

# Tips For Running A Successful Photography Business



The global digital photography market accounted for \$79.12 billion in 2017 and is projected to reach \$149.98 billion by 2026 with a .74% compound annual growth rate during the forecast period.

Whether you consider yourself a hobbyist and want to turn to photography as a side gig, or a professional who wants to strike out on their own rather than working for a major corporation, running your own photography business is much more than just taking pretty pictures.

## Tips For Running A Successful Photography Business

### Write a Business Plan

One of the best things you can do, regardless of the type of business you're starting, is to develop a business plan.

It serves as the guide that outlines everything for the business and will help you to determine if the business will be profitable.

You can use a free business plan template the help you get started. Your photography business plan includes things such as:

- Your business name
- The legal business structure and business licenses you may require based on where you operate. Many start out as a sole proprietor.
- Primary and secondary competitors
- Products and services
- Start-up costs including the cost of photography equipment, marketing materials, and photo editing software
- Ongoing expenses such as business insurance,
- Company mission statement
- Target market
- Goals for the next year (and up to five years from now)
- Barriers to entry
- Opportunities
- Financial plan
- Business ideas to help you stay competitive

## **Choose a Niche**

Sure, you could decide to photograph anything and everything but the more you do, the harder it will be to differentiate yourself from the competition. Think about your favorite thing or event to photograph and go from there.

Also, consider what other photographers in your area are doing. If you are in an area saturated with wedding photographers, you may opt to go in a different direction focusing on newborn or pet photography for instance.

If the idea of being around animals and babies stresses you out, you could specialize in headshots and portrait photography.

Niching down gives you a chance to be seen as an expert in your field and helps make marketing easier.

## **Build a Strong Portfolio**

If you've never taken a photo in your life, you will have a difficult time landing clients.

Before you officially open your business its doors, reach out to family and friends, and ask if they would be interested in a small session with you.

Use this time to work out kinks in your client booking process, test out new equipment, and hone your skills.

To build a varied portfolio, you may want to offer a limited number of discounted sessions in exchange for the rights to use the photos in your portfolio.

However, to establish yourself as a professional in the area, focus on reaching a point where you no longer offer both discounted sessions just for the sake of getting a gig.

That said, if you don't feel like the photos are high-quality or represent your best work, skip adding them to your portfolio.

## **Invest in Quality Branding**

As with any other business, branding matters. Take a look at what your competition is doing not for the purposes of copying them, but to determine how you can further differentiate it yourself.

Make it a point to work with a branding expert or graphic designer who can take your ideas and transform them into a cohesive brand across your business cards, social media accounts, and company website - down to your domain name.

Your branding makes a strong first impression - and you want it to be a good one.

That said, don't spend too much money ordering branded printed products because you may find that you'll change your branding a couple of times before you find something that really works.

Lower volume discount appears to save you money, chances are you won't actually use that many.

Instead, save money by using smaller print runs or print-on-demand. If you find that you run out, you know you're actually using them, then you can move to a slightly larger batch.

# Develop and Execute a Marketing Plan

When it comes to the internet, there is no such thing as build-it-and-they-will-come.

You don't need to spend thousands of dollars on website design and search engine optimization (SEO), but unless you're willing to invest some time and money into marketing your business, you won't be getting the leads you need to make a profit.

Even if you start with a simple WordPress website, you need to have a basic website with your contact information and portfolio to help you market your services.

It's a good idea to cover marketing within your business plan and there are plenty of free things you can do to get started. Some basic ideas to consider are:

- Donate your services to silent auctions
- Build a referral program to help grow your business with word-of-mouth.
- Network with other professionals
- List your business on Google My Business
- Automate social media so you have more time to actually engage with your audience.
- Write and share blog posts on your website.
- Start building an email list as soon as possible.

# You're More Than a Photographer

As someone with a photography business, you will also be handling basic office functions like booking sessions, accepting deposits, balancing the books, ordering supplies, and more.

It can be overwhelming to realize you have to be so many different things but fortunately there are plenty of ways for you to improve your skills in all areas of small business ownership.

# Get Organized and Track Detail

An organization system that works for you is absolutely essential to running a

business.

There's no one-size-fits-all approach, of course, but if you don't have a system in place to organize your images - years from now when you have tens of thousands of photos, tracking down your early work will be a time-consuming pain.

You'll also need a system for keeping track of your business files - from contracts and orders to all your client details. Do it from the start and it will be much easier to maintain as you grow.

More than knowing where all your files are - tracking details of your business can be quite helpful when it comes to making decisions later.

Tracking how many inquiries get, how many of those convert to paying shoots, how much money you make from each type of shoot, cancellation rate, etc.

For instance, if you find that you have a high cancellation rate, you can curb it with a non-refundable deposit.

If you already have a deposit in place and are still seeing a lot of canceled appointments, increase the deposit amount relative to the size of the package/length of the shoot.

Blockquote: "Investing in tools to help you get organized and automate certain functions within business operations can be well worth it in the long run."

## **Value Your Time and Skill When Setting Prices**

Time is the only thing you cannot get more of.

Even the world's billionaires work with the same 24 hours in a day, and they can't buy or make more of it. As such, it is the most valuable thing any of us have - and as a business owner, value it.

Go beyond what your local area deems as fair, and think about what you're worth.

Of course, as a beginner, your skill may mean that you're getting paid less than what someone with more experience would be able to command, but price yourself too cheaply and you'll be working for less than minimum wage.

Remember, not only do you need to cover a livable wage to pay your bills and take care of other needs, but your business needs income to order supplies, purchase editing software like Adobe Lightroom, and more.

When setting prices, consider how much you want to make per hour, how many hours you'll spend on each session (not just shooting photos, but editing and everything else from start to finish) and then mark it up slightly to prepare for taxes and business expenses while still producing a profit.

## **Strengthen Your People Skills**

Photography is a people-centric business, even if you shoot landscapes. The better you can work with and take care of the people you conduct business with, the more successful you'll be.

If you don't consider yourself a people person, take time to read *How to Win Friends and Influence People*.

It's an old book but a classic for a reason.

## **Keep Things Simple for Your Clients**

Chances are, you're not the only professional photographer someone is going to contact.

Make it easy for people to contact you and book you. Include your business location on your website, along with the service area you cover.

Create PDFs that outline the process of working with you, and show a sample contract. Offer a flexible, easy-to-use payment system that makes getting you paid easy - PayPal, Venmo, Square, etc.

Keeping things simple can go a long way toward quality customer service - turning that would've been one-off client into a regular who refers everyone they know to you.

## **Carefully Consider All Business Purchases**

Whether it's extra gear you don't need or a general business purchase, it is easy to get caught up in a cycle of making business purchases to help you grow better

and faster.

If you have more gear than you need, it's a lot to lug around to each shoot, which takes more time and effort.

## **Hire an Accountant**

It may be tempting to handle finances on your own for a while because you feel like you don't make enough money to justify the expense.

But, an accountant is there to help you save money. In addition to helping you track income and expenses, they can help with tax filings and other business financial reporting requirements.

This way you spend less time agonizing over financials and more time on the things in your business that you're best at.

## **Set Goals**

When you first get started as a photographer, it can be easy to get caught up in the magic and wonder of creating a stellar experience for your clients.

While that should always be something you strive to do - you should also take time to make goals for yourself.

The sky is the limit, but if you make goals that are really big from the get-go, you may find yourself discouraged as time moves on and you're no closer to achieving your goals than you were the first day you ran your business. Start with small, realistic goals, and work your way up.

Take a few minutes to think about what you want to accomplish and write it down. Review that list of goals often to keep them fresh in your mind.

And while you're at it - remember that failure is okay. No one is perfect, and chances are pretty good that you'll make some mistakes in your business. That's the price of taking risks and doing something new.

The important thing to remember is that failure isn't a bad thing. If you live in fear of failure, you'll never take the leaps you need to see your new business grow and flourish.

## **Have a Second Shooter on Standby When Needed**

Some events will require a second shooter, and sometimes, the potential client may request one.

This doesn't mean you should hire a second shooter full time (or even part-time for that matter) and pay them a salary, just to sit there and do nothing while you wait for jobs to come in.

This means you should connect with a trusted photographer friend and see if they would be interested in helping you as a second shooter if and when it is needed. Pay them a percentage of the package price for their time - and repeat as necessary.

## **Maintain a Professional Appearance**

Whenever you meet with a client, dress appropriately. This doesn't mean you need to wear a three-piece suit or dress, of course.

It means you should dress for the image you want your clients to associate with your business. As a newborn or pet photographer, that may mean a polo and jeans or nice slacks, even though you really want to wear your band tees and sneakers.

With wedding photography, however, you may need to dress up more, to blend in with the guests.

There's no right answer, but regardless of your choice, people will judge you based on what you look like - and that may mean repelling the very clients you want to attract.

And as with all things in life, strive to maintain a balance. If you're self-employed, it can be hard not to work what feels like 24/7 because the business is the only thing keeping a roof over your head and food in your stomach.

But, working too much leads to burn out, which will negatively affect your health and your quality of work.

# What's your goal today?

## 1. Use PLANERGY to manage purchasing and accounts payable

We've helped save billions of dollars for our clients through better spend management, process automation in purchasing and finance, and reducing financial risks. To discover how we can help grow your business:

- Read our case studies, client success stories, and testimonials.
- Visit our "Solutions" page to see the areas of your business we can help improve to see if we're a good fit for each other.
- Learn about us, and our long history of helping companies just like yours.

[Book a Live Demo](#)

## 2. Download our guide "Preparing Your AP Department For The Future"

Download a free copy of our guide to future proofing your accounts payable department. You'll also be subscribed to our email newsletter and notified about new articles or if have something interesting to share.

[download a free copy of our guide](#)

## 3. Learn best practices for purchasing, finance, and more

Browse hundreds of articles, containing an amazing number of useful tools, techniques, and best practices. Many readers tell us they would have paid consultants for the advice in these articles.

## Related Posts