

5 KEYS OF A SUCCESSFUL PHOTOGRAPHY BUSINESS STRATEGY



Five key areas to focus on, from reputation to product quality, when building a successful photography business strategy.

A lens and a business card are all it takes to get into the photography business, but it's not as easy to turn it into a long-term profitable enterprise.

Making photography a career requires one to establish a solid business base, secure high quality, dedicated employees and actively involve oneself in the business' target market. I grew up in the photography

studio industry. Many of my friends have operated successful businesses for over 40 years. This article distills why they are successful into 5 great things to focus on in order to establish and grow your photography business.

1. DEVELOP A PROFIT-DRIVEN PHOTOGRAPHY BUSINESS STRATEGY



The primary reasons small businesses fail are: lack of planning, unrealistic expectations, and underfunding.

To start a business in a practical way, one must take a good look at where one is, what specifically one wants to do and determine how it can be done profitably. It's important to have a clear plan from which to build a brand that will be incorporated into all marketing, advertising, and visual representation of the business.

The product/price list and sound business software create the backbone of small businesses.

Clients need a clear idea of what is available for them to buy and how much it costs.

You need to know that the business is providing the products for profit. Good business software empowers businesses to track clients, orders, expenses, and profits. Many programs also integrate marketing strategy capabilities that are key to company growth.

Clearly understand that time is money. Hard costs are easy to calculate. Investment of human time in product creation, marketing, and selling the work must also be incorporated into product price in order to operate profitably. Photographers make money when they are taking and selling pictures. Overlooking the time spent interviewing clients, editing, presenting work, post processing, retouching, printing, framing, assembling albums, updating social media and marketing easily translates into long hours for low profit. Build a team. Outsource. Focus on working profitably.

2. QUALITY OF PRODUCT AND BUSINESS IMAGE



The difference makes the difference.

Today's pro photographers are competing with everyone who owns a smart phone, an HD TV and a home printer. Many clients have great cameras and home printing capabilities up to 13"x19". They can upload their files to web services that offer very low cost generic printing up to wall size and bigger. Most consumers do not know what good **professional quality** photography and printing should look like, so you have to show them.

Purchasing art is also based upon perceived value. Why are your pictures more expensive than theirs? If you have to explain it, they're not; it should be visually evident.



Key points in developing visually distinctive imagery are education and practice. Internet is a great source of education if you already know what you need to learn and are knowledgeable enough about the subject to know if the information you are gathering is complete and accurate. If you are new to the field or self-taught to date, attend classes, participate in associations and

seek personal mentors. Learn the basics and the classics. They will take you everywhere you want to go. Practice, experiment and challenge yourself often.

Impactful presentation of visually distinctive imagery builds perceived value.

Where and how clients see your work is integral to how they perceive the value of it.

The higher the price, the more image marketing contributes to perceived value. For instance, one expects Costco to be cheap and Neiman Marcus, expensive. The compared visual appeal of each store is image

marketing, from the brick and mortar environment to the ads placed in magazines. Develop your image marketing to reflect what you do in an appealing manner to your studio's target market.

3. NETWORK THE TARGET MARKET



Most photographers get clients from within their community. People tend to do business with people they know or are referred to by a friend or associate so it's important to become a familiar face.

Personal participation in networking groups, art centers, educational programs, country clubs, churches, animal shelters, charities and other community projects puts you in front of potential clients on a regular basis. Develop a short, clear and concise verbal description of what you do and what kind of work you are looking for. Ask for referrals.

Marketing is most effective when it is appealing to the target market, contains visual branding of the business and is facilitated according to an annual marketing plan.

Develop reasons for your customers to buy throughout the year

Whether it's holiday related or physical events you either put together or participate in, let people know what you are doing, why they should want to participate, and what they can buy.

Remarketing: It's important to understand what other businesses do but more important to develop something different. For instance, if everyone else relies upon social media, a physical mailing piece will make you instantly different.

4. CREATIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF INCOMING TECHNOLOGIES



Technology changes frequently. It's important to research incoming opportunities, evaluate possible monetary benefits for your business and imagine creative ways of implementing the ones that look promising

for your business growth. Consider whether or not a new technology will save time or make money before putting a lot of time or money into it.

Internet is important. Most people browse a website, LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, and maybe a YouTube, Instagram, or Pinterest presence, BUT one can spend hours per day updating, sharing, connecting and browsing and it's not billable time. It may also be secondary to personal image marketing within the community if your clients come to you locally. I recommend a good online presence that reflects the image design, branding and style of the tangible pieces you use to represent the business.

I also recommend tracking how your clients come to you so you can polish the most popular venues to perfection, work on making the low lead options more attractive and drop the ones that prove ineffective for the type of business you have.

5. REPUTATION FOR QUALITY AND SERVICE



Clients come to a business in a variety of ways but come back because they liked what they got, it was good perceived value for their money, they had a good time getting it and want more of it the next time.

Find ways of servicing clients that make them feel special during the time they spend with you. Follow up with a personal note, an email, a

text – whatever is appropriate for your target market and be sure to include them in future advertising.

Deliver what is expected, or a little bit more, on time and in good condition.

Handle complaints promptly and in a manner that is fair to both parties. Be professional in all aspects of the business. Be ethical and honest. Never deliver a job that is less than your best.

It's been my experience that in the end, it's who one is rather than what one does that ensures long term success. Most people are forgiving of mistakes that are honestly admitted and supportive of those trying new things that just might not be perfect this time. People gravitate to authentic kindness and respect. People avoid businesses that have poor reputations for quality and service.



A career in photography can be very rewarding and fun. It is a business, however, and like all businesses will not be successful long term without a lot of business savvy. Plan yours well. Have realistic expectations for time and profit based upon research, practice and education. Make sure there are funds available to carry the business during lean times for the

first three years. And don't forget to enjoy creating beautiful images!



Jane Conner-ziser is an award winning photographer, digital artist, premier educator and independent consultant. With over 25 years of experience, 19 of them in digital imaging and evolving technologies, the techniques Jane developed for facial retouching and enhancement and portrait painting from photographs are widely emulated by photographers and digital artists worldwide through her classes, online training and educational products. You can learn more on [her website](#).