

# PPCO

**PROFESSIONAL PHOTOGRAPHERS OF CENTRAL OHIO**

September 2008

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Newsletter**



**Our September Speaker**

**Patrick Rice**

**PPA Certified, M.Photog.Cr., CPP, PFA, ALPE, Hon-ALPE**

**Wedding Photography 2008**

**The State of the Industry**

Today, the wedding photography market is experiencing changes that few photographers predicted only a few short years ago. As studios fail and full-time photographers find second jobs outside of photography in order to make ends meet, it is time to start finding solutions to keep all of us in business.

Patrick Rice is a controversial and outspoken advocate for true professional photographers. His thoughts on the state of the industry are widely published and discussed by photographers across this country and abroad. Whether you agree with his ideas or not, they are certainly thought provoking.

In this program, Patrick will outline many of the challenges facing wedding photographers and provide his insights from discussions with photographers all over the country. He will outline many of the reasons that have led to the demise of professional wedding photography and how they are still being reinforced today. With each discussion point, Patrick will encourage interaction from the audience. The purpose of the discussion is not necessarily to change your mind, but to get everyone to consider several solutions to any given problem. Of course, there will be lengthy discussion about selling or retaining image files and how to properly address the issue.

This is certain to be a must-see program that attendees will be talking about for months to come.



## PPCO PRESIDENTS MESSAGE SEPTEMBER 2008

Hello everyone,

Serving the Professional Photographers of Central Ohio and its members as 2008/2009 president is a great privilege and honor for me. It is a great opportunity and but also great responsibility.

My belief is that the role of President of PPCO should be proactive creating new vision for the future of our group – most important is a clear vision, identifying new opportunities and new areas of education. We have to encourage activities, workshops, and possibly conferences in these areas.

PPCO must be attractive to photographers along with current and potential new members. We must have a clear vision of the benefits associated with membership. It is very important to encourage new groups of volunteers to join in for the improvement of our services to members – bridging the gap between the board and individual members is of paramount importance.







I believe there is still place for many new actions and improvements – with the goal “to serve the members”.

I will be looking forward to serving you and working with you. I count on your help and feedback.

I included two good articles in this newsletter. I hope that they grab your interest and you find them useful.

Thank you,

Jim Nardone

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<i>2008/2009 Calendar</i>
Sep. 8 Patrick Rice Seminar : Wedding Photography 2008 The State of the Industry
Oct. 13 Alexis Riffle TBA
Nov. 3 TBA
Nov. 9 & 10 Fall Two Day Conference - Hilton - Easton
Dec. 8 Members Christmas Party - Berwick Manor
Jan. 12 Print Competition - Judges TBA
Feb. 9 Round Table & Swap Shop Moderator: Robert Hughes
Mar. 4 -9 Mid-East States Convention – Dayton OH
Mar. 16 TBA
Apr. 13 TBA
May 11 TBA BOARD ELECTIONS

## How To Use The "PR Follow-Up and Stick" Program To Keep A Great Sale Once You Have It!

by: Charles J. Lewis, M. Photog., Cr.

"You must put just as much effort into KEEPING a sale after you make it, as you put into GETTING the sale in the first place."

I often talk with photographers who are having troubles with cancellations, and order reductions after the sale. Here's what I recommend be done to keep from losing sales after you get them.

But first, a very important point: Now, you may be thinking to yourself, "Why should I go to all this effort? I don't have very many cancellations or changes in my orders now? Good point. If you have NO, OR VERY FEW cancellations of orders, and NO, OR VERY FEW changes in your orders after the sale or booking, then your prices are WAY, WAY TOO LOW.

You see, changes and cancellations are a regular part of doing business in today's world if you are even close to charging good prices for your services and products! It's NORMAL. So if you don't have any changes or cancellations - this should be a WARNING to you that you should be charging much more!

The whole point of this is to show you how you can EASILY reduce, or almost eliminate any order changes or cancellations! This "stick" program should become a normal part of your operating system.

It's called a stick program, because it's entire purpose is to see to it that once a sale is made, it "sticks" - or doesn't cancel or reduce in amount. This requires very little effort on your part, and when done correctly, almost completely eliminates changes or cancellations to your sales, orders and wedding bookings.

As I'm sure you realize, after any decision is made by a prospect or client, she begins experiencing what is known as "Post Purchase Dissonance" or "Buyer's Remorse." This is a normal, human psychological response. Everyone experiences it from time to time. Your "Stick" program will GREATLY reduce any order reductions or cancellations!

Obviously, you don't have to do every one of the following suggestions. But I can assure you, the more of them you do, the fewer order reductions or cancellations you will have!

## Here's my recommended "Stick Program" for your Portrait Photography:

Portrait Stick Step #1: Personal, hand written thank you note IN THE MAIL the SAME DAY as the Design Consultation or Pre-Portrait Interview. This is a simple, short note where you simply say something like this: "Hi Jennifer, It was great talking with you today! Chuck and I are really looking forward to creating beautiful portraits for you and your family! IT's going to be great! See you on the 24th at 3:00pm at your home to go over the clothing and plan the session! Thanks again, Cheri."

It's important that this be in the mail on the same day as you met with her! THE SAME DAY! Cheri and I know all the mail boxes near the studio, and their last pick up time of the day, so we can be sure to get our "stick" notes in the mail THE SAME DAY THAT WE MET WITH THE CLIENT.

Portrait Stick Step #2: Personal, hand written thank you note IN THE MAIL, THE SAME DAY as the (Session.) This goes something like this: "Hi Jennifer. It was great working with you and your great family today. Thanks so much for the opportunity. Your portraits are going to be FANTASTIC! We'll see you on the 15th at 3:30. Thanks, Chuck."

Portrait Stick Step #3: Personal, hand written thank you note, IN THE MAIL, the SAME DAY as the sale (Projection Appointment.) This goes something like this: "Hi Jennifer! It has been such a pleasure working with you and your great family! Your photographs are going to be SUPER! I'll call you as soon as they are completed! Thanks, Cheri"

Portrait Stick Step #4: "We like you" thank you card mailed one week after the sale. I learned this from the great Joe Girrad, the world famous car salesman. Every month, he would send his past clients a card of some kind, with the words, "I like you!" on each card. This is a great way to just say "thank you" to your client, after everything is said and done. Have "I like you" be your motto with all your clients. Simply let her know everything is going just fine, and that you will call her as soon as everything is completed.

Portrait Stick Step #5: Status of order call approximately half way through production. Here you simply call the client and let her know that everything is going great with her order, etc. You simply are really nice, excited, and again thank her for working with you. Then you let her know approximately how long it will still be (based on your DOT date in your production system - DOT stands for Delivery On Time - and is the date you set for the entire order to be completed - you never tell the client this exact date though - or she will show up on your doorstep on that day! Just give here an approximate amount of time left before everything should be completed. Be sure to tell her MORE time than you actually expect it to take! This way, you will always be calling the client BEFORE she expects to hear from you. This will greatly cut down on your phone calls from clients asking if their order is ready yet!)

Then, when everything is completed, you call the client, and set up a time for her to come by and pick everything up - always by appointment - (or for you to deliver everything to her home.) Be sure to always give her the balance due, etc. And be really excited, etc.

By the way, when she picks everything up, or when you deliver everything to her, that is the time to

get the RAVING TESTIMONIAL! Just ask, she will be thrilled to give you one, in writing, right there and then! As you know, this is a very important part of your marketing - you want a raving testimonial from all your clients, and permission to use their name and testimonial in your marketing pieces.

This is also the time you ask her for referrals. Referrals are an important part of your marketing plan, and will produce some of your very best clients.

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Portrait Stick Step #6: Personal phone call the day after she picked up the finished order. You call her the day after she has picked everything up. The call goes something like this: "Hi Jennifer. This is Cheri at Charles Lewis Photography. How did everyone like the portraits?!!! (Listen to answer...etc.) Well, I just wanted to again thank you for the honor of working with you. You have a great family, and it was our pleasure getting to know everyone. Let us know how we can be of help to you in the future..."etc.

Portrait Stick Step #7: "How Did We Do?" Questionnaire. This is sent out right after your phone call above. It's a simple questionnaire which goes like this:

Dear Jennifer,

We really enjoyed working with you and your family. It was our honor and pleasure.

Would you do me a special favor? Would you please answer the following questions and return this to us in the enclosed postage paid envelope? We are always trying to improve your services, and your feed back will be greatly appreciated.

Again, thank you for the opportunity of working with you, and please let us know if there is anything we can do for you in the future.

How was your experience of working with us?

What suggestions could you make on how we could improve our product and service?

How do you feel about the investment? Do you feel it is appropriate for the quality of service we provide?

Please rate the following on a scale of 1-10 where 10 is fantastic:

1. Friendliness of staff
2. Telephone communications
3. Pre-planning services

4. Your photography session
5. Quality of photography
6. The process of selecting your images
7. Delivery time of completed work
8. Quality of completed work
9. Overall service you received

Is there anything else you would like to suggest to us or say to us?

Again, thank you for your patronage, and for your time in responding to this questionnaire.

(Then be sure to personally sign this - just like a personal letter.)

Portrait Stick Step #8: Put them into your VIP past client mailing/newsletter program. YOU MUST keep in contact with your clients on a monthly basis. It's REALLY IMPORTANT to maintain the relationship, get more referrals, and get additional sales from your past clients.

Portrait Stick Step #9: Flower arrangement or plant sent to them with thank you note for Thanksgiving. Thanksgiving is a perfect time to say "thank you" to your past clients, and let them know how much you appreciate their friendship and their business. If you work really hard at making each and every client a good friend, your business will grow and grow.

That is the system we use to insure that our MASSIVE sales STICK, and that our clients get a great felling from us every time!

## How To Be Sure Your Price Lists Are Doing Their "Job"

Here are the major "check points" to use in evaluating whether or not your price lists are going to do the job they must do for you - which is to help you book clients who are happy to work with you and pay your prices - without your having to discount your prices.

*by: Charles J. Lewis*

1. First, a review of a couple very important points:
  - a. Price Determines Everything - if you don't charge enough, then you won't receive any respect or cooperation from your clients.
  - b. It's Not The Price That Matters, It's How You Present It. This is true both in how you merchandise and how you "sell" the prices to your products and services to your prospects.
  - c. Raise Your Prices Twice A Year, Every Year, 10%-20% Each Time. THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT! DON'T SKIP THIS! (For weddings, I actually prefer to "never book two weddings at the same price." By this, I mean that each time you book a wedding, you raise ALL your wedding packages a tiny amount - like 3% or 5% - this way, your prices are always slowly increasing. Very important!)
  - d. Remember The Principle Of The Price/Value Relationship - The More You Charge, The More You Are Worth!
2. Are about 2/3rds of your clients or prospective clients complaining about your prices? Even a small complaint? If not, your prices may be too low.
3. How simple are your price lists to understand by someone who doesn't understand photography?
4. Do you begin with your best, and work your way down, rather than beginning with your least expensive products and services and working your way up?
5. Do you have a "Whopper" for each service you offer? Very important! - Note, a WHOPPER is the most expensive package or photograph - the one you expect NO ONE to invest in. It makes all your other packages and images seem inexpensive by comparison.
6. Be sure your price lists don't use professional "lingo" like "units" etc.
7. Does your price list annoy people by having all the things they really want "extra additions?"

8. Is your price list a left brain or a right brain presentation of your prices and services? Remember, people invest in portrait and wedding photography for emotional, right brain reasons, so be sure your price list is an emotional presentation of your prices - at least as emotional as possible.
9. Does your price list begin with one or more of your Unique Factors? Or does it just have the prices and sizes on it?
10. Does your price list use the correct vocabulary? Such as "creation fee" instead of "sitting fee."
11. Do you have a maximum & minimum of 3 choices - (good, better, best)
12. Does your price list include a description of the good, better, and best? Does each have a name?
13. Do you have choices of both "a la carte" and packages? For graduating seniors, this is a really powerful way to increase your sales - if the packages are created correctly. For weddings, I recommend you have only packages for your primary services. Then you can have a la carte and packages both for reorders, etc.
14. If you have packages, what are their names? Be careful not to use names like "standard", "regular" or "economy" , etc.
15. If you have packages, do you always clearly tell them on the price list how much they save by selecting each package, opposed to a la carte?
16. If you have packages, do you list the investment for each package at the top of the description of what's in the package, not at the bottom?
17. Do you charge a prepaid creation fee for portraits, and is it obviously not a deposit? Is this concept presented in a positive way?
18. Do your price lists leave the studio at any time? (they shouldn't - but there is a great way to give them the prices to take with them without letting your price lists out of the studio...)
19. Do you include frames with the portraits? (Don't do that.)
20. And last, but not least, when a non-photographer glances at your price list, is it SIMPLE TO UNDERSTAND ? (I know, this was already mentioned above, but it's sooooo important that I wanted to mention it again!)

There's your checklist.