



Top 3 Keys to Long Term Success

“What are the most important things for me to focus on early in my business in order to build a foundation for lasting success?”

1. Developing a recognizable Brand
2. Networking like crazy
3. Making your workflow efficient & profitable

The first 2 will get you all the business you’ll ever need. The 3rd will prevent burn-out.

With the exception of a little online advertising & cost-free editorial submissions, the first 2 are the only avenues I’ve ever used for marketing.

Relatively little cost: #1 is a financial INVESTMENT. #2 involves a small ongoing cost.

Developing a recognizable Brand

- Infuse the face of your business (name, logo, website, blog, image style, printed materials, office decor) with YOUR PERSONALITY. YOU are the single most important thing that can make your business unique & set it apart from the rest.
- If possible, make your business name based on your name. Clients want to hire a PERSON as their photographer so keep the face of your company personal.
- Spend the money for a professional logo & website. It’s worth it. This is the best financial investment you can make in your business.
- Make the look of your branding representative of YOU. Give it personality. Give your graphic designer a packet of magazine cut-outs, fabric swatches, photos of keepsakes – anything that makes you happy and makes your heart sing. They can’t read your mind; help them to know you.

- Make your branding consistent across your entire business – website, printed materials, office décor, etc.
- Blogging is the most impactful thing I've done to bring personality to the face of my business.

Benefits of blogging:

- FREE marketing; who likes "free"?; blogging—all about marketing yourself; building your brand; great thing is—people don't realize that's what you're doing
- Non-interruption based advertising
- Creates sense of friendship
- Celebrity perception
- Creates buzz for your business
- Creates & retains customer evangelists; makes people remember you & keep you at the forefront of their minds
- Easier to update than a website so a great way to show your recent work
- Creates anticipation for the wedding day; people love you by the time you do their wedding
- Good for networking—plugging other vendors/venues by linking
- Great personal journal—way to reflect on your business and see where you've come from

With all these benefits who has time not to blog? Blogging advances your client & vendor relationships, your brand, your marketing and more.

Tips for making your blog addicting & successful:

- Make it personal; be vulnerable & transparent; but keep it positive & clean
- Link to other vendors/venues/consultants
- Blog as regularly as possible; be consistent
- Post right away – people feel like they're reading late-breaking news
- Be honest/genuine
- Be excited
- Ask questions; ask for responses; make it a conversation
- Ongoing topics i.e. 101 in 1001, contests

Marketing your blog:

- Write it; they will come
- Gather emails at receptions
- Newsletters: constantcontact.com; drive traffic to your blog
- Be a nice person—other people blog on you

Network Like Crazy

Networking is a lot of work. But if you focus on it and do it consistently over time, the results will fuel your business long-term.

Love is the Killer App.

- Tim Sanders talks about giving away your intangibles -- specifically your knowledge and network -- for FREE, and how doing this can ultimately end up blessing you and your business in the long run.

Non-photographer vendors & venues

- Best way to network with them is to take care of them AFTER working with them.
- If you go after relationships with them cold turkey it's going to be much more work & yield fewer results.
- GIVE away photos of their work, free portrait shoots, ANYTHING you can.
 1. Willow Book Proof Book w/favorite images & images that show off venue – send to venue after each wedding with brochures in a pretty container.
 2. CD of high res images (no logo) to all the vendors you work with (more than 12 photos)
 3. Email high res images (no logo) to all vendors you work with (less than 12 photos)
- Go to local networking meetings—ABC, etc.
 1. Whenever you meet or work with a new vendor, friend them on Facebook, follow them on twitter, add them to your Constant Contact newsletter database list. Invest in the relationship.
 2. After the initial contact, write them on Facebook. Nice to meet you; ask to lunch, etc. Find out what THEY NEED for their businesses and give it to them.

Benefits of networking/building relationships with other photographers:

- Knowledge sharing
- Getting each other booked up—developing referral base
- Insurance: someone to turn to in case of emergency

- Just makes life more fun—attending workshops together, going to lunch, shooting together, etc.
- Network sharing

Ideas of how to network with other photographers:

- Ask those in your area to lunch one on one. Pay for the meal. Try to get to know them
- Attend your local PUG. If there isn't one in your area, start up a local network that meets monthly. Take turns sharing on different topics related to photography and business. Bring in outside speakers and consultants.
- Once you find like-minded people who are similar in style and price –range, suggest forming a referral/insurance network. Refer to each other when booked. If someone is sick or can't shoot their wedding, promise to be there for each other to help out when needed.
- Most of all, be the first to give without expecting something in return.

Make your Workflow Efficient & Profitable

Outsourcing

- You can't do it all yourself
- Hire quality people.
 1. Look for loyalty, teachable spirit, hard-working
 2. Train them well
 3. Ask them to stay around for at least 2 years
 4. Pay them \$9-\$15 to do anything and everything that you don't have to do and then do what only YOU can do and make \$50+/hour.
- Outsource to other companies – accounting, proofing, print fulfillment, album design.
- Free yourself up to work ON your business rather than FOR your business.

Workflow checklist

- Use for each wedding
- Keeps things consistent
- Good for communication between everyone working on the event

My Workflow Checklist:

1. Add wedding guests to Constant Contact (completed by assistant)

- Collect email addresses at the reception from guests who want to see all of the photos after the wedding.

2. Input anniversary into iCal (completed by assistant)

- Used to send out anniversary cards to clients every year.

3. iView -- time sort, rename RAW/consolidate to 1 folder -- make sure all files are there; back up on hard drive (completed by me)

- Done the night I get home from a wedding
- Use iView MediaPro; Lightroom works well too

4. Edit photos -- two folders (favorites/the rest); rename (completed by me)

- Use iView
- Rate favorites with 5 stars (80-100 photos)
- Rate the rest of the photos that you want to give the client with 1 star (another 500-600 images)
- Pick the photos you like rather than delete the photos you don't want to keep.
 1. Focusing on the positive rather than negative
 2. Easier to pick one photo out of a bunch that are similar rather than deleting the ones that you don't like until there's only one left.
- This process takes about an hour per 1000 images
- I try to get it done the first couple days after the wedding.
- When done rating, delete the rest with one click.
- It REALLY helps shorten the rest of your workflow if you're critical & keep the number of images saved to a manageable number.
- Don't save similar images. Pick the best one out of the bunch for your client and delete the rest. That's what they're paying you to do.

5. Color correct favorites; create slideshow; post on blog (completed by me)

- Do the same day as you complete step 4
- Camera RAW in Bridge; Lightroom works great too!
- Blog post keeps the client happy while they wait for online proofs
- Web-based slideshow

6. Send Constant Contact email to guests, bride & groom (completed by asst.)

- Template email gives guests the link to the blog post & a link to sign the guest book on Pictage so they will be informed when the event is released there.

7. Color correct "the rest" folder in Bridge and edit in PS (completed by asst.)

- It's key to have an assistant do the bulk of your color-correction and image processing. I only color correct my favorite images for the blog and slideshow; my assistant does the rest.
- The client doesn't want a perfect image; they want a good image FAST. If you're holding onto perfectionism in post-processing, you're doing it for yourself; not your client.
- See rating system & process under session 2: post processing

8. Copy favorites into "the rest" folder; time sort, sort into category folders,

rename (completed by assistant)

- Using Bridge
- Purpose is to prep the images for FTP to Pictage.
- The favorite images are duplicated so that they appear in both my "favorites" folder--the first folder that clients see online--and in the corresponding folder for the part of the day they were shot in.

9. FTP images to Pictage (completed by assistant)

10. Submit event online to Pictage (completed by assistant)

11. Send "After Wedding" survey to bride 1 mo. after wedding (completed by asst.)

- *Creating Customer Evangelists* by Ben McConnell & Jackie Huba -- the importance of getting customer feedback
 1. To know what you need to improve on
 2. Helps you differentiate your business more; putting words to what makes you unique
- Constant Contact
- 3 short surveys
 1. After a client books me
 2. After the wedding
 3. After album delivery
- Ask for a written testimonial for your website

12. Burn archive DVDs and backup on external harddrive (completed by asst.)

- Save two copies of the edited files--one on DVD off-site and one on an external hard drive in the office.

13. Delete images from hard drive (completed by assistant)

- Once the files are all backed-up as stated above we delete the files from our working internal hard drive.

14. Edit & release event on Pictage (completed by assistant)

15. Order/create products: DVD montage, Print credit, Proof Book, Gift Book(s), Custom Album, Parent albums, DVD of all images (completed by assistant--mostly)

- My assistants do a majority of this including the first draft of the album design using my templates.
- I check/tweak the album design before posting a slideshow of it online for clients to view and revise. I also touch up all the photos myself once the album design is finalized.

16. Order 7x7 book for venue (completed by assistant)

- We send a small book of my favorite images to the venue along with some

brochures.

- WillowBook Proof Book

17. Send images to vendors/ add to Facebook (completed by assistant)

- We email some vendors photos of their work and others we send a CD depending on how many images there are.

18. Set aside images for publications/website (completed by me)

19. Email bride about Wedding Chronicle submission about 1 month after wedding (completed by assistant)

- The Wedding Chronicle is a local publication that we submit to regularly.
- Make submissions a regular part of your workflow.
- Working on adding other publications to our workflow.

20. Send "After Album Delivery" survey (completed by assistant)

I'm mostly done with my part a day or two after the wedding.

With this workflow, we're able to get all of the proofs online within one week of the wedding and the album design up within two weeks of the wedding.

Getting the images/album design to clients fast will not only free you up to take your business to the next level, it will increase your PROFIT.

- Wedding photography is an emotional purchase
- Getting a client's images to them while emotions still run high will cause them to form an emotional connection to them – increasing sales.

