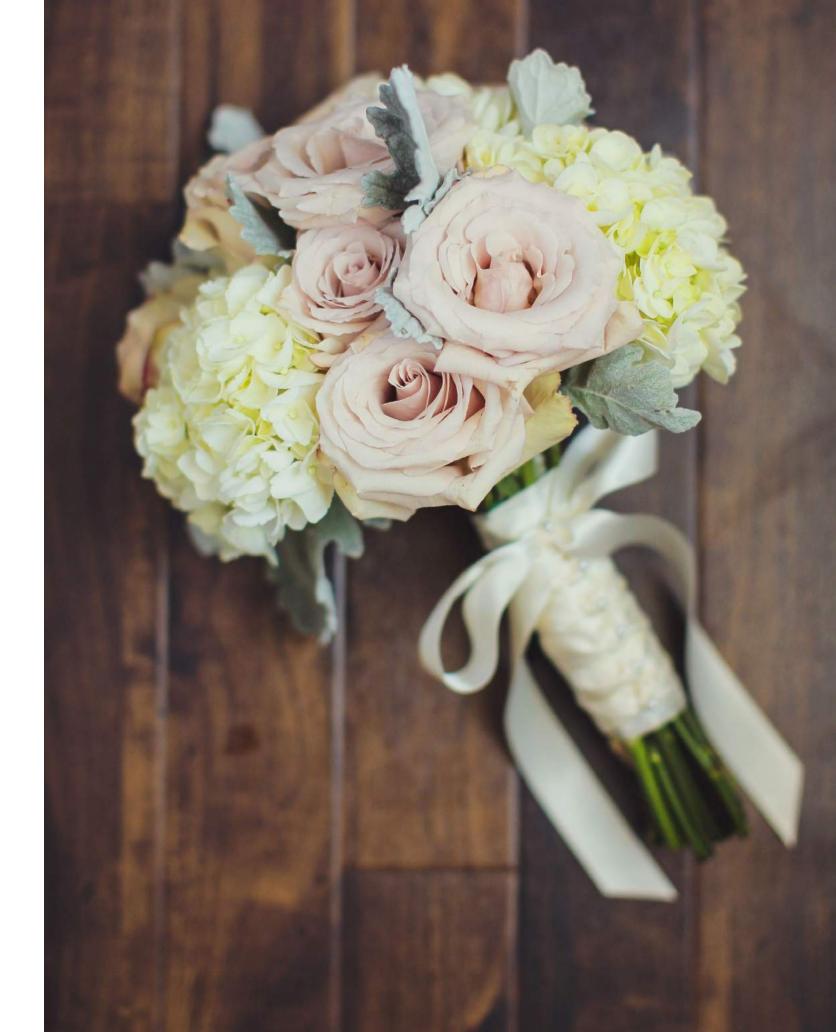


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ALL LOGOS & PACKAGING

I remember one of my first introductions to branding. I was sitting in a workshop and the Nike logo popped up on the screen and then Mercedes and then Coca Cola. It's the most common way to explain branding. Showing popular logos and letting the audience realize they have a connection to that logo, good or bad, and therefore a connection to that company and their product. That is branding, but that's not all that branding is.

People's lives are becoming more open and consumers more educated on what a solid business brand should look like. Consumers are starting to have a more critical eye and expect a higher level of experience when spending their money. Starbucks will always redo a bad drink. Victoria's Secret will wrap your purchases like a birthday gift. Apple will forever be dedicated to sleek and sophisticated electronic style.

"That's not all that branding is."





You need to find ways to communicate your brand to the world like these companies do.

"Starbucks will always redo a bad drink."

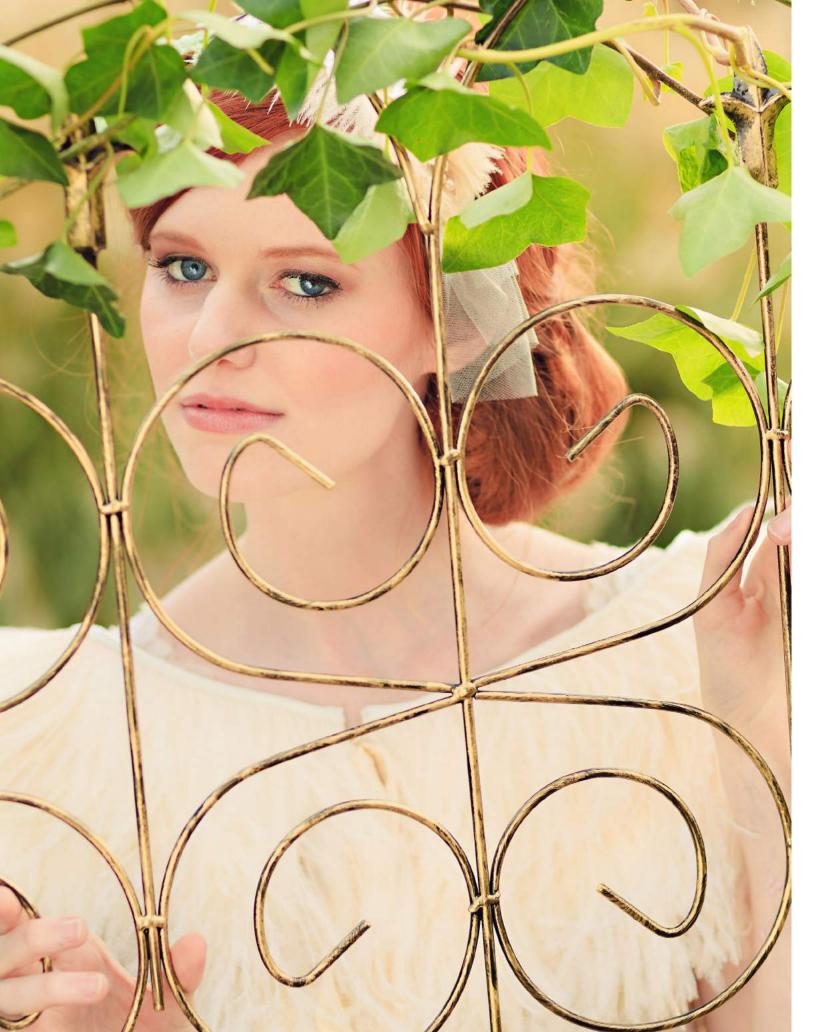
The first thing that
comes to most people's
minds when thinking of
branding is, "What else can
I put my logo on"? or "Does
my website look consistent
and flow nicely and with
my logo?" Yes, all of that

matters, but, it's so much more than that. Branding is so much about the overall customer experience which has so many in's and out's, places to excel and places to improve. To effectively convey your brand message to your clients you need to look at the overall picture of what you're communicating to your audience. Walk yourself through the client process and see how they see you.

"See how they see you."











SOCIALIGHT

Gary Vaynerchuk writes
in this book The Thank You
Economy that individuals
need to work on their own
personal brand. He wrote
this book some years ago
and was foreshadowing to
how powerful social media would become and how

eryone create a brand for themselves. Think about how true that is today. If you find a new business or even a person that you're looking to evaluate for one reason or another, what do you do?

"Require that everyone create a brand for themselves"

You check out their social media and in just a few clicks and scrolls you think you know them and what they're about.

Your customers are not the exception to this emerging social norm.

When they first look at your website and want to know more about you, they'll click on your Facebook and see how many likes you have. They'll pop onto your Instagram feed and see if it looks artsy and unique but still professional. Your social media is 100% a platform for telling the world who you are and

one of the first ways that you can convey your brand.

If you're looking to improve your social media brand presence consider the following tips:

-Decide what you'll post about your personal life.
Whatever you decide is fine, but do it intentionally one way or the other and be prepared to be judged on it for better or for worse.

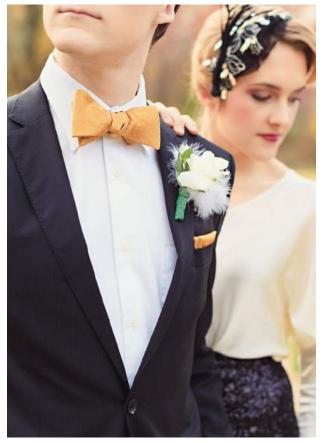
-Clean things up. Feel free to go back in your feed and delete posts that aren't conducive to how you'd like to convey your brand.

-Be everywhere. Social media helps boost SEO.

"Telling the world who you are"

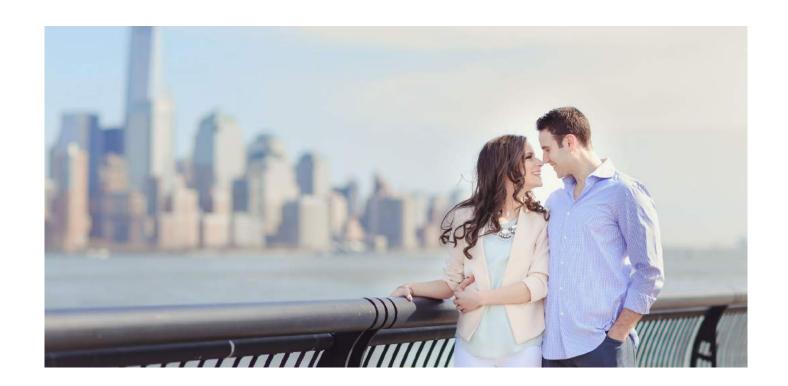














Ever experience buyer's remorse due to a product just not being all it was cracked up to be? Or, left a store with a bad taste in your mouth because of how they handled a concern or complaint? How you make your clients feel throughout their relationship with you plays a huge part in not only your brand but how your customers will talk about you.

It starts with setting expectations and delivering on your promises. Don't bother promising your potential clients a great client experience if all you do for them is your job. That's not an experience, that's what they paid for. The difference between buying clothes at Target and buying clothes at Bloomingdale's is night and day because one offers an experience and one-on-







one customer service while the other simply offers you clothes.

entire business, is the experience and attention that you give your clients. This doesn't just mean the formulated task list your have for everyone that comes in the door; this also includes how you handle problems as they arise, and they will arise. One of the best ways you will demonstrate what your company is about is not by how you make your clients feel while everything

is hunky dory. It's how you make them feel when everything isn't quite so peachy keen. Things will go wrong but you don't have to let mishaps turn into disasters. Find ways to turn your unhappy clients into your biggest positive advocates through addressing issues with sympathy, understanding and compensation. The experience given through the good and the bad is what your clients will tell others about and how your brand's reputation will build.

"That's not an experience, that's what they paid for."











TOMATO tamata POTATO potata

Communication is paramount. Don't worry, I'm not going to pick on your grammar here - although proper grammar and e-mail etiquette should be a no brainer. However, how you speak and the words you chose to use say a lot about your brand.

For example, if you saw a website that was bright and airy

and whimsically romantic and then chatted with that company you'd expect the same cheery personality coming through the other side of the phone, or a smiley face or two in an email. If, on the other hand, you went to a website that was more moody and dark, you'd expect to correspond with someone a bit more serious in tone.

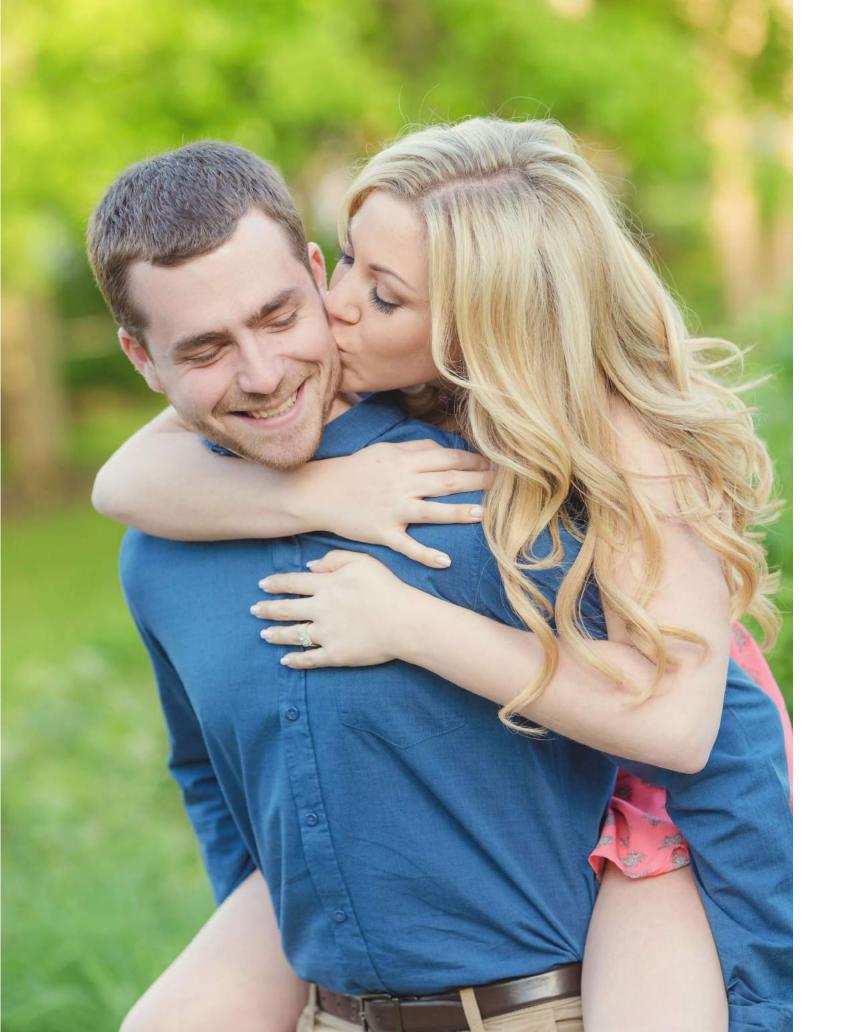
How you speak and how you portray your personality deeply impacts your brand because you are your brand. This isn't to say that you need to go change your personality to match your brand. It's simply to state that who you are, especially if you're running a boutique style busi-

ness and are playing an active role in front of customers, is more so what your clients are buying than the product itself.

As the saying goes, "People don't pay you for how good you are at what you do, they pay you for how good you are."

"People don't pay you for how good you are at what you do,
they pay you for how good you are at who you are."





WANT TO COME

Whenever you meet with your clients, where you're meeting with them speaks volumes about your brand and your business. Meeting at a local Starbucks or Panera? It's still imparting a brand image to your clients and you absolutely can twist it to be a positive one. If you're fortunate enough to have studio or office space, or a retail location, then you have much more control over the environment you're bringing your audience into.

Do yourself a favor and stroll in your nearest Toyota dealership. Then head down

the road immediately after and waltz into a Porsche dealership. Just after taking one step in each door you'll be met with a completely different atmosphere. Potentially, without even taking a look at the actual cars in the showroom you'll know which car is better, or at least that's what Porsche wants you to "know". You want your clients to know, without even seeing your products, that you've got the best there is. Eventually, the reverse ends up being true and they'll see your photos or name and



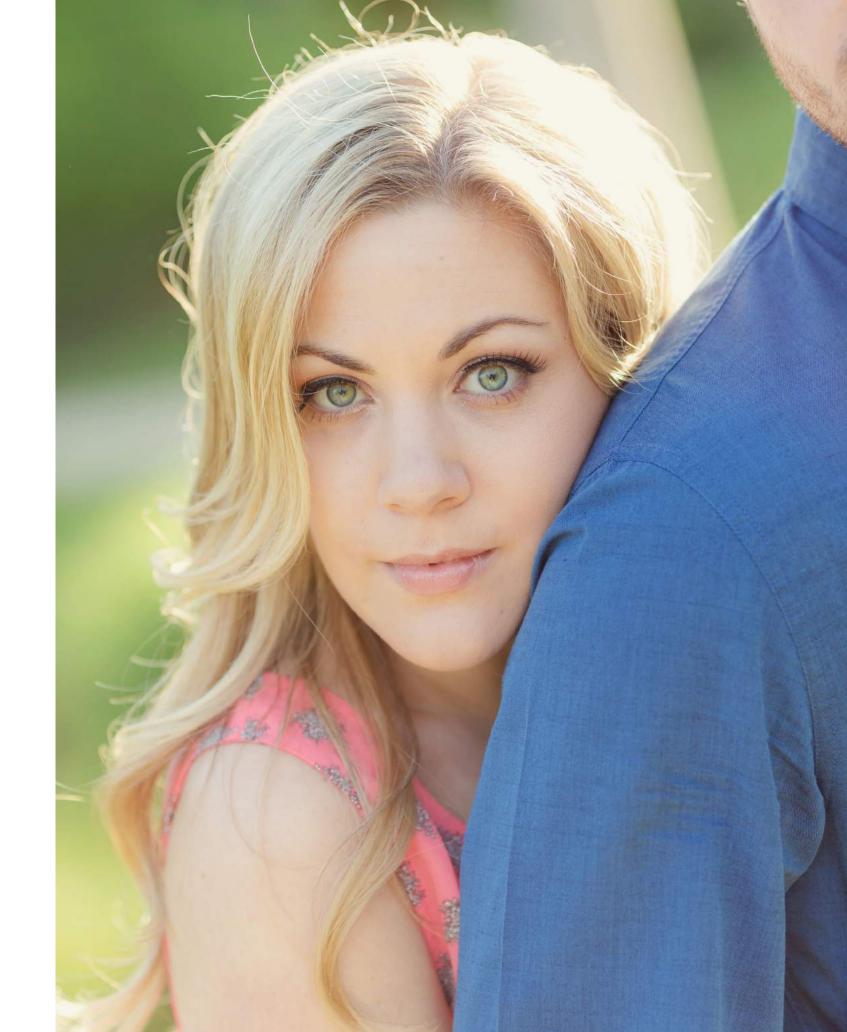


"You want your clients to know, without even seeing your products, that you've got the best there is."

correlate it to the atmospheric experience they had and draw conclusions about you and your brand from it (hopefully good ones).

To maximize your environment just think of the five senses and walk yourself through your space.
What do you see? Messy areas or neat, color coordinated spaces? What do

you hear and smell? Noisy neighbors and dinner cooking or a crackling fireplace and lit candles? Encourage taste and touch by offering them food and drinks and inviting them to hold your most luxurious products as well. Anything you can think of to positively engage the senses will create a lasting impression about your business and product.











As a wedding photographer, I always tell my clients about my second photographers that will accompany me on a wedding. I stress to them that not only do I care about them being about to produce quality imagery, but I also look for

people with similar personalities and demeanor to me as well. If I'm trying to get my clients to "pay me for who I am rather than what I do" like I said before, then who I am needs to be seen in my personnel as well.

"Who I am needs to be seen in my personnel"

I often tell the story about an amazing photographer that I chose not to hire. Typically, before I hire a photographer they come along on a test wedding not only so I can see the work that they produce under the same circumstances that I'm shooting in, but so I can see how they work as well. Once, I had a photographer join me for this on-the-job interview and wow did I love the images that came back. What I didn't love was that throughout the whole day the photographer looked angry. When I addressed this, the photographer stated he was so focused on creating great imagery that he was in "the

zone" and didn't realize he was coming off negatively. Ok, fine. I could accept that, so I gave him another shot. The second time around it was unfortunately still the same. His images were fantastic, his ability to smile through stress was not. One of the biggest day-of perks my brides experience is that I am calm. collected and seemingly in control the entire time. Even when everything is going haywire, I'm still smiling. Being able to be a rock for my clients is part of my brand and indicative of the experience I want my clients to have, so every member of my team needs to know how to do the same.

Think of the five senses."











LET'S PLAY OCLAS OCLA

This may sound silly but I have a proven track record on this one. One of the first clients I ever booked for my wedding photography business was a beautiful blond girl with an impectable fashion sense. I met with her in person for a consultation in dress pants and a nice blouse and it went ok. I was within her budget and soon after she asked

to meet me again with her Maid of Honor. Having already met her and knowing the fashionista she was, I chose to wear a fun fashion forward dress and heels this time. She commented on it, more than once, saying how much she liked it when we met and she booked with me later on that week.

What you wear and how you







"Reap the benefits of that luxury brand."

present yourself says a lot about your brand. It doesn't have to be designer clothes necessarily, but I have found that I will relate better with my high end clients if I am wearing them. They'll recognize the designer brand and I reap the benefits of that luxury brand, and all they've worked hard to represent, being associated with me and my business.

The second part of self presentation has to do with style.

Since I am my brand I want to dress the part and rarely will

I let my clients see me in dark

colors because my brand is light and airy with pastel logo colors. It may sound silly, but I've had comments on my looking like my brand and it is not an accident that I wear a lot of light pink and turquoise colors and clothes from Free People in front of my www.vanessajoy.com clients. It's all part of my Vanessa Joy brand and how I want my clients and potential clients to perceive me. This is why so often clothing companies will make their employees wear their brand. That and for the next tip below.

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SHOPAHOLICS

You want your clients to value the product and service you're offering them. Especially if you run a boutique business and are charging a premium for it. Part of being able to do get your customers to pay your price is conveying to your clients that you too value what you're offering.

If you're selling high end fashion apparel, you cannot

be trying to sell it while wearing off-the-rack. You need to wear staple pieces from high end brands to be convincing to your clients and to relate to them as well. Too bad clothes aren't typically a tax-deductible purchase. If you're selling photography and want your clients to pay top dollar for it, then you have show you treasure captured moments too.









Even more specifically the brands that you buy, wear and show your sup-

"Joo bad clothes

aren't typically a tax
deductible purchase"



port of says a lot about the kind of person you are and what your business is an extension of (more on that later). Political affiliations aside (though not to belittle the effect that can have on business), the brands and type of brands you visibly support will communicate one thing or another to your audience. Make sure that it's communicating exactly what you want your brand to represent.









SHOW ME THE Would

Truth be told this is where the rubber meets the road. The start-to-finish experience you give your clients either holds your brand true to it's word or calls its bluff. Your brand sets the expectations for your clients and you have to follow through with it 110%.

One way I keep up my brand

image through my client experience is through client gifting. I want my clients to feel special and I want their decision to go with me to be validated throughout our time together. Better yet, I want to give them tangible items to share on social media and brag to their friends about, furthering my establishing my

brand, its recognition and reputation. I give them a "Hello" gift, "Goodbye" gift and a "It's Almost Your Wedding Day" gift. Gifting is one of my favorite love languages so I relish in showering my clients with surprise presents.

However you want your clients to remember your business and how you want them to share it with friends and family

"To above and beyond"

is how you'll want to tailor their experience. Do you tout yourself on being an expert in your field? Continually offer tips and tricks to your customers. Is your business about quality of life? Then look for ways to help improve your client's wellbeing outside of the service or product you're providing. Go above and beyond for your clients in a way that superbly represents your brand mission and you won't go wrong.

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This is ultimately what branding is about if you're a small business owner and your face is the face of the company. The best part about this is that you can simply build the business around who you are. In fact, the most well-branded small businesses I've seen are ones where the owner has done exactly that. A wedding planner I know, who is an Anthropoligie nut with Restoration Hardware all over her house, became

wildly successful by making her business an extension of herself and her personal and home lifestyle. It seems like a no brainer but it's amazing how many people I've seen attempt to create a business that's the opposite of who they are. One of two things will happen in that case. Either the business owner changes who they are to be a reflection of their business, or there's a disconnect between the owner and the brand that leaves clients

subconsciously confused.

Take Steve Jobs for example. That man looked, dressed and acted like everything we know Apple to be. He was simple and sleek with an intelligent sophistication about him. He practically was a black iphone. Could you imagine if he was the opposite? If he wore Free People clothing and acted like a flower child? Or if all of a sudden he took up the hipster trend and traded his black shirts and almost wireless glasses for plaid and thick frames? He wouldn't be Apple anymore.

To quote Gary Vaynerchuk again in his book Crush It, "Watch me for two seconds and you know exactly who I am and what I stand for. Au-

thenticity is key... I'm not putting on a performace when I do the show or my blog spots

- I'm just being me." When you make you business about you, all of the above will more easily fall into place.

- -

Branding is a continuous task that evolves as your company grows. There are endless ways to brand your business. It can be seen in something as small as the type of post it notes you use or as large as the billboard space you just rented. But if I were to sum it up, these three words perfectly describe the basis of branding in a small business setting. Just be you. Start with you, end with you and be true to you everywhere in between.

Build the business around who you are."











Mout Vanessa

Vanessa Joy has been an influential photographer in the photographic community for years. Starting her photographic journey in 1998, she has since earned 5 college degrees, started her own business in 2008, and began teaching around the world in 2009. Vanessa has spoken at almost every major convention and platform in the industry such as CreativeLIVE, Clickin' Moms, WPPI, ShutterFest, Imaging USA Trade Show, PPA related conventions, in addition to hosting personal workshops and numerous small business and photography conventions around the globe. Recognized for her talent and more so her business sense, her clients love working with her and industry peers love to learn from her generous, informative and open-book style of teaching.

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