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Make the Career You Want

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Maximize the Drama

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Harmony

NOVEMBER 2022

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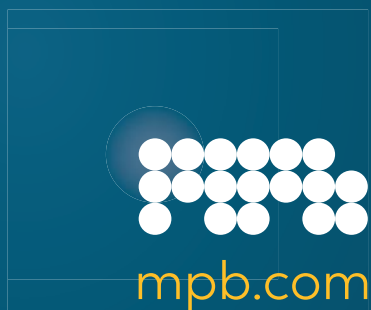


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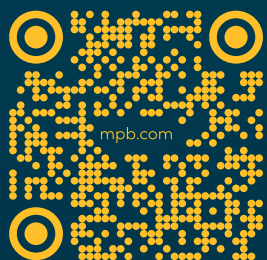
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Professional Photographer, official journal of Professional Photographers of America Inc., is the oldest exclusively professional photographic publication in the Western Hemisphere (founded 1907 by Charles Abel, Hon.M.Photog.), incorporating *Abel's Photographic Weekly*, *St. Louis & Canadian Photographer*, *The Commercial Photographer*, *The National Photographer*, and *Professional Photographer Storytellers*.

Opinions expressed by *Professional Photographer* or any of its authors do not necessarily reflect positions of Professional Photographers of America Inc. Acceptance of advertising does not carry with it endorsement by the publisher.

Professional Photographer (ISSN 1528-5286) is published monthly by PPA Publications and Events Inc., 229 Peachtree Street, NE, Ste. 2300, Atlanta, GA 30303-1608. Periodicals postage paid at Atlanta, Ga., and additional mailing offices.

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POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Professional Photographer*, 229 Peachtree Street, NE., Suite 2300, Atlanta, GA 30303-1608.

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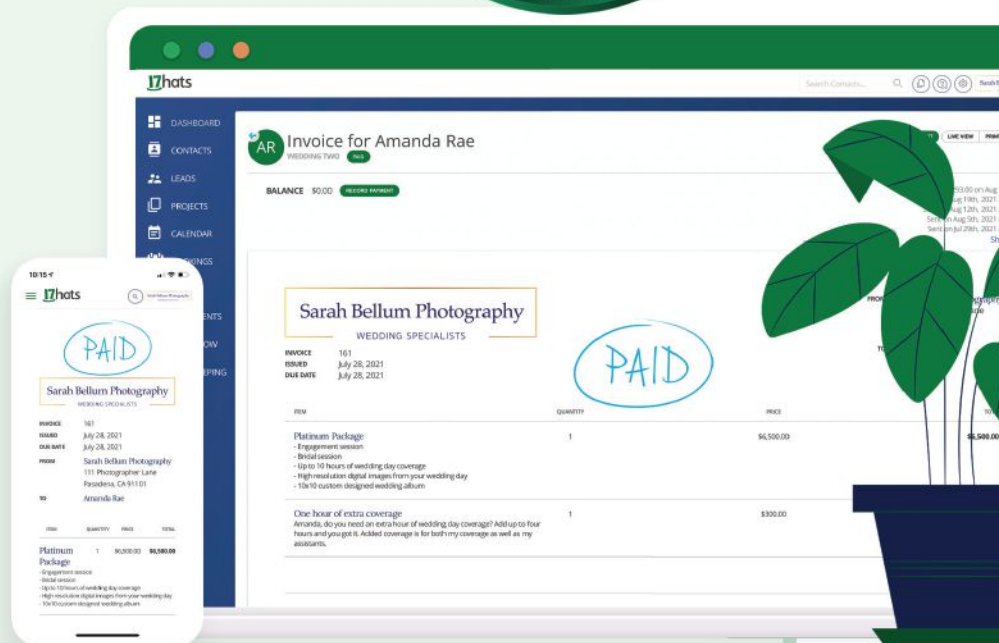
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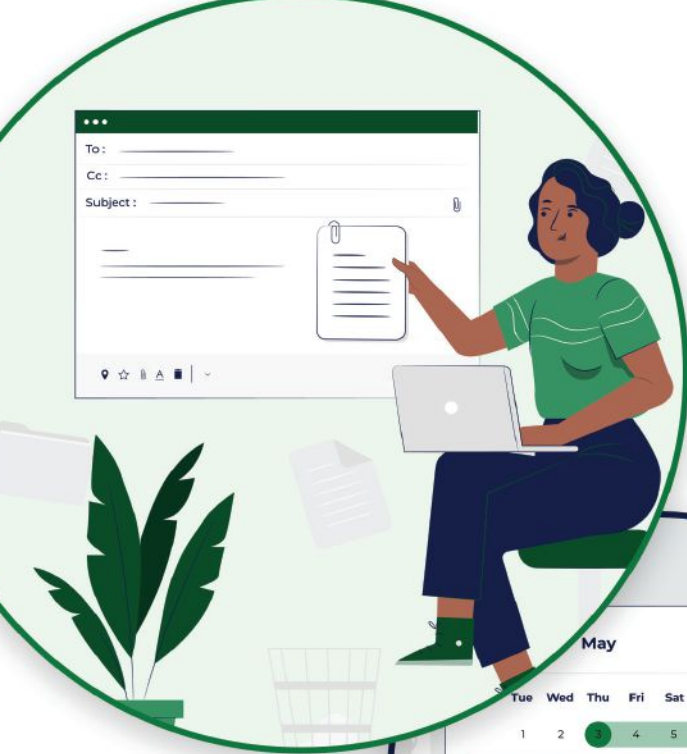


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Stories You Tell Yourself

MAKE THEM GOOD ONES

The memories you have of stories you read as a child are probably more vivid than the memories you have of financial reports you pored over just two hours ago. Stories are powerful vehicles that carry events, characters, and ideas in formats we engage with in a deep way. We anticipate what might happen next and guess at who done it. We visualize the unfolding narrative that we populate with imagined voices. We ruminate on the plot and discuss its themes.

So great is the power of a story well told that no spreadsheet, regardless of its impeccable delivery, can compare in its memorability.

The way we understand ourselves, other people, and the world is simply that—the way we understand them.

So, take great care in choosing the stories you tell yourself. They hold sway over your ability to succeed.

Professor and bestselling author Brené Brown popularized the phrase “The story I’m telling myself” It reminds us that the way we understand ourselves, other people, and the world is simply that—the way we understand them. For example, maybe I’ve been looking forward to catching up with a friend over dinner, but she texts me a few hours prior with apologies because she has to cancel. She just found out her sister is coming to town. The story I tell myself could be that my friend doesn’t value our relationship as much as I do because she could have invited her sister to join us. Alternatively, the story I tell myself could be that her sister needs emotional support right now.

The stories we tell ourselves are interpretations. They unwind in our brains all day long, mostly without our conscious thought that they even exist. And so, we make assumptions, jump to conclusions, and are tricked into believing that our stories are “the truth,” a representation of reality.

We all wrestle with self-narratives that are self-sabotaging. Author and business coach Julie Solomon notes that people can lack confidence simply because they’ve created a fiction about themselves. If the stories we tell ourselves include ideas about things we can’t do, then we prove ourselves right. Believing we can’t is self-fulfilling. I’ve never heard a gold medalist say “I knew all along I couldn’t do it. But guess what? Turned out I was wrong!”

In Jeff Kent’s interview with Solomon (“Believe in Yourself,” page 32), she says the first step to having the career we want is working on ourselves. Granted, that’s not easy. As difficult as it is to put together a business plan, admitting that we are our own biggest hurdles to conquer is even harder. And then we have to figure out how to be our own biggest believers. Don’t miss this article for more important insights from her.

And if you’re joining us at Imaging USA 2023 in Nashville in January, make sure to catch Solomon’s closing keynote address so you can wrap up all your conference learnings in a warm blanket of confidence. You can be the person you aspire to be and have the business—and the life—you want. •

Jane Gaboury

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FOREGROUND

By Amanda Arnold

Yeehaw

UNLIKELY HANDSTAND

If there's one thing Steve Wrubel can't quit, it's photographing rodeos. "I have an insatiable appetite for it," he says. "From small-town Carbondale, Colorado, to the world finals in Las Vegas, I want to shoot them all." He amasses thousands of photos from rodeo to rodeo, always in search of that lightning bolt image that displays horse and rider "at the edge of the envelop of physical possibilities."

Case in point, this photo of bull rider Adam

Lucero. It was a classic case of being in the right place in the right time, Wrubel says. Lucero, "in an explosion of dirt and leather and unfathomable power, bucked up right in front of me."

It didn't take long for Wrubel to learn rodeo photography would require a fast lens and a camera that can shoot a lot of frames per second, does well in low light, and has great autofocus and high resolution. He's settled on the Canon EOS R5 and the Fujifilm GFX100.

"I never shoot below 1/1,250 second shutter speed," he says.

For each of the photos in Wrubel's "Rodeo" series, he removes the background, which he dubs "visual pollution," in post-production and replaces it with vistas he's photographed around the American West—"subtle hues of sky and cloud and dusk." For this photo, he added an intense arid landscape he photographed in the Mojave Desert, one of his favorite places. •



©STEVE WRUBEL / stevewrubel.com

FOREGROUND

"I have learned that being just outside my comfort zone with my prices is a good thing. Every year I raise my prices, feel a bit queasy, and then hit Save. And every year enough clients fill my calendar and say yes without batting an eye."

—D'ANN BOAL



©D'ANN BOAL / smittenandswoon.com

Lessons in Pricing

KNOW YOUR WORTH

If there's a universal no-no in selling your photography, it's pricing your work based on what a competitor charges. Your sessions and products should be priced according to your cost of sales, your profit goals, the level of service you provide, and the products you deliver.

D'Ann Boal owns Smitten & Swoon studio in Boulder, Colorado, where she does portrait photography. She'll deliver the educational session "Pricing & Profit for the Artistic Soul" at Imaging USA 2023 in January. She offers these tips on pricing for profit.

VALUE YOURSELF, AND YOUR SUCCESS WILL SNOWBALL.

"Creating a valuable experience for our clients starts when we value ourselves first," Boal says. "When we build a business of value, we will attract clients who want a high-end experience and are willing to pay for it," she explains, which snowballs into higher profits and more money to put into things like photography education and new equipment. With those added resources, your photography improves, past clients rebook, people refer you, and your calendar fills up, at which point you can raise prices. "The snowball just keeps getting bigger and bigger."

SELL PRODUCTS.

Clients are overwhelmed by digital images they have no idea what to do with. "We are the experts," Boal says. "We know which image from their gallery is going to look amazing printed as a 40x60 on archival paper with a deckled edge and framed in matte black. We know how to get heirloom photo albums with gilded edges and velvet covers." That knowledge is power, and when you use it to sell products, you become more profitable.

IN-PERSON SALES TIPS

- Use in-person sales software that allows clients to view their gallery, place orders, and see how art-work will look on their walls.
- Communicate policies and pricing information clearly before the in-person sales appointment.
- Have samples ready—framed art in extra-large sizes, printed albums, and holiday cards.

OFFER IN-PERSON SALES APPOINTMENTS.

"You don't have to have a fancy studio," Boal says. These appointments can be done via online chat where you share your screen or at your client's kitchen table. "Just have samples to show, a beautiful catalog of your products and pricing, and your images will do all the selling you need." •

 Hear D'Ann Boal at Imaging USA
imagingusa.com/speakers

Mona Lisa of the Deep

UNDERSEA BEAUTY



COURTESY CALIFORNIA GOLD MARKETING GROUP

It's hard to believe a photo could survive more than a century and a half at the bottom of the ocean, but in 2014, 10 remarkably preserved daguerreotype and ambrotype photographs were recovered from a ship



that sank off the coast of North Carolina in 1857. The ship was carrying California Gold Rush gold bars, coins, and dust from Panama to New York, thus its nickname Ship of Gold. It sunk during a hurricane, killing 425 passengers and crew.

In 2014, as scientists worked to recover gold and other items from the ship, they found more than 100 photos, many in glass case holders. A majority were degraded beyond recognition, but 10 standouts are remarkably clear, including a portrait the group dubbed "Mona Lisa of the Deep," which was found in a pile of the ship's coal on the seabed. The sunken treasure are offered at auction by Holabird Western American Collections. •

A Business Owner First

TIPS FOR COMMERCIAL WORK

Stop thinking of yourself as an artist who makes money from your art and start believing you're a business owner whose business is art. So says Taylor Brumfield, a Virginia-based photographer specializing in commercial beauty and product photography. Brumfield, who will deliver the educational session "Launching a Commercial Photography Business" at Imaging USA 2023 in January, offers business tips for people transitioning into commercial photography.



Taylor Brumfield

Learn from Taylor Brumfield at
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IMAGES ©TAYLOR BRUMFIELD / taylorbrumfield.com



PRICING: In wedding and portrait photography, it's common to offer event or session packages. Commercial work is more nuanced; the assets you provide and the time you spend on a project, not to mention the complexity of work, differ from project to project. Brumfield recommends custom rates based on the client's specific needs, with a minimum compensation to ensure you're turning a profit for the work.



NICHING: It's great to niche into a specific type of commercial photography. But don't define your niche until you've done two things: know for certain there's a market for what you want to offer and built a robust network—not only of clients but also photographers who can provide advice when you're in a bind.



MARKETING: Learn the art of funneling interested parties through various touch-points that seamlessly lead to bookings. Since Brumfield attracts a majority of her clients via Instagram, she keeps direct messaging open and includes a bio link to her site, where potential clients are funneled straight to her portfolio and a booking app. •

FROM THE ARCHIVES:

Find Your Joy

"While photography is not as easy as merely pointing a camera and snapping the shutter, it should always bring some joy to the photographer no matter what the subject might be. If there is no joy in photography, and one finds himself bored with the kind of pictures he is asked to make, it might be wise to consider some other line of endeavor. There is no more boring picture than that created by a bored photographer."

— W.A. Reedy, Cr.Photoq.
"Meeting the Client's Needs ... Maintain a Professional Attitude"
The Professional Photographer, Nov. 1975

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Embrace Gratitude

IT'S THE SEASON FOR THANKSGIVING

By Jeffrey Dachowski, M.Photog.Cr., CPP



©CAROLLE DACHOWSKI / dachowskiphotography.com

In the United States, November marks the season of thanksgiving. Many people think the first Thanksgiving holiday was celebrated in the United States at the Plymouth Colony in 1621, but it's also been reported that the first was held in 1610 in Virginia. President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed a national Thanksgiving holiday in 1863. A day of thanksgiving is celebrated in many other countries, too: Canada, Germany, Liberia, Grenada, Japan, and Brazil, to name a few.

I believe the feeling of gratitude is ingrained in human DNA. It doesn't matter what country we're from or whether we celebrate a traditional Thanksgiving Day meal with family. For me, being grateful for people and experiences is paramount to enjoying life and prospering in my work.

Being grateful doesn't simply mean thanking people for delivering your takeout order or holding open a door. I mean taking gratefulness to another level, to the point that it improves your life and business. People want to do business with people they know, like, and trust. A lot of that can be felt by clients when they first come through your door. Are you happy they're there to make new portraits, or are you concerned about the behavior of their 3-year-old twins? Are you grateful for the chance to help them build a legacy, or are you worried you're not going to hit your sales average?

I'm grateful that my craft and profession allows me to be involved in so many people's lives. I'm grateful that my wife and I are able to earn a living by creating images for a family or a business that will help them build a legacy.

With so many negative events happening around the world nearly all the time, it can be a struggle to hold a mindset of gratitude. Here are a few ways to be more grateful in your personal life:

Remind yourself in a visual fashion.

We're all image makers; we use an optical input in nearly everything we do. If you struggle

to get into a grateful state of mind, consider setting a few visual cues around your home. A simple sticky note might help to remind you of a few things you're thankful for.

Mind your words. Choose vocabulary that keeps you grounded in gratitude. Reduce the limiting language in your life.

Keep a gratitude journal. Each day write down three things you're grateful for. Your list can even include coffee! The act of putting pen to paper will help cement the positive effects of nourishing a grateful heart.

Here are a few ways to help you be more grateful in your business life:

Go beyond the words "Thank you." Let clients know you're thankful for their trust. It might sound something like this: "I am so grateful you chose our studio to make your portraits. It makes me happy to play a role in your family by making portraits for you."

Express gratitude to your staff. Not every employee is driven by monetary compensation. A good way to show you're grateful for their contribution to your business is to find what drives them and compensate them in that manner. You might have a staff member who values a flexible schedule or an extra day off once in a while. By giving them this, you send a clear message that you're grateful for their help.

Tell your vendors and industry partners you appreciate them. Let them know you're happy to be working with them and grateful for the effort they and their staff make to help you create the experience you want for your clients.

In the end, saying thanks helps both you and the person to whom you've expressed your gratitude. It's not hard to do, but the payoff can be huge. In this traditional month of thanksgiving, take a few moments to focus on gratitude. I am certain it will pay off both personally and professionally. •

Jeffrey Dachowski operates a photography studio in Bedford, New Hampshire, with his wife, Carolle.



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A man in a black suit is playing a saxophone, looking upwards. The background is a gradient from white to grey.

CRIS DUNCAN
M.Photos.M.Artist.Cr., CPP

One Light,
Ten Portraits

A woman in a white chef's uniform and hat is in a kitchen, holding a knife and a pan. A roasted bird is on a stand in the background.

KRISTY STEEVES
M.Photos.Cr., CPP

PRE-CON

Editing for Clients and
Photographic Competition

A man in a pink suit and a woman in a red dress are sitting on a wooden bench. The woman is lying down, and there are many red roses around them.

CHIP DIZÁRD

How To Find
Your Ideal Client

A woman in a pink dress is standing in a field, looking out over a landscape with mountains in the background.

D'ANN BOAL

Pricing & Profit for
the Artistic Soul

A close-up of an elephant's head and trunk, looking towards the left.

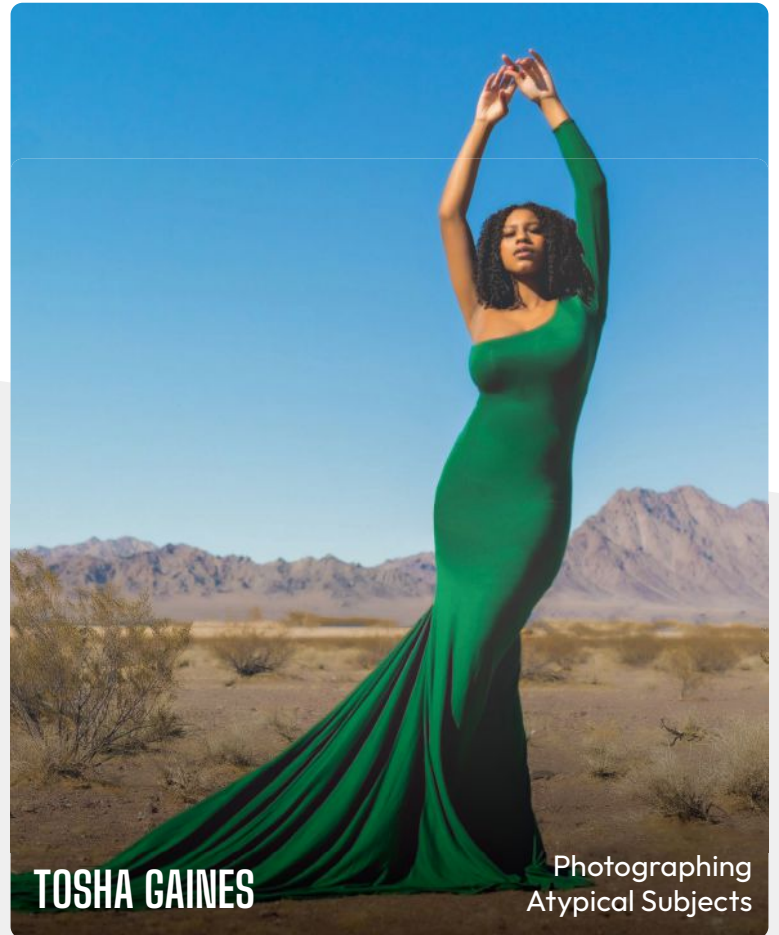
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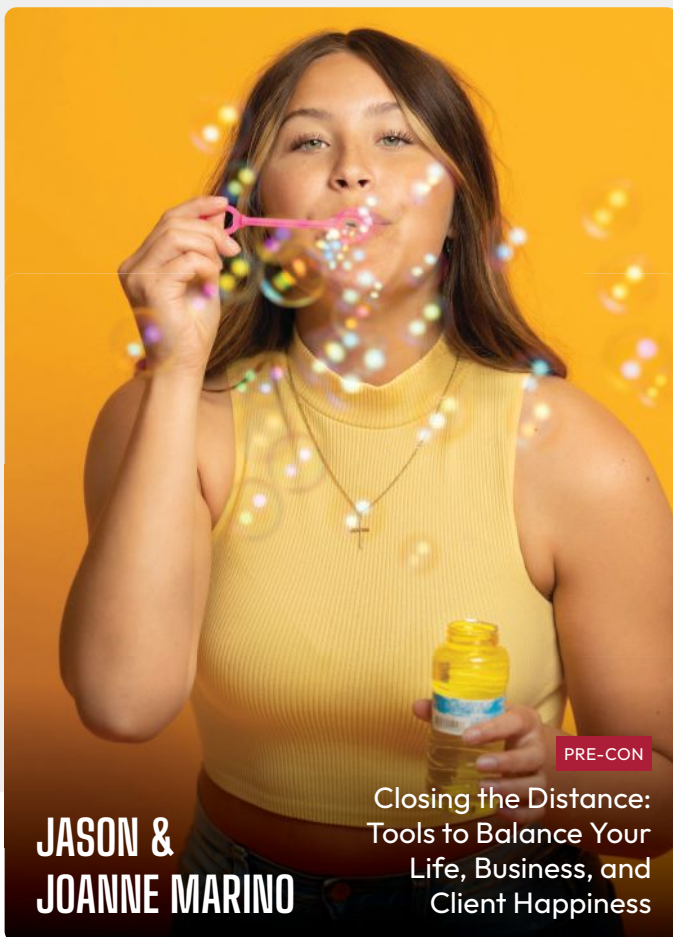
IAN SPANIER

Why You Should
Use a Light Meter
(Even for Digital)



TOSHA GAINES

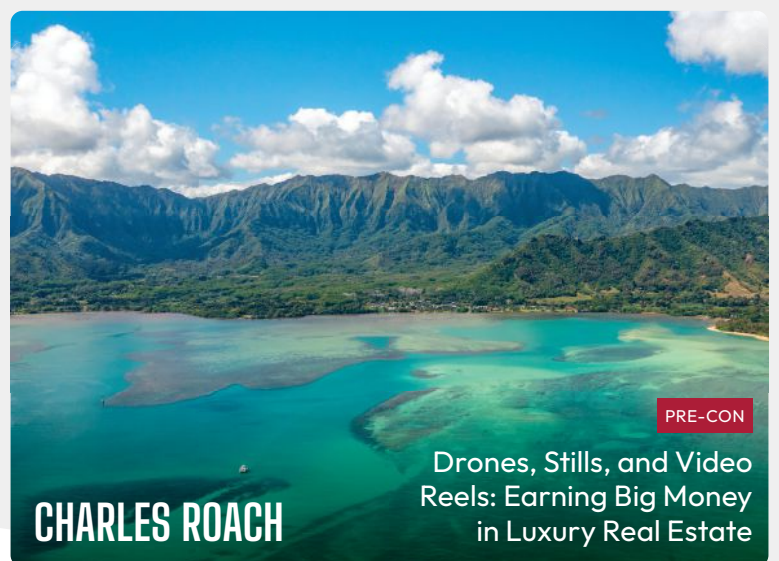
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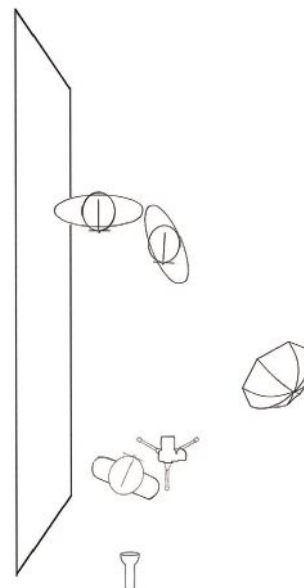
Ramon L. Robles Photography
Canton, Michigan

CAMERA & LENS: Canon EOS 5D Mark IV,
Canon EF 70-200mm f/2.8L II USM lens

EXPOSURE: 1/250 second at f/2.8, ISO 200

LIGHTING: A Godox AD200 in a Flashgear 20-inch soft box with a diffuser served as key light camera right, and a Godox AD200 fitted with a MagMod MagSphere behind the camera position and overhead ambient light served as fill.

POST-CAPTURE: Ramon Robles processed the image in Adobe Lightroom for slight color balancing and light and shadow adjustments. He used Portrait Pro Studio Max for skin retouches and Adobe Photoshop to burn the background to increase subject separation.



ABOUT THE IMAGING EXCELLENCE COLLECTION: The current Imaging Excellence collection comprises more than 1,200 photographs chosen by jurors of PPA's International Photographic Competition. The compositions are considered the best of the best in contemporary professional photography, having been awarded the Imaging Excellence distinction based on their success in meeting the 12 elements of a merit image. ppa.com/ipc-gallery

NOTE: Lighting diagrams shown here are not to scale.

MERITED

Breaking Free

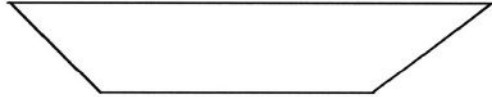
Jennifer Curry Wingrove
Wingrove Studio Photography
San Diego, California

CAMERA & LENS: Canon EOS R6, Canon EF 24-70mm f/2.8L II USM lens

EXPOSURE: 1/250 second at f/4.5, ISO 100

LIGHTING: Jennifer Curry Wingrove used a Flashpoint Xplor 600 HSS with a 4-foot strip box with eggshell, positioned sideways facing the subject's right side.

POST-CAPTURE: Using Adobe Camera Raw, Adobe Photoshop, and Nik Collection, she brought up the shadows in the model's jacket and pants, brought down the highlights in the subject's right hand, cleaned up the back wall and some of the floor using the clone and healing tools, and increased the warmth in the image.



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When we help other people, we do ourselves a favor, too, by contributing to our own well-being. A recent study from Adobe surveyed 9,000 creators, including photographers, writers, and content creators. It found that 95% of respondents across the generations—from baby boomers to Generation Z—were using their skills to advance causes important to them. •

REWARDS OF CAUSE-ORIENTED CREATION

71%

FEEL MORE POSITIVE

58%

INTEND TO POST
MORE FREQUENTLY

50%

ANTICIPATE CREATING
MORE BECAUSE THEY
FEEL THEY'RE MAKING
A DIFFERENCE



Source: "The Future of Creativity," Adobe, 2022

Believe in Yourself

CREATE THE CAREER YOU WANT BY BANISHING SELF-DOUBT

By Jeff Kent

Confidence appears at the center of so many success stories. For photographers who haven't achieved the success they dream of, confidence is a scarce resource. Yet successful professionals have plenty of it, and it appears to replicate itself.

People lacking confidence tend to hide behind the idea that success eludes them because it's not really possible. But that's a fiction we tell ourselves as a defense mechanism. Success is there for people willing to put in the work, not just on their businesses but on themselves.

Julie Solomon is an author, a business coach, host of "The Influencer Podcast," and the closing keynote speaker at Imaging USA 2023 in January in Nashville, Tennessee. She notes that confidence fuels everything successful people do. To help people achieve great things, she promotes a process of overcoming self-doubt and building the confidence to push through all those layers of fear. This process begins with the three As of confidence building: awareness, acceptance, and action.

AWARENESS

"The most overlooked part of doing anything well doesn't lie outside

but within us," says Solomon. "Get real with yourself. Push beyond your fears by questioning those self-limiting thoughts, that stinking thinking that keeps us from growing ourselves and our businesses. You have to focus on that inner work first."

People often want to bypass this internal work because it can be the most difficult part of the process. It's easier to focus on business strategy and action items than to dig into the root causes of problems. But to make positive changes in your career, you first need to understand the part you're playing and why you're not experiencing the success you want.

The first step is awareness. A lot of us can't achieve that awareness until we have some sort of catalyst. It could be a major shift in our business or even a rock-bottom moment that forces us to face reality. If it's the latter, use that downturn to your advantage. "Allow those horrible moments, the things we want to avoid, to serve as signposts pointing you toward the areas of life that need the most attention," says Solomon. "The flip side of any weakness is building a strength. So how do we use those moments to get better?"



 More from Julie Solomon
juliesolomon.net

ACCEPTANCE

You need to be coachable. You have to be open to new ideas and willing to accept assistance. You could start by finding a coach, a mentor, or a friend who can help you jump those personal hurdles and get to a place where you can unpack your unrealized fears and issues. “Someone else can always see your blind spots better than you,” says Solomon.

You also need to recognize that you don’t know it all. Solomon points out the two most common objections people make: Nothing ever works for me, and I know this already.

But those are excuses. They are the stories we tell to avoid putting in the hard work on ourselves. We need to push past excuses and open ourselves up to change. It’s OK if you’re not excited about doing that work, but to progress, you need to be willing to put in the effort.

This is acceptance. This is the uncomfortable place where we come to grips with the part we’re playing. “We’re accepting reality on reality’s terms,” explains Solomon. “We’re getting to a place where we recognize there is a piece of the puzzle that no longer fits, and it’s our responsibility to remove it.”

ACTION

The action stage is where you put your plan into place. “A lot of times people want to go straight to action,” says Solomon. “They want to go fix it. But it’s not about fixing. You have to accept your role, see your part to play, and then change the script.”

Expressed as a photography metaphor, imagine that you’re looking at a scene and you want to create a specific image, but no matter how many times you click the shutter, you’re not getting the result you want. After some consideration, you realize that you’re using the wrong lens. Do you keep clicking away with the wrong lens hoping for a different result? Or do you change the lens, then formulate a plan to capture the image that’s in your mind?

ESTABLISH A SUCCESS MINDSET

So much of this process relies on having the right kind of mindset. Solomon expresses this mindset as *be, do, have* as opposed to *have, do, be*.

Many people’s idea of success is that after they have all the things they want, they can do better and ultimately be the person they want to be.



Julie Solomon

Don't miss Julie Solomon's keynote address at Imaging USA
imagingusa.com/speakers/keynote-speakers

©KARA COLEEN

Solomon stresses that this paradigm should be flipped. The more productive approach is to become the person who believes it’s possible to get what they want before trying to put any plan into action. “Believe you have to *be* the person to *do* what’s necessary to *have* what you want,” she says. “It’s the idea of becoming who you want to be. Successful people work on becoming the person they need to be in the future so they can work on what they need to do today.”

BUILD CONFIDENCE FOR LASTING IMPACT

With a success mindset in place, confidence emerges more easily—not just generalized confidence but confidence in yourself as a service provider and confidence in the value of what you produce. With this confidence, you can more effectively pitch your services and start taking direct action to improve your business.

“You really have to see pitching as a service,” says Solomon. If you believe in the value of what you provide, and if you believe that your clients will enjoy and cherish what you’re offering, then you’re providing a service by pitching them. Taken a step further, if they would be better off after experiencing what you have to offer, then you’re doing

people a disservice by not pitching them. You’re robbing them of the opportunity to have something that would change their lives for the better.

“Many people have the perception that sales is sleazy and they don’t want to do it,” says Solomon. “However, we’re in sales whether we want to admit it or not. The key is to differentiate hard sales, which focuses on wins, from sales that focus on service. Pitching is really about serving people first.” If you see pitching as a service and allow yourself to show up and pitch your services, then you can build more confidence. With more confidence, you can go after the bigger deals and the types of clients that will help you take your business where you want it to go. This process circles back to *be, do, have*. You’re building confidence to be the person you aspire to be, then using that confidence to do the pitch so you can have the kind of business you’ve always wanted.

You’re worth it, after all. You just need to believe it. •

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Pushing the Reset Button

HOW TO REBUILD YOUR BUSINESS AROUND YOUR IDEAL CLIENTS

By Jeff Kent



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Are you working with the right kinds of clients? Are you doing the work you love? Or is your business stuck in a rut, dragged down by unappreciative clients and projects that don't suit you?

These were questions facing wedding photographer Chip Dizárd when he took a hard look at his business a couple of years ago. "Looking through my portfolio, I realized that a lot of the people on the roster were not ideal for me," he says. "It's not about the money. It's about how they make you feel. You want your customers, in a way, to be advocates for your success. I reconsidered the question *Who are we really serving?*"

Dizárd determined it was time to push the reset button on his business and refocus his efforts on finding his ideal clientele. In the process, he came across some fundamental truths that could be useful to any photographer looking to pivot to a new working model.

PUSH THE RESET BUTTON

The process of pivoting to a new, refocused business can be outlined in four steps.

1. Assess where you are, what you're doing, and how people are getting to you. Are you chasing clients or projects that don't suit you? What role have you played in client interactions that were less than ideal?

2. Understand where the holes are in your business. Is it in marketing, your photographic technique, planning?

3. Engage a mentor. Reach out to colleagues about how they handled certain situations. Have them review your portfolio and messaging, then get their thoughts on what you're putting out that might be attracting clients who aren't right for you.

4. Regulate clients' interactions with you. Set parameters that help you be more productive and creative. Good clients respect clearly stated guidelines. Bad clients roll over them.

Learn from Chip Dizárd at Imaging USA
imagingusa.com/speakers

FLAG BAD CLIENTS

Bad clients will raise red flags; it's up to you to spot those warnings. Two red flags that are fairly universal:

1. Preoccupation with price. It's often a problem when a potential client talks about price first and value second. If they're concerned only about price, especially if you're aiming to provide a high-quality product and exceptional service, then they may not be the client for you.

2. Wanting something you don't provide. If a client wants a style that isn't in your wheelhouse or attempts to push you to work in a way that isn't your focus, then you may want to pass on that contract.

A key point to remember: Just because you routinely have a certain type of client doesn't make them your ideal client.

IDENTIFY IDEAL CLIENTS

Dizárd recommends a two-step process to building your ideal client profile:

1. Eliminate bad client experiences. Think about your worst client experiences and eliminate them. How did those people get to you? How did they make you feel? What were the red flags? And how can you discourage those types of clients from approaching you in the future?

2. Expand good client experiences. Think of your best client experiences and expand on them. Who were they? How did they find you? What can you do to attract more people like them?

TRAIN YOUR REFERRAL BASE

Your referral base may not be sending you the right referrals because they haven't been trained on how to refer you. This training can be as simple as a short statement: "If you had a good experience working with me, I'd really appreciate your referrals. The types of clients I'm looking to work with are"

It's also helpful if your referrers know your

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PPA offers such great support to its members as well as resources that illuminate how other photographers run their businesses.



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starting rate. Even if you don't want to publish all your prices, make sure the people referring you know your base pricing so they aren't referring people who can't afford your services.

Additionally, you can shape your referrals through the way you portray yourself on social media. Use your social channels to talk about what you like to do and who you like to work with. Provide that profile of your ideal client in the work you share and the stories you tell about your projects.

BREAK OUT OF THE PIGEONHOLE

If you feel you've gotten pigeonholed in a specialty you don't enjoy or that has clients who aren't great for your business, then it may be time to pivot. If you go this route, you'll need to make some wholesale changes. Change your portfolio. Change your messaging. Change your social media. Ultimately, change what you show, and show what you want to do.

Also, think about your messaging. In your social media and your marketing materials (including your website), talk about your passions. Talk about what you love to photograph and why. Make videos, reels, and other content that shows you working on your passion projects. Share behind-the-scenes interactions with your ideal clients on your ideal projects.

And ask for help. "People love to help people," says Dizárd. "When you're pivoting, ask for help from your community. The people who are close to you want to help you succeed. Tell them you're making a pivot, and ask for help. You may be surprised at what comes your way. Sometimes we photographers don't get business simply because we don't ask."

MITIGATE BAD CLIENT EXPERIENCES

It's hard to say no to paying clients, but sometimes it's necessary. To screen out bad fits for your business or repair relationships that aren't working well, try these suggestions:

- **Diagnose the disconnect.** Have a talk with your difficult clients to see where the disconnect is. Ask how you can work together better. Apply this feedback not only to those

clients but to your future client interactions.

- **Set boundaries.** Boundaries communicate how you want people to do business with you. For example, tell your clients when you'll take calls, how much you'll communicate, what they can and can't expect. People usually respect boundaries when you lay them out clearly. If they don't, then you can pass them along to another photographer who may be a better fit.

- **Systemize.** The most successful photographers have systems in place to make common tasks and interactions more efficient. Instead of frequently asked questions, Dizárd recommends listing on your website all the questions that clients *should* be asking. Refer potential clients to this list before they book you, which not only gives them information but also helps prequalify them. When they do hire you, they'll come to you with knowledge about how you work, which mitigates unrealistic expectations and related problems.

- **Communicate (more and better).** If you don't have clarity of message, you won't find the right client. Lay everything out as clearly as possible. Communicate your anticipated timing, go through what clients can expect from you, and be transparent about what you expect from them. Once you've communicated these things, stick to them. Be consistent, keep your clients updated, and above all else, do what you said you'd do.

SEEK THE RIGHT PROJECTS

Ultimately, says Dizárd, you should look for projects that fit three criteria:

1. They make you money.
2. They make you fulfilled.
3. They're the type of work you're good at.

Finding those projects and shifting your business to help you land them is a process. Keep working at it, and keep working on what you provide. "The key to getting out of the rut is to continue doing a volume of your preferred work," says Dizárd. "That's how you get better, not bitter. That's also how you find people who become clients for life and who will help you build a sustainable business." •

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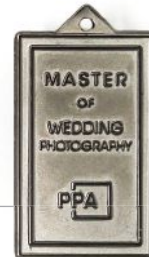
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Pop of Excitement

VIBRANT HUES MAKE PHOTOS SNAP

By Joe Edelman, Cr.Photog.

I love color. The brighter, the better. My fascination with color allows me to appreciate the abundance of vibrant hues in nature and create a fantasy world of my own.

My fantasy world includes color combinations that are bolder and more daring than we typically see in everyday life. I can tap into

cognitive psychology and use color to elevate the emotional response to my photos and even control what people see and don't see.

I use color to make my photographs stand out. It allows me to create mood and influence emotion. I can guide people to see what I want them to see by creatively using color as part

of my composition. Color even increases the perceived value of my photographs.

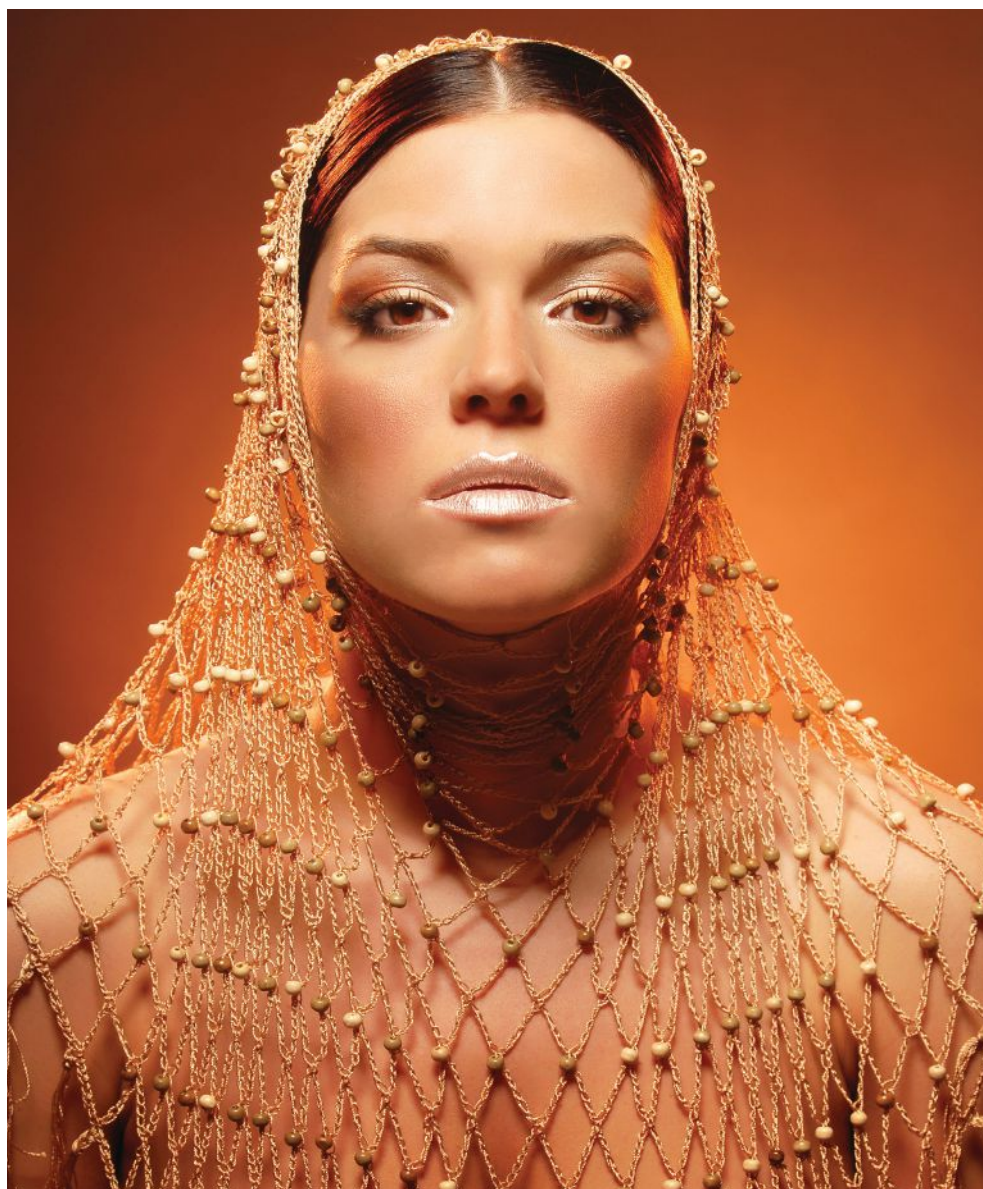
I could fill a magazine with the hows and whys behind color theory and their application to photography. Here are four of my favorite fashion portraits that demonstrate my approach to color.

One of the easiest ways to use color for composition and attention is to bring the image into one color range and make the most important part of the image brighter to draw the viewer's gaze. I had an interesting gold chain shawl I wanted to use as a fashion piece. I decided that orange was the best color to unite the skin tones, background, and chain. I'm a big fan of symmetry, so I chose to have the model's hair parted in the middle and draped the neck opening of the shawl around her face. She's wearing a simple tube top to provide bare shoulders and no distracting clothing details.

The makeup is a beauty look that highlights the model's features without introducing other colors.



The lighting setup is one key light—a small 21-inch beauty dish with a 200ws flash placed slightly in front of the model and above her head. The shape of the beauty dish and its close proximity to the model create a rapid light falloff that automatically highlights the face—no Photoshop required. Behind the model are 200ws rim lights on each side, both with an orange gel. They're aimed to ensure the orange light doesn't hit the tip of her nose. Another 200ws strobe with an orange gel is behind her, aimed up at a Savage Universal #27 Thunder Gray seamless paper background. Since orange is often associated with emotional strength and determination, I chose a low camera angle and kept the model's chin level to create a majestic look.



IMAGES ©JOE EDELMAN / joeedelman.com



I was hired to produce images for a new hybrid LED light and given complete creative control to show off the digital burst capabilities of the light. The final images would be used in print, on the company's website, on social media, and potentially in a video, so I needed to create a "scroll stopper." I knew it would be essential to feature an attention-getting color set—not one that was already popular on social media. One of the best ways to stand out in a crowd? Do different. I chose red and gold as the base colors. Red draws attention like no other color. It's full of passion and energy that motivates us to take action. Gold is a positive, strong color associated with wealth and success. It inspires us to reach for our potential. I felt confident that these colors embodied this groundbreaking piece of lighting

equipment and on late 2021 social media would be compelling enough to get people's attention. I wanted to create a calm-in-the-middle-of-chaos image that would allow me to show how the new light could stop action. I added more color to the subject herself as a type of mask because the image is about the capabilities of a light, not the subject. My makeup artist created a colorful mosaic on the model's face, working primarily with cooler colors and including a small amount of red and gold to tie everything together. I placed a fan on the floor behind the model to blow the gold material around her head. The blowing material and mosaic makeup gave me enough chaos to hold the viewers' attention. I kept the lighting simple. No gels were needed since I already had the colors in the shot.



I lit this shot with a StellaPro Reflex S mounted in a 24-inch Octa Beauty Softbox from Chimera that was directly above the camera and aimed down into a 20x30-inch white foam board below the model's face to add fill. I have a second StellaPro Reflex S on the floor behind the model aimed at the Savage Universal #08 Primary Red seamless paper background.



More color portrait breakdowns from Joe Edelman
ppa.com/joe-edelman

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THE GOODS



For this image I used three strobes and a ring light, which was placed above the model's head. I had a 33-inch round soft box on camera right with a 200ws strobe as the key light. On camera left behind the model was a 200ws strobe with a slight amber gel as a rim light. A 200ws strobe with a blue gel was behind the model aimed at the background. The black streaks on the background were added in post-production.



I envisioned this photo with a sci-fi feel and a subject who could well be an AI instead of a human. The color scheme combines the calm, confident, and intelligent aspects of blue with the warmth and emotional balance of magenta. The color would have to set the mood since most of the robots we see in science fiction show little to no emotion. The simple makeup incorporates a bit of magenta. The lacy collar and jewels on the forehead add texture without adding color.



I often use the calm-in-the-middle-of-chaos concept for fashion portraits. In this case, the blue material flattered the models' bright blue eyes and lent a kind of wizard or sorcerer impression when we wrapped it around her face. Keeping the makeup simple, we added a bit of color around her eyes and, for dramatic effect, a little contouring on her cheeks. Since sorcerers are routinely associated with dark, moody colors, I thought this lighter blue would work well to create a calm balance to my model's serious and dramatic expression. I knew I could use shadow areas to create darker blues on the edges of the frame.



I lit this image with one 26-inch collapsible soft box placed directly above the camera and in front of the model. The camera was placed slightly above the model, with her looking up. •

Joe Edelman is a photographer, author, and photo educator.

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Lighting by Wand

REVIEW: NANLITE PAVOTUBE II 60

By Ellis Vener



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For the past six months, I've been working with a pair of Nanlite PavoTube II 6C wand-type lights. The 6C is a relatively inexpensive 6-watt RGBWW lighting wand that casts light over a 180-degree arc from the semi-cylindrical diffused front of the wand. Near the right end of the back is a recessed control panel with a small OLED info display, controls, and a USB-C charging port. The 6C is just under 10 inches long, including the half-inch wide bumpers on both ends, and weighs 9.07 ounces. The primary power supply is a built-in 2,200 mAh rechargeable lithium-ion battery, providing a 54-minute total power runtime.

LEDs don't make a lot of light compared to electronic flash. The ratio of the watt-second (or joules) ratings for flash to an LED's watts of energy is about 15 to 1. Which is to say that a 6-watt LED light such as the PavoTube II 6C creates the same amount of light as a flash set to a 0.75 watt-second. And that's when the LED light is producing daylight white light. By comparison, an average full-size hot shoe mount speedlight at full power uses around 65 watt-seconds of electricity. Placed three feet from a state-of-the-art Sekonic meter, at its full power of 6 watts and set for 5,600K, the output from the PavoTube II 6C produces 6.7 EV. For camera settings, EV 6.7 translates to a smidgen more than f/1.4 at 1/50 second at ISO 100 or f/2.8 at ISO 400. Dial in a different color, and the amount of light produced declines.

In practical terms, if you need to freeze motion or compete with existing daylight, LED lights are not the right tool for the job. Unless you like long exposures, expect to work at higher ISO settings. But this is not an issue when shooting video indoors or after dark or doing still photography indoors or after dark.

A significant advantage of using LED lighting instruments over flash is that you can see the lighting effect without making test exposures. LED lights with red, green, and blue filtered LEDs can produce millions of colors. The nature of the problem changes to color percep-



For this portrait of artist Cressandra Thibodeaux I used a pair of PavoTube II 6C lights, one on each side of the lens. Mounting the light tubes this way creates the shadowless lighting associated with a ring light but with greater control.

tion: Is the color you see with your eyes the color your camera will record? To address this problem, the PavoTube II 6C, like its bigger sister the 15C, adds warm white and daylight-balanced LEDs to the mix, hence the RGBWW designation.

The two whites go a long way toward filling in the gaps in color between the red, green, and blue filtered LEDs. While your eyes may not see a difference in the color of the light produced by an RGB or RGBW and an RGBWW LED light, your camera's sensor will. This discrepancy between seen and photographed color becomes an issue when you use the light's controls to match a specified gel color or when

the interaction between light color and subject color creates an unwanted result. While RGBWW goes a long way toward addressing these problems, if you want to produce the specific color of a gel rather than trying to dial it in, the best solution is to set the light to daylight white (5,600K) and use that gel.

The PavoTube II 6C has two primary modes, CCT (correlated color temperature) and HSI (hue, saturation, intensity), and 15 effects modes. In all modes, output brightness is adjustable in 1% increments down to zero. In CCT mode, using either the controls on the light or the Nanlite app for iOS and Android devices, color temperature can be set in 100K increments from 2,700 to 7,500K with green/magenta tint adjustable in single digits over a 200-step range. A negative G/M control setting shifts the light toward magenta, and a positive value adds a green tint.

HSI mode gives you a more extensive color palette—essentially every visible color—to work and play with. HSI uses a standard color wheel model where the combination of hue angle and saturation describes the color, and the Dim setting determines how bright the light will be. In this color model, the hue angle of red is 0 degrees, yellow is 60 degrees, green is 120 degrees, cyan is 180 degrees, blue is 240 degrees, and magenta is 300 degrees. The axis of the color wheel is the absence of color or, in other words, white. Therefore, the lower the saturation value, the paler the light is, with 0 being white. Multiply hue by saturation by brightness (measured on a scale from 0/off to 100/full), and you get 3.6 million possible colors.

The effects modes fall into four categories: loop, flash, pulse, and simulation. In the three loop modes—Hue, CCT, and Intensity—you can select a brightness range and period for the loop from 2 to 30 seconds. In the flash modes, the adjustable interval range goes from 10 seconds down to 0.1 seconds. Interval here describes the time between the flashes of light and the flash length. The Pulse modes are similar to the flash modes but with a

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With a pair of PavoTube II 6Cs, I created different color combinations using the HSI mode. Clockwise from the upper left are pale green/magenta, magenta/white, green/magenta, and blue/magenta.

more gradual ramping of brightness. In Pulse mode, the number of pulses and gaps between is adjustable from 1 to 240 per minute.

The lighting effect simulation modes include Lightning Storm, Police Car, Old-style Television, Paparazzi, Flickering Fire, Disco, Bad Bulb, Fireworks, Explosion, and Welding.

In addition to the internal battery, the PavoTube II 6C will power from an external power source through the USB-C connection. One of the Nanlite accessories I like to use is the inexpensive optional accessory extension handle for the PavoTube II 6C. The grip/battery holder screws into the 1/4"-20 socket on the end closest to the 6C control panel. When loaded with a fully charged high-quality NPF5500 battery (sold separately), the run time of the light doubles from 54 minutes (full power) to 108 minutes.

The mounting options add to the versatility of the PavoTube II 6C. There are three ways to mount the light to a stand, boom, clamp, strap, or just about anything else. Along with the 1/4"-20 threaded socket on each end of the light, the end bumpers' side and rear-facing facets contain strong magnets for sticking the light to anything made of steel or iron. Finally, the light fits into industry-standard T-12 mounts.

Nanlite makes several handy and inexpensive accessories for the PavoTube II 6C: NP-F Battery grip, a fabric grid, a remote control if you do not want to use the Nanlite app, and a variety of mounts. The most practical accessory is the transparent polycarbonate T12 LED tube mounting clip with 1/4"-20 receivers.

The Nanlite PavoTube II 6C retails for \$89 and is available through local stores and online retailers, including Adorama, Amazon, and B&H Photo Video. •



Video of the Nanlite PavoTube II 6C color transition
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MAKING THE MOST OF Maternity

DIANA ROBLES
CELEBRATES THE
BEAUTY OF MOTHERHOOD

BY JEFF KENT

When Diana Robles launched Loveprint Photography in Hawthorne, New Jersey, it wasn't her stated goal to become one of the most sought-after maternity and newborn photographers in the state. That result was more of an earned byproduct. Rather, she wanted to help women express the beauty in their journey to motherhood. That appreciation was something that had eluded Robles during her first pregnancy, when cultural norms about feminine beauty discouraged her from fully embracing the experience.

"Women's bodies change so much during this time, and it's hard to see the beauty sometimes because we're trained to see so many of these changes as negative," she says. "That made it difficult for me to enjoy the journey because I was so consumed by what I saw as imperfect."

Robles understood how special the path to motherhood was in her life, and she resolved to help other people see the beauty in their own journeys. "I made it my goal to have every woman I work with feel beautiful and empowered," she says. "I want them to leave with a feeling of how amazing it is to bring a life into this world."

CONNECTION AND COMFORT

A personal connection is essential for bringing out confidence in an expectant mother, says Robles. She starts building that connection with a pre-session consultation that goes beyond cursory info gathering. Robles wants to hear each woman's story so she can relate to them on a deeper level. When she's able to connect with a client, their interactions resemble those of friends—open, relaxed, and willing to share.

Building that rapport isn't always smooth. Some people tend to be guarded, and Robles can find it difficult to get them to open up. When an initial consultation isn't going as well as Robles would like, she doesn't push. Instead, she focuses on making the client comfortable and postpones asking personal questions.

Robles communicates information about the session well in advance so clients know that their wishes and concerns have been addressed. Everyone is more at ease when they know there's a plan in place and that all the details are being attended to.

Robles starts each portrait session by offering sincere compliments. And she keeps up the positivity throughout the process. Hair and makeup are part of every session, which provides a pampering experience for the client and gives Robles about an hour and a half to get to know them better.

Throughout the session, Robles asks for the client's opinions, making it clear that she can remedy anything the client doesn't like. "I'm demonstrating that we're paying attention, that we are making this about them, and that they are, indeed, in good hands," she says.

Eventually, even the most reserved clients let down their guard and allow themselves to feel com-





MAXIMIZE MATERNITY SESSIONS

- Design a workflow that makes the process easy, practical, and efficient.
- Practice poses and setups until you know them by heart. When a client is in front of you, you'll know exactly what's next.
- Create a shot list you can work through for maximum efficiency.
- Pregnancy can mean exhaustion, so build in time for a break if needed, and make sure the client is comfortable. Let the subject's energy level be your guide.
- Have snacks and drinks available to level out the client's blood sugar or offset nausea.
- Don't rush your session. Allow time for breaks, snacks, and a relaxed pace that helps the client feel comfortable.

fortable. It's not uncommon for one of her clients to tell Robles, "You made me feel like a goddess." That's when Robles knows she's achieved the level of comfort she's seeking from a client, which leads to freer creative rein during the portrait session.

For every session, Robles works from an established workflow and shot list, which is customized for each client. This allows her to have specific lighting setups ready in advance and to make efficient transitions. Robles photographs primarily on white paper. Based on her lighting setup, she can create a

lot of variety in the images, allowing her to maximize options without having to move the client. Robles has specific images in mind to guide the setups she chooses. Variety is important as she tries to capture as many different looks as possible within each session.

NEWBORN TRANSITION

Maternity and newborn photography are a natural combination. For clients who want to hire Robles to document the next stage of their motherhood journey, she offers newborn portraits as well as mommy-and-me sessions when

the baby is around six months old. From the beginning of each new client relationship, Robles mentions that she does newborn and baby photography, but she doesn't push. "When they come into the studio, they see examples of the newborn sessions, the props, the images, and they get inspired," she says.

As in her maternity sessions, Robles uses a workflow and shot list for newborn and baby portrait sessions, which she customizes for each client and varies based on the baby's behavior.

"It's super important to have a

workflow so everything is ready to go when the client arrives and you can maximize your time with the baby," says Robles. "You need to transition between looks very quickly while the baby is sleeping."

Robles typically starts with bean bag poses, then prop shots (with soft wood-grain mats, little baskets, and other pint-sized decor), then wraps up with parent-and-baby portraits. She uses a few different pre-arranged lighting setups, which typically involve lighting the baby from head to feet. She usually photographs down from the bridge of the



Diana Robles

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nose, not up the nose, which can produce a distorted look.

SAFETY AND PATIENCE

If the baby is awake or fussy, Robles still needs to get the most out of the session—and help the mother feel comfortable that she has the situation handled. Babies who are fussy or persistently awake can be swaddled in a little wrap or placed in a supportive basket. The swaddling sometimes calms the babies enough that they fall asleep and she can revert back to her original plan.

“The baby is the boss,” Robles says. “They determine how smooth the sessions are and what we do. You can’t tell them to sit still or close their eyes. I always tell parents we just have to relax and go with the flow. The session could take a couple hours or it could take four hours. That’s why we only schedule one newborn session a day so we have time to do what we need, take care of the baby, and go with the flow.”

Robles strongly recommends seeking out education about working with newborns before attempting a newborn session on your own. She has attended three workshops focused entirely on newborn safety to make sure she can meld creativity and safety in every session. “You may think you know what you’re doing, but it’s not as easy as it looks,” she says. “Go to a live class if you can. It’s useful to have hands-on experience and see the techniques in person versus just watching a few videos online.”

Once you’re secure in your safety knowledge, Robles urges slow movement and patience during newborn sessions. “Don’t rush the baby, and don’t rush the shot,” she says. If you push the pace, you risk agitating the baby and setting things back to square one. •

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LUCKY

MARKETING POINTERS
FROM ALY ELLIOTT

BY AMANDA ARNOLD



Aly Elliott

When portrait and conceptual art photographer Aly Elliott, M.PhotoG.Cr., CPP, delivers educational sessions on marketing to fellow photographers around the country, she always asks attendees the same question: Do you have a marketing plan? Inevitably, in a room of 100 people, only one or two will raise their hands. “Then I ask if they follow it, and they stop making eye contact and pull their hand down,” she laughs. “I think people are overwhelmed by the idea of a marketing plan.”

But you’re missing out on opportunities when you don’t have a plan, says Elliott, who will deliver the session “Marketing to Grab Attention and Loyalty” at Imaging USA 2023 in January. “Not having a marketing plan makes it easy to just throw something up on Facebook or Instagram and feel like you’ve marketed,” she says. People think that if they’ve posted something on the internet, everyone will see it. But they’re not necessarily reaching their audience. “To help your reach online, you have to be able to reach people in person,” Elliott argues. “They have to be able to know who you are and put a face with your logo.”

In Elliott’s 15 years of marketing her business, she knows one thing for sure: “Word of mouth is still the age-old, No. 1 thing to grow your business.” Elliott offers advice on how to leverage marketing to grow those referrals.





1

MAKE IT TANGIBLE

"Right now, everybody wants to do everything online because it's quick and free for the most part, and easy, and people have gotten really comfortable just being home," Elliott says. But it takes a lot more time to make a personal connection with someone virtually than through real-life conversations where you can exchange eye contact, read body language, and share a laugh, she says. To get clients talking to one another about her brand, she turns to tangibles like postcards and magazines.

"Magazines are one of my top marketing priorities right now," she says. "We are not getting mail like we used to; people like things they can flip through and show their friends." She publishes a biannual magazine that showcases client portraits as well as her fine art exhibition work, in addition to any awards and competition wins she's received. Many times, clients ask for extra copies to forward along to the grandparents. "There is no marketing in the world like a grandma who is proud of her grandkids," she laughs. The magazines also allow clients to see examples of her conceptual art and inspire them to reach out if they have a story they'd like to tell.





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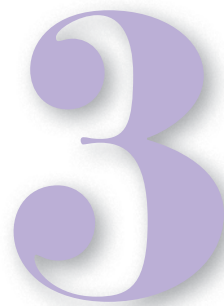


GET INVOLVED WITH CHARITIES

Another way Elliott markets her business and puts herself face-to-face with potential clients is by donating gift certificates or free sessions at gala fundraisers for her favorite local charities. This puts her in the presence of likeminded people who might appreciate her work and pass on her name.

TAKE ADVANTAGE OF FREE MARKETING

Bloomington, Indiana, where Elliott is based, is a college town, and several years ago a sorority asked if it could include her studio in a rush week scavenger hunt. Her logo, a bright pink bird that is prominently displayed on her window, was included in the search. Sorority girls took selfies with her pink bird, which they posted on social media. That's when she realized what an amazing marketing opportunity this was for her brand. Now she makes sure she's on the list for the scavenger hunt every year.



4

CREATE A LOGO AND STICK WITH IT

Elliott has had the same pink bird logo, which she acquired from an artist on Etsy, for 15 years, she says. It's become more recognizable than the name of her studio. In fact, one client commented that she "couldn't get away from this bird," because it's become ubiquitous in Bloomington. "It's my McDonald's arches," Elliott says.





5

DON'T GIVE UP TOO SOON

The biggest mistakes Elliott sees photographers make with marketing is that they give up too quickly. According to the marketing rule of seven, consumers must encounter your brand an average of seven times before they make a purchase. "Marketing isn't necessarily an immediate return," she says; it's playing the long game. People tend to try something once and then give up when it doesn't immediately attract attention. "That is not the way marketing works," Elliott contends. "We need to see the same logos and branded materials over and over again to be able to feel like everybody has that, I want that, I want to be a part of that."

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6

CREATE A MARKETING PLAN

Putting together a marketing plan is as easy as using a blank calendar to broadly define your marketing strategies over the course of a quarter or a year. At what points in the year or quarter will you send out newsletters, mail postcards or magazines, or get involved in a charity event? "I create a broad pattern showing what I would like my brand to look like," she says, setting the mood for seasons and holidays that are important to her business. She also slots in times when she might deviate slightly from her brand identity to get clients' attention. If your brand is serious, romantic, and surreal, then you should plan for a social media post that's humorous and light-hearted 10 percent of the time to grab followers' attention. By planning her social media posts by the month, she can slot in those kinds of posts as well as set an overall mood that denotes consistency.



7

ORGANIZE CLIENTS INTO TIERS

Organizing clients into several tiers enables Elliott to focus marketing resources where they're needed most. Tier one clients have infants or small children and will likely want more portrait sessions—perhaps several a year—because their children are changing so quickly. She keeps in close contact with this set of clients, using tangibles like postcards and her magazine to remind them regularly of her work and encourage more sessions. Tier two clients are families with older children who have sessions less frequently, and tier three is reserved for families whose children have grown and may be starting their own families. "I have a lot of clients that I see every year where I just contact them for their session date and make it really easy," she says. She moves tier one clients into tier two as their families grow and change. •

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Andrew Morrell

ANDREW MORRELL CAPTURES SLICES OF EVERYDAY MATRIMONIAL JOY

BY AMANDA ARNOLD

No one was more surprised that Andrew Morrell would enjoy photographing a wedding than Andrew Morrell.

It was 2006 and Morrell had just undergone a huge career shift. He'd worked in public radio for years, climbing the ladder from station to station to what felt like the pinnacle—program director for NPR's new satellite radio service division in Washington, D.C. Within six months of making the move, the division was scrapped, and Morrell was out of a job.

After working at a station in Ann Arbor, Michigan, he accepted a position at a local station in Cleveland, Ohio. As he perused images of Cleveland real estate online, he noticed something: The photography was abysmal. "I was like, Oh, is that the toilet house, or is that the garbage house?" he laughs. "The photos were taken by real estate agents who knew nothing about photography." The radio job



in Cleveland wasn't a good fit and Morrell was burned out. So, he left public radio for something the community clearly needed: good real estate photography.

TRANSFORMATION

By partnering with agents, Morrell built a successful real estate photography business in Cleveland. In the meantime, the inevitable happened: A couple of former co-workers from the station asked if Morrell would be interested in photographing their wedding. "I was like, 'Not at all, I would not,'" he laughs. "I was trying to get away from people." A self-described introvert with bouts of major depression, Morrell was perfectly content with the solitude of photographing houses and editing the images in the quiet of his own home.

Another friend asked. "She said, 'Listen, you can shoot it like you shoot houses.' I'm like, *What does that mean? How am I going to shoot a wedding like I shoot houses?*" She even offered to rent the appropriate photographic equipment for him to do the wedding. He said he'd consider it.

When yet another former colleague inquired, Morrell finally gave in, telling himself it was practice. When he walked into the family's home in June 2006, he was terrified, he says. So, he just started making photos.

"I started shooting to protect myself," he admits. "I put the camera up to my face and started shooting, I guess because that way I didn't have to interact with that many people." As the event wore on and he reviewed his work on the back of the camera, he realized he liked what was happening.

That's when a transformation began. Morrell, the introvert, took the camera down from his face and began to take on the wedding photographer personality, he says. "We all know that wedding photography is 50% the

work and 50% the personality. And I became the personality"—the gregarious, friendly, part-of-the-family kind of guy. "I don't know where that came from." But it felt like a million bucks. "I thought, *This is where I'm supposed to be.*"

In the past, Morrell had shied away from photographing people because he'd perceived it as intrusive. But as a hired contractor with a job to do, he felt permission to engage. "I think that sort of overarching sense of permission allows me to interact with people even above and beyond how I would normally do it," he says. "It's a bit of an act, a bit of a performance."

People think you have to be an over-the-top extrovert to be a wedding photographer, says Morrell. But as a self-described hermit whose primary goal is to "never leave my house ever," he says he's living proof that introverts can succeed at it. And clients love him: 95% keep in friendly contact long after their wedding day.

SERIOUS IMPROVISATION

Morrell's ideal wedding client is relaxed, artistic, and values creativity over fads. "I detest trends," he says. "Pop culture, no thank you." If a potential client asks him which wedding colors are currently trending, he knows they may not be a good fit.

What Morrell prizes most is connection. In public radio, broadcasters are trained to read the news as if they're speaking to one specific person. That personal touch is how Morrell communicates with clients via his website as well as during the lead-up to their event. That includes discussions about the investment, which he stresses is important to talk through at the outset. The approach he uses with clients, he says, is: "I will make it work for you."

Morrell's communication style even extends to being open about his depression with clients. Such



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Or hover your phone camera over the code

honest rapport before the wedding pays off when the couple trusts him enough to ignore his presence on their big day.

“Ninety-nine percent of what I do has nothing to do with people addressing the camera,” he says. It’s about facilitating a reaction between two people who love each other. A longtime jazz musician, Morrell equates his approach to the concept of spontaneous composition: “That is how I see my role at weddings. I don’t have any go-to. I don’t have any pattern. I don’t have a playbook. I deliberately go to weddings with as little information as I can. ... I take improvisation very seriously.”

The key to capturing a great

wedding image is to identify an interesting background, position himself to photograph that scene, and wait for people to populate it, he says. “If the scene behind them is abstract enough, interesting enough, the people will do their job without them even knowing they are doing a job, which is just to make the human condition present and to be themselves.”

SPECTACULARLY ORDINARY

When asked which weddings stand out, Morrell offers a few stories: At one barn wedding, he says, a massive storm knocked out the power as the walls of the structure heaved in the wind. “It was terrifying for a few mo-

ments. I thought we were going to die.” At another wedding in Costa Rica, which took place at the foot of an active volcano, the volcano erupted during the ceremony, releasing a puff of smoke.

And there are bittersweet stories. At one wedding, the groom’s dad was feeling ill before the ceremony and couldn’t make it to the site. To watch the nuptials, he FaceTimed in, and at the end of the ceremony, the bride and groom leaned into the phone to wave hello as a newly married couple. “I caught that photo,” says Morrell, and two hours later, the father unexpectedly passed away. “They didn’t know that was going to happen,” he says. “But Dad be-

ing present at the ceremony was reflected in this one shot. That, for me—that right there—is the value of wedding photography.”

For the most part, the weddings Morrell photographs are filled with the everyday drama of human emotion—“nothing spectacular other than the spectacular shimmer of ordinary people.” The glances between two people who love each other, “you can’t recreate that,” he says. “You can’t fudge that stuff. When two people are looking at each other and they connect, you can’t act that.” It’s what makes wedding photography so rewarding, he says—that there can be so much magic in so much ordinary. •



“Ninety-nine percent of what I do has nothing to do with people addressing the camera.”



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FRESH

Script



DAVID ABEL SAVED HIS BUSINESS BY DOUBLING DOWN ON JOY

BY ROBERT KIENER

Romantic. Timeless. Elegant. Scroll through David Abel's website and you'll read these words time and time again. His carefully selected portfolio of online images echoes these qualities as well. From elegant brides in Oscar de La Renta gowns to couples posed in romantic locales to timeless captures of emotional moments, the images are varied but consistent.

That consistency is by design. "We are using our website to brand ourselves," says Abel, from the Richmond, Virginia, studio he shares with his wife, Kristy, who photographs weddings with him. "We are careful to curate the images we include on our

website to attract the people who want the elegant, romantic, timeless photographs we love to make.

Abel reinforces the brand throughout his website. As the copy notes, "You'll love your wedding photos now and forever—long after the trends of today begin to fade. Our style is rooted in the philosophy of timeless elegance." He explains, "It might seem obvious, but we have learned that we need to show exactly what it is that we do. People don't hire you for something that you *can* do but for what you *actually* do. And if you're not demonstrating that on your site you won't get hired for that."

Abel has also learned that by limiting the images on his website to those he enjoys making—the ones that light him up, he says—he can target precisely his ideal clientele. "I've learned that a site should be polarizing," he explains. "It should repel or attract. If it is not doing anything, then it is failing. If a viewer's response is merely *This is nice*, that's not effective."

RECENTERING

Abel's eye as well as his fine-tuned online marketing have made him a much-in-demand wedding fine art photographer, as the 39-year-

old describes himself. He travels widely and works more than 30 weddings a year as well as numerous other assignments. He admits that success didn't come easily. Indeed, he explains, a few years ago he almost quit the business before reinventing himself.

After graduating with a Bachelor of Arts degree in fine arts from Virginia Commonwealth University in 2006, Abel worked as a website designer and part-time photographer. He discovered web design wasn't his passion, but he loved image-making.

He eventually took up wedding photography full time.

"I found that weddings are like a perfect symphony of different types of photography, from portraiture to fashion to architecture to documentary," he explains. "And the one thing that weddings have that most genres don't is heart. I see it all the time: a mother helping her daughter into her bridal gown, a father walking his daughter down the aisle or a groom pulling his bride in close on the dance floor."

He built up his business and

was soon photographing 30 to 35 weddings a year.

By 2017, with two children, he was focused on making money to support his growing family more than on making images that excited him. "I realize now I was doing what I thought clients would love instead of being more selfish and doing the work I wanted to produce. I wasn't shooting the type of images that really lit me up. I was doing what I had always done, what I'd been trained to do, and what I thought people wanted. Some of that

work was inauthentic or forced, which I didn't enjoy, and that began to wear me down."

Burnout loomed. "I knew I had to make changes," says Abel. "I decided that I had to get selfish and double down on doing exactly what I wanted to do, to make the kind of images I wanted to. I decided that I would rather fail doing what I loved as opposed to succeeding at doing what I hated."

MEANINGFUL TWEAKS

The first step: switching cameras.





4 TIPS FROM DAVID ABEL

IMAGERY: The type of work you show is the type of work you will attract. There cannot be a disconnect between what you're trying to book and what work you display. Create a consistent brand and don't show too much.

POSITIONING: Many potential clients can't discern much difference between wedding photographers, notes Abel. Having so many similar options makes it hard for them to decide. Some photographers focus heavily on pricing, but pricing really comes down to the value of what you offer and where you position yourself. Is there something unique you offer besides photographs, such as a white glove experience or something that will take a client's breath away? You attract more attention by standing out.

VOICE: To the untrained eye, images from luxury wedding photographers can all look like beautiful options without a lot of difference. But when the voice—the specific words you use on your site—is paired with those images, you establish your brand and a client's buy-in. They want to be part of the story you're telling.

CONNECTIONS: As the saying goes, your network is your net worth. Developing relationships with people who help you—stylists, designers, wedding planners, and other photographers—is key to success. These connections should be effortless and real, not just business-oriented.



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He'd always used film for personal family photography and digital for weddings. "I had always preferred the warmth and elegance of film but never thought I could use it for weddings," he says. In a bold gamble, he traded his Canon 5D Mark III digital camera for a Contax 645 medium-format film camera.

"I said the Contax is the camera that creates the work I love, and I am going to get really good with it," he remembers. "Using film slows things down and is more expensive, but it makes you pay more attention to what you are shooting and makes you a better photographer. It is unique." While he and his wife still use digital cameras in low-light situations, such as at a reception, almost all of the work he posts on his site is film.

He sought other film photographers he admired and asked for help. "Everyone was very generous with their advice," he says. Eventually he amassed a large enough body of film photography to redesign his site with just those images. He also began producing luxury fashion editorial photography and added that work to his site.

"It all came together," says Abel of the transition. "I began getting more and more clients who loved the film images I had posted and wanted the work that I was offering and I was most excited about."

Another bonus of offering work that continues to excite Abel: "I am more energetic about my work, I am attracting the right kind of clients, and I am creating work I am very proud of. It is as if I am breathing new life into the business."

He pauses, then smiles and adds, "It's like that famous quote: 'You know those things you always wanted to do? You should go do them!'" •

Robert Kiener is a writer in Vermont.

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Gap sessions address the disparity between photographers and the ever-changing desires of consumers. If you don't keep up with what clients want, there's less opportunity for you to give it to them. What they look for today isn't necessarily what they were buying even a few years ago. Bridging the Gap is education for the photographer that reveals insights into consumer expectations and motivations. It also targets the limiting beliefs many photographers experience, including a fear of in-person sales, imposter syndrome, and a lack of goal-setting. The sessions offer a wide range of views on entrepreneurship from successful photographers as well as experts outside the profession.



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The Expo's a Go

The Imaging USA Expo is always an exciting venue. Attendees are able to lay their hands on new cameras, lenses, lighting, and every other kind of gear they rely on, as well as consumer products like albums, prints, presentation products, props, and clothing, plus software and other essential business tools. Live demos and mini-educational sessions abound at the Expo, providing opportunities to learn more about all kinds of subjects.



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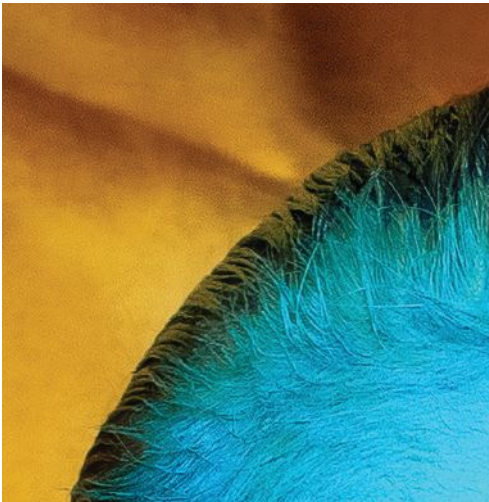


Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation (Requester Publications Only)

1. Publication Title Professional Photographer		2. Publication Number 1 5 2 8 - 5 2 8 6		3. Filing Date 9/12/2022	
4. Issue Frequency Monthly		5. Number of Issues Published Annually 12		6. Annual Subscription Price (if any) \$27.00	
7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication (Not printer) (Street, city, county, state, and ZIP+4®) 229 Peachtree St. NE Ste 2300 Atlanta, Fulton County, GA 30303-1608				Contact Person Kelly Rosaan Telephone (include area code) 319-536-1743 x5418	
8. Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher (Not printer) 229 Peachtree St. NE Ste 2300, Atlanta, Fulton County, GA 30303-1631					
9. Full Names and Complete Mailing Addresses of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor (Do not leave blank) Publisher (Name and complete mailing address) David Trust, 229 Peachtree St. NE Ste 2300, Atlanta, Fulton County, GA 30303-1631 Editor (Name and complete mailing address) Jane Gaboury, 229 Peachtree St. NE Ste 2300, Atlanta, Fulton County, GA 30303-1631 Managing Editor (Name and complete mailing address) Joan Sherwood, 229 Peachtree St. NE Ste 2300, Atlanta, Fulton County, GA 30303-1631					
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