

WORTH EVERY PENNY *joycast*TM

I just got back from a mastermind at a high-end luxury resort in Playa Del Carmen, Mexico. This is where we go to unplug and elevate our business, but it's anything but inexpensive, yet worth every penny. In this episode, I'm going to talk about how we justify a luxury like this and what you can learn about the experience you provide your photography clients.

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.

Recently, I went to a five-day event hosted by my mentor. It was in Mexico at an all-inclusive resort. There were hundreds of entrepreneurs from around the world, and everyone converged on this massive resort for a week. Everyone pays at least 25,000 up to \$250,000 a year to be in this group, plus travel expenses. Of course, that's always on us. So during the year, we go to several mastermind meetings in Boise, Idaho, and I'm in Springfield, Illinois, and then once a year our mentor picks a somewhat bougie place for us to meet. My friend in Australia has to take a 24-hour flight, and he pays \$13,000 for his flight. And he comes three to six times a year, so whoa, I need to stop complaining about the hassle it is to get to Boise. And of course Mexico is really easy to get to.

But the last two years of the Mastermind in Paradise, that's what they call it, have been in the same place because we all loved it so much. What's interesting is that, to me, I always thought all-inclusive implied low end. I'm sure this came from my parents saying, "Oh, those places are overcrowded and it's dirty sometimes. It's just not a high-end experience." Not that we grew up having high-end experiences, but they just didn't ever want to do that. And so I had

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some biases there. But when we went on this, we didn't have a choice because we were going, and it was so high end. I'll talk more about the experience in a moment, but here's why I wanted to share this on a podcast with you. I feel like most people when they start a business, they assume that people make their purchase decisions only on price. Think about that and think about what it means to you.

As entrepreneurs, it's important to look at why some people may pay more when they can get it cheaper. In fact, that happens all the time. What's interesting is, on my travels home, I visited with two different couples. One couple, I was waiting to board my flight and they were college students who had gone on spring break. And of course, they're in college and they probably found the cheapest possible place they could go, but I was asking questions about their experience and they called their place a dive. They said it wasn't nice at all. They were bright-red burned, and it just cracked me up because that's what my friends and I did when we were in college. But the second couple I sat next to on a flight, they were the two people next to me, and they were a young married couple. They had a one-year-old baby who was home with grandma and they were in Mexico for a friend's wedding. I was asking them about their experience and they also said it was not at all an excellent place. Both of the places were all-inclusive, but they were not thrilled with it. They said their accommodations were meh, the food was horrible, and no amenities like the lazy river, all the amazing things we had.

As they were asking me about my experience, I felt a little guilty because they were shocked. They were like, "Wait, we didn't get that experience." And then as it registered in their brain where they were like, "Okay, you probably paid more than I paid," we both kind of realized that, right? Do you see where I'm going here? Yes, there are people who might only want the cheapest photography, just like the cheapest all-inclusive vacation or work spot, but there are also people who want more.

Let me paint a picture for you of what our experience was like. When we got there, there were 30 people dressed in the same either dress if they were female or they had a little short outfit with a matching top all with flowers on them. So cool. And they were in the lobby,

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so we knew who the staff was. They met us and immediately took our luggage because they knew we'd been dragging this luggage around. Someone met us right at the top of the stairs with this little basket of frozen ice cream popsicles. It was hot there. We were frustrated. We'd all been flying for hours and navigating the airport, and it just immediately put us in this happy, happy, happy state.

Someone immediately escorted us to the building where our room was and the floor, gave us directions, walked us there, got our passport and everything we needed done in a separate lobby that was just for our building, took everything to the room, showed up with our luggage with us, and made the check-in the easiest thing I've ever done. This place was massive, it could have been such a nightmare. They set us up with a WhatsApp texting program, which I'd already had from a travel experience before, and the bellman was connecting to us so that anything we needed, they said just text them, and then it went to the person who had our room for the whole week. So it wasn't just one person.

We lost our shoes at one point and our notebook. We didn't lose them, we set them down to go take pictures 20 feet away, and by the time we came back, someone had already turned them in. So we just got on WhatsApp, we texted our person and they found it for us. If we needed directions, if we needed room service. The last day, the night before, they texted us to confirm our scheduled departure bus and said, "What would you like for room service? We'll make sure it's delivered," which is amazing. A lot of times you're out late the last night because you know you're leaving and you want to get it all in. And you wake up in the morning and you're starving and you're thinking, "Oh my gosh, why didn't we plan for food?" And then there you're traveling all day and it's exhausting and you're starving. And so they were thinking ahead for us.

They texted us every morning to see if we needed anything. They asked if we wanted a massage booked or an excursion. Now, we didn't do any of these things, but we could have. How cool is that? What's interesting is each building had a separate pool. There was a main pool. There were all these places to eat everywhere. If we were sitting at a pool working, it was

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rare that more than 10 minutes went by where they were offering to fill our food and our drinks. And the food was amazing, all fresh seafood and veggies, fresh avocado. The drinks were so fun, all the little slushy drinks in pretty glasses, whether you were drinking alcohol or not, they just came and were presented so beautifully. So you just felt really fancy and important.

There was a lazy river that ran through the entire park. There were several theme parks included if you wanted to do that. They were all on the property, so you didn't have to go somewhere in Mexico where you didn't feel safe or you didn't know how to navigate another country. We always felt super, super, super safe. Every few hours there were performers who were dressed up in native dress with music and drums. They would dance and they would do a little performance and they would move on. It was amazing.

We had a bracelet that was our room key, which was great because we didn't have to try to find a key, we just would swipe our wrist and we could get in and out of our room. But it also allowed us to take pictures all over the facility, even at the adventure park. So you'd see a sign and it would scan your bracelet basically, and then you could buy a photo package of all of the digital files, I heard, for 70 bucks, because I heard other people doing it. But how fun is that if you had a family there and you had kids. We were there for work and didn't really take advantage of it, but had I been there with my kids, I would've gone nuts for 70 bucks, which is pretty cool.

Because of my preconceived ideas of all-inclusive, I remember thinking, "I am not an all-inclusive place kind of person." I was dreading it the first year. "I don't want to have to wait in long lines and have empty food containers that everybody's grubbing for." This was not that. It was so much better. We go there for work, so we want to get work done, we want to connect. We have meetings with people, and there are private meeting spaces everywhere, and there's food everywhere and drinks everywhere, and they bring them to you. So we literally maximized every minute by meeting with different people and helping people, and they were helping us.

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We didn't have to stop and say, "Oh my gosh, we have to go find somewhere to eat." We just ate and worked. It was like a workation.

But I really want you to hear this. For me, instead of asking myself, "How can I get the cheapest version of what I want?" what we did was, "How can we maximize this experience and attend it, and then how do we prioritize paying for it?" Because it wasn't for us a choice of, "Oh, let's find the cheapest place to go in Mexico." This is where our event was. We knew that we could make money by what we learned there, so we said yes to it, and then we looked at how can we pay for it.

Now, for me, of course, this was a business expense, which is amazing because it's deductible, as it should be, so I don't have to pay tax on that investment. Let me tell you what, we made so much progress on our business in how to serve our students better and make every process in our company better, but also we got treated in a way that made us value ourselves so much. Because we invested this money, I feel like everybody who was there left feeling like we were all so worthy after being treated in such a fantastic way.

Think about our clients who are going through this amazing experience with us as their photographer and how amazing they feel and how much love they feel toward their family. I always question, how do we attract clients who value the heck out of us as photographers and value us and want to pay what we're worth happily? And then as consumers, we're always looking for the cheapest option. It's the law of the mirror. It doesn't work that way. That's where the conflict comes in, and we get scared to work with the right-fit clients when they're out there waiting for us, looking for us, wanting us.

Look, I'm not always traveling this way. A couple of weeks ago for my daughter's college volleyball season, she's playing beach volleyball in the spring in college, I was in Miami watching her play volleyball. I wanted to stay with the team, so I stayed at, I don't even know, I think it was a Holiday Inn. It wasn't in the safest neighborhood because the coach told all of the girls, "Stay in your rooms," which of course I did. Except for right when we got there because one of the other moms and I got there early, we were starving. I'd been traveling all day. She drove

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like four hours from another city in Florida. It was rush hour. We were right in the middle of a super busy area. And since we didn't want to go far or get lost and we wanted to see our girls for just a few minutes, usually we can see them when they check in, we had dinner together at the Holiday Inn. And the best part, we laughed and we had a total ball.

You know what? My room was very inexpensive and not at all nice. But you know what? Who cares? Having not grown up living a life of luxury, I didn't grow up with hotel-owning parents or anything really fancy, it feels a little uncomfortable for me not to be price shopping. Which is why this experience was so perfect for me, because if I wanted to go to learn, this is where the event was, which was so excellent. We were forced to invest in a higher standard for ourselves when we would've just gotten by. And now I really crave it. I'm asking myself, "How can I live a life where I get treated with excellent service and I can fuel my body with excellent foods?" It makes me feel better, it makes me feel stronger, and it makes me feel like I can serve more people.

And I ask myself, "In both of my businesses, how can I create a better experience for my clients so they feel valued, so they feel worthy of what they're investing in?" Because I want them to feel that feeling of, "Wow, that was expensive, but it was so worth it." What does this mean for you? Look, I want you to apply this to your clients. If you are giving your clients this ultimate treatment, like this all-inclusive bougie resort that we stayed at in Mexico and a week later I had just stayed at a Holiday Inn, you're giving your clients the treatment that the Holiday Inn doesn't give.

Sometimes people want a Holiday Inn photographer where they just get cheap digital files. That's cool. They can do both. But also, I want my clients to come to my photography business who want gorgeous heirloom artwork on their walls. I want to be the specialty place for people who are being served at a high level and who want something beautiful to hang in their homes. I want to work with people who at least once every couple years wants the experience and the handholding to have beautiful artwork without the risk of making a mistake. And if they fill in with other photographers and they get digital files or take their own in the

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meantime or in between the times they come to me, I'm completely fine with that. I'm completely fine with that.

I want you to ask yourself as you're building this business that's not a Holiday Inn, that's not affordable for everybody because everybody doesn't prioritize the kind of experience that I had or the kind of experience I offer in my photography business, but I want you to ask yourself what experience can you give your clients that the digital file-only photographers can't? And ask yourself, "What would make me giddy if someone did that for me? What can I do from experience to products to the services and all the things I do and the way I speak to them and how I treat them that is so high end and next level that they can't stop talking about me to all their friends?" I'm fine if they say, "I went to Sarah Petty and it was expensive," as long as they follow it up with, "and it was the best money I've ever invested," or "and it was worth every penny." That is awesome. That's how I felt about our Mexico trip.

And then make sure you've worked all of those special things you're offering into your prices. One of the coaches in my program where we mentor photographers, her name's Sara Rostatski. She has a family business in Canada, and her husband hangs these big collections for their clients. Can you imagine buying a collection with five to 10 large wall portraits that are all being hung in a really cool way and they have to be centered and they have to be balanced? I know for me that might send my husband running, but they offer that to serve their clients. When people walk into their homes, what's the first thing that visitors say? "Whoa, that is amazing."

What I want to challenge you to do is create an experience for your clients so they feel like the place I went to in Mexico. I don't think we do that for ourselves enough, really treating ourselves to a special experience when there's a much cheaper option on the table. It's even hard for me as I've grown in my life and I have more disposable income because I was raised in a way that is super thrifty and watching every dollar, and so it is hard for me, which is why this was perfect for me because I didn't have a choice.

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The two couples that I met did have a choice. What's interesting is the second couple, the husband and wife who were sitting next to me on the plane who were hanging on my every word, they really wanted to have the kind of experience I had, he looked at his wife and he said, "Well, you get what you pay for." Which is so true, isn't it? It is so true. I know sometimes we think, "Well, it's okay to sacrifice and just get good enough." That Holiday Inn was good enough. It was a roof over my head. I was traveling by myself. And sometimes that's okay. But other times we want more and we're worth more.

It's funny because I often get asked by photographers who want to hire me as a coach and do some of my programs, they ask, "Why are my programs more than some of these other people who are promising the world for way, way, way, way less?" It's interesting because when someone promises everything you need to know for 199 bucks, it always makes me wonder, right? And here's what I say: "There are lots of cheaper one-off Holiday Inn style courses you can invest in, and for some people that may be just fine. But I know that running a business that doesn't compete on price, it is really hard, if not impossible, to run a business or learn how to run a business that puts your family first and makes you money from a one-time couple hundred dollars course.

I know that because I used to offer those courses, and I would get frustrated when students would get frustrated because they didn't have the handholding that you get when a course costs more. That's just why, right? That's why my coaching programs are more expensive than most in the market because we have the most comprehensive system. I've been doing this for 25 years profitably, and we have a whole team who serves our students. We serve people hard, and that's why it costs more, because I want my co students to serve their clients hard and cost more and be worth more and treat people better. It's so, so cool to be able to treat people that way and then charge what you're worth.

So listen, no matter if you value travel and excellent life experiences or not, if you are in business and you want to charge what you're worth and be profitable, you must create experiences that leave your clients feeling the way I did after that trip to Mexico. And as a

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consumer, I hope you start to make decisions not just based on what is the cheapest. Just something for you to think about.

Okay, friend, I'm a little embarrassed to admit this, but I didn't know how to subscribe to a podcast. I know. I know. I'm new to this whole podcast world, but I figure, heck, if I didn't know, maybe you didn't know either. So here's the scoop. If you want to get notified on your phone each time I drop a new podcast, do this. First, if you're on an iPhone, open up the podcast app on your iPhone, type in Worth Every Penny Joycast, and you'll see a tiny purple Subscribe button. Just tap it and voila, now you'll be the first to know when there's a new episode, and it'll be delivered right to your phone so you can hit play during carpool, your drive to a session, or during your workout without having to search for it. And while you're there, if you want to tap the Five Star button to review, it's how we get the word out to other photographers who may be struggling and need help too. From your computer, you can subscribe to this podcast through the iTunes Store, and if you're on an Android phone, you can listen via the Google Play music app. And as always, this joycast is 100% free to you.