

PPCO

PROFESSIONAL PHOTOGRAPHERS OF CENTRAL OHIO

January 2010

Click Topiks Newsletter



Presidents Message

Greetings from South Africa.

I hope everyone enjoyed their holidays with friends and family. The PPCO holiday party was another great success. Thanks again to our hosts Penney (Adams) and Marc for opening their home to our group.

I want to encourage all members to participate in our January print competition. All details, costs and forms are available on the PPCO web site. This is a great opportunity to see what our quality judges have to say about your work and how you can make it merit worthy. We need to try to start this meeting early to get through all of the entries in a reasonable amount of time, so please try to order your meal no later than 6:30 so that judging can begin by 7:30. PLEASE NOTE: Our meeting is the THIRD Monday of January, on the 18th due to Imaging USA.

2010 will be another great opportunity to learn and share within our organization. We have speakers lined up for February, April and May that we are certain will give you useful information to apply to your photography and your business. March is our Round Table meeting where we share information within our group, discuss ideas and strategies and ask questions. Your Board is busy coming up with a plan to make this meeting a big success. YOUR input will be critical at this one. We will keep you posted as to our plans.

In closing, I want to thank you again for your membership and friendship and want to wish you and yours a happy and prosperous New Year.

Happy 2010!

Kerry

Our Annual PPCO Members Print Competition

PPCO PRINT COMPETITION DETAILS

(only members may enter)

7 Categories:

Portrait, Senior, Wedding, Landscape/Nature, Commercial,
Action/Sports, Creative Open

Note: Your _____ 2009-2010 categories are based on PPO categories. We added one additional category of Sports/Action. Additional categories make it easier to determine where your print stands when judged with similar types of work. Each entry will still be judged with the same standards and the *12 elements in mind. Entering should help you as a photographer to improve your skills and creativity for the type of work you do daily while also preparing you for other competitions.

Classifications:

Finished 8x10 to 16x20 meeting PPA Competition Standards
- retouching and/or enhancing is recommended
Prints must be titled and mounted. No frames, transparencies or albums.
No unfinished category - bring your best to be judged.

Cost:

\$5.00 per print or 6 for \$25 - 6 print limit
Note: To be eligible for PPCO Photographer of the Year a minimum of FIVE prints must be entered..

Judges:

Darrell Moll, Jerry Wolff, Bob Williams and Bob Hughes as Jury Chair

Please read the *12 Elements of a Merit Print ([Page 5](#)) for PPA competition pointers.

This competition is anonymous on the day of judging so only you will know when your print is being judged, however, the top three print entrants in each category, the first time entrant top score and the Photographer of the Year will be presented with ribbons at the February PPCO meeting.






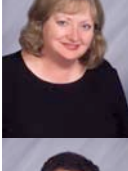

Special note:

We will be asking the judges this year to comment on every print that has scored 75-79. An 80 would received a merit at regional competitions, so they will advise you as to whether, in their opinion, the print is worthy to continue to work with for competition purposes, and advise you how to make it merit worthy. Although we get quality judges, keep in mind that this is just their advise from experience and there are no guarantees. Also - do not let this friendly competition discourage you - don't be offended. It is meant to be fun, interesting and informative! There is so much to learn. Every image can be improved upon and this is one of our most educational meetings of the year.

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2009/2010 Board Members		2009/2010 Calendar	
	Chairperson of the Board Jim Nardone Jim.Nardone@mac.com	Sep. 14 Steve and Julie Busch "Seniors, Children, and running a Full Service Studio in a small market."	
	President Kerry Mechtly info-pgofc@insight.rr.com	Oct. 12 Ellie Vayo "The State of Digital in the Senior Market"	
	Vice-President Heidi Mechtly hmechtly@insight.rr.com	Nov. 9 Danny Leary "The Complete Wedding Photographer"	
	2nd Vice-President, Treasurer Kim Myers kim@myers-photo.com	Nov. 15 & 16 Fall Two Day Conference - Hilton - Easton	
	Secretary Lisa Farnholtz photoblondie@columbus.rr.com	Dec. 14 Members Christmas Party - The home of Penney Adams	
	Elected Board Member Beth Bartter bethbartter@att.net	Jan. 18 Print Competition Judges Darrell Moll, Jerry Wolff, Bob Williams and Bob Hughes as Jury Chair	
	Elected Board Member Tom Welsh tom@tomwelshphotography.com	Feb. 8 Tom Walter "The Art of the Business of Photography"	
		Mar. 8 Round Table & Swap Shop Moderator: TBA	
		Mar. 10 - 15 Mid-East States Convention Dayton OH	
		Apr. 13 Deb Chagares "The Magic of Corel Painter"	
		May 11 Wilson Sarkis "Sharing Light & Posing"	
		BOARD ELECTIONS	

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Weddings happen even in a bad economy

By Rick Brewer

2008-09 poses some interesting challenges for wedding businesses. So far we have seen a nationwide trend where Brides are booking necessary services much closer to the date of their wedding than they ever have before. Signs are pointing to Brides booking for spring 2009 and even into 2010, in most cases they are booking far out to be able to pay over time or save money. Brides are also tuning down their budgets. Without the necessary sales and marketing skills, your business can really be in for a rough ride. This being said, if you are one of the 16 primary industries that 80% of all Brides book, you may see a dip in what the Bride is spending.

2009 will bring some interesting challenges for wedding businesses. The "hobbyist" or "weekend warrior" will start to spend more time on their full time employment and those who are in the industry fulltime will have to step up their marketing efforts to get to the newly engaged brides. Signs are pointing to Brides shortening the buying cycle and putting off the decision to buy until the very last moment. This being the case, it is crucial for your business to advertise to the Bride in a manner that will be effective and not just telling her about your "stuff". Without the necessary sales and marketing skills, your business can really be in for a rough ride. This being said, if you are one of the 16 primary industries that 80% of all Brides book, you may see a dip in what the Bride is spending unless you learn the vital skills of marketing to Brides.

There are many businesses in the wedding industry who are thriving during this Chaotic time. They have well oiled marketing machines in place and a systematic approach to sales to Brides. One wedding photographer I know has seen an increase of 35% over last year. They charge about 2 1/2 times the average for their city and they book on average 3 weddings a week.

The wedding businesses who will be most affected will be those who back off of their marketing. This is a simple concept; with 85% of brides being first time brides who have never purchased \$1800-2000 worth of photography, \$1000-1500 of flowers, \$2-3000 on a Dress they will wear once, etc... how will they buy from a business that they do not know about.

Unique Customers

Brides and their weddings are unique as customers. They have never bought the things they need to buy and because of that, they get "sticker shock" with the prices. That is why they play the game "what's my price" with wedding vendors. You have probably played that game this week-you know, when the Bride calls up and only wants to know your "prices" not any of the services or differences with you and other vendors. She hangs the success of her wedding on the hook of "price" alone.

We as wedding vendors know that price is about the only measurement which has nothing to do with the results. There have been many mediocre wedding vendors who charged a low price only to give a horrible product or service in return.

The typical Bride is experiencing more stress than she ever has for several reasons:

- She has never spent this kind of money before
- She is trying to please too many differing personalities
- The Groom is typically not interested in being involved
- She has too much to do with working a full time job, meeting obligations at home and getting together at family events (2 families not typically) and planning her wedding which is like a full time job.

Typically the Bride does not know how to buy these products and services for her wedding because there is too much information out there, many times information which conflicts with itself. This is another reason why the Bride will go back into "price" only mode.

By taking a different approach to this Bride with your Marketing, you will be able to better communicate your offering to her and she can then better determine if your business and her needs are a good match.

Preparing for 2010

Each year in the Wedding Business, there are three magical days which account for 35-40% of all the engagements that will occur during the year (the three days are Christmas, New Years and Valentines day). Being properly prepared for getting the word out to this HUGE group of Brides begins

now.

In recent weeks as I have spoken to large groups of Wedding professionals, I have heard the same stories. "I have never seen a year like this in my 15 years of business", "Business is so off I have had to consider taking a part time job", "The Brides just hid for the year" and the comments go on and on. My natural follow up question is "how is next year looking?"

So far, some have responded favorably to the follow up and others are a bit concerned. The thing I mention next is that not everybody had a bad year this past year. In fact, I have seen many businesses that have expanded this past year. There is a reason why some businesses are expanding and others are going out of business; Marketing.

Think about this, nothing is going to happen until your marketing works. If your marketing doesn't work, the Brides won't hear about you. Brides are very unique customers:

- 85% are "first time Brides"
- They have never bought your products/service before.
- They will never buy it again.
- They are buying more products/services for the one day than they will ever spend again.

Now, let's take a look at what is happening with your marketing. In my working with wedding vendors, I have seen three typical problems. These problems are magnified by the fact that most of the wedding vendors who suffer from these problems do not feel as if it is a problem or that it is a problem that they are responsible for. Here are the three problems:

1. There are 8 typical ways in which I have researched and found that Brides typically find the vendors that they are going to use. The average wedding vendor is typically only taking advantage of 2.8 of these 8.

2. When I look further into the average 3 ways they are trying to get Brides, they are using the wrong methods to reach out to the Bride (they talk in the wrong way about the wrong things and the Bride promptly ignores them).

3. Further, they look at marketing as an event rather than a process. The marketing you start now will have an

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effect 6-8 months down the road. Again, if you do not market, or you market badly, you will have bad results down the road.

Here is something that if you get nothing else from this email you need to fully understand: You are 100% RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR results.

If you put a great ad in a bad magazine, you will get the same results as if you put a bad ad in a great magazine. If you show up to a networking meeting with the wrong objective, you will walk out of there with zero results. If you go to a Bridal show and there are Brides there and you have the wrong preparation, the wrong display and the wrong actions, you will walk away with zero results.

Again- whose fault is it-the magazines? not necessarily. Is it the Bridal show that's bad? not necessarily. Is it that networking doesn't work- absolutely not. You may need a tune up on what you are doing.

By tuning up what you do and how you do it, you stand to turn around dismal results that were experienced in 2009 and make 2010 more profitable and let's face it- More Fun! (Everything is more fun when you are making more money and are busy rather than bored).

If you build it, they Won't come (they might, but...)

In the movie, "Field of Dreams", you will remember the line "if you build it they will come". The movie illustrator using faith to start a project that doesn't make sense in the beginning and begins to take shape at the end. Unfortunately, as I travel around the country speaking to wedding professionals, this seems to be the method with most wedding businesses.

Let me explain this concept a little better. Most wedding businesses are "Mom and Pop" businesses, or also

known as Owner/Operators. My estimate is 85% of the industry (really the backbone) is made up of these owner/operators. Most owner/operators get into their chosen fields due to really liking the field-it's their passion and they love to do what they do. Because they love to do what they are doing, the improving on their craft comes very easy. It's like Bret Favre-he loves football and just can't stay away from the game! This is a good thing.

The problem kicks in here; how long can these businesses continue to operate if they fail to bring in any customers. This is the point that they start to market their business. Because they naturally love to do what they do, it is felt that they have "built it" so customers should naturally come. This gets a little tricky because we are thinking like business owners and not like our customers.

Our customers (Brides) have never bought your "stuff" (for lack of a better word) before. Because they have never bought this before (and especially not to this extent-i.e. thousands of dollars for photography or flowers), they have a natural built in "buying reluctance". They are nervous about making a bad decision. Because this day has to be perfect in their minds, this adds one more layer of that buying reluctance. Money is almost always tight (even with the girls who live in the expensive parts of town. In some cases these girls want the most deals.) and this adds yet another layer of reluctance. Their once hard decision has a 3x's factor if you look at things from this point of view.

Now let's shift back to the marketing that gets put out to these girls. The Owner/operator who is not well versed in marketing/advertising throws together an ad, a brochure or other marketing piece based on what they think should be out there (remember that this owner/operator's life is surrounded by Weddings and they do them every week, sometimes several a week. There is little they haven't seen. Much like the insensitive kindergarten student who is showing up for her first day of school, the Bride comes in wide

eyed and enthusiastic only to have a crusty teacher who has done this 20 times before burst their bubble by systematically taking the fun and magic out of the experience. The Owner/operator puts together their marketing based on what they think is important. They will include "fluff" statements that really turn off the bride (statements like "fairy tale weddings come to life", "Because you deserve the very best", etc...).

Simply putting up a business (as great as it may be) and throwing up some advertising isn't enough. "Building it" is necessary, but will not guarantee customers. Your marketing is the first priority in keeping your business open and bringing customers through the door.

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12 ELEMENTS OF A MERIT PRINT

The Photographic Exhibitions Committee (PEC) of PPA uses the 12 elements below as the "**gold standard**" to define a merit image. PEC trains judges to be mindful of these elements when judging images to the PPA merit level and to be placed in the International Print Exhibit at the annual convention.

The use of these 12 elements connects the modern practice of photography and its photographers to the historical practice of photography begun nearly two centuries ago.

Twelve elements have been defined as necessary for the success of an art piece or image. Any image, art piece or photograph will reveal some measure of all twelve elements, while a visually superior example will reveal obvious consideration of each one. They are:

Impact is the sense one gets upon viewing an image for the first time. Compelling images evoke laughter, sadness, anger, pride, wonder or another intense emotion. Creativity is the external expression of the imagination of the maker by using the medium to convey an idea, message or thought.

Style is defined in a number of ways as it applies to a creative image. It might be defined by a specific genre or simply be recognizable as the characteristics of how a specific artist applies light to a subject. It can impact an image in a positive manner when the subject matter and the style are appropriate for each other, or it can have a negative effect when they are at odds.

Composition is important to the design of an image, bringing all of the visual elements together in concert to express the purpose of the image. Proper composition holds the viewer in the image and prompts the viewer to look where the creator intends. Effective composition can be pleasing or disturbing, depending on the intent of the image maker.

Print Presentation affects an image by giving it a finished look. The mats and borders used should support and enhance the image, not distract from it.

Center of Interest is the point or points on the image where the maker wants the viewer to stop as they view the image. There can be primary and secondary centers of interest. Occasionally there will be no specific center of interest, when the entire scene collectively serves as the center of interest.

Lighting the use and control of light—refers to how dimension, shape and roundness are defined in an image. Whether the light applied to an image is manmade or natural, proper use of it should enhance an image. Subject Matter should always be appropriate to the story being told in an image.

Color Balance supplies harmony to an image. An image in which the tones work together, effectively supporting the image, can enhance its emotional appeal. Color balance is not always harmonious and can be used to evoke diverse feelings for effect.

Technical excellence is the print quality of the image itself as it is presented for viewing. Sharpness, exposure, printing, mounting and correct color all speak to the qualities of the physical print.

Technique is the approach used to create the image. Printing, lighting, posing, film choice, paper selection and more are part of the technique applied to an image.

Story Telling refers to the image's ability to evoke imagination. One beautiful thing about art is that each viewer might collect their own message or read her own story in an image.