Social media, ugh, it's everywhere. Talk about over-stimulation. Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, all of it, there are so many cool things. Here's the thing. If you're intentional about social media, you can actually use it to grow your business without letting it take over your life. Grab a pen and stick with me.

So the real question is, how are portrait photographers like us able to run a profitable business and still put our families first, without selling digital files for cheap and working all the time? I'm Sarah Petty, your host of the Worth Every Penny Joycast, and I went from a stressed-out, overworked mama with three babies to being named one of America's most profitable photographers, without working my kids' lives away. Each week, I'll show you how to find and serve boutique portrait photography clients in a world where we compete with free thanks to everyone having a digital camera in their pocket. Take the first step to adding more joy and profit to your life by downloading your free photography business tools at joyofmarketing.com/podcast.

I know I talk a little bit about social media in this podcast, today, I'm really going to dig in deeper, because look, I grew up without social media, many of you have maybe the same story, and I think I would have really loved it, but nonetheless, I've kind of come into it kicking in screaming. When my kids were growing up, which I had three kids in three years, and I started speaking around the country, and I don't know why, but I felt super protective to keep my kids and my family life very hidden. I was super private, and Facebook was basically the main platform at that time, and I rarely posted. I also thought, "I lead a pretty boring life. Why would people want to know what I'm eating for lunch or what I'm doing?"

And then as Joy of Marketing grew, my company that supports portrait photographers like you, I got pulled into social media by my team, because it's how we can reach you. You guys are all over the world, you're not in my local market, and so we have a whole team that makes this social media happen. It's not what I do to market my small boutique photography studio, I don't need to, because I learned skills that helped me build it before social media. And so now with this super competitive place, it's very overwhelming for many of you who are thinking,

"Oh, well, hey, it's great it's free, I can market my business free," but then you realize if you're being too salesy, or you're not doing it the right way, the algorithm isn't even going to show your post to people, right? It's like a whole game that takes a while to sort of figure out.

So here's the thing. I realized if I was going to be creating content, I needed to be a user, and wow, there goes the time. A little farm animal video here, magic tanning solution there, look at those cute shoes, oh, and look at the jewelry, where could I wear all of these things? Products, advice, tips, ideas all over for the creative who has a family of squirrel ideas living in one's brain. That's me, is that you? Probably, and it's so much. I'm thinking you can probably relate.

Then you have these tons of people out there telling you you have to have tons of followers to build a business, right? As if we weren't already stressed-out enough trying to figure it all out with our time, and overwhelmed, and how to fit it all in before social media. Well, I'm going to just drill down some really more guidelines for you that can help you not let the proverbial social media tail wag the dog. Grab a pen.

Number one, cheer, don't jeer. Be a cheerleader on social media and lift others up. That's really a core value here at Joy of Marketing, we lift as we climb. Be a source of positivity, and I know it's... You get on there and you see somebody make a comment, you're like, "Oh," you just impulsively comment back. But the thing is, when you're a business owner, I was going to say "Entrepreneur," but I know so many of you have a problem with that word, you think, "I'm not an entrepreneur," but when you own a small business, you are. But when you are a small business owner, you can't rail on another local business on social media. I believe it's not in our best interest to go on a political rant, you make that choice, or especially jumping in on drama.

If you want drama, you can find it all over on social media, but here's the thing. You only have so much time and emotional energy. Why do you want to give it away to someone who potentially believes the opposite as you, and everybody's watching you? You can take this for what it's worth, but I was raised by entrepreneurs, and I was really raised that we keep our

opinions to ourselves because we can serve clients with opposite beliefs other than ours. Everybody doesn't have to believe everything I believe for me to serve them and help them and change their lives. I really believe, why cannibalize half of the world by having a public rant about something polarizing?

You choose what's right for you, and you may completely disagree with me even telling you this topic, but here's the thing that I want you to consider. When you are a business owner and you want to attract clients to hire you, I personally think it pays to stay a little bit like Switzerland publicly on social media, right? Switzerland just stays pretty darn neutral out there. Why can't you be neutral? And literally, I put on the hat of I love people. I love people even if they have a different view from me, and in small groups, I don't have a problem talking about things that are important to me, but when you do it publicly, you're really asking to alienate potential clients, and if you don't care, go for it, go for it all day long, but just know that we live in the results of the decisions we make. So if you're really bummed out that nobody's coming to you after you've been stirring up, or even just participating in drama, or saying negative things online, it really puts a barrier up to you running your business, okay? So number one is cheer, don't jeer.

Number two, be intentional with how you use it. What I'm talking about, social media, follow clients, follow potential business partners, follow potential clients, follow important things happening in your city, and business groups. And look, if it's really important to you to share those opinions with your friends and family, you can create a second profile and only allow the people who are super important in your life and maybe share your views.

I actually did that, I created a private Facebook name just to stay connected with people in high school and people who knew me by my maiden name, because photographers were completely clogging up my profile when I started speaking, and I thought, "Oh my gosh, I'm so private, I have to have all this separate," then I got locked out of it for a few years, and I don't really even use it, and I realized it was more trouble than it was worth, and nobody really even cared, but it just... I didn't know at the time. It seemed like a good idea, so you have to decide

what's right for you. The key thing is just to really make sure you're careful and you're being intentional with how you use it when you are a business owner.

Number three, educate and story-tell. Yes, story-tell about your personal life, if it's okay, right? And it fits into number one, where you're cheering, not jeering. But use it sparingly for promoting your business directly, because if you're posting more things that are salesy and that are asking people to buy, and you're not creating value and getting interest, your things aren't going to be shown to other people. And I have a lot of photographers saying, "What's the algorithm, what's the algorithm?"

Think about it from a user perspective. If you're out there and everybody's just trying to sell you a house, or get you into an MLM, and get you hosting a party for them, or buying their product, or doing whatever it is you want them to do, if that's all that was on social media, you'd turn away, you'd say "There's nothing here for me." So the owners of these platforms want value, they want to reward people who are interesting, who are sharing things of value, and they determine that by how many people are following them, how many people are engaging? It's not just the huge follower number, buying followers would work, which it doesn't, okay? It's about engaging with people and sharing, and being a part of the community. Think about it in real life. If there was a room of people and you walked in, just started handing out business cards and selling to everybody, would people want you in the room? No. But if you're there adding value and connecting people and sharing and educating, they want you there, okay?

So advertising and promotion are different. So if you're advertising and you're buying Facebook ads, for example, that's one thing, that's not a post. If you're posting something to promote it, right, that's not paid, advertising is paid, but promoting something, you can appear very salesy on social media if you're not careful, and if you don't know how to do it properly, and if you're always promoting.

I've unfriended people, and not in a long, long time, but I had people on my page that were just blah, blah, blah, only talking about that, not teaching anything or adding any value.

And so I realized, "Okay, that's not the way to go either," okay? So you really want to be careful and not be salesy and just selling what you have to offer all the time. You want to educate, you want to share stories, tell stories about your clients, tell stories about your session. That's interesting to people.

And then number four, set limits. If you kind of treat social media like a job, not an escape to go into this mind-numbing abyss of hours being gone from your day, no, think of it like a job, like a business activity. So if you spend 90% of the time on social media interacting with clients and Dream 100 people, right? Those are business partners that you'd like to work with, or groups that you're a part of, and you go in and you just want to help and serve others, set a timer and do those things. Have a plan for what you're posting and when and how long it'll take. Really set an intention for how you're planning to use social media for that little timeframe when you're hitting that icon on your phone. Set a timer if you have to, and plan your content out.

But if you use it as an escape, it's just going to suck away your valuable time. That is your most precious commodity. I love doing some social media when I'm soaking in the bathtub, because I know before long, the water's going to be cold and I'm going to be all wrinkly like a prune and I'm going to want to get out, so it's kind of an unintended sort of natural limiter that I can't spend too much time on social media. It's like my little hot bath, light a candle, have a little bit of that social media catnip, and then I move on.

And bonus number four, when you're doing that mindless scrolling before bed, and look, I do it too, but use that as your guilt-free time to just surf for a little bit, but set a limit, right? Set a limit so you're not there at 2:00 AM still watching TikToks. The better habit is to put the phone away two hours before bed and get something productive done in the morning before you open email or social. It's a choice. So when you go to hit that app, hear my voice telling you, "It's a choice."

Look, I totally get how mind-numbing social media can be, and sometimes when you've had a bad day, you just need an escape. When we have something hard on our to-do list, it's

easier just to check out and watch Reels or go onto TikTok, but this is where setting intentions and creating excellent habits comes in. I want you to build a high-performance life, and that starts with a high-performance business in my mind. Think about it, a profitable business is the answer to what you've been missing in your life.

If you're overwhelmed and you have no time, a profitable business gives you more time because you should be working less if you're following the model that we teach, that's the boutique model for you portrait photographers. And if you're always fighting over money, a profitable business will alleviate that. So truly, you making the decision to make your business profitable is going to change your life, but only you can decide that you're tired of settling for the things in your life that you aren't happy with, and that you're ready to use that camera that you love so much to build your dream life doing what you love every day. Why would you not do everything possible to make this happen? Look, I want you to put your best self into the world for your clients, for your kids, and for yourself, so when you make that choice, just know I am here for you, and I'll talk to you next week.

Hey photographer, this is Sarah again, and really quick. I wanted to give you a chance to work with me for five days for free starting September 26th. You heard me right. Inside the Joy of Marketing community, I'm hosting a free challenge we call the 5-Day Booking Boost. This challenge is for you if you're unsure who your ideal client is, you just know maybe you aren't like them, or maybe you have a lot of doubt and can't quiet the voice in your head that tells you, "People only want digital files where I live." If you feel paralyzed by marketing, always second-guessing yourself and putting it off, then hop on over to the 5-Day Booking Boost challenge right now at joyofmarketing.com/bookingboost. That's joyofmarketing.com/bookingboost.

You'll get a printable challenge workbook, and then you'll join me live on Facebook each day for a daily challenge so that we can help you find your ideal clients. You'll get support, encouragement, and accountability in this private Facebook group. No matter where you are in your photography business, this challenge is going to help you understand the strategy behind

finding boutique clients, and understanding all the things you need to be successful in consistently getting bookings. Go online to joyofmarketing.com/bookingboost, that's joyofmarketing.com/bookingboost, and join this challenge.