



Business Building 101

Wedding Photography/Videography

By Samuel James

Chapter 1 – Making A Business Out Of It – Game Of Costs

Money, money, money! It may not be as expensive as most other businesses but you sure must dish out a bunch of dollars if you want to ensure your wedding photography/videography business is going to get the start it deserves.

You'll need capital whether it's going to be used for the business with you alone in it or to hire a good business team to handle various important corners of the art. An accountant will be your most useful ally. If you can't afford one, learn the ropes and learn them quick. Accounting is one of the most important factors where you can manage your photography/videography progress, handle profits, balance losses and more.

This business isn't going to help you get rich quick, you can be sure of that. It takes time and long-term planning to get to the top which is where the money really starts flowing and the fast lane resides. No matter how talented you are there are always those more talented, many of whom are already established. This chapter is going to take you through the very foundation of the business namely the finances and starting here you can see marked improvement, if you play the game of costs right.

A business plan is in order. What type of services you offer and how your customer relationships are going to be are two of the many factors that go into making a sound business plan. When you start by determining prices (this is termed business pricing) start small but think big. Lay out all the immediate prices you need to spend in order to stand strong as a photographer/videographer for hire. After that spread up and out and see your larger goals and lay them out as well. This will help you understand up to where and how you can grow your business with no unexpected cash loss. All this while sticking to the practical nature of things (nothing unrealistic).

Hiring employees to help, even if it's just one assistant or accountant, is a key point to consider. In this case, you'll have to make sure—no offense intended—to try and do without them. This warrants some research and self-education on your part so you can catch up on some valuable accounting knowledge that you can do yourself and save yourself a bloated paycheck that goes to the accountant you may have hired. Whereas as assistant will be great for field work—displaying your professionalism by helping impart efficiency and speed—you can still do without them, if you know how to work with the equipment you have, especially remote-controlled or wireless devices.

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The general price a wedding *photographer* puts up is around \$5000 for a day spent shooting. A wedding *videographer* asks extra, for obvious reasons. Another obvious point that follows that earlier estimate is you have to be really good to deserve such a cost or one look at some samples/portfolio will give your client(s) reason to bargain.

You can't discount pre-production costs. These include preparation material you may need to buy. Another sub-field of pre-production includes the purchase or renting of equipment, the buying of good (make that *great*) editing software, and miscellaneous components like hard drives, memory cards and such like.

Next, turn your mind to post-production. You'll certainly know the album and its print costs take up this spot. This is sole crucial point you need you need to remember where post-production is concerned. All this is what, according to practical observations, \$5000 covers. Where good accounting, smart saving and personal knowledge comes in handy is when you use them to see a profit exceeding the \$5000 that finds itself being spent faster than you can click or record a shot.

An accountant—can't stress this employee enough, or the knowledge this subject affords you—compares and cross references to see you come out with a profit. This leaves you room to improve your services as a photographer/videographer and then develop on those skills and services for the betterment of your business.

The Market is your next focus in the overall business plan. It's good old fashioned research in this particular circus where you learn what your competitors are asking by way of prices and how much they spend (if such info is available). You may have to spend as much time traveling and researching as will before the computer, online.

The reason you're going through this effort is so you don't end up underselling yourself. When your competitors catch wind of the fact that you're offering your services so cheap, whether intentionally or not, you lose respect with your potential colleagues and that will somehow lose you clients than otherwise, as you might have assumed. The same notion works for overcharging, so stay within your station. You'll learn how to do this during your market research. Your pricing now takes on an enviable professionalism that has the potential to get you recognized for your competitive edge.

You can imagine how far this will take you in the business.

Do not—repeat, do *not*—price your services depending on what you personally or professionally think they are worth. The modern market today consists of people who aren't dumb. This is your target market and they have an estimate of the worth of your services. Their value is your value. This is one of those 'the customer is always right' moments you need to take advantage of to the benefit of your photography/videography business.

Remember your research earlier, where you learned how much your competition is pricing their clients? Use that knowledge to know what the clients are demanding of their professionals. It's that simple. Getting the information may be hard but using it afterwards becomes a cinch.

Price according to what they want to see and you'll get them to like you a lot, enough to hire you and refer you afterward. Be very careful when it comes to the competition you choose to set your standards by. Many of them have made some rotten business decisions that looked like a good idea at the time. As mentioned a while back, it takes time to gather the research but it gets easy to implement the good ones later.

The primary element where you become your own person and work to best effect, with the least need to depend on other people, be it friends, family or paid employees is Software. This is your main Workflow Manager. From those latter two words you can understand that this software hasn't got to do with the editing software you as the photographer/videographer are going to use for certain.

This is the kind of software that helps you craft templates that can be customized based on what your client(s) loves, which spreads out to include contracts you create for your customers. Contract templates are where you sell your professionalism, pricing and more, so this is indeed quite valuable.

Product management is yet another superb feature such software helps you manage. Pricing is another, making it highly important to you and your business. Organizing your clientele is made even easier with software. ShootQ and Fundy Software are two of several examples in this category.

Make smart inclusions in your business plan and always plan ahead. You'll learn more, especially the latest updates and tricks, as you go along. Such tricks include tiered pricing, which is essentially a customization option for your clients. Too many options stress them and too many selections of said option on their part may stress *your* finances.

Take the minimum price depending on your expenditure costs for the wedding shoot. This is called the base package. Build your tiers from here, based on the pricing variable you've chosen to go for. These variables are basically additional services, extra deliverables and what not, including hours you're tasked to work in.

Chapter 2 – The Importance of Capturing Happiness

This idea can't be stressed enough. As a wedding photographer/videographer you need to get your skills in order. By that it's meant you need to know your number one priority, which far exceeds any other wedding-day requirement for a professional like yourself. That priority is capturing happiness. Often tears of joy or shock add to the element of inner gladness you need to get on tape or film.

That's a skill in itself, otherwise anyone armed with a camera and a few additional components can go into business as a wedding photographer/videographer. The bride, groom and the family on both sides will look forward to a lot of amazing shots that must touch them deep down. There's no pressure on the photographer/videographer to try and please each of the people involved. If you can manage to capture shots that make the bride feel happy, you're good to go. If circumstances are such that you can't in the time being ask what the bride desires then use your own talent, specifically that of filming/clicking happiness.

The opportunities aren't rare. With a plethora of excited and joyful shots a wedding opens you up to, the sky's the limit. This is the primary reason professionals like yourself take as much footage as possible so you have enough to work with at the editing stage and not find yourself coming up short.

The prevalent romantic atmosphere is a gift. Use it to best effect. Magic is just waiting to happen and not just the fantastic imaginative version but the technical ones as well, where the floor is open for you to take some of the most unique and magnificent shots or films, certain to bring a tear of happiness to anyone's eye and light a spark of desire in their hearts.

This is the goal every videographer/photographer should aspire to... Getting ahead of the game using unique shots that reflect on their personal talents while, and here's the important part, acquiring happiness in every shot.

A simple yet smart way to look at this is you try and shoot people's emotions in any one frame or stretch of recorded film. If you can see and sense emotions going strong in that particular shot you've taken or are taking, you've gotten it right.

Of course, the consequent idea is what type of emotion you're seeing. This largely depends on the scene and the elements that are present in it. Using those visuals you can work your skills. Angles are where you can see a lot of this taking place. Distance, another. Lighting and other features come into play as well.

What you're basically doing is playing with your skills using a mixture of practiced/trained guesses and knowledge. After that, you're guaranteed to meet your aims and targets and accrue plenty of referrals for the same.

Faces are invaluable expression-sources yet, surprisingly, many professionals forget to take enough of it. It's on faces, especially those of the bride and groom, you can capture some of the best photo/film moments on a wedding day.

The expressions, the sudden facial-shifts, the rise and the fall of so many emotions, all this and more can be captured on faces. So, get that camera ready and focused for such sublime shots. Pan out from here... What you could probably be shooting is a wedding ritual. This is where emotion is high. It's a traditional moment, a rather official one too, so you can imagine how getting all the right angles in this unique stretch of moments will be more than satisfying.

The rest of the wedding is a superb time to go all out and unleash your full creativity in the shoes of the wedding photographer/videographer. Get as many shots of the bride and groom as possible. Keep a balance in that regard, meaning get a lot of footage of them together and nobody else. On the other hand, also aim for several pictures/films of them with family and friends.

Special effects are yet another amazing tech-element to summon. This takes place in the editing stage where you add ideal lighting, effects and more to enhance an ordinary photo or film into an enchanting one. This phase takes a large chunk of your time, based on the type of effects you plan on using.

These are some of the greatest ways you can capture happiness as the wedding videographer/photographer. It takes a level of psychological know-how on your part to understand the bride's needs and desires where filming/photographing joyful moments are concerned.

We all want happiness. One of the epitomes of such an emotional state is present during weddings. There is the promise of so much to look forward to in future. Granted, sometimes life fails us and many a couple doesn't get the happiness they deserve out of a marriage that started out wonderfully.

However, there a million factors that go behind why that happened, which is not the prerogative of this book to cover. What you as the professional should understand is you hold in your power tools and talents that can help turn the tide long after the wedding day is over. There are a bunch of real-life instances where marriages were saved when therapy had couples going through their wedding photos and films and attempting to relight a lost spark.

Outside of therapy, you can still see happiness through the framed pictures on a couple's home and the videos they sit back to enjoy on anniversaries and other similar special occasions. All this becomes possible because you gave it your best on the day in question, when a man and woman in love looked into each other's eyes and said 'I do'.

Facial Expressions

Cuteness packs a lot of emotion. Aside from the adorable children you see running around in their wedding-wear best, turn your focus *also* on capturing cuteness in adults, especially the bride and groom. It takes an inordinately large amount of personal closeness for two people to be comfortable being cute in each other's presence.

Therefore, not only do cute photos/scenes reveal how much in love the couple is and how close their family is in relation to other people in the shot it also captures a moment that will prove this closeness exists time and again. You can't imagine the emotional impact a simple snigger, chuckle or laugh can impart when this picture/film moment is viewed many years down the line.

With practice, experience and training comes an instinct to know when a genuine expression is going to pop up on someone's face. It helps to pay attention to the lower half of the face. The reason why eyes haven't been stressed strongly is because you may not often be at an angle or nearness to spot the shift or emergence of an expression worthy of capture around those features. The lips and cheeks often move first, though, something you can spot from afar and get ready to shoot. Of course, if the circumstances are right, nothing beats eyes for expressions.

Sounds are another factor to help you get that ideal emotion into your video shot. Still-photos aside, sounds in videos adds to the impact on viewer's senses. Albeit it can be tricky to capture sound along with the scene to impart a sublime emotion, it isn't impossible. This is where your professional skills come into play so rest assured that you will know what to do when the times comes. Then again, practice always helps.

Expressions, after all is said and done, are the best way you can communicate the subject's emotion to the viewer. This makes your skills along these lines quite invaluable. More often than not people seeing a superb shot or video ask after the professional who took them it.

Smile lines are great ways to determine just how emotional the person is at that moment in time. From the spread and stretch of skin along the cheekbones, called the naso-labial folds, to the creases seen beside the eyes, you can work using these and other emotional cues to help you get a better shot of the moment.

Sooner than later you're going to have to ask the subjects in your photo/video to do certain things. Implementing such knowledge will help you direct them accordingly and get a cool shot the first time around. If you keep guessing and making them wait overlong or ask they do different things just so you can get a great shot from one of them, it removes the natural flow of things and renders your 'awesome' shot 'awful'—no offense intended, but this is indeed based on fact.

Have fun, be smart and come prepared with the know-how on expressions to be captured and how to spot them in the nick of time. There's no way you can go wrong.

Chapter 3 – How To Approach Your Customer/Client

You may have other clients hiring you for a wedding day than the bride herself, but you must prepare the same or similar queries to ask them. If you're meeting with the bride directly to get some important questions answered, well and good. Your interview comprises what's called the Approach (not a technical term). It helps highlight your professionalism, further putting your business in the spotlight.

The Location: While It may be advisable for you to go scout out the location yourself ahead of time and take notes on how best to set up equipment and where the light is great, at what time of day and so on and so forth, it's proper form to ask the bride her description of the location. Not only will you gain insight into a point or two you may have missed yourself you'll also possess specific information on what most appeals to her. This, and other details, will help you plan accordingly and get those shots into your footage-collection on the big day.

The Expectations: It's amazing to hear someone ask you what your expectations are for an event in which you feature prominently. This way they're giving you the advantage, heads up and control over the occasion, making you feel secure, confident and happy. This is the emotional tête-à-tête between a photographer/videographer and the bride when they're busy discussing what she expects to see in her wedding-day photos and videos. There are so many avenues in this process that will save you time, money and disappointment. From the charming to the simple, the silly to the perfect, idea-exchanges like this will get you personal details she wants used you may not find out on your own. A similar query to ask is what they (the bride and /or groom) hope to get out of the whole experience, to be remembered for forever after.

The Plan: There are planned moments and some un-planned ones. Either way, you're better off asking a confirmed schedule of events for the wedding day. It will save you plenty of time, for one thing, to plan your own coverage. You can get to all the right places on time or set up wireless equipment to gather footage while you work somewhere else. You'll be directed to important places and moments to look out for, certain group photos/videos that include people who are only dropping in for a few minutes and who are an absolute must-include in your footage, and so on.

The Budget: It's not at all impolite to ask after this but it's the way you ask it that counts. In this way, it can be rather tricky how you approach this query. Chances are the bride or whoever else is sitting in at the interview has already come up with an estimate. The wedding budget is, after all, one of the top three points focused on during wedding planning. Your asking about it only proves you're keen on keeping within the range limit and doing your best to consider such important financial details. Once you have a realistic number on paper your expectations will align themselves accordingly and your plans get fine tuned instead of leaving you facing a chaotic-creative mélange of options.

The Competition: There are some weddings that hire two different photographers/videographers to bring a diverse talent-set to bear on the day's events. Aside from the fact that such a decision means a larger budget on the part of the bride and groom, your duty rests with your skills alone and how best you can work your magic. Some healthy competition isn't a bad thing, so asking who the bride has in mind by way of different professionals is alright. What *is* a bad thing is when you're busy competing on the wedding day with this person. That's sure to cause a ruckus whose mess will be revealed when your work is developed and shown to the bride and, as slang says it best, it ain't gonna be pretty. There are instances when the bride may be considering hiring you to cover the wedding *solo* but has her sights set on another potential professional to cover it solo, if you don't pass muster. Asking about who else she has considered, along these lines, helps you alter your work ethic to appear more appealing to the bride by way of pricing, coverage skills and more.

The Wedding Planner: Of all the other vendors at the wedding (vendors include you, the videographer/photographer) the wedding planner will be one of your most useful allies. Without their aid you might, just might, find yourself unable to manage expectations. Besides, there's a great chance they can help save you time and unnecessary research by revealing you to locations, scenes, moments that are certain to take place here or there, dining spreads, cake display and more, all of which will look fabulous in your footage-collection. After editing, these could develop into one of the most sublime works of videographic/photographic art you could ever have performed in your business run.

The Marketing: Although you'll be reading a lot more on this in "Chapter 5: Marketing & Advertising" it's mentioned here because you're going to have to ask the bride an important question on these lines most professionals refrain from asking. Ask how she heard about you and your services. This essentially gives you the advantage, because during, before and after the wedding you're prone to meet the person(s) who recommended or suggested you. A simple sharing of gratitude will take you quite far with that person(s). If they aren't there at the wedding, you can at least get an estimate of what the person who recommended you must have been thinking and chances are there will be some sort of data in there somewhere that will help you where marketing is concerned. Make certain you time this query right lest you sound rude or arrogant, not to mention abrupt.

The Style: Every wedding videographer/photographer has their own style, something that's just them and nobody else. It's this special skill that makes brides want to hire them. In fact, it makes the bride's job that much easier when she knows the style she likes and if you have it. This is exactly why you directly but calmly ask whether she likes your style of work. Show her samples, take a stocked portfolio and/or anything else you may have at hand so she gets an extensive spread to peruse. She'll know what she wants and if she sees what she likes, you're in. Some photographers/videographers, though they have a unique style, are versatile enough to adapt to what the bride likes. This isn't really recommended, because the more unique your style your work will show that and the more work you do the more that style spreads and people start recognizing you by it. However, if you're a rookie professional looking to gather work, money and experience such versatility will be a step up.

The Bride: Get to know her and her groom. How did they meet, funny life instances, things she'd love to see go into the photos and videos, ideas (quirky or otherwise) she'd like to have you shoot, specific events she and her beloved came up with together and that has special meaning only to them and nobody else which she'd love immortalized in picture or video form... In this fashion, there's no end to the queries you can ask and the answers you can glean. In the end, you'll have yourself enough resources to work magic with.

Chapter 4 – Equipment & Gear

For Photographers

The first point to note is that photography equipment can get rather pricey, so come prepared to invest appropriately when you shop. There are some options that are less expensive, so be on the lookout for those and make good decisions. Photography equipment's value for your business is immeasurable, so never stop to assume you can take it easy with this step.

Canon and Nikon share a lot of similarities where tech-speak is concerned, so be aware that what you're going to read is the world of Canon.

Usually the 10D and 20D Canons, cropped sensor cameras both of them, are great to work with. However, it's been observed that switching to 5D's incredibly improves the image quality. The Canon 5D and the Canon 5D Mark II are two superb examples of wedding cameras you can rely on to perfection. The 5D's also have a cool extensive viewfinder—you're certain to appreciate that feature. The Mark II one mentioned earlier is one full-frame camera you'll love where affordability is concerned (approx. \$2700). Don't bet on the 5D's getting you cool focus systems, though, those are better in the advanced 1-Series, but 5D's are indeed great for weddings and the workload such coverage brings your way.

This will be a good time to mention the absolute need for a backup camera. You can't do without this, so keep one ready—don't be misled by the 'backup' word's cliché sound lest the word 'disaster' comes along preceded by 'emergency'. Backup cameras can be simple pieces, as long as they get the job done and not have you losing any precious memories. If not a full frame, see to it you have an SLR that can accommodate your lenses. Speaking of which...

Lenses come in a range of different sizes based on how they're used...

35: This is the widest of the lot, ideal for portraits and photojournalistic shootings. It is pretty useful during weddings, but doesn't see as much action as the others. Some wide angle lenses make group photos come out odd, in that some people's features are slightly twisted. The 35 doesn't do that. Dance shots, portraits, large family shots, church shots and so on are great to capture with the 35.

50: Commonly touted as the must-own lens for any photographer, this one helps you capture images akin to those seen by human sight on a full-frame camera. It's perfect for use any time of day. From portraits, speeches, mid-length ceremonies to preparations, dances and other wedding-day moments, this lens is a superb choice. There's variety with this one, so you can choose a 50 lens-type that fits your budget and camera.

85: From putting your subject in a light all their own and capturing them in ideal angles, this lens is awesome for portrait-taking. If you're looking for that extra stretch to cover the distance, be it close-ups of the father-daughter dance or mid-ceremony speeches/events this one's a cool option to consider.

70-200: Although oft used to capture ceremony shots, this lens is highly valuable for all things wedding photography. When times call for discretion while also demanding appealing close-ups of the bride and groom, you can capture a lot of emotion using this one. The long end is where the magic happens, permitting a superb level of zoom and wonderful framing no matter how tight a space you're in at the time.

There are zoom lenses (24-70mm zoom, 17-40mm) out there for you to check out and also specialty lenses (Lensbaby, tilt-shifts, macro rings), which are something experienced professionals will appreciate giving a shot.

Accessories are yet another important addition to your equipment checklist... Flash, tripod, battery packs, memory cards, external hard drives, camera bag, lens pens, rocket blower, microfiber towels, and of course spare batteries are some of the must-have's you can use.

For Videographers

There are some similar points for videographers to consider from the above equipment must-have's for photographers. It's essential that you have updated technology and preferably not a run of the mill camcorder.

Hi-Def (HD) SLR's are a beginner's favorite. Not only are some brands in this category rather affordable they're also great for shooting a film-like run of footage. Add high definition to that and you have yourself a professional's dream come true. There are other HD-SLR models, though, that put up quite a challenge so be sure you know what you're getting yourself into.

Recording media is your next big concern. These include the fairly obvious audio and video tapes, memory cards and film to data storage, presentation material, printing paper, optical media and others.

A parallel item of great value for a wedding videographer is batteries and power supplies. Always take extras and backups where this is concerned. Videos need them much more than photography, because videos take up more power to function.

While those seem like 'duh' points, there have been several instances where the simplest overlooking has led to a career breakdown and reputation loss, so keep your head in the game and come prepared. Besides, being a professional means you own good equipment and better backup to begin with.

Any videographer worth their gear needs outstanding audio equipment. There's nothing like bad audio to ruin even the best video footage. It's a known fact how the continuity of picture relies immensely on the continuity of sound. If, for instance, you missed an important shot or scene, you can always go back to get a replacement or find something else to splice and attach. You can't easily do that with audio. It will turn out fake, confusing, irrelevant or worse.

Therefore, shop for the best you can afford out there on the market. Your business will be all the better for it. Speeches, toasts, vow-exchange, music, dancing, words shared, laughter and much more are sufficient reason for you to make absolutely sure you have reliable audio equipment.

Modern weddings often hire DJ's to craft some awesome grooves. Getting to know this person and coming equipped with the proper wiring equipment will help save you tons of time and effort while letting you acquire some of the most sublime audio footage that is certain to make your wedding day coverage truly memorable.

Accessories are fast becoming work-savers, meaning videographers use these more than occasionally to get amazing angles and shots they sometimes can't manage without their aid. A tripod, monopod and/or shoulder support rig will give you a clear picture as to how this is possible, making for a wholesome gear assembly and adding to your professional appeal.

Lighting is a can't-do-without item you need present as part of your equipment. Flashes are one thing but continuous lighting is a whole other. Whether it's an on-camera light or one of those high-end pieces that stand on their own, you must have these in your videography equipment, because natural light sources can fail you unexpectedly and fishing out one of these beauties is sure to earn you points in incredible ways.

Wireless gear is a modern trend that experienced professionals will love using. This is great for when you don't have an assistant or support staff on site to help with covering the wedding. Setting up smart tech like this will keep you from missing any crucial moments in one place while you're off focusing on another important wedding-occurrence a ways off.

This is all you need to know to get you started on gathering the right equipment and gear. Whether you're a photographer or videographer reading this, you'll certainly have gained some idea of what you're supposed to shop for. Of course, what's mentioned in this chapter isn't all there is in the market. Keep your eyes open for more personal gear that you know for a fact will enhance your style. Shop smart, get everything you need and be prepared. Equipment and gear is what make you the professional you are. Your unique style follows afterward.

Chapter 5 – Marketing & Advertising

Marketing

Marketing is essentially you owning a wedding photography/videography business connecting with your clients in all the right ways. Letting them know your skills, what you can do for them no other professional can and how superbly you can cover their wedding.

Although word of mouth marketing is a great way to quickly get your name out there, the modern state of this business demands you do a lot more to get it right. After all, there are so many professionals out there looking to strike it big in this business, which is the main reason you need to follow certain key marketing skills to grant you the competitive edge.

Blog: Better than a website in a lot of ways and also sometimes rather affordable, a blog helps you keep personally in tune with your potential clients and makes them feel like they're actually looking at a human being than a bunch of programming. You achieve this through a more user friendly web interface, easily accessible sample shots and written content to convey your thoughts on a less formal note, if required. Seeing as how your blog is essentially a reflection of your own work ethic it's a swift way for clients (like the bride) to know more about you in a few minutes spent perusing it. Keep your blog updated lest it loses its web-ranking or looks too 'naïve' for hire.

Brand: Instead of a logo with a catchy company name, your brand is basically what type of coverage you specialize in. This is so you attract brides from the particular 'type' of 'genre' your photography/videography business covers. There are formal brides, rich ones, simple ones and casual ones, all those adjectives referring to the *type* of wedding those brides are planning on having. If your brand covers that specific need, you're going to go far in this business.

Crediting: This has to do with saying a simple 'thank you' in different ways based on people who and organizations that have helped you in some way. More than appearing humble or grateful, giving credit like this (where it's due) links your blog to other wedding related sites and vendor portals online, getting you a much needed commodity in this business, namely exposure. Driving traffic (people visiting a site) is what this move does and hopefully gets people interested seeing you displayed on their florist's site or their caterer's or an equipment rental portal and so on.

Photo Books: The hard-copy version is still in vogue. Don't assume it's gone out of style, photo books are still a superb way to let the bride see your work up close. There's nothing like turning the pages of a photo book/portfolio and tangibly understand the style of the videographer/photographer offering it up for perusal. This photo book you leave at wedding planners' offices, bridal boutiques and so on, enhancing your marketing streak.

Self-Publicizing: Research is key. Aside from the obvious, namely wedding boutiques and planners, check out local as well as famous wedding blogs. Whatever contacts you have, send them introductory emails. Make sure they're a good fit for your brand. Be creative with your introductions—learn more from what's already been done and do it differently. There are several practical as well as decorative things you can do at this stage to impart that perfect first impression—there's nothing better than that in this business.

Promotional Videos: This has long since become fashionable, what with YouTube and a bunch of other attractive sites where people flock. More of this will be covered in "Chapter 6: The Power Of SEO". A simple video is all you need, using some of those free video backgrounds you find online which are actually pretty appealing. Basic video editing software like iMovie or the more familiar Windows Movie Maker are good to touch up your promotional video and make it fit for the web.

Advertising

This is a lot like marketing, adding to your ease and how fast you gain familiarity with the way this phase progresses.

Newspapers: This is the commonest place most beginners in the wedding photography/videography business plan on printing their skills in. It can get a bit expensive, though, depending on the daily in question. One conundrum you might face is a cheaper advert in a commonplace paper may not get noticed by a lot of people where the one that can come at a steeped price in popular dailies will. In this case, your best bet would be to go for the popular dailies so you can display your business to a mass audience in one efficient sweep with one bulk pay.

Flyers: Such leaflets are a great way to spread the word despite a lot of people these days not taking the time to go through them. You can, however, depend on them to access places you never expected they'd go, increasing your chance of getting noticed by a wider potential clientele. Then there's the fact that flyers are far more portable than most other forms of advertisements.

Television & Radio: These are two immensely popular media through which a simple display or mention of your business will go very far. There are heightened chances your work will get noticed by somebody simply tuning in for no apparent reason and then there are the opportunities that come with people actually seeking out your skills.

Internet: The importance of this medium needn't even be mentioned. It's the go-to realm for all things these days, one of the big names being advertising. Do ample research, see if your choice suits your style and budget while reaching your target audience and you're all set.

Suppliers: Referrals come mainly through other wedding-industry vendors who can be broadly classified under the 'supplier' category. Send copies of your best portfolio to boutiques, cake designers, make-up artists, hotels, hairdressers, limo companies, florists, reception venues, equipment rentals and any other 'supplier' you can think of.

Bridal Expo: This option deserves special mention. It's almost always a local event, making it easier to accommodate a set number of brides who come there to explore vendor options and often hire or set up interviews right then and there, making these annual expos one of the most sought after advertising locations for any wedding videographer/photographer. It's alright to spend some cash on traveling to bridal expos beforehand to see how booths are designed on-site. You can use that template to advertise your business in smart ways.

SMS & MMS: These are pretty straightforward means of advertising, but don't be so sure they'll get noticed. The reason you aren't sending out emails to random people is because your business-card may end up in the Spam folder, lowering your professionalism a bit. Phone messages aren't a very nice way to impress potential clients but there are chances these messages, text or multimedia, get noticed. However, be sure to pay your service provider for such commercial access.

Magazines & College Papers: These, like newspapers, depend on the type of magazine and paper you go for, but in the end they make for some awesome advertising options for your business. You'll be surprised how many people who may not really have need of your skills take one look at your advert in these media and pass them on to bride-friends or family who can take a look to see where it takes them.

Postcards: Though a bit old fashioned, the charm of post card adverts is undeniable. Older people will really like this form of advertizing. Plus, the romantic nature of weddings makes it even better to receive an elegant postcard displaying your business in an enchanted flair.

Chapter 6 -- Final Tips For The Business-Minded Photographer/Videographer

Cash: Investing right is the life-blood of your wedding photography/videography business. Free listings are known to help you gather a few contacts and establish yourself in small ways but it can only get you so far. Paid listings and online advertising is a far better way to go. The internet is largely free but you can make use of the paid opportunities open to you. This way you get backlinks to your site/blog/page, upload galleries and video portfolios to show potential clients what you got going for you, and spread the word of your business and skills in online locations where brides and other wedding vendors flock to. This makes money an obvious yet crucial inclusion in your business and investing it properly to benefit your business, depending on the latest corporate trends, is even more useful.

Sites where you can advertise are theknot.com, wedj.com, wpja.com. That latter site allows free listings but an upgrade to the paid counterpart will take you quite far and open up many another opportunity. Web-upgrades, like what the guys at foliolink.com offer, are great ways to transform your site into a attractive, charming, magical realm, based on how much you're willing to pay. Search engine rankings are certain to improve too, because such web-upgrades allow your site's metadata to show up in people's search results.

Be prepared to face some financial loss or waste. Every business experiences this, so be smart in all the right ways and you'll see markedly less loss. National advertisements in the Yellow Pages, wedding publications and also in search engine ad-displays are *not* overly great choices. You may land a few bookings and get a few calls but not enough to see the required development in your business.

If, on the other hand, you know what your potential client(s) wants and that they're visiting a specific range of advertising outlets, try placing an ad there and observe if you're getting their attention before going all out and investing further.

Visibility: People should be able to find you, period. Where would any business be without this? Visibility doesn't just mean you throw your brand and business everywhere, but as the earlier tip 'Cash' will have detailed, you need to be in all the *right* places. Your style and what specific type of wedding videography/photography you do should be your guiding light in these matters.

Avail yourself of memberships with varied online sites that help expose your business to your preferred client-type. Ask advice from techies concerning search engine appearance. Many brides have typed in something as simple as "wedding videographers/photographers London" or some such query-phrase and found your business after a long dig even though you may be working out of London and offering exactly what they were looking for. Catch up on your SEO and other marketing methods and you'll know what to do to remedy this.

All sites related to your business are aiming to offer brides as many options to choose from as possible. To this end, they have plenty of free listings and such like. Take advantage of that but also consider upgrading to a paid version so you can perform more to get your business noticed.

Referrals & Reputation: The basic idea behind referrals is your client(s) will send them your way after experiencing a job outstandingly done by you on their wedding day. However, seeking referrals yourself is a great idea too. For instance, other vendors at the wedding (DJ's, planners/coordinators, florists etc.) have seen you work and will most probably have seen the fruits of your art, namely the videos/photos you've taken on the day. Their referrals are just as effective, going almost everywhere required and through all the right ears. After all, brides communicate with each of these vendors in wedding season.

Sometimes, if you know someone in the wedding business just like you, you can refer each other. That's one sure fire way to make allies and spread your name, adding to your reputation. Speaking of which...

Lack of cooperation with other videographers/photographers also hired to cover the wedding, inappropriate behavior of any kind, laxity in professionalism and other no-no's are easy means to losing your reputation. In an industry this fast paced and subjective you can't afford to go wrong, especially if you're a start-up business.

Get to know your client(s) on an adequately personal level. Make them your friends, so to speak, more than your employers, sticking to your limits as per your professional capacity. As you can imagine, this is a rather tricky skill which will demand practice. Once you master this or at least get the hang of it, there's no way you can be forgotten as a person let alone a professional.

Practice: This is your best tip ever! No matter what the sub-field—equipment use, time management, working with other professionals/employees etc.—you must practice your skills, methods and techniques in or with all of them. This determines as well as polishes your personal style as a wedding photographer/videographer.

Such practice is what got the more established and infamous men and women in this field where they are. This is the one tip that will, eventually, lead to you making a hefty paycheck. Besides, there's the job satisfaction to consider afterward.

Seeing two people overjoyed with your work and skill implementation at capturing enchanting memories, not to mention the family's take on it all, will further enhance your personal character as a human being and make you feel truly at bliss doing what you love best and being the wedding photographer or wedding videographer you've always wanted to be. Here's to a prosperous business year. It's as they say...

"Find what you love to do most and then find somebody who will pay you to do it."