

## Marketing the Studio

Image is everything, especially when reaching for the client that we are pursuing. How our studio is arranged, decorated, how we dress, our manner, our yard, all of these things project to our client our degree of professionalism and if they feel comfortable with how we do business. What do you want to be your share of the market? There are all different kinds of clients out there at all different income levels. Where do you see your photography studio? We believe in going for the gold! Instead of working our way up to the client we eventually want, we believe in targeting that client first. From our image presentation through promotional pieces, to our advertising dollars, to our pricing, to the way our studio is set up, we are focused on that market. We believe that we are selling ourselves and that our images are an extension of ourselves. You only have seven seconds to make a first impression and it is the most lasting! Everything from answering the phone, to your studios appearance, to a marketing piece has a tremendous impact on whether you will procure the client. Do you know how many times people change doctors because they have a lousy bedside manor. People connect with personalities and how they are treated.

The first year in Jacksonville, we focused all of our energies into weddings. Rick had been very successful in the Orlando area, doing 117 weddings the last year there; however, Orlando is a tourist market. Jacksonville is your typical Saturday Country Club wedding city. In some ways, when you move cities it is like starting over. What we did have to our advantage was an incredible website that gave us tremendous exposure. We knew that we needed to do more than that to market ourselves, so we looked around for the best possible source to put our advertising dollars. We looked for a publication that would appeal to the type of client that we were pursuing and had the style that best represented us. That was the Wedding & Reception Magazine that is published twice a year by Jubilee Communications. By placing a full-page ad and doing a few bridal shows, we were able to get the phone to ring.



page 2 Marketing the Studio

Remember that YOU make the phone ring. How? Have a plan (let's say for example: a direct marketing piece or a bridal show), a way to implement the plan, taking action to implement it, and follow up. Don't wait for the phone to ring, go out and get people to call by getting involved in your community through, Chamber of Commerce, charities, networking with vendors, and by visiting local businesses and leaving your business cards. Gloria Daly, a photographer that works with us, shared something that has stuck with her that she heard a long time ago, "He who has a thing to sell and goes and whispers in a well, is not as apt to get the dollars as the one who climbs a tree and hollers!" Just get out there and do it!!!

Once you establish that consultation how do you secure the sale? What is your hook? Clients come to us for the romantic location portraits we show on the internet and through our advertising. Securing them as a client involves convincing them why they should choose us over all the other photographers out there. Our hook is that we tell our clients that they are not only hiring a photographer but a graphic designer. With our ability to creatively enhance our images through Photoshop whether retouching or designing our own digital albums, they are assured of a quality product unmatched by a mall studio.

One of the questions that we are asked when we teach our photography seminars is "how do you get samples if you are just starting?" We approached one of the venues that we wanted to photograph weddings at and offered to do a photo shoot free for them. We involved the publisher of the Wedding and Reception Magazine, who then involved other vendors who needed images for his publication. We recreated a 1920's wedding at this historical venue and had 6 brides, 2 grooms, 3 children, a Vintage car, horse and carriage, gowns, tuxedos, a make-up artist and hair stylist. All the vendors were then able to use the images for their ads as long as we were given photo credit. So now we had a full page ad that we paid for as well as other ads with our name that we did not have to pay for along with a variety of samples for our website, studio and marketing promotions.



**page 3 Marketing the Studio**

We have continued to do this with other venues and because we do the shoot for free, it is a win-win situation for everyone. Because of these photo shoots we have developed great relationships with various vendors in the community and procured a variety of paid commercial jobs from it as well. We did a free bridal shoot at a golf course and because the director liked our work we were contracted for the commercial shoot for their website.



Another great marketing tool for us is to offer our wedding clients free wallets from their engagement session. We will give them as many wallets as they have guests if we can put them on the reception table at their wedding. We tell them that it is another reminder for the guests to view & purchase their images online after the wedding through **Collages.net**. Collages.net has been a wonderful marketing tool as well because we can send potential clients to view one of our weddings and develop a database of future clients from those that go online.



**page 4 Marketing the Studio**

After the first year, we decided it was time to let the community know that we do portrait work as well as weddings. We rented a 8x15 foot space in the most expensive mall in our area for a three day woman's show. We set up a display of gallery images, with beautiful furniture and a rug and spent three days meeting people and showing our work. For the cost of one bridal show, we had three days, Friday, Saturday & Sunday of incredible exposure. We are now scheduled to do that three times a year because it was so successful!



You have heard that you show what you sell. Because we project everything we show to sell to the client, we started creating templates in Photoshop similar to the mats and frames that we sell through Albums, Inc. We are then able to suggest to our clients how to best use their images, drag and drop them to these templates and even show them in color, black & white and sepia. Since we have added this to our sales presentation, our portrait sales have tripled!



**page 5 Marketing the Studio**

I believe that we are all born with talents but how we develop and use our talents makes a difference in our success. A great idea is worth a dollar, a plan to implement the idea is worth a million, but without action you never see the money! Most people did not get into this business to make a million. They got into it because they had a passion for creating images. Being able to create great images doesn't pay the mortgage. Selling great images pays the mortgage. It takes both.

To be successful at marketing you must have these attributes:

- 1. Believe in yourself (at least acting as though you do!)**
- 2. Sell yourself (It is really you that you are selling and putting out there, not your images, they are just an extension of you.)**
- 3. Have a plan**
- 4. A way to implement the plan**
- 5. Take action**
- 6. Be consistent & repetitive**
- 7. Follow up**
- 8. Assessing the results**

So many photographers tell me that the reason they don't have the images we do is either because they don't have beautiful clients or the kind of income level of client that we have. Because you sell what you show, create a portfolio of images of the kind of client you want to have! How? Set up a photo shoot in your area at either a beautiful location or the type of reception location you would love to photograph at regularly. Get with other area vendors, ie: a florist, bridal salon, vintage car or limousine service and modeling agency and offer to give images in exchange for them helping with the photo shoot. Make sure your name is on each image you give the vendors involved so their customers will see it. You are now in control of the quality of image you want to present and market with.

Our biggest asset as a Marketer is that we are in control of our client base, our direction of photography and our level of success. **Success doesn't just happen, YOU make it happen!**