

PPCO

PROFESSIONAL PHOTOGRAPHERS OF CENTRAL OHIO

OCTOBER 2009

Click Topiks Newsletter



Our October Speaker Ellie Vayo

Master Photographer, PPA Certified, CR., CPP, API

“What it takes to stay alive and move forward in this digital driven market.”

Ellie Vayo is coming up on her thirtieth anniversary in business!

Ellie presently owns three very successful operations in the country today.

Her studios are in Cleveland (Mentor and Solon) and an office in Miami, Fl.

She is a part of the Fuji Talent team of which for several years has lectured throughout the country at schools and conventions

Her first book, The Art and Business of High School Seniors, was published through Amherst Media in 1999. A revision is due out in 2011.

Continued on page 4.



PPCO PRESIDENTS MESSAGE October 2009

Hello everyone,

Well we're off and running! A new year is under way, and we started out of the gate with a successful September meeting. If you were able to attend last month's meeting, then I know you had to be impressed with Julie & Steve Busch's presentation. Wow! Their creative senior photography was quite inspiring! We should all take notice about their commitment to the local community with cool ideas to help organizations in need.

They were still able to make money while leaving a positive impression about their business. If you missed it, I suggest you check out the Busch's website!

Thanks to all that have renewed their membership. I believe it is money well spent. If you know of someone who may be interested in our group, please invite them. The first visit is free, and we have a lot of great speakers lined up, not to mention the wealth of knowledge within our group!








In October, well known speaker, Ellie Vayo will be discussing the senior photography market. Her many awards and photography degrees speak for themselves, but her website evayo.com, will show you the real talents of this photographer.

Also, she's bringing goodies.....give-a-way dvd's and a new Opimus Ultra album from GP Albums. You MUST be present to win!! So, everyone come out and join us for a fun evening with friends.

In closing, don't forget about those competition prints for the PPCO Print Competition in January. The days go by fast, and the sooner you start, usually the easier it becomes. Our social hour is good time to get input about the possible prints you are considering. Also, if you have any questions or concerns, or if you think I can help in any way, don't hesitate to contact me.

info-PGofC@insight.rr.com

Thanks,
Kerry Mechtly
Photo-Graphics of Columbus

<i>PPCO Board of Directors</i>	
	Chairperson of the Board Jim Nardone Jim.Nardone@mac.com
	President Kerry Mechtly info-pgofc@insight.rr.com
	Vice-President Heidi Mechtly hmechtly@insight.rr.com
	2nd Vice-President, Treasurer Kim Myers kim@myers-photo.com
	Secretary Lisa Farnholtz photoblondie@columbus.rr.com
	Elected Board Member Beth Bartter bethbartter@att.net
	Elected Board Member Tom Welsh tom@tomwelshphotography.com

<i>2009/2010 Calendar</i>
Sep. 14 Steve and Julie Busch "Seniors, Children, and running a Full Service Studio in a small market."
Oct. 12 Ellie Vayo "The State of Digital in the Senior Market"
Nov. 9 Danny Leary "The Complete Wedding Photographer"
Nov. 15 & 16 Fall Two Day Conference - Hilton - Easton
Dec. 14 Members Christmas Party - The home of Penney Adams
Jan. 18 Print Competition - Judges TBA
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 TBA
May 11 TBA
BOARD ELECTIONS

Continued from page 1.

Her new book, Ellie Vayo's Guide to Boudoir Photography is presently out and in most Borders book stores or can be purchased through Ellie Vayo.

Many of her articles on senior portraiture have been featured in Rangefinder, Studio Design and Lens Magazine. Great photography, good marketing and a hands on approach to the business have allowed her company to grow to what it is today.

Stop Turning Customers Away with Voicemails and E-mails

By: PPA

Your voicemail system and your automated e-mail responses can drive potential clients away, and you may never know it. After all, they are all part of customer interaction...usually some of the first interactions a person has when trying to reach you. Below are some dos and don'ts to creating good voicemail greetings and automated e-mails.

Voicemail

Gordon Matthews is credited with the invention of voicemail in the 1970s. According to reports, he hated the whole concept, calling it "voicemail jail." Unfortunately, in today's 24/7 society, all businesses must have some form of voicemail, so that we can be readily accessible to our customers.

Here are some tips to ensure a pleasant customer voicemail experience:

- Your outgoing voicemail greeting does not have to be long and complicated, but it does have to be professional. Script out what you want to say, and read it out loud a few times before recording.
 - Try to keep the voicemail greeting less than 30 seconds in length. If it's too long, people may just hang up without leaving a message.
 - Clearly state the name of your business, thank them for their call, and ask them to leave a name, phone number, and brief message.
 - Ensure that the background noise is at a minimum when you record. Try to record indoors in a quiet, enclosed space. This will minimize echoes and road vibrations.
 - In case of a client call to your cell phone (or if your cell phone *is* your business phone number), make sure that you have a professional message. "Yo, it's Vinnie. Go ahead and give me the 411" may be funny to your friends and family, but what would a business person who wants to book you for an event think?
- Call-back time frames are crucial and necessary, but only if you follow through with your promise.
 - Some business owners shy away from saying that a team member (or the owner) will call back within a certain time frame. While there are no guarantees that a call might turn into a client, a call returned days after a message is a guarantee that you *won't* get the contract.
 - If you are away on vacation, unavailable for a specific period of time, or can't return calls within a 24-hour time period, state that clearly in your voicemail message. Tell

the client that you will contact them by a specific date.

- Help prospective customers understand your professionalism by letting them know that you are “a proud member of the Professional Photographers of America.” If you are Certified, make sure you use that in your greeting, and so on.
- Do you think that your voice doesn’t sound professional, or do you feel uncomfortable recording a voicemail for your business? You can always ask someone you trust to record your voicemail greeting for you.
- Always include an alternative way to contact you. Do you have a Web site? Mention it in your greeting and invite them to view your images and additional information.

Automatic E-mail Responders

Speaking of Web sites, many professional photographers have a “Contact Us” page. A potential client can fill out a short information request or click on an e-mail address. What happens next depends on you.

Sometimes, businesses employ an “auto-responder” program, which sends a prewritten e-mail with particular information right back to the requester. You decide what goes in the e-mail, and it is automatically sent out.

There are positives and negatives about using an auto-responder program for your prospective customers. Your e-mail responses may be the first interaction they experience with you, so here are some things to remember:

- One-line canned responses are worthless. “Thanks for your interest. We’ll get back to you shortly” means nothing, especially online. It’s impersonal and in most cases, if not given a timeframe, clients will call you directly (if they’re still interested after that response).
- Use an automatic e-mail as a marketing tool. Yes, you want to thank them for their interest, but go one step further. For example: We’re so glad that you want to know more about ABC Photography, the leading portrait/wedding/seniors professional photography studio in the Anytown Metro area. Why do our clients love us?
‘ABC captured our special moments in a way no one else could. We have memories that we can look at every day, all thanks to ABC Photography.’ - Mary Q. Public, a very happy customer
We want to give you the attention that you deserve, so please expect an e-mail from us about your specific questions within the next twenty-four hours. You can also call us during studio hours (Tuesday – Saturday, 8:30am – 5:30pm). Thanks so much for contacting us!

This is a little more personal than that “We’ll get back to you when we can” feeling that often comes from a normal automated response.

- Help prospective customers understand your professionalism by letting them know that you are “a proud member of the Professional Photographers of America.” If you are Certified, make sure you use that in your message, and so on.
- It may not be helpful to tell potential clients to “check out our Web site for more information,” especially if they are e-mailing you from the Web site. They may have already “checked it out” without finding the information they needed about you and your services, which is why they are e-mailing you! While you should include your Web site in your e-mail response, it’s probably not necessary to direct them right back to your site.

- Proofread your e-mails for typos. Nothing turns a client off more than an obvious misspelling or grammar issue. Your professional image encompasses not just your images, but your words as well!
-

How to Keep Them Coming Back for More

By: PPA

You got the customer, delivered great customer service, and made the sale. Now what? Will they come back?

A return customer is so much more than a repeat customer. Returning requires an active decision—and actual action on the part of an individual. Return customers like you and your service, and they will usually go out of their way to do business with you. They will recommend you to friends and family. Basically, return customers should be your ultimate goal, for they support your business and can provide valuable feedback.

As we always say at PPA, “It is less expensive to bring existing members back than to attract new ones.” It’s true, considering the expense of advertising, marketing, media, and other tools necessary to lure new customers.

In addition, prospects will only listen to your pitch when they’re ready to buy. That means you have to be constantly on the prowl to find those few who are ready to purchase.

But return customers are walking billboards! If they come back, chances are that they liked the way they were treated the first time (not to mention the product you provided). So it’s a good bet that they’re going to spread the word—publicity free of charge to you.

Here is your mission: connect with return customers and find ways for them to communicate their experiences with you to their circles of influence. If you can do that, you’ve just expanded your sales force, without incurring additional overhead. But first, you must get that return customer, so here are some suggestions:

To build repeat customers, be consistent.

You’re probably thinking that to get a solid base of repeat customers, you just need to provide excellent service or products. That is true, but many do that. Repeat customers return because their experience is *consistently* solid. If you’re ready to try something new in the way you do business, make sure that you can maintain it. Ever been to a restaurant that had great customer service when they opened, but when you went back, the service was...mediocre? If you can’t keep your customer service experience solidly positive, that great new offering may end up sending repeat customers elsewhere.

Understand who you are.

Have you ever heard David Trust’s program on branding, referencing Starbucks Coffee? They always hire excited and passionate employees, so consumers don’t mind paying a premium for coffee. People have an expectation of who you are and what your studio offers. If you’re known as the photographer who is “cutting edge,” then be passionate about being radical—and true to yourself. That’s your key to the premium that your customers will pay to have you as their photographer. (And please understand, “cutting edge” and “radical” may not be what your existing customers want, especially if they know you as being a “traditional” photographer.)

Hire the right people.

Since your employees are on the front lines, their demeanor and interaction with clients can cement relationships that bring customers back to your business. Hiring individuals who are positive, friendly, and really care about doing a great job is the first step. Anyone who is going to interact with customers—from the person who answers the phone to the person who completes the sale—has to understand the importance of creating that positive experience.

Know your customers and keep it personal.

It's hard to build repeat business if you don't know what your customer values. Talk about their families, churches, friends, and what they do for a living. And make sure you remember their names! Note down facts that you remember when they leave. It's a great opportunity to tailor communications (and even any promotions) to them. After all, when a company remembers details about you, it can add to your warm experience. The company becomes more personal and friendly, sticking in your mind when you think of that type of service or product.

Stay in contact.

Often, people need a reason or excuse to push them into booking a session. Staying in contact is a great way to remind your past customers of your skills, what you offer, and how different events and times in their lives can best be recorded with professional photography. The more details you remember about your clients, the more personalized you can make these "touches."

For example, what about sending a yearly birthday card to the newborn you photographed, showcasing another image from that session? Send a handwritten thank you to customers with orders over a certain amount, and include a discount for their next purchases. Encourage repeat business by staying in touch with your customers through a blog, newsletter or e-mail. Not only do you stay in their mind, your customers also get to know you better and their loyalty grows.

These are just a few suggestions for building your customer base. Give people the kind of customer experience they can't wait to tell others about—it will keep them coming back. Those customers will soon join your unofficial sales force by their own volition.

What The Duck

