

DISCLAIMER: I don't claim to have all the answers nor is this 4,400+ word post meant to even come close to everything you'll need to know. There are things that I will share in this post that will not work exactly the same in every segment of photography. For example, Google Adwords may be effective for one segment of photography like products, but bridal shows may be more effective for targeting brides.

Before I get too deep into this post, if you do not have a do whatever it takes mentality, if you are not committed to working at least 5 days a week 10 to 12 hours per day minimum and if you are not willing to spend some level of money beyond "0" for marketing, advertising and/or social media, please do yourself a favor: Bookmark this post and/or download the PDF and read it at a later time when you are truly 100% committed to getting to the next level because growing a photography business is not easy unless you get lucky.

One year from now, if you don't want to be in the same place you are right now, you'll have to buckle down and get it done. If you stay committed for the next 365 days and are no better off than you are right now, I would be very surprised because it's hard not to have a certain level of success by being committed with a D.W.I.T (Do Whatever It Takes) mentality while working 50 to 60 hours per week 5 days a week (notice you get two days off) and spending some level of money beyond "0" on marketing, advertising and/or social media

Who is this post for?

This post is for photographers who are struggling to get to the next level and drive more business. It's not meant for photographers that have a system that is working, lots of non-stop business, numerous inquiries a week about new projects, a studio outside of their home and/or a large staff.

Let's Dive In...

Many photographers struggle with marketing, advertising and social media. There is only so much time in everyday and there has to be time to actually shoot as well as edit especially if you are a solopreneur which means you do it all. This is key reason why a 50 to 60 hour workweek 5 days a week is so critical because it's hard to

grow a photography business as a solopreneur working under 40 hours per week and trying to do it all.

Part 1 – Marketing...

Marketing: When typing ...define marketing... into Google, the result that comes up states that marketing is the action or business of promoting and selling products or services, including market research and advertising.

Notice that marketing is “the action or business of.” The definition does not say anything about spending money for marketing, but also notice that advertising (next segment I'll cover) is a part of marketing and is different as you'll discover later. One key element to marketing is “the action of.” A marketing plan with no action is just a plan.

All marketing is not free. However, as a solopreneur, you can do free marketing. You can “take action” on letting others know about your business by networking and communicating in a NON-Selling way online and offline for free about your business.

Don't Do This While Networking:

“Hi, I do professional headshots. Here's my business card. Are you available tomorrow to come in for a headshot?”

Do This At Networking:

“Hi, my name is _____. What's your name? What do you do? Can you tell me a little about that?” Let the conversation run its course, then exchange business cards if it makes sense.

Online Marketing Tip:

People seem to go psycho online. They blast political stuff. They bash people left and right. They make stupid comments that they would likely never make face-to-face. But they also sell, sell, sell when they should share, share, share. Don't sell what you do, but share what you do instead.

There are numerous ways to market your business for free, but I'll only cover a few below which are all online:

Blogging:

I am a huge fan of blogging. It has stood the test of time and will likely remain popular for many years to come.

Why Blog?

- 1)** Google loves fresh, relevant, unique content and likely always will. It has been that way for years.
- 2)** It's a great, FREE way to write about photography, share projects you are working on or simply write about your business.
- 3)** It's something that you can do as little or as often as you'd like.

Tips To Maximizing Your Blog Post

- 1)** Keywords in the title.

Put relevant keywords in your blog title. Notice that the title of this post is "Marketing, Advertising And Social Media For Photographers" because I'm targeting photographers.

I didn't simply make it "Marketing, Advertising And Social Media." With the way Google works this gives me the opportunity of potentially being found for Marketing for Photographers, Advertising for Photographers, Social Media for photographers.

On a local level, what about a blog post titled "Portfolio: Wedding Photography In Cary NC By Photographer John Doe." In the post, you could share some images that you took at the wedding in Cary, talk about technique, mention the venue and more.

Guess what? You are 100% promised the blog post that you never write will never be seen. BUT you have the chance of being found for the blog post you actually "take action on" and write.

- 2)** Use the TAG feature on the blog post.

I don't know about other platforms, but wordpress allows the writer to

put relevant tags on the post.

Think of short phrases that are relevant to the post and write several tags: Wedding Photography Cary NC, Photographer John Doe, Wedding Venue In Cary NC, etc.

3) Share, Share, Share

Use every social media platform that you are on to share your blog post. This is a great form of FREE marketing: Write & Share. It's not much simpler than that.

Reviews:

Getting online reviews is FREE marketing. It's also better when someone else talks about your business than when you do.

Google and Yelp are two of the best places to have reviews posted about your photography business online. However, make sure you read their terms of service.

Google reviews tie into your Google business page, so you'll need that set up if you don't have one. As of this post, the person writing the review will need a gmail account to write a review. If they setup a gmail account, write the review and then delete the gmail account, guess what? The review will also be deleted.

Like Google, you'll need a Yelp business page, so you'll need that set up if you don't have one. Yelp is TERRIBLE about hiding reviews that their algorithm doesn't feel are legit. It's a stupid system, but reviews on Yelp matter. FYI, you'll get frustrated with Yelp. Guaranteed!

Thumbtack.com is a platform that a lot of photographers are on. If you are getting business off of Thumbtack, you should also be getting reviews.

Facebook Personal Page (Business Pages Under Advertising):

I have found that my Facebook personal page works well for getting business as long as I am SHARING and BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

and NOT SELLING. I completely avoid selling on social media.

By sharing and building relationships over a period of time, business will trickle through on Facebook and it's a FREE form of marketing without being overly promotional. Yes, some may think that sharing what I do is selling and I realize that there is no way to please everyone. So for me, I'll keep sharing but not selling on my Facebook personal page.

LinkedIn Articles:

If you are not writing an occasional LinkedIn article which is free to do, you are not tapping into a resource that may help your business.

The article may not get a ton of exposure, but there here are a few things to consider:

- 1)** It will be seen by a few people and it's a free way to get in front of those few that see it. You never know when you may get in front of the right person.
- 2)** You can grab the link and share it on your other social media platforms or just share it to Facebook and Twitter right from LinkedIn. You can also come back at a later time and re-share it on your LinkedIn feed because the initial time that it goes live, it is automatically posted in your LinkedIn feed.
- 3)** The article usually gets indexed in Google. It may not happen right away, but it's very likely that it will exist in Google.

Like blogging, if you don't write an article on LinkedIn, you are guaranteed it will never be seen by anyone. If you do write an article, there is the potential of it driving business, building your credibility and increasing your brand awareness.

Marketing (like advertising) can cost money.

One of the best (provided you hire the right person) investments is to hire a marketing consultant. You'll likely pay \$75 to \$150+ per hour,

but if the consultant can help you create a marketing strategy that you will actually implement, it will likely be a great investment.

Once you get beyond the marketing consultant level, you could actually hire someone internally or externally to help implement your marketing strategy.

One way to market your business that is paid that I don't really define as advertising is to join a paid networking group like BNI (<http://www.bni.com/>). The investment for the first year may exceed \$500. BNI will use some of your 50 to 60 hour workweek, but it is a way to market your business with a relatively low financial investment.

As I close out the marketing segment of this post, remember that not all marketing is FREE. Marketing is "the action or business of promoting and selling products or services" which is not always free to do.

Part 2 – Advertising...

Advertising: Dictionary.com defines advertising as the act or practice of calling public attention to one's product, service, need, etc., especially by paid announcements in newspapers and magazines, over radio or television, on billboards, etc.

Advertising is a part of marketing. It is usually associated with spending money which is why the definition above likely includes "especially by paid announcements."

You'll have to be careful when it comes to spending money unless you have an unlimited budget and want to try out a lot of things. However, if you have a large budget, you'd be better off hiring a marketing and advertising company to do the work for you.

Below are several ways to spend your advertising dollars:

Let's look at online first...

Google Adwords

If you think that you'll run some ads for a couple of weeks to see how it goes and that maybe the phone will start ringing more, you have the wrong approach to Google Adwords:

- 1)** Hire a Certified Google Adwords Professional. Yes, it will cost more money, but Google Adwords is not as simple as you may think.
- 2)** Be committed to sticking with Adwords for a minimum of 90 days while at the same time putting a minimum of several hundred dollars (not a \$100) each month into Adwords.

If you are not willing to do both 1 and 2, you should probably use another form of paid advertising and not Adwords.

Facebook Ads

Posts are not seen that well on a Facebook business page without promoting them. Whether you have 1,000 likes or 10,000+ likes (FYI, I have a non-photography page with 20,000+ likes, so I know.), your posts will not be seen or responded to the same as they will by using Facebook ads.

For photography, I don't think of Facebook ads as sell, sell, sell. I see Facebook ads as more about getting exposure to what is posted on a Facebook business page which is hopefully not a sell, sell, sell post.

I would suggest that you post information on a recent image on your Facebook page that is non-selling and encourage people to LIKE your Facebook page. If you want to sell, sell, sell, that's up to you, but for me, I'm tired of being SOLD. Then, once you have your post live, set up an ad to get exposure to that post and your photography brand.

Yes, you can get business off of Facebook ads, but it's more likely as a photographer that you will help build your brand exposure than the phone ringing several times a day from Facebook ads.

Facebook ads are also relative to the segment that you are in. For example, a family photographer may get more business from

Facebook ads than a product photographer or vice-versa. Someone in a different field other than photography may generate more leads than a photographer. It's something that you will have to test.

At the end of the day, Facebook ads are one of the most affordable ways to get your brand in front of people.

As of this post, I have two ads running: One with 124 Likes and \$14.70 or .12 per post like and the other with 49 for \$5.27 or .11 per post like. Whether the phone has rang of the hook or not because of it doesn't matter as much to me as the brand building I have received for less than \$20. Neither post is a sales pitch.

Yelp Ads (and briefly LinkedIn Ads)

Yes, I have gotten business from Yelp and from LinkedIn. However, I am definitely not a fan of LinkedIn's ad model and overall cost. Until they seriously revamp it, I'm probably staying away from LinkedIn Ads.

As for Yelp Ads, I am still in my first 90 days of trying them for the first time on a 180 run. So far, I am not super excited about Yelp Ads.

Yelp uses some hard pressure sales tactics and I held off for well over a year of trying out Yelp ads. However, if you press the Yelp rep, you can find out a few things that they don't readily volunteer.

1) They'll press you for a year commitment "because they know it works and if you stay a year, you'll be around after that." BUT you can do a 3 month or 6 month as of this post. There is a slightly higher minimum for 3 months or 6 months. If I don't have the type of results that I want in 6 months, I don't see what staying around a year will do for my business. In the commercial world, my business is not as seasonal as some other photography segments.

2) For terms less than a year, they'll recommend a higher spend each month, but at the end of the day (as of this post), you don't have to do what they recommend. You can ask what the bare minimum is and tell them that is all you are interested in. I was tempted to do only 90 days but opted to 180 days to give Yelp ads a solid try.

3) If you don't have reviews on Yelp, don't waste your money on advertising. I say that because TRUE Yelp users are very much into reading reviews and making decisions based on those reviews. Yelp is a very review driven platform. Getting and keeping reviews on Yelp can be frustrating as I mentioned under the marketing section.

Bing and Yahoo Ads

They are part of the same platform and the search volume for local photographers is not nearly as high as Google. However, the cost per click will likely be much lower and the monthly spend will be far less. If you want to try Bing and Yahoo Ads out, I recommend that you talk with the Certified Google Adwords professional that you hire.

Now, let's look at offline...

Tradeshows, Associations & The Like (similar to):

As of this post, I have done one tradeshow in the past 12 months. I'm a member of at least one association. I also doing a little of "The Like" (Chamber of Commerce and/or Other Organizations). They are just all part of my marketing and advertising strategy. Like anything, sometimes it works well and sometimes it doesn't.

If I were a wedding photographer (which I'm not), I would most likely be involved in as many things like this that I could afford that has bride's showing up face-to-face to a venue like a wedding show. I don't know for sure, but it just seems like getting face-to-face with brides is the way to go vs. some of the online advertising that I mentioned.

Direct Mail

Direct mail is typically a 1% to 3% response rate and that response rate doesn't mean close rate. So for every 100 pieces you mail out, you might generate 1 to 3 inquiries which may or may not lead to any sales.

If you do direct mail, I would recommend doing your own professional piece with some of your images that is targeted to your audience and

not doing something mixed in with 50 coupon mailers unless that truly hits your exact target market.

If you are a wedding photographer, how valuable would a list be of 100 brides that are getting married a year from now? What about mailing to VENUES that target brides? Again, you have to streamline any direct mail pieces for maximum impact if you are working with a small budget.

Magazine Ads

It's amazing how much local magazines charge to advertise in. But if that magazine targets your exact audience (not simply those living in 350K houses and up that making X per year like basic statistical data that most magazines have), then it may pay off for you. However, it's not the first place that I would spend my advertising dollars unless it was hyper targeted.

Hiring An Advertising, PR or Marketing Firm (Online or Off)

This is tricky because when you get right down to it there are very few one stop resources for all your online and offline advertising, PR, social media and marketing needs. This is also not going to be your lowest cost option. However, hiring an expert may be just what you need to do if you can make it happen.

When it comes to hiring an agency, you'll have the agency fees plus the actual cost. For example, if you want to do direct mail, you'll have the agency fees for creating the direct mail piece plus the cost of sending out the mailer, printing the mailer and potentially buying a mailing list. For Google Adwords, you'll have a management fee plus the cost of Adwords. In my opinion, paying an expert is better in many cases (not all) than trying to D.I.Y.

If you hire an agency, I would suggest asking them how much is in house and how much is outsourced? For example, a traditional agency that helps produce print collateral for tradeshow, etc. that also says they do Google Adwords may have a relationship with someone that does Adwords, but it's not actually done in house. You'll have to decide what you are comfortable with.

Part 3 – Social Media...

Social Media: Dictionary.com defines social media as websites and other online means of communication that are used by large groups of people to share information and to develop social and professional contacts.

Please note that the definition above says “to share information and to develop social and professional contacts” with the keywords being SHARE and DEVELOP not SELL ME SOMETHING. If you are a photographer and you are outright selling on social media, STOP IT!

Now that I've yelled, let's dive in...

It's true that some photographers have made it big through sites like Instagram. However, you'll likely need a solid overall presence for your business rather than waiting around to make it big on Instagram.

I am regularly active (and/or at least with the help of my social media assistant) on the following social platforms: LinkedIn, Instagram, Pinterest, Google Plus, Tumblr, Facebook and Twitter.

You can find me on social media via these links:

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/davidwilliamsphotographer>

<http://instagram.com/raleighphotographer>

<http://www.pinterest.com/dwppc/>

<https://plus.google.com/+Dwppc/posts>

<http://dwppc.tumblr.com/>

<https://www.facebook.com/DavidWilliamsPhotographer>

https://twitter.com/David_Williams_

For the most part, social media falls under the category of marketing because it can be done for FREE. However, there are also paid options which I mentioned briefly under advertising.

Here are a few key points about social media:

1) It's about building relationships, sharing, commenting, liking, interacting, etc. but NOT about selling. Don't sell, sell, sell on social media. It's fine in my opinion to share some of your latest work and talk about a project you are working on or have just completed. However, don't sell, sell, sell like CALL ME TODAY, SPECIAL OFFER, I'M DESPARATE FOR THE PHONE TO RING...PLEASE, PLEASE CALL ME!

2) Only use the social platforms that you can stay active on with the exception of at least having a professional profile on LinkedIn. However, LinkedIn can be utilized deeper by posting articles and updates. If you cannot maintain several social platforms, just stick with the ones that you can keep updated. If you are not already on Twitter and active, you will likely find it to be a pain. I really like Twitter, but I've been on it for years.

3) Social media is a great place to share your blog posts which I covered under marketing under the blogging section.

Social media can lead to revenue, but I think that it's something that happens over time which ties back into the definition of "develop" because you don't "develop" relationships socially or professionally off of one comment, one share or one like. People begin to know, like and trust you, then they are likely not only to do business with you, but to recommend you.

Bonus Material...

3 Photographers I know who keep growing their business...

I will not mention their names, but I know 3 photographers who seem to be doing well in a short period of time. All 3 of them share common traits and got the momentum going in their first year. Two of the three are now in their 3rd year or so and one of the 3 is still in his first year.

Here are the common traits that I've noticed in all 3...

1) They are 100% committed to their craft of photography.

2) After they get the initial business, they get repeat business.

- 3) They work long days and have a get it done mentality.
- 4) To my knowledge, none of the 3 spend a lot of money on advertising. In the case of the two in the 3rd year or so, they have built up repeat business and word of mouth. So the early efforts of year 1 and 2 seem to be paying off big time in year 3. But the one that is still in his first year has built repeat in his first several months that keeps paying him over and over.

Here is what the guy in year one does...

In addition to the 4 common traits above, the one that is still in his first year does a couple of key things that fall under the D.W.I.T. (Do Whatever It Takes) mentality:

1) He is willing to "drive" 1,000+ miles to do the business and sleep in the back of his truck (with a camper shell) to save money on hotels. Yes, that's a true story, but he stays busy doing photography and appears to make a comfortable living doing it.

How far are you willing to travel outside your local area? Have you thought about targeting your market outside your local area?

2) He is very good about asking for other opportunities from the same client. Rather than focusing on just the project at hand, he asks if there are other photography opportunities that he can help with. That alone often leads to more business with very little effort but a simple question or two. I'm guessing (knowing him) that he may also ask for introductions to other potential clients.

Do you ask questions to your current client base that could lead to more business? Do you ask for referrals from your current clients?

It Is Possible!

I've listened to an audio from Les Brown which he repeats over and over "It Is Possible, It Is Possible, It Is Possible."

Right now, ask yourself a question about where you want to be in

your business. For example, if you are are a wedding photographer and you want to be consistently doing two weddings per month at \$3,000 minimum per wedding, ask yourself this question. "Can I achieve two weddings per month on a consistent basis at an average of \$3,000 per month per wedding?" Then, respond to yourself, "It Is Possible, It Is Possible, It Is Possible." If that didn't just make you feel good, then repeat this exercise until it does make you feel good.

Feeling good is only one aspect. Now, go out and make it happen!

WOW! The phone is ringing! Now what?

The 17 questions below are not in any particular order nor do you have to ask all of them to your potential prospect because some questions cross over with others and wouldn't fit if you asked a variation of a similar question.

- 1) How Does That Sound?
- 2) What's Your Timeline?
- 3) What's The Next Step?
- 4) Do You Have Any Questions So Far?
- 5) Do You Have Any Additional Questions?
- 6) Would You Like To Setup A Time To Meet?
- 7) Would You Like For Me To Send A Written Proposal?
- 8) When Is The Best Time For A Follow Up Call?
- 9) Is There Anything Else You'd Like Me To Cover?
- 10) Is This What You Are Looking For?
- 11) Is It Alright If I Send Over The Agreement?
- 12) Does That Work For You?
- 13) Does That Fit Your Budget?
- 14) Does That Make Sense To You?
- 15) Did I Explain Clearly What Makes Us Different?
- 16) Are You Ready To Schedule?
- 17) Are You Ready To Move Forward?

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