

BERNIE GRIFFITHS

SUCCESS SECRETS OF A  
PROFESSIONAL  
PHOTOGRAPHER

TURN AROUND YOUR PHOTOGRAPHY  
BUSINESS AND CREATE A BETTER LIFE

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## **Preface**

*"I quote others only the better to express myself".*

Michel de Montaigne

### *Important note from the author*

Over my forty plus years as a wedding and portrait photographer, I have attended hundreds of seminars, both on photography and small business, listened to hundreds of tapes and CDs and read and purchased hundreds of books, which are still taking up a great deal of my shelf space.

I have put to use all of this learning and information over my career, and in the course of writing this book. In doing so, I may have failed to acknowledge my sources appropriately; if so, I apologise, and hope that you will accept the information in the spirit in which it is given.

I have also included some stories from my own life experiences throughout the book, purely to put some things into context; but, maybe, to be a little self indulgent. What ...a photographer with an ego? I hear you say!

I have been consulting to other photographers and holding seminars on both the business side of running a successful photography studio as well as the practical photography side. Over the last few years I found myself doing more of this than actually running my photographic business.

I always envisioned myself as a business owner rather than a photographer. Although I have been a successful, driven photographer for 45 years, I always knew that I would be an even more passionate and driven consultant for other photographers.

This is a dynamic and ever-changing climate in which to run a business. So I have focused on my photography business to prove the systems and practices I recommend are relevant in today's market. I am continuing to do a select number of portrait sittings, photography viewings, and weddings to ensure that the information I am passing on to other photographers, is absolutely up to date and relevant.

### *Disclaimer*

While all care and diligence has been exercised in putting this book together, please understand that neither myself, my company, nor those associated with this book are responsible for the success or failure of any person or business who chooses to use its contents.

We don't believe in get rich quick programs; we do believe in hard work, adding

who is totally responsible for any outcome in following any of the suggestions and ideas included.

Bernie Griffiths

## **Acknowledgements and Thanks**

I would like to thank all of the people whose books I have read, whose CDs I have listened to, whose seminars I have attended, and who have influenced me in some way over the course of my photography career. You have been an inspiration. Some of these people have been mentors, some friends, and some who I have never met have nonetheless played a part in this book. For any I have forgotten, I apologise.

I would also like to thank the thousands of people I have photographed, for without you I would not have had such an amazing journey in following my dreams.

Thanks to—

Ian Hawthorne, Max Townsend, Danny Dekker, Jeff Crowley, Barry Gittins, Charles Lewis, Gary Glenn, Gary Fong, Dr Bob Montgomery, Victor Kiam, John Ploog, Donald Trump, Robert Kiyosaki, Jeff Kershaw, and many others.

My biggest thank you goes to my wife Wendy, for always being there for me in so many ways, and my two children Allison and Christopher for their understanding that, because of the nature of my work, I could not always be there for them.

Without their love and amazing support this book would never have been written.

### *In the beginning*

Bernie Griffiths has over 40 years experience owning a successful wedding and portrait photography studio. He is the owner of three successful businesses, and is still photographing selected portraits and weddings. He is a down to earth person who can relate to all areas of a portrait business. Bernie has walked the path as a wedding/portrait photographer, and knows the frustrations and day to day challenges.

There are short cuts that can lead you to accelerate your success, both as a photographer and business owner. Talk to him about secrets of success and he will bluntly tell you that there aren't any. He will say: "just work hard and always measure your results. Don't make the same mistake twice."

Using his unique retail selling system Bernie has turned over millions of dollars in his portrait photography business.

### *The joys of having your own business*

So why do you want to have your own business? Do you like the thought of having more spare time? How about just working the hours that you want? Have a holiday whenever you feel like it? Make lots and lots of money? Photography is your passion? You want to have control of your life? You want to spend your life doing what you love? You want to control your own destiny?

Many people dream of having their own business. If you are a passionate photographer, then you may love the idea of creating income while doing something that you really enjoy, while at the same time making lots of money. If you are a "type A" sort of person, like to be in control of your circumstance, and are an avid decision maker, then becoming a business owner may be for you. Once you set off on your journey, you can create a business, a brand. When you are in the driver's seat, you have control.

There are many benefits in owning your own business. Being able to have the flexibility to organize your time is a major attraction, and the reason a lot of people decide to start their own business. Whether working from home or a commercial outlet you are able, in your own business, to set working and social hours. Some entrepreneurs say that owning their own business lets them set their priorities, and the sky is the limit to the amount of money that they can earn.

### *It's a risky business*

There is no question that owning your own business can be a risky proposition. With risk of course, can come satisfying rewards. On the other hand, some people thrive on the routine of their job, in repeating the same tasks over and over, day after day, and working for the same company for years. My father did exactly that, as a radial driller. He drilled the same holes in the same places, in thousands of car chassis for over forty years.

When you work for someone else, you rarely get to choose the people that you like to work with. In your own business, if you don't like your co-workers you can always hire someone else. You are the boss. I know a lot of photographers who employ their spouses or other family members, when the business grows too large for one person.

### *Running a photography business is not easy*

This is what a lot of photographers have told me—especially when you are isolated in a country area, or run the business on your own. It can be lonely. It is not easy. Running a business from home can also be stressful, with the pressures of balancing family life.

The market place is also very competitive, with photographers opening up on seemingly every street corner. Wouldn't it be great to have an edge over your competition? Starting a photography business without any training, and very little capital, can also be daunting. I have seen over my forty years of owning a studio, some photographers become millionaires, while others have failed. What is the secret of their success? I believe that everyone has the secret hidden inside of them, but sometimes they just need that spark or inspiration to start the "fire of success".

The one key ingredient for success is passion—not being able to see failure. Your passion will drive you. This book is the road for your passion to drive along.

The biggest weakness that I see in many existing photography businesses, is that they believe in the old saying “build it and they will come”. This is no longer applicable in today’s highly competitive marketplace. Especially in the wedding and portrait market areas, where there are literally hundreds of small photography studios.

The photographers that succeed in this industry are masters of marketing and promotion, and not necessarily masters of photography.

I’m a big believer in defining and refining and re-defining and re-refining your dreams, constantly polishing exactly how you would love your life to be, and being realistic and inspired by the vision of your destiny, making sure it’s truly what you would love to have as your destiny. If you can’t wait to get up in the morning and go and live it then you’re clear and on track. If for some reason you’re still not inspired by your life and your mission, then you obviously have not yet clearly defined and refined enough.

I am constantly trying to grow my own business, and I am always looking for new ways of generating new products, new marketing and sales ideas to create new clients.

One of the biggest illusions which can hold you back is not recognizing your true potential and living only according to what you feel you have to do, should do or need to do rather than what you would love to do. This is ultimately futile.

It can be scary to think we are completely in control of our life and the results we achieve. We might prefer to be guided from the world outside rather than the world within. There is no ultimate right or wrong. The truth is we are largely in control of our own futures and need to make conscious decisions rather than just living from day to day.

*Are you running your business  
or is it running you?*

Everyone lives by an evolving set of priorities or values and concentrates their energies on what is highest on their value list or what is most important and meaningful to their lives. If you have a family, this must be a huge consideration in any business decisions you may make.

So, determine what is most important to you, or what is highest on your list of priorities, and target your learning and actions in that direction.

Always remind yourself that you are in business to make money! I have always thought this way. Winning clients is not everything ... winning the *right* clients is everything. Your clients will feed you. Complacency in your business can be your number one enemy! Never think that building your business will ever end. Business is a moving, dynamic thing. It is alive and needs feeding all the time. Never think that you will ever be happy with the amount of business that you have. The minute that you put yourself into this complacent mindset, your business just may turn around and bite you on the bum!

*Are you looking at taking that next step  
in your photography business?*

There’s one fact I know—business is harder than ever before. Running a small photography business has never been more challenging to achieve success. Sadly success will only come to a small number of studios that operate today. The rest will more likely be closing their doors within the next three years. If you are thinking of starting a new business you need to consider the steps to grow your business.

Maybe you have been in business a few years and are not having the success that you used to have. Are you excited to turn your passion for photography into a career you’ll love? If you are ready to take your photography business to the next level, then this book is for you. It will take you from where you are now to where you want to be and beyond.

*Learning new skills*

You can take good photographs. That on its own is not enough. You have to become a business entrepreneur. This quote by Victor Kiam sums up what an entrepreneur is:

*Entrepreneurs are risk takers, willing to roll the dice with their money or reputation on the line in support of an idea or enterprise. They willingly assume responsibility for the success or failure of a venture and are answerable for all its facets. The buck not only stops at their desks, it starts there too.*

You will have to develop a whole new set of skills. You will have to wear many different hats. This of course will be easy if you are a female reading this book, but it may be a little harder for the guys out there! Multitasking is quite common in most workplaces these days. And so it is in small business.

Marketing, if you are not a marketing Guru, may not be easy for you. Marketing is all about “test and measure”. Keeping an accurate record of the results of any advertising will not only show you which of your successful advertising you should repeat, but it will also teach you which are unsuccessful campaigns and how you can improve. The key is to do SOMETHING! Do not think too hard on an advertising idea. Do it. That is the only way that you can test and measure.

### *The perspective*

Making sure you have your business life in perspective and keeping stress levels in perspective is an important skill in any business.

Photographing people is a great privilege as well as a great responsibility. Wedding and portrait photography is both of those things but can also be hugely stressful ... if you let it. Yes, you must take the responsibility seriously and do your utmost to get the very best results possible for your client. Have backup equipment, cover all your bases, do your homework, strive to get the best possible result, but also understand this is not life or death. This is not brain surgery. Being in the business of photographing people is a great challenge, and along with this responsibility there is also a lot of FUN!

### *Best use of time*

We have all fallen into the trap of spending hours and hours working in Photoshop, tweaking images that the client may never buy, and may never be printed. Staying realistic about the time you spend working on images, and releasing your time for more important things like generating new clients is perhaps one of the most important lessons to learn in a photography business. We are all guilty of spending time doing the jobs we prefer and procrastinating about other jobs, but the “busy work” of spending excessive amounts of time sitting in front of a computer can be fatal to your business. Time spent marketing, attending seminars, formulating ways of generating new business, and even spending time with family, is far more productive.

### *It's not just about the photography*

The biggest misconception that a great number of photographers has, is that if they take great photographs, the client will buy heaps of them. Wrong! If only it was that easy. Now we all know that the most successful hamburger place does not necessarily make the best hamburgers. In my experience some of the most financially successful photography studios, produce fairly average photography. That does not mean that we should not try to constantly improve and lift the standard of the images that we produce. We should have pride in our product.

### *On the business side of things*

This is not just a book about running a photography business, but a book about the business of photography. You will:

- Read about the amazing lessons that I have learned that have revolutionized my business.
- Learn how to determine who your target market is and why it's essential for you to market directly to them.
- Learn the importance of defining your business so that it is in tune with your lifestyle and goals.
- Find out how to take the right kind of images and how to choose which images sell.
- Learn why you shouldn't take every client who's interested in your services.
- Learn how many photos to take per session and how many images to show clients at viewing time.

- Find out how to simplify order time with a great proven selling system that will change your selling strategy forever.
- Get tips on how to have a good family life and not to let your business overrun it.

This book will help guide you along the way with pages packed full of information that will drive you along the road of success. I share the secrets to my success in building my photography business, including all the lessons I had to learn the hard way (so you don't have to).

### *The advent of digital*

The introduction of digital photography revolutionised the professional photography industry. It was in 1988 that the first digital camera recorded images on a file rather than film. The camera was the Fuji DS-1P, and it recorded to a 16MB internal memory card. That same year digital formats were introduced with the first JPEG and MPEG standards, which allowed image and video files to be compressed for storage.

Early digital cameras cost thousands of dollars, and were well out of the price range of the average portrait photographer. It was not until 1990, with the introduction of the first commercially available digital camera, that used a CCD image sensor, stored pictures digitally, and connected directly to a computer for download, that the real digital revolution had begun.

In 1991, Kodak introduced the Kodak DCS-100, the beginning of a long line of professional Kodak DCS SLR cameras that were based on Nikon film bodies. It used a 1.3 megapixel sensor and was priced at over \$40,000.

In 1995 Canon introduced, in conjunction with Kodak, the Canon DCS3, followed five years later by the Canon EOS 10D, and then the EOS 20D. This was when I swapped my medium format film camera (a Hasselblad) for a Canon EOS 20D, and plunged into the new world of digital photography.

In 1997 the first megapixel cameras for amateur consumers were marketed.

In 1999 Nikon brought out the Nikon D1, a 2.74 megapixel camera that was the first digital SLR developed entirely by a major manufacturer, and a cost of under \$10,000 made it affordable for professional and serious amateur photographers alike. This camera also used Nikon F-mount lenses, which meant film photographers could use many of the same lenses they already owned. Photographers could now view their images on the back of their cameras. What this meant of course is that adjustments could be made before taking the next exposure, allowing some control of exposure and colour balance, of the final photograph. This was previously not possible with film cameras.

Digital photography began a new dimension of learning. For me, it was like starting all over again. I had to learn a completely new way of capturing an image. Along with capturing the image in digital form it also led me to having learn many new software applications on a computer. My life had changed from simply being a photographer, to being a multi functioned entrepreneur, with computer skills.

### *Setting out a plan of action*

You are following a career in photography because you love taking photographs. In becoming a professional photographer, you will have to spend, or are already spending, a lot more of your time embroiled in the business of actually running your photography business. This book is a complete guide to structuring and simplifying the tasks attached to making and growing your dreams. This book will guide you from taking great saleable photographs, to managing all aspects of your day-to-day business. It will provide easy and highly effective, tried and tested, photography, marketing and selling solutions, and sound advice from someone who has had over forty years of experience.

## My Story

I was born in England, just before the end of the Second World War.

### *My mother dies*

I lived at the time in a small town in England. We were a poor family. My mother had died when I was only eleven years old. I watched as they carried her slowly down the stairs. She had been in bed for a few days. The doctor thought that she had the flu. I never saw her again. My mother had left me. I cried for days asking the same questions, over and over again. Why my mum? Why not take someone else? Anyone but mum. I cried and cried. I never attended the funeral. Too young I guess. I do remember the wake that was held in the living room. Cups of tea and sandwiches, and relations and friends that I never knew.

### *Childhood challenges*

The lake was a favourite fishing spot of mine for many years during my childhood. I would ride my bicycle to the lake and sit for hours on my own, only occasionally accompanied by the odd rat that would cheekily steal the stale bread that I was using for fishing bait. In the winter time the lake was completely frozen over. It was such a simple game. To see how far you could go toward the center of the lake without the ice cracking, with the very real possibility of falling right through, and with little hope of being rescued. I was only being an adventurous ten-year-old boy. The ice cracked as I inched my feet closer to a place of no return. Crack! Crack! I decided to go back to solid ground.

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## **Sometimes you have to know when it is the right time to turn around, and head in the opposite direction**

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### *My father was a working class man*

My father worked in a local car factory, often carrying his bicycle the eight kilometres to work, when deep snow covered the ground, and riding it home at night when the snow had cleared. With four children to feed, his life was work.

I was the youngest in the family. I had always loved photography. We had an old family Kodak box camera, and I loved to take it out and photograph people and places, processing the films and then printing them, using my father's bedroom as my darkroom. By processing and printing film for a few other people and charging them a small fee, I was able to save enough money to buy a brand new 35mm Pentax camera. Then I learnt a very valuable lesson. I now had a good camera, so my expectation was that my photographs would be better quality, more creative and generally so much better. Wrong! All of the photographs were out of focus. I angrily threw the film into the rubbish bin.

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## **I learned that it was not the camera that creates the photograph, but the person operating the camera—the photographer**

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### *Falling in love*

I remember the very first time that I went into a darkroom. The unique, pungent smell of the chemicals making me feel light headed; it was like being drugged. The exciting anticipation when the images started to appear on the photographic paper. The red glow of the darkroom light making me feel like I was in a nightclub. I was in awe of the whole experience. I was creating something from nothing, magically turning a blank piece of paper into an artistic image. I had an adrenaline rush, and I fell in love with photography. It gave me power. I felt comfortable and excited at the same time. I never realised that this passion would turn into my livelihood.

I had an epiphany. I don't know what triggered it, but I do remember when it happened. I was fifteen years old at the time. I was having a day off school, lying in bed with the flu. A thought came into my head. It was to define the rest of my life: "I want to be a successful photographer and to travel the world."

### *The ship's photographer*

I left the boys grammar school that I attended as soon as I was able. I was fifteen years old. I left with no qualifications, but with a burning desire to be a photographer. After a brief stint as a photographer on a local newspaper, my next job was with a processing laboratory that collected, processed and printed the films from the local camera shops and chemists. I would be the one to process the films, spending most of my day in darkroom.

Often during the winter time when deep snow covered the ground, I would drive the picturesque country route collecting the film that held the precious memories of the clients, and safely load them into the back of the van. Many a time I would have to shovel away the snow off some laneway, so that I could continue my journey. A bit like the pony express delivering the mail in the USA. The film had to get through! I loved my job, even though one day I nearly set fire to the old wooden building as I tried to unfreeze the water pipes by holding a lighted rolled up newspaper under them.

After a few months I realised that to climb to the top job of being manager, I would have to wait twenty years. At the end of this time the current manager could retire. Too long a wait I thought.

The goal that I had previously written, to become a successful photographer and travel the world, kept coming back into my head. Finally I could not take its persistent driving beat any more and I applied for a job as a ship's photographer. My interview went well with my future boss telling me that he liked my haircut—it was short and tidy, which was unusual in young men in the mid sixties. Usually they had long hair past their shoulders, and wore kaftans. I was different, and he had no hesitation in employing me as one of his photographers for P&O Lines. Two weeks later I was on the long train journey to Southampton to join the ship.

During the two week Mediterranean cruise I photographed passengers, put up their photographs on display boards and sold them at the counter the next day. What a great life. Did I mention the alcohol? Well it was duty free! During the return to Southampton I received a telegram asking me to join the largest ship in the P&O fleet, the forty five thousand ton *Canberra*. A big leap in pay and responsibility. I was to be chief photographer and have a staff of three photographers; I was to travel around the world doing what I loved, and I was to be paid for it! My accommodation and expenses were all paid for by my employer. How quickly it seems that I had achieved that first goal.

### *The ten second decision*

I arrived in Australia in July 1969. I flew all the way from England with Qantas for just ten pounds, (the cheapest discount fare of all time). I worked in photography, in darkrooms processing and printing photographs. I was for a short time employed by a small camera shop/studio processing and printing photographs in a small darkroom at the back of the shop. A photographer owned the business, and I eagerly photographed any extra weddings that he could not do.

Then something strange happened. I had some uncertainty about following my dream, and I kept asking myself whether photography was really what I wanted to do for the rest of my life. I had not known anything else. I had no formal qualifications. What else could I possibly do? I was only really good for factory work, but I hated the thought of following in my father's footsteps. My choice was to become a door to door encyclopaedia salesman. After learning a three page sales script, I was thrust onto the general public. I was dropped off by the manager in an outer Melbourne suburb, at six pm, and told to knock on doors until ten pm, at which point I would be picked up. My reward for any sales of a set of encyclopaedias was a small commission.

After just six weeks I approached the manager and told him that I wasn't sure whether I wanted to continue. He gave me a simple ultimatum. He said if I stayed he would turn me into a great salesperson. Or I could walk out and go back to my photography. He said that I had ten seconds to make a decision. I walked out after six seconds. I just had this gut feeling that it was the right thing to do. That moment defined my life.

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## **Don't be afraid to let gut feeling be your decision maker**

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### *The birth of a business*

My passion to take photographs intensified, and I could not wait to own a photography studio. Within six months, the opportunity appeared before me. In the 'businesses for sale' section of the local paper there was an established photography studio for sale for \$500. It seemed like a reasonable amount of money to buy my dream. I was excited as I drove the fifteen kilometres to talk to the owner. There was no hesitation from me. It was mine. Another goal achieved within six months of landing in a new country.

The journey had begun.

The premises consisted of a shop downstairs and accommodation upstairs. I slept on the linoleum-covered floor in my bedroom. I had no possessions. Life was good, as I formulated the whirlwind of ideas that spun in my head, to make my business success. I was twenty three years old and owned my own business.

It did not take long to realise that the owner had changed a few numbers in the books, and the business was not quite the cash cow that he had presented to me. I struggled to pay the rent, sometimes over a week late. Somehow I always had that last minute client come in, giving me enough money to run down to the bank, throw the cash on the counter, and pay my landlord. Most of my income came from passport photographs. I would shoot them on film, process and print them, and have them ready for the client within the hour.

I thought having a shopfront the clients would queue outside my door each morning and hand me their hard earned money. It wasn't to be. I realised that I had to become a marketeer. I had to get my name out into the marketplace; I had to promote my business. I have been promoting my business ever since.

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## **You can never over-promote your business**

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### *When a child dies*

I was in Sydney at the time, when my photographer friend received the phone call. It was from a funeral director whose premises were just down the road from his studio. A few days prior there had been a horrific road accident. A car had been traveling along the highway. The father was driving, his wife sat next to him in the passenger seat; their two cute little girls aged six and four were sitting in the back seat. The car slowed down as it approached an intersection. The truck didn't. It ran over the back of the car crushing and killing the children and badly injuring the parents.

The children's grandmother had asked the funeral director to organize some photographs of the children lying side by side in the coffin. We took a ladder so that we could be looking down on the children. My friend photographed the children while I held a reflector to enhance the light to get the best result. The girls were beautifully dressed in pale pink dresses, and pink soft ballet shoes. Their faces were angelic. They looked beautiful. After taking lots of photographs from different angles we went outside and our eyes filled with tears. Just like they do now as I recall the story, all of those years ago.

A few years ago I photographed lots of children for a premature babies charity book project. One of the babies, who was ten months old, arrived with both of his parents. He had a tube going down his throat that was attached to an oxygen bottle. His mother told me that he had been on oxygen with the tube going into his lungs ever since he was born. She said that we could remove it for a short while as the doctors felt that it was time to slowly wean him off the oxygen. They removed the tube and I took photographs of the family and some separate ones of the baby. He smiled all the time and the parents loved the photographs so much that they bought a large collage of a selection of the images. Two weeks after they had picked up the finished photographs, they phoned me to say that the baby had died. They thanked me and told me how much they appreciated the photographs of him. It was a beautiful record for them to keep.

There is a point to be made in this story in this book. Sometimes I would feel that my chosen field had no significance or value. After all, I am just a photographer. I do not risk my life in my chosen profession, and

neither do I save lives. But when I think about the photographs that these clients have to remember their children, their loves ones, or just a moment in time, I do feel some sense of pride and purpose. Yes, a portrait photographer can impact lives and leave a lasting legacy. I feel better knowing that.

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### **Always remember your worth and your value**

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#### *A Porsche and a Rolls Royce*

Coming from England and having a financially poor upbringing, I always dreamed of driving a Rolls. After all, the Queen had one or two. Another thought that came from nowhere, but became embedded in my head.

Knowing the success of my previous goalsetting campaigns I wrote the goal to have a Rolls Royce Silver Shadow—my favourite model in the range. I stuck a photo on the wall of one that I had torn from a magazine. Lying in bed at night I would visualize driving it, smelling the leather, feeling the steering wheel, and I imagined the feeling that I would have in cruising along the road. I knew that it would be a burgundy colour and have black leather upholstery. I set no deadline to have this possession. I only knew that one day it would be mine.

Many years later while out driving along a road close to my home, I suddenly saw my dream in a car yard. There it was! My Rolls. I sat in the driver's seat. It felt exactly as I had imagined. It was an amazing feeling. But the price was too high. I sadly walked away.

Exactly two years later I was ready. I had the money. My business was doing well. In searching for a Rolls I found one for private sale. It was the same car that I had seen previously. Of course I took it for a test drive. It was mine. An amazing feeling of déjà vu came over me. I had driven this car so much in my imagination, that it seemed so natural to be actually driving it. My Rolls served me well. I cleaned it with love. I extended the garage so it would fit. I needed a second car so I bought a black convertible Turbo bodied Porsche. Times were good!

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### **Patience can lead you to your dreams**

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#### *The happiest man alive*

He sat on the deck overlooking the overgrown tropical back garden. "I am the happiest man alive," he said to me, as his eyes scanned the scene before him. "Look at that beautiful sky, the green foliage of the trees, and listen to the birds singing. What more could you want?"

He did not look his seventy-six years, and had only been to a doctor twice in his long life. He lives alone. Unusual in some ways, that he really liked, and never got bored with, his own company.

A self taught and naturally talented piano and harmonica player for all of his life, the only ones that heard his daily musical sojourns besides himself, were the two uncaged parakeets that kept him company whilst flying around the downstairs living room.

He said that he could buy anything that he wanted. He had just bought a new car and paid cash. His previous car was five years old and had only travelled five thousand kilometres. The fact is that he did not aspire to owning expensive possessions. He did not need possessions to feel good about himself. He was his own best friend.

Life for him is a daily mix of the same settings, the same places, the same chairs, and the same mindset. The solitary nature of the life he leads, makes him a great human being.

Living on the pension means that he does not have much money. He does not need it, for his needs are simple. He is even able to save from what is left over from his weekly expenditure.

He is the happiest person that I have ever met. He is my brother.

By fulfilling his basic needs of food, clothing and shelter, he lives a happy and contented life.

Lesson—we are all different, and have different wants and needs. If we can identify those wants and needs and seek them out, no matter how simple or how grand, we are well on the way to becoming happy.

### *You can't milk a dead cow*

Over recent years there has been a major shift in consumer behaviour—in photography, in particular. Consumers embraced the digital format quickly and started sharing their photographs using a variety of digital devices.

Many photographers thought that this was going to be a short-lived trend, and that everyone would soon get back to their normal behaviour and again start to utilize the services of a professional photographer for their imaging needs. The trend became a lasting reality. Consumers approach photography differently now. They photograph each other, they photograph themselves, and they instantly share via social media. This, on the surface, has eroded the value of professional photographs and people are less likely to pay as much as they once did. Instead of acknowledging this trend, which has been happening for a long time, photographers, it appears, have been busy devoting their time to developing their technical digital skills rather than dealing with this revolution in consumer behavior. As a result, it has become necessary to re-invent what we do, or simply do it differently. We have to look at new ways to attract clients by giving them products, services and a quality that they cannot produce themselves.

### *Ten seconds to live*

I had a fear of flying. Although I had been in many large and small aircraft—even a small helicopter and a two-seater Cessna with the passenger door taken off so that I could take some aerial photographs—I still had a fear that would cause my hands to sweat, my heart to beat faster, and my mind to visualize the plane crashing to the ground.

I had read somewhere that the best way to overcome your fear is to face that fear. I decided to participate in a parachute jump. I felt that if I could jump from a plane, it would take away my fear of heights. After nearly two days of training I was taken up for my jump. The parachute was attached to a static line so that when I jumped the parachute would automatically open. My training had taught me that if the parachute did not open, I had ten seconds to make the decision to pull the reserve parachute. Otherwise only the ground would stop my fall. I hung expectantly onto the wing waiting for my instructor to tell me when to let go. The command came and I released my tenuous grip.

Mixed emotions followed—fear, nervousness, relief, wonder, excitement, and fulfillment were a few. Yes the parachute successfully opened, and I began steering the parachute toward the drop zone. Although I landed hard on my backside, I had faced my fear.

I do feel a lot more comfortable flying nowadays—but would feel even better if I had a parachute strapped to my back.

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## **Confront your fear to conquer it**

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### *The four big mistakes photographers make when they start their business*

1. The better my photography, the more money I will make.

This is just not true. We are photographers so we think that if we make our photographs really, really good, we will make more money.

Of course you want to do everything to make your photography the very best it can be. This will be an ongoing project. You have to be proud of your product and service, and your clients do have to like your work. But by itself, it is no guarantee of your success.

You must have some selling strategies in place to maximize your sales.

Selling is not pressure. Selling is not a bad thing, and it's not ripping the client off. You're never going to trick someone into buying something they don't want.

Selling, is finding out what people want, and helping them to get it, at a price that they are willing to pay.

2. If I do a really good job, my client will tell all their friends, and I'll have all the business that I want.

Wrong again! Do you honestly believe that all of our clients will be so happy with what you do, that they will tell everyone they know, and you'll be swamped with business? This is not the case.

You need a marketing plan to create business. This is normal in any small or large business. Do McDonalds advertise a lot? Of course they do. They know that if they stop advertising, people will stop buying their products. Do they promote within the local community? They sure do. They never stop getting their message out there.

3. If I just keep my prices a little lower than my competition, I will be able to take some of their business away.

This is a big mistake. We just don't realize how wrong this is, until we put our prices up higher than our local competitors, and start to make some 'real' money. The key is to charge more for your photography than most, or all, of your competitors, and then learn how to sell it. This way, you can spend more time with each of your clients, and make sure that the work that you do is up to the standard that you are happy with. You will also take more pride in your work, and in your business.

4. If I let my clients take their proofs home, or put them online, they will show them to all of their friends, and I'll get heaps more business.

When you have photographed someone, you should continue with your professionalism, and help and guide your client to make the right decisions. You can only do this by getting them back into your studio/home and presenting their images to them, in a personal 'face to face' professional environment. Let's be realistic. The only thing that you can do with the product that we manufacture, is to look at it. So if you give clients the opportunity to look at your images on the internet, why would they want to buy? They need a hard copy, so that they can get years of viewing pleasure.

#### Summary

Take great photographs, advertise, promote, learn a great selling system, then sit back and enjoy the rewards.

## Where to Begin?

### SETTING UP YOUR BUSINESS

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#### *Define your business*

Do you have a sound business proposition? In order to have a successful photography business, you need to have a clear understanding of what your business is, what you do, and what you need to do to be successful. Have a mission statement and clear business goals of what you want to achieve. If you are clear on who you are and what you provide, your client will also be able to understand clearly.

#### *Mission statements*

Mission statements are a constant reminder of the purpose of the business, providing direction and guiding decision making. And they're not just for the big multinational corporations; even restaurants, daycare, real estate and legal businesses need mission statements.

If you have no idea where to start, check out [www.missionstatements.com](http://www.missionstatements.com) to view a large number of other companies' mission statements. Example mission statements that are communicated there:

*To create meaningful and beautiful images ...*

*While projecting a pleasant, patient, and understanding attitude ...*

*So that you receive excellent value for your investment ...*

*Ensuring a memorable and rewarding photographic experience!*

#### *Goals:*

*For every client to know that they have been provided the best quality photography services available.*

#### *Objectives:*

*To employ the best professional practices with honesty and commitment.*

*To develop partnerships with clients, so that they know their photography needs are being met.*

*To apply all my working knowledge and experience to each job, so that every job is a success for my business and the client.*

*Never to let photographic equipment stand in the way of a great photograph.*

*To be an educated, proper and respectful representative of the photography industry.*

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### **Write your mission statement in big letters and stick it on the wall in plain view**

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#### *Who are your ideal clients?*

Photographers that I speak to all say that they are passionate about what they do and that they would like to create a successful business. Their main problem in an industry that is seasonal, is cashflow. They want more clients, but they are not sure where to find them.

A huge mental block holds a lot of photographers back. That block is they are afraid of talking themselves up, and getting the word out. They are too shy.

Letting your ideal clients, prospects and community know about you, is vital if you are to succeed. For some reason, too many photographers feel promoting and marketing themselves is not something that they are comfortable with. One of my consulting clients realized:

*I came into business because I felt I was technically really good at what I did, and for the first few years it was all I needed, plus I couldn't think of anything worse than having to 'market' my business. But now after our work*

*together, I've seen the financial benefits of how important it is to build relationships, engage and promote not only my business but also what I do. I really enjoy doing it now, and even my husband can't believe how much I enjoy it!*

The fact is that we don't know what we don't know.

Why base your opinions on what others do, and miss out on getting your own creative ideas in marketing and promotion happening? You want to be the business owner who understands what it takes to have enough clients to give you constant cash flow, and the time to create and enjoy your business and also your life outside of the business.

Position yourself strategically in the marketplace. What is your message and brand, and will it position you as a leader within your industry? Will your potential clients understand who you are and what you do? When you are clear on your position, you will engage and build better business relationships with your clients.

Have a plan of action. Develop your plan for the next three months on how you can build your business. How productive are you? Are you busy being busy because of bad time management? Or are you focusing on your core income producing activities?

Take time to network and develop strong third party contacts to help build strong win-win relationships. Leverage your business. It's important to show up each day, be confident, and be committed.

## **SOME IMPORTANT THINGS TO CONSIDER**

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### *I don't have enough money*

Don't worry, many successful photographers started with very little money, yet despite this, they still managed to turn their photography business into a very lucrative and profitable concern, with thousands of dollars turnover. There aren't many businesses that thrive immediately without having at least some form of investment. You must remember that while it may take a little money to get things going, if you are smart and use your money wisely, you can stretch what little money you have available to put into your business, much farther than you ever thought possible.

### *My spouse doesn't think I will have enough time for the kids and run a business*

If you have a spouse or partner and kids, you have to get everyone on the same page, if your business is to succeed. Having constant disagreements is going to cause nothing but stress, and that is not something you need to be dealing with when starting a new business. The best approach is to hold a family meeting, and let everyone tell their concerns, and then you can address them with your solution. Be understanding and listen to their concerns. Assure them that with the right plan in place, nobody will be left out, neglected or forgotten about.

Organising your time, so that you can share it around and balance your lifestyle, is something that may take a little time to get right. Set a schedule of when you are working in the business, and when it is family time. Your family is your number one priority, and you should always keep that fact in the back of your head. Never put business before your family. It just will not be worth it, no matter how much money that you earn.

### *I am afraid of failing*

What if I don't make any sales? Is my photography good enough? Fear is a very emotional thing, and it is also very real. Fear can keep most of us from doing a lot of things. But you don't have to let it. Make the decision to take some risks. I don't mean massive financial risks, but simply put yourself out there and give it a go. Have the confidence to know you are better than you think you are.

If you do not feel that way then learn, learn and learn some more to lift your confidence. Do your homework to understand the type of risk you are taking. Nothing worth anything is easy. Get inspired, get some strength, and work toward improving all of the skills necessary to succeed. You can do it. As Thomas Edison said: "It is far better to fail, than to not try."

### *Business management is boring*

If the thought of making a \$2,000 portrait sale is boring to you, then maybe you should find another career path. Business can be boring to some. I just love it! Keeping records, managing people, photographing, working on my files, meeting new people every day, organizing paperwork, and so on, is the reality of running a business. It is all in a business day. Every day is different. If there are any jobs that I just absolutely hate, I get someone else to do them. That someone is called my wife. If you are forced to do the boring stuff yourself, pick a specific day each week to do it. Keep it up to date. Don't procrastinate. Do what you do not like doing first.

### *Rules of engagement*

Every business, whether large or small, has certain ways of structuring the business, and setting down certain rules, to enable it to run smoothly on a day to day basis. These rules are set also to give the business the best opportunity to also operate at a profit. These are what I call the Rules of Engagement.

### *Practice, practice, practice*

Most other creative people practice their craft over and over before presenting their skills to their audience or clients. As photographers we should not practice on our clients any more than a surgeon should practice on his patients.

Test your equipment, refine your style, experiment with new techniques and constantly develop your skills. Use friends or family, or even hire a model to improve your photography skills and to practice on.

But here is the key. Learn and practice your selling skills as well as your photography skills. I used to role-play my portrait selling sessions with my friends. Recording these sessions allowed me the opportunity of hearing back what I had said, and to make sure that I did not make the wrong or inappropriate reply next time. I learned to answer any selling objections with confidence. I lost my fear of facing a client.

Although I have had over four decades running a successful business, I have always found time to practice. The more you practice the areas of your business that you lack skills in, the quicker your success will come.

The photographers that succeed in this industry are masters of marketing and promotion, as well as being masters of photography. They have also made the effort to seek help and advice from an experienced and qualified photography business coach or consultant.

## **HOME STUDIO OR SHOP FRONT?**

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One of the weaknesses I often see in studios is that business owners believe in the old saying "build it and they will come". This is no longer applicable in today's highly competitive market place—especially in the wedding and portrait photography markets, where there are literally hundreds of small studios in large and small towns all over Australia.

Often a photographer may begin their photography career working from home, and then progress into a more commercial premises. However, more and more photographers are choosing to have a long term business, operating from the family home.

### *The home-based photographer*

The home-based photographer is rapidly becoming the boom industry of this new era. More and more people are opting to change their lifestyles, as more and more mothers become skilled in taking good photographs. Working from home has great benefits, like the considerable reduction of overheads and expenditures, but it can also have its price.

Owning your own photography business and operating from home can be the ideal situation for yourself and your family, if handled correctly.

Working from home, changes your entire life. Your castle, and your family's once safe sanctuary, becomes a multi-purpose abode, trying to be all things to all purposes, and can affect all of those around you.

Your work life can easily spill over to your personal life. Your house now becomes your office receiving client visits and telephone calls; your studio may be your family room at night; your front lounge room may be your

viewing room.

In making your decision to work from home, you have to realise that your personal or home life could intrude on your work, and vice versa. Your child may grab the phone to answer a wedding enquiry, or your dog or cat may come to the door when a client comes to do business with you. Your partner may wonder why you are so tired every night, or why you sit in front of the computer for hours on end.

A major concern in working from home is the total loss of privacy. Your privacy is compromised when you are bringing clients into your home on a daily basis. Complete strangers, even though invited, will find out about your children and family, your pets, and your lifestyle.

The fact is that working from home can be hard, and more than ever, discipline is needed to push you to focus on your work. But keep reading; we may have some direction for you.

### *The good news*

The good news is that working from home can provide you with a fulfilling career, while being constantly around the family. There are many other benefits of course, and the best one is that if carefully planned and executed, your business can give you a great income, as well as time to spend with your family.

Photographers are willing to juggle their business and family life for a more simplified lifestyle that can bring rich rewards if handled correctly. However, a business at home does have many challenges. Small business owners can be hit hard as power bills, petrol prices, food prices, and the price of just about everything else, keep climbing.

The market place is also very competitive, with photographers opening up on seemingly every street corner. Wouldn't it be great to have an edge over your competition?

Here are what I consider to be the top nine challenges that you may experience if you choose to work out of home:

#### 1. Not being taken seriously

A common concern of most home-based photographers is whether their clients will consider their business a real one, rather than just a hobby that they are making a bit of money from. They think that their clients may feel that the business is not legitimate.

Home businesses are generally seen as part time concerns, and therefore their professional image and credibility suffers. They are not taken seriously! Although this perception exists, the business owner should do everything that they can to change this. This can be done by presenting a strong professional business image, not only in the physical appearance of the home but, more importantly in the way that the business is conducted. The way that you treat the client, together with strong branding, advertising, and business practices, will go a long way to justifying working from home. Your own mindset is also paramount in having a strong profitable photography business.

#### 2. Separating work and family life

When a photographer makes a decision to work from home they feel that one of the advantages is that they can be there for the kids, but this can be an enormous disadvantage as well. The daily household chores, picking up and dropping off kids, and working around sleep times of smaller children, can be a great source of distraction in running your business.

As everyone knows, there is always something to do around the home, especially when you have kids. It is very hard to talk professionally to a client over the phone with a two year old screaming in the background, or trying to photograph someone else's children while yours are fighting in the other room. Handling two or more different roles under the one roof can create challenges and difficulties, as you juggle the demands of both your home and your business.

#### 3. Lack of space

The setting-up of a home business is made easier if you have a larger house and you can separate spaces for the business. Lack of space can be a concern if you are living in a small house or an apartment.

Compromising some of your family space can be quite confronting, but this is a trade off that you sometimes may have to accept. A separate entrance for the business would be ideal, and just thinking through the problem and discussing it with someone outside of the immediate business and family can often bring a solution.

#### 4. Working too much or procrastinating

When working from home, there is always the constant temptation to work long hours. You shouldn't feel guilty if you check and answer emails in the evening when the kids are in bed. If you are passionate about your photography and are constantly working on growing your business, you should work hard. But if working too much intrudes on and affects your family life negatively, you should re-evaluate your work ethic.

The opposite of working too much, is procrastinating on work related tasks.

There is an unlimited amount of things that you could do around the home instead of doing work related things. Failure to keep up with your workload could amplify and create a massive problem in a very short space of time.

Another potential problem is spending too much time on tasks which you enjoy but may not be generating income, and neglecting the tasks you don't enjoy.

#### 5. Lack of privacy

Even if you have your own private business space in your home, privacy and security is always a concern. You also need to keep the whole house tidy, just in case the client has to walk through your house to go to the bathroom.

Some clients can be annoying if they knock on your door at all hours of the day and night. You must make it clear to your clients that you work strictly by appointment, and are not available at other times. Your clients will appreciate your professionalism in this regard.

#### 6. Strain on family relationships

Be sure that your family understands what it takes to operate a home business. Talk to your partner and ask for their support, and explain to the children your need to be given time to work for the business.

Some members of your family may resent the fact that while you stay in the house for most of the day, your attention is not focused on them. However, be sure also to know when to stop working for your business and start living as part of the family. Your family and kids need your attention, and of course housework, friends, and even pets, can demand your attention at different times. Working at home can be very hard if you have a newborn baby or three or four small children who always demand your full and complete attention.

#### 8. You can feel isolated

If you are the sole worker in your home business, you may feel isolated and often lonely. It can be a confronting and solitary existence, when you are dealing with clients, phone calls, emails, and the photography, without having someone to share your experiences, or ask advice. The isolation can become quite intense, especially if you have a naturally outgoing personality.

Self-discipline can become hard with no one looking over your shoulder. Failing to maintain a tight time management regime, and not being able to control and handle your feeling of isolation, will make it very hard to achieve success in your business.

#### 9. Lack of experience

When a photographer commits to working from home in the hope of making some money from their passion, the one thing they may lack is the knowledge and experience of how to control and maximize the way in which they conduct their business. Many of these photographers may be like yourself, a mother/father and wife/husband first, and a businessperson second. Making that transition to becoming a businessperson may be difficult to handle, if you have not had any training in setting up and running a business.

Experience of course can only come with time. Time will allow you to learn. The question of course, is whether

the things that you learn are the most effective and profitable way of going about it.

Photographers working from home have their own individual and personal challenges. These challenges need to be addressed individually with their own unique circumstances taken into consideration.

## **SOLVING THE PROBLEMS**

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So what's the secret to growing your photography business despite the tough economy, and the challenges of working from home?

Any business, whether large or small, is mainly about solving day to day problems, which include getting more clients, increasing sales, lowering overheads, staff relationships, and maximizing the efficiency of work spaces—all should be focused on improving profitability. A micro business that is operated from home by a single person has the same issues to resolve. What you may need is a viable and long-term business model.

You need to develop business systems, which cost very little time, money and energy, together with sourcing help and guidance in integrating them into your business. In other words, a business model that puts money into your account regularly, year after year.

I have consulted with many photography businesses over many, many years, and have seen the effects of the pressure that it can involve. I have seen marriages break down, uncontrolled debt, and legal proceedings, all happen with bad business practices.

### *Identifying and resolving problems*

Swiftly identifying and resolving any problems within the business, whether they are client complaints or financial issues, is hugely important. A photographer's dream can quickly become a nightmare if the problem is not identified and immediate action taken to diffuse it.

The rewards of good business management are well worth the effort. Those who succeed enjoy freedom, lots of quality family time, and have good financial reward.

## Defining Your Brand

### IS YOUR PHOTOGRAPHY A HOBBY, A BUSINESS, OR A BRAND?

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*It is all about me, isn't it?*

No, it is not all about you. Yes, we know that you are this fantastic, attractive photographer, who takes unbelievable photographs. But remember who pays all of your bills. The client, right! Clients are selfish. It's all about them. They are not really influenced by the fact that you have won all those amazing photography awards, or that you are a member of a professional association.

They want you to show them what you can do for them, and if you do an exceptional job, they will consider handing you a fistful of money. So tell them what's in it for them, and what benefits you can enhance their life with. The client has to benefit, before you get to benefit. So think about your brand through their eyes, not yours. Put yourself into their shoes. And just remember, we often deal with female clients, so learn how to be sensitive, understanding and emotional—and accept the fact that “the customer [client] is (almost) always right”!

*It's all about branding*

Being a photographer you are a small business owner. Although your business is small, keep in mind that it is a BRAND, and you and others that may work for you, are a reflection of your brand. Your brand is not just a cleverly designed logo or website, but more a reflection of what you are as a person and what you stand for. Not only when you are in front of clients, but also when you in the company of anyone, whether friend, family or stranger.

You are your brand. How you treat others, how you dress, how you act, and your ethics, are all part of your business. How do you feel about the person that you see in the mirror? That is your brand that you are looking at. We are all being watched and judged on a daily basis. What do others say about you? What they think of you is your brand. What happened to the Tiger Woods Brand, when he was caught out abusing his brand? Sadly Tiger Woods may never be remembered for his incredible golf record, but may only be thought of for his indiscretions.

Here is an excerpt from the book *The Midas Touch* by Donald Trump and Robert Kiyosaki:

*Many entrepreneurs work hard building a business, but only a few build a brand. Building a business into a brand is essential to developing your Midas Touch. Whether you realize it or not, your brand can be many times more valuable than your business. If your business is not a brand, it is a commodity. A brand is power. It precedes you and works on your behalf. That's leverage, and in business, leverage is a big advantage. A business that isn't a brand is just “busy-ness”. It's a job for you, and a job for your employees. It keeps you busy, but at the end of the day, week, month or year, all you have to show for your efforts is work and, if you played your cards right, profits. Nothing wrong with that, but Midas Touch entrepreneurs want more. Great Brands are: Genuine ... Meaningful ... Different. Practicing what you preach is all about being genuine: living your words, walking your talk, and talking your walk. If you fake it on the outside, you probably are faking it on the inside. Anyone who thinks people don't pick up on phoniness is kidding themselves. If your customers don't pick up on it right away, they will eventually. As that old saying goes: “You can fool some of the people some of the time, but you can't fool all of the people all of the time”. In today's economy, people are very sensitive to brand promises, price and value. This means that people want to know what you care about and that you care about them. If you don't your competitor will. You see, a business is not about money. A business is about caring. If you do that—genuinely care, fulfill your brand promise with an outstanding experience, and operate 24/7 from everywhere—money will come pouring in.*

### *Creating exceptional value*

Exceptional value is created when your client perceives your product or service to be worth more to them than the price they actually pay. The key ingredient in creating this in your client's mind, is communicating to your client the benefits in relation to the value of your products and services, compared to your competitor. This can result in a high level of client satisfaction; that can, in turn, cause your client to become a 'raving fan', which is a great way to obtain referrals. The client who becomes a passionate advocate for you and your business is an enormous asset.

Some of the ways that you can create this desire within your client's mind include presenting your photography products in a unique and different way. For example I describe my canvas products to my clients thus: "the image is printed onto Italian canvas, and then it is hand finished and enhanced with an Impasto gel, that not only saturates the dyes in the canvas, but also gives a brush stroke texture, reminiscent of an oil painting. The canvas is also mounted onto a hardwood two inch stretcher frame, with a rolled edge under the canvas to prevent the frame cutting into the canvas".

Your photography sessions can also be enhanced by delivering great service and attention to detail, and creating a memorable experience for the client. You have to care about them. Treat them as the precious commodity that they are.

## The Practicalities

### *What equipment do I need?*

Your equipment will depend on your budget, but it is best to buy equipment that falls into the professionally recognized range. The photographic equipment that you will need will of course, include cameras, lenses, tripods, flash units, and if you are using a studio set up, you will need studio lights and stands, seamless paper and other backgrounds.

Don't be extravagant by buying expensive equipment that you do not use very often. Your equipment is an investment to create money. Purchase high quality equipment and always have plenty of back-up equipment. Any photographic equipment can break down and you must be able to simply go to your back-up equipment to complete any photographic session. Upgrade your equipment as often as you are financially able to. Remember that it is you that takes the photographs, not the camera.

### *Insure yourself against disaster*

Be sure to protect yourself, your business, and your equipment, with suitable insurance. Be prepared for the unexpected. Your equipment should be insured against loss, damage or theft. I have known of equipment being stolen from cars, parks and beach locations. I had a reflector stolen when I turned my back for a minute while I was photographing a portrait in the city.

Insurance is for your own benefit. You also need to set up a suitable health and disability insurance in the event that you cannot continue working in your business.

### *Public liability*

Public liability insurance is more important than equipment insurance. Public liability insurance, covering accidents that your clients may have, is a must. This kind of insurance will protect you if your client, for example, trips on a tripod and suffers any injury.

Imagine if you are photographing a baby, and the baby falls from the table that you have placed it on. The baby begins to scream and turn blue. The mother goes into panic mode as she tries to console her distraught baby. You call an ambulance as the baby's condition continuous to deteriorate. The ambulance takes the mother and baby to the hospital. Who is at fault? The mother for not watching the baby as you asked her to? The photographer for placing the baby in a precarious position? Can the mother sue you for neglect?

This is just one example of how a simple accident can turn into a major disaster, and end up with you possibly losing your home, if you do not have public liability insurance. The amount that you need nowadays is at least twenty million dollars of cover. In the current climate that we live in, of a much more litigious society, you have to make sure that your assets are covered.

If you intend to promote your business in shopping centres or at expos or hold exhibitions, the venue will require that you have a minimum of twenty million dollars public liability insurance.

## Developing Business Systems

### *Pricing*

In my experience in talking to, and consulting with, hundreds of portrait and wedding photographers, the area of pricing their photographs is the most difficult part of their business that they have to contend with. If your prices are too low, you not only attract the wrong type of clientele, but you also may not make any money. You can, in fact you may well, lose money. If the prices are too high, you may not get any clients at all. Both of these scenarios are of course not acceptable. So how do you determine your prices? To help us get to this, you should first ask yourself this simple question. How much *should* I charge?

I will answer this for you. As much as possible!

One of the first and most important things that you have to do in your business is to set your prices. Most photographers get their prices totally wrong, and have price lists that are too confusing, and far too detailed. Getting your pricing right will be crucial to your business success. Your prices for your imagery will determine what market you will attract, your brand, your competition, and the amount of money that you will earn. Because this is such a crucial part of your planning, make sure that you follow carefully the steps in this book.

To develop your price list, the first thing that you need to do, is start to think differently. You probably set up your price list by guessing at numbers, or worse than that, you may have obtained a copy of a competitors price list and then made your prices cheaper! This is the exact opposite of what you should be doing. A badly thought out price list will cost you money, and may even bring your business into debt. It will force you to work many hours without pay, and may even destroy your love of photography. Compiling a well thought out, and realistic price structure, will help to drive your passion, attract good clients, and help you achieve the financial success that you deserve.

Over the many years that I have worked on my business, getting the price list right was always high on my list of things to do. I have built a guide to building a solid portrait pricelist that you will constantly revisit over the years. But the price list that you are about to structure will be your default. It will be the foundation of your business. It has worked for many photographers from a variety of backgrounds and in many different locations. Everyone's pricing is different and it is up to you to determine what is right for your business.

### *Setting up a merchant account*

A merchant account is vital to the success of a business. Most people use their credit or debit cards for most of their transactions. If you do not give your clients this option they may decide not to buy. It also gives a professional appearance to your business, and studies show that consumers tend to invest more into an order, when they can use a credit card over using cash or a cheque.

There are several ways to get set up to take credit cards through a merchant account. Most people assume you need an expensive card reader and deal with lots of red tape to accept credit cards. That's not true. If you would like the convenience of a swipe machine, contact your own local bank and ask if they offer a merchant services membership. Some banks will give you the swipe machine for free when opening a business account. There are also several companies who offer "virtual terminals" where you can access a secured website and manually enter the credit card information. They give you immediate confirmation or declined status. Usually there is a monthly fee to use this service, but no extra equipment is needed.

With each transaction you process you can expect to pay a small per transaction fee. There is also something called a discount fee, which is the percentage of the sale you pay to process that charge. You can expect to pay 2–4% of your transactions plus a per transaction fee to any company.

Another option is to use a service like PayPal to take credit cards. This is by far the easiest method to get approved for and doesn't require any equipment at all.

## **YOUR BUSINESS CONTRACTS**

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### *Rules of engagement*

Within any business there are systems that should be followed by everyone, every time, from the initial enquiry right through to the delivery of the finished work. All of the components of these systems are essential to the end result. If any steps are missed then the end result will vary.

### *Prepare the client for the sale*

Be open and clear so that their expectations are defined. Add to this their natural emotional state, and the great photographs that you have taken can only lead to your objective of maximising the sale.

With this in mind, I have developed key letters which are integral to the sales process, and also keeping the clients informed of the 'rules of engagement'.

## **SOME KEY LETTERS**

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### *Appointment letter for a portrait photography session*

Hi Gabby,

Thank you for booking your photographic session for Saturday the 7th of January at 12 noon.

So that we can produce the best result for you, please feel free to bring along two or three changes of clothing for Harley. Hats can look quite cute too. For yourself, and Danny, long sleeves and dark colours are best.

As you may know, Emma Black Photography is one of Australia's leading photographic studios. Your portrait will be personally created by Emma Black, one of the country's most experienced and accomplished photographers.

Emma Black Photography specialises in beautiful wall portraiture and "one of a kind" art prints. We offer a range of print styles, finishes and sizes with a price range from fully framed and matted wall prints starting at \$695, to \$180 for a two print folio.

### **WHAT HAPPENS AFTER YOUR PHOTOGRAPHY SESSION**

We will organise a time to get together to view your images approximately a week after your session. This is the really rewarding part—you get to re-live the fun of your photography session and view some great images.

At this viewing and selection session, firstly you will see a slideshow of the images that have been taken. Then with the magic of technology, we will show you some different products, like collages, black and white images etc, to give you an idea of how your images can best be purchased. Of course, there is no obligation.

This is the time that you can make all of your purchasing decisions, and don't worry, we will go through all the relevant sizes, finishes and prices, to allow you to make your decisions stress free.

Our viewing sessions are done weekdays between 9.00am and 2.00pm.

Please allow about an hour to view your images and work out any order.

Our website is [www.emmablackphotography.com.au](http://www.emmablackphotography.com.au) and if you have any questions please don't hesitate to call on 9724 7890.

I am sure that you will enjoy the portrait-making experience and take pleasure from the resulting images for many years to come. Many of our clients tell us, years later, that their portrait created by Emma Black is their most cherished possession.

Please feel free to call Emma personally on 0418 509 228 if you have any other queries.

Kind Regards

Emma

**EMMA BLACK PHOTOGRAPHY:**

**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS – PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHY**

**DO I HAVE TO PLACE MY ORDER AT THE TIME OF THE PORTRAIT VIEWING?**

Yes this is the time we are able to advise you on getting the best from your photographs, so all of the decision makers in the family should be present.

**CAN I GET A CD OF THE IMAGES?**

Emma Black Photography specialize in wall décor and the production of fine photographic prints. We can supply files on a CD, and they are priced as a minimum of 4 files.

**WHAT ARE THE PRICES OF YOUR PHOTOGRAPHS?**

Our prices start at \$145 or \$180 for a two print folio, while our fully framed wall portraits start at \$695.

**HOW DO I KNOW WHAT SIZE PHOTOGRAPHS WOULD SUIT MY HOME BEST?**

Choose a size you feel comfortable with and if you feel it is the wrong size when you get it home we will replace it. This is our 'right size guarantee'.

**CAN I SEE THE PHOTOGRAPHS ONLINE TO SELECT FROM?**

We do prefer to show you all of our finishes, cropping, collages, and framed products, to make your decision making easier. Online viewing would also incur a fee.

*cont-p2*

**HOW LONG DO ORDERS TAKE TO COMPLETE?**

Usually orders are completed in one to three weeks.

**IS IT POSSIBLE TO LAYBY MY PURCHASE?**

Full payment is generally required on all orders but layby may be organised by arrangement for larger orders.

**DO YOU TAKE CREDIT CARDS?**

Yes we take all credit cards except Amex.

**CAN I ORDER PHOTOGRAPHS AT A LATER DATE?**

Of course you may order photographs at a time later than the viewing time but please note we keep the files **FOR ONLY 28 DAYS** after the photography session.

Your appointment to view the photographs is on:

at:

**PLEASE NOTE THAT IT IS IMPORTANT THAT DECISION MAKERS ARE AT THIS APPOINTMENT. PLEASE FEEL FREE TO CHANGE THE APPOINTMENT IF NECESSARY TO ENSURE THIS HAPPENS.**

Decisions on the purchase of any photographs will be made on this day.

**EMMA BLACK PHOTOGRAPHY:  
PORTRAIT AGREEMENT TERMS AND USAGE**

Your session includes the talent of your photographer and the time it takes to create your images. No finished prints are included with your session unless otherwise specified.

Emma Black Photography requests that photographs taken may be allowed into art exhibitions, displayed in our studio, photo competitions, website, display advertisements, exhibits, or any other use, as deemed, or any other purpose to promote the business as a photography studio.

**ACCEPTANCE**

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I have read this portrait agreement and agree to comply with all policies and information included.

I also agree that Emma Black Photography may use any images created, as set out above. I agree that any images can be used without any additional compensation.

Signed:

Date:

### *Correctly handling an email portrait enquiry*

Most photographers handle their email enquiries very badly. Here is an example of a simple request for portrait prices:

*Hi Emma ... I was just enquiring to see how much you would charge for photographs of my children?*

*Thank You. Rosemary Clements*

Most photographers at this point would simply send out a copy of their price list.

Wrong!

What you should be doing at this early stage of an enquiry, is to try to build a relationship, *before* your enquirer becomes your client. Don't forget that there are heaps of photographers, and that she may just be looking around, the same as you or I do, when we are out to buy something. You need to engage her, gather more information about the children, and also find out a little more about what is in her mind about the photographs that she wants to purchase. Yes, I am already assuming that she wants to buy some photographs.

So instead of simply sending out a confusing price list, let us reply as follows:

*Hi Rosemary,*

*Thank you for your portrait photography price enquiry. Just so that I can send the correct pricing, was this to be a family portrait or just of the children? In the studio or outdoors? What time frame? How old are the children by the way? I will be happy to forward full details once I have a little more info.*

*Thanks again for considering us.*

*Regards Emma*

This should elicit a further response:

*Hi Emma,*

*I did only want the children photographed. I have two children. One is two years old and the other is five. I wanted a few professional photographs before we returned to America. They would have to be done within six weeks. I think I would like them in the studio.*

*Regards Rosemary*

You can now respond with more specific information concerning her needs, as well as some detail of the process involved:

*Hi Rosemary,*

*For this month we have a Special of 50% off our normal sitting fee (normally \$185). Therefore we would take the photographs of the children for just \$92.50. After the photography session we would make a time for you to view your photographs. It is at this selection process that you would decide on size, finish and type of product. We have a large variety of products from matted and framed wall photographs starting at \$695 to a two print folio at \$180; we also have an exclusive Italian hand-finished canvas product. These are just a few of our products available from your images. We are able to show you all of our photography products on our gallery walls, at the image viewing appointment.*

*We are available for our photography sessions from Tuesday to Friday or we do have a limited number of Saturday mornings this month still available.*

*Would you have a phone number that I can call you on and chat to you about our money saving folio package?*

*Regards,*

*Emma*

### *Using the right words*

Using the right words when communicating with your prospective and existing clients is extremely important to the success of your business; this will give the client confidence in you and your business. We are all subconsciously persuaded by not only the words that we hear, but also the tone in which they are presented. There are a few key changes in a few words that you will frequently use in your photography business. The

following are the most incorrectly used words with their alternatives:

- Talk about your *clients*, not customers.
- You should have *photography sessions*, not sittings.
- You should *photograph* your subjects rather than shoot them.
- Call your photographs *products*, not pictures.
- Talk in terms of the client purchasing the *appropriate size* product, rather than big or small.

You may feel that the use of a few different words seems very simplistic, and unimportant, but let me assure you that it is crucial in extracting good sales from your clients. These words should be embedded into your 'rules of engagement'. Practice using these words until they come out of your mouth automatically. They really worked for me; using them will give you a lot more confidence, and you will also gain more respect from your clients.

## The World Of Wedding Photography

Everybody loves a wedding ... or so they say. Talk to a wedding photographer and you may get a different take on weddings. Every adjective that has ever been used, I think has been used when I hear fellow photographers talk about weddings; amazing, incredible, unbelievable, scary, stunning, crazy, gorgeous, stupid, are just a few that quickly come to mind.

As I have mentioned previously, my introduction to photographing a wedding came very early in my career. At just fifteen years old, my sister asked me to photograph her wedding. I had a reasonably good thirty five millimetre film camera, and I had a good idea of how to use it. So away I went on a journey that would see me photograph thousands of weddings, some of them in distant parts of the world.

My sister loved her photographs; although it did snow all day, that did not dampen what was a beautiful day. The snow certainly made it a great photography challenge for me, from preventing the camera from getting wet, to getting the exposures right.

When I opened my own studio, my income was to come from passport photographs, portraits and weddings. Weddings of course would bring in the most amount of money. I would take the photographs, supply the clients with a set of proofs, and they would choose the photographs that they wanted to purchase. It was a pretty simple system.

It worked well for many years, but as my studio grew I had to come up with a much better selling system to maximise the sales. The introduction into the photographer's marketplace of a new type of album that allowed the photographer to custom design the pages, gave me the opportunity that I was looking for. I was able to get the couple to come to the studio after their honeymoon, and with my newly developed design skills, the couple would very often take the opportunity to include in their album a lot more pages than they had originally paid for. Of course, the couple are always aware of this opportunity from the outset, and are not surprised or subjected to pressure sales. It is purely a matter of choice.

I taught my album design selling system to many photographers, who had amazing success in upselling their clients. One photographer in particular, back in those days, took the system to unbelievable heights by adding many thousands per album sale, in both Australia and America, for many years.

I have photographed weddings in England and America, and photographed a myriad of different nationalities and cultures. Two people come together and make a vow in public, to commit to each other. They seal it with a kiss, and then exchange rings as a constant reminder of their commitment. A wedding photographer's job is to capture these moments, and everything that surrounds them—in brief, to capture images which tell the story of this very important day in the couples lives.

A well photographed wedding album will be one of the few precious items that is kept and loved many years after the wedding day. As well as conveying the emotions, romance and fun of the day, the album may be passed down to future generations.

Clearly this is a huge responsibility for the photographer and must be taken seriously. As I have written previously, the professional photographer must have good equipment, good backup equipment and endeavour to cover every unforeseen contingency which may occur.

### *The initial consultation*

- Set the tone of the consultation—friendly, enthusiastic, casual and professional
- Start with a greeting and be positive.
- Use the couple's names regularly during the interview.
- Ask open-ended questions: Where is the reception? Where is the ceremony? Tell me about the cars. Tell me about your dress.

Take an interest in the responses.

- Make lots of eye contact.
- Clarify what the client wants with reference to the phone enquiry: “When we spoke on the phone you said you liked ...”
- Body language and presentation—  
Look interested. Keep a straight back, lean forward a little, nod your head, smile. Appearing confident is important as it relaxes the client and will ultimately make you feel more confident also.
- Relate your products features to what the client wants: “We specialize in ...”
- Present four sample albums to the couple. Illustrate the main differences in the albums. Ask clients to tell you what they like and dislike. Leave the couple alone for a short time so that they can talk to each other. Then ask what they thought. Which album did they prefer?
- Reinforce the benefits—  
Natural expressions  
Eternal photographs  
Tells a story of the wedding  
Captures the feel of the wedding
- Make an excuse to leave the couple alone to talk to each other. When you come back into the room ... ask them if they would like to book!

#### *Pricing your services*

Here is a suggested starting point at which you can customise for your wedding pricing. Note that it is kept simple and gives the couple a choice of everything that they may want. Yes, I do suggest that you offer a coverage that only includes digital files. Yes, I do recommend that you include a CD of high resolution files in all of the album coverages.

When I did a “test and measure” on including the high resolution files it did not diminish the album sale, and it did increase my wedding enquiries and booking rate.

Here is a sample of how you could summarise your services and pricing for wedding photography:

**EMMA BLACK PHOTOGRAPHY:  
WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHY PRODUCT SUMMARY**

**COVERAGE**

All albums include up to seven hours of photography time, and a high resolution DVD of files.

**DIGITAL FILES ONLY**

Your wedding story on a CD of images.

\$.....

**VERTICAL ALBUM**

Individually designed pages. Personalised metallic photograph mounted onto perspex forms the cover. The 26 sides can be black or white and feature double-page spreads giving the album maximum impact.

\$.....

**PANORAMIC ALBUM**

This popular and very stylish album has the flexibility to include a mixture of matted and digital pages. The pages can be black or white and reflect the quality of the photographs. The album cover is either a matt black leather or contemporary metal. The album also comes with 26 sides with the option to add more sides after the wedding.

\$.....

**SQUARE ART ALBUM**

For those who want the best. This 16" x 16" album is our top of the range and has a big 'wow' factor. Album includes 26 sides. Extra-large pages bring your wedding day memories to life, showing all the emotion and fun that you enjoyed on your perfect day. Both matted and digital layouts complement one another. The cover is in a soft matt black leather complete with a matching carry case. A CD of all the images is also included.

\$.....

Extra pages may be added to all of the albums at the time of the album designing session. The price will depend on the type of album that you have selected.

*Being transparent*

It is vitally important that your wedding clients are well informed every step of the way on what is going to happen in the process. They need to know how you are going to present their wedding images to them and the possibility of choosing more photographs than their initial chosen coverage.

It is pivotal for your wedding clients to be aware and informed to avoid any misunderstandings or disappointments after the wedding.

With all of the documentation provided here, this point has been reinforced several times.

*Wedding contract*

It is so important to have a well thought out contract for your wedding couples. Failure to have everything in writing could leave you open to misunderstandings, or worse still court action. Keep your contract simple and to the point.

**EMMA BLACK PHOTOGRAPHY:  
WEDDING AGREEMENT FORM**

Names: Lyn Radford and Jeff Knott wedding  
Date of wedding:

**TERMS AND CONDITIONS**

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We the undersigned hereby assign the photography of our wedding to Emma Black Photography.

We understand and agree that:

- (a) All care and diligence will be exercised in the performance of the above assignment and that the liability is limited to monies paid should mechanical failure, theft, accident, ill health or any other mishap occur which prevents the fulfillment of the agreement.
- (b) Should the nominated photographer, Emma, not be available due to unavoidable circumstances the studio will notify us and endeavor to supply another photographer. If an alternative acceptable photographer is not available all monies paid will be refunded in full.
- (c) A booking fee of \$..... is required to reserve the date, with the balance of the agreed coverage payable at least two weeks prior to the wedding.
- (d) Should a cancellation occur, the studio shall retain only the booking fee, but with any postponement shall honour all monies paid, toward the revised date.
- (e) The files may not leave the studio until the album has been completed.
- (f) A 10% surcharge will apply on any outstanding balance if the album isn't collected within three months after the album design session.
- (g) The studio reserves the right to use any photographs for advertising promotion or display purposes.
- (h) The album planning design session takes 2 to 3 hours and is normally done on a weekday morning. We understand that we may order extra sides for the album at this appointment. Other times may attract a surcharge.

---

We agree to purchase the follow products:

*Vertical Album:*

*Panoramic Album:*

*Square Art Album:*

*Extra Sides:*

*Bonus Early Bird Special—20"x16" Wall print:*

*DVD of high-resolution images included*

*We have read and agree to what is set out above.*

*Total Payable: \$*

*Deposit Paid: \$ Date:*

*Balance: \$ Due Date:*

**NAME (BRIDE):**

Signed:

Date:

**NAME (GROOM):**

Signed:

Date:

**EMMA BLACK PHOTOGRAPHY:**

Signed:

Date:

### *The image selection appointment*

At the final interview with the bride and groom a couple of weeks before the wedding, it is important to reinforce some of your 'terms of engagement'. This can be done with the form below. It is also at this time that the remaining balance of the coverage is paid. Emphasize to the couple that they should read through all of the frequently asked questions, so that they understand more about the album design session.

## **EMMA BLACK PHOTOGRAPHY:**

### **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS – WEDDING PHOTOGRAPHY**

#### **WHY CAN'T I TAKE THE FILES AWAY AND DECIDE WHICH PHOTOS I WANT?**

Our album designs can have an almost unlimited number of photographs in them, so it is better for us to pre-design the album and then you may change any photos that you do not want included.

#### **HOW MANY PAGES DO I GET IN MY ALBUM?**

You would have paid for a certain number of sides, but you may need lots more to tell the story of your special day. It is entirely up to you once you have seen the pre-planned design.

#### **WHAT IS THE AVERAGE NUMBER OF SIDES MOST COUPLES HAVE?**

The number of sides depends on many things. Some weddings are very short while others may go over many hours. The number of sides will therefore vary depending on the number of photographs taken, but a well-balanced album is usually around 40 sides.

*cont-p2*

#### **CAN WE ADD PAGES LATER?**

All of our albums are custom made so it is not possible to add extra pages later. The album finalised at the session will be your wedding day story.

#### **DO WE HAVE THE CHOICE OF PHOTOGRAPHS?**

Yes. The final decision of the photographs is up to you. There will be lots of great photos to choose from, but we will guide you, so that you will end up with your perfect album.

#### **ARE THE FILES RETOUCHEDED FOR FACIAL BLEMISHES ETC?**

Yes, we do some Photoshop work to enhance the images, usually under your direction. Extensive Photoshop work may attract extra cost.

#### **HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO COMPLETE THE ALBUM?**

The normal production time is 4–6 weeks depending on the album that you have selected.

#### **CAN I ORDER SOME PHOTOS FOR MY FAMILY?**

When you collect your album we will give you a price list and order form for family and friends orders.

#### **HOW LONG WILL THIS ALBUM PLANNING APPOINTMENT TAKE?**

The appointment usually takes 2–3 hours.

#### **WHEN DO WE HAVE TO PAY FOR ANY EXTRA PAGES THAT WE MAY ORDER?**

Payment is usually made in full at the time of order, but layby is available for larger orders. We take all credit cards except Amex.

#### **CAN I TAKE THE FILES AWAY TO SHOW OUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS?**

Yes you can. When you collect your album a disc will be included with all of the photographs on.

*Your appointment time to finalise your album*

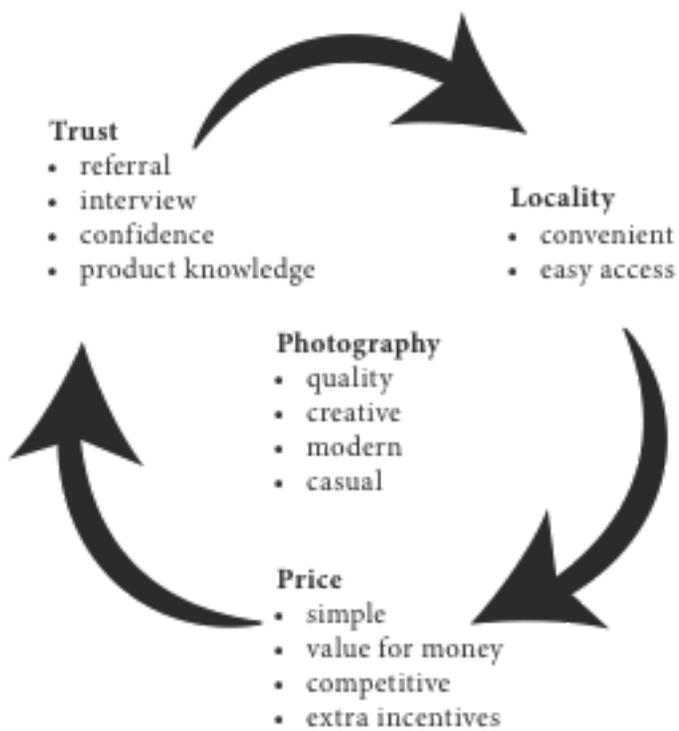
*is on:           at:*

*It is important for both of you to attend this session.*

*We are happy to re-schedule to accommodate this.*

*Why couples will book*

Consider the following reasons that a couple will choose a photographer to capture their special day. ALL ARE OF EQUAL SIGNIFICANCE.



## *You and Your Wedding Photography*

*Written by John Ploog*

*Before you arrive to photograph a wedding consider the importance of the day for the people you are about to photograph. Consider their feelings and emotions and mentally prepare yourself to be courteous, friendly and above all patient.*

*Before you enter, make sure you check your equipment, make sure everything is working and your lenses are clean. Check your flash and have your camera ready to go.*

*BE ON TIME. Not late, not early. Just on time.*

*Make sure that your car is clean and that you are properly dressed. YOU are the center of proceedings, you are paid to be professional, and everyone relies on you. Respect your customers by being punctual, professional, understanding and helpful.*

*LISTEN. Not only to what is said, but also to what is implied. Watch body language, expressions and looks. Try to please your bride and groom. Be calm and unobtrusive.*

*Do not accept alcoholic drinks while still photographing the wedding.*

*As you arrive at the bride's or groom's home smile and introduce yourself by saying something like: 'I am your photographer for the day. If at any time you would like me to take a special photograph, just ask me.' Establish good rapport with everyone at this stage, because you need to work with them all day.*

*CEREMONY. Establish before arriving at the ceremony any restrictions that may apply to the photography at the venue. Arrive before the bridal party and introduce yourself to the celebrant. Agree to any requests they may have. (You have no choice at this stage). After the service thank the celebrant for their co-operation, whether you got it or not!*

*During an outdoor ceremony, photography is usually easier, but still introduce and thank.*

*LOCATIONS. Make sure the bridal party, parents and others required for photographs at the park, know exactly where to go. Botanic Gardens? Front? Back? Side? North? Gate No? BE SPECIFIC. It is always good to give the car drivers a business card with your mobile phone number on it, so that they can get in touch with you in case of mishap. Photograph the groups with the parents first, so that they can go to the reception to receive their guests.*

*RECEPTION. Introduce yourself to the proprietor/manager and confirm the timing. Take the photographs required. Do not move anything without permission. If you would like candles lit, ask permission. Before leaving ask the bride, groom and parents if they require any other photographs, then thank the bridal party and parents for their help. After finishing thank the proprietor/manager. Be efficient.*

*IN CONCLUSION. Be compassionate, caring considerate and understanding. It is their first wedding (usually), and you have photographed many (usually). You know all the procedures that make up the wedding, and they do not. They are nervous and unsure, and may even be annoyed. Don't take it personally. They will also wonder how their photographs are going to look. Reassure them.*

*If you do all of the above, not only will you be a great photographer, you will make your job easier. It will be a pleasure as well as a gratifying job. You will leave the wedding satisfied and pleased that you have made a wedding very memorable.*

*You will be tired but very satisfied.*

### *Digital wedding photography*

The digital world has not only brought to the wedding photography market a new way of doing things for the competent professional photographer, but it has also brought a great deal more competition. Photography forums are filled with wedding photographers complaining about the competition they face from so called "backyarders" or "newbies", charging cheaper prices. This is a real concern for some photographers, however there will always be competition in wedding photography, as in any business.

We should always direct our drive and energy directly into our own businesses. Other photographic businesses will come and go, and it is your task to make sure that you compete favourably and have a long and prosperous business life.

In one case I set out to dominate my area by opening up a second studio opposite my main competitor. That was a great challenge I set myself. What fun! After two years he was gone. I was now the photographer everyone knew, and came to. I guess I had created the other photographers demise, or maybe he caused it himself by being too complacent.

### *Stop worrying about the industry*

It is not the wedding photography industry's fault if your business is declining. It is your fault, and your fault only. The industry doesn't owe you anything. The wedding clients are becoming more and more educated, and have a greater understanding of photography than ever before. They can in fact take good photographs themselves, even on their iPhones.

Don't confuse your clients by trying to educate them with technicalities like file formats, pixels, metadata, and full size sensors. It is a better approach to lift your business to a higher level, so that they cannot compare you to the cheaper wedding photographers. Lift your personal presentation, lift your photography, lift your branding, get more education on how to run a successful business, set your goals and focus on your business, not the photographers down the road. If you do this you will have a higher perceived value for your prospective clients.

### *What brides want has changed*

Another element that has changed in the wedding photography world is that brides now have so much more choice of how they can have their images on their wedding day captured, and viewed. Facebook, computer, television, iPhone and iPad, are a few of the ways that a bride can show her images to family and friends. The bride therefore does not feel compelled to purchase a wedding album or even any prints. This alone is the reason for the steady decline in the wedding photography market. This factor is often overlooked by photographers who have been photographing weddings for many years.

### *Competition forces you to keep moving forward*

Competition allows you to be in control, and to continually change everything about your business. This includes your photography, your prices, your systems, and your advertising and promotion programs. A business should be a long term commitment. It will evolve and change, but only if you make it. Lets face it, we don't have any control over the wedding photography industry, nor can we prohibit any photographers charging the prices that they want to charge. We are after all in a world of free enterprise. But we can control our own businesses. The key is to set out to be the leader, and force everyone else to follow you. This is not as hard as you think, once you get your mind set to do it.

### *Employing contractors*

From time to time in your small business you may need to employ people to assist you with specific tasks such as production, retouching, or as a photographer. It is my opinion this should be done, wherever possible, by engaging them as sub-contractors, thereby placing the onus of things such as workcover, superannuation, and annual and sick leave back on them. If you have access to a business adviser or an accountant it is worthwhile to seek specific advice, as the rules for engaging sub-contractors change from time to time and all parties must be clear and well informed.

When engaging a sub-contractor you must have a formal agreement with them, so that all parties are aware of their obligations and conditions. Below is a sample of a sub-contractor agreement form which can be adapted to varying roles within a photography business:

#### **SAMPLE SUB-CONTRACTOR FORM**

---

**EMMA BLACK PHOTOGRAPHY:  
CONDITIONS OF ENGAGEMENT AS A SUB-CONTRACTOR**

The key conditions of your engagement as a sub-contractor for Emma Black Photography are as follows:

**PAYMENT**

To photograph weddings for Emma Black Photography as agreed in a professional and responsible manner, for the fees as set out below:

Starter package	\$.....
Panoramic Album Coverage	\$.....
Panoramic Album Coverage	\$.....
Signature Album Coverage	\$.....

- *Extra travel time is subject to negotiation*
- *The rate for assisting on a wedding is \$100.00*
- *The hourly rate for all other in-studio work such as a final details interview is \$18 per hour*
- *All amounts and rates quoted include GST*
- *Payment will be made weekly on receipt of a Tax Invoice with the appropriate ABN number*

**CONFIDENTIALITY**

In the course of your engagement with Emma Black Photography you may have access to confidential information, which is the property of Emma Black Photography. During the period of your engagement as a sub-contractor, and at all times even following the termination of your contract, you may not use or disclose any information to any person other than for the purpose of your contractual responsibilities.

**COPYRIGHT**

Copyright of any photographs taken for Emma Black Photography shall remain the property of Emma Black Photography and may not be used for any other purpose without written authority.

**LIABILITY**

The sub-contractor is responsible for any failure to provide all of the contracted work, whether it be due to any mechanical fault, theft, accident, mishap, loss, or incompetence on their part, and may be held liable for any financial losses to Emma Black Photography

**WORKCOVER**

For the purposes of Workcover, you are NOT deemed to be an employee of Emma Black Photography, and you will NOT be covered for the purposes of Workcover.

**PUBLIC LIABILITY INSURANCE**

It is the responsibility of the sub-contractor to have at least \$20,000,000 Public Liability Insurance.

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**ACCEPTANCE**

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I have read and understand the terms and conditions as set out above.

I agree to these conditions and terms.

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**NAME:**

Signed:

Date:

**EMMA BLACK PHOTOGRAPHY:**

Signed:

Date:

## Promotion and Advertising

### *Starting Out*

Most photographers that I come into contact with began their photography life by taking photographs of their family or friends. A little bit like myself really. Photographing bees on flowers and butterfly wings was my obsession. I loved that first box camera that I had. I would process the films myself, loading the developing tank while kneeling before my bed, anxiously trying to make sure that no light crept between the sheets and the blankets. My sister reminds me of how I photographed my first wedding when I was only 14 years old. She remembered it well as it was her wedding. The photographs were great. She loved them.

She did not pay for them.

### *Marketing*

Most photographers begin their photography business, in this way or similar. You take some photographs, people like them, and then you think: “Well I should get money for my photographs.” Oh, if it were that easy! Enter promotion and marketing! Without them you will never create a money making machine. All that you will create is a bigger and bigger debt. Like it or not, you need to become a marketeer.

You should be always trying to grow your business, looking for ways to generate new clients. Any ways that we can think of we should try. Simply test and measure our well thought out marketing strategies. We can use email, phone calls, direct mail, third party promotion, or social media.

The marketing of your photography requires your full attention, and most of your time. I understand that you may not like the thought of marketing as much as you like your photography—but if you want to grow and prosper in your photography business, you are going to have to put a lot more time and effort into your marketing than your photography.

Why? Because it’s marketing that creates the fuel for your business. Marketing creates subjects for you to photograph. Those subjects will pay your bills. You must learn to constantly approach people who can help drive your need to find new clients. You must put at least one third of your time and effort into marketing skills. You must learn how to get good, qualified clients for your business right now. But always remember that marketing is all about “test and measure”. There are no guarantees in achieving success in marketing, and you must monitor and record the effectiveness of each marketing project. This way you will quickly learn how to market more effectively.

### *Your studio’s marketing strategies*

#### **PRODUCT POSITIONING:**

superior quality

superior value

superior service

#### **SUPERIOR VALUE:**

more benefits than competitors thus justifying higher prices

our product is unique (the only supplier of product)

branded photography

#### **SUPERIOR SERVICE:**

quick turnaround

cared for

individually tailored photography

client satisfaction guarantee

personal

**IMAGE POSITIONING:**

expensive

enhances the experience

'experience the best'

**EXAMPLE TARGET MARKET:**

people who seek the best out of life and enjoy it

they are well travelled

they are warm fuzzies

they value photography

**CLIENT SERVICE:**

do that little bit extra

anticipate client's needs

have pride in your business

treat everyone with respect and dignity

serve with enthusiasm

make the first and last 30 seconds count

friendly, enthusiastic and professional

**absolute belief in your business and its products**

enjoy the experience!

**IS YOUR WEBSITE DOING ITS JOB?**

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*Why most websites suck*

It is critical that you create a powerful and simple online presence as part of your promotion and marketing—in other words, your website. The problem that I see with most photographer's websites, is that there is a major tendency for photographers to overthink their website design, get stuck on the technology, and create a huge monster of content, links, and distractions. They get little or no response from clients, after all the endless hours that they have spent, building the complex beast.

*The basic essentials for a great photography website*

Here are the keys that you should be focused on:

Get your website professionally designed, as the client will trust you more if the design looks professional.

Display your full location and phone number on the home page, making sure that it includes all of your details, so that they are clearly visible.

Show photographs or videos of previous recent happy clients.

Put a call to action on every page. You have to get the client to act, by enticing them to call or email, while they are on the website. This could be for a reduced photography fee or to receive valuable information on how they can best display and care for photographs in the home.

Place your phone number prominently on every page, so that it is easy for clients to contact you.

A frequently asked questions page is a must have. This is where you can put together your business "terms of engagement" in a simplified way.

Make sure that all of the photographs on your website are great images. Do not put inferior quality images on

your website pages.

Personalise pages by including photographs of you and your staff. Put your face to your business, as people want to deal with people. Don't put photographs on your website of your children.

Make sure that you add new and interesting blog content every week. Content should include articles, photos and video.

You should feature lots of testimonials of people who have experienced and enjoyed doing business with you.

Feature your professional awards and association memberships. This gives you and your business credibility and trust.

Put your social media sites (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube) on each of your website pages. Today's clients spend many hours on Facebook. Make it easy for them to connect with you.

Capture your website visitors with an email lead automatic capture form. On the website there must also be clear details of how to contact you by phone or email.

Ask yourself these questions:

*Is my site exciting and interesting?*

*Is it different than other photographers?*

*Is there a "call to action"?*

*Is it easy to navigate?*

*Do my images have "wow" factor?*

*Does my site come up quickly?*

*Does it get my message across in five seconds?*

When you look at your website, try and look at it from the consumer's eyes. Put yourself in their shoes.

Alternatively ask someone else what they think. Does it satisfy all the criteria set out above? What is it that you think would appeal to a prospective client? Is it the content, or the ease of use?

Look at your site, without your ego being present. What really appeals to you about your site, apart from your name and images on it? Does it tick all of the boxes? When assessing your site you have to look beyond the fact that you have created it with your web designer, and think like someone seeing it for the first time.

Why are people going to your site? If you don't know, and don't have a website traffic statistics program, maybe you should consider implementing one. If you don't know why people visit your site and what they are looking at, you don't know what to improve. It is this easy. Go to Google Analytics, then create a Google account. Add your website to your profile and then you cut and paste a section of code into the bottom of your website pages. Make it easy to send your clients to share your website. "Add" and "Share" links on your site make it easier for more people to see what you have to offer. An easy way to share your website is by using 'Add This'. This is also free. Social networking can be a good way of directing traffic to your site via Facebook and Twitter.

They can also be a great timewasters. Consider them as a marketing tool instead of catching up with your friend next door, or telling everyone what you had for breakfast! Think about it. You have one chance when people are looking at your website to turn them into clients. Simple equation:

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## **CLIENTS equals MONEY**

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Are you in the photography business, or are you in the business of photography?

### *The importance of record keeping*

Record keeping is a vital part of running a successful business. It helps you understand what's working well, and enables you to make informed business decisions.

My business mantra has always been "test and measure". Don't guess!

Don't guess your average sales figures. Keep accurate sales records.

Don't guess how your business is progressing. Keep accurate enquiry records.

There is no guesswork about results, and no fanciful financial exaggerations. The old saying about statistics, with a slight variation applies well to professional photographers—there are lies, damn lies, and photographers.

The information that can be recorded includes:

*Which promotions are working effectively*

*The average sale*

*Which products sell the best*

*How many sittings were done in a week/month/year*

*Which sales person made the sale*

These records can be kept on a computer spreadsheet or in written form in a simple book.

### *Word of mouth*

If you expect your business to survive on word of mouth to get new clients, you will be very disappointed. You should never depend on word of mouth—it will not bring you in enough income over the long term. It certainly is true that in the short term it may bring in some clients. It is also a strong form of advertising to have someone tell friends about you and how fantastic your photography is. The problem is that you will run out of friends to get business from. If you are looking to sustain your business for many years, you will have to come up with a longer term approach to achieving your success.

### *Building and using a database*

I have found in consulting with hundreds of photographers, that there is one area that they do not put enough significance and work into, and that is collecting, and actively using, a database of their past and current clients. Every new client should be recorded. Data should include names, address, children's ages and birthdates, and also include any significant dates like wedding anniversaries etc. You can use the data regularly to inform clients of special offers, the introduction of new techniques or products, and generally keep in touch. You want them to choose you as their family photographer, and to be your business friend. In a very short time your database will grow to such an extent that you may only need to service the clients that you have on a regular basis.

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## **Do Not Underestimate The Power Of Your Database**

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### *Marketing focus*

Spending your marketing dollars wisely means that you have to target your market for your portrait photography business. The first point that you should keep in mind is that your target market is females, in the 25–50 year old bracket. This is the most important aspect of advertising. Sounds obvious yes, but I have seen so many ads that were targeted toward men. As a basic guideline, men do not invest in portrait photography, but women certainly do. You should also target the women that value what you do. Women who appreciate and respect you as a professional. These women are sensitive and emotional. They cry at the movies, and have family values. Women invest in photography for emotional reasons, and not logical reasons.

Once you have defined your target market, you can then start asking yourself what are the best ways to attract them to your business. Don't waste your time going after everyone. Stay focused on your target market and direct your focus on reaching them. Defining your target market, as clearly as possible, will greatly improve the effectiveness of your promotional and marketing efforts for your photography business, in all areas. You should always, in your advertising, try to focus on your target, and drive your efforts toward that select group.

Most photographers just haphazardly market to everybody and are then surprised that they do not get the quality of client that they were looking for. Do not believe for one moment that you have to photograph everybody, and then hope that they will be financially good clients. This is a mistake. An example of a target market could be the women with newborn babies, from a particular private hospital, where the mothers would obviously have the disposable dollars necessary to purchase photographs. You need clients who value what you do. If they value professional photography, they will happily pay whatever it costs. They have to be excited by the emotional time that they are going through, and realize the importance of recording with photographs the priceless moments.

### *Setting a budget*

Most of us as professional photographers and small business owners, do not have an enormous budget to spend on creating new clients. It is therefore vital that we spend our marketing dollar wisely, and monitor carefully its effectiveness. Set yourself a specific budget—at least have some idea how much money you intend to spend to make more money. Advertising should be an investment and return many times the number of dollars that you have invested. How much you should invest totally depends on how much you have put aside to grow your business. Of course each business is different, but eight percent of your gross income would be a guide.

### *Show your photography*

Displaying your photography around your local community with an exhibition is a good way to get your name known around the area, and also gives an added opportunity to run a competition for people who have seen your work, names you can add to your database. The cost of doing these exhibitions, is minimal. The first thing that you have to do is to come up with a title for the exhibition. For example, if you wanted to promote new born babies the title of the exhibition could be: *Great things come in very small packages.*

It is possible to get an exhibition into banks, art galleries, malls, movie theatres, restaurants, hair salons, office buildings, doctors' waiting rooms, and many other locations. These places can benefit by having refreshing and interesting images displayed for the interest of their clients or the general public.

How do you approach the businesses to allow you to do this? Send the letter below to as many businesses that you can find in your area, and wait for a reply:

Proposal to Bank.

### **WHO IS EMMA BLACK PHOTOGRAPHY?**

We are an upmarket photography portrait studio that was established at 24 Smith Street, right here in Rainford over eight years ago. The studio has earned a high reputation for quality and service and believes in exceeding our clients expectations. For us, a happy client is a repeat client. Emma Black Photography has implemented many similar promotions over many years with great success.

Please check out our website:

[www.emmablackphotography.com.au](http://www.emmablackphotography.com.au)

### **HOW DOES IT WORK?**

The bank would host an in-store exhibition and competition over a period of one month titled: Family – the foundation of our community.

### **WHAT IS IN IT FOR THE CLIENT?**

Your clients would have an opportunity to enter the competition and win a beautiful Italian, handfinished canvas family photograph.

### **WHAT IS IN IT FOR EMMA BLACK PHOTOGRAPHY?**

Emma Black Photography specialises in high quality family photography, and a bank exhibition and competition, as outlined, would expose us to more potential clients within the Rainford community.

### **WHAT IS IN IT FOR THE BANK?**

The exhibition and competition would encourage bank clients into an awareness of family values and community involvement. It would also enhance the Rainford Bank as

a Community Bank with a face. This type of promotion also attracts the local newspapers as a newsworthy story enabling the bank to gain community publicity.

### **ARE THERE ANY COSTS INVOLVED?**

There would be no costs involved for the bank. Emma Black Photography would cover all costs.

### **SOCIAL MEDIA: WILL IT HELP YOU?**

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Should you join the revolution that your clients already have joined? Is social media marketing the new way to promote your business, or is it quite simply a waste of your time?

What makes up social media marketing? Well there is Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and YouTube which have a combined audience exceeding a billion affluent consumers. This rapid and permanent shift in internet usage is slowly but surely relegating other forms of advertising such as print ads and Google Adwords to lesser significance. Facebook has a community of over 800 million regular users; Twitter has 200 million daily users; LinkedIn 150 million business users; while a BILLION short videos are watched on YouTube daily. But wait, there's more. What about Triberr, Tweepi, Klout, Kred, Peerindex, Social Oomph, Quora, Empire Avenue, Scoop.it, etc.

Theoretically you have a third of the world's population, almost two billion people, who are your potential marketplace. There are 9.2 million Australians who participate in one or more of the social media outlets. Should your business be using this amazing internet phenomenon, in your marketing mix?

**Google+** is not just a social network. It is Google's answer to making search results current and relevant. Because the "traditional" way to rank websites has been replaced by social media activities there needed to be a way to create AUTHORITY—that way is Google+. 62 million regular users have joined in the first six months.

**LinkedIn** was originally developed for traditional job placement firms to have a platform to attract and place job applicants. It has grown to nearly 300 million users, it is listed on the Stock Market in the US at \$10 billion valuation and has become the PROFESSIONAL Facebook for business. Use this amazing platform to build your reputation across the globe and access the very best people, resources and ideas on a regular basis.

## Posing

### *What is posing?*

“Posing implies artistic or aesthetic intention of the position of the human body” (from *The Human Position Analyzed*).

Our purpose as a professional in photography, is to bring together the elements of Posing, Light and of course Expression in such a way that we produce a photograph that our client is happy to pay for.

### *First things first*

Whether you photograph babies or children on a regular basis, you will need a working with children card. You can apply for this at any post office. The Working with Children (WWC) Check is now fully implemented. If you are required under the *Working with Children Act 2005* (the Act) to pass the WWC Check, you must now apply before you undertake child-related work or you may be subject to penalties under the Act.

## **PHOTOGRAPHING BABIES**

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Photographing new born babies can be fairly straightforward if you follow a few simple guidelines. The first thing to remember is that the baby will generally do what it wants to do, and when it wants to do it. Be prepared at all times, because babies do what they want to do usually without prior warning. Make sure that everything that you do is done in a safe and gentle way. Do not put a newborn baby in an unsafe or uncomfortable position, and always keep mum or dad holding the baby, or keep at least one of them very close to the baby. Try to relax and make the session fun. Make sure that mum and dad feel comfortable and relaxed. Let them know that their baby is the cutest baby that you have ever seen.

### *Keep it simple*

Whether you are a fan of an Anne Geddes style or want to do much simpler photography, you should let the photographic session evolve around what the baby does at each particular moment.

More than likely, the photographs that you will be attempting to take, will include cute baby fingers, baby feet and any other detail shots that show off the uniqueness of the baby. I would usually leave the nappy on for all of the photographs, and would only take it off at the mother’s request. Be sure that the studio or wherever you are photographing is at a warm comfortable temperature.

### *Eyes open or closed*

If you take sleeping babies, make sure that the baby has a nice full belly. Newborn babies are comfortable in a naturally “curly” shape as they were in the womb, so position them in that way.

### *Using props*

As mentioned above, the baby along with mum and dad in the photographs usually give you enough variety in the photography session to make a good sale at the viewing. Props though, when appropriately used, can create a unique style for yourself as a photographer. It can also help give an idea of the perspective and size of the baby. You may like to add that touch of pink or blue to reflect the baby’s gender. A beanbag is the ideal prop to position the baby on.

### *Lighting*

My own studio is a natural light studio. This type of lighting is not only soft, which is ideal for babies, but it also eliminates the need for the use of direct studio flash lighting. This means that I do not have to worry about flashing bright lights into the baby’s eyes. I use a silvered reflector on a stand, to “kick in” a touch of light into

the shadows.

### *Handling the baby*

This is a personal choice, but for me, I do not handle the babies at all. I request that the parents do all of the placement and posing, together with any clothing changes needed.

## **PHOTOGRAPHING CHILDREN**

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### *Kids don't pose they play*

You can make photographing children a fairly easy task if you follow a few guidelines. Children are often inattentive, sometimes nervous, and may be hyperactive, or just plain naughty. The best way to get great expressions is to distract them. To capture them, you must remember that children love to play. Therefore you should place the emphasis on playing with them, and be ready to capture the many fleeting expressions. These expressions will come and go very quickly, and the art of the professional photographer is to be able to capture them without the child even realizing that they are being photographed. It can be helpful to have a small selection of toys and other props to get their attention. One of my most successful ways of totally distracting a child is to have a bubble machine and blow bubbles. You should use items that are interesting and you may have to use a few different things if you want to keep them occupied for more than a few seconds. If you need the child looking at you during the pose, position your camera appropriately then use a small noise to get their attention. Using noises like a squeaky toy, or playing peek-a-boo behind the camera is often a good way to get lots of different expressions. Consult with the parents ahead of time to find out whether the child has any special needs.

### *Working with older children*

Working with older children is very different, as there is usually less anxiety, and they are usually easier to manage. It is easier to talk to older children and you can often capture them in their natural poses. Try playing a “pretend” game with them, or talk to them about their favourite football team, music, or television shows.

## **PHOTOGRAPHING FAMILIES**

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### *Do co-ordinate clothing*

Before you meet with your family you should guide them into a wardrobe choice. Ultimately it is up to them and their family's style to choose what they wear, but simply reminding them to possibly overlap in a color scheme, avoid extreme colors, prints and logos on their clothing can make a big difference. This will give you an easier time post-production, and you will have both options in color and black and white. As I said, it's their picture and their choice, but a casual recommendation from a professional is usually appreciated.

### *Try to be funny to get some genuine smiles*

A few cheesy jokes can work surprisingly well to break the tension. You could tell everyone to pretend that they are happy and that they like one another, or ask everyone to strike their best glamour pose. Other ways to get a smile is to get them doing something they don't normally do. Have them try jumping, or whatever comes to mind. You can use any one-liner that you may have previously used successfully, or a different and fun pose.

Any photography session generally evolves and gets better as people relax and get used to being in front of the camera. The whole point of a professional portrait is to make your subjects look good, and that's exactly what the photographer is trying to do. A portrait should flatter the person—make them look better than they actually are. If the subject stood there in bad light, and you simply took a photo head-on, it would result in a very non-flattering image. They certainly would not want to purchase a large framed print for the wall. Why should the family portrait be any different? You should be able to place your subject and then direct them to emphasise their best features.

There are many variables when photographing groups, whether shot outdoors, with available light, indoors,

or in a studio with studio lighting. Your posing depends on the size of the group and the environment. However, some basic points may be of help in some situations.

#### *Turn the subject's shoulders*

Turning one shoulder closer to the camera than the other will create a more interesting image, and it will also make your subject appear slightly slimmer, because the head is no longer square to the body, and the body is angled to the camera. The focus is also put onto the subject's face.

#### *Photograph with triangles in mind*

When you're posing a group for a family portrait, try to arrange the heads of your subjects so that they form different sized triangles. Geometric shapes like triangles can create photos that not only have visual appeal, but also allow you to easily set up a group, and therefore allow you more time to concentrate on getting the right expressions. Grouping your family into a good composition made up of triangles, also brings the group closer together, which creates less empty "dead" space between each person's body.

If you have more than three family members, you can create sub-groups of triangles, until you have everyone properly arranged.

There are so many ways to photograph families these days. Every photographer has their own style, there is no right or wrong way. But there are a few basic rules that you may find helpful. A good family photograph need not necessarily be a photograph of everyone sitting down dressed in their best outfit. Nowadays a family photograph is all about capturing the family relationships. The photograph has to have a certain sense of togetherness. The group should look good compositionally.

Many photographers are nervous about letting people wait to have their picture taken and start taking them before a good group has been composed. This is where you as the photographer should not feel rushed, but explain that you will spend some time arranging and rearranging everyone until the group looks pleasing to the eye. With young children there is often no time to arrange anything, one just has to grab the moment, so this rule does not always work out. Still, think in terms of the composition first, followed by expression—unless you see in front of you the ideal shot where no rules apply.

#### *Watch where you place hands*

You must be very careful when you are setting up hands. Hands can create all sorts of problems when you are setting up family portraits. Most people can't decide what to do with them. Should they fold them? put them in their pockets? place them on their lap? Lots of hands in a family photograph can add a lot of visual clutter in the image, and this effect is magnified by each additional family member that you have in the photograph. The easy solution is hide their hands from view. Men can fold their arms, while women can place them in their laps, and pockets are often a great solution for older kids.

### *A few tips*

Here are a few do's and don't's.

Don't let the children look bigger than their parents. If mum is bigger than dad, hide the mum slightly. Look at your group and decide how you can best flatter them.

Remember, when they view the photographs everybody will be looking at themselves. For this reason taking several shots of the same composition before moving on to another grouping is a good idea.

These days most people own good digital cameras, and even iPhones which take pretty good images, so the professional has to be able to produce images which are superior at every level—in lighting, posing, composition and expression.

### *Tilting heads together*

The mere act of tilting heads ensures that every person's body is not straight up and down. It also creates an immediate feeling of intimacy. When people keep their heads straight up and down or tilted away from the person next to them, it looks like they're not part of the group. The minute those heads get just a fraction of an inch closer, your family portrait comes together, and doesn't look like a group of strangers all standing next to each other.

One final way that you can make your family portraits more engaging and interesting is to have some people sit and others stand. This can be done whether indoors or outdoors.

Keeping in mind the triangle approach, find natural locations in your environment where some people can sit down; it doesn't matter if it's a park bench or a large rock.

### *How do you get that casual feel in a group that has been composed?*

During a shoot, I find myself talking the whole time. I especially talk to the younger members of the group, which usually engages the parents as well. This seems to relax the whole group and is a bit of a diversion for the more self-conscious ones.

The session will usually come to a natural end. You will know when everyone has had enough. You will have captured a variety of images. The beauty of starting with the arranged group at the beginning, is that you can be sure of a good shot, if the casual ones don't quite work out.

## Defining Your Workflow

### *Capturing the images*

There are many ways to capture your images. You can shoot Raw or Jpeg files or both. Raw will give you the best quality, but you have to weigh up the extra memory storage that you will need, and the slower computer time that is required to process the images. For me there is no right or wrong. Capture the images the way that you feel comfortable with. Each has its own advantages and disadvantages. Personally I shoot Jpeg files, and find the quality very acceptable for the type of portrait work that I do; the fact that most of the products that I sell are collages of multiple size photographs, with the largest being around eleven by fourteen inches, is relevant.

### *Saving the images*

After the portrait photography shoot, you should straightaway download the files onto your computer and then back them up, either on a disk or an external hard drive. Name the folder with client name, day, month and year. This then becomes an easy way to find files, not only in the short term, but many years down the track.

### *Editing and retouching*

Showing the client too many images will confuse them. You should edit the images to around a maximum of forty of the best. Of course it does depend on the number of people in the photograph, but by only showing the best images, without any similar duplications, will make it easier for the client to make their selections. If you have correctly exposed the images, you should only need to do a little “cleaning up” of the files before the sales session. Many photographers spend hours retouching their files before the client has placed their order. The key is to get it right in the camera. Your goal should be to spend no more than sixty minutes in preparing the images for your sales session.

## Maximising the Sale

### THE ART OF SELLING

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My personal definition of selling is finding out what the client wants, and then being able to give it to them at a price that they are willing to pay. Notice that the emphasis is in finding out what the client wants. Not in what you want to sell them. At a price that they are willing to pay means that they are happy with the sales transaction and don't feel pressured or left with the feeling of having paid too much. This can lead to "buyer's remorse" and will certainly not get you any referral business from that client.

But, of course, you don't want to be like that, do you? I hope not, for if you strive to be that type of person you will have a very short business life. One of your goals should be to develop into a better photography sales person.

Most photographers hate the thought of being a salesperson. Their perception is that sales people are pushy, unethical, untrustworthy, and are just about the money. We know that this doesn't necessarily apply to most sales people; it is nonetheless the public perception, which is usually based on a bad personal experience.

We have all heard about finding a need in the client, and then filling that need. Our target market is people who want professional photography. That is their need. We can fulfil that by taking good photographs. Then we have to go one step further and present to them a selection of ways in which they can get those photographs. Giving choice, and then letting the client make the decision from the choices given, is an easy way of selling photographs.

Strangely, I ask the client to first choose the product that they want, and then together we choose the appropriate images for that product. It works!

Product choices nowadays include matted and framed photographs, framed collages, metallic paper, art paper, canvas mounted on a stretcher frame, acrylics, and photographs mounted onto metal. Definition of these products is crucial in the formation of compiling your price list, and its ability to link to the products that you wish to sell.

#### *A safe soft selling system*

Making your skills and your business appear valuable is essential, because not only will you start to believe it's true, others will too.

If you value yourself highly, it is more than likely others will value you highly too. Hard sell can sometimes appear to be desperation. If all the right things are in place, the sales will generally fall into place. Selling is always a numbers game, a business of averages. Giving people the opportunity to buy in a non-pressured environment will give you the best result—in other words giving the client a product that they want, at a price they are willing to pay. Is your work worthy of the price that you are charging for it?

#### *My retail sales system*

I suppose that we have all had those bad experiences with sales people who were pushy and used all those clever salesperson questions that lead you to say yes, when you meant no! I didn't want to be like that. I had one of those experiences once, and from that day I vowed that I would never be that type of sales person with the selling of my photography.

I came up with a fantastic sales system that I call my retail sales system. No pressure on the client, and no pressure on me. A system that anyone can implement in their photography business, to maximize the sales, and leave the client feeling happy with their purchase.

You need to be successful at selling your photography, but at the same time you do not want to put your clients under pressure, or make them feel uncomfortable in any way about purchasing your images. You

must always build trust with your client. This can be done by being open with your pricing, and having knowledge of your product. It is amazing how many photographers that I have spoken to, do not sound convincing when I ask them their prices or to describe their various photography products. Asking questions like "How do you feel about that?" will also help the client to mentally evaluate what they really like.

You must be patient when you are selling your images. Do not rush the sales process, as it is a process that should be allowed to come to its own conclusion. Allowing one hour for the sales presentation, is usually the amount of time that should give you the desired result.

### Delivering Your Portraits to Your Clients

Delivering your finished portraits in an elegant and professional manner will enhance the client's experience with you and usually exceed their expectations.

Your portraits should be perceived as highly customized and valued works of art. Not only should your packaging include the same high standard as your portraits, but it should remain consistent with the image of your studio. When clients receive their finished portraits, they should be presented in a special way. These are priceless memories. The wrapping and packaging need not be expensive. For example we have a roll of cellophane that we wrap the framed photographs in, and then tie a ribbon, with the studio name embossed on it, around the whole thing. We also use lots of coloured tissue paper to add to our presentation. This extra packaging is an added expense, but it is one that my clients appreciate, and is often something that they don't expect. The client satisfaction far exceeds the packaging cost.

Your studio packaging should match your studio look and feel, and reflect your brand. Suppliers of packaging can be found on the internet. Look for suppliers who focus on business to business sales, rather than consumers.

Remember that it is not only the larger chain stores that must brand their company. Small photography business owners such as yourself, can take advantage of branding to create loyalty and brand recognition, not only among clients but also future prospects. The important thing to remember is to be consistent in all of your marketing efforts. Everything should work cohesively—packaging, letterhead, business cards, web site, and even the décor of your studio.

#### *Handling complaints*

No matter how hard you try to run your business professionally, and attempt to keep all of your clients happy, it is almost inevitable that you will have the occasional client complaint. Your challenge is to not only handle the complaint properly, but to turn the client around, into becoming a fan of yours.

I remember many years ago, I had a family complain about various aspects of the photographs that they had received. I invited them into the studio so that I could work through their complaints. Although it was an extended family shoot, I was still surprised when eight members of the family came to the appointment to try and resolve the issues.

The first thing I did was to sit them all down, and make them comfortable. I had a sheet of paper in front of me, and asked them if they would tell me their grievances. I listed each one, and then made sure that the five points that they had made was the total sum of their complaints; this avoided further irrelevant issues being raised later. I then went through each point and made suggestions of how the issue could be fixed. There were a couple of things that I thought were not fixable and I told them why.

Having a structure and meeting their complaints head on enabled me to obtain an equitable solution fairly quickly. I apologized to them, and they all left happy that their concerns had been addressed.

Do not treat any complaint as though it is trivial; to the client this is upsetting and gives out a negative vibe toward you and your business. If you ask the client what it is that you have to do to make them happy, they will tell you, and you should try and negotiate their demands. You will get complaints. You will get clients who upset you. You will get clients who put no value on your profession. Just remember to run your business to satisfy the majority, not the minority. We unfortunately live in a world that is regulated primarily by the minority. You are quite within your rights to tell a bad client to go away and not come back. I have done this on a couple of occasions and without regret. It is your business and you should run it within your rules of engagement. Not the client's. The client is only *nearly always* right.

#### *Giving value for money*

How do you balance your prices with the quality of your photography?

I received the following email from a photographer who attended one of my Making Money in Portrait Photography seminars. At the seminar I had spoken about a new photographer that I was consulting with. She had photographed an extended family, and had received an order in excess of \$10,000. The order had since increased to over \$20,000 in total, from various members of the family.

I have edited the whole email so that it contains just the main points:

*Firstly I think the venue was good—central location, easy parking, helpful staff, clean bathrooms and suitable size, etc, for the needs of the seminar. The cafe was also very efficient and service was good during the lunch break. The content of the course was as advertised and I gained some valuable understanding about changing your mindset when pricing the products, learning ‘the system’, keeping it simple, and some marketing/advertising opportunities. I also picked up some ideas for what type of products I could offer, software that would assist my business and a new understanding of the potential of canvas wall art.*

*I guess the main reason for sending this email is in relation to the last topic covered—The \$10,000 sale. I really liked seeing a ‘real life’ example of how to change a business using video—very effective.*

*I do however feel I need to share my disappointment (that’s probably not strong enough) in the unethical way in which you encouraged a clearly inexperienced and unprofessional photographer to portray herself as a professional and charge unrealistic prices—basically ripping off any unlikely customer. It is incumbent upon every professional photographer to strive to maintain the integrity of our profession ... to provide advice on how to run a business it would have been more appropriate to encourage the photographer to firstly develop her skills through education and training—then embark on a business.*

*She has been thrown in the deep end (albeit with your assistance) and at some stage will come crashing down. I was embarrassed for her to be shown to other photographers as an example during the seminar.*

*I could go on but I think you get the point. I left the seminar yesterday feeling very deflated and would strongly encourage you not to use this as an example in the future.*

My reply was as follows:

*Thanks for you feedback ... our motto at my company has always been: “don’t tell us how good we are; tell us how we can be better.” I have emphasized to the photographer concerned that she will probably come crashing down at some point, but she is hungry for success, and has promised to further her photography expertise on her journey. The clients by the way bought the photographs, the photographer did not sell them. She has a very happy client. Isn’t that what we set out to do in business?*

The question is: Who determines the quality, and who determines the correct price to reflect that quality? I know in my early days of earning a living with photography, I kept thinking that when my photography became better I was justified in putting up my prices. After a while I realized that I would never be able to balance price and quality, so I put my prices up and let the client decide what I should charge. If they bought they were happy, and in raising my prices I was motivated to constantly improve my studio presentation, photographic quality and business skills. What came first, the chicken or the egg? For your business to flourish, you have to build a solid base of regular clients that come to you for their photography needs, many times over many years. You do in fact have to become their family photographer. You become the only photographer that they think of when a change in their life occurs that they want to record—like a new baby, or a family photograph when they feel that the family is complete.

Some photographers succeed, while others fail.

To achieve a big goal, you have to have big dreams and become a bigger person. The most important thing that you can do to guide yourself onto a path to greater success is to change your thinking. Give away the ideas that just simply don’t work, and are costing you money. Start doing the things that will create the success that you deserve.

You may believe that the better your photography is, then the bigger your sales will be. This thinking is a big mistake, but almost every photographer that I have met who is starting out, thinks this way.

You will always strive to make your product the best it can be. Naturally you want to be proud of what you do.

I see a lot of really good photographers who are not creating the financial wealth that they think they deserve. Their work is fantastic, but they are not making any money.

You may think that you will have all the business that you need by opening a shop front. This is another very common incorrect belief. As I have mentioned earlier, a retail premises does not hold any advantage to the consumer, and may even turn out to be a negative to you if the rent is increased, or becomes difficult to pay.

Do not think that keeping your prices a little lower than the competition will help you create more business. This is a mistake that some photographers make. Don't try and sell your work based only on price. You will end up giving it away, or worse than that, it may be costing you money. The trick is to charge more for your work than your competitors, and learn how to sell it properly. This way you can spend more time making sure that your work is up to a high standard, and you will make more profit with each client. Your clients will also respect you more.

Also, how you present your images to your clients is the single most important decision of your career. Present them correctly—in person, by projection, or on a large monitor—and prosper! Do not ever let your clients take files home or post your images online. After you have photographed someone, your responsibility is to present the images to the client at an emotional level, and face to face.

The most successful photographers that I have met, those who have gained great success and prospered, all have believed and acted on the fact that the way to growth and prosperity is to take a single step at a time, and have a fixed goal in mind. They constantly make changes and improvements in every part of their photography business, throughout their business and personal life, to get them to the place where they want to be. Some photographers simply complain about how bad business is yet keep on doing the same thing over and over again hoping for a different result.

## Putting It All Together

Your photography business needs to have what it takes to succeed in today's highly competitive market place. Today's clients are very savvy and want more from their relationship with you than just a low price.

Clients are used to trying new things, and having the ability to use new technology and products at the drop of a hat. While there has to be a formula to what you do, and a strong foundation to your business, you have to be willing to re-think what you are doing on a regular basis.

It means keeping up with the trends in marketing; for a photographer it means trying new angles or getting a new camera lens, or new background. Look at your business with an open mind and ask yourself what you can do differently that will reach your clients where they are, and where they will be in a year from now. What is the biggest change you have made in your business so far?

The price of your photographs is not the only reason you are attracting, or not attracting, clients. Nowadays the majority of clients are looking for businesses that deliver unique products coupled with good value. They are looking at your photography to be a little different, and they are looking for a far higher level of satisfaction than just the intrinsic value of the item itself. If you can learn to tap into this level of emotional satisfaction, your business should thrive.

You may have asked your clients if they were satisfied with their experience and purchase from your business, but the true measure is whether they do repeat business with you, and whether they give strong recommendations to their friends. On average most of your clients will be happy, but only some will purchase from you again. Clients need to be emotionally satisfied for this to happen. Emotionally satisfied clients will also recommend your services to others.

### *Busy, busy, busy*

Many photographers have told me how busy they are and then tell me how little money they are earning. The question is, what are they busy doing? We all have a tendency to keep ourselves occupied, like busy bees gathering honey, but are we using that time doing important functions, or are we just passing time? Most of the time we are doing the latter. We all choose to spend the most time on doing the jobs we like best, and it seems in general that, for many photographers this includes many hours retouching and enhancing images that the client may never buy. Spending an appropriate amount of time working on the business, particularly in marketing and promotion, is vitally important. Prioritizing your workload can often mean doing the thing you like least, first.

### *How to create exceptional value*

Exceptional value is created when your client perceives your photography service to be worth more than the price they paid.

There are two things that can create exceptional value for the client: how well you communicate the unique properties and value of your services relative to their perception of others in the marketplace; and, your key strength, building deep, trust-based relationships.

You should always try to deliver a lot more than the client expects. Wearing a Rolex watch, or driving a Rolls Royce car, is all about how you feel. Any watch can give you the time, just as any car can get you from one point to another. What impresses us though is the prestige. A Rolex suggests more than your need to tell the time. It says that you appreciate the finer things of life. It shows that you have earned enough success to purchase such things, and it means you value craftsmanship and quality.

### *Always be ethical*

People will always pay more to use the services and products of a business that they perceive to be ethical. People feel better about themselves when they believe they are dealing with other people who give the

impression that they care about doing the right thing. It is also good business sense to treat your clients with respect.

### *You need to practice*

There was one thing that I implemented throughout my photography business, and that I find is just not done by the new breed of portrait photographer—the one thing that they should do on a regular basis to propel their whole business to a new level.

That discipline is practice.

Practice your photography. I would borrow kids from anywhere, and simply take lots of different photographs, with many different backgrounds or locations. This enabled me to photograph the way that I wanted to, improve my technique, and even create my own style.

Practice your selling system. Get friends to pretend to be clients and go fully through a selling system with them. Learn to answer their objections in a confident and professional way. It is not fair to practice on your client, whether it be taking photographs or your selling presentation appointment.

### *Changing your mindset*

The mind is like a parachute ... It works better when it is fully open.

Your mindset is the only thing that is holding you back from doing amazing things. Never discount your worth, your value, or what you are capable of achieving. You can make changes to your mindset. Doing it may not be easy, but it is a great challenge to begin. Without challenging yourself, you cannot hope for any changes to happen. Empower yourself, and get your head in the right space.

### *Keeping up with change*

Change is inevitable. You must, in business, learn to evolve, to constantly take a forward movement. When I began my business all those years ago, most photographers did everything in a similar way, and were successful by doing it. There was very little choice, and so clients were comfortable in having the same style of photographs taken as everyone else. It is such a different world now. A world that gives so many choices in just about everything.

Photography especially gives consumers so much choice. They can access high quality cameras and produce good portrait images themselves. To achieve maximum success you must be able to push your limits and change with the times, and sometimes you have to be creative and think a little ahead of the time.

### *Change or face the consequences*

A lot of people wait until change is forced upon them. If you can force yourself to change, you become the master of your destiny. The captain of the ship of life. Change direction often. Always be looking to lead rather than being lead. Be a leader, not a follower.

Most market leaders that we can think of have changed, with either an evolving product base or an evolving sales and marketing approach.

You need to have the ability to adapt with the times by adjusting your systems, prices and style, and adapting to the ever-changing market forces and influences.

This has been the main factor that has enabled me to sustain a successful photography business for over forty years.

### *What is holding you back?*

So what is holding you back? You were born to do great things. You were born to succeed. To set and to reach goals. You were born to do things that people said you could never do. The power is inside of you. What is holding you back?

Here is a list of reasons not to—

- *I am not ready*

- *I am afraid that I will fail*
- *I don't think that I can*
- *I do not have the money*
- *I don't know how*
- *My partner discourages me*
- *The kids*
- *I am not willing to pay the price*
- *Don't want to get out of my comfort zone*

The funny thing is that the supposed insurmountable obstacles that we see preventing us from achieving great things are not really big at all, when we set some goals and begin the journey.

Write your goals down, and then visualise them, focus on them, sleep with them, embrace them, change them, love them, share them, hate them, but never, never, ever leave them.

Once the journey has begun, the direction has been set; the important thing is to start. As the saying goes: "A thousand mile journey begins with the first step."

## **GOAL MAKING**

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### *Does goal setting work?*

From my own experience, YES. It was at the age of 15 that I set my first goal. It was: "To be a successful photographer and to travel the world".

It was a big call as I had never travelled more than 50 kilometres from my home town. I wrote it down. It would not leave my head. Just seven years later I was chief photographer for P&O lines traveling the world on a luxury passenger liner with a staff of three photographers. I was just 23 years old. I had a cabin to myself, a cabin boy to clean my cabin and to do my washing, and I was getting paid a wage and a commission of sales. Hawaii, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Cape Town, Sydney, Melbourne, Fremantle, Hong Kong, Kobe, Nagasaki, Tokyo, Yokohama, Panama Canal, Nice, Vancouver, Gibraltar, Athens, Acapulco, Lisbon and Malaga were a few of the places that I traveled to as a photographer.

Then I set a new goal: "To have a photography studio in Melbourne." I wrote it down. Six months later Gregory's Photography was born.

### *Do not underestimate the power of goalsetting*

From my early successes of reaching my goals, I created a GOAL book constantly listing new goals. Some photographers are doing amazing things. They travel around the world teaching, they produce amazing images, they are making lots of money. Why not you? I challenge you to succeed. Failure is not an option when you commit to a written goal.

Take the journey. Don't forget that expectation is usually greater than realisation. The journey is the success part. The journey is exciting, challenging and rewarding. Walk the walk. Too many talk the talk.

### *Find a mentor*

Having someone believe in you, and believe in your goals, can shorten your journey.

I had a mentor who inspired and motivated me on a daily basis. Your mentor can guide you, and help you with your decision making. But only you can drive your dreams!

### *So what is holding you back?*

It may seem too easy now that you know how. But that's just another excuse not to start!

Read this out loud:

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**If it is to be, then it is up to me**

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Now read it again and again and again.

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**GOAL MAKING PROMISE**

I \_\_\_\_\_ set the goals below. I promise to work hard toward reaching my goals.

Goal One:

I will achieve this by \_\_\_\_\_

Goal Two:

I will achieve this by \_\_\_\_\_

Goal Three:

I will achieve this by \_\_\_\_\_

Goal Four:

I will achieve this by \_\_\_\_\_

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**I understand that if it is to be, then it is up to me**

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### *You are complaining to the wrong person*

Have you ever noticed that people almost always complain to the wrong people—to people who can't do anything about their complaint?

They go to work and complain about their spouse; then they come home and complain to their spouse about the people at work. Why? Because it's easier, it's less risky.

It takes courage to ask for a behavioural change; it also takes courage to change your own behaviour.

Learn to replace complaining with positive action that will achieve your desired outcomes. That is what successful people do. That is what works. As the old adage says: "don't just sit there (and complain) do something". And remember, it's up to you to make the change, to do something different. The world doesn't owe you anything. You have to create it.

So often in the past I would hide behind someone else's imperfections rather than looking at my own. I'm a huge believer that everyone has vast potential for positive growth in their lives. But the tragedy is that for millions, that potential lies untapped for a lifetime. Realising that you are the one responsible for making whatever changes you want in your life is, to my mind, one of the essential steps toward unlocking that potential.

Even if the problems that you are facing are someone else's fault, there is still no alternative to taking personal responsibility for resolving them. After all, when your car blows a tyre on the road you don't walk back down the road to blame the nail that did it. You get out the spare and change the wheel. Not a bad analogy for life in general.

### *Taking responsibility*

We need to take responsibility for our business shortcomings as well as our successes, even though some things are out of our control, such as a failing economy, changing trends, and personal circumstance. Once we have a positive attitude and put into practice some positive actions, change will follow.

### *Achieving a good work and home life balance*

Everyone has phases in their working life where they have to work hard to achieve their goals. It is possible to enjoy a balanced family and social life while still maintaining a busy working life, by setting priorities, and allocating time to the important tasks first. It is not easy to be disciplined, especially if you work alone or in a very small business of your own.

Nowadays, due to economic pressures, there are more and more photographers operating their business from home. This creates even more pressure in getting a good balance between successfully carrying out all the many tasks associated with the business, and having a separate family life. This problem is amplified when children become part of the mix.

Some of the problems that photographers have are that the kids treat your studio as a play area and you have to have a big clean up before each shoot! Then there is editing at night after the kids go to bed. You never stop working when work is at home. This is where the discipline comes in. Determine your working hours, say 9.30am until 5.00pm as if you were going to a normal employer. Make suitable arrangements for your children during your working time and when you "clock off" you should close the door to your work space and mentally go home. If you need to go back to work after the kids are in bed and you still have the energy, then allocate those hours as needed, but again make it a conscious decision to "go back to work".

### *Family comes first—it's all about planning*

It's easy to become lost in your business. When you look back and ask yourself if it was all worth it, you want to be able to say yes. I decided to make my family the important part of my business, and that was my priority. Everyone says kids grow up so fast, and once they become teenagers time flies even more quickly. We, as parents should do our best to enjoy the precious family moments. But the question is how do we do this. In my case I needed to plan ahead. I allocated time in the diary well ahead for holidays with the family and planned toward it so that my workload was under control beforehand. As a wedding and portrait photographer, I had very few weekends off to spend with the family, so I also made a point of finishing work early one day a week to

pick the children up from school and to spend that time with them.

Achieving a balance is not easy, but with a bit of planning it can be achieved—or at the very least improved!

*Action, action, action*

An old Chinese proverb says that a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. You must put thought into action. Step by step, little by little, inch by inch. Action will cause you to head in the direction that you want. Do not fear the unknown. Do not fear failure. Do not be afraid of meeting new people. Keep acting on your thoughts. Thoughts alone will not drive you to your destination. Let action be your fuel.

*The Guy In The Glass*

*Author Peter Dale Wimbrow Sr.*

*“When you get what you want in your struggle for self  
And the world makes you king for a day  
Just go to the mirror and look at yourself  
And see what that man has to say*

*For it isn't your father or mother or wife  
Whose judgment upon you must pass  
The fellow whose verdict counts most in your life  
Is the one staring back from the glass*

*Some people may think you're a straight shooting chum  
And call you a wonderful guy  
But the man in the glass says you're only a bum  
If you can't look him straight in the eye*

*He's the fellow to please, never mind the rest  
For he's with you clear up to the end  
And you'll pass your most dangerous, difficult test  
If the man in the glass is your friend*

*You may fool the whole world down the pathway of life  
And get pats on your back as you pass  
But your final reward will be heartache and tears  
If you've cheated the man in the glass.”*

## Success Stories

Through my long and unfinished journey of operating a photography studio and photography consulting business ([www.aswpp.com.au](http://www.aswpp.com.au)), I have been a part of many success stories.

I hope that somewhere, sometime, you will be inspired and something will stir inside of you. A little inspiration that will drive you to progress your photography business. A catalyst causing you to act. I sincerely hope that this book will be the spark that lights your fire!

These are a few of the many success stories of the photographers I have mentored and consulted with.

## CASE STUDY ONE

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### ***Working from home***

Sally is married with two gorgeous four and six year old daughters. She was a school teacher for thirteen years, but always had a love of photography. She and her family live in a regional centre in Victoria with a population of around 300,000.

When her husband was made redundant they decided, after many lengthy discussions, that Sally would start a photography business. Their plan was to run the business from home, and then maybe later move to a shopfront. Sally was to operate all aspects of the business, while her husband was to look after the children. They had a small amount of savings that would sustain them for a while, and if things didn't work out as planned, Sally could go back to teaching. Their plan went well, and after two years they were making enough money to support the family.

### ***Business breakdown***

Then they had a problem. Although business was fairly good, they became increasingly nervous about the future. Although Sally was working from home she was spending less time with her children, and her relationship with her stay at home husband was becoming increasingly strained. Her youngest child also began to have behavioural issues, due to Sally not spending enough time with her.

### ***The solution***

It was at this point that Sally called me asking for my help. I have consulted with many photographers who have encountered similar problems. Sally's intense focus on the business meant that she was placing her family secondary in her priorities. This of course was, in turn, putting pressure on her husband, as he had to spend more and more time with the children.

The first thing that I did was to ask Sally and her husband to sit down with a twelve month planner. I then asked them to select dates for family holidays, and other events that would be dedicated family time. This could be as simple as a walk in the park or a family barbecue or picnic in a park. I encouraged them to let their children participate in this family time exercise, so that they could make some suggestions of what they would like to do.

Now that they had set the family time, any business time would have to be planned around this. So now family time had priority.

### ***Solving business issues***

My next step was to go through all of the business elements that Sally had put into place with her business model. She had done quite a good job of this, but did not know how to lift the business to the next level. Together we looked at the types of products that she was offering to her clients, the pricing, the way that she did her selling, and the way that she photographed. We then reviewed her advertising and promotion strategies.

I then implemented changes in all of these areas. I introduced a new product which was unique to her photography business and separated her from others. I raised the prices of the rest of her products, and trained her in my unique photography selling system.

I gave her new ways of attracting clients, with different types of promotions and together we set some realistic financial and family goals. I also helped Sally to re-brand the business, so that it would attract a better type of clientele.

The introduction of my Pop Up Studio ([www.popupstudio.com.au](http://www.popupstudio.com.au)) solved the problem of not having enough room in the house to set up a studio.

We communicated weekly by Skype and in a very short time Sally and her family were back on track.

One year later the business continues to grow and Sally now employs three part time employees to help with the workload. Her portrait sittings are consistent each week, and her weddings have increased by thirty percent.

The family has had a long holiday in Fiji, and their new work and life balance plan is working well. They are financially strong and managing to save money each week, and I am continuing to help and guide them.

## **CASE STUDY TWO**

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### ***A single mum***

Jane is a single mum with a fourteen year old daughter. She lives in a rented house in a small regional city in Victoria with a population of 29,000. The main industry in the area is farming.

Jane was a photographer working for a studio, when her partner of three years decided to end the relationship. The only skill that she knew was photography, so she decided to try and support herself and her daughter by taking photographs. She began photographing kindergartens and child care centres, as well a few portraits and a few weddings. She ran the business from her home.

### ***Lack of money***

Jane was able to sustain an income for a number of years, but not enough to create any savings. She lived a financially controlled lifestyle, and never went on any holidays. Things changed dramatically for Jane when digital cameras came onto the market. Now almost anyone could produce quality images and get them printed at ridiculously cheap prices. Jane's income declined dramatically. She had no idea how to advertise or promote her photography, to lift herself out of her financial burden.

### ***The consultation***

Jane called me and told me of her desperate plight. I drove the three hours to her home and started the process of finding a solution to help Jane to get more clients and create better sales. I looked at her photography, and saw that this could be improved. She was photographing all of her clients at outside locations.

The digital world had caught up to her, as mums and dads were taking perfectly acceptable photographs in an outdoor environment with their digital cameras—Jane's problem was that there was not enough difference between how she was photographing, and how they were photographing. I suggested firstly that she change her photography style and create a defined brand. I set up some simple studio lighting in a spare bedroom, and complimented that with a couple of modern backgrounds. After I had given her instruction on how to get the best from the studio set up, we sat down and looked at the other areas of her business.

## **TESTIMONIALS**

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### ***Linda's story***

*"I am so excited! I love photography and two years ago I started a business from home. I just did "shoot and burn", offering a CD of images for \$175. After a little mindset change and going through a lot of learning curves,*

*and after making some hard decisions, I am now charging closer to my real worth, and I am regularly selling nearly \$1,000 per sale. I have also had quite a few sales even higher than that.*

*What it took me so long to learn, was that people will pay a lot more than what you think you are worth.*

*I used to photograph a lot of sessions a week, and I thought that I was making good money. But the time and effort involved was just not worth it.*

*I was just about to give my photography passion away, and go back to my previous job as an administration officer for the local council, when a close friend who was also a photographer, suggested I contact Bernie at the Australian School of Wedding Photography and see if he could help me.*

*I didn't have much hope that anyone could help me, as I am no good at selling, so I could not see any way out of my situation—I only knew Shoot and Burn. I would show my customers their images on my computer and then give them the CD, and they would leave.*

*I organized to have a free Skype session with Bernie. He asked me lots of questions, and then suggested that he could help me in the key areas that I was lacking.*

*One was that I needed to stop Shoot and Burn, and start selling wall portraits. Then to design a structured price list, and then to adopt a simple selling system.*

*The structured price list was the most important thing. Once I had that, all I would have to do would be to show them what I have for sale, and sit back to let them make their own decisions. Simple really. But it worked!*

*Having an effective photography pricing strategy, combined with a simple selection of products to sell, resulted in less work and a lot more money.*

*By the way, I understand if you're charging less than \$35 each for your Gift Prints (8x10 and smaller). Those were the prices that I had been charging. You are probably cheating yourself, because I know from my own experience that the customer is willing to pay heaps more than you think.*

*If you love what you do, sometimes you forget about the money. You take photographs because you love it. It could be the only thing that you have found that you are really good at. I just got so tired of working so hard and having no money in the bank.*

*I have spent the time, money, energy, and then even more of my time, to take better photographs, so why was I giving it away?*

*Yes it was scary at first trying to lift my self worth and lift those prices up. But when I did, my customers respected me more, and raved about their photographs.*

*My advice would be to get rid of that nervous and devalued mentality, if you have it, and get help to develop a photography pricing plan and selling structure that will take you to developing a strong home business.*

*Be strong—do it for yourself and your family!"*

*Sara Taylor Photography*

*"Working through not only one, but two consulting programs with Bernie has taken my business far and beyond what I thought ever possible!*

*Not only has he a world of experience in the actual craft of photography but his focus on the business of photography and getting the fundamental of business practice spot on is exceptional and totally inspiring.*

*When I contacted Bernie he swiftly took a snapshot of my business as it was operating, suggesting some quick fixes that could be implemented straight away to assist with efficiency of running the business on a day to day basis.*

*Over the next three months we worked together on implementing a number of marketing programs, restructuring my products and prices, implementing a sales system along with growing the business with additional part time employees. The result was an array of structured business systems which could be employed across a variety of clients and situations, along with a more than a 75% increase in my average portrait sale. The business structures allowed me to spend less time working in the business and more time working on the business, and having more time with my family.*

*One of the best things about working with Bernie is that he is a straight shooter—no nonsense, just effective ways to improve and enhance your business of photography and your photography itself. As he has been running his own successful business from the time I was born(!) he has experienced all there is to experience and is willing to share his knowledge to assist others to take their businesses above and beyond. He is always easy to contact and reliable which when working business to business is essential.*

*Consulting with Bernie has changed not only my business life, but my family life. I am now making really good money in my business, and am looking forward to the two week, five star family holiday coming up soon.*

*I could not have achieved such freedom, or such financial reward, without Bernie's guidance.*

*I have also been awarded two silver and one gold award in the Australian Professional Photography Awards, as well as winning the Micro Business of the Year Award in my local community—testament to the fact that Bernie really knows his stuff, from the photography side to the business side”.*

Sara

[www.sarataylorphotography.com.au](http://www.sarataylorphotography.com.au)

*“I wanted to say a huge thank you for some help you gave me about five years ago. I came to one of your workshops and spoke to you afterwards about entering the digital realm of photography and what camera to buy etc. I had shot film for years, and was very much self taught, busy with a photography business at a different level. But you guided me towards my first digital camera and were very helpful in some further knowledge of how to take my business to whole new level.*

*I went down the west coast of the USA and many, many other amazing things have happened in my business. I thank you for taking the time in your very busy day all those years ago and the emails we shared back then also that set me on the path that I lead today. My business has gone from strength to strength and earlier this year I was voted in the top 10 wedding photographers by Capture magazine—a great honour. I have wanted to speak to you in person for a long time. I am sorry that I missed you at the end of the talk today, but I understand that you were probably very busy. It is the first time I have seen you since the seminar all those years ago.*

*So thank you very much Bernie”.*

*Love and light, Liz*

*“Have I thanked you enough for changing the direction my business is going? I will be resigning from my disability work at the end of the year. I have been helping out disabled adults for almost 20 years and my pay has only increased from \$17 an hour to \$22 per hour. Can you believe that!*

*Today I made another \$2,000 portrait sale. Never in my wildest dreams did I think I would be making portrait sales like this.*

*I am treating my family to a trip to Hong Kong in September.”*

Zaharoula Harris

*“If there is one person who can help you grow your business, trust me it's Bernie! He challenged me, showed me how to shoot to sell more images and expanded my way of thinking; so much so that I now have one of Melbourne's most successful wedding studios that shoots over 200 weddings a year, has fabulous and consistent album upgrades and actually makes a profit! You won't walk out of the workshop the same person—Thanks Bernie”.*

Shireen Hammond

[www.fovphoto.com.au](http://www.fovphoto.com.au)

*“Your seminars helped me out dearly and even though I still have a lot to work on, my business has grown since July so much more than I ever expected. I have just done a rough figure of my last year's numbers and it appears that my business grew about 70% in income even though I dropped about 20% in bookings. I dropped the charity*

*work that I used to do. I have to say I love that! Less sittings but more money!*

*You taught me how to value my work and how to sell it to customers that find that value in it. I have also launched my small home based studio. My sittings have increased from two a month to six per week and an average sale of \$1,300. I am not sure how that sits in normal circumstances but I am over the moon with my new figures! I have you to thank for giving me a slice of your experience to feed myself off! I have lots more confidence too! Thank you!"*

*Adriana Harrison*

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## **Every Accomplishment Starts With The Decision To Try**

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Need help to grow your photography business?

We can help...

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[www.aswpp.com.au](http://www.aswpp.com.au)

[www.berniegriffiths.com](http://www.berniegriffiths.com)