

2016

an educational guide by  PHOTOSHELTER

Photo Business Plan WORKBOOK

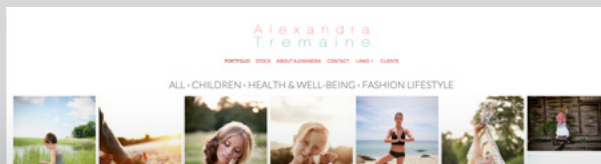
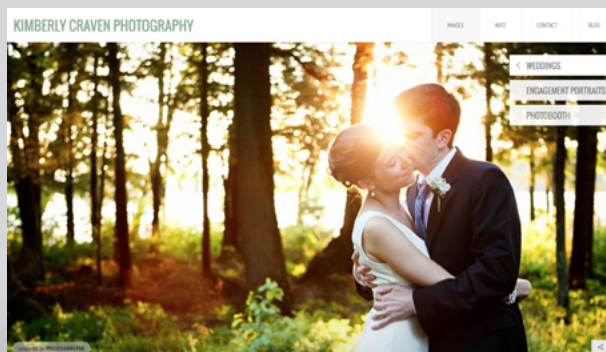
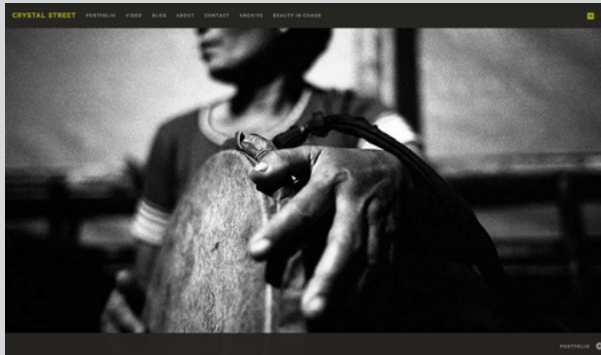
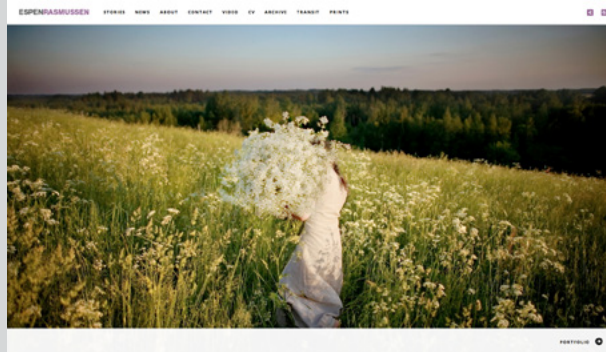
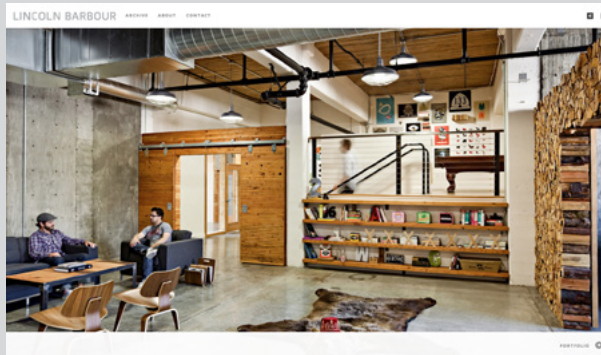
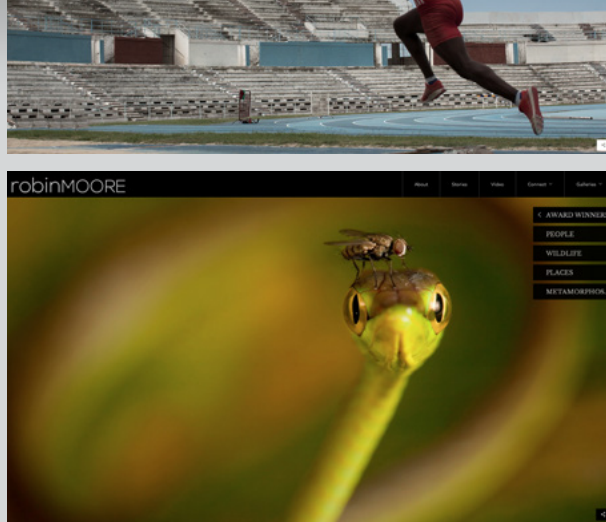
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Overview

Most of us didn't have the luxury of going to business school, and with all of the day-to-day activities that it takes to keep a photo business afloat, it's often difficult to step back and focus on strategy and the large scale plans that will help a business sustain growth rather than just tread water. But it's arguable that this process is even more important when times are tough, and so we present *The 2016 Photo Business Plan Workbook*, which is designed to help you systematically think through a few key areas of your business in an actionable and digestible format.

This workbook isn't meant to be your sole resource for business planning. Instead, we hope to provide key concepts and steps that will help you think about your photography from a business perspective. We reference a number of additional resources that will allow you to dive deeper into areas that pique your interest. After all, the difference between a professional photographer and an amateur is rarely talent; rather it more often comes down to hustle and business savvy.

Each section is divided into smaller subsections to help you digest the information easily. We also provide a "Do This" list with estimated times for those of you who like more of a cookbook approach.

Before you jump in, take some time to consider your goals for the year. Having a clear sense of what you want to achieve in 2016 will help you think strategically about the tactics that will be required to get there. The more specific you can be, the better. Clear goals will also provide a yardstick that you can measure your progress against at various milestones throughout the year.

#1

Define Your Product & Services

When it comes to photography, limiting the scope of what you photograph will help you become more effective at penetrating certain niches.

CONCEPT

Creative people tend to have a wide variety of interests by nature. However, when it comes to improving your business, you often need to narrow your focus to a more limited set of items.

Buyers have consistently told us that they appreciate when a photographer exhibits a clear specialty—whether that be style, location, subject matter, or talent. Having a specialty will help when buyers need to recall a photographer who does something exactly the way you do. Plus, it will help the buyers place you and your promotional materials into both mental and physical storage locations for reference later on.

The size of your market in the area where you live and work might be a gating factor. If you live in a small town, there might not be enough weddings to sustain a full-time business. This might lead you to do portraits, or you might expand the geography in which you work. But trying to develop a business in a completely different niche (e.g. stock photography) is unlikely to be successful because there are so many different factors to consider.

RATIONALE

When it comes to photography, limiting the scope of what you photograph will help you become more effective at penetrating certain niches and help you understand the nuances of different vertical markets within photography.

Example

A wedding photographer might consider the following:

- › developing relationships with vendors (caterers, wedding planners, event halls, etc)
- › attending bridal shows
- › maintaining a standalone website for your wedding photography
- › attend industry trade shows (e.g. [WPPI](#))
- › increasing your social media presence because of the strength of “word of mouth”

If you're a generalist and weddings are just one of the many things you are trying to do, then it's unlikely that you'd be able to spend much time developing the relationships or the other activities necessary for success. Resist the temptation to fill your days with low paying jobs because you confuse being busy with being successful. Instead, spend the time honing your product offerings and improve your marketing.

So, you need to make a determination—what is it that you offer your target customers? Can you clearly state this? Is your unique offering based on a specialty (e.g. night photography), or certain access (e.g. US military) or skill (e.g. lighting)? Or, is your unique offering based on

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the service delivered or tangible product the customer will be purchasing (e.g. boudoir portrait sessions or photo wrapped Mini Coopers)?

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Similarly, if you sell products, analyze what has sold for you in the past year, and get a sense of whether the profit margin was worth the effort. For example, many wedding photographers have stopped selling prints, and instead deliver files on DVD as a part of the wedding package. Part of this is for convenience sake, but there's also been a dramatic shift to only displaying images online like Facebook, for example. Savvier wedding photographers, therefore, have altered their print sales strategy to selling a single, high priced item like a canvas wrap for \$1000 instead of one hundred 5x7s for \$10 each.

DO THIS:

- Create a list of your top selling products and service offerings. Determine whether it is of sufficient size to cover your cost of doing business and turn a profit.
- Survey your competition to determine whether they have service offerings that you could replicate.
- If you sell products, periodically visit large print services to see if they have added new products that might help you sell more (e.g. die cut cards, leather bound photo books, etc).

(estimated time: 3 hours)



PHOTOSHELTER CAN HELP

PhotoShelter gives you a comprehensive selection of photography sales options. PhotoShelter is fully integrated with five partner labs to provide automated printing and shipping of prints and products. Our PhotoShelter Print Vendor Network extends this to virtually any lab worldwide. You can even sell royalty-free, rights-managed and personal use downloads. Learn more about selling through PhotoShelter in our [Basic Steps to Selling](#).

RESOURCES

- › **TOOL:** [NPPA's Cost of Doing Business Calculator](#)
- › **GUIDE:** [Pricing Your Work: Magazine Photography](#)
- › **GUIDE:** [Pricing Your Work: Corporate and Industrial Photography](#)
- › **GUIDE:** [Pricing Your Work: Photojournalism](#)
- › **GUIDE:** [How to Sell Prints](#)

#2

Determine Your Audience & Addressable Market

CONCEPT

Judging by the number of photographers who solicit opinions about their websites from other photographers, we can say with certainty that there is something askew in the way that many photographers think about their current and potential customers. While it might be convenient to ask a photographer buddy, it's not particularly useful in trying to understand what your intended audience thinks. The inability to articulate your intended audience is a clear indication that you have an incomplete view of your business.

Once you've determined your intended audience, also consider the size of that intended audience (a.k.a. the addressable market). Is it large enough to sustain your business given what you know about the frequency of sales within that market? For example, if you specialize in corporate portraits of lawyers, do a quick back-of-the-napkin calculation to determine the number of law firms, the frequency with which they need portraits, the rate at which you gain (and lose) them as clients, and the price per portrait. Be as conservative as possible—if you did 50 things last year, it's unlikely you'll do 150 this year.

Get into the habit of estimating, and then hone those skills with the actual numbers. The more clarity you can bring to the planning process, the more accurate your forecasts will be.

RATIONALE

An incomplete understanding of your potential customers and the size of that base can lead you to disastrous results. When you can define your audience, you can better understand their needs and hone your marketing message and products.

Example

If you specialize in underwater stock photography, your audience isn't men's lifestyle magazine photo editors. More likely it's a very specific set of textbook publishers and travel companies specializing in underwater adventure. Because textbooks require a high degree of specificity and accuracy, you will need to provide the scientific names to satisfy the needs of your audience.

When you can define your audience, you can better understand their needs and hone your marketing message and products.

DO THIS:

- Write your positioning statement to ensure you've clearly defined your product/service and audience. Fill in the blanks below:

“For *(your target market)* who wants / needs *(reason to buy your product/service)*, the *(your name, business, product or service)* is a *(specialty)* photographer that provides *(your key benefit)*. Unlike other photographers in this space, my key differentiator is *(how you uniquely address the client's needs)*.”
- Consider your target customer's key needs and pain points. List them out one by one. Then go over the list and determine how your services will address those needs.
- Make a determination about the size of the addressable market. How likely are you to serve enough customers in this market to sustain your business? Does your addressable market need to get larger? How would your product and services change as a result?

(estimated time: 1 hour)

PHOTOSHELTER CAN HELP

If you have multiple specialities that are sufficiently differentiated (e.g. weddings and photojournalism), strongly consider different websites for each niche. A single website without a focus isn't just bad for SEO, it gives mixed messages to your intended audience. Did you know that PhotoShelter offers discounts on multiple websites? Call 212-206-0808 to inquire about the discount.

RESOURCES:

- › **WEBINAR:** [Interview with Zack Arias: If I Had to Start My Business Today](#)
- › **GUIDE:** [The Ultimate Guide to Starting Your Photo Business](#)
- › **GUIDE:** [Creating a Successful Photography Portfolio](#)
- › **BLOG:** [The 4 Most Important Questions Every Working Photographer Should Answer](#)
- › **BLOG:** [The 5 Steps to Figuring Out Your Target Audience](#)
- › **VIDEO:** [Stop Waiting For Your Big Break](#)
- › **VIDEO:** [Turning Your Passion Into a Lasting Career](#)
- › **VIDEO:** [Get Organized and Build a Better Portfolio](#)

#3

Create a Marketing Plan

CONCEPT

Even the word “marketing plan” can sound daunting, but don’t get tripped up on terminology. Still, if you expect to see an increase in clients/sales, you need to have a plan for specific marketing tactics that will drive this improvement. Our recommendation is to simply think about different marketing categories, and then list out activities that you could do in each.

Your marketing plan shouldn’t be designed to treat each potential customer as if they were in the same state of readiness to hire you or buy something from you. For example, some people who walk into the Gap are just passing the time; a smaller percentage want to try on a pair of jeans; and an even smaller percentage walk into the store ready to buy.

When you consider different activities in each category, think about how people in different parts of the “sales cycle” would react. You might do a low cost postcard campaign to blanket as many photo buyers and editors. And you might do a more expensive photo book to send to your top 10 to make a larger impression. You wouldn’t treat the customer who’s just looking for a place to sit down the same as the one who’s ready to buy a pair of jeans. Your marketing efforts should be nuanced.

RATIONALE

One-time marketing efforts rarely pay off. You often need multiple campaigns through multiple channels to get on people’s radars and convert them into customers. Increasing your “brand awareness” amongst your potential customers is arguably as important as converting a small percentage of them into paying customers.

Example

Here are a few categories to consider:

- › Direct Mail: postcards, books, posters
- › Social Media: Twitter, Facebook, Instagram
- › In-person visits
- › Events: Trade shows, organized portfolio reviews
- › Inbound Tactics: SEO optimization
- › Outbound Tactics: Email newsletter

If you expect to see an increase in clients/sales, you need to have a plan for specific marketing tactics that will drive this improvement.

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Once you have some marketing activities defined, create a simple spreadsheet with some estimates of time, cost, and Return on Investment (ROI).

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Use your historical data combined with your best estimates to get a general sense of which activities you think will lead to the best results. You can't work 24 hours a day and the outcome of this comparison should help give you a sense of the activities that are worth your time and marketing budget. Those activities that produce the maximum return (ie. new clients) for every dollar spent, or hour invested, should occupy the bulk of your plan.

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Further, don't consider every decision final. Savvy marketers are always testing ideas. Create a hypothesis, design a test, and give the test enough time to run.

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DO THIS:

- Create a list of current and future marketing activities.
- Create a rough estimate of time/money that you will expend on each.
- Create a rough ROI (return on investment) calculation in dollars that each initiative will bring.
- Jettison low ROI projects. Plan campaigns around high ROI projects (e.g. commit to advertising a discount through multiple channels each quarter).

(estimated time: 2 hours)

RESOURCES:

- › **GUIDE:** [How to Market Your Photography](#)
- › **BLOG:** [10 Great Photographer Promos](#)
- › **GUIDE:** [Marketing Yourself with Photo Books](#)
- › **GUIDE:** [The 2016 Photographer's Guide to Photo Contests](#)
- › **VIDEO:** [Ami Vitale's Winning Tips on Submitting to Photo Contests](#)
- › **BLOG:** [Your Checklist for Creating a Winning Print Portfolio](#)
- › **BLOG:** [15 Things Buyers Love to See in a Email](#)
- › **BLOG:** [7 Essential Marketing Tips](#)
- › **BLOG:** [10 Tips from National Geographic, The Cut, Sports Illustrated & More](#)

#4

Fix Your Finances

CONCEPT

Are you depositing money from your photo jobs directly into your personal bank account? Are you living from gig to gig? Have you been putting off acquiring insurance because it costs too much? Are you unclear on which items you can legitimately deduct from your expenses when you file your taxes?

Most freelance photographers slide into the profession without thinking about it from the perspective of developing a healthy business. But a single lightstand hitting an event guest, or an IRS audit, can terminally affect your business.

RATIONALE

If your photography is your occupation, then you need to treat it as a job, not a hobby. This means maintaining a level of professionalism and accountability.

Your business needs at a minimum:

- » a separate bank account and credit cards to separate business and personal charges
- » an accurate bookkeeping system

- » equipment and liability insurance (you might want to consider errors & omissions insurance in case your CF card becomes unreadable)
- » a cash flow plan to ensure your spending does not outpace your income

We recommend sitting down with an accountant sooner rather than later so that you understand the reporting obligations that your business has in your jurisdiction, as well as information on your tax obligations. Understanding how timing your purchases can impact (or even reduce) your tax burden will help you make better decisions about what equipment you buy and when you do it.

Example

Cash flow is not a hard concept and you don't need an advanced degree in accounting to create your plan.

Try this simple exercise: project out all of your desired equipment needs, and other business costs (travel/transportation, communications, business meals, insurance, office expenses, etc.). Note specifically whether any of these costs must occur at specific times. Then look at your revenue (monthly) from the previous year. If you do everything the same in 2016, and clients continue to pay their bills, will you cover your expenses? Can you create a cushion to protect yourself and still honor your obligations in case any one client doesn't pay on time? If not, you need to determine ways to generate more income by either increasing sales or increasing the price of your current product and services delivered.

We recommend sitting down with an accountant sooner rather than later.

DO THIS:

- Use the [NPPA's Cost of Doing Business Calculator](#) to understand what your billable rate needs to be at the bare minimum to cover your expenses and turn a profit.
- Find an accountant and book time for a financial assessment. It could very well be the best money you ever spend.
- Separate your personal and business finances.
- Meticulously track your expenses. An audit can be devastating to your business.

(estimated time: 5 hours)

RESOURCES:

- › **TOOL:** [Mint.com](#) Not a substitute for real bookkeeping, but a free and convenient way to track and monitor your income and expenses. Plus it's free!
- › **TOOL:** [Quickbooks Online](#) This cloud-based bookkeeping software starts at \$12.95/month and is great if you need to grant access to your part-time accountant.
- › **TOOL:** [Freshbooks](#) Simple invoicing software
- › **TOOL:** [Taxninja.com](#) The Tax Ninja has helped hundreds of photographers plan their finances and navigate tax obligations.
- › **BOOK:** [Best Business Practices for Photographers by John Harrington](#)
- › **BLOG:** [5 Business Mistakes Photographers Make All The Time](#)
- › **BLOG:** [Negotiating With Clients Doesn't Have To Be Scary](#)
- › **BLOG:** [Should Photographers Incorporate? Here's How To Tell](#)
- › **BLOG:** [There's No Crying in Finances: 8 Tips to Help You Get Ahead](#)
- › **VIDEO:** [Crowdfunding Your Personal Projects](#)
- › **VIDEO:** [How to Talk Money With Your Clients](#)
- › **VIDEO:** [6 Reasons to Consider Renting Photo Gear](#)
- › **RESOURCES:** [American Photographic Artists: Resources](#)
- › **RESOURCES:** [Business and Legal FAQs for Photographers from American Society of Media Photographers](#)
- › **RESOURCES:** [Pricing Guides From American Society of Media Photographers](#)

#5

Tune-up Your Website

CONCEPT

The typical photography website around the turn of the millennium was a digital version of a printed portfolio—a handful of your best images arranged into a few galleries. But websites aren't only portfolios—they are sales and marketing tools—and if you don't conceive of your website that way, it might be time for an upgrade.

Here are a few things your website must have to be functional and competitive:

- » Image search
- » E-commerce
- » File delivery
- » Newsletter signup
- » Contact information/About page
- » Blog

There's even tangential evidence that an old-looking site can affect your Search Engine Optimization (SEO). Modern websites not only look attractive and have solid functionality, they are also coded in such a way to make them more visible to search engines.

Websites aren't only portfolios—they are sales and marketing tools—and if you don't conceive of your website that way, it might be time for an upgrade.

Maintaining the freshness of the content on your website should be an important goal, so it's a good idea to plan out a series of regular updates. Your website should be easy to update, and if you maintain the “set it and forget it” strategy then you're likely hurting yourself on a number of fronts. Search engine robots that crawl your site like to see fresh updates and you'll get a bump in search engine results. Plus, every website update gives you “new news” to share with followers in your social community (and the prospects on your newsletter list)—giving you one more reason to cross their radar screen.

Use an analytics tool like [Google Analytics](#) to help inform your changes. Determine what content is most compelling to visitors (or even more ideally, which content is most helpful in converting visitors to paying customers). On the flipside, you can also easily analyze your site to determine which content isn't working at all to attract new visitors, engage them, and turn them into your customer.

RATIONALE

Getting people to your website is hard work. Don't lose the potential to convert them into customers or sign up for a newsletter by only treating your website as a showcase for your photography. Imagine if Amazon.com didn't have online ordering and you had to call a sales person between 9-5 to purchase an item. It sounds ridiculous, but this is how many photographer websites function.

Example

[Hunter Harrison](#) is a Cleveland-based wedding photographer. A few years ago, he was upset with the limited SEO tools offered by his template website provider, so he

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switched to a combination of WordPress blog and PhotoShelter. These two sites together give him complete control to apply his desired keywords across his Web presence.

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Realizing he wanted a more polished design than he could execute himself, Hunter swallowed some pride and engaged a professional designer to help him update his website, design a new logo, and create a set of promotional materials to communicate his new brand and business name. (Read all about the process in [his blog post on Branding for Wedding photographers](#).)

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Hunter now uses PhotoShelter to make his image archive and event galleries available to clients via his website. He then turns to PhotoShelter's social sharing tools to allow his clients to easily share images with friends, family, and guests. His clients and their family and friends order prints right online from his website. Hunter regularly checks his Google Analytics to determine how well SEO is working, with clear data on whether or not the keywords he's using are generating new traffic from search engines.

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DO THIS:

- Based on your identification of your audience and addressable market, determine what features your website needs to have to best serve your customers.
- Audit your website to understand where it is falling short for your customers.
- Install Google Analytics to gain insight into how people are using your website and where they are coming from.

(estimated time: 1 hour)



PHOTOSHELTER CAN HELP

We offer beautiful websites alongside 100+ business tools to help you grow your photo career and reach more clients. Try us out for free for 14 days when you visit www.photoshelter.com.

RESOURCES:

- › **SERVICE:** [PhotoShelter](#)
- › **VIDEO:** [Welcome to PhotoShelter - A Quick Video](#)
- › **GUIDE:** [11 Secrets to a Great Photo Website](#)
- › **GUIDE:** [Creating a Successful Photography Portfolio](#)
- › **BLOG:** [9 Features Every Photo Website Needs Now](#)
- › **GUIDE:** [Google Analytics for Photographers](#)
- › **VIDEO:** [Building a Better Online Portfolio with Stella Kramer](#)

#6

Build Your SEO

CONCEPT

Photographers are often vexed by Search Engine Optimization (SEO) because it seems like a moving target. Just when you think your website is ranking well, Google changes its algorithm, and you lose half your traffic. The frustration might be warranted, but the fact of the matter is that everyone uses search engines to find services and products online. And no matter what you search for, some website always comes up first, and subsequently gain a massive marketing benefit.

Although there are many different factors that affect SEO, we like to think of three main categories that you can focus on to simplify things.

- » On-page content
- » Building links to your website
- » Getting people talking about you in social media

RATIONALE

In an information-rich society, we are highly dependent on search engines to find what we are looking for whether it's a local plumber, or a portrait photographer

in Des Moines. You simply cannot drive enough traffic to your website by handing out business cards. The goal of SEO is unsolicited traffic—people looking for your products and services without knowing who you are.

Example

There are three main areas that all photographers can focus on immediately to improve their SEO:

1 ON-PAGE CONTENT refers to the text that appears on your website. On many photographer websites, there is very limited text, which is a huge problem from an SEO perspective. As much as you might want your photography to “speak for itself,” you still need textual content to rank within search engines. If you are a New York portrait photographer, then “New York portrait photographer” should appear on your website. So should words and phrases that are similar in nature like “I specialize in corporate and editorial portraiture in the New York and Tri-state area.” Similarly, your images need captions and titles, and the more detail, the better.

Hopefully, your website provider has automated much of the SEO techno-geek stuff for you. This might include:

- » unique page titles
- » meta description
- » <h1> (aka. HTML headline tags)
- » IMG alt attributes
- » microformats
- » sitemaps
- » optimized page load times

The goal of SEO is unsolicited traffic—people looking for your products and services without knowing who you are.

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2 BUILDING LINKS TO YOUR WEBSITE is the most important factor in increasing your SEO. The process of “backlink” creation can seem like a very ambiguous task, but in fact, it’s quite simple. There are two ways to build links 1) do it yourself, or 2) get other people to link to your website.

Maintaining a blog is the easiest way to link to yourself. Each time you photograph something new, create a gallery on your website, then write a blog entry which links to that gallery. If you belong to any photography trade groups or community sites, you might have a profile page where you can link back to your website.

Getting other people to link to you is a bit harder, but you really just want to have something interesting on your website. Perhaps you’ve worked on a long-term photo project that has some relevance right now. You might pitch a gallery of images to various photo blogs, magazines, or newspapers. Link aggregator sites like Stumbleupon, Digg, and Reddit can also be a great way to get a large number of people talking about your photography very quickly.

3 GETTING PEOPLE TALKING ABOUT YOU IN SOCIAL MEDIA has quickly become an important correlative factor in SEO. In the same way that backlinks are viewed as a vote of endorsement for your website, social signals (e.g. people “liking” or “tweeting” about content on your website) is viewed similarly by search engines.

Google makes hundreds of changes to their search algorithm in any given year, and “freshness” has become more important. Therefore, it’s important to be actively creating content online to succeed.

DO THIS:

- Create a keyword “hitlist” of 20-50 words that you want your website to rank for.
- Check these words against the Google Keyword Tool to determine whether they have appreciable search volume. Modify your list accordingly.
- Use your keyword list to inform website copy
- Search each term to determine your on-line competition
- Use [MajesticSEO](#) to perform a backlink analysis to determine whether you can displace the competition.
- Build links to your website!

(estimated time: 5 hours)

RESOURCES:

- › **TOOL:** [SEOmoz: Search Ranking Factors](#)
- › **TOOL:** [searchengineland.com](#)
- › **TOOL:** [majesticseo.com](#)
- › **TOOL:** [Google Keyword Tool](#)
- › **TOOL:** [Marketing Grader](#)
- › **BLOG:** [Why People Aren’t Linking To Your Website](#)
- › **BLOG:** [9 Foolproof Ideas for Your Next Blog Post](#)
- › **BOOTCAMP:** [SEO for Photographers](#)
- › **BLOG:** [5 Reasons Blogging is Crucial for Good SEO](#)
- › **BLOG:** [What Is Anchor Text and Why Should You Care?](#)
- › **BLOG:** [Find Your Images Online Using Reverse Image Search on Google](#)
- › **BLOG:** [Google’s official blog](#)

#7

Get Social

CONCEPT

Over 1.2 billion people use Facebook. Twitter has over 280 million active registered users. Instagram has over 300 million active registered users. Social media isn't a fad—one could argue it is the glue that creates highly sticky user interaction on the web.

Companies are amassing millions of users online with the ability to broadcast messages more frequently and more inexpensively than ever before. Celebrities are communicating with fans, news outlets are breaking stories, and photographers are finding that they can enter the social conversation by simply tagging wedding guests in a Facebook album before the guests can.

RATIONALE

We're not saying that every social media outlet will work for every photographer, but there's enough real evidence to suggest that a strong social media campaign can translate into real marketing exposure and real revenue. The key point to remember is that your website is not a daily destination for your customers. Whereas hundreds of millions of people login to Facebook daily, it's important that you go to where your customers already are.

The argument can be made that different specialities will use social media differently—that's very true. So, going back to your understanding of your audience, it's a good idea to determine how your audience uses social media to follow photographers and identify new talent. For instance, if you're a portrait photographer, you're probably focused on how you can best harness the social platforms to promote word of mouth. Can you come up with new Facebook strategies that get your clients sharing your images with other potential families and teens? And if you're a commercial or editorial photographer, maybe you're more interested in using LinkedIn and Twitter to keep former clients and prospects aware of your latest work. (We've been told that many buyers use social media to stay in contact with photographers they've worked with, not necessarily to find new ones.)

Example

[Ken Kaminesky](#) is a former commercial lifestyle stock photographer who more recently turned to fine art photography, with a focus on landscape and architecture. Ken relies heavily on social media and his blog to market his work with over 104K Twitter followers. He's reached a level of social media success by diligently tweeting and interacting with his Twitter followers, and establishing relationships with social media influencers to help spread the word.

After notable shoots, Ken will write a blogpost describing the experience and include select images in the post. He will then share the post with his social communities on Twitter, Google+, Instagram and Facebook. On each social platform, Ken has an engaged community of fans thanks to his regular participation in social conversation, frequent interaction with others, and the quality and di-

A strong social media campaign can translate into real marketing exposure and real revenue.

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versity of strong content he's shared. The result is that his community frequently shares his work with others. This activity helps stimulate fine art print sales to unknown buyers who find Ken online thanks to social word of mouth.

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Ken's social presence on multiple platforms helps potential clients easily find and engage with his work. These total strangers encounter his images, but get a dose of Ken's personality as well. In an instant, it is easy to form an impression that he's well travelled, knowledgeable about his craft, and easy to work with—all "soft" brand qualities that clients appreciate and help close a sale or book an assignment.

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DO THIS:

- Survey your competition to see how they are using social media. This might give you a rough indication of whether it's effective for your niche.
- Create accounts on the most relevant social media networks.
- Use your marketing plan to help create a schedule of social media activity.

(estimated time: 2 hours)



PHOTOSHELTER CAN HELP

PhotoShelter makes it easy for your website visitors to share links to your photography in their social communities as well, with optional buttons to post links in the major social networks. Because PhotoShelter's latest portfolio websites are based on HTML5 and CSS3, not Flash, every individual image has a discreet link that can be shared by fans and followers. (Unlike some Flash websites which typically have one single URL for the entire site.) Also with our responsive portfolio options, you can integrate directly with sites like Wordpress, Vimeo, Tumblr and Instagram.

RESOURCES:

- › **GUIDE:** [The Photographer's Guide to Facebook](#)
- › **GUIDE:** [The Photographer's Guide to Instagram](#)
- › **GUIDE:** [The Photographer's Guide to Twitter](#)
- › **GUIDE:** [The Photographer's Guide to Copyright](#)
- › **GUIDE:** [The Photography Blog Handbook](#)
- › **BLOG:** [Measuring Social Media Influence with Klout](#)
- › **VIDEO:** [The Balance Between Sharing and Selling Your Images](#)
- › **TOOL:** [Google Analytics](#)

#8

Create an Advisory Group

CONCEPT

Chances are, you've been hanging out with a lot of photographers in the past several years, and the result of those interactions is probably a narrow understanding of how other people in other industries build successful businesses. Creative consultant Luke Mysse suggests building an advisory board for your business composed of people you respect in other industries. Take them out to lunch once a quarter and solicit honest feedback about improving your business.

The advisory group might help you create milestones between each meeting, have you examine different aspects of the business that you never considered, or might even suggest non-work-related items (e.g. your health) to consider.

RATIONALE

When it comes to self-evaluation, we're often too myopic to assess our own strengths and weaknesses. The same could be said of a small business. Larger businesses or investor-based businesses often have a Board which provides guidance and constructive criticism. There's no reason why a small business or sole proprietor shouldn't benefit from the same dynamics.

Example

Here are some people you might consider for your advisory group:

- › **ACCOUNTANT/CFO:** If you looked at your business strictly by the numbers, would you come up with different conclusions?
- › **MARKETER:** Marketing is fundamental to growing any business. A marketer can help you stay focused on growing your funnel and improving conversion.
- › **SALES PERSON:** Sales people are a different breed. When you're unafraid of the answer "no," how will your business change?
- › **GRAPHIC DESIGNER:** Get a second opinion on the design and flow of your site. Does it showcase your images front and center or is it cluttered with text?
- › **MBA:** MBAs often learn through case studies from a variety of industries. Could your business benefit by cross fertilization?
- › **INTERNET ENTREPRENEUR:** Rapid growth and product development provide a very different colored lens to view business.

It's a common management philosophy to hire people smarter than you. Similarly, seek an advisory panel who can challenge and inspire you. You should never come away from an advisory meeting thinking that it was a waste of time because if you feel that way, then it most certainly was.

Solicit honest feedback about improving your business.

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DO THIS:

- Think of the three smartest business people you know who aren't photographers.
- Meet with them individually to propose that you trade lunch once per quarter in exchange for their advice. Don't spook them with calling it a "board" or any formal terminology.
- Take their advice to heart. There's no point in dedicating the time if you're not going to be receptive to their feedback.

(estimated time: 1 hour)

#9

Follow Up With Old Clients

CONCEPT

The easiest sale should, in theory, be with your old clients. But for some reason, human behavior creates strange obstacles and barriers that prevent many of us from conducting simple follow up with old clients. (So no, you weren't the only one who wishes they were better at this.) Assuming you provide high quality work with a smile, your old clients should be eager to hire or refer you to friends and colleagues. And because these clients are pre-qualified, you can feel more confident about spending more money marketing to them.

RATIONALE

Go back to the well. Your old clients are already familiar with you, and if you haven't been in contact with them for a while, you likely have a lot of great reasons to reach out and let them know about new projects, products, and services.

Most photo buyers and editors we spoke to encourage regular communication (usually no more than once per month). This might be too frequent for regular consumers, but this shouldn't dissuade you from still making contact once or twice a year.

Example

- ▶ Editorial photographers: Send a tear sheet of your latest work to remind photo editors of who you are and the type of work you do.
- ▶ Wedding photographers: Send a print from the wedding to the couple (doublecheck that they are still married!), thank them for their patronage, and kindly ask them to pass your name along if they have friends who are looking for a photographer.
- ▶ Travel photographers: Notify photo editors of where you are traveling to in advance. You never know when they might need a photographer in a specific area. Consider creating a small booklet shot in your neighborhood as an example of your capabilities.

If you've published a book recently, you might consider signing and sending it to your best clients for the holidays.

We like photo-related reminders because they are relevant to the products and services you provide. Although we've never met a client who would turn down a goodie basket of delicious food, it's less memorable because it doesn't reinforce your core service.

Go back to the well. Your old clients are already familiar with you, giving you a lot of great reason to reach out again.



PHOTOSHELTER CAN HELP

Creating a special gallery that's tailored to a specific client is a great way to make an impression. You can create a public, unlisted gallery to make it easy for them to access, but without the gallery displaying on your website.

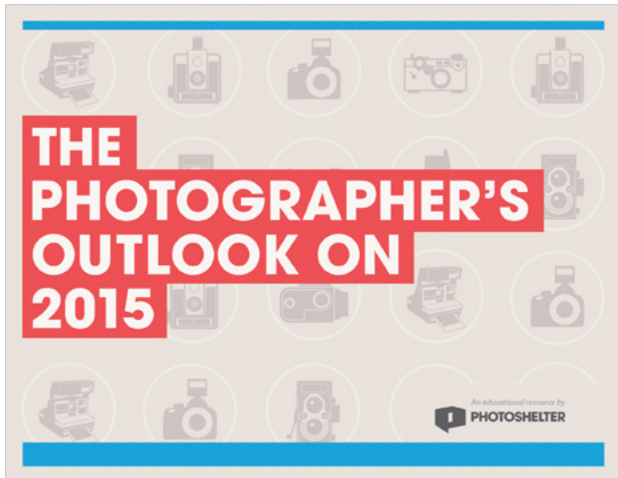
DO THIS:

- Make a list of the clients you've worked with in the past three years. (Feel free to expand that to potential clients you've encountered over the same timespan.) If you don't have their direct contact information, use a social network like LinkedIn to reconnect. For this exercise, consider either sending them a portfolio update or even asking for feedback on the prior project. Remind them if necessary of how you worked together, share a link to your website, and make sure they know you're available for new work. Don't forget to remind them where you're located!

(estimated time: 3 hours)

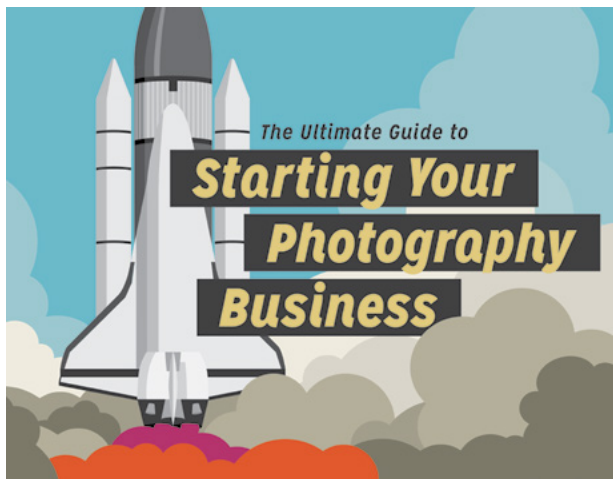
RESOURCES:

- › **GUIDE:** [What Buyers Want From Photographers](#)
- › **GUIDE:** [The Inspiration Handbook: 50 Tips from 50 Photography Trailblazers](#)
- › **VIDEO:** [What Sports Illustrated Wants From Photographers](#)
- › **VIDEO:** [How Ad Agencies Select & Hire Photographers](#)
- › **BLOG:** [4 Ways to Get More Work From Old Clients](#)
- › **VIDEO:** [How Travel + Leisure Hires Photographers](#)



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