

Going PRO : 5 Wedding Photography Tips

1. Business Plan
2. Advertising and Marketing
3. Branding
4. Networking
5. Sales

1. In order to achieve and perpetuate a profitable photography business or any other business, it is very essential to have a vision where you would like to see your business grow, expand and head in the future. Visualizing and capturing your thoughts on paper and then producing a business plan is very essential. It will create a sense of direction as well as prioritization in regards to the financial, creative and self fulfilling needs. Refer back to it often and don't be scared to rewrite it, add to it or scratch things off as you develop yourself and business alike.
2. Advertising is great, however when starting a brand new business, budget allocated to advertising will be minimal as you will have tons of other expenses. As such I strongly recommend for you to realize your target audience. In wedding photography, it will be brides averaging the age of 20-35. You need to find out where your local brides hang out online and off, and how to reach them. Once they start talking about you and your amazing business and how remarkable it is, a word of mouth is unparalleled to any other form of advertising. It is FREE and very strong as it usually comes from a friend, family or someone who can vouch for your great, remarkable work. Once you build your portfolio (at least a few weddings) you will have some images to showcase, which leads me to point 3.
3. Online presence and blog. In this day and age, most of your target audience will find you, check you out and access your portfolio and compatibility online. Having a strong web site visually driven will be a definitive plus. Going through lots of research and trial and error I found that as oppose to making your own site which will not look very professional (unless you are a web designer and programmer) or paying hundreds of dollars to custom create one for you, the best way to go is buying a photography driven template. One that is easy to update, customize your interface from colours, fonts, logo, feel, images...et al. I recommend www.bludomain.com. You can pick up a template as low as \$100 and have a really presentable and professional looking site in a matter of days. Check out my portfolio at www.kostelphoto.com that I have customized with one of blu's templates. Also, I definitively recommend creating a blog which can be a very resourceful marketing tool adjacent to your web site. You can create a free blog with www.blogspot.com. Once you get the hang of it, it is really easy updating it with photos, stories, youtube videos or any other content you choose to share with your clients, friends and blog stockers. Your clients will be able to see your current work as well as be able to relate to you on a personal level if you choose to blog about your personal life. This way your potential brides will feel more comfortable, have a easier time meeting you and feel more partial to hiring you as oppose to someone they have not seen in pictures. It really does work. Numerously, I have brides mention how much easier it was meeting us, because they felt like they already knew us through our blog. So blog about anything and everything. Blog your weddings, engagement shoots, personal work, personal life to your comfort and you will see the potential.
4. As many people say or perhaps you have heard this phrase: Network is your Networth. I can't stress enough. Network, network and network. You might feel isolated in this industry, but networking can help you get to know your colleagues, pass referrals onto one another, and once again amplify your own word of mouth advertising via your brides. Who should you network with, might you ask? With your clients, wedding photog's and other wedding vendors such as coordinators, venues and halls, florists, dj's, limos...et al. Simple thing such as acknowledging them and linking to them via your blog posts or sending them a promo DVD of their products ie; floral arrangements will surely spark up a good and mutually beneficial working relationship. Also don't forget the many forums, online chats and other social networks like www.facebook.com that will allow you to connect to other professionals and potential clients.
5. Your run your photographic business for the passion of the art, creativity, interpersonal relationships and the positive environment you surround yourself with ie: weddings and people in love. However you are running this venture for profit as well. Do not forget that. Pay yourself first! All sales start from an email inquiry, telephone call or a consultation. In fact sometimes they follow that exact order as described above. Always pick up the phone and show your potential client the service you can provide that they are expecting. Price yourself accordingly. Research your local competition and see what is being offered with regards to services and products. Customize your packages and try to differentiate yourself from the pack. Don't be afraid to ask what you think you are worth. Price yourself to specifically to the target audience you are after. Socio-economical brides come in many levels with many different expectations and needs. According to your prices you will or will not attract a certain audience. If you choose to price yourself a bit higher then your competition, make sure you can justify it with abilities, experiences and artistically. Consultations are very important. Offer them free with no obligations. This is your first, in person point of contact with your potential client and time to show your work and really sell yourself! It is also a time to interview your client to see if this match is backwards compatible. Think of incentives to close the deal the day of consultation or allow clients to do their homework, think about it and get back to you. If you were mutually a good match and client was able to relate to you, they will come back. Price is not everything! We establish a good rapport from a get go and most of our clients become our friends. The whole experience becomes much more personal and fun! So, get out there, be fun, creative, love your job and get paid well!