



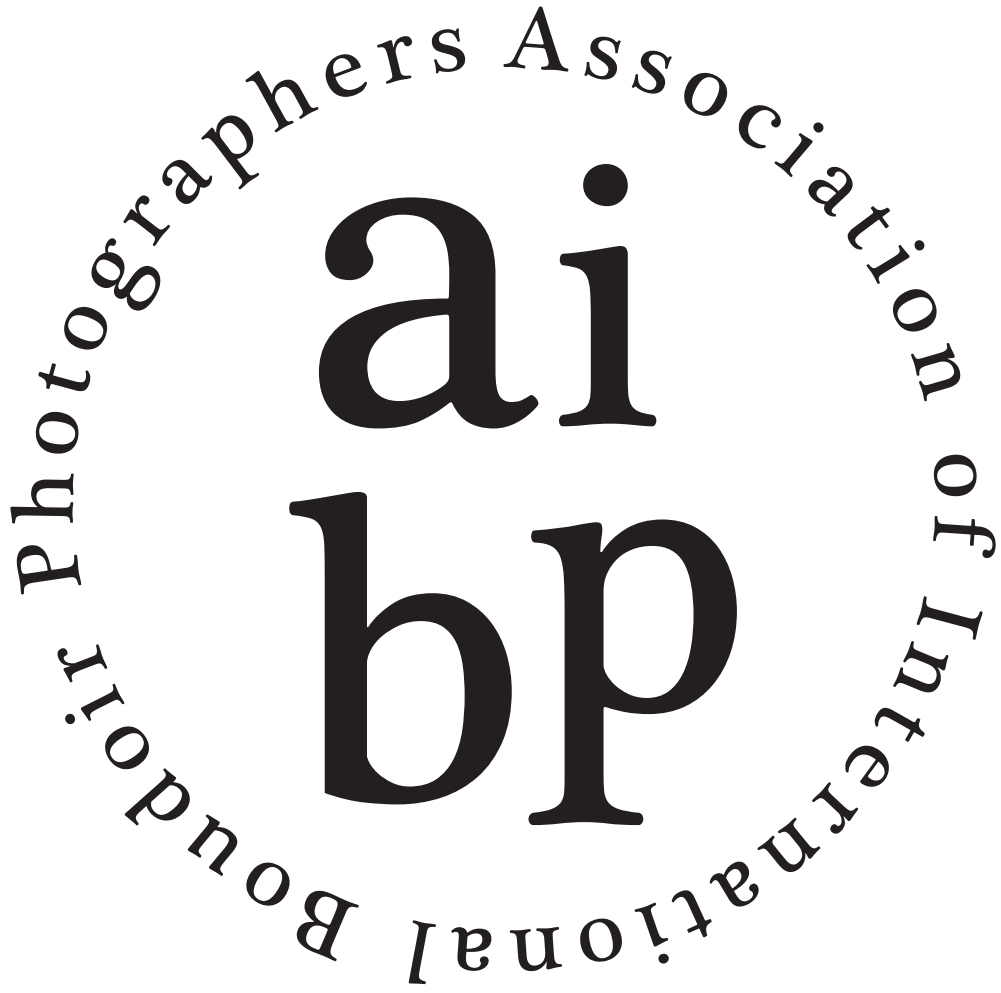
PHILOSOPHIE

boudoir

Spring 2022

Building a
Brand-Focused
Client Experience

Top Ways to
Get Your Studio
Back on Track After
the Pandemic



PHILOSOPHIE

boudoir



SPRING 2022

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PHILOSOPHIE boudoir is the Magazine of the Association of International Boudoir Photographers (AIBP).

AIBP works to promote, inspire, educate and connect boudoir photographers and the art of boudoir photography.

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A Message from the President

By Shawn Black

I'm Shawn Black, president of the Association of International Boudoir Photographers and remember I'm not only the AIBP president I'm also a member. Okay, so I just totally dated myself with a flashback to the 80's Hair Club for Men infomercial with Sy Sperling, but ironically, this was one of the first things that came to my mind after my wife Michelle and I acquired AIBP in August of 2021.

At the time of the sale, AIBP had been around for 12 years and I had been a member for 8 of those years. Already running a successful wedding photography business when I launched my boudoir brand, Couture Black, I thought I knew what I needed to navigate this new genre, but very quickly realized how little I actually knew. I stumbled upon AIBP shortly after and I, like many other photographers, grew with the association. Back then, there were very few resources available to boudoir photographers in regards to education, networking, or community, but AIBP was there to fill this void.

Even in its early years, AIBP provided the tools, opportunities, inspiration for me to thrive as an artist in the boudoir world. I vividly remember entering my first image competition, the theme was film noir. I had a limited portfolio at the time and was so proud to have an image to enter. Later

that week it was announced that I had won. I was beyond thrilled to have the recognition, but more important to me were the comments from the judge and encouragement from the community. I knew then I had found *my* place in this new corner of the photography world where I felt welcome.

In 2015, AIBP hosted its 1st annual retreat in Ojai, CA and I was thrilled to be a part of it, having now been a part of the association for a couple of years. This 4 day educational gathering may be one of the singularly most important influences on my career. The opportunity to learn in a hands-on environment was incredible, but isn't what made such an impact on me—it was the bonds made from connecting in person with more than 40 of my peers within the AIBP community. Some amazing friendships developed in these 4 days that through the years have challenged me, pushed me, and guided me to where I am today. Every year after that our community would gather for a creative recharge, attendees leaving enriched and with many new friends.

Since 2009, AIBP had continued to grow and was a leader in the boudoir industry thanks to its founders and amazing membership that I have always been proud to be a part of.



Unfortunately over the course of the last couple of years due to numerous factors, that growth had stagnated and our sense of community had begun to fade. Between the pandemic, other boudoir groups coming/going, and no clear path forward I began to see the association that has played such a large part in not only my own journey, but so many others along the way begin to crumble. It was at this point that I set out to acquire AIBP, taking the baton and building on the foundation that had been laid out over the previous years.

Despite my wife, Michelle, initially thinking I was mildly crazy, she could see the passion and vision I had for the future of AIBP. She also knew the impact that it had on me over the years and that I would not let it fail. We were actually at WPPI in Las Vegas when the transaction was completed and the AIBP Reboot was started. Michelle and I

are anxious to rebuild AIBP into the most widely respected boudoir organization within the photo industry. We look to achieve this by creating comprehensive educational offerings—building a thriving membership community where connections and friendships can be made like the ones I’ve developed through out my years in the association. Lastly, to have AIBP advocate for the genre so that boudoir gains more recognition and respect within the photographic industry as a whole.

My imagery, my business, my mentors, my circle of friends, and my standing within the industry have all grown as a result of being lost at the beginning of my journey in the genre we all love. Not a day goes by that I don’t consider myself lucky that my web search led me to the Association of International Boudoir Photographers and don’t forget I’m not only the president, but I’m also a member.



Shawn Black is the owner/photographer of Couture Black, a boudoir studio located on the north shore of Boston, MA, and, well, you know the rest.



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The Brand-Focused Client Experience

Written & Photographed by Cate Scaglione, *Life As Fine Art Studio*

The boudoir photography niche has exploded over the past five years. Not only has the boudoir photography experience

become more mainstream among new clientele, but more boudoir photographers have entered the marketplace seemingly every day.

While it often seems there's enough work to go around – “community over competition” as they say, it still does not preclude us from wanting to be a prospective client's #1 choice.

Faced with a growing number of studios, they can choose among many photographers –

and not always for the reasons we want them to. Sometimes it's a matter of price shopping – and honestly, who wants to be the winner of that game? And 100% yes, it's the quality and aesthetic of your work that makes them pay attention to you on social media.

We all know that one of the most impactful and relevant ways to lead the pack is through your brand's identity. But specifically, the one piece of brand identity that converts clients to be yours forever is through

your Client Experience. When it's a Brand-Focused Client Experience, it's boudoir nirvana.

“The one piece of brand identity that converts clients to be your forever is through your Client Experience.

When it's a Brand-focused Client Experienced, it's boudoir nirvana.”



Finding Your Five

The truth is, most businesspeople think of their brand as an aesthetic, a voice, and a vibe. But these are really the initial starting points that can draw a prospect into a brand. They definitely levitate attraction and are the parts of your business that are easily in your control. Some people master this aspect. That's how sometimes “average” photographers can become inundated with clients and sales, while some of the “incredibly great” photographers fly under the radar.

The reality is, there's a facet of your brand that's less in your control -- and that is the client's own experience of your brand. Their visceral reaction, to every interaction, determines what will help you book the session, pump the sale, or gain the retention and referrals that build your business.

Within your brand design and content, you're presenting your business to the public with

a promise (implicitly or explicitly). But it's the client who gets to decide if you're living up to that promise. And right there, lies the power of having a 360-degree Brand.

As a brand consultant, I would often ask my clients to identify FIVE core adjectives that they want clients to say about them, their work, their vibe, all of it. FIVE.

When these FIVE are well-aligned with the Client's takeaway, after all is said and done, the heavens will sing. New clients will come in droves and your business will be one that is revered, evangelized, and referred.

But when this is misaligned, your clients will detect what they're missing... an authentic brand experience.

Putting Your “Five” to the Test

How are you presenting yourself and the brand when you market on your site, bio and social media?

...Are you the “tight-ship, buttoned up process, service excellence, exclusive” studio?

...Are you the “fun loving, carefree, everything goes, a little bohemian, hip studio?”

...Are you the “get-to-know every client on a personal level and become friends,” studio?

...Are you the “save the world-- one woman at a time studio?”

These fictional, albeit uniquely different brand strategies, will surely attract the clients YOU want to work with. But where do you go from there? Once that identity is put into place and “acted out” in the real world theatre of social media, HOW does your brand deliver that message start to finish?

You must put those adjectives to the TEST.



The 360 Degree Brand

When consulting small businesses, I often like to refer them to what I call the “Brand Pie.” It’s a sort of a visual pie chart of what comprises every aspect of their brand -- 360 degrees, all around.

Far too many photographers and marketing consultants want to dive in and focus on the aesthetic of the business, the website, and the actual work. The aesthetics are in fact, only one piece of the pie, and likely – the easiest of all to execute.

That’s because most marketers were taught to focus on the 4ps of marketing – Product, Price, Place, and Promotion. But these are only the “WHAT” of your business. They’re the tangible, rational

aspects. These are things we can control --and literally “copy/paste” off other successful businesses.

I like to add 4 more slices to the pie, and think of 360-degree branding instead as “the 8 P’s of your Brand’s Marketing”, which now incorporates the “HOW” you execute.

These are the elements that touch people’s lives, and make them people actually FEEL or EXPERIENCE your brand on an emotional level. Most often, these elements are considered as “infrastructure” by business owners and get overlooked. This could not be more WRONG!

The 8 P’s

1. Product

Your work, Your Brand Aesthetic, Your Brand Voice

2. Price

Your Value (Priced as First Class, Luxury, Average, or Economy class)

3. Place

Media or places where you find your clients (ex.- Facebook, Google, Networking, At the Gym)

4. Promotion

The Marketing Tactics you use to get clients (Advertising, Model Calls, Giveaways)

5. Process

The Processes and Procedures that set guidelines for your clients; Your Workflow & communications of it

6. Philanthropy

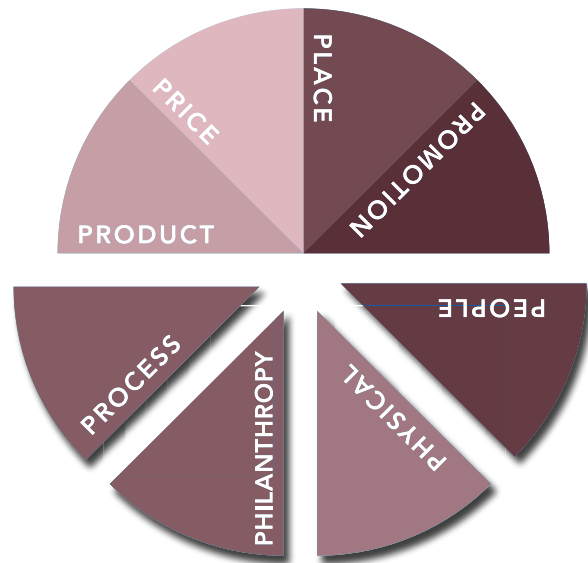
The Social Consciousness of your Brand in the community

7. Physical

The Sensory Aspects and Accommodations of your shooting space, The IPS Environment, Special Perks during the shoot, etc.

8. People

You as the Photographer, Your Assistant, Your Hair & Makeup Talent, Your online persona, and the “community” you build.



The first four items can be formulaic – tried and true. However, it’s the second latter four that must be skillfully customized to meet your brand adjectives effectively and authentically.

So let’s dive deeper into the final 4P’s to cohesively execute this in real life...



Process

Yes, process can be a brand element! This one gets controversial, because we all want to protect ourselves --and the business of course. But also, when you portray yourself as fun-loving and easygoing but become an unwavering hard-ass on business policies, it creates a disconnect for the client. Perceptions and reactions can go awry. Here are some hypothetical examples:

- Photographer A portrays herself constantly as the best, confident, authentic open book... but then she does not disclose relevant information upfront about price, policies, add-ons, etc., except buried in a contract or even post-contract.

Decide what you are comfortable sharing upfront. If you cannot disclose specifics, offer a range or examples of how other clients typically do transactions with you.

- Photographer B likes to be known as a great human who “connects with clients” - but then has such an air tight contract --that when his client cancels for a serious life event, he will not budge or offer concessions.

Client/Contractual Empathy is part of true connection! Find scenarios to be flexible or else stop portraying this brand element.

- Photographer C wants to be known as high end and exclusive – but then nickel and dimes on every feature a client wants and never offers additional value.

High end brands do not nickel and dime! To be exclusive, above and beyond service is essential. Surprise and delight every time!



Philanthropy

OK, so technically this isn't just about funding causes --but I wanted to stay with the P's, so there you have it. This is about a social consciousness for your business. It is about demonstrating your worldview, what you care about, and your inclusivity. Extensive market research shows, especially among Millennials and Gen Z, that social consciousness is a major factor in choosing brands and products as well as their brand loyalty. There are many ways to do this, big and small – some without even spending extra money! Here are some more hypothetical examples:

- Photographer D (spoiler alert: this is ME!) set up her studio in a “green space”, a LEED-certified environmentally friendly building and art space. I take it a step beyond, by furnishing with reclaimed items in the studio, upcycling, and by using Floricolor albums who have both vegan textiles (no leather albums for me!) and eco-conscious packaging. This becomes part of my brand conversation – in materials as well as casually in the studio.



- Photographer E creates mini-fundraisers within her VIP group for members in crisis to help foster the interconnection between wo(men) in the group.
- Photographer F requests that every client to come to their session with a donation item that she can bring to the local women's shelter or soup kitchen.
- Photographer G asks every client cancellation that rather than lose the session fee, she “Donate/ Transfer” her lost session fee to an interested person in the VIP group so someone else can now book without the fee. The first client looks like a hero, is less bitter, the group celebrates the gesture, and it's a win for the photographer too as it fills the books!

Physical

Fact: You do not need a “studio space” to have a studio. Many highly successful photographers do sessions in their home. But the physical space and experience of that space is SUPER important and memorable. There are absolute ways to create the ultimate environment through décor, sensory experiences, viewing environment, Styling area and the “green room”. I like to focus on the FIVE senses to make sure I am hitting all touchpoints for the client:

Sight

I ensured gorgeous decor and a “living room arrangement.” Even though I move furniture around the whole time, I ensure their first impression upon walk in is that the room looks gorgeous and somewhere they want to live!

Make sure the space is immaculately clean and tidy to feel safe; high end; welcoming; It should feel as pristine as entering a 5-star hotel room. In my high vaulted space, I have been guilty of the occasional dust bunny and sadly, I know it didn't go unnoticed. I also ensure that all sheets are not only freshly washed but very obviously SMELL freshly washed (hello scent booster). I also let them see us put the bedding on ceremoniously. During COVID, I used UV wands in between sets.

Scent

Scent is the most potent memory trigger. Before every client enters the space, I spray a signature scent in the air. I also spray this scent in their album tissue paper packaging so it reminds them of their amazing session day.

Taste

Taste adds an element of posh to your brand but you can personalize this with your identity! For me, I like to invoke luxury travel. I offer them menu choices -- the best Italian Prosecco, French Croissants (we go to the French bakery to get them hot), and Belgian chocolates. But a cuter, flirty brand would do great with pink champagne and cupcakes! What food says “YOU” visually and

tastefully? Maybe it's even a silly, naughty treat!

Does that IPS area create maximum comfort (and spending)? For IPS sales meetings, I spray a combination of vanilla scents – which studies show raises spending in casinos and department stores! And, if their MAN accompanies them to a IPS session, I add cinnamon/pumpkin pie scents, as studies show it is a subtle aphrodisiac to the male brain. (I did not make this up!). I have changed the IPS seating three times to ensure not only maximum comfort, but to feel like a true screening room.

My styling area functions as their “green room,” as if they were a TV guest star. It has everything they could possibly need from a stocked flavored water bar, one bite snacks, welcome sign, extra beauty and feminine supplies, comfy seating, phone charger, poles to hang clothes – I present this as their “dressing quarters for the day.” This area has the signature scent too!

Sound

I play extremely calm lounge music when they're in the styling chair (to keep nerves calm) but then put on ultimately sexy slow music for the shooting portion to help them move rhythmically. This is subjective for everyone, but I find this works so fantastic for mood control. When it comes time for IPS, I play a faint spa music station in the background to keep them in a relaxed state of mind for swiping that credit card!

Touch

I like the luxury feel and each of my clients receives a custom (logo) satin robe for her styling chair. I ordered inclusive sizes to ensure all clients needs' are met. I sampled the fabrics first to ensure no sweating or itchy fabrics. You can also buy in a store and bring to a local sports uniform shop for embroidering!

Some photographers consider the studio elements like furniture or HMUA chair to be inclusive for physically challenged clients or clients of various body sizes.



People

- This is the area of your brand that has the most enormous impact --but we must keep in check to be a successful brand experience. You are your brand. But so are the people that support your work. You can control your behaviors way more easily than you can your employees or contractors. Do your team members look, dress and behave the part? Do they speak in a manner consistent with your brand ideals? While conflicts can be difficult, the hard truth is -- if your support people do not match the “adjectives” you identify as your core elements, they must go. Here are some scenarios I’ve seen (or experienced myself) and lessons we can all learn from:
 - The client is there for the ultimate escape day and took off from work. But the makeup artist is talking about all her fears of COVID-19 and who she knows that contracted the illness. So now, the client is playing a reel in her head: Illness. Worry. Potential Exposures. Political Beliefs. It’s a mess. Set the tone for what topics you want to avoid. Make it clear (verbal and written) what your goals are every day to give every client, when in the chair.
 - The Makeup artist is going through a bad breakup. The client asks if she has a “significant other” and so your MUA starts pouring her heart out. Suddenly, the client becomes instant therapist and is emotionally exhausted to start the session. Stay in earshot when clients are being worked on! Think of yourself as an attending physician and your staff are your residents. You must stay aware what’s going on and keep a pulse; maybe a team member needs a hiatus until they pull it together. Definitely cannot imagine this scenario delivering on ANY of the “five” adjectives for you!
 - There’s the photographer/business owner who is an introvert in real life. But as we know, introverts sure do thrive on the internet! You have to ensure there is congruence between what you “put out there” online and who you are in person. Otherwise, a client could get confused and believe that you did not “click” with them or connect like you appear online. This makes everything go downhill. It’s OK to be shy or quiet, you just need to be consistent in your appearances.
 - The HMUA is super chatty and really engages the clients. So much in fact, the HMUA friends them on social media and becomes outside acquaintances with them. She begins networking through clients and does everything from selling MLMs for them, asking them to support her XYZ charity, or some other crazy shenanigans. These are YOUR clients. Not her hustle. It also puts the client in a raw association when things go wrong. It is so important to set boundaries and policies for anyone that wants to work FOR YOU and WITH YOU. They need to see your studio as a brand that delivers (insert those adjectives!) and not just pretty pictures.

There are so many pieces of the pie that create a TOTAL brand experience. Think about how you are delivering each slice of the pie every day. It can constantly be built upon and improved, sometimes without even spending an extra dime. The more you do, you will be well on your way to the ULTIMATE brand experience.



Cate Scaglione of Life As Fine Art Studio, NJ, is an award winning boudoir photographer since 2010, specializing in fine art and editorial style intimate portraiture. In addition, she works with small business owners to create visual brand identities and content imagery. Previously, Cate was a Director of Advertising + Brand Management for a Fortune 500 luxury brand for over a decade. Cate and her work have been featured on Bravo TV, VH1, The New York Times, Rangefinder Magazine, Professional Photographer Magazine. She is also brand ambassador for Floricolor and a frequent presenter at conferences about women’s empowerment, business branding and client experiences.



How Light Diffusion Can Affect Your Portrait's Mood

Written & Photographed by Nino Batista

Right off the bat, I want to make it clear that the mood in your portraits will be mostly determined by your subjects. After all, a smile is markedly different from a scowl, and laughing totally the opposite of crying. Emotion in your portrait work comes from the human element almost entirely, for lots of obvious reasons.

That said, other elements in your portraits can affect and enhance the overall mood of your shots – especially and including the lighting. Simple decisions about light diffusion, for example, can alter or augment the mood you are after in your portrait radically.

I think it's important to also add that different people may have differing opinions on what light diffusion does to a portrait's mood, as it is arguably a very subjective thing. However, there are some tried and true light diffusion considerations that work consistently to evoke, or enhance, specific moods when applied to human subjects.

Our Main Lightsource

Let's start our analysis by considering the main light source all of us know and are aware of: the sun. The mighty orb of life on Earth provides us with light to see, heat to survive, and even energy. But the sun is also the main reason why we perceive light in certain ways as human beings, simply because it is ever present in our lives, to some degree.

A bright, cloudless summer day, for example, is almost always associated with fun times, perhaps sporting events, days at the beach, and summer in general. These activities, and the emotions they illicit, are by and large positive to most people. As such, bright, clear, non diffused light tends to come across as exciting (or at least high energy) in some manner when it come to people's perception of a portrait, and to others it can even come

across as mysterious, and perhaps powerful.

Super soft, diffused light comes from the sun on cloudy days, rainy days, and right before dawn and before sunset. These moods are generally more somber, but perhaps peaceful and relaxed. Soft diffused light is generally associated with gentleness, softness, polished, an perhaps clear and welcoming. This is one of the main reasons why beginner lighting tips generally demand you use diffused light at all times on portraits: it's generally more flattering, laid back and simpler to digest visually.

What Affects Light Diffusion

When working with light modifiers, it can be confusing at first about what does what, why you would choose one over another, and how to actually use them successfully. It helps immensely to understand how light diffusion is affected by modifiers, but more to point, what the three main aspects are that effect light diffusion overall:

1. Light scattering caused by translucent material (fabric, nylon, plastic, etc.)
2. Light source size.
3. Light source distance to subject.

When a light scattering element is present, such as the fabric on a soft box, the directionality of the light coming off the bulb is quite literally scattered at the atomic level. Photons that radiate outward from the bare light source tend to go in a straight line (radially, and away from the bulb) until they are sent through some scattering element. The translucent fabric in a soft box, for example, will send those photons going in every direction because they get reflected, scattered, by said fabric. By changing the (mostly) directional aspect of the photons coming off the bulb, the light emitting from the soft box now causes "light wrap"

due to the photons coming off the fabric in literally every direction now. Light diffusion doesn't mean the photons are changed, it just means they are moving in more random directions.

This doesn't mean much if the light source is very small, however, hence aspect #2. When you use a 6 foot soft box, for example, the scattered photons come off of a larger surface area than, say, a 7 inch reflector. This affects light wrap, or light softness, heavily because the modifier is large in comparison to the subject (a human). Even if both the soft box and reflector both have diffusion fabric on them, the much smaller reflector will not afford you much diffusion because it's so much smaller than the soft box overall. Said another way, you cannot get a light modifier that's smaller than a human skull to wrap light around someone's head for a super soft look. Physics frowns on such assumptions!

Finally, and related to light source size, is how far the light is from your subject. This affects which photons are hitting the subject, and crucially, which ones are not. When light scatters while passing through the face fabric of a soft box, the photons go out in every single direction outward from it. The closer the modifier is to your subject, the more wildly scattered light is hitting said subject. Imagine the 6 foot soft box just 4 feet from your subject, directly in front of their face. It would be radically wider than your subject, of course, and at that proximity the scattered light coming from it would hit both sides of the subjects head rather easily. This is the concept of light wrap, essentially.

When your subject is, let's say, 20 feet from your soft box, the photons that hit the subject's head at 4 feet away now, basically, miss your subject because the subject is much further away. The photons that do hit your subject are radiating slightly more parallel to one another at the distance of 20 feet, however, thus creating slightly less softness (or light wrap). Keep in mind that the scattered photons radiating out from the fabric do not change their direction. Simply put, subject distance affects which photons from the light source hit your human subject and which don't, and that affects how the light diffusion looks on your subject, too.

Very Diffused Light

When you use a diffusion fabric, such as a soft box, to soften the light, and the light source is very large and close to the subject, light diffusion is immense. Photons are going in all sorts of directions, and are starting their journey to your subject from extreme angles due to the close proximity. Light wrap is at a premium at this point, and super soft looks will dominate everything you shoot in this setup. Furthermore, specular (shiny) highlights are controlled very well with extreme diffusion, generally avoiding major flare into the lens or significant overexposing of said specular highlights.

This is fantastic for beautiful and serene portraits, or shots that need to evoke a soft clarity about them. It's flattering to human skin, it softens everything on frame nicely, and usually causes big, striking catch-lights. No doubt, extreme diffusion is a popular lighting approach in studio, and can be accomplished with large, soft modifiers and commonly used feathering techniques to reduce contrast at times.

Hard Light

Popular in fashion and editorial, but usually avoided in general portraiture, using a bare bulb (or nearly bare bulb), far away from the subject affords you a very hard look to the light. Hard lined shadows and strong specular (shiny) highlights define this style of lighting, stemming from the fact that most of the photons are traveling (mostly) parallel to each other. Scattering is at a minimum, like a bright and clear summer day, and clearly defined perimeters of the shadows dominate the mood of the shot. Although the sun is insanely massive, it is also nearly 93 million miles away from your subject, and therefore relatively small in the sky. As such, a cloudless day means the same hard shadows which can impart a strong, dominant, exciting or dramatic look to your portraits. Recreating this look in studio is actually very easy, as a strobe by itself, across the room, is all you need.

Do not discount the use of hard light in your artistic portraiture; you may be pleasantly surprised.

Examples of "Very Diffused Light"

Nino Batista



Examples of "Hard Light"

📷 Nino Batista



Examples of "Semi-Diffused Light"

📷 Nino Batista



Semi-Diffused Light

Obviously, life doesn't have to be A or Z. Using a semi-diffused light look is one of the most popular ways to light a beauty head shot, for example. Classic white beauty dishes, when used at appropriate distances to your subject, create an ideal semi-diffused light for beauty and fashion portraits. Sure, at this point we're splitting hairs, and how to accurately define "semi-diffused light" is probably impossible. That said, sometimes too soft is too soft, and hard light isn't the look you're after, either, and so you opt for something in between.

The semi-diffused look is also common in window light shots, outdoor locations with lots of tree coverage, and even partly overcast days out in the open. To me, a semi-diffused look is some-

thing I associate with a welcoming mood, a pleasant mood, something recognizable and even.

Light Effects

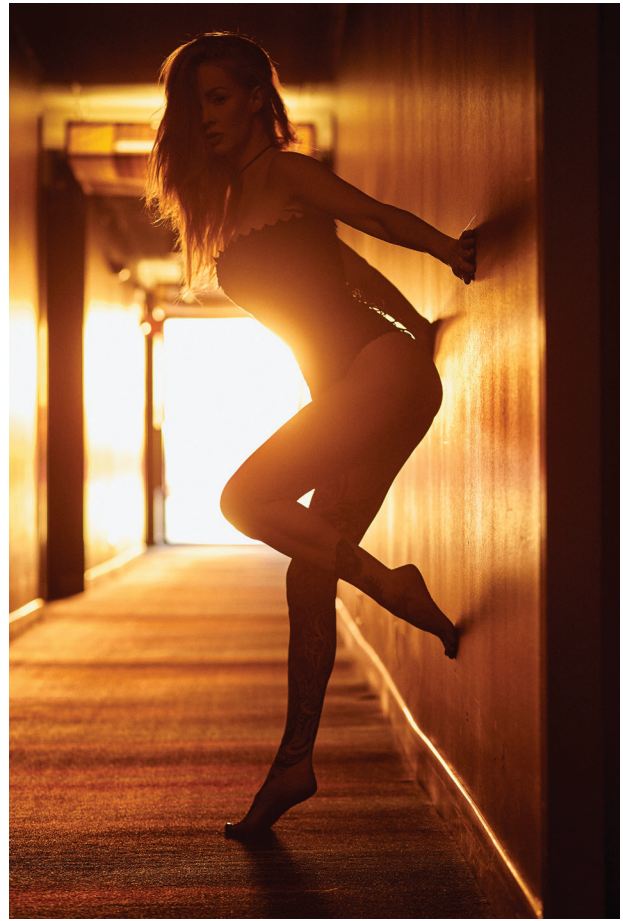
Of course, light wouldn't be any fun if we didn't play around with some lighting effects. Intentional lens flare and hazy looks is the most common of these to use in portrait work, with dramatic, backlit shots evoking an ethereal mood almost immediately.

Ideal for moody, fantasy type of vibes, obviously these type of effects can be done somewhat easily, and become passé if done too often. That said, there is still never a bad time to see that the light on set is ideal for some dramatic effects and capitalize on it if so!

Examples of "Lighting Effects"

📷 Nino Batista

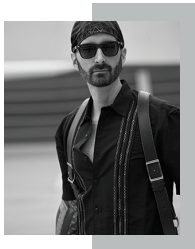




Conclusion

A smile is a smile, a glare is a glare, and the emotion they convey is undeniable. But when you tweak these moods with different light diffusion, you can tailor the final vibe of your shot exactly how you want it. This is highly subjective, as I mentioned earlier, but what is undeniable is that light diffusion plays a big role in the overall aesthetic in your portraits. Don't just buy a soft box or a beauty dish

and point it at your subjects because a tutorial video told you to. Think about how you want to work light diffusion before your next project, and experiment with intentionally trying for different amounts of diffusion on different sets. You never know what you may discover in your own work when you set out to rock light diffusion like a boss!



"Beauty is beauty, and often frighteningly subjective. However, the perception of strength is directly objective. When an image comes across as strong, as powerful, there is something more to the shot than simply beauty. For me, beauty is the delivery as I enjoy experiencing it, but strength is the intent as I enjoy capturing it." **Ron "Nino" Batista** is a photographer, writer, musician and overall creative whose work is regularly seen in lifestyle publications the world over. He is regarded as the premier model photography, retouching and artist development coaching educator based in the United States.

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www.theboudoiracademy.net

Change Your Mind, Change Your Business

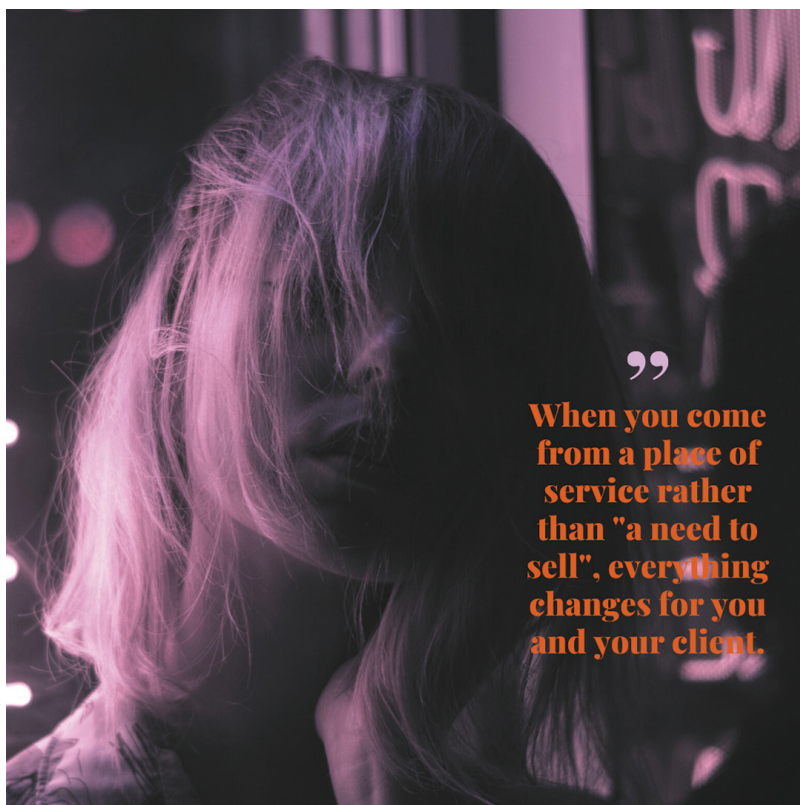
By *The Boudoir Academy* • SPONSORED CONTENT

As boudoir photographers, we wear many different hats. Like every other businessperson, we're drawn to the fun parts of our profession. Who among us doesn't love the unlimited creativity of cool backdrops, styling, fashion and making our clients feel like a million bucks? Many of us also thrive on the editing process, coming up with new marketing ideas and even the technical wizardry behind innovative backend systems. But when we add the word "sales" to the equation, everything we love suddenly takes on a heaviness and becomes almost intimidating.

The sale is not just the finished product and how many images or albums someone buys. A sale begins with your first interaction with a potential client. It could be a phone call, an email, a video chat or an introduction to a friend of a friend at Starbucks. From that opening moment, you must begin selling yourself and your studio to convince them to book with you—and later, to buy the finished product at the level you hope for. Even though many initial inquiries are about price, your ability to turn that conversation into a discovery of wants and needs is the real seed of the relationship and a vital step in the ultimate sale. And for many of us, that's where things start breaking down.

As professional boudoir photographers, we know ourselves and the business backwards and forwards. We're proud of our talents and skills in showcasing clients' beauty and grace. We know intellectually that sales and revenue are our backbone, crucial to keeping our studio doors open and serving clients. Yet, we tend to shy away from the monetary part of the business and let fear and uncertainty creep in just when we need to be at our best. As my coaching clients tell me (and I've experienced myself), we doubt our ability to turn a prospect into a favorite

client. We hesitate or hedge when talking about package prices or add-on fees. We dread viewings or stumble over our words when presenting the finished product. No matter how artistically gifted or technically savvy we are, we simply don't have the same confidence and passion for selling that we feel for other parts of the business.



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When you come from a place of service rather than “a need to sell”, everything changes for you and your client.

So, what's holding us back and how do we overcome it?

The first step is to reframe your thinking and focus on the absolute certainty that you can help your prospective client. It's called a service mindset. I know it sounds too easy, but you'd be surprised how far this simple change can take you. When you come from a place of service rather than a “need to sell,” everything changes for you and your client. Those initial conversations become more comfortable and the relationship develops with a different tone and tenor. A service mindset frames your interactions and presentations in a totally different light. You no longer pressure yourself to close the deal; instead, you guide the

client along a journey that meets their needs. A service mindset brings genuineness and ease to your product discussions, your recommendations and your viewings. It totally changes your delivery and, in turn, your client's reception.

Equipped with this new service mindset, you're ready to take a new approach to client inquiries and prospecting. Instead of leading with price or product features, ask questions to learn more about "why" your prospective client is interested in a boudoir session. We all know how emotional this decision can be. Being sensitive to the client's true wants and needs rather than their budget will

help you discover meaningful reasons they want to book. If you find out early on, for example, that they want a gift for someone special, you'll want to ask different questions than if their objective is to feel better about themselves. Showing you truly understand and care about their needs will give prospective clients the confidence to choose you and most likely refer you to others, leading to more sales. Sometimes during this discovery, you'll find an inquiry is not your ideal client and the best way to serve them is to refer them to someone else—and that's okay. When you adopt a service mindset where clients' needs, not sales, are your highest priority, everyone benefits.



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When we add the word “sales” to the equation, everything we love suddenly takes on a heaviness.



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**Come from a
place of service
rather than a
“need to sell” .**


Changing to a service mindset is key to starting, building and maximizing your boudoir photography business. Yes, sales and revenue keep your doors open, but focusing solely on how much money you can make on a session is a short-term

tactic that shortchanges you and your clients. When you lead with service, create a seamless experience and deliver an exceptional finished product, you’ll find a new ease and enjoyment to selling with positive, long-term, sustainable results.

The Boudoir Academy

Full solution education & coaching for your boudoir photography business.

 theboudoiracademy.net

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About our Cover

Soon after announcing the relaunch of Philosophie, the AIBP put out the call for submissions for the cover. Not surprisingly, we received an amazing set of submissions. When the dust settled, Andrea Liora was selected as this issue's winner.

Below, Andrea tells us the story behind the photo, followed by a story of her journey as a boudoir photographer.

The “Cover Story”

By Andrea Liora, *Andrea Liora Studios*

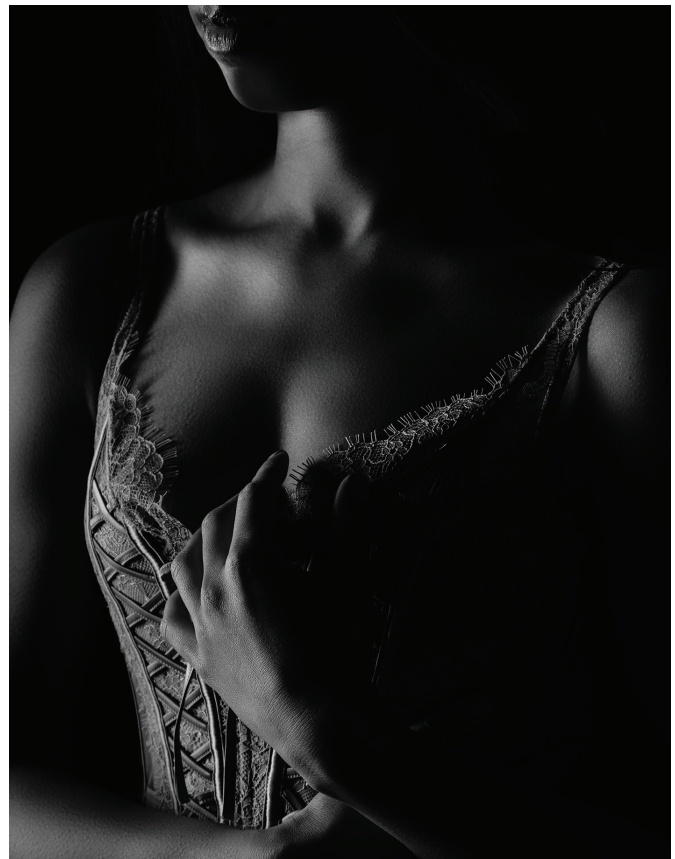
I am so incredibly grateful, and a bit shocked, to be honest, that AIBP selected one of my images for the cover of this issue. This image is very special to me because the subject is my fabulous physical therapist, who helped me walk again after being hit by a car. We became fast friends once I started therapy, and when she asked me to photograph her months later, I jumped at the chance. She had helped me more than I could ever dream of doing for her, but this was my chance to give her a little something in return. She describes her session here:

“I did this photoshoot for myself. I wanted to feel great about my body and try something new. I wasn't quite sure what to expect from my session. Honestly, I had never even worn lingerie before, so this was all very new to me. In the end, everything turned out better than I could have ever expected or hoped for. It really was a liberating experience, and I would encourage my friends to do the same.”

—Miss G.

Because this was the first time she had ever purchased or worn lingerie before, I knew I wanted to capture a few detail shots of this amazing corset top she brought from Victoria's Secret. I also knew beforehand that I wanted to create some wall art options for her. Generally, when I aim to design a piece of art for a woman to hang in her home, I like to go back to my roots and create something a bit more mysterious and anonymous. For this image, I used a strip box with a grid to highlight the corset laces and emphasize the

shape of the subject's body. Because I am partially colorblind, I have always leaned towards black and white portraits over color, and my boudoir



style relies heavily on creating interest with light and adding some mystery with shadows. I believe this image is a perfect marriage of all of those favorite elements I find in photographs.

Andrea Liora Studios

Our Cover Winner Tells Her Story

By Andrea Liora, *Andrea Liora Studios*

*M*y interest in photography began when I was a teenager with Vogue clippings taped all over her bedroom walls. At the time, I dreamt of moving to New York and becoming a fashion photographer. I spent my free time running out to an abandoned bathtub in the woods near my parent's home in Houston, TX. I'd have friends get all dressed up and then lay in this nasty old tub or pose in the trees. A few years later, I began college at the University of North Texas, pursuing a Fine Arts degree in Photography.

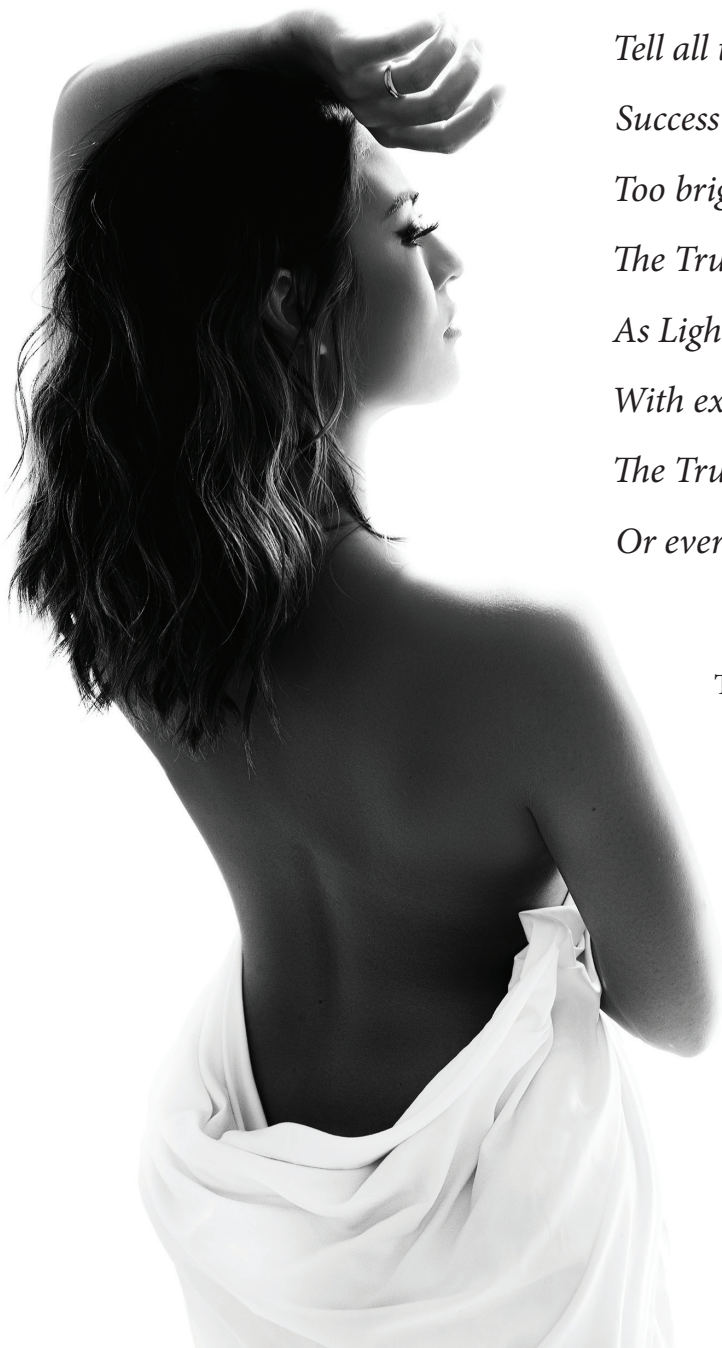
My days there were spent in the darkroom creating semi-nude self-portraits and hoping that I wouldn't have an unintended exposed nipple appear in the developing tray next to one of my classmates - Though it did many times. I would gasp, immediately pull the print, and try to find a less revealing negative.

My artwork primarily consisted of close-up body-scapes of which you couldn't quite tell what you were viewing. The idea originated from an Emily Dickinson poem posthumously titled '1129'.

*Tell all the truth but tell it slant —
Success in Circuit lies
Too bright for our infirm Delight
The Truth's superb surprise
As Lightning to the Children eased
With explanation kind
The Truth must dazzle gradually
Or every man be blind —*

—Emily Dickinson

That poem still sticks with me today - Hell, I can't escape it. I had the title tattooed on my bicep for my 21st birthday. My interpretation of the poem led me to create images that left a bit of mystery or allowed the viewer only a slice of whatever my subject was.



I ended up moving to the Art Institute in Austin, TX, to finish my degree. Their program focused more on the commercial use of art, and I ended up primarily photographing architecture and interiors after graduating. Like many young graduates of the art field, I took a corporate job as a Private Banker to pay the bills and reserved my evenings for photo gigs and part-time work as an Intern and Web Content Editor for a photography blog called Feature Shoot.

Fast forward to many years later. I moved to San Francisco in 2018 with my now-husband. I was working in finance for a Non-Profit and honestly hadn't picked up my camera in quite some time. While walking home from the subway station one rainy evening, a car blew through a crosswalk and hit me. If you've ever been to San Francisco, you'll know the picturesque hilly streets are not kind to someone in physical therapy and on crutches. I intended to take a temporary leave of absence from work until I was walking unassisted again. During that time, I did some soul searching and began taking some refresher photogra-

phy courses online. I wound up taking a boudoir course by Jen Rozenbaum and then another by Kara Marie and decided I HAD to try boudoir. I found a model and a makeup artist, and together we created my first boudoir portraits in my tiny Berkeley bedroom. I was hooked! My temporary leave from my finance career became permanent, and I opened Andrea Liora Studios in 2019.

As women, we frequently struggle with self-love, and we put everyone else's needs and happiness before our own. We look in the mirror and don't always love what we see because we wish we were five pounds lighter or focus on that little wrinkle that wasn't there a year ago. We find every excuse not to celebrate the amazing badass women we are. We all need a massive reminder of how f-ing great we are from time to time. To embrace our bodies and to love ourselves for everything we've experienced. Even if we're not at our "goal weight," or if we haven't learned to appreciate our literal or metaphorical scars just yet. A boudoir session can change the way you see yourself.

"Tell all the truth but tell it slant..."

My interpretation of the poem led me to create images that left a bit of mystery or allowed the viewer only a slice of whatever my subject was.



A few months ago, my husband and I decided to move out of our live/work townhouse. I had just closed my books after my busiest shooting month to date, and the majority of my studio packed up when I received an email inquiry from a young, 24-year-old woman who had just been diagnosed with breast cancer that same week. She thought surgery was imminent and wanted to quickly schedule a boudoir session to celebrate and memorialize her body before beginning treatment.

My mother is a breast cancer survivor, and so was my grandmother, so it was a request that genuinely pulled at my heart. I am here to serve any woman when she most needs to see her beauty and power.

Whether that be before, or after surgery, or both. So I unpacked, reached out to every makeup artist I knew, and scheduled her session for the night before our moving truck would arrive. It was the most pressure I've ever felt to create a safe, comfortable, and positive session. I needed to ensure she had photos of herself that she would love and that her experience would hopefully bring her some light during a dark time.

Here is what she had to say about her boudoir experience:

"Every photo made me feel sexy in a way that I just hadn't since my diagnosis. It felt like the part of me that might

admire my body for a second in the mirror before stepping in the shower could finally, truly come

*We all need a massive
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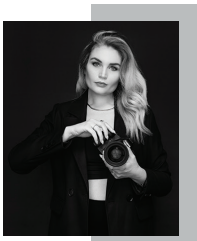






out and enjoy herself. And I'm so glad I let that part of me out before she went away. I'm sure she'll be back, but right now, things are tougher. It's not easy to feel sexy during chemotherapy; let's just say that.

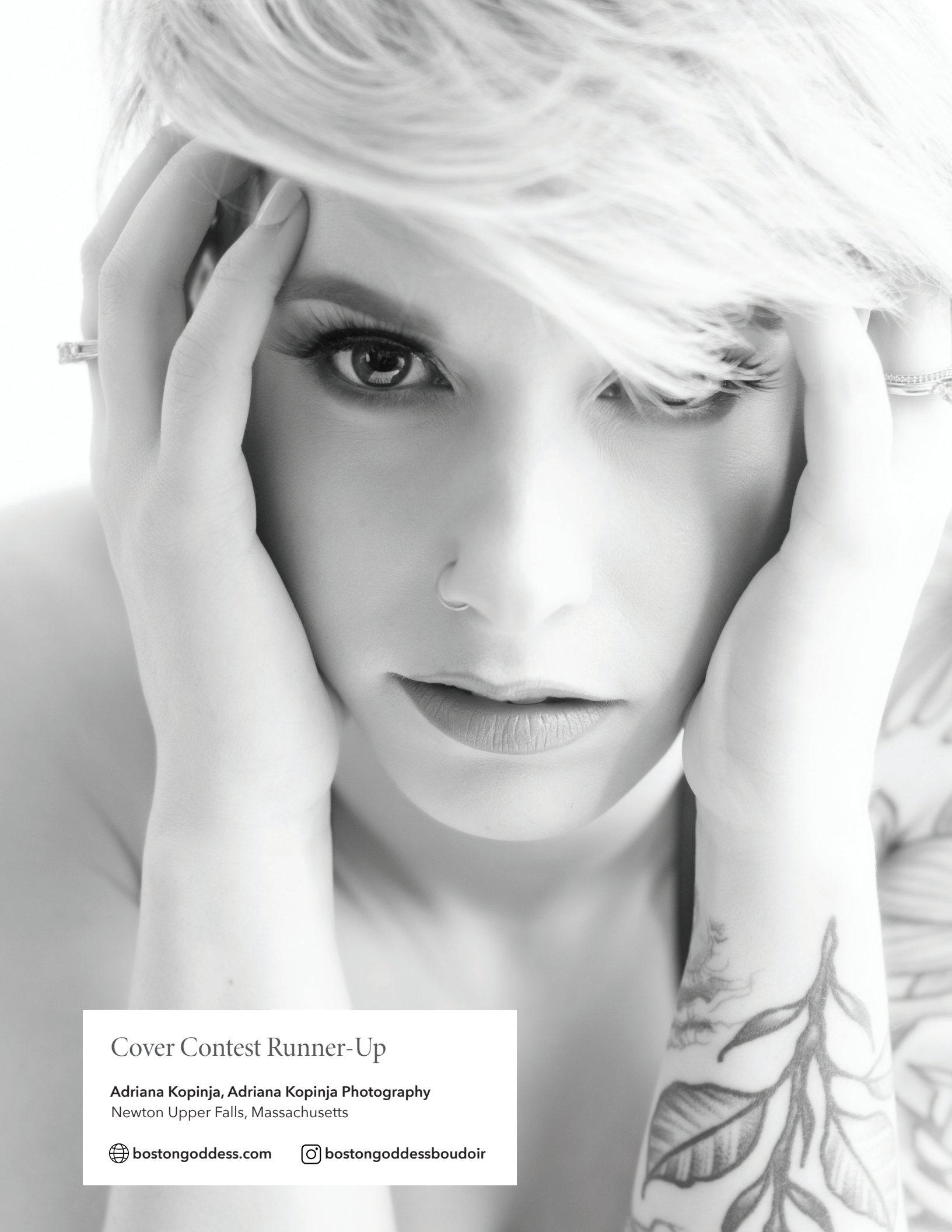
When all is done and I've had my mastectomies and my reconstruction, I'm looking forward to doing another shoot. A boudoir photoshoot is like therapy for body acceptance. It's a place to own your body, own your sexuality, own every single part of yourself." - Miss B.

I couldn't be more honored to be her photographer. My vision for my studio and how I personally "see" boudoir continues to evolve as I grow as a woman and mother. My purpose, however, remains the same. I want to help women on their path to finding love for themselves. No matter what that path may look like.



Andrea Liora is the proud owner of Andrea Liora Studios in Oakland California. Photography has been her passion from a young age. After some life altering happenings, she decided to follow her passion to open her studio in 2019. She has been helping women on their path of self love.

 andrealiora.com  [andrealiorastudios](https://www.instagram.com/andrealiorastudios)



Cover Contest Runner-Up

Adriana Kopinja, Adriana Kopinja Photography
Newton Upper Falls, Massachusetts

 bostongoddess.com

 [bostongoddessboudoir](https://www.instagram.com/bostongoddessboudoir)



Cover Contest Runner-Up

Katie Murphy, Lady Fine Boudoir
Midland, Michigan

 ladyfineboudoir.com  [ladyfinestudios](https://www.instagram.com/ladyfinestudios)

AIBP Weekly Choice Image Competition

Congratulations to the winners from the 4th quarter of 2021!

Every week, the Association for International Boudoir Photographers features photos from our members in a weekly competition, on the AIBP blog, and on social media.

We would like to thank all of our amazing guest judges and all who submitted images. The winning images for the last quarter of 2021 follow. We look forward to seeing more of your beautiful art this year.

Want to enter your own images?
We'd love to see them!

Log in or create your account at [AIBPhotog.com](https://www.aibphotog.com) and you'll find details there (scan the bar code at right to be taken there!).

Good luck!

We are proud to announce that in 2022, the Weekly Choice Image Competition is sponsored by UAF Photo Lab.

Each week, the winner will be gifted an acrylic block print courtesy of UAF Photo Lab!



 Bobby Linton, Lens and Lace Boudoir









📷 Dan Ketcham, D C Ketcham Photography



📷 Laura Robinson, Ellarre Boudoir



📷 Jasiel Ramos-Delgado, Silver JRD Photography



📷 Kristen McKay, Kristen McKay Photo







📷 Laura Robinson, Ellarre Boudoir



📷 Kamil Jania, Kamil Jania Boudoir









From Lead to Client: 6 Tips for a Successful Lead Experience

By Amanda Rae, 17hats, COO • SPONSORED CONTENT



With each new lead brings new life and new growth. An exceptional lead experience is a necessity to business, as without it your business won't exist. As your business grows, the time needed to respond to leads is spent on the pile of to-dos from your current clients resulting in new leads not responded to in a timely manner or at all.

It is proven that the sooner you respond to a lead, the more likely they are to convert to a client. Why is that? Mainly because we live in an instant gratification world. When a lead contacts you, they are also contacting two or three other businesses as well. Because they are excited about the services, they usually go with whoever responds first, granted that response is not an out of office email or a generic "thanks for contacting me email." The first vendor to respond with a personalized email usually gets the client.

Do you respond to leads with the generic email? If, so let's change that. Leads want to know that you are genuinely interested in them. So by asking open ended questions like, "Why are you excited to use my services?" or "What are you most looking forward to?",

leads begin to build a relationship with you and trust you. And, trust building is the most important part of the client relationship.

Leads also don't like to jump through hoops until they are certain they trust you. Before a lead ever contacts you, they have probably checked out your website and social media pages. When they initially inquire about your services they don't want to give up all their information just yet. So you want to make sure you ease them into your process.

Think of your lead experience like dating. If you are asked to commit to the relationship the first time you spoke, you would probably run away. But, you would be ok with them asking for your phone number or things you like to do on the weekend. Leads are the same. Asking them to book you too soon or even too late can cost you a sale.

I know all of this can be a little intimidating which is why we at 17hats want to help. With millions of leads coming through the 17hats system, here are a few things we have learned that help our members close the deal quicker.

Use a Lead Capture Form on your website.

1 By using a form you can kick off your process and ensure your lead is responded to in a timely manner. If you only answer phone calls, there is no way that you can ensure a follow up.

2 Remember that the main goal of the Lead Capture Form is to capture their email address.

With their email address, you will quickly and automatically be able to follow up.

3 Don't ask too many questions on your Lead Capture Forms.

Submitting a lead capture form is like going on a first date. Too many questions seems like too much of a commitment, and therefore they won't complete it. Shorter Lead Capture Forms are proven to be more effective. I suggest asking no more than 5 questions on your Lead Capture Form.

4 Get rid of the out-of-office email for leads, even if you are out of the office.

With 17hats, you can have a personalized email automatically sent to your leads to keep the communication going. Unless you have been highly recommended or the only professional within 200 mile radius, they won't wait until you are back in office. They will either book with your competitor, or the excitement will dwindle and they will talk themselves out of it.

5 If you have multiple revenue streams, ask the lead which one they are interested in so your email can address their specific needs.

They will be more connected to your business if you take an interest in their needs before you even meet.

6 Vet your leads.

Not all leads are a good fit for you. With your email, send a Questionnaire to complete. Again, five questions max so it is not a daunting task. Ask what their expectations are, timeframe for service, what they look forward to, or what they are wanting. Let them share their excitement. Your leads know that you are listening to them. But, also read those answers and look for any red flags.

While perfecting your lead experience may seem like a nervous task, it can be actually very exciting. And, if you are looking to provide an automated, yet personalized experience. Check out 17hats, as we provide just that. You will have a stellar lead experience with higher conversion rates and save tons of time in your day.

17hats is the all-in-one client management software trusted by 20,000+ small business owners to kill the clutter and give back their time.

THE SOLOPRENEUR'S JOURNEY TO

Success

Q&A WITH AMANDA RAE



The solopreneur's journey towards success can be an exciting, but also lonely road, which is why we sat down with 17hats COO, Amanda Rae, to learn how you can go from winging it to rocking it in business.

As a solopreneur, it is natural that we learn as we go. A client asks a question, and we answer without thinking it through. This winging it mentally allows you to start unfolding who you are as a business owner and discovering where you want to go.

Q: HOW CAN YOU TRANSITION FROM WINGING IT TO ROCKING IT?

A: As a solopreneur you need to have an understanding and an appreciation for each phase of growth. Understanding that the 'winging it' stage is the first stage of growth, but it is only destined to take you so far.

Being able to recognize when you have reached that limit of growth, and to start preparing for the next stage is what will allow you to continuously level up your business.

Q: HOW CAN YOU RECOGNIZE THAT YOU'VE REACHED THE END OF THAT FIRST STAGE OF GROWTH?

A: If you find yourself saying, “there’s not enough time in my day”, “I need a second set of arms”, or even my favorite, “I wish I could clone myself” ... then you reached it. It’s the point that you want to do more, but don’t have the time to do it. That’s when you have completed a stage of growth and you’re ready to make changes for the next stage.

Q: WHEN IT IS TIME TO LEVEL UP A BUSINESS, WHAT DOES A SOLOPRENEUR NEED TO CHANGE?

A: Mindset for starters. If you want to earn a million bucks, you have to act like a million bucks, right? If your mindset is still small then you are destined to always be small. However, if you are confident and determined with your eye on the bigger picture, then you are most likely going to make it.

Once you have your mind right, process is the next most important step. Your process determines your client experience. Your client experience becomes a part of your differentiator and can be used for marketing. By diving into your process, you find ways to reduce time, streamline your communication, and raise your average sale. All things needed to push through the next phase of growth.

Q: HOW DOES 17HATS HELP SOLOPRENEURS ROCK THEIR BUSINESS?

A: 17hats is designed to help you put the foundation for growth in place no matter if you are in the winging it stage or the rocking it stage. The whole “you have to act like a million bucks” from above ... 17hats is one way to do that.

Through 17hats organization and automation, you will maintain control over your business in the most professional way. You will consistently stay on top of client communications and to-dos, easily manage contracts and invoices, get paid in a timely manner, and deliver a rave-worthy experience.



Rocking your business relies on an automated process, it's just that simple.

Ready to level up your business?

VISIT 17HATS.COM

Sign up now with referral code, **AIBP22**, and save 50% off your first year upon purchase.

Top 3 Ways to Get Your Studio and Photography Business Back on Track After the Pandemic

Written & Photographed by Tanya Smith

So yeah- the last 19 months have been a pretty big struggle. And it's no secret that small businesses have been hurt by the global shutdowns (and re-opens, and shutdowns!)

Now that things are opening up again and we are getting back to some kind of (new) normal, here are a few things to keep in mind to help your business thrive and to get back into the swing of things as soon as possible!

Of course, there are new guidelines around sanitizing and cleaning your studio, not to mention rules for your hair and make-up artists.

To help clients feel confident that your space is safe, as well as complying with your local rules around covid safety measures, the steps you're taking should be made clear to your clients and potential clients.



Consider adding a pop-up to your website explaining the measures you are taking. Do a few stories on Instagram and add those to a story highlight so clients have peace of mind.

I've included a Canva template you can customize and use for your stories. Grab it by scanning the QR code above.







However, these things help to build awareness that your studio is safe, but what can you do to get those inquiries coming in so you can have a booked calendar again?



Keeping your clients informed is great by using social media and your email list, but for this article, I want to give you three easy ways to get a boost of inquiries and bookings. It's perfect anytime you are slow, and is a good strategy for getting back after the pandemic:

1. Offer Gift Vouchers

This is one of those things that I recommend all photographers offer when they want to get people in front of your camera, either to build or grow your portfolio OR to bring in paying clients.

The premise is simple: Offer a gift voucher or certificate to a bunch of people.

So we are offering a free shoot?
Well, no...and kind of, yes.

Let me explain. A voucher is different from a free shoot because you are putting a VALUE to what you are offering. So instead of saying -come in for a free photoshoot, you are saying "I would like to offer you a voucher worth X dollars."

You are giving them a specific amount to redeem, so yes, they could just spend the amount of the voucher and not spend anything else, BUT they could also buy a higher-priced package from you, apply their gift voucher amount towards the invoice balance, and pay you the difference!

For example, if I want to get images to use for my own purposes (to build my portfolio, promote a new set, etc) I will offer a voucher for a large amount, say my session fee + the amount of my lowest package. This way the client can come in, enjoy the whole experience with you, including hair and makeup and walk away with your lowest package (digitals only). You will have images to use (because for them to utilize this voucher, they need to sign an image release agreement) but you will be

out the cost of your h&mup artist and your time.

There is also a possibility that the client will choose a higher-priced package and pay you the difference.



On the other hand, if I don't want to shoot for free but I want to get people in the studio, I will offer a voucher for a lower amount – maybe the session fee plus an amount that is LESS than my lowest package.

This way the client will have to spend some money if she wants any images.

If you would like to download a template of the voucher I use, scan the QR code above.









2. Run a Sale

Sure this sounds obvious, but most people don't offer a sale so that it is PROFITABLE. We are not trying to be business, we are trying to be profitable.

When I run a sale, I am discounting my session fee and adding in some valuable bonuses, but ones that don't cost me much money or time, for example- I include the digital images and a smartphone app, but ONLY copies of what they purchase!

Your sale can be for Black Friday, but it can also be for any reason..."We are open for business" is as good a reason as any!

If you structure your sale or promo so that it does not cost YOU much money, and is also a great discount for your clients, then this is a great strategy. When I run these sales, I make over \$80k in sales and book my calendar for months ahead.

3. Run a Contest

This is similar to the Voucher option in tip #1, but your voucher will be for a large amount (include your lowest package plus session fee). Put together a contest and decide on the rules for them to qualify. Do you want them to join your Facebook group? Follow you on IG or tiktok? Invite or tag their friends? Leave a comment and engage? Do all of the above?

Make sure your rules are clear and make sure you add a dollar value to the giveaway. I always stipulate that the winner MUST be willing to sign a FULL image release so that I can use their photos, as well as behind the scene images and videos for my marketing.



This will help to grow your social profiles, introduce new people to your work (because they will invite and tag their friends), and create engagement and new marketing materials for your business.

SO, what do you think? Are you going to try any of these ideas?



Tanya Smith has been a women's portrait photographer since 2011 when she fell in love with how a boudoir session could change the way a woman sees herself.

Since 2017, she has been mentoring and coaching other boudoir photographers one-on-one who want to grow their business. Visit her site to learn more.

 profitableportraits.com

 [tanyalsmith.photography](https://www.instagram.com/tanyalsmith.photography)





HELPING TO
Empower
WOMEN

Your clients deserve to have their confidence elegantly and artfully preserved in a respectful and safe manner. Our all-female production team looks after your boudoir images with the utmost care. From the transfer of your digital uploads, to the binding and packaging of your album, we value your and your clients' privacy.

Our mission includes a monthly donation to the London Abused Women's Shelter, to help provide free counseling, advocacy and support to women in Southern Ontario. (www.lawc.on.ca)

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THE
BOUDOIR
ALBUM

The Boudoir Album

By Kellie Marie, for The Boudoir Album • SPONSORED CONTENT

In 2020 during a pandemic, my boudoir photography studio grossed \$721,943.91. Even though we were closed for over 16 weeks. That's crazy, right? "There's no way that's possible." I get that comment a lot when I talk about my sales in Facebook groups. The truth of the matter is that it is possible, and I'm happy to report it's actually becoming more common for photographers to earn annual incomes in the mid to high six figures.

How is this being done? With a luxury experience and service, high quality images, in-person sales appointments, and high end product offerings. The days of 'shoot and burn' are in the past for many of my colleagues, and our clients couldn't be happier. That being said, there's still a lot of push-back from photographers who are still operating their business with the 'shoot and burn' model. They're highly resistant to making the jump but once they do they quickly begin to understand the benefits, not only for their bank accounts, but for the client experience as well.

In Person Sales (IPS) is a service we provide our clients to complete their experience with us. It is not a scam, we aren't robbing our clients or tricking them into spending money they don't have. Sales should be fun, not something to fear. The In Person Sales appointment is the greatest part of my job as a photographer. It brings the client experience full circle and my clients feel well taken care of during this process.

As a boudoir photographer especially, the impact of the sales appointment is the greatest part of the client experience and is not something that should be left to a gallery delivered via email. Boudoir photographers do their clients a disservice by not conducting IPS appointments, leaving women to

browse a gallery of images from their session from home in an uncontrolled environment is a recipe for disaster. With the emotionally charged genre of boudoir, it is important that we are there to support our clients all the way through the image delivery process. I offer my clients a 2 hour appointment, typically the same day as their actual photoshoot, where they get to review their lightly retouched images and I assist them in their purchasing process. Nearly all of my Google reviews state that the 'Image Reveal', was the BEST part of their experience with our studio. We create a short 4 minute slideshow for them that typically brings them to tears. "That's

really me?!" is the normal reaction we get as we hand them tissues.

With the right process and sales training, IPS does not have to feel pushy or slimy. It's not a bait and switch program. My clients are not typically wealthy, many of them are teachers and nurses or even

stay-at-home moms. My studio is not in a "rich" area. I have rural clients that drive 2-4 hours to our studio and we occasionally have clients who fly in from even further away. There is nothing "special" about what I do. I simply produce quality work and deliver an excellent experience. A service my clients love which keeps them coming back for more.

Offering high quality products is one of the keys to having high sales and a luxury brand. I have tried tons of different printing labs, but for the last 5 years I have been printing solely through The Boudoir Album. My clients consistently remark on how luxurious the items they purchase are. Their expectations are always exceeded by the quality and craftsmanship. And as a business owner, I feel confident charging thousands

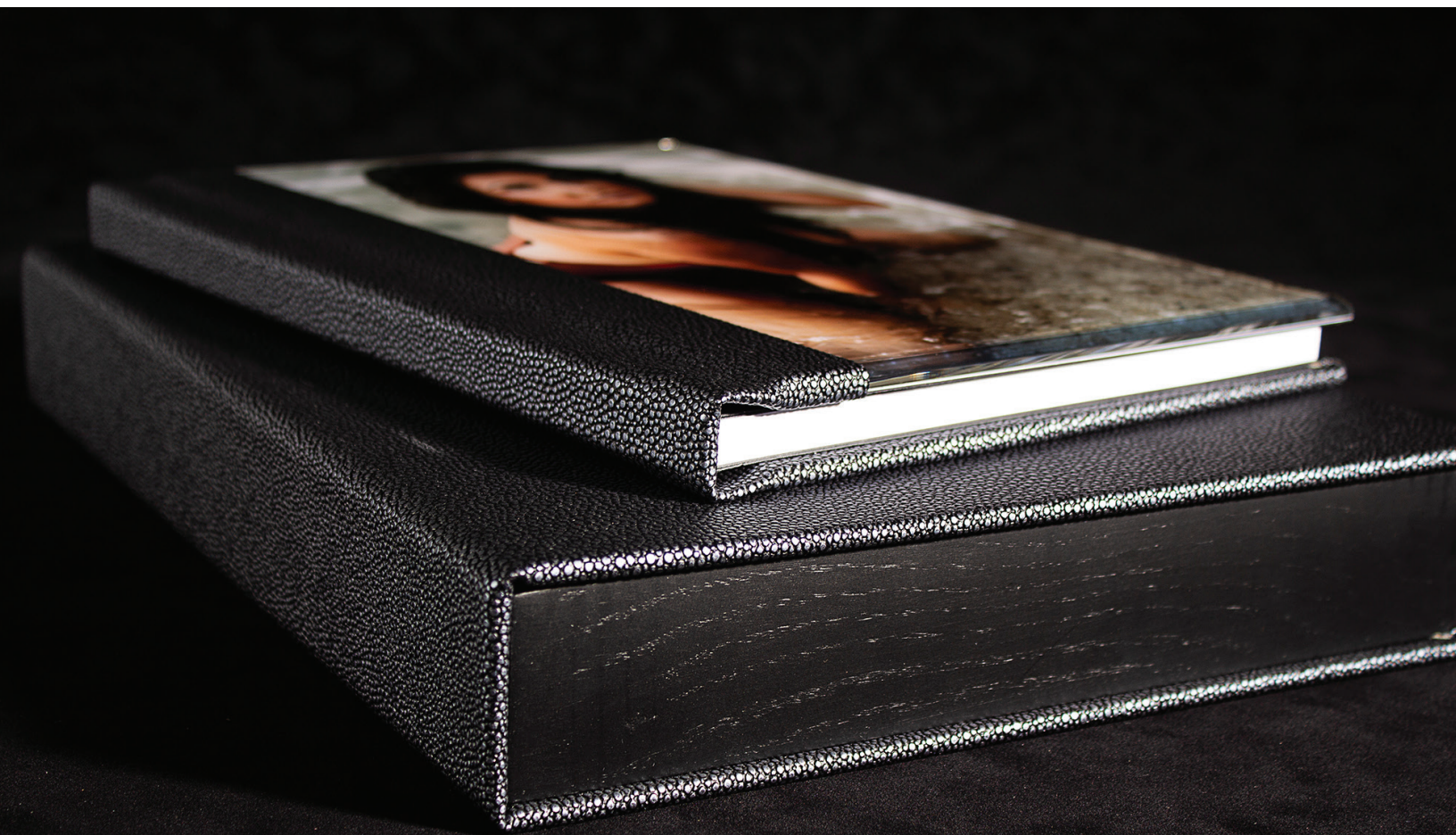


of dollars for these products. I am able to keep my costs of goods for each package sold around 5-10%, and my clients couldn't be happier.

Photographers are infamous for undercharging for their work, but I am pleased to report that in the Boudoir genre, we seem to be creating something of an industry standard for minimum pricing. This is due in large part to the education provided by our industry leaders, as well as the widespread conversation about the value of what we provide our clients. When you have a better understanding of the time and expense that goes into each client's experience, you begin to understand why charging any less than \$2000 for a boudoir session is simply not profitable. And when all of your local competitors are priced in the same range as your studio, clients then get the opportunity to select who they want to work with based on values that actually matter rather than price alone. This ensures that clients are actually working with someone who is a good fit for their needs instead of who provided the lowest price tag.

One of the ways you can begin making IPS a part of your business is to explain to your clients that this is NOT just a simple photoshoot, it's an experience. My clients spend a full 6 hour day at our studio from beginning to end. We are full service, meaning we include everything. Our clients walk in with almost no preparation, we handle their hair and makeup, the wardrobe and shoes, and of course provide them with our impeccable studio space for the photo shoot. After the photography session complete with our expert posing, we send the clients to lunch at a local cafe for about 90 minutes. While they are away, we are quickly culling and retouching their images. We are able to bring about 60 images to a retouching level of about 75% complete, which for us is enough to show the client at their IPS appointment when they return from lunch.

As a photographer, I love IPS because it is VERY efficient for my schedule! I actually offer same day IPS appointments for all of my clients.





My typical client schedule is:

- 9am: Client arrives and goes immediately into hair and makeup.
- 10:30am: Hair and makeup is complete, we move on to the wardrobe selection process.
- 11am: Photoshoot begins.
- 12pm: Photoshoot ends. Client goes to lunch. Photographer retouches images.
- 1:30pm: Client returns from lunch and the IPS appointment begins.
- 3pm: Client completes IPS appointment and all design selections are finalized.
- 5pm: Photographer finishes image retouching and orders all client products.

This timeline is extremely efficient for my busy schedule, as we photograph 5 clients per week. By doing same day IPS, it allows me to focus my time and complete an entire client experience on the same day. I can have an entire client complete by the end of the day, and I never have to reopen any files or worry about print deadlines. All of my clients are told prints will be delivered within 6-8 weeks following the session, and I am able to far exceed their expectations because of how much time my process saves. Some photographers prefer to have their clients return to the studio a few weeks following the photoshoot, but I find that this creates a plethora of issues that can arise and actually diminishes the client experience. We capitalize on the hype of the day by offering same day IPS, which I truly believe heightens the experience for the client and leads us to bigger sales.

In regards to how I actually conduct my IPS appointments, it's very simple! I have a room in my studio setup with all of my sample products on display (this is very important, as you will sell what you show). On one side of the room is my desk with my computer, which is where I sit to conduct

the appointment. My computer is strategically placed so that the client cannot see my screen as it is a distraction during their appointment. On the other side of the room I have a red couch for the client to sit (red is a symbol of money in feng shui) facing a 55" television. I use an Apple TV to share my computer screen to the TV, and once I prepare my client on the IPS experience I will then begin a short slideshow I have prepared using my sales software ProSelect. Upon completion of the slideshow, we will review the Investment Menu together and select the package they wish to purchase. If necessary, we will narrow the gallery down to the appropriate number of images for the package or discuss upgrading to a package that includes all of the images shown in their slideshow. We then design the wall art and album if required, finalize payment, and that's it! It's a very simple process that anyone can implement into any kind of photography business, regardless of experience level.

There are so many benefits to IPS not only for the photographer, but for the client. By offering our clients an in person appointment to review their images, we are able to offer them better customer service. That service is the act of holding space for the client, as seeing your own boudoir images for

the first time as a client can be very uncomfortable. I find that sometimes I have to be my client's "hype girl," telling her how much I love each image so that she can start to see her own beauty. If you aren't doing IPS, you aren't able to offer your client this type of support! We are able to walk them through each image and reassure them that it is ok to see themselves in this light, even if it feels a bit weird at first. With IPS as opposed to "shoot and burn," clients are also able to pick and choose what images they pay for, as opposed to being stuck with a gallery of images they may not really love. IPS allows your clients the opportunity to see a larger gallery of options, and narrow them down into a group of favorite images to purchase. The images then go on to be printed on quality heirloom products that are not accessible to the general public. With the "shoot and burn" process, most clients will never go on to actually print any of their images. We are providing the service aspect of IPS by offering to take care of the printing process for them, so that they can actually enjoy the images they are purchasing as opposed to leaving them on a hard drive for all of eternity.

Same day IPS solves a lot of common issues in a photography business. We no longer have to worry about clients screenshotting images and





not purchasing them, regardless of watermark safeguards. We are ensuring that we are being paid for our work because clients are being properly qualified and are aware of investment minimums. It takes out the back-and-forth communication with clients about scheduling and rescheduling their IPS appointments, which can easily mess up your daily schedule and delay your income (unless you're requiring prepayments, which I highly suggest). And it leads to better reviews and referrals as client satisfaction is increased!

With our unspoken industry standard pricing, photographers are better able to re-invest into their businesses to grow their skills. Photographers are also talking about things like retirement planning and retirement in general, rather

than scraping by each month. It's such a great movement to be a part of and to watch happen, and I couldn't be happier for my colleagues.

What we offer our clients is far beyond a few images on a disc. Boudoir photographers freeze time and offer clients an opportunity to better their body image and self confidence, something nearly every person struggles with. And people are willing to pay a premium price for this experience. Don't underestimate the value of the service you provide based on your own money blocks. People will pay for a service if they value it, you just have to create the experience for them and convey that value in your marketing. If you're selling yourself short, this is a great time to reevaluate your business model, pricing, and sales process.



Kelli Marie is the proud owner of a successful boudoir photography studio in New Hampshire! She has been empowering women through the art of boudoir photography since 2010, and has been empowering other photographers by helping them grow their businesses to higher levels of success since 2016.

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Difficult Clients are a Myth

Written and Photographed by Denise Birdsong

PSA: *Posing has changed and won't be the same for photographers*



A person is shown from the waist down, wearing a long, white, sheer, and flowing dress. They are sitting on a tufted sofa. The background is a wall with decorative paneling. The lighting is soft and focused on the person, creating a dramatic effect. The overall mood is elegant and artistic.

If you think all workshops are created equal and posing guides are the answer to all your posing challenges than stop reading this article right here, this message is not for you.

However, if you're like most photographers and find yourself still struggling with posing even after guides and workshops, then you will want to read on.



Let me ask you, do you show every single image you shoot? Is your instagram portfolio full of regular sessions? I'm betting "no."

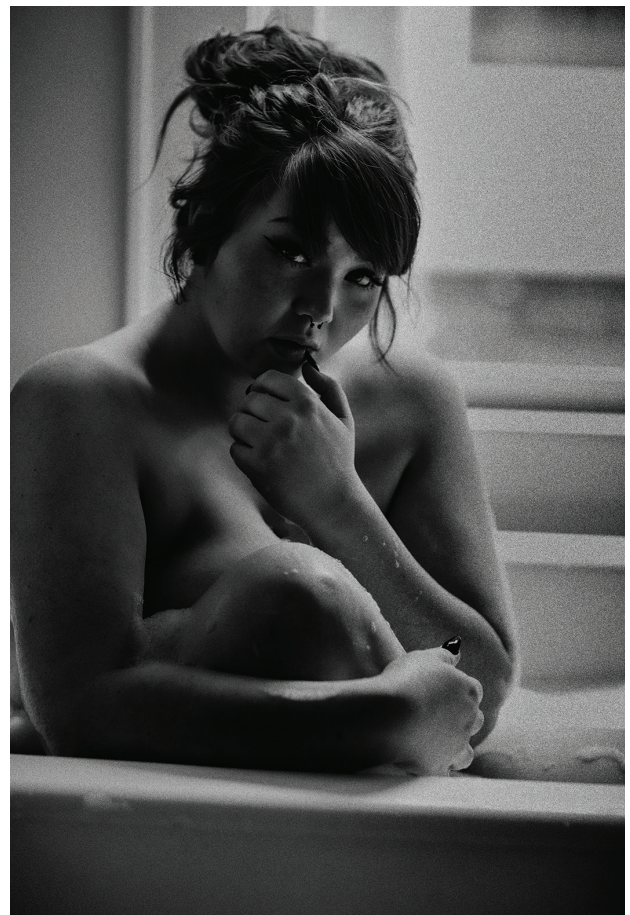
Look, there are a lot of photographers out there sharing work made up of professional models, influencers, actors, and dancers...all people who have a natural sense of body language and are very photogenic. Which is totally great by the way, we all know how fun it can be to shoot someone who can move seamlessly and just radiates from within. But here's where it gets tricky.

Beautiful portfolios filled with trained models, or portfolios created by copying exact poses from a posing guide will leave a huge void in your skill set. That void.....guess what?! That VOID is the very thing that is creating all your doubt, fears, and insecurities as a photographer. Because deep down you know you were only partly responsible for the outcome of that image, it wasn't all you. Man, that's a rough feeling. I know I've been there too. And it gets worse.

Then when you find yourself with clients who don't have that same sense of body language, you get stuck with posing and often complain of "difficult clients". Guess what? There's no such thing as difficult clients.

I know you're probably thinking "oh my gosh this woman is crazy, I love my posing guides, they've saved my life". You're not wrong, posing guides have their purpose, they can be so helpful when you are beginning, but in a world full of photographs, I mean seriously we have more images out there than ever before, a pretty picture isn't enough to stand out. Some images just stand out and I want you to be creating those. I want to see MORE of those earth shattering images in this world.

The truth is, every portrait photograph is created by two people, the photographer and the subject and if your subject doesn't understand how to elicit the look your wanting you'll not be satisfied. It's a fact that fashion photographers don't pose their subjects, in some cases they offer direction, but they allow their models to do what they are the pro at.





Long ago in a time very far away I was once a model. It takes more than just having a certain look to get hired, you have to sell a product and emotive body language creates sales. It still does. My students who have mastered this make higher sales because of the emotional connection the client has to the image.

I promise you every client can be your dream client if you find ways to fill that void. Start by practicing with MORE untrained clients. Look for people who claim to be especially unphotogenic and challenge yourself. Study body language and dissect its parts. Use the inspiration and get to creating that beautiful work that is inside you. Could you just imagine for a minute with me,

what it would be like to walk into the studio, your favorite music playing, your client ready to create magic and knowing exactly what to do every step of the way. Feeling like you could take on the world!

So let's just take a minute and think about this. If you feel most happy shooting trained models or photogenic people, If that's where you are able to create your most beautiful work, and if you are truly the skilled artist then you should be able to repeat that process with anyone. Being able to guide and direct someone with a full understanding of body language and the emotive process will make you confident beyond measure, because you will be able to create ART with anyone! So keep practicing and learn the language.



Denise Birdsong is an award-winning wedding, portrait and boudoir photographer from the San Francisco Bay Area. Through her experiences as a dancer and model, Denise mastered the fine art of communication and storytelling through body language and facial expression. Emotion is what makes portrait photography truly stand out, and it's usually the missing component for most photographers. Denise is passionate about teaching her master photography students her signature methodology that takes them to the next level of their craft.

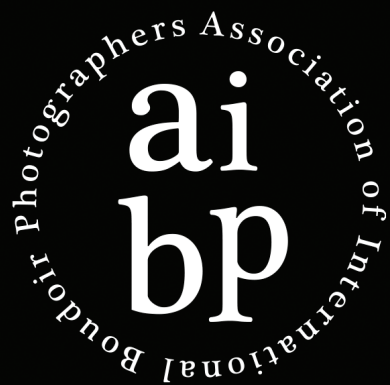
 dbirdsong.com

 [denisebirdsongphotographer](https://www.instagram.com/denisebirdsongphotographer)





Established in 2009, AIBP has become the leading boudoir photography association worldwide. In an ever growing and changing industry, AIBP provides a community space for photographers to enhance their craft, build their business, network with colleagues and explore educational references.



Join the community today
www.aibphotog.com

