of structure through goals, action plans, and a daily schedule. Now it is time to focus on how your clients will see you with a clear branding and marketing message. If we stay with the house analogy, it's time to start installing the windows of our house, so our clients can see clearly as to how our photography business can help them.

Most photographers never think about the branding and marketing side of starting a new business, however, both branding and marketing are important to the success of your photography business. Failing to brand and market your business will likely result in failure of your business within a year or two.

With quality branding techniques and marketing know-how, you have the potential to turn a startup photography business into a booming business quickly. If you're not sure where to get started, this chapter will help you learn the basics.

So back when I lost everything, I was in survival mode and I was doing what every other photographer does: going after everything and anything. As an example, I went and signed up for the local newspaper and weekly publication. I was getting \$50 gigs and \$35 dollar gigs, just for survival. I know a lot of people are out there and are doing the same thing depending on what their lifestyle situation is right now...everyone is different. Those gigs definitely helped me survive at that time when I needed it.

The thing is though, long term you can't survive off of that type of money. At the end of the day when you pay your bills, you pay for your gas, you pay for your time, and you pay for your living expenses, if you are just making \$35 or \$50 a gig, you are never going to get ahead. You never are going to be able to buy the gear or be able to do any of the things you want to do as a professional photographer. I found myself in

that same situation. It was like no matter how hard I worked, I was going in that same cycle.

So I was going into the holidays after 2008 when I lost everything and was reinventing myself and I sat back and thought, “What's going to separate me from the competition?”. Everybody has a camera these days! What am I going to do? I knew I needed to put my thinking cap back on and go back to my skill sets that I knew. I had to reinvent and separate myself from everyone else. Coming into the holidays, I knew, good, bad, or indifferent, there are people out there that spend money to get their picture taken with Santa Claus. In my head, I kicked and screamed! I did not want to do that because I thought I was selling out, selling my soul. I didn't want to be like everybody else. But the more I dived into it, the more I thought, I don't have to be like everyone else. I need to separate myself from everybody else by approaching this differently and that is where I invented the idea of the Santa Experience, which is a very unique different process that anyone has done in the world. This approach helped me from a branding standpoint and right out the gate and it gave me a mechanism to separate myself from everyone else.

You are going to read in the rest of this book how how I leveraged non-profits and corporate events and the Santa Experience is also one of those items that got me into very targeted and unique environments where I was able to find and go directly after a distinct avatar: the people with the disposable income who would pay for the type of photography services that I wanted to offer. I knew I could not survive on \$35 a session or \$50 a gig. I needed to have people in my base that were willing to spend hundreds to thousands of dollars when it came to photography services. I needed to separate myself from everyone else out there doing family sessions, fall sessions, or even very traditional santa sessions, so the idea was to separate myself from the crowd and what helped me go in that direction was to create something totally different with the Santa Experience.

Now beyond this book, I can't dive deep into the Santa Experience itself, but I do want to share that I have an opportunity to learn about the course for it. If you go to www.SantaExperienceCourse.com you can learn more information about that course. It is very unique and very different and it is more than just a session; it's a totally interactive experience that

helped me separate myself from everybody else and just one of many examples that I am going to share with you in this book, so go there now.

Different Types of Photography Market Segments

One big mistake many new photographers make is trying to be all things to all people. If you try to specialize in every photography niche, you are headed for disaster. Think about the most successful photographers in the world. What are they known for? They are usually known for just one or two types of photography. It's very rare for a successful photographer to be known for servicing all types of photography niches and markets.

Why is it so essential to find your niche or market segment? Not only is it easier to excel in one niche, it's also easier to market if you have a specific niche. The smaller your niche, the easier it is to find your gap in the market.

Let's start looking at the different types of photography market segments, or niches. There are two general photography categories: commercial and consumer. Most photographers decide to go one direction or another. While there can be some crossover between commercial and consumer photography, the most successful photographers are usually known for one or the other. In many cases, they have a specific niche in one or two genres.

Looking at the various photography market segments can help you know what options are available to you. When you're familiar with your options, think about what you enjoy doing. What are you good at? Will it pay you enough? How much competition is there in the market? Do you need specialized equipment for the niche? Does your current location suit the niche you want to work in? These are all questions to ask yourself when trying to decide on your photography market segment.

Commercial Photography

Here's a look at some of the commercial photography niches:

1. Photojournalists – Photojournalists spend their time documenting locations, events, and people who are considered newsworthy. Their photographs may show up in telecasts, webcasts, online publications, or print publications. In many cases, photojournalists do report to editorial staff and may perform a variety of different duties, including capturing film video segments or photographs, transferring digital files to computers, using image editing software, gathering background information on subjects, writing narration to accompany their images, and submitting images and other information to editorial staff. Travel to assigned locations is often required. Unfortunately, while there are great opportunities and unique events to experience, the pay is generally low. As publications continue to disappear, there are fewer opportunities available for photojournalists.

2. Headshots – Actors, models, and corporate professionals often require headshots for marketing purposes. Headshots are a specific style of portrait that realistically shows off an individual's appearance for casting or branding. Headshots may be a portrait of a full body or a face with a background that helps to show off the personality of the individual who is being photographed. Several types of headshots include:

a. *Entertainment Industry Headshots* – These headshots are usually for actors, singers, and other types of entertainments. Most of these entertainers have to include headshots, as well as a resume, when they apply for jobs. These headshots may be more artistic than other types of headshots and performers often have multiple headshots that feature different expressions and poses. Performers may also have both theatrical headshots and commercial headshots taken.

b. *Modeling Headshots* – Often called tear sheets or comp cards, modeling headshots involve compiling multiple images on one sheet. Close ups are often required to show the model's skin. Modeling headshots are often used for modeling portfolios, magazine advertisements, TV ads, comp cards, online industry profiles, and more.

c. *Business/Corporate Headshots* – These headshots are often used for branding, marketing, and social media. In most cases, subjects are only show head to torso or head to chest. Corporate headshots may be used for Facebook, LinkedIn profiles, annual reports, author pages, company

websites and publications, resumes, about us pages, newspapers and articles, press releases, and corporate marketing items.

3. Editorial/Lifestyle – This photography niche focuses on telling stories or conveying ideas. This type of photography is often used within magazines. The goal of this photography style is to tell stories or to inspire people with a photograph. Editorial/lifestyle photography often combines the preparedness of studio portraits with the candid nature of photojournalism to provide a unique, day in the life look that still has an editorial quality.

4. Stock Photography – Stock photography has the ability to be a lucrative niche for photographers and this term applies to many of the generic photos that you come across from day to day. To be successful in stock photography, photographers need to find ways to shoot with a unique twist or from unexpected angles. It's also important to think about keywords strategically when shooting. Photographers need to avoid doing the same old photographers that others have done if they want to succeed in this niche.

5. Product/Food Photography – Product and food photography is a niche that is nearly always in demand no matter the state of the economy. Companies always need to visually promote their products. The goal of this type of photography is to entice consumers to want the item being photographed, so it's essential to properly display the product and convey its message. Photographers must learn about the subjects in high demand, how to highlight products with strategic lighting, and to learn from techniques already being used in magazines and other forms of advertising.

6. Event Photography – Since image is everything for businesses, corporate event photography continues to be a niche that thrives. This type of photography is perfect for the social butterfly. It's important to be able to blend into the background, yet it's also important to have an outgoing personality, since you'll be around plenty of people. In many cases, success in corporate event photography leads to other opportunities, such as the chance to take on executive headshots.

7. Fashion Photography – Fashion photography is one of the more glamorous photography niches, and it often involves collaborating with famous designers, working with fashion models, and traveling around the globe. However, it comes with its own set of challenges. Fashion photographers often need to be located near major cities and breaking into the niche often requires being an assistant first. Building good connections is just as important as talent if you're going to succeed in this niche. Being a fashion photographer requires extensive technical knowledge, such as using light gels, backdrops, strobe lights, reflectors, and more. Retouching experience is also an essential technical component of this photography niche. Fashion photographers must also excel at self-promotion.

8. Architectural Photography – For photographers that have a love and an eye for architecture and design, this niche may be a perfect fit. Choosing this niche makes it possible to shoot for architecture firms, architecture magazines and websites, interior design firms, design magazines, and real estate agencies. There are multiple sub-niches available as well, such as restaurant photography or real estate photography.

9. Travel Photography – Travel photography is a photography market segment that involves documenting a particular area's people, customs, landscapes, history, and cultures. Unlike other photography genres, travel photography continues to be underestimated and isn't as monetized as some other genres. Some of the challenges that face travel photographers include shooting various subjects in various conditions, low lighting, and hostile conditions. It's often very difficult to break into this niche as well.

10. Medical Photography – Medical photography is a very precise form of photography that requires photographers to produce objective, accurate images that record disease, injuries, medical procedures, and operations truthfully. This type of photography is designed to help educate, document, and aid in diagnosis. Many hospitals and medical research facilities have photographers on staff to photograph medical conditions and to maintain searchable databases.

Consumer Photography

Here's a closer look at a few of the consumer photograph niches to consider:

Weddings/Engagements – Every bride wants a perfect wedding day, and that includes the perfect pictures to preserve those wedding day memories. For this reason, wedding and engagement photography is a booming market, although there's also plenty of competition in this niche. Building relationships is important in this niche. In many cases, a good photographer can begin by taking engagement photos, building a relationship that results in contracts for wedding photos and anniversary photos in the future. Depending on the photographer and the couple's wishes, a traditional or photojournalistic approach to the photos may be taken. Traditional wedding photography generally includes classically posed images. On the other hand, a photojournalist style usually focuses more on candid shots with very little photographer interaction. Remember, this can be a high stress niche that requires a lot of gear, and some photographers even find that they need to hire an assistant.

Portraits – Portrait photographers generally have their own studio, although they may go on location for some shoots. For photographers that enjoy one-on-one interaction with clients, this is a great niche to explore. While some photographers choose to focus on multiple types of portraits, other photographers may choose to specialize in only one type of portrait, such as:

Family Portraits – Some photographers choose to specialize in family portraits, and this sub niche is an excellent choice for photographers who are very good with kids. Family portraits may include in-studio portraits or on location shoots in natural settings.

Maternity/Newborn – Most new parents want to have pictures of their new bundle of joy, and newborn and maternity photography offer a special niche that can bring in plenty of business. Photographers can focus on building relationships with expectant mothers by creating unique, beautiful maternity photos. Parents often want creative, cute pictures of their babies, and creative photographers can find unique ways to show off all the baby cuteness with great results.

Senior – Senior portraits are important rite of passage for most high school seniors, and both formal and informal poses are generally needed. This means that photographers may need to shoot formal poses in the studio and head out for on location shoots for informal poses. Keep in mind, formal senior portraits may need to meet certain criteria to be included in the senior's yearbook.

Seasonal/Holiday Portraits – Another portrait sub-niche is seasonal or holiday portraits. Special Christmas portraits are very popular, especially for families that like to put photos on their Christmas cards. Other family just like to document having the whole family together with a holiday portrait that they can treasure.

Glamour/Boudoir – Glamour or boudoir photography is becoming even more popular, and many women enjoy feeling beautiful and sexy as they take these unique photographs. This type of photography is designed to celebrate the unique beauty of the woman.

Team and Individual Sports – Team and individual sports photography has the potential to be very lucrative, especially in areas where sports are very popular. Team photos include everyone on the team and are posed by the photographer. Individual sports photos show of the individual players and allow for a bit more personality.

School Portraits – Providing school portraits, particularly for large schools, can bring in plenty of business, although doing school portraits comes with some challenges as well. School portraits are usually done in a uniform way and these portraits are often used in yearbooks. However, parents usually have the ability to order these portraits as well, so taking quality school portraits can bring in more money in family orders. The difficulty can be dealing with squirmy kids all day long.

Parties/Events – Whether it's a birthday, a Bar Mitzvah, or a retirement party, family members often like to capture all the important moments that come with a big event or party. Outgoing photographers often do very well with party and event photography. Not only can photographers capture candid shots during the party, they can also set up photo booths and capture unique photos of guests together. This provides

a great way for photographers to sell to more than just the hosts of the party.

Pet Photography – The pet industry is a huge industry, including pet masseuses, pet trainers, pet hypnotherapists, and even pet photographers. Many pet owners want the very best for their furry friends, which makes pet photography an excellent niche for photographers that really enjoy working with animals. This type of photography often takes a lot of patience, since it's often hard to direct and pose animals.

Identifying Your Ideal Client

Once you have defined what photography niche you are part of, the next step is to identify your ideal client. One of the important cornerstones of your photography business is knowing and identifying who your ideal client is. Many new business owners make the mistake of skipping this important step. They start a business and build a website without ever thinking about their clients, what they want, who they are, the problems they have, or the solutions they need.

Who is an Ideal Client?

An ideal client is a client that finds a perfect solution to his needs or problems in the products or services provided by your business.

Why should you identify your ideal clients? Shouldn't your company be for everyone? Why should you limit yourself to one type of client?

Here's an example. Most businesses have 90% general clients and 10% ideal clients. However, those 10% of ideal clients usually make up about 90% of the company's total income. That's incredible. If only 10% of the total clients are making up 90% of the total income for a company, what would happen if 100% of a company's clients were ideal clients?

Let's say your business has 100 clients, and according to the earlier percentages, only 10 of those clients are ideal clients. Let's say that you

make \$1,000 a month from each ideal client. That means that you're making \$10,000 per month from your ideal clients.

Now, what happens when you turn all of your clients into ideal clients? If all 100 of your clients are ideal clients that spend \$1,000 a month, you go from making \$10,000 per month to \$100,000 per month. That's a HUGE difference, which is why it's so important to identify and target your ideal clients.

Create an Ideal Client Profile

Now that you're aware of the importance of identifying your ideal clients, it's essential to know how to create an ideal client profile. Creating ideal client profiles makes it easier for you to land those ideal clients for your photography business. The following are some helpful tips that will help you to create your own ideal client profile.

Identify Age Categories – Think about the average age of your ideal clients. Are they young parents between the ages of 25-40? Are your ideal clients older retirees with grandkids between the ages of 50-65? When you try to create your ideal client profile, make sure you determine the average age of these clients so you know the age group of clients who will be the best fit for your photography business.

Personal Characteristics – It's also important to think about the personal characteristics of your ideal clients. By knowing the personality types and personal characteristics of your ideal clients, you'll be able to come up with the language that you need to attract these ideal clients. Do you want to target busy mothers, new grandparents, new parents, or large families? For example, maybe you'd like to target busy moms who don't have the time to take photos of their children. Those moms may be working 8-10 hour days and they may have little down time. The more you know about this ideal client, the easier it is to attract that client.

Wealth Characteristics – You also need to think about the wealth characteristics of your ideal clients. What is the average annual income of your ideal clients? What is the net worth of your ideal clients? This is

important, since you need to make sure that your ideal clients can afford the services and products that your photography business offers.

Interests and Hobbies – Think about the interests and hobbies of your ideal clients. Do your ideal clients enjoy playing golf, attending sporting events, shopping, etc.? While it may seem trivial to identify the interests and hobbies of your clients, this information can actually help your marketing efforts. By identifying the personal interests of your ideal clients, it's easier to tailor marketing and client events around your ideal clients.

Family and Professional Relationships – Don't forget to consider the family and professional relationships of your ideal clients. This is a critical, and often under appreciated, part of creating an ideal client profile. You need to know what individuals are connected to your ideal clients. Maybe they are work colleagues or family members. Finding out more about the relationships of your clients makes it easier to make connections with your ideal clients.

Problems or Needs – It's also important to think about the problems or needs of your ideal clients. What problems do they have and how could you offer a solution to that problem? Every market has specific wants and needs, and you need to be aware of the wants and needs of your clients so you can find ways to meet those wants and needs.

Other things to consider when creating an ideal client profile include:

- Where do they live?
- What do they buy?
- What is the typical family makeup?
- Where do they work?
- What is their occupation?
- What companies do they work for?
- What is their education level?
- How do they prefer to pay for goods/services?
- How often do they use the internet?
- Do they use social networks?

Now that we have created our ideal client profile, let's dive deeper and put an actual face to the client. This process is called creating your client avatar.

Creating Your Client Avatar – Learn the Basics of Avatar Creation

When you're starting a photography business, one of the first steps you need to take is to create an avatar. Unfortunately, most people never create an avatar, which can ultimately result in business failure.

What is an Avatar?

An avatar is the profile of the specific client you want your photography business to work with. It's the idealized representation of your business' perfect prospect. After all, you want to market to people who actually want to purchase your services. When people feel like you are talking directly to them, your marketing is doing its job. The best way for you to achieve this is to make sure you market as if you really are speaking to just one person – the client avatar you've created.

Identifying Your Niche Market

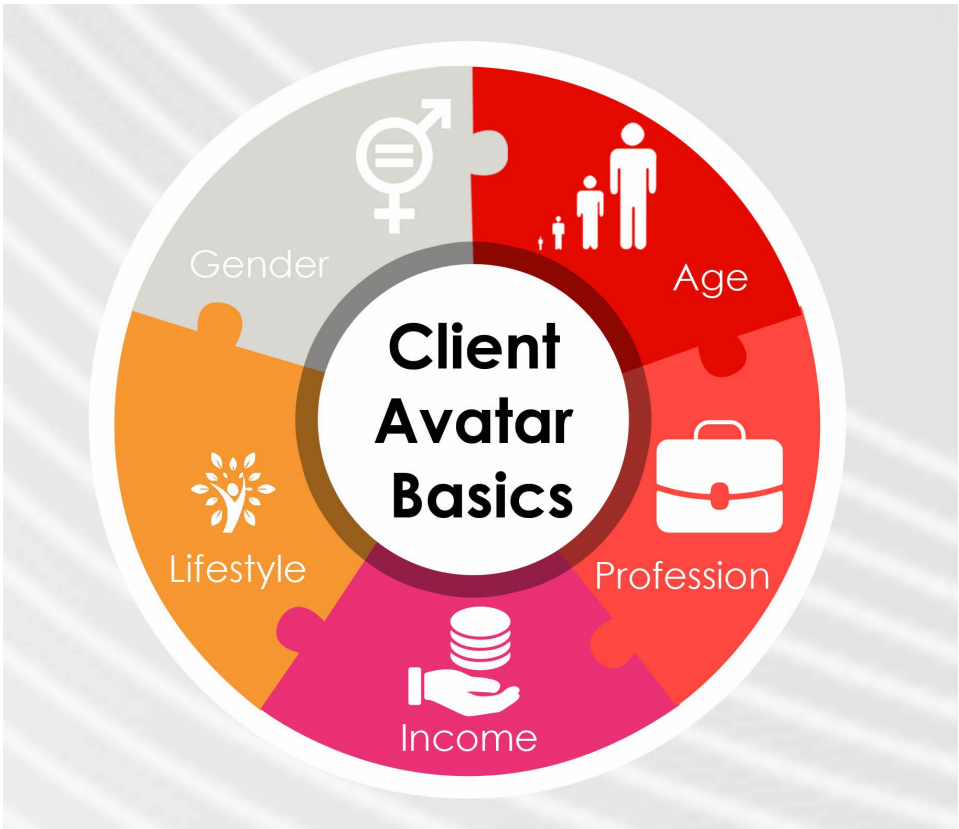
Before you start creating your client avatar, make sure you identify your niche market. Think about your photography business. Have you chosen a niche market? Do you plan to focus solely on wedding photography? Are you planning to do corporate headshots? Do you want to just shoot photos of children and babies? You need to know your niche. If you fail to have a niche market, you'll have a tough time achieving success.

Defining Your Ideal Client

After you know your niche market, you're ready to start defining the ideal client you want for your photography business. Start with some

generalities. For example, think about your ideal clients. Why do they need your service? How will they learn more about what you're selling?

Creating your client avatar will go a bit further. You'll be able to bring to life your ideal client by focusing on the person you're targeting with all of your marketing efforts. As you work to develop your avatar, make sure you're honest, direct, and clear. It may take some time and effort to create the client avatar, but it's an important part of creating and maintaining client relationships in the future. Remember, the clients drive your business, so you need to be able to find them.



Creating Your Client Avatar – The Basics

As you begin to think of your avatar, personalize the process. You may want to come up with a name for your avatar. As you begin working

through the process, it's a good idea to try to "become" the avatar so you begin to think and feel as your avatar does. Focus on the details. All the details are important. You need to know your avatar's strengths, weaknesses, lifestyle, likes, dislikes, and multiple other factors.

It's easy to make the mistake of just viewing a client on financial terms. However, it's the relationships that will help your business to succeed, so you need to get to know your client avatar as a real person. You want to know their thoughts and feelings. You want to know what makes them happy or sad.

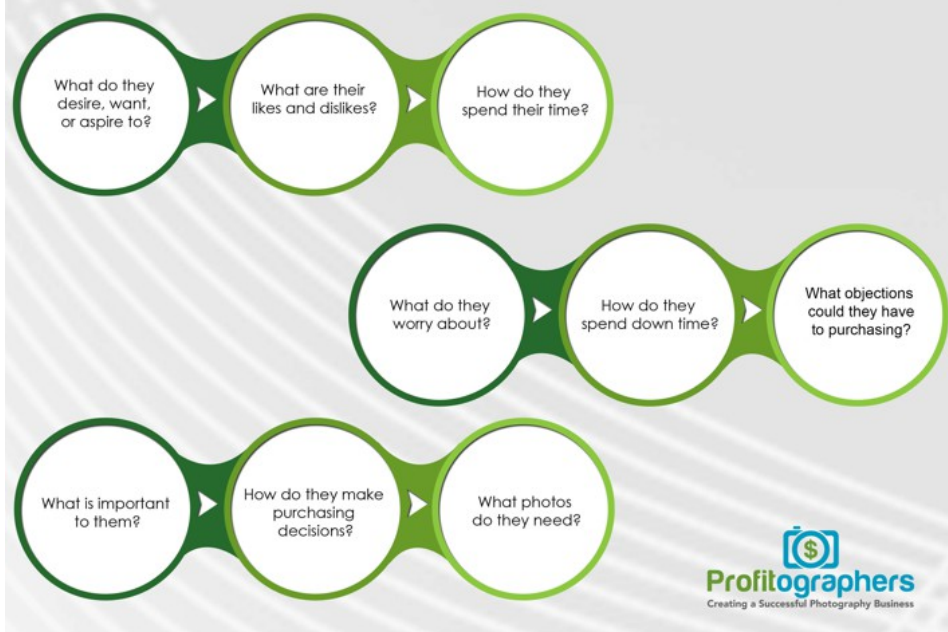
As you get started, you don't need to be perfect. Simply start brainstorming and writing down things as you think about them. You can always organize this information later.

Outlining Your Client Avatar

One of the best ways to learn more about your client avatar is to start asking some questions. Here are a few questions you can ask to help you come up with more information on your ideal client.

- What is your avatar's gender?
- What is the age of your avatar?
- Do they have any children? If so, what are their ages?
- What is your avatar's marital status?
- What career is your avatar involved in and what is his/her responsibilities on the job?
- Where does your avatar work?
- What type of community does your avatar work in?
- How would others describe your avatar?
- What are the top priorities of your avatar?
- What things does your avatar worry about or fear?
- What are the hopes and dreams of your avatar?
- What kinds of photography services does your avatar need?

Dig Deeper with These Questions



What Will Make Your Avatar's Life Better?

Now that you know the basics and the personal details of your avatar, you need to start thinking about what could make your avatar's life better. Take the time to really think about your avatar and what he/she needs to do to break the current life cycle. Be specific about the things that would make your avatar's life better. How can you help make your avatar's life better? You need to find out what you can offer to your avatar that they really need.

Multiple Avatars May Be Needed

While creating a single avatar for now may be fine, over time you may need to come up with multiple avatars when you run specific marketing campaigns. For example, if you decide to offer multiple

products or services, you may need to have separate avatars for different services or products you offer.

As you create the avatar, make sure you have fun. You may even want to turn it into a story. When you get creative, you'll work smarter, maximizing your results.

What is Branding?

What is branding? It's a lot more than just a logo. It's the perception that consumers have of you and your company. You and all your marketing materials should represent and support your brand identity. The key is to identify your ideal client (as mentioned in the previous chapter), and then make sure that you represent you and your company in a way that will connect with your ideal clients.

Branding is a blend of science and art that manages associations between brands and memories in the mind of your ideal customers. Branding involves focusing your resources of both tangible and intangible attributes to differentiate your brand in a compelling, meaningful, and attractive way for your target audience.

Branding must be consistent and congruent in every aspect of communication, services, products, and marketing materials. This includes you, as a photographer and business owner, how you communicate with others, and how you dress. Remember, even when you're off the clock, you're still representing your brand.

Does Branding Apply to Your Photography Business?

Some new photographers wonder if they really need to focus on branding. Does branding really apply to your new photography business? Yes!

Branding applies to any organization, individual, service or product, as long as you have a transaction that takes place between humans. Branding actually relies on some of the fundamental principles of

psycho-sociology – the way that the human memory stores, process, and recalls information. Failing to create and manage your brand is basically like burying your head in the sand and hoping for the best.

Of course, quality work and relationships are still essential to the success of your photography business. Branding and brand management can help your photography business in many ways, such as:

- Making your clients loyal to your business
- Communicating a focused message to help attract new ideal clients
- Building relationships and evoking emotions in prospective clients

The Objectives of a Good Brand

A brand can include a name, sign, design, term, symbol, or combination of these elements to identify the services and goods of your company, differentiating your company from competitors. When you begin branding, the goal isn't to get your ideal clients to choose you over your competition – it's all about getting potential clients to see that you are the only photography business that provides them with a solution to their problem.

What are the objectives of a good brand? A good brand should:

- Confirm the credibility of your business
- Deliver the message of your business clearly in a way that prospects can easily understand
- Make buyers feel motivated
- Connect with ideal clients on an emotional level
- Generate loyalty to your brand

Remember, as you work to compete for customers, a strong brand will be invaluable. It's important to spend time defining, researching and building your company's brand. After all, your brand is essentially the source of a promise you are offering a consumer. It's the foundation of all your marketing efforts, and you can't afford to be without it.

Benefits of Branding Your Photography Business

Branding your photography business offers a number of benefits, including:

Benefit #1 – Loyalty and Recognition – Branding your photography business gives you the benefit of loyalty and recognition. When you brand your business, people are more likely to remember you. A strong brand and logo/image ensures that customers and potential customers keep your company image in their mind. Even if customers aren't aware that you offer a certain service or product, if they trust your brand, they're more likely to trust your business, even when it comes to unfamiliar services or products.

Benefit #2 – Image of Size and Expertise – Quality branding can also give your business the image of size and expertise. Many consumers associate branding with large businesses that can afford to spend money on promotion and advertising. Effective branding can give you an image of size and expertise, which is important when consumers are looking for reassurance that your business will still be in business in a few years.

Benefit #3 – Creates a Quality Image – Building a strong brand also helps you to create a quality image for your business, since most consumers see a brand as a part of a business that shows off value and quality. In most cases, when you show individuals two identical products and only one product is branded, they almost always believe that the branded product is of higher quality. When you effectively brand your photography business, over time, the image of quality in your company will continue to go up.

Benefit #4 – Gives Your Business the Image of Experience and Reliability – A strong brand also gives your business the image of experience and reliability. Strong brands create the image of an established company that has been around long enough to be well known. If you brand your business, your photography business is more likely to be seen as a business that is experienced in photography services and products. You'll also be seen as more trustworthy and reliable than unbranded businesses.

Benefit #5 – Easily Link Together Multiple Products and/or Services – By building a strong brand for your photography business, you can easily link together multiple products and services. When you use your brand name on every service or product you offer, customers for one product are more likely to purchase another product from your business.

Defining Your Brand

Defining your brand is important, but it can take some time. Some of the questions that you'll need to answer when defining your brand include:

- What is the mission of your photography business?
- What are the features and benefits of the products and services you intend to offer?
- What qualities do you want customers and prospects to associate with your photography business?

Take time to do some research. Learn the habits, desires, and needs of prospective customers. Know what your ideal clients are thinking.

What Does Branding Encompass?

After you define your brand, it's time to get the word out, and it's important to know what branding encompasses. Some of the things that branding encompasses include:

Marketing Efforts – This includes your business cards, website, logos, marketing materials, social media business pages, brochures, etc.

Client Communication/Services – This involves how you handle initial contact and follow up with customers and potential customers. It also involves face to face, email, and phone communication. Post session, day of service, after the sale, delivery of products, and viewing session client communication is also included.

Products/Services/Packaging – Branding should encompass the quality and pricing of your services and products, as well as the imagery you use when presenting products, the types of products you offer, your photography style, studio space, editing style, and packaging for deliverables.

YOU – Even the way that you communicate, the words you choose, and the presentation style of your communication should be in harmony with your brand. Branding should also encompass your personal style, cleanliness, grooming, attire, vehicle, approach, and overall attitude.

Remember, the key to branding is to make sure that all of these items are congruent. They should match the market you want to attract. Potential clients will quickly pick up on any incongruences, so make sure that you are genuine and authentic with your branding practices.

Branding

Branding is more than a logo. It is your total identity to the consumer about yourself and your company. Branding is not creating a logo. The key is to identify your perfect ideal targeted client (also referred to as your Avatar).

Branding encompasses:



Marketing Efforts:

Website, business cards, logos, brochures, marketing materials, social media business pages



Client Communication/Services:

How you handle an initial contact and followup, email, phone, and face to face communication, day of service, post session/wedding client communication and followup, systems, viewing sessions, delivery of products, after the sale followup



Products/Services/Packaging:

The quality and pricing of your products and services, type of products shown, imagery chosen presented on products, editing style, photography style



YOU:

How you talk/communicate, the words you chose and how your communication style presents itself, your personal style, attire, cleanliness, grooming, car, attitude and approach

The key is all of these items should be congruent with one another and match the market you are focused on attracting.

Defining Your Unique Selling Proposition

It's also important that you define your unique selling proposition. After all, your Unique Selling Proposition (USP) is what differentiates you from your competition. If you can simply rip the logo off your ad and replace it with a competitor's logo and this works, then you have failed at defining your USP. Here's a look at what a USP is, as well as how you can find your unique selling proposition.

What is a Unique Selling Proposition?

What is a unique selling proposition? Simply put, it's what makes your photography business different from all the other photography businesses available. This is what will make you stand out from your competition, it makes you different, and it earns you a special place in your ideal clients' minds.

Think of your USP as the reason your business is in existence. You can also think about it from the ideal client's point of view. With all the other options available, why should they buy from you?

Remember, your USP really isn't about being the best. Having a great product or service isn't usually enough to make you stand out. After all, having a great product or service is required in the business world. When you're first starting your business, it's often difficult to compete on product or service quality alone. Instead of using the message, "Look at my business, I also offer great products/services," you need to say, "I'm all about X, and we do things differently here. I'm the only place where you can get X."

Tips for Finding Your Unique Selling Proposition

How do you define your unique selling proposition? While there's no particular answer for how you define your USP, there are several tips that can help you figure out the differentiation you can use to increase your chances of success. As you try to find your USP, here are a few tips that can help.

Tip #1 – Put Some Personality in It – When you're running a small business and you're the primary owner of that business, put some personality into your USP. Sometimes personality can make a huge difference. Putting a unique stamp on various aspects of your business allows you to create something that no one else is able to compete with.

Tip #2 – Understand Your Customers – It's easy to fall so in love with your services or products that you forget about your customers' needs. You need to take a step back and understand your customers. What can you do to make clients choose your business, and then come back repeatedly? Remember, price isn't going to be the only reason that customers choose a business. You have to address more than price, finding other things that your customers are looking for when creating your USP.

Tip #3 – Know What Motivates the Behavior and Buying Decisions of Customers – To define your USP, you also need to know what motivates the behavior and buying decisions of potential customers. What is driving and motivating your potential clients? You need to go beyond traditional demographics, such as gender, income, age, etc. Look at the motives for buying and find the emotional and psychological reasons that motivate buying decisions.

Tip #4 – Provide Solutions and Fix Problems – Provide solutions and fix problems with your USP. Understanding and defining the frustrations, fears, and problems of your customers is extremely helpful when you're trying to create a unique selling point. Define the problem and offer potential clients a solution with your USP.

Tip #5 – Share the Biggest Benefits – Remember, when defining your USP, there's a big difference between what your product is and what it can do for your customer. You need to define how your products and services can benefit your potential clients. You need to turn features into benefits that clients will appreciate (something we'll address in-depth a bit later). The more specific you are about the benefits, the more effective the benefit will be as your unique selling point.

Tip #6 – Remember You Don't Want to Appeal to Everyone – Don't make the mistake of worrying that your USP is leaving out some

potential clients. It's natural to want to please everyone, but you don't want to appeal with everyone with your photography business. If you try to appeal to everyone, you'll end up appealing to no one. Your goal is to connect strong with your ideal client.

Creating Marketing Materials and Support Systems

Once you have defined your ideal customer and your unique selling proposition, you need to start creating marketing materials and support systems that match them.

What Kind of Marketing Materials and Support Systems Do You Need?

What kind of marketing materials and support systems do you need? Here are a few to consider:

Logo – Your logo will be used on all of your marketing materials, so make sure that you have a quality logo to use.

Business Cards – Business cards are great marketing tools. Make sure you include a description of what your company does, include your contact information, and you may want to list some of your products or services.

Website – Your website can function as a marketing material and a support system. It's a good idea to have one in place quickly. You don't need a fancy website, but a well-designed, easy to use website is one of your primary marketing materials.

Brochures – You can use printed brochures and virtual PDF brochures to market your business, using brochures to cover a variety of needs that other marketing materials can't.

Email Signature – Whenever you send out emails, make sure you have an email signature that offers a marketing message. Make it catchy,

ensure it includes your business name, and include your contact information.

Other great marketing materials can include flyers, booklets, calendars, greeting cards, and newsletters. It's also important to remember that the way you photograph, how you edit your photos, the business systems you use, and the way you communicate should also match your USP and ideal customer. It all needs to tie together for the best results.

Tips for Creating Marketing Materials and Support Systems That Build Your Brand

When you create marketing materials and support systems, you want to make sure that they will work to build your brand. The most important thing to remember is to ensure that all your marketing materials and support systems coordinate. While your materials don't have to match each other completely, there are some elements that need to remain the same. Here are several tips to follow when creating marketing materials and support systems.

Tip #1 – Pay Attention to Color – Color is an important part of brand identity, since it plays a huge role in memory retrieval. Choose a primary color that works for your company image and use it as a dominant color on all marketing materials. The dominant color chosen should also appear in your logo. Consider learning more about the perceived meanings of color and color psychology when choosing the dominant color that you want to use.

Tip #2 – Focus on Consistent Graphic Elements – It's also important to focus on consistent graphic elements when creating your marketing materials. Remember, you want to use distinctive shapes, borders, and symbols to convey the image you plan to communicate. Choosing consistent graphic elements will make it easier and faster for customers to recall your brand. You can also choose a specific illustrative or photographic style that is used in all your materials, setting your brand apart from your competitors.

Tip #3 – Choose and Use Only a Few Fonts – Make sure you choose and use only a few fonts across your marketing materials. It's usually best to avoid using more than two fonts in the same document. You may want to use a serif font for text blocks and paragraphs and sans-serif fonts for numbers, small text, or headlines.

Tip #4 – Keep the Voice of Your Materials Consistent – Keep the voice of your marketing materials consistent. If you want to convey a friendly brand, use a conversational voice on all materials. If you want to convey an exclusive, expensive brand, then use a formal voice.

Tip #5 – Use Your Logo on All Materials – Since the logo is the most basic graphic element of your brand, make sure that you use it on all of your materials. It's usually a good idea to place it at the same location on the page and it should appear at the same size. While it's okay to proportionately resize the logo, you should never alter it, since consistence is so important.

Communication Methods for Prospecting/Business Building

As a small business owner, it's essential to find effective ways to communicate with your customers. Communication is important for both prospecting and business building. Of course, multiple forms of communication are available. Which communication methods are the best choices for your photography business? Here's a look at different communication methods, their effectiveness, and when you should use them.

Prospecting/business building communication methods:



Face to Face Communication

The most personal and effective form of communication is face to face communication. This type of communication is also the most influential type of communication, and is especially helpful when you need to convey important information. However, it does take more time than other forms of communication.

When you engage in face to face communication, it's just as important to be aware of your nonverbal cues as it is to be aware of what you're saying. Your body language and facial expressions communicate a lot to your prospects. Face to face communication also requires you to learn how to listen and to keep up with fast-paced discussions. If you're not comfortable with this type of communication, it's time to refine and develop your in-person skills.

Telephone Communication

Telephone communication is the second most effective form of communication for prospecting and business building, since it allows you to use your voice and connect in fluid conversation. Unfortunately, many individuals don't answer their phones and some have their numbers on do not call lists.

Communicating via telephone can often save you time if you spend too much time checking your emails. If you need to talk to someone immediately, using the phone is still a good idea when possible. Using phone communication is also a great option if you want to use the power and emotion of your voice.

Traditional Mail Communication

Traditional mail (snail mail) communication is appropriate in some cases. You can reach the masses with traditional mail communication, but it's not as personal as telephone or face to face communication.

Traditional mail can be a great way to send potential customers or previous customers a personal, handwritten card or note, which can be a powerful way to encourage brand loyalty.

Communication Via Technology

You have multiple ways that you can communicate with people using technology today, such as email, social media, text, and video conferencing. Communication via technology is usually impersonal, such as text messages and emails, but they do allow you to reach many people and this type of communication can often prove effective.

However, there's an emotional detachment to consider, and you end up being left in a reactive state, waiting for individuals to respond to you. If you have a tough time approaching strangers, this may be an easier form of communication for you to use.

Keep in mind, using video conferencing, one form of communication via technology, can prove very useful, since it gives you face to face communication via technology. Even if you cannot meet in person with an individual, technology makes it easy to still enjoy that face to face interaction. This now leads me to our next section, all about the best social media platforms for photographers.

The Best Social Media Platforms for Photographers

Photographers that want to build a successful business cannot afford to ignore social media. If you want to grow your business and get your name out there, social media is crucial.

When you use social media correctly and build up a good following, it also offers you social proof. What is social proof? It's a positive influence that's created when an individual finds out that other individuals are doing something. People assume that the action of other individuals is the correct behavior. For example, if more than 1,000 people like your Facebook page, others people looking for a photographer are going to assume that those people believe you to be a great photographer.

Social media is all about the numbers game as well. The larger your social media presence, the more likely you are to have followers that have photography needs. Those individuals may tag or directly refer their friends to you, offering the potential to bring you a significant amount of business.

Of course, social media isn't a magical technique that will immediately skyrocket your photography to success. However, it is a very essential piece of your marketing strategy that can help you build your brand and connect you with many potential clients.

The Importance of Social Media for Photographers

Why is social media so important for your photography business? Here's a look at a few of the ways that social media can help grow your photography business.

Building Your Brand

You already know how important it is to build your brand, and social media can help you to accomplish this. When you share relevant, timely content on social media, you can become well-known within your photography specialty. It may also help you to establish credibility and expertise on a specific photography related topic. If you're trying to generate interest and awareness of your work, social media can offer an excellent foundation to build upon.

Building and Managing Relationships

Using social media can also help you to build and manage relationships. Many of your clients, potential clients, colleagues, and partners are already using social media. This means you need to be where the action is, providing people with many convenient ways they can interact with you on their own terms. Being engaged in social media can also help you find out about and help solve potential problems that your clients are talking about online. Social media also provides a great channel for keeping clients updated or you can use it to build more personal connections.

Generating Direct Sales

Although social media may seem like a great place to directly offer your products or services, you need to handle this tactfully. Social media is intended for dialogue, not one way posts that scream “Buy my photos” or “Hire me.” You don’t want to turn off your followers with hard selling to them all the time. Of course, social media users do understand that social media is for personal and business use, so some promotion is definitely acceptable, something we’ll talk more about later. Even though you need to temper your promotional posts, social media can help you to generate more direct sales.

Improved SEO Rankings

Are you looking for ways to improve your website’s SEO? Social media can help. Social networks foster a sharing culture, so followers are often looking for links that they can share with their community. Social sharing increases the chance that people will see, link, or share your content, extending the reach of the content you post on social media website. Since major search engines now index tweets and certain other social media posts, you can get some great results when using social media for SEO. In fact, social media participation continues to become even more important for the overall success of your SEO campaigns.

Feedback and Inspiration

Building strong networks on social media sites also gives you the chance to benefit from feedback and inspiration. No matter what social network you use, you’ll find that you have greater access to new ideas that will help push your own creativity. The work of other photographers will influence you. You’ll be able to engage in conversations that can help you improve your photography techniques. Social networks even make it possible for you to solicit feedback from others, whether it’s on client issues, how to price your photography, or specific photography techniques.

Social Media Platforms for Photographers

Photographers today have access to multiple social networks, and the number of social media sites can be intimidating. How can you figure out what networks you should be using? How do you figure out where to focus your limited time and energy? First, you need to take a closer look at the best social media platforms, how they work, and the benefits they have to offer. Then you'll be prepared to decide on the best social media platforms for your photography business.

Facebook

Facebook has more than 1.49 billion monthly active users as of 2015, and this platform is very business friendly, making it possible for business owners to reach out to millions of potential customers. Facebook continues to be a big driving force in marketing and it gives photographers the ability to keep potential clients and current clients updated with work, promotions, future projects, and so much more.

A Few Facebook Statistics

- More than half of Facebook's active users log into the site daily
- Facebook has the largest repository of images found online
- The average user on Facebook has at least 150 friends
- Facebook is ranked as the 2nd most visited site across the world

The Pros

- Facebook has more users than any other social media platform
- Your coworkers, friends, family, and clients are probably already on Facebook
- Facebook has great mobile applications
- Facebook ads are available

The Cons

- Many users only head to Facebook to stay connected with friends and family
- Facebook interest has dropped off a bit, which could pose a future problem
- Image compression is sometimes a problem when adding images to Facebook

Why Consider Facebook? – Most of your customers don't head to your personal website daily. However, people visit Facebook multiple times a day. It's important to participate in the places where your clients already are, and Facebook is a place where you can almost guarantee daily interaction with your target market.

The Importance of a Business Page – Many photographers find that it's important to have a Facebook business page instead of just a personal Facebook Page. Many clients feel that it's too personal to "friend" a photographer's personal page, but they'll be fine liking a business page. Using your personal page also limits your friends, which is why you definitely want to create a business Facebook Page that is specifically for your photography business.

LinkedIn

LinkedIn has millions of users and it's specifically designed to be a social network for professionals. Adding it to an overall marketing plan can help photographers make business connections, giving photographers the ability to reach specific individuals who may help their business to expand. Since this is a business like platform, you'll need to keep things professional, keeping your photography business as the focal point of your account.

LinkedIn Statistics

- Over 2 million companies have their own company page on LinkedIn
- Mobile page views make up more than 11% of member visits to this social media platform
- LinkedIn has many executives from Fortune 500 companies

The Pros

- It's the only major social network designed for professionals
- You can include your resume on your profile
- It's easy to write and receive recommendations on LinkedIn
- Great for headshots

The Cons

- Many people have the idea that people on LinkedIn are just looking for jobs
- LinkedIn comes with different types of interactions than other popular social media platforms

Why Consider LinkedIn? – LinkedIn offers the potential to build powerful professional relationships that can help you to advance your career as a photographer. Since word-of-mouth marketing is still so important, LinkedIn allows you to establish your business as a reputable source and gives you the chance to make connections with individuals who will vouch for your excellent photography and great business ethic. Since LinkedIn is a professional networking site, photographers can use LinkedIn to help meet new business contacts and expand their network.

Great LinkedIn Features – LinkedIn provides some excellent features that can prove helpful to photographers. The profile is like an online resume and is an important part of your account. The updates feature allows you to share things with your network and gives you the option to attach a link. If you're looking for jobs, you can find photo gigs with the available job listings. LinkedIn also offers a Skills & Expertise section that allows you to type in your field, making it easy to find photography groups, postings, and more.

Twitter

With more than 500 million user accounts, Twitter is a huge social media platform that shouldn't be ignored. While Facebook is more visually driven, Twitter limits you to just 140 characters per tweet to say what you need to say. Twitter is considered a microblogging platform and it gives you a chance to keep your clients and potential clients up to date with what you're currently working on. You can also ask questions, share industry news, interact with leads, and get feedback on Twitter.

Twitter Statistics

- More than 1 billion tweets are posted each week
- Millions of searches are done on Twitter each day
- Mobile users continue to increase significantly

The Pros

- Twitter offers a simplistic way to communicate since you only get 140 characters
- News often breaks on Twitter first
- No noise filters are used on Twitter
- Hashtags make it easy to find what you want
- Instant communication makes it easy to connect with other companies and individuals quickly

The Cons

- You only have 140 characters for each tweet
- Twitter feeds often seem intimidating to new users
- Nearly half of the users who have accounts are not active users

Why Consider Twitter? – Even though Twitter may seem intimidating, it's still a great marketing machine for photography business owners. Twitter has the potential to help photographers:

- Improve SEO
- Build relationships with current and potential clients
- Drive signups to newsletters
- Spread awareness to individuals who don't know you
- Discuss photography and any related news and issues with peers
- Get feedback on services and images
- Generate interest in photography
- Announce achievements, news, events, or special promotions

Pinterest

Pinterest is a community “pin board” that quickly exploded in popularity. Today, Pinterest boasts more than 100 million users and a large percentage of those users are female. While it's one of the newer social media platforms, it's grown quickly and has great potential for photographers.

Pinterest Statistics

- Approximately 42% of online adult women in the U.S. currently use Pinterest

- 30% of all social media users in the U.S. use Pinterest
- In 2014 alone, Pinterest grew by 135% in non-U.S. users

The Pros

- Pinterest continues to be one of the fastest growing social networks
- Pinterest is very easy to use
- Women are the main demographic on Pinterest
- Pinterest gets over 1.7 billion page views each month

The Cons

- It has a smaller user base than some other social media platforms
- It's not as good for interaction as other social networks
- User demographic lacks in diversity

Why Consider Pinterest – Pinterest offers you far more than just a great way to show off your photographs. It's also a great way to drive traffic to your photography website. Pinterest is great for helping unique photography ideas go viral. Since women are the larger demographic on Pinterest, many portrait and wedding photographers find Pinterest to be useful.

Instagram

Instagram has more than 80 million users and this social media platform is all about photography. Many photographers use this platform because it does focus on photos.

The Pros

- It's the fastest growing mobile photography network
- It's very easy to use
- Many people enjoy using it because it's so fun
- Instagram photos can be posed to Flickr, Facebook, Twitter, and other sites when they are uploaded to Instagram
- Photography based

The Cons

- Square limitations of the images may stifle creativity

- Many images on Instagram have a similar look and feel because particular Instagram filters are very popular
- This product is only a mobile network

Why Consider Instagram – Instagram is a lot of fun, and since it's fairly simple, many people use it actively. It's a great way to get people familiar with your photography in a fun way.

Google+

Google+ was launched in 2011 and it has grown very quickly. It quickly joined the ranks of other social media giants, such as Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook.

The Pros

- Google is more than a social network – it's a social layer for everything Google
- Great privacy controls
- Excellent mobile experience
- You can increase your standing in the search results with Google+ activity
- Excellent user interface ensures that photos look beautiful

The Cons

- For some people, Google+ continues to have a negative public image
- A lot of people are not on Google+ yet
- Many users have a hard time getting used to Google+, since it's very different from Facebook
- Google+ is still quite young when compared to other social media platforms

Why Consider Google+ - Google+ is worth considering because it does have the ability to impact SEO rankings on Google. If you're looking for education, a great photo community, or inspiration, Google+ is an excellent option. Currently, it's not the best place for booking clients, but it does offer plenty of great ways to connect, particularly with the helpful Google+ Hangout feature.

Google+ Photos – Since you'll want to share your photos on Google+ if you decide to use it, you'll find that it has a great photo albums feature that is powered by Picasa. It's easy to upload photos, creating albums that show off your work. Once albums are created, you can easily share those albums with individual friends, the public, or circles. An image editor is also available, as are sharing feature and privacy options. Regularly sharing photos, adding photo details, and adding captions can help you add to your credibility as a photographer. Posting interesting, new photos regularly will constantly remind your network that you're an active, quality photographer that has current work to show others.

Periscope

Periscope is a relatively new, live-streaming video mobile app that was recently purchased by Twitter. In just 10 days, Periscope hit one million users. Today it's considered the fastest growing social network. With Periscope, it's possible to go live on your smartphone from wherever you're at, allowing you to broadcast live with just the touch of a button. Viewers can tune in to your live broadcast from around the world.

Why Consider Periscope? – Periscope offers a number of great benefits for photographers, including:

- The ability to gain new followers that you may not meet anywhere else
- You have the chance to market your brand in new unique ways, such as giving tutorials, hosting Q&A sessions, or giving a behind-the-scenes look at your studio
- You can show off your own personality, which is important since most people like to purchase from people they know, trust, and like
- Build even deeper relationships with your followers

Myspace

Why did I even include Myspace? It's practically a ghost town today, but it used to be a thriving social network years ago. It's important to think about this because it proves that what's in today may not be the in thing tomorrow. As a photographer, you need to keep your eye on the current trends, ensuring that you stay with the trends to optimize your results with social media marketing.

Don't Let Social Media Become a Time Suck

There are so many social media platforms out there, and it can be exciting to start your own social media marketing campaigns. However, keep a word of caution in mind – don't let social media become a time suck. While it's important to engage in productive activities on social media sites, you need to avoid wasting your time.

If you find that you're wasting time on non-productive activities, you need to find a way to avoid this. Remember, your time is valuable. Social media has the potential to help you grow your business, but you won't succeed if you're wasting your time with non-productive activities on social media websites.

How Many Social Media Platforms Should You Use for Business?

We've already talked about a lot of different social media platforms. Should you try to use them all? Keeping up with a social media platform can take a lot of work, especially if you're trying to juggle multiple platforms.

How many social media platforms should you use for your photography business? It's important to be good at a minimum of one platform. However, many social media marketing professionals recommend that you use three platforms.

Most people that do very well within the social media game are well-known for a specific platform. It's rare that they are leaders in multiple platforms.

If you decide to work with a couple of different social media platforms, make it easier by linking your accounts. Many social media platforms make it easy to link your accounts so you can post the same content on multiple platforms, which reduces the effort you have to put into keeping up multiple accounts.

The Importance of Balancing Social Media Posts

When you're using social media platforms, it's so important to balance your social media posts. The goal is to slowly influence and predispose your followers to want to use your services or recommend your services. You should not be focusing on selling them again and again. Remember, engagement is key. It's important to create timely, valuable content that engages your audience instead of constantly posting spam or regular sales pitches.

If you're using your own personal account, it's best to keep your posts 80% personal and 20% business. However, if you have a specific business account, you should post 80% business and keep 20% of your posts personal.

Your goal is to begin building rapport with your audience over time, which is essential to building trust. You need to have the trust of your audience before they want to use your services personally or recommend your services to someone else.

Free Posts Vs. Paid Posts

Many social media platforms, such as Facebook, Pinterest, and Twitter also give you the chance to pay to promote posts. Should you pay for posts? In some cases, paid posts can worth the money. They are highly targeted, which means you'll get your message in front of the people you're trying to target. However, you have to be very smart about whom

you target and about what you post or you'll simply be wasting your money.

Marketing/Sales 101

Marketing and sales is an essential part of your photography business. If you don't have any marketing knowledge, it's important to start learning what you can about marketing so you can increase your chance of success. While there's a lot to learn, here's a look at some basic marketing and sales information you need to know if you want to ensure you successfully grow your photography business.

Proactive vs. Passive Marketing Techniques

When you begin marketing your business, it's important to realize that there are two broad types of marketing: proactive and passive marketing. Both marketing techniques can help you get the word out about your company's products and services. However, to build an effective marketing plan, you need to understand both marketing techniques, their pros and cons, and how to use them effectively.

First, let's look at the definition of the terms, "proactive" and "passive." According to the Merriam Webster dictionary:

- Proactive means, "Controlling a situation by making things happen or by preparing for possible future problems."
- Passive means, "Not active or operating...existing or occurring without being active, open, or direct."

Proactive marketing is all about being in control of the situation and involves taking action. It involves engaging with and reaching out to your customers. It requires you to take purposeful, deliberate action, and it takes some effort on your part. Proactive marketing may include cold calls, proactive posting on social media sites, sending out emails, using direct communication, and using other methods that reaches out to customers.

Passive marketing isn't active. It involves marketing strategies that let you sit back while waiting for prospects to come to you. This type of marketing is done before a need arises, such as building a website or posting an advertisement online or in a newspaper. While you'll get a trickle of business from passive marketing, proactive marketing allows you to bring in more prospects with your marketing dollars.

In most cases, it's a good idea to have a combination of these marketing techniques when marketing your business. Make use of technology and passive marketing to ensure that information about your company is out there. However, to really stand out, particularly in a local market, you'll need to use proactive marketing techniques as well.

Marketing/ Sales 101

Proactive vs Passive
Marketing Techniques



Create Predictable
Duplicatable Results
Driven Activities



Generalized vs
Target Marketing



Present Needs vs
Future Needs



Create Predictable, Results Driven Activities

Another important piece of marketing information is to focus on predictable, results driven, marketing activities. Why is this so important? As the owner of a new photography business, you'll be very busy. You don't have the time to waste on marketing activities that don't provide you with good results. When you engage in marketing activities, you need to make sure that your marketing activities will bring you the fastest profitable results.

Some of the best predictable, results driven marketing activities for your photography business may include:

- Writing blog posts (that are keyword optimized) for your photography business website
- Connecting with your target market on social media sites
- Calling potential leads
- Creating and sending out email broadcasts
- Search engine marketing
- Creating marketing materials
- Showcasing your work at local arts and crafts shows
- Networking with other local businesses

On the other hand, some activities that will only waste your time include:

- Checking your email too frequently
- Spending too much time reviewing competitor websites
- Engaging in unproductive "chatter" online

Generalized vs Target Marketing

Previously we talked about why it's important to define your ideal client. When you use generalized marketing, you're marketing to anyone and everyone. However, target marketing is marketing that allows you to market to your ideal clients. This type of marketing is like sending a guided missile to your target – it provides results every time.

Why should you choose target marketing over generalized marketing?

Target marketing allows you to focus on a specific market area, which usually makes your marketing efforts more time-efficient and cost-efficient. You'll also stand out from your competition with this form of marketing. When you differentiate your photography business from the competition, prospective clients are less likely to focus on your prices as the main issue, which can help improve your profit margins as well.

What to Include in Your Marketing Message

Do you know what your marketing message should include? If not, your marketing will end up being a shot in the dark, and you won't reap the results that you want. Here is a look at the most important things that you need to include in your marketing message.

Features Vs Benefits

Should you focus on features or benefits in your marketing messages? Unfortunately, many business owners don't understand the difference between features and benefits. Then, business owners focus on features and they don't mention the benefits, assuming that consumers will automatically know why they should purchase the product or service.

What are features? Features are factual statements about the product or service you're promoting. However, features don't entice your ideal clients to make a purchase. Here's a few examples of features that businesses have used in marketing materials:

- One-click financial reports
- 75 number speed dial
- Batteries included
- Custom programs
- Self-setting clock
- Open 24-hours

What are benefits? Benefits let customers know what they will gain from the features. They show consumers what the feature offers to them. Benefits are actually results. The benefits should show customers why your product or service is for them.

If you try selling the features of your services or products, you make potential clients do the work to figure out how or why that feature benefits them. It's in your best interest to do the work for potential clients, showing them a look at the benefits.

For example, the previously mentioned feature, "75 number speed dial" offers clients the benefit of being able to keep in touch with customers without a lot of effort and without the frustration of misdialing. The benefit of "one-click financial reports," is that clients can easily see where businesses are at any point in time.

Take this information and apply it to your photography business. Look at the features you have to offer, and then figure out the benefits of those features. Make sure you include those benefits in your marketing message.

What's In It For Me?

The WIIFM Factor (what's in it for me) is a value proposition that you need to include in your marketing message. It's used to persuade your target audience why your services or products are worth their time and money. Unfortunately, many business owners fail to communicate this essential piece of information in their marketing message.

In order to set your photography business apart from competitors, you need to create a spark of interest by addressing the needs that your ideal clients have. If you fail to highlight how your product or service can help your clients or what is in it for them, you'll quickly lose the attention of your target market. To successfully use the WIIFM factor in your marketing message, make sure that you communicate the following to prospective clients:

What We Do – Communicate what your business does briefly, but make it clear.

What's in it For You – Grab the attention of your audience by showing how your product or service benefits them. Keep it clear and brief and avoid industry or technical jargon.

Why Choose Us – Include the reason consumers should choose your company, expanding on your value proposition.

Testimonials – Testimonials can also show clients what's in it for them, helping you to build credibility.

Marketing/ Sales 101

Features vs
Benefits



"WIIFM" -
What's In It For Me?



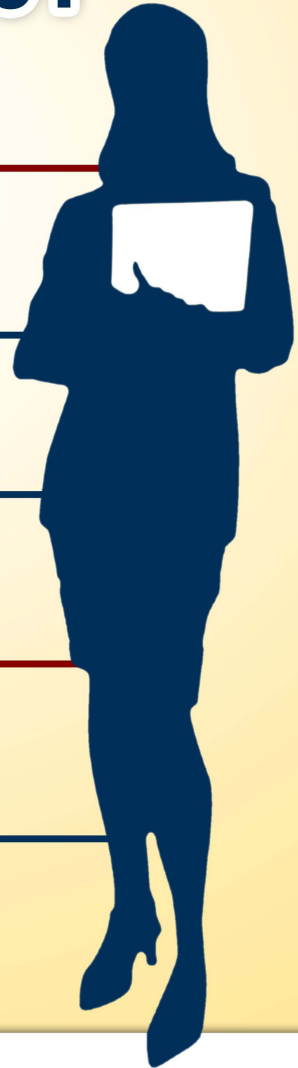
Become the solution to
your client's problem



Emotional vs
Logic



Competitors strong/weak
points - Make them your
strengths



Offer a Solution

Consumers are bombarded with marketing and advertising methods, so you need to find ways to make your marketing message stand out. One of the best ways to do so is to make sure that your marketing message offers a solution to prospective clients. This involves listening to prospective clients, relating your message to the problems and pain your target market is experiencing.

Remember, it's actually easier to sell solutions than it is to sell features or positive benefits. Think about the problems you're potential clients are facing. Know the needs of your potential clients. Once you find a problem that your products or services can solve, start using your marketing message to offer a solution to this problem.

Are you wondering if this really works? Think about some of the hottest products on the market today. These include products and services that help you grow hair, diminish wrinkles, stop smoking, or lose weight. Why do these products do so well on the market?

They offer solutions to negative problems or situations.

After you come up with a problem that your products or services solve, start incorporating this information into your marketing message. Make sure that you mention both the problem and the solution, which will keep your marketing message on target.

Emotional vs Logic

The end goal of your marketing message is to sell your products and/or services. As you develop your marketing message, should you use emotional pleas or focus on logic? Actually, both types of marketing have their place.

Humans are emotional people, but most people like to think they are logical. The human race is driven by emotions, although most people think they are driven by experience, wisdom, math, science, rules, and

knowledge. While logical elements inform emotions, the opinions and actions of humans are usually rooted in emotion.

When should you use emotion in your marketing message?

Keep in mind, emotions affect us deeply – they’re one of the most memorable parts of our lives. For this reason, one of the most effective methods of marketing is to appeal to human emotions, since emotions are long-lasting. By appealing to basic emotions, such as fear, pride, and happiness, it’s possible to make people take action.

When should you use logic in your marketing message?

While using emotions is a powerful way to market your products and services, logic can also be useful, especially if you want to sell quickly. Logical appeals are often seen in advertisements because they encourage quick option. For example, an ad may tell consumers that they can save thousands of dollars on a car if they buy today. While it’s a great technique to help generate quick sells, the sales won’t last forever, and in many cases, the customers don’t last either.

In the end, combining emotional and logical appeals is an excellent idea. You can use emotional to sell consumers on your products or services, making them feel like they want or need your products. Then, you can use logical to help seal the deal. By using these two techniques together in your marketing message, you can eliminate some of the roadblocks consumers may have about the products or services you offer.

Competitors’ Weak Points and Strong Points

You can use your competitors to help you build a good marketing message. How can you stand out from the competition, even as a startup photography business? Start looking at the weak points of your competitors, and then, make those weak points your strengths.

Why do people purchase from your competition? It's because of the competitor's perceived strengths. However, every company has weaknesses, and you can use those weaknesses to help you market your business. When you find the weak points of your competition, those are the areas where you can outperform your competition.

Not only can you use your competitors' weak points to fuel your marketing message, you can also address the competition's strengths with your marketing message.

For example, if your competitor is offering lower prices, don't respond by lowering your price unless you only do it temporarily. Instead, use your marketing message to focus on the fact that you offer more value for the money. If your competitors offer a larger selection, focus your marketing message on the fact that you offer the specific products/services that your customers need.

Call to Action

You also need to make sure that your marketing message includes a call to action. State the action you want potential clients to take. For example, if you want potential leads to call your photography business, include the phrase "Call us today at 000-000-0000" instead of just listing your phone number and assuming that potential clients will call you. Clearly and specifically state the action that you want potential clients to take and you're more likely to enjoy results with your marketing message.

Branding and marketing are important aspects that you will need to incorporate everyday within your photography business to create the success you desire. These business strategies that we discussed can significantly impact your business with how your clients see you. Don't underestimate the power of branding and marketing and how it can revolutionize your business!

6. Advanced Presentation Tips and Skills for Your Photography Business

We have built a strong foundation of business principles and basics and open windows of how our clients see us through branding and marketing. Now it is time to address the doors to your new house of your photography business, or rather, your presentation skills, which will open up new opportunities for new business and loyal customers.

If you don't have an in-person sales background, you may quickly feel like you're out of your element when you try to sell your photography products to clients. Mastering the sales presentation is an essential skill you need to have if you are going to make your photography business a success.

While you may already have the pricing and a few sales basics down, it's time to take a more in-depth look at sales presentations so you can grow your business and beat the competition.

The ability to close sales will be the difference between your success and your failure. If you're ready to learn how to start increasing profits by making more sales, it's time to learn some more advanced presentation tips and skills.

In this chapter, you'll learn more about making good sales presentations and the importance of practice and role playing. You will also discover the best strategies for dealing with objections so you can turn those objections into a sales. Other helpful information you'll learn include how to close sales as well as how to use body language to improve your overall sales presentations.

Master these advanced presentation tips and skills and you'll be on your way to a more successful photography business!

Canned vs. Planned Presentations

As a photographer, it's easy to spend all your time working on your craft and not enough time working on your sales techniques. If you want your photography business to be successful, you need to make sales. The quality of your sales presentation often determines if, and how much, a client buys from you.

How do you make sure your sales presentation is effective? Maybe you immediately think about creating a “canned” presentation, which is a rehearsed, word-for-word “pitch” that you rattle off when you're trying to sell your photography products to customers. Should you use a “canned” presentation, or should you go with a planned presentation? Here's a closer look at the best option, as well as some other tips that will help you make the most of your sales presentations.

Why Planned Presentations are the Best Choice

Canned vs. planned presentations – which is the best? If you want to connect with your photography clients and improve your sales, planned presentations are the best option.

The truth is, no one wants to hear your canned, boring sales pitch. To make sales, you have to connect with each, individual client, and canned sales pitches will never accomplish this. While you may have several words or phrases that you commonly use, a planned presentation is a completely controlled, thoroughly interactive presentation that moves a sale through each stage of the sales process.

While a planned presentation allows you to keep the sales interaction feeling customized and impromptu, you still must plan every part of the process so you can control the direction of the interaction and the outcomes of your sales presentation. A planned presentation should include a step-by-step process that results in a successful conclusion. You need to maintain flexibility in order to adapt to different responses and yet plan to keep the entire process on track towards the objective of selling your photography products.

A planned sales presentation is simply a strategy that you have in order to accomplish your goals at every stage of your presentation. For example, you may want to present clients with a beautiful, emotional video presentation that includes their photos in the beginning. Then, you may want to go on to let customers take a more in-depth view of the photos you have taken. Next, you may want to work to find ways to implement your products in the client's home. With each step of the sales process, a planned presentation helps you know exactly what you want to accomplish and when.

Here's a look at a few differences between canned and planned presentations. When you note the differences, you'll understand why a planned presentation is always the better choice.

Canned Presentations PUSH Clients – Using a canned presentation pushes your clients, minimizes interaction with your clients, and forces ideas on the client.

Planned Presentations PULL Clients – When you use a planned presentation, it pulls your client into the presentation, maximizing interaction and pulling them towards the photography products you have to offer.

Canned Presentations SUPPRESS Clients – A canned presentation will suppress any objections and responses from your client, and this type of a presentation also stifles the emotion of the presentation.

Planned Presentations EXTRACT – Your planned presentation is designed to extract responses from clients while stimulating emotions, which often helps you avoid objections altogether.

Canned Presentations TELL Clients – If you use a canned presentation, your script merely tells your clients things without getting them engaged in the process.

Planned Presentations ASK Clients – With a planned presentation, you will ask questions of your clients, creating an interactive, personal atmosphere that compels your client to make a purchase.

The Importance of Practicing Regularly

Planning your presentation is important, but you also need to make sure that you practice your presentation regularly. You've heard the old adage, "Practice makes perfect", however, the truth is that PERFECT practice is the only thing that will make you perfect. It's also important to note that practice will also help make your presentation skills permanent.

So, what is perfect practice? It means spending time at least every week, preferably every day to practice your presentation.

You may think that you don't have the time to practice your sales presentation regularly. After all, you have photography sessions, photo editing, and other photography tasks to take care of. The truth is, you don't have time NOT to practice. If you fail to practice your presentation, you will waste your time and you'll have a difficult time making sales.

Why should you spend time practicing regularly? Just think about a professional athlete. When they get out there and perform, their performance looks so flawless and effortless. Why? It's because they spend hundreds, even thousands, of hours practicing and preparing. Everything they do before the game is what makes the difference when the game gets started.

It's no different for professional photographers. When you sit down with a client and try to sell your products, it's what you do before that sales presentation that will make the difference.

Role Playing

Simply practicing your sales presentation to dead air or in front of the mirror isn't going to help you get the results you want. One of the best ways to perfect your presentation is to engage in role playing. Have a friend, a family member, or a colleague work with you so you can hone your sales skills. Role playing can help you reduce your nervousness and it can help you prepare to deal with the questions or objections you may encounter when selling your photography products.

Role playing basically involves acting out your sales presentation with another person. This allows you to explore how your clients may respond to your sales approach. Preparing for your sales presentations with role playing helps you to build up self-confidence and experience. It also helps you develop intuitive, quick reactions to multiple situations. This prevents you from making big mistakes when you're working with your clients. When you engage in role playing, you'll find out if you have any knowledge gaps or problems presenting your products, and luckily, you won't have to find this out when you're dealing with clients.

Don't wait to try your presentation on your clients. Remember, the whole reason to use role playing is to get experience without using your client meetings as practice time. You can't afford to practice on your clients. You need every sale, so you don't want to make huge blunders that result in losing a client.

Setting the Stage for a Perfect Presentation

Now that you're familiar with planned presentations and the practice you need to do in order to perfect those presentations, it's time to look at how you can set the stage for a perfect presentation. While you want the sales part of the presentation to be perfect, don't forget to set the stage for a presentation, which increases the chance that your clients will make a purchase. Here are a couple tips you can use to make sure you set the stage for the perfect presentation that compels your clients to buy your photography products.

Appeal to All 5 Senses

One important tip for setting the stage for your presentation is to appeal to all five senses. You want to engage every sense in the presentation. After all, you want to be able to properly set and control the whole experience. When you think through the elements of all five senses, you will be able to ensure that your clients feel relaxed throughout the presentation experience and the decision making process. Here's a look at each of the five senses and how you can use them to set the stage for a successful presentation.

Sight – Appeal to sight by making sure that you give your presentation in a clean, professional location. You also need to make sure that you are properly groomed and dressed so you look professional. Any distractions or clutter should be removed. If the presentation is not taking place at the client's home, make sure that you use a professional space that is consistent with your brand. You'll also want to ensure that you have important visual aids for your presentation, including:

- Sample albums
- Samples of other products
- Professional image displaying methods
- Client pricing guides

Smell – Certain smells can help create a relaxed, comfortable state, enhancing your presentation. Inviting aromas to consider using include cinnamon or vanilla. However, you do not want to overdo the scents. You also need to avoid overdoing the cologne or perfume you wear, since some individuals may be sensitive to smells or have allergies to certain scents.

Taste – Do not forget to appeal to the taste sense. Consider having drinks on hand for your clients, such as coffee, tea, or water. You may want to have some high quality chocolates for your photography clients to indulge in while you are making a presentation. You can use other snacks as well, but avoid focusing too much on food so it does not overshadow your presentation. Another idea is to have a bottle of champagne or quality wine on hand to celebrate the purchase of a high end, signature package with your clients.

Sound – Sound is very powerful, and it can be used to help set the stage for your presentation. However, the wrong sounds can be a distraction. Try to eliminate any sounds that may be distracting, such as television sounds, external sounds, and other unnecessary ambient noise. If you're giving a presentation in an individual's home, it's a good idea to have sitters for small children or the ability to have the dog offsite before the meeting to prevent distractions that ruin your chances at making a sale. When you make presentations in your studio, consider playing an instrumental or soft jazz station to help set the tone for your presentation.

However, avoid making the music too loud. You want to keep it as background noise so it does not become a distraction.

Touch – Touch is also very powerful, and you're more likely to sell something if you can put a product directly in the hands of your clients. Clients don't just like to see products – they also like to touch them. For example, they are more likely to purchase a nice album if they can hold it in their hands than they are if you simply describe it to them. High end products, such as canvases, make a much bigger impression on clients if they can touch them and see how they will fit on the wall in their home. Make sure that you have a full range of sample products with you for the presentation. This will make it much easier for your clients to make a decision, helping you to make the sale.

In Person Sales

Setting the Stage: 5 Senses

One of the most important aspects to guiding your clients using in person sales meetings is to be prepared to properly set and control the entire experience. Thinking through the elements of all five senses will help make your clients feel more relaxed during the experience and decision making process.

Sight:

Is the location professional and clean?
Are you properly dressed and groomed?
Did you remove clutter and distractions?
Are you in a professional space that is consistent with your brand? Do you have proper visual aids like client pricing guides, professional image displaying methods, sample albums, canvases and other print products?

Smell:

Certain smells are known to help create a relaxed and comfortable state. A hint of vanilla or cinnamon in the background are typical inviting aromas. Be careful not to over do it with perfume/cologne as some people have negative sensitivities.

Sound:

Eliminate distractions of external sounds like TVs and other unneeded ambient noise. Sitters for young children and taking dogs offsite prior to in home meetings is highly suggested. While in your own studio, playing a nice soft jazz or instrumental station in the background can help set the tone of the meeting.

Tastes:

Do you offer water, coffee, or tea?
How about select chocolates?
How about a bottle of wine or champagne to celebrate purchases of signature packages?

Touch:

You sell what you show and even more when you can place it in the hands of your clients. For them to hold an album in their hands will influence their decision more than you just verbally talking about it. Having a full range of sample products will allow the decision making process to be easier for your clients.

Using Neuro Linguistic Programming in Your Presentations

Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) is a technique that has been used for sales purposes for several decades, and this learned technique has the ability to drastically improve your sales performance. Using NLP gives you the ability to establish, build, and maintain rapport with your clients, which gives you greater influence over your presentation, giving you the confidence that you need to positively shape the way that your clients see and receive you and your presentation. Here's a look at a few ways you can use NLP to improve your presentation and increase your likelihood of making a sale.

Tip #1 – Understand Why People Make Decisions – One of the keys to proper communication is understanding why people make decisions. Decisions are always made based on two factors: the gain of pleasure or avoiding pain. Studies show that most people make decisions to avoid pain, but most successful people focus their decisions to obtain positive rewards.

Try to understand how the client you are working with makes decisions. Does the client make decisions to gain pleasure? If so, you can use techniques that promise reward or pleasure to get that client to make a decision. If the client makes decisions to avoid pain, you can find ways to show clients the consequences of not purchasing your photography products.

Tip #2 – Use NLP to Build Rapport – You can also use NLP to build rapport with your clients during a presentation. When you use NLP skills, you have the ability to quickly form a deep bond with your client. One of the NLP concepts that can help you build a bond on a deep level includes mirroring and matching.

Tip #3 – Make Associations – NLP helps you understand that the brain works by making associations. It's important to understand associations and how they can work to trigger particular responses. When you understand the way people make associations, you can use associations as a powerful tool to increase your ability to make the sale to the client.

Tip #4 – Set Specific Outcomes – You can also use NLP to set a specific outcome in your mind before you make the presentation. When you set a specific outcome for the presentation in the mind, your subconscious mind begins working to come up with a solution. As you start the presentation, you'll even have your subconscious mind on your side, helping you with body language and tone of voice so you can effectively wrap up the sale.

Techniques for Handling Objections

When you work to sell your products and services to clients, you are always going to encounter objections. Unfortunately, many photographers do not plan for objections, so they end up losing the sale. You need to expect these objections, learn which objections to expect, and then figure out the best way to handle them while still making a sale.

NLP - NEURO LINGUISTIC PROGRAMMING IN SALES

The key to proper communication is understanding why people make the decisions they do.

Every decision made is based on two factors:

- AVOIDING PAIN:**
Our association to pain/consequence
- GAIN OF PLEASURE:**
Working towards pleasure/reward

Studies show more people make decisions to avoid pain.
Most successful people focus their decisions on obtaining positive rewards.

Common Objections

Before learning how to handle objections from your photography clients, it's important to be aware of some of the common objections you may face. Some of the most common include the following:

Objection #1 – Need – Your client may say that they don't really need your service or product, or they may say that they have a need that you are unable to satisfy.

Objection #2 – Price – Clients often object to the price of your products. They may say that they could get it somewhere else or they may say that your competitors offer lower prices.

Objection #3 – Time – Sometimes clients object to the timing of the purchase. They may say that they need time to think about the purchase or that they don't have the money at the time.

Objection #4 – Features – In some cases, clients may object to some element of the product you're selling, whether it's the style, the size, or the details of the product.

Of course, clients may come up with many other objections, but these are some of the most common types of objections you'll encounter when trying to sell photography products to your clients.

Technique #1 – The LACE Technique

If you're trying to learn techniques you can use to handle client objections to sales, one excellent technique that is easy to remember is LACE.

Listen – First, you need to listen to what the client has to say when they make an objection. You need to understand the objection, as well as the emotion and thought behind it. Try to find out more about the objection. In some cases, it may actually be a cover for the client's real objection. You can also ask clients if they have any other objections, which will get you closer to closure.

Accept – After you have listened to the objection, you need to accept or acknowledge it as well as the client. Your client could fear your reaction to their objection, so use your attitude to show that you are accepting. When your attitude shows acceptance, you build trust. Remember, while the objection is frustrating to you, if you don't accept the objection at this point, you will end up dealing with a mutual stalemate, and you won't close the sale.

Commit – At this point, you've increased both trust and understanding, so it's a great opportunity to move towards a close. Try to get your client to make a commitment. You can ask them to make a commitment if you can address their objections satisfactorily. At some point, your client will run out of objections, so if you can address each of them properly, you'll have the sale in the bag. You may also need to make a commitment to your client, which could include putting in some additional effort to resolve the client's objections.

Explicit Action – Now you're ready to address objections and take action on the commitments that have been made. You may need to persuade your way through the client's objections by changing the way that they view them. You may also need to concede on some objections if it's worth it to you. In some cases, a small compromise on your part, such as the addition of a free product or a slightly lower price may be enough to close your sale.

Technique #2 – Asking Questions to Stay in Control

One of the best ways to deal with objections is to ask open ended questions to make sure that you stay in control of the conversation. Remember, listening to your client is important. When you continue asking open ended questions, you give the client a chance to talk, making them feel appreciated and understood. Asking these questions also shows that you care about what they have to say, which builds trust.

Meanwhile, your questions are allowing you to gently guide and control the conversation where you want it to go. What kind of questions should you ask your photography clients? Make sure you don't ask

questions that can be answered with a “yes” or “no” answer. Ask questions that include:

Who?

What?

Where?

When?

Why?

How?

Consultative Sales techniques

ASKING OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS

WHEN?



WHERE?



HOW?



WHY?



WHO?



WHAT?



Handling client objections

CDDC

Clarify

acknowledge and ask a question back to clarify the real root of their objection



Disarm

compliment the understanding of their question/concern/position



Discuss

provide facts and information to support your position/point of view



Confirm

ask a "tie down" question for them to agree with your point/position



NOTE:

Make sure you understand the difference between an objection and a condition



“Tie Down”- A Tie Down is a closing technique where you purposely ask a question that makes your client agree or confirm in the affirmative.

Example: “Does that make sense to you?”

Understanding the difference between objections and conditions

In sales photographers commonly mistaken conditions with objections and this ends up leading to miscommunication and in some cases frustration between the two parties. This is an opportunity for you to educate the consumer and be able to close for the sale.

An objection is simply an unanswered question in the consumer's mind.

Example:

- How much is your wedding package?
- How long have you been in business?
- Will you give me a discount?

A condition is a client's situation that cannot change based on anything you say or do. By recognizing these conditions you may identify very quickly that this is not your client. They may not be willing and able to purchase your product or service.

Example: “Will you give me a discount?” or “Your pricing is too high.” could really mean the client has no money and nothing you say or do can put money in their bank account.

Other Techniques and Tips

You already have three great techniques that you can use to handle objections. Make sure that you practice using those techniques when you are role playing your sales presentation. To help you better address objections, here are a few more techniques and tips that may help.

The Boomerang Technique – This involves using the client’s objection to actually weaken their point while reinforcing your point.

Certain Closure – You can offer to deal with the client's objection if they agree to make a purchase.

Asking for Clarification – With this technique, you can ask the client to clarify, which helps you get more information before you respond to their objection.

Empathize – By empathizing with your client's objection, you show that you are listening and that you care, which helps you build trust.

Gratitude – If a client brings up an objection, try thanking them for bringing it up. Remember, an objection can be better than a flat “no,” since it gives you a great place to start the conversation.

Reframe the Objection – Interpret the client's objection as something that isn't an objection. For example, if a client makes an objection, you could say, “I realize that maybe I didn't explain that right. I apologize. Let me explain it in another way for you.”

Justification – Let your client know that you realize that their objection is reasonable, and then go on to find a way to deal with the objection.

Pushback – In some cases, you may want to assertively push back against the client's objection. Of course, you need to use this technique sparingly and you should never use it aggressively. However, if you push back gently and show a client that their objections are unfounded, it may keep them from making other objections.

Asking For and Closing the Sale

Do you want to make a sale? If so, you need to ask for the sale. Many photographers never get the sale because they don't actually ask for the sale. They may make the sales presentation, but they let their insecurities keep them from asking for the sale or making a closing statement that pushes for it. If you want your photography business to be a success, you have to start having confidence in yourself. You can't let fear get in the way. You have to be confident enough to start asking your clients to buy.

Make a Closing Statement

One of the easiest ways to ask for the sale is to include a good closing statement at the end of your sales presentation. Not only do you need a great closing statement, but you also need to deliver the statement or ask the question with confidence. Confidently make your case for the sale. When you make your closing statement, do so with an expectant attitude. When you have a great closing statement, confidence, and an expectant attitude, you'll find it easy to get the sale that you want.

If you're not sure what kind of closing statements to use to ask for the sale, here are a few great examples that you can use or adapt to add to your sales presentation.

- Are you ready to make your order?
- We can get the process started today when you make your order, if you'd like.
- Should we fill out the order sheet so we can get started?
- Let's go forward with this order and start the paperwork. Does that work for you?
- Can we get started with your order?
- Would you like to move forward with your order?
- It will take some time to get your order taken care of, so if you'd like to move forward, we should get the paperwork started now.
- Why don't we start the process so you can move onto other priorities? Does this sound good?

Assume the Sale

Another great way to close the sale is to assume the sale, a technique often referred to as an assumptive close. While it is very effective, it is also very simple. It assumes that your client is going to buy.

Why should you assume the sale? Do you have the correct products for your client? If so, then your sale should close. Here's an example of how you can use this closing tactic.

“Mrs. Jenkins, when you make your order today, I can have your photos and additional products to you next week on Tuesday.”

In this example, Mrs. Jenkins never said that you should order her products. You simply assumed that she wanted the products. When you are working with photography sales that require an upfront transaction, using the assumptive close is often effective.

Asking Positive Response Questions

Asking positive response questions can also help you close your sale. The goal is to ask the client several questions that are easy to answer, and the answer should always be “yes.” Then, you simply add the question at the end for which you really want the client to say yes.

To use this tactic, you usually need to have at least three questions. However, you don’t want to overdo the tactic. Either you should keep the questions to a reasonable number or you should space out your questions throughout your sales presentation and closing.

When you ask these questions, do so in a conversational manner. You should also gently nod your head as you are talking with the client. Nodding your head is a positive use of body language (which we will talk about more), that will encourage your client to say yes.

If you want to hide the important questions, you can also bury the question amongst the other questions you ask the client.

Here is an example of how you can ask positive response questions to get the answer you want:

- Are you enjoying the presentation of your photos?
- Did this photo product catch your eye?
- Are you ready to make the purchase?
- Do you want it to be delivered next week?

Asking positive response questions works by helping you to set up a repetitive pattern of “yes” answers from the client, which helps the client

get into a habitual response. Once you establish the pattern of the automatic “yes,” then you can slip in the question that is really important. You’ll also find that many people don’t care to answer “no” to questions, since they often feel like doing so is impolite.

Other Helpful Closing Techniques

The same closing technique doesn’t work on every photography client, so it’s a good idea to have several closing techniques to call upon when you’re trying to close a sale. Here’s a look at some other helpful closing techniques that may prove helpful as you work to increase your photography sales.

The Consultative Close – This closing technique involves asking a question, such as, “Do you think that this photography package will best fit your needs?” By asking this question, you find out if your client is seeing value in the products you are offering. If you don’t get a “yes” to this question, this means that you have a lot of work to do to close the sale. If the answer is not a “yes,” then you have to ask more questions to try to salvage the deal. However, in most cases, clients will recognize the value of what you have to offer and give you an answer of “yes.”

Time Sensitive Close – If you already know that the photography client needs to make their purchasing decision by a certain date, you can use this to help you close the deal. After the presentation, you can state, “I realize that you need to have these photographs within the next two weeks. Since you’ve indicated that you’re really pleased with the photographs, why don’t we go on to discuss all the details of your purchase?”

The Bonus Close – You should never use this closing tactic too early in the game or you may end up wasting both time and money. Using the tactic too early can result in you giving a product away that you didn’t need to give away. However, if you save a bonus until the very end when you are having a tough time closing the deal, then it can really help you make the sale. Everyone enjoys getting something free, which is why a bonus close works so well. Offering clients a bonus not only makes them feel like you appreciate them, but it makes them feel like they are getting

the better end of the deal because they got you to give them an extra bonus.

The Importance of Body Language

While we've talked a lot about the verbal end of your sales presentation, it's important to work on your body language as well. After all, effective communication includes three components: verbal communication (the words that you say), visual communication (eye contact, facial expressions, body language, gestures), and vocal (delivery and tone).

If you have a lack of alignment between the three components, you can create mistrust in your client. You may be surprised to find that clients give the most credence to your visual communication. This means that if you're saying one thing but your body language is saying something else, your client will believe your body language.

Many photographers spend all their time only focusing on the verbal part of their sales presentation, however, it's possible to lose sales if you aren't using the right non-verbal communication. It's also important that you learn to tune into the body language and vocal cues of your clients, since this information will offer you valuable insights that can help you close your sales.

If you want to close your photography sales, you need to master the understanding and use of body language. Here's a look at how you can recognize and interpret body language, as well as some tips you can use to use your body language to increase your sales.

Recognizing and Interpreting the Body Language of Your Clients

First, you need to learn to recognize and interpret the body language of your clients. Here's a look at some problem body language, neutral body language, and positive body language to look for when you're trying to make a sale.

Characteristics of HUMAN INFLUENCE:

7% happens
in spoken
words.



38% happens
through voice
tone.



55% happens
via general body
language.



Problem Body Language

-Perspiring and fidgeting may indicate that your client is feeling uneasy. Pinching or tugging at the skin or clothing may also indicate unease.

-If your client is feeling defensive or frustrated, you may notice that they run their hand through their hair, cross their arms, clench their hands into fists, cross their legs, or point using their index finger.

-When you notice that a client is turning sideways, pointing their body away from you, crossing their arms, physically drawing away, or failing to look at you, they may feel suspicious.

-Kicking a foot, drumming on a table, doodling, staring away blankly, or putting their head in their hands are all signs that your client is distracted or just bored with your presentation.

-Clients that squint a lot may be confused.

Neutral Body Language

-Clients that rub their thumbs together, put their hands in their pockets, chewing on a pen, or biting their nails may be nervous and need some reassurance from you.

-If you notice clients engaging in hand-to-face gestures, such as playing with their eyeglasses or stroking their chin, they may be seriously considering and evaluating what you have to offer.

-Walking around and tilting of the head may also be signs that they are considering your products seriously.

Positive Body Language

-Open arms, pleasant facial expressions, tilted head, and open hands indicate that your client has an open, cooperative attitude.

-If your client agrees with you, they may move forward as if they are going to touch you without actually touching you, or they may lean forward towards you. The hands may move towards their chest and their gestures will be open when they are in agreement.

-When a client is ready to make a deal with you, they may place their hands on their thighs when sitting down or on their hips if they are standing. Clients that are ready to make a deal may also grip the edge of a table or sit on the edge of their chair.

-Clients who are expectant may move closer to you, cross their fingers, or rub their palms together.

-If clients are really interested in your products, they may nod their head, relax, become more friendly, or start reexamining the samples, photos, and products that you have brought to the sales presentation.

When you are aware of your clients' body language, it makes it a lot easier for you to manage the sales presentation. Usually you will notice repeated patterns of both nonverbal and verbal communication. If you notice a shift in body language, then your client may have had a change of attitude. To be effective at selling your photography products, you need to watch and listen actively for these patterns so you can respond accordingly to make the sale.

Using Your Body Language to Increase Sales

While it's very important that you learn to recognize and interpret the body language of your clients, you also need to learn how to get your own body language right to increase your photography sales. Managing your body language is important, since you want to avoid using signals that contradict what you are saying to your clients. Here are a few helpful tips you can use to manage your body language to increase sales.

Use Body Language That is Open and Assertive – If you are standing, make sure that you stand with open posture, showing that you are welcoming, that you are ready to listen, and that you want to meet their needs. You also need to make sure that you are assertive with your

posture and your language, although you should never be submissive or dominating.

Match Body Language to Bond – When you begin your presentation, work to match the body language and movement of your clients. Why? Reflecting the body language of your clients helps you to create an emotional bond. You should try to keep your body at the same level as your clients. For example, you can stand up to greet your clients and then sit down when they sit down.

Start Changing Your Movements – After you match the movements of your clients and create a bond, you need to start changing your movements. They should start following your body language if you have created a bond. If you notice that they are not reflecting your body language, then continue reflecting your clients' body language a bit longer and then change your movements again. Try to wait to close your sale until the clients are following your body language.

Lean In – It's important to lean in towards your clients from time to time. This helps you move closer to your clients, creating a bond. However, you need to avoid leaning in to close. You don't want to invade your client's personal body space. Leaning in is more acceptable than actually moving in. This body language can also be conspiratorial, which makes it seem like you are offering an exclusive offer that cannot be heard by others. When you lean in, you are also lowering your body into a subtle bow, which shows deference and respect.

Avoid Overly Dominant Body Language – Many people try to show they are dominant with their body language, showing that they are in control. However, this strategy can be very risky, and in many cases, it will result in a counterproductive, antagonistic reaction. Remember, you want to appear confident, not dominant or aggressive.

Other Subtle Actions – Some other subtle body language you can use to influence sales include:

-Pausing and holding your breath while you are waiting for an answer from your client

-Slightly pressing your lips together with a slight frown if you disagree

-Gesturing with your palms open to show that you are open

-Tilting your head or raising your eyebrows to show surprise or questioning

-Soft eye contact that shows that you care (not staring at the client but not looking away either)

-Smiling gently to show you are comfortable and that you like your client

-Using a relaxed face and slow, deep breathing to show that you are confident. Of course, you always need to use body language with care. You don't want to overdo your body language or your presentation will not come across as genuine. Also, always make sure that your body language is aligned with what you are saying.

If you have a tough time aligning your body language and your words, make sure that you practice this technique during your role playing sessions.

How you present your photography to your clients is a key component to accelerate the success of your business. I want to share a quote to keep in mind when creating your sales presentation:

“At the end of the day, people won't remember what you said or did, they will remember how you made them feel.” -Maya Angelou

By perfecting your sales presentation through practice and understanding verbal and nonverbal communication, you will become more connected to your clients, allowing them to not feel like a number, but instead, create a relationship that will lead to sales, referrals, and loyalty to you and your business.

7. In Person Sales

In this chapter, we will close up the construction of our new house with a sturdy and strong roof of skills for in person sales. This skill set completes your “house” and will set you apart from your competition as you grow your successful photography business.

As so many businesses head to the internet to make their money, many photographers are relying on online sales. While a good website and offering online sales may be a part of your marketing plan, you shouldn’t forget the importance of In Person Sales (IPS) as well. When capturing special moments for your clients, presenting those memories in an impersonal way may not prove effective. It’s the human presentation, the personal touch, that allows you to connect with your clients, increasing your overall sales.

Unfortunately, many photographers are afraid to try in person sales, mainly because they’ve rarely tried it. While it may feel uncomfortable at first, with some practice, you’ll improve your sales techniques. In fact, you’ll probably begin to enjoy interacting with your clients on such a personal level.

Whether you’re brand new to in person sales regarding photography, or you’ve tried it and failed in the past, this chapter will help by taking you through each important step involved with in person sales, from prequalifying your clients to closing the sale.

The Benefits of In Person Sales

Before you start learning the steps to successful in person sales, it’s important to understand why it is so important. Why should you take the time to learn how to perfect in person sales? Here’s a look at the benefits of using in person sales, which will help you understand the importance of using this sales tactic for your photography business.

Benefit #1 – Stand Out from Your Competition

Currently, the photography market is very competitive. The market is saturated with other photographers that provide many of the services you do, however, many photographers don't have the know-how or confidence to focus on in person sales. Offering in person sales to your clients allows you to stand out from your competition, which, in turn, will help you bring in more clients and increase your sales.

Benefit #2 – Add Luxury to Your Photography Brand

In person sales allows you to add luxury to your photography brand. In person ordering is a high-end, premium service that isn't offered by most photographers. By adding these services to your brand, you can begin charging more for your products.

Benefit #3 – Sell Different Products More Easily

Another benefit of in person sales is the ability to sell different products to your clients more easily. If you only sell your products online, it's difficult for clients to envision the products in their home. However, when you show clients a coffee table book or a large 20x30 canvas, they'll have the chance to see how great these products will look in their personal environment. This visual encourages sales, making it easier for you to sell your different products.

Benefit #4 – You'll Save Time in the Long Run

Many photographers have the idea that in person sales will take more time, however, you'll actually save time in the long run when you sell in person. Sure, you'll spend a couple hours answering questions, displaying photos, and dealing with the order, but you won't spend all the time emailing clients, answering their questions via phone, or reminding clients to complete and submit their orders.

Benefit #5 – Create an Emotional Reaction That Leads to Sales

Presenting the photos to your clients in person allows you to create an emotional reaction in your clients. When they respond to photos

emotionally, that leads to sales. It's a natural progression that doesn't require a lot of hard selling on your part.

Properly Prequalifying the Client

The first step to successful in person sales is to properly prequalify the client. Prequalifying the client allows you and the client to set up expectations, which will help everything run smoothly. Failing to prequalify the client will make it more difficult to sell to your client when you present the photos, packages, and products.

Does the Client Want Services You Offer?

Part of the prequalifying process is to find out if the client wants services that you offer. Ask the client questions to find out what services they're interested in or require. Do they want services that are a part of your current offerings or do they want services that you don't currently provide? If you don't currently provide the services or products they want, you'll need to decide whether the client is a good fit for your business. Your goal is to create a relationship that benefits both you and your client.

Provide Clients with Product Pricing

As part of the pre-qualification process, you should always provide clients with a list of your product pricing. Failing to provide clients with pricing up front can cause frustration on their end, making them less likely to buy from you later. If clients have a price list up front, they cannot complain about your prices later when they're ready to make an order. Remember, providing more information up front helps you increase your chances of making a sale.

(Refer to Chapter 3 for tips on how to set your prices)

Discussing the Photo Shoot

It's also important to discuss the photo shoot when prequalifying your clients. Prepare your clients by talking about what they can expect during the shoot. Discuss with them your style of shooting as well as what they should wear for the photo session. Find out what types of photos your client wants before the photo shoot so you can guarantee your clients get exactly what you want. Discussing the photo shoot together helps ensure that both of you are prepared when it's time for the session.

Take Questions from the Client

Make sure you take questions from your client as well. Remember, the photo shoot is important to your them. Clients want to be reassured that you are qualified to meet, or even exceed, their expectations. By letting them ask questions in the beginning, you can help prevent any surprises in the future.

Discuss the Viewing and Ordering Session

Always discuss the viewing and ordering session with your potential clients. Make sure they are aware that the viewing session is the time for them to order the products they want. This is your way of letting your clients know up front that you will be selling to them, and this can help you avoid confusion or awkwardness in the future. Letting your client know about the viewing and ordering session ahead of time also allows them to make sure that the people involved in the decision making are all at the meeting so orders can be placed after they preview their images.

Setting Your Prices

Setting prices, deciding whether to use package pricing, and deciding on the presentation of your prices can be difficult. Should you only offer packages or should you offer products a la carte? Should you charge a session fee? This section will look at the pros and cons of different

options, helping you decide on the best pricing options for your photography business.

Using Package Pricing

The most common type of pricing used by photographers is package pricing, but it's not the only option available for in person sales. Creating packages is often easy, since photographers generally know what elements most customers are looking for.

If you want to use package pricing, start by creating 3-5 packages. Create packages that have a good difference in dollar value as well as perceived value. The goal of your packages should be to get your client to choose the next package up. The jump should have a significant increase in value so clients are incentivized to choose the higher product, otherwise you need to make sure that the higher package doesn't include a price jump that is too painful.

Your lowest package should have a lower perceived value to retail value ratio. The purpose of the lowest package is to serve as your benchmark to your other packages. Your highest package should be mainly for display purposes, and it should include nearly everything available while including a price that is high enough to warrant all the products included. The middle packages should be the packages you really want to sell, so make sure they include the most popular items and a mid-range price.

It's often helpful to display a list of a la carte options with the full retail price listed. This allows you to show a significant discount between paying for a la carte options and paying for the package. This way clients are incentivized to choose a package because it's perceived to offer more value.

The Pros of Package Pricing

- Contains the most popular requests
- It's easy for clients to choose packages quickly
- Reduces the need to negotiate and offer discounts if you address common requests well
- Easy for clients to read and understand

The Cons of Package Pricing

- It can be difficult to change pricing and package menus
- Clients may not completely realize the full value of the products included in the package
- It can be tough to swap out services/products
- Clients may feel like they are forced into packages that might not fit their needs completely

A La Carte Pricing

Another pricing option is to use a la carte pricing. A la carte pricing helps you create a base value for your services and products.

When you use an a la carte menu, you can show the retail value and show discounts. Another option is to show full retail values for each item and then let clients know that you can apply discounts when a la carte items are chosen.

The Pros of A La Carte Pricing

- Allows the client to feel in control of all their options
- Clients will better understand the complete value of all the elements you offer

The Cons of A La Carte Pricing

- Takes some thought to come up with this kind of pricing
- May allow clients to keep their dollar value lower
- You may need to heavily use discounting methods and negotiation tactics to sell a la carte items

Another Option – Product Credit

Another option to consider that combines package pricing and a la carte options is the product credit pricing method. This method allows you to use the retail value from your package pricing strategy and the base value for products in the a la carte pricing option. You can come up with the total base value you will do the work for, and that will be your basic price.

For example, you could have a basic price of \$450 for a session. That price could include a half hour photo session, \$200 of product credit towards products of the client's choice, and photo files in 4x6 resolution. You could make this basic price good for groups of up to six people.

Then, you'll also need an a la carte price list, although these prices should be slightly discounted. Then the client can choose up to \$200 of products from your a la carte offerings. Any other items they want will need to be paid for at the a la carte price. This approach is often very successful for photographers engaging in in person sales because it offers benefits for you and your clients.

The Pros of Product Credit Pricing

- The client feels like they have more control
- You have more control too
- Discounting methods and negotiation aren't necessary, although you can still use them if you want
- Clients can easily see the value of all the elements available

The Cons of Product Credit Pricing

- This requires some thought
- It can take some juggling and some math to figure out this pricing method

Should You Charge a Session Fee?

In the product credit option, your basic price does include the session fee. However, if you use a la carte pricing or package pricing, should you charge a session fee?

This is a highly debated topic, but in many cases, it's a good idea to charge a session fee. If you decide to do so, charge it up front when the session reservation is made. Why? It keeps people from wasting your time. Clients won't leave you hanging if they have already paid a session fee, and they are more likely to purchase your products if they have already made a financial investment.

Relying on selling packages or a la carte options can make it more difficult for you to make money. In many cases, clients that aren't willing to pay for a session fee up front won't be willing purchasers of your high end products anyway.

If you want to wave the session fee, make sure you're still going to get paid. You can charge that session fee up front and then offer to wave the fee if they make a minimum purchase. For example, if your session fee is \$300, you could wave the fee if they make an \$800 purchase, which means you're still making money.

Remember, everything about your prices and pricing procedures should be about making a sale in the end. Come up with pricing strategies that help you to achieve successful in person sales.

Choosing the Right Location

When you're ready for the viewing and ordering session, choosing the right location for that meeting is an essential part of your in person sales strategy. You want to choose a location that is convenient for your clients because you want to make sure that they are relaxed and comfortable, making them more likely to make a purchase. Should you hold the viewing session at your studio or at your client's home? Here's a look at both options and the pros and cons of both.

Viewing Sessions in Your Studio

One location you can use for your viewing session is your studio, and studio presentations do offer many great benefits. Some of the benefits of studio presentations include:

- You probably have quality image monitors in your studio, making it possible to present images at their best.
- Presenting in the studio gives you more control over the presentation and look of the images.
- There's no need for you to travel anywhere.

Of course, while studio presentations do offer some benefits, they're not always the best option when you're focusing on in person sales. At the studio, it may be harder for your clients to relax. Also, clients are required to travel to your studio, which may be difficult for clients with a busy schedule. It's also harder for your clients to visualize how the products will look in their home, since they are in a more impersonal space.

Viewing Sessions at the Client's Home

Another location you can use for a viewing and ordering session is your client's home. Home sessions offer many benefits, including the following:

- Clients don't need to travel for the session.
- Home viewing sessions allow clients to be in a place where they are comfortable and relaxed.
- You can bring samples to show them how products will look in their home.

Clients can invite other individuals to be a part of the viewing and ordering session. Sharing that session with friends or family members can result in a more positive attitude and may result in increased sales.

If you do decide to hold the session in a client's home, you will need to travel, but that time investment will definitely pay off. You will need to take the equipment you need with you to present the photos, and it may be difficult to bring equipment that is of the same quality as your studio equipment. However, the comfort and convenience of a home showing often outweighs any potential disadvantages.

In the end, you'll need to choose the location that works best for you and your client. In some cases, clients may not feel comfortable with a home viewing session, however, when it comes to successful photography in person sales, a home viewing session generally offers the best sales results.

What You'll Need for the Viewing Session

Before the viewing session, you'll need to make sure that you have everything you need to make the session run smoothly. If you're unprepared, it will make in person sales more difficult. Whether you're holding the photo presentation at your studio or the home of the client, you'll need the following items to optimize your sales.

Product Samples

It's always important to have product samples on hand for a viewing session, and it's best to have samples of every product that you offer, from large canvas prints to coffee table books. Even if you offer excellent product images and descriptions in your product guide, that's no substitute for having samples that your clients can physically feel and touch.

When choosing your samples, it's often a good idea to invest in the largest sizes you offer. For example, if you offer photo canvases in multiple sizes, from 11x24 canvases all the way to 30x40 canvases, it's a good idea to have the 30x40 sample. Clients often buy what they see, so having the largest product available can improve your in person sales.

Using large samples also helps you show clients that the products aren't too large. Sometimes the idea of a 30x40 print sounds huge, but when clients see the sample personally, they realize that the size can look great on their wall.

Projector/Laptop/iPad/Printed Proofs for Viewing

If you're presenting the photos in your studio, you can always use your studio screens to show the photos. However, if you are heading to the client's home for the viewing, you'll need to have a projector, laptop, iPad, or printed proofs on hand to show your clients.

Each option has its own set of pros and cons. For example, a projector and screen (or a wall) allows you to show the photos in a large format, which really offers a great presentation, particularly if you're showing the photos to several people at a time. However, this equipment takes up a lot of space and it may not offer the best quality.

A laptop is easy to carry, and many laptops offer great screens, so you can easily show your photos to clients. However, it can be difficult for multiple people to crowd around the laptop screen. Using an iPad is even more portable, and they usually offer excellent screens that show great definition of photos. However, once again, this makes it more difficult to show the photos to multiple people comfortably.

Printed proofs allow you to easily spread the photos out on a table, which often makes it easier for your clients to compare the photos. It also lets clients see what the colors will look like when the photos are printed. Physical proofs also make it harder for clients to put photos in a pile of rejected photos. However, it will cost you a bit more to have physical proofs printed, but it may be worth the investment.

Viewing and Design Software

If you decide to use a laptop, an iPad, or another digital viewing device for the viewing session, you'll also need to have good viewing and design software. With a laptop or personal computer, good photo viewing software can prove helpful. Lightroom is an excellent option that allows you to make sure photos look their best when you present them on a screen.

Don't forget to have a good design software on hand. While it's not mandatory, it may help you to increase your sales. With design software, you can show clients unique designs, such as wall art collages as well as introduce them to other options that they may find interesting. If you're using an iPad or another type of tablet, it's possible to use apps to take photos of the client's wall, choose an art product, and then insert the images into the product so clients can see what the images will look like on their walls. These types of apps make powerful sales tools, improving your chance of making a sale.

Other Essentials for Your Viewing Session

Some other important essentials that you may want to have on hand for the viewing session include:

- Power cord

- Price list (even if you already gave one to your client)
- Tape measure
- Paper and pen/pencil
- Order sheets
- Calculator

Tips for Presenting Photos to Clients

Now that you know what you'll need when presenting photos to clients, you need to know how to best make your presentation so you make the most you can in sales. From deciding what to wear to using free gifts, here's a look at some helpful presentation tips you should use for successful photography in person sales.

Avoid Doing Online Galleries and Sneak Peeks Before the Viewing Session

One of the most important tips for presenting photos to clients is to avoid doing online galleries or sneak peeks before your viewing sessions. Why should you avoid online galleries and sneak peeks? Here's a few reasons:

A Sneak Peak May Set Unrealistic Expectations – If you offer a sneak peak of the best photos, it may set unrealistic expectations. Not every photo will be as amazing as the 3-5 photos used in a sneak peak, and you don't want customers to be disappointed at the viewing sessions.

Online Galleries and Sneak Peeks Ruin the Anticipation – Using online galleries and sneak peeks also can ruin the anticipation. When clients have to wait until the viewing session, it builds up the anticipation for the event, but the anticipation for the viewing session will drain away if your clients have already seen the photos.

Temptation to Steal Images – Unfortunately, those online galleries often lead to the temptation to steal images. You don't want to waste your hard work and have a client simply steal your images, and you can avoid this problem by skipping the online galleries until after clients make orders, or even skipping it altogether.

People Place Larger Orders When They First See Photos – When clients see the photos for the first time, it creates an emotional response that results in larger orders. Don't waste the client's emotions on a sneak peek or online gallery. You want them to get excited and emotional about your photos, so save them all for your viewing session. You'll also have the satisfaction of seeing how much they love the photos.

What to Wear to the Viewing Session

What should you wear to the viewing session? It's a common question. Should you dress in professional attire? Should you go with something more casual to set your clients at ease?

In many cases, it's best to choose your attire based on your clients and the location for the viewing session. If you know that your clients will be in business attire at the viewing, you may want to keep your dress businesslike and professional. However, if you know your clients will be dressed in casual attire, going with business casual dress may be a better choice. If you'll be doing the viewing session at your studio, you may want to pick attire that is more professional than the attire you would wear to a more casual, comfortable home viewing session.

No matter who your clients are or where you have the session, it's important to keep your brand in mind. Even your dress is important to how you portray your photography brand. If you are building a brand that focuses on luxury and professionalism, dress the part.

Setting the Scene – Steps to a Good Photo Presentation

Of course, every photo presentation will be different, depending on the location and the clients you're working with. However, when you're setting the scene and focusing on in person sales, here are some general steps you can follow for a good photo presentation. Remember, you can always adjust these steps as needed.

Step #1 – Start with an Artful Presentation of the Photos – Start your presentation off with an artful presentation of the photos. Try to

create a presentation that will appeal to the emotions of your clients. For example, you may want to create a beautiful slideshow that highlights the photos while music plays in the background. While these presentations will take a bit more of your time, the initial reaction and emotions of clients will make the presentations worth the time investment. Encourage clients to sit back and just enjoy the photos during the first presentation.

Step #2 – Display the Images Again for Image Selection – After the initial presentation, give clients a few minutes to take in everything and then display the images again so clients can start selecting the images that they like the most. This time, skip the artful presentation and simply show the images in a high quality format. Spend more time on this display, allowing clients to linger over the photos.

Step #3 – Show Samples of Your Products – Once clients have seen all the images and they have a good idea of their favorite images, show your clients samples of your products. You should not only show off the samples, but you should also inform clients on the benefits and features each product offers. Take the time to let clients see how they can benefit from each of the products you offer.

Step #4 – Walk Clients Through the Decision Making/Purchasing Process – After showing clients the images and your products, you're ready to start walking clients through the decision making and purchasing process. Ask clients what they want to do with the images and where they want to display their images. Spend some time walking through their home helping them find great display spots. Some clients may love wall art, while others may prefer a coffee table book or a digital album. Work with clients to help them find products that will best meet their needs and taste. This is also the point where you look at the pricing, helping clients decide whether to choose packages or a la carte items. Make sure you write everything down or use your order forms so you have all the details of the client's order.

Step #5 – Collect Payment – Once clients make their final decisions, it's time to collect the payment. Make sure that you collect payment before you leave while emotions are high. If you leave without payment, clients may change their minds and decide to order less. Always let clients know that they can order more photos and products at any time.

Using Free Gifts

In many cases, it's a great idea to use free gifts when presenting photos to clients. It's essential to let your clients know how much you appreciate them. When clients show up for the viewing session, consider having a nice gift on hand for your clients to enjoy or throw in a thank you gift to clients that purchase high-end packages. Remember, the simple gesture of offering a free gift to your client can turn a client into a raving fan. Satisfied clients become repeat clients, and they'll also spread the word to their friends and family members, so taking care of your clients will pay off.

A Few More Tips to Remember

The following are a few additional tips that you should remember to ensure your viewing and ordering session is a big success.

- Make sure that you let clients know approximately how long the viewing/ordering session should take. While you want to spend plenty of time with the client, your time and their time is valuable, so use it wisely.

- In most cases, it's best to avoid having younger children on the scene for the viewing session. You want parents to pay attention to the photos, not their children. Try to find a time that works for parents with children so the kids won't be on the scene.

- Consider offering incentives to clients if they hit a certain sales amount.

- If you had a photo or two turn out badly, avoid showing the photo at the viewing session.

- Consider offering refreshments. Bringing coffee, cold beverages, and/or a small snack to the viewing session may increase the positive experience your clients have, which is worth the small investment.

Dos and Don'ts for Closing the Sale

Sometimes closing the sale is the most difficult part of in person sales. If you don't have the know-how to close the sale, even the best viewing session may leave you lacking in sales. Here's a look at a few dos and don'ts to remember when trying to close the sale with your clients.

DO Use a Smooth Transition to Sales

Sometimes it's difficult to go from a photo presentation to sales, but you need to make sure that you make this transition smoothly. It's not easy to start asking for money, but remember that you're offering your clients a special service. They're not doing you a favor by buying – you're doing them a favor by offering them quality products. It's also important to avoid taking too much time to make the transition. You want to transition into sales mode before the emotions of the photo viewing fade away.

DON'T Do all the Talking

Many photographers make the mistake of doing all the talking when trying to close a sale. Remember, you need to listen to your clients. Listening helps you find out what they want, which gives you the information that you need to make a better sale. Instead of launching into a long-winded sales pitch, listen to what your clients want and help them choose the products that meet their needs.

DO Use Special Offers to Help Close the Sale

Sometimes you may want to use special offers to help close the sale. This can often get an indecisive client to make a commitment. In many cases, providing a special offer, such as a free print or another free product, can prove to be a better incentive than negotiating your price, which can be tricky. Just make sure that your special offers don't devalue your work as a professional photographer.

DON'T Forget to Practice Your Sales Process

Making the final sale isn't easy, so don't forget to take time to practice your sales process. Successful in person sales take practice, so don't expect to be perfect the first time. To perfect your sales process, practice on a family member, friend, or colleague until you are able to get through the presentation smoothly. This will help you hone your sales skills and overcome objections, making it easier to score the sales you want to keep your photography business successful.

8. Never Stop Learning and Growing

This book is a great training course, but it's important to remember that this book and other books can never provide you with all the training you need to succeed as a photographer. For your business to succeed, you can never stop growing and learning. The good news is that you can find many different ways to learn and grow as a photographer and a small business owner.

Online Resources to Learn From

One of the best places to look for great resources is on the internet. If you want to keep learning and growing, the internet is packed with great resources, both free and paid. Here's a look at some excellent resources you should look for as you continue to learn and grow as a photographer and business owner.

Webinars – Webinars are online seminars. Some are free and some are paid. Most will require you to sign up in advance. Any time you can score a quality, free webinar, take that opportunity. (Check out FreePhotographerWebinars.com for my ongoing free photography classes.)

Online Videos – Many photographers now post online videos that include business tips and photography tips. You won't have to spend time reading text and you get to see everything in action. Take the time to check out videos from successful photographers regularly. Many successful photography businesses post helpful online videos on their websites, on social media pages, and on YouTube.

Photography Websites – Speaking of photography websites, websites designed specifically for photographers can offer a wealth of information. Many are packed with informational articles, how-to guides, podcasts, videos, and more.

Online Courses – If you're interested in photography or business courses but you don't have the time for a traditional classroom experience, online courses are a great option. You can learn from the comfort of your own home or office, and in many cases, you can take the course at your own pace.

Ebooks – Free and paid ebooks often have a lot to offer photographers. Look for ebooks on the business end of photography, photography techniques, photography sales, social media for photography, and more.

Offline Resources to Learn From

Of course, you'll also find plenty of offline resources that can help you to grow and learn as a photographer. A few great offline resources to consider using include:

Books – Start searching for books on photography or running a photography business and you'll quickly find that there are hundreds of options out there. Browse through some titles at a bookstore or online and find some books that you think will be helpful. Some books offer as much information as a class without the high price tag.

Workshops – Don't forget to consider attending photography workshops. Workshops not only help you learn, they give you the chance to enjoy hands-on learning in most cases. You'll learn a lot and you'll have the chance to network with other professionals.

Traditional Courses – Traditional courses are great if you prefer a classroom environment when learning. Top photographers often offer courses. Check with local universities and community colleges to find out if they offer photography courses or business courses that may be helpful to you.

Seminars – While seminars generally aren't as hands-on as workshops, they have a lot of value. They often have multiple speakers, which means you can learn about multiple, relevant topics in a short

period. They also prove to be an excellent way to network while you learn.

Don't Limit Your Learning to One Teacher or One Way of Thinking!

Whether you decide to go to workshops, check out webinars, or read helpful ebooks, it's important to avoid limiting your learning to one teacher or one way of thinking. Don't make the mistake of thinking that one teacher or speaker knows it all. After all, there's more than one way to achieve success with your photography business.

Unfortunately, our industry is full of empty promises of the magic bullet idea. Purchase this one course, ebook, template, camera, plugin, modifier, etc. and your entire life will be completely changed. Sure, many of these are great ideas, systems, and tools, but you cannot afford to get in one framework of thinking.

If you take the time to look, you'll find countless ideas out there that are just waiting to be discovered. There are many different paths to success. After all, they often say, success leaves clues.

Keep your mind open. Learn as much as you can from as many different people.

I actually love talking to people each week on our PROFITographers Podcast (available on Stitcher Radio and iTunes apps). Each year, our live workshops sell out and I just love the hands on aspect. We offer online courses, monthly webinars, and more. They give me a chance to keep my schedule busy when I'm not doing what I love most – being a real working photographer.

Getting Involved with Mastermind Groups

Mastermind groups are fairly new to many people, although the concept has been around for years. These groups have the ability to shape your life and your business, helping you achieve success. If you're not

familiar with mastermind group, here's a closer look at what they are, why you should join, and how to find a good group for your needs.

What is a Mastermind Group?

What is a mastermind group? It's a group that offers a combination of support, brainstorming, peer accountability, and education to help you sharpen your personal and business skills. These groups may meet monthly, weekly, or daily to tackle problems and challenges together. Essentially, mastermind groups are like peer-to-peer mentor groups. Participants in these groups challenge one another to set and accomplish powerful goals. Groups require being committed to confidentiality, a willingness to receive and give ideas and advice, total honesty, compassion, and respect.

It's also important to know what a mastermind group is not. First, it's NOT a class. While your group may decide to have guest teachers or speakers from time to time, the main focus of these groups is accountability, brainstorming, and support.

A mastermind group is NOT group coaching. These groups are all about member sharing with one another. There is no facilitator that coaches the group. Everyone offers support, advice, and feedback. The conversation is to be balanced between all of the group's members.

You also need to know that these groups are NOT networking groups. Although you may share resources and leads, this is not the focus of these group meetings. However, as you connect with the other members of your group, you will no doubt find professional networking, lead sharing, and joint venture opportunities.

Reasons to Join a Mastermind Group

Now that you know what a mastermind group is, you may be wondering why you should consider joining one. Here are a few reasons a mastermind group may be beneficial to you.

Reason #1 – Exclusive Community – To join a mastermind group, you often need to go through an application process or you must be invited by the group’s members. Not only will you benefit from the knowledge and experience of the community, they will benefit from yours.

Reason #2 – Business Advisors – Running a photography business can leave you feeling alone, but you’ll lose this feeling of “being alone” when you are involved in a mastermind group. The other members in your group will become like business advisors to help you along the way. When you need opinions about business decisions, you’ll have plenty of people to give you good opinions.

Reason #3 – Collaboration – Once you’re in a group, you may find another group member that is a perfect fit for a project you’re working on. Another member may find that you are a perfect person to work on his project. Collaborating together can help you achieve even more.

Reason #4 – New Learning – Each of the mastermind group members has unique connections, experience, and skills. As you share and interact, you’re sure to learn something new that will help you in your business.

Reason #5 – Stretch Your Boundaries – As you work with a mastermind group, you’ll soon find that you are stretching your boundaries. When you’re surrounded by other people who are doing great things, you’ll start thinking better and doing great things yourself.

Reason #6 – The Chance to Ask Questions – If you’re dealing with any problems or you have some specific questions, you can bring them up at your mastermind meetings and talk through solutions with the rest of your group.

Tips for Finding a Mastermind Group

Are you ready to find your own mastermind group? How can you find a good one? Here are a few tips to keep in mind.

Tip #1 – Talk to Others in the Industry – Many photographers are involved in mastermind groups, so if you're looking for a group to join, ask others in your industry. Mastermind groups may be looking for new members, so asking around never hurts.

Tip #2 – Check Out Meetup.com – This helpful site connects like-minded people and it's possible to find groups that are meeting in your area.

Tip #3 – Photography Forums – If you're a regular in photography forums, read through posts or talk to others to find out if they know of any mastermind groups accepting members.

Tip #4 – Start Your Own – You probably know other people in the industry who would like to improve their photography and their business. Consider getting a few of them together regularly to begin a mastermind group of your own.

Semi-Private or Private Coaching/Mentoring

Are you interested in taking your career and business to another level? If so, consider semi-private or private coaching/mentoring. Think about it – the world's top athletes and many top business owners have coaches. You may benefit from coaching too!

Why You Need a Coach or Mentor

Why do you need a coach or mentor? Here are several ways that having a coach/mentor can help:

Improves Focus – It's often easy to get sidetracked when you're running a business. A good coach can ensure that you stay focused so you're moving forward in the right direction.

Help with Decisions – Sometimes it's tough to make the big decisions for your photography business. If you're unsure, you may make

a bad choice. A mentor can help you make hard decisions, ensuring that you continue gaining momentum.

Motivation and Inspiration – Everyone needs motivation and inspiration. In fact, as a business owner, you'll need this regularly. A coach can offer you both.

Sounding Board – Having a person who will listen to your challenges and having someone you can bounce ideas off is very helpful. When you talk things out, you often learn. Just talking out loud to your coach can help you to clarify your thinking.

Save Stress, Time, and Money – When you follow the recommendations, cautions, and guidance of a mentor, it can help you save yourself the stress, time, and money that are often wasted due to mistakes.

Build Connections – Your mentor already has connections and having those connections can open doors that could take you years to do on your own.

Tactics, Systems, and Strategies – Your coach has experience and can teach you tactics, systems, and strategies he or she has used with success. It's always helpful to learn from someone who has already traveled and conquered the road you're currently one, helping you get down that path to success easier and faster.

Challenge – A quality coach will challenge you, pushing you to do your best and to reach for things you may never have tried on your own.

Finding the Right Coach/Mentor

If you want to try coaching, it's important to find the right coach/mentor. Having a coach in your corner can really be helpful, but you need to have the right one. Here are a few tips that can help you find the right coach/mentor for your needs.

Tip #1 – Find Out About Coaching Style – Different coaches have different coaching styles. Some are questioning and tender. Others are direct. It's important to find a coach that uses a style that works for your personality.

Tip #2 – Ask About Credentials – While a coach or mentor doesn't have to have coaching credentials, the coach should at least have significant credentials in the field in which he or she is coaching. You want to make sure you're learning from someone who has already been successful.

Tip #3 – Talk to the Coach – It's essential to make sure you can feel comfortable enough with your coach to be honest and open. Taking the time to talk to the coach, whether in person or via technology, can help you decide if you feel comfortable with the coach.

Tip #4 – Ask for References – Talk to other individuals the coach has worked with. Find out if they were pleased with the results.

Tip #5 – Inquire Into a Free Session – Many coaches will give you a complimentary short session so you have the chance to check out their coaching style for yourself. This can be a great way to decide if you and the coach have a good rapport that will lead to a beneficial relationship.

The PROFITographers Website *(Our Shameless Plug)*

If you're looking for helpful information to help you keep learning and growing, check out PROFITographers.com. You'll find more information on our webinars, podcast, coaching, workshops, and more. We would love to learn and grow with you – together.

9. BONUS Chapter: Owning/Renting a Private Studio, Shared Studio and Rentals, and Shooting on Location- The Pros and Cons of Each Option

When you start a photography business, one of the big decisions you'll need to make is whether you're going to shoot in a studio or on location. Should you own or rent a private studio? Should you get started by renting shared studio space? Will shooting on location be a better option as you get started? These are all important questions to consider.

To help you make your decision, we'll take a closer look at each of your options. You can consider the pros and cons of every option, which should help you to decide which option will work best for your new photography business.

Owning/Renting a Private Studio

Having your own studio often seems like the dream. It's exciting to think about having your own space, giving you full control over your business. However, while having a private studio offers you a space of your own, it brings with it a lot of financial responsibility. Before you decide on this option, take the time to fully consider the pros and cons of owning or renting a private studio for your photography business.

The Pros

A Professional Environment – One of the main benefits of having a private studio is the ability to create a professional environment. You'll become more than just a person with a camera when you have a professional studio that clients can visit.

Fewer Distractions – A private studio boasts fewer distractions than a shared studio or on location shooting. Fewer distractions will help you keep shoots on track and will ensure that you're not distracted as you work on other photography tasks.

Little to No Setup/Breakdown Time – Setting up and breaking down all your photography equipment takes time. You will not have to worry about that as much in your own studio. Remember, time is money, so saving time is a huge benefit.

Space to Showcase Your Work – Showcasing your work is important, and you can show off great photos you've taken. You also have the ability to show your product options, including portrait books, canvas portraits, and wall collections.

Influence Clients with Ambiance and Décor – You have the ability to customize your private studio, which allows you to focus on ambiance and décor that influences your clients.

The Cons

Expensive to Build, Run, and Maintain – While a private studio offers many pros, the biggest con is the expense of having your own studio. It is expensive to build, run, and maintain your studio. You'll have monthly rent or a mortgage to pay. You will also need to pay utilities and deal with the costs of maintenance.

Clients Must Come to You – With a private studio, clients will need to come to you. For busy clients, this may become an obstacle. You may lose some business if you are unable to go to your clients.

Location May Have Challenges – Certain locations may come with unique challenges. You could have a hard time offering parking to clients or you may end up with a studio in an area with a bad reputation.

Long Term Commitments – If you buy or rent your own private studio, you're going to have to make a long term commitment. What happens if business does not go the way you think it will in your first few months? What if you buy a studio in an area where there is little interest in your services? You're taking

on a long term commitment, which can be scary when you're first getting your business off the ground.

Anxiety and Tension for Clients – In some cases, a formal photography studio causes anxiety and tension for clients. For clients that feel anxious in the studio, your private location may prove problematic.

Shared Studio and Rentals

If you love the idea of shooting in a studio but you are not ready to commit to a private studio, a shared studio or renting studio space for short periods of time may be an excellent choice. Shooting in a studio offers many advantages, such as the ability to control and shape your light quality. However, you do not have to choose a private studio to enjoy the advantages of shooting in a studio. If you are considering studio rentals or a shared studio space, keep the following pros and cons in mind as you make your decision.

The Pros

Minimum Investment – When choosing a share studio or short-term studio rentals, you'll only need a minimum investment. You may only need to pay a small membership fee to share the space or you may be able to rent studio space by the day or half day for a reasonable fee.

Professional Environment – You will also enjoy the benefit of having a professional environment for your photo shoots. Your clients will appreciate the professional feel of shooting in a studio.

Access to Studio Gear – Purchasing studio gear of your own is expensive, but shared studio options give you access to studio gear that you may not be able to purchase yet.

Only Pay for Time Used – With shared studio space, you'll only be paying for the time you spend in the studio. When you are

not using the studio, it is not costing you anything, which can be especially helpful when you're just starting your photography business.

Gain Experience Without a Huge Investment – If you do not have a lot of experience shooting in a studio, shared studio space allows you to gain more photography experience without making a huge investment. Some studios may also offer the use of a studio assistant, which offers a great way to learn more about using the available equipment in the studio.

The Cons

Availability Restrictions – When you're sharing studio space, one of the big cons is availability restrictions. When you are booking clients, you'll have to keep studio availability in mind. This may make it difficult to cater to the specific needs of your clients.

Potentially Setup/Breakdown for Each Shoot – If you are using your own equipment and not the studio's equipment, you'll probably need to setup and breakdown your equipment for every shoot. This takes a lot of time, reducing the amount you make for your time spent on each shoot.

Others May Tamper with Gear/Props Stored at the Studio
Do you plan to leave your gear or props in the shared studio? If so, others may touch or tamper with your gear, a worrisome problem because you have spent so much money on good equipment.

Shooting On Location

Shooting on location has become a popular alternative to shooting in a studio. It allows you to go to your clients and does not require the big investment that comes with buying or renting a private studio. However, while shooting on location offers many pros, you'll need to consider the cons too.

The Pros

No Ongoing Rental Expenses – You will not need to worry about ongoing rental or mortgage expenses when you shoot on location. While you will need to purchase all your equipment, the lack of ongoing studio expenses often makes it easier for you to begin seeing profit from your photography business.

Convenience for Clients – Shooting on location offers added convenience for clients. Some clients may lead very busy lives and they may not have the time to head into a studio. When you shoot on location, you become more available to clients, which may help you beat out the competition.

Potential Higher Participation – Some clients may not want to head into a studio. However, when you tell them that you will come to their location, you may increase your chances of making a sale.

Upcharge Opportunity for Setup – Since you'll need to setup on location, this gives you the opportunity to raise your rates. You can charge a setup fee or you can let clients know that your prices are a bit higher to account for the time spent setting up and breaking down on location.

Reduced Stress for Clients – For clients that feel anxious in a studio setting, shooting on location may help them relax, resulting in better sessions for you and your client, as well as better photos.

The Cons

Travel Time and Expenses – While you will not have the expenses that come with having a studio, you can't forget to consider the travel time and the expenses of traveling. As you build a business plan, you'll need to keep these expenses in mind as you decide how to price your services.

More Setup/Breakdown Time – Every time you do a shoot on location, you'll need to setup and breakdown your equipment. This can take a significant amount of time, so you will be spending more time on sessions than you would on a studio session.

Location Challenges – Shooting on location often comes with challenges that are unique to the location. You may arrive on site to find that you do not have enough room to set up all of your photography equipment. You could end up in a busy, distracting environment that makes it difficult to shoot a session successfully.

Making Your Decision

Whatever choice you decide needs to be congruent with your business model and planning. These pros and cons to each option will be helpful to use when making your decision. Every business and circumstance is different and there is no one size that fits all. You should always factor in what risks you and your family are able to afford before taking the next step. Whatever choice you make, just remember it is not permanent and you can always adjust. Just move forward with a positive attitude, focus, and determination!

10. One Last Thing....“Acres of Diamonds” – Lessons From This Speech You Can Apply to Your Photography Business

Russell Herman Conwell, an American Baptist minister, philanthropist, writer, lawyer, and orator, is well known as the founder and original president of Temple University. However, his greatest claim to fame is his famous speech and essay, “Acres of Diamonds.” While the speech may seem like it’s from another era, every business person can learn a lot from Conwell, one of the first American motivational speakers. Here’s a closer look at this famous speech, the powerful story in the speech, and the lessons that you can apply to your own photography business.

About the “Acres of Diamonds” Speech

The inspiration for the famous speech and essay took place when Conwell traveled the Middle East in 1869. According to Conwell, an Arab guide told him the story that led to the creation and main idea of this speech. Originally, the speech was first given before a reunion of troops he served with in the Civil War. Later he delivered the speech on the Chautauqua circuit before he became the pastor of the Philadelphia Grace Baptist Church. Later, in 1890, the speech was published in book form. The speech was so powerful that through the years, Conwell would deliver the “Acres of Diamonds” speech more than 6,000 times around the globe.

The Powerful Story in the Speech

The speech was created around a powerful story told to Conwell by an Arab guide whom he hired when he was in Baghdad. The story was about an ancient Persian named Ali Hafed who lived near the River Indus. The Ali Hafed owned a huge farm with gardens, orchards, and fields of grain. He was a wealthy man and content with what he had. However, one day the farmer was visited by a Buddhist priest who told the farmer stories of how the world was made.

The priest told the farmer that the world was at one time a bank of fog, and the Almighty thrust His finger into the fog, slowly moving the finger around with increasing speed until the bank of fog turned into a ball of fire. It rolled through the universe, burning through fog and condensed moisture that fell in floods on the hot surface of the earth, cooling the outward crust. Mountains and hills, prairies and plains, and valleys were created when the internal fires burst up through the crust. According to the priest, diamonds were congealed drops of sunlight.

The priest went on to tell Ali Hafed that a single diamond the size of a thumb would give him enough money to purchase a country. With a mine of diamonds, all of his children could reign on thrones with the influence on the amazing wealth. After hearing the story, Ali Hafed went to bed thinking about how much they must be worth. While he didn't lose anything, he became poor with discontent because he felt poor. As he lay awake through the night, he decided that he wanted to have a mine of diamonds for his own.

In the morning, he woke up the priest, asking the priest where he could find the diamonds:

"Will you tell me where I find diamonds?"

"Diamonds! What do you want with diamonds?"

"Why, I wish to be immensely rich."

"Well, then, go along and find them. That is all you have to do; go and find them, and then you have them."

"But I don't know where to go."

"Well, if you will find a river that runs through white sands, between high mountains, in those white sands you will always find diamonds."

"I don't believe there is any such river."

“Oh yes, there are plenty of them. All you have to do is to go and find them, and then you have them.”

Said Ali Hafed, “I will go.”

Ali Hafed went on to sell his farm. He took his money, left the family with a neighbor, and he went off to search for diamonds. He started looking at the Mountains of the Moon, in Palestine, and eventually he ended up in Europe. When he was finally left with nothing, he saw a tidal wave roll in while in Barcelona and cast himself into the tide, taking his own life.

Back on Ali Hafed’s farm, the man who had purchased his farm took his camel to drink from the garden brook. When the camel began to drink, the new farmer suddenly saw a flash of light in the stream’s white sands. He reached in, pulling out a black stone that reflected all the colors of the rainbow. Not knowing what the stone was, he simply placed it on the mantel in his home.

When the same old priest showed up to visit the farm, the priest ran up to the stone shouting. He thought that Ali Hafed had returned with diamonds. However, the new farmer let the priest know that the stone was found in the farm’s garden. The priest declared that the stone was a diamond.

The two rushed back out to the garden, and there, they find many diamonds. This was how the diamond mine of Golconda was discovered, which was the most incredible diamond mine that was ever found.

Had Ali Hafed simply stayed at home and dug around his own property instead of selling everything and taking off to find diamonds, he would have ended up with “acres of diamonds.” Every acre on that farm revealed incredible diamonds.

Lessons You Can Apply to Your Photography Business

What can be learned from this famous speech?

The man in the story thought he had to sell everything and go in search of diamonds, but all the while, the diamonds were in his own backyard. When you're running a photography business, it's often easy to look for greener pastures. However, it's important to remember that clients are all around you all the time. Unfortunately, it's easy to overlook the obvious.

When you think you need to move on to something else, you're probably already in the right place. You can't afford to think that the great businesses or the great photography clients are somewhere else. Maybe there's nothing special about where you are, but you have the power to make it special.

Attaining wealth with your photography business is possible. However, you'll end up poor and destitute if you give up everything to go search for wealth somewhere else. In fact, there's a good chance that you're already sitting on your own "acres of diamonds" right now. Learn to explore what's right in front of you and you'll find the "diamonds" for your photography business.

Final Thoughts

In reading this book, I hope you walk away feeling like a successful photography business is something that is completely attainable. A photography business is so much more than taking great images (although this is important as well). Creating a successful photography business requires a lot of hard work and preparation, but can most certainly be done. It is so important to decide who your target client is, then apply the skills described in this book towards them. There is no magic button to push to give you that successful business you are looking to create. It is a constant journey and you must be willing to learn new things everyday. That being said, if I can do it, I know anyone reading this can as well.

So take this as encouragement, as motivation to perfect the skills mentioned and apply them to your business personally.

I wish you success and profitability in your business and leave you with this last word of wisdom from one of the greatest teachers out there.

“Do or do not. There is no try.”-Yoda

Now go out there and make things happen. And please stay connected with us through PROFITographers.com as we learn and grow together in our profitable photography business!

-Paul Pruitt

Please feel free to share with your photographer friends.

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