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Years ago, I got the most heartbreaking email from a photographer. She was about to lose everything and asked for my advice for turning things around. Here's what I told her.

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.

Here's the story. About 10 years ago, I was doing a last minute read through my email. It was like the day or two before Christmas before heading out to start my holiday fun with my family. That's when I saw the heartbreaking email from a photographer who was on the brink of losing everything. There wasn't going to be a Christmas for her kids, which wasn't even the worst part. She was going to lose her business, her house, everything, possibly even the kids. She was desperate for ways to make money with her camera fast. I thought on it and thought on it and I racked my brain and even talked to my team about it, trying to figure out how can we help her.

We love marketing, we're really good marketers, but unfortunately the day before Christmas is a little bit too late to make the money you need before Christmas. Had she reached out weeks earlier, a month or two earlier, there would've been things to do. But the reality is December 24th is too late for this holiday season, but right now is not. So if you're the person who's already been thinking, "Ah, look, this year's almost over, I'm just going to do better next year." No, listen up. There are three things every photographer can sell right now to end your year better than you did last year, better than you thought you could and get yourself some momentum going into 2023.

Since I'm in the middle of a six week training program I call Christmas Cash Camp with my coaching students where we go deep into the dos and don'ts of each of these activities and then we do them together, I thought I would share these three things with you today. You might want to grab a pen and paper and write notes because I've got a lot of info coming at you.

Number one, extended family sessions. Let me first talk about why this is important right now. I remember years ago running into a good client of mine a couple days after Christmas, and we were both

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shopping, running errands, I'm sure, doing the after Christmas sale circuit. We looked at each other, we kind of hugged, "How are you? How is your Christmas?" "Great" as she was talking, she said, "Oh my gosh, my kids were all home for the first time in years." I just saw her face melt as she realized, "I'm talking to Sarah Petty and why didn't I get photos made? She's our family photographer. Oh my gosh." She said, "Sarah, why didn't I think to call you? It would've been perfect."

So I felt bad. I felt like, "Oh my gosh, it is my moral obligation to serve my clients and I never wanted that to happen again." If people don't want to hire me or they don't need photos or they did it somewhere else, that's fine, but I want to be the one to remind them. Here's the reality. Families are home from college. They're home from the military, or maybe they have adults who have moved away, or all of the cousins and siblings are home together to see the grandparents. This is a great grandparent gift.

If you have grandparents who are still with us, you know how hard it is to get gifts for them. They pretty much have everything. They don't need a lot of things. If they do, they really are sentimental about the things they have and they don't want new. But artwork is always a great gift. Who doesn't love photography of the people they love? Here's the thing about it, there's great income potential. I have students like crazy who are crushing it with this. Jen Pisani had an order of over \$18,000 from an extended family. Jean Lachat this summer did one over a holiday with an over \$10,000 order. Lainey Poelzer did this last holiday season and cash flowed her entire first quarter with a \$14,000 order.

So look, it's not uncommon for these orders to be that high. You may be thinking, "Oh, that can never happen for me." Yeah, it can. Here's why. There are so many people ordering. You have the gift for the grandparents where everybody's going in on it. You have each individual family. So say the grandparents have three kids, you can photograph each of their families. You have the cousins. You have the cousins with the grandparents. You have the parents with the grandparents. You have all of these different combinations of people who can and will order.

I know that one of the biggest takeaways that my students have had this week while I've been talking is just how we went through a 20 page document on how to manage the session itself and the sales presentation, right? It has to happen differently than having everybody show up at once because the reality is there's always a Negative Nelly, someone who doesn't like photo day, someone who doesn't like photography or photos or being a part of a group or whatever it is. So make sure when you do big groups that you're handling each family separately.

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When you look at the work time involved before the holiday, look, it's minimal. You reach out and find them through your network, through your connections. If you're students of mine, which I know you guys love this podcast, you know how to go out there and quickly find a client. You'll meet with them before the session, about 30 minutes to plan clothing and location and fill out all the paperwork, finding out all the details about everyone in the family and having them answer all of the questions you need answered so that you can do a great job. The session is one hour. You've got to be quick and efficient and get it done. Maybe it's two hours, whatever, but you can fit this in.

I think the mistake most people make when they're doing this is they treat everybody the same and you can't do that with an extended family, okay? Some people are going to order a lot and some people are going to order a little. So your job is to figure out ahead of time who wants to order and who doesn't, so that during this session you can be super efficient with your time. In my photography business, I make sure I know what people are going to be purchasing before I even do this session. That's always a big aha for my students because they're like, "Whoa, I didn't realize how easy this would be to find this out."

Then you take the images of exactly what you know they're going to want, give them a couple choices of each, and then in-person presentation that happens after the holidays, that's a way for you to make money throughout January by selling and holding the hands of all of the different family members who have been a part of this. So extended family sessions are amazing. Gosh, around the holidays, they're so easy to book.

Number two, holiday cards. I am so passionate about holiday cards because literally that was the only thing I did for the first many years and that's what built my photography business. Because I did really cool ones and people would share them and they would talk about me and then it would generate referrals. It was seriously that one thing alone. I think because I didn't exist as a child, there were no photos. My mom is amazing. She's my best friend but she was not super sentimental. She had two kids close together. Just after I had kids, I realized how much work that was, but it just became sort of my thing.

Look, 2 billion holiday cards are sent each year in the U.S. alone. People are already doing them, some aren't doing them and feeling guilt that they should. But I think after COVID, it becomes more important, especially when I get so many of them where people are just doing them badly. Guys, it is our mission to save the world from bad artwork and bad holiday cards, right? We can do this. But the key is

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you don't want to become a holiday card factory, and I'll talk about that in a minute, because we don't make as much money on holiday cards as we do our artwork. So we want to do them for our clients who are also investing in artwork.

But the other reason why now is a great way to do holiday cards and a great reason to do them is that it gets your clients to pay for your marketing. Look, even if you did them at cost, which I don't recommend doing, but you might, right? If you're just starting out and you have friends and family and you say, "Hey, I'm going to use this to build my business, but I want you to pay for it." You do the photography and you get the designs done, and then they pay to print them and mail them and maybe even pay the designer. I know that's one of the things my students love about our Christmas Cash Camp is we give them a bunch of custom designs that my designer created.

I think that's what I love about teaching is that I pay the designer to create them for my business, Sarah Petty Photography, and then I include them in my program so that my students don't have to reinvent the wheel. Okay, so make sure someone's covering the cost of the design. You don't want to just do generic boring cards like everyone else. You want them to have some better design and be thoughtful about them. But think about it, they're paying the printing, they're paying to mail them out and you put your logo on the back of the card, and bam, you're in business, baby.

Look at the income potential. If you have 10 clients who do this and they invest \$500 in their cards, again, that all depends on how many cards and how you're pricing it, et cetera. But 10 cards at 500 bucks a client, that's five grand. Bam. You can do this. Look, you can use the templates or you can create your own, but you should be able to do these cards very quickly. So the time involved is very minimal, or it should be. That's where I see most people going wrong is that they allow this back and forth, back and forth, back and forth.

You might want to write this one down because this is a big one. I always say big door swing on little hinges. This is one of those. I create the design and I print it out and I tape it up just on my little inkjet printer and I say, "Hey, client, here is a proof of your card." I can make one round of changes, and after that, it's whatever you want to charge. It doesn't even matter. Say 20 bucks an hour, 50 bucks an hour, a hundred bucks an hour, and they will not make one more set of changes, okay?

So you have them look at it and you say, "Are the names spelled correctly? Are they in the correct order? Do you like everything on it? Do you like the colors?" Say, "I want you to just approve it. Give me your John Hancock right there on the card to let me know that you have approved everything.

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I'll make the changes and I'll get these babies printed." All right? So we don't want to go back and forth, back and forth.

When I first started, I just wanted so hard to please people and they'd say, "Oh, I love it. Can I see it in red? Can I see it in green? Can I see the photo on the back and the words on the inside and the vice versa, vice versa?" I would go back and forth and back and forth. No, they see it once. If you want to show them one final with the changes, that's fine, but we're not going back and forth, back and forth.

The other thing I see photographers stress about or do wrong is not putting their name on the card. Look, everything you buy has a logo on it from look at the pen you're writing with to your Apple iPhone to your Coke can to your tennis shoes to your shirt, to everything you have, and remind people, it's way more powerful to use something with a brand than just a generic holiday card. So you can put your logo small on the back or you can put copyright 2022 Sarah Petty Photography or just your name.

But that's how we build our business and they don't owe you anything for doing it. It's your brand, right? They paid more to work with a professional photographer, so they should really like that. That's what's cool about working with a professional photographer. Again, I'm hoping that you are doing your own holiday cards so that you're practicing what you preach. So make sure you're doing your holiday cards.

Number three, the third thing you can be doing right now to grow your business and to make money is gift certificates. You can do this one right up until the holidays, right? It could be New Year's, it could be Christmas, it could be a gift, whatever it is, people have the budget set aside for gifts. Okay, right now, people are looking for you. They are. You might think, "Oh, they don't need that or they've already got gifts purchased." Literally, I know people who wait till the last minute and struggle and struggle and struggle, okay, maybe that's me, it really is me, trying to find that perfect gift and then you forget about the thing that's so obvious.

Gift certificates are great for hard to buy for people. Great for husbands or spouses. Because I had a precious husband one year who snuck his kids out and did photos and he didn't have the little girl's hair done or even brushed and the clothes weren't exactly what the mom would probably want. So I realized, "You know what, I think most moms would just prefer a gift certificate so that they can get what they want." Grandparents, employees. What I love about grandparents too is that you can pool family budgets together and you can get a bigger gift certificate. But it's such a great gift that a lot of people forget about.

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Look, the income you can get for from this, if you sell just a \$200 gift card and you sell five of them, that's a thousand bucks. If you sell five at 500 bucks, that's 2,500 bucks. That can pay for your holiday season and maybe a little family trip as well, okay? You figure out what people get for that. People who have taken my courses know how to work that in and to sell artwork from that. I prefer you not sell just digital files for that. But if you're converting to boutique from digital and you want this to be your last year, you could definitely do that.

You might take 30 minutes to identify prospects. Go to your database, look at people you know who are married, who have kids, parents of your kids' friends, people that work with people you know. Go and be creative. I've had people approach my husband to buy me Christmas gifts and I've actually really loved them. I think that's super cool. Then you make the spouse out to be the hero. Then plan an hour or two to do the graphics and post them on social media and do reach out.

Now, let me caution you, because I do think most people use social media wrong. Don't just blast out there, "I'm selling gift certificates. Who wants one?" No one's going to reply. Okay, you want to be a little more stealth and you want to generate leads on your social media, and then you reach out to people and you tell them your irresistible offer and you talk to them, okay? I know you can do better than what all of the amateur photographers, all the people who aren't getting education, who aren't here listening to how to do things correctly, right? You're so much better than that.

So you might post and ask, "Who has extended family coming home for the holidays or who's struggling with a holiday gift?" Or you could post, "What is the gift you're most excited to give?" You start conversations and you reach out to people and you say, "Oh my gosh, I had a great idea for you." Okay, you don't want to be pushy and salesy and yucky. No one likes that. But I do think it's our moral obligation as photographers to create artwork for our clients and to remind them when they need an opportunity of what a great solution we have.

Remember, people need extended family sessions right now. They need holiday cards and they need gift certificates for hard to buy for people. You can do this and you can come out the hero, not some pushy, salesy, annoying business owner, okay? We can do both. We can be amazing and giving and sharing and awesome to think of our clients and we can be profitable. You don't have to pick.

Look, as portrait photographers, there are a few times a year when it's easier than ever to make money. This is one of them. So please don't give up on your year yet and don't overthink it. Just get out

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there and finish the year in a place where you're set up knowing that next year will be better. Dude, it's time and I know you can do this. Happy holidays, my friend.

Hey, photographer, it's Sarah again with a quick question for you. Do you ever wonder why some photographers make \$300 a session and others make 3,000? I know I did. So I dug deep into what's going on and I wrote a book for you called Worth Every Penny. You can get a free copy at joyofmarketing.com/freebook. Inside this book, you'll learn four ways to price your photography and why there's just one pricing strategy that attracts the best clients.

What to do when you need clients and why paying for ads doesn't work and what to do instead that's way cheaper. The dos and don'ts of social media, what most photographers are doing wrong that lowers their profits and what to do instead. I'm not sure there's a book on the planet that more photographers have read. 23,124 photographers have it already, so I want you to have it too. Grab your copy of the hardcover book free here. Just pay a little for shipping and handling at joyofmarketing.com/freebook.