

MARKETING MATTERS

Three & Easy

Master marketer Alan Hutchison outlines the three basic fundamentals of marketing that photographers can't afford to forget if they want to be developing a flourishing business.

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IF THERE'S ONE thing separating the successful photography business from the also-rans, it's marketing or, in the case of the latter, the lack of it. The rather brutal fact of life is that you can be one of the finest photographic artists around, but if you don't know how to get your work under the noses of the right audience you're never going to make a success of things, no matter how good your work is.

But marketing is easy, isn't it? After all, we have the wonders of social media and the Facebook/Instagram advertising platform, that makes it so simple to create an advert that can then be placed in front of thousands of potential clients. You upload your images and/or video, create your text and then wait for the enquiries to come flooding in. Except, inevitably, they don't. Tumbleweed. Nothing.

You check the statistics of the ad and, sure enough, Facebook is indeed placing it in front of the prospects that you want to reach and some of them at least are clicking. But you're still getting no enquiries, so what's happening?

I've known so many photographers who've experienced this scenario, some of them highly seasoned professionals, and



it usually comes down to just one thing, namely that they've forgotten the basic fundamentals of marketing. And these are so important, yet they can be so easy to overlook. It's the reason why, whenever I work with other photographers to help them with their businesses, I always make sure as a first step to take them back to the three essential ground rules.

RULE 1: Who is your perfect customer?

This seems like a simple enough question, that should have a simple answer, so why doesn't it? Let's take a wedding photographer. Their customers will be couples about to get married, so straightforward enough. But what other factors might they need to think about?

For a start, what about their location? If I'm based in Wales, I don't want to be travelling to the north of Scotland every week to photograph a wedding, so I need to consider where my ideal customer is based. Meanwhile, if I'm a high-end wedding photographer I also need to consider if my client can afford my fees while, if I'm servicing the budget end of the market, I don't want to waste time or money advertising to couples who are wanting a pricey bespoke product.

For our marketing to be truly effective we need to sketch out a clear profile of our perfect client. When I started out, I'd just left a highly paid position in IT, so I knew that if I was to replace that level of income, I had to target those who were looking for higher-end coverage. a

From my own experience as a wedding guest, I knew the people that typically booked higher-end weddings would be slightly older than average, and most-likely would be in a professional career. I also knew that the USP of my wedding images was that they were very stylised and fashion orientated, so I also needed to target clients who had an interest in fashion and their own appearance. Another issue was that there were only a few higher-end wedding venues near where I was based, so I had to be willing to travel a little further afield.

So, for my particular business, my perfect customer profile was a 35-45-year-old female who either lived in Scotland or was planning to get married there. She would regularly visit the gym or spa, would probably be educated to degree level and would work in a professional role. She would also have an interest in fashion, and magazines of choice would likely be *Vogue* and *Cosmopolitan*.

Using this profile I could use filtering within Facebook and Instagram to ensure I only showed my adverts to individuals with similar demographics to this. This is crucial to ensure you're not wasting your advertising budget getting in front of people who are just not going to book you.

Think about the number of times you've seen adverts on Facebook from other photographers marketing their wedding services. This is a perfect example of where the photographer has failed to properly define their ideal customer. They've not been specific enough in their audience definition to exclude someone like me, who has been married a long time and is certainly not looking for a wedding photographer!

RULE 2: Define Your Marketing Objective

Now we've defined our perfect customer, we need to think about our marketing objective. If I were a portrait photographer I might be looking to get an instant booking on my website platform, while those shooting landscape might have the objective of attracting their client to a gallery of images for a specific geographical area.

As wedding photographers, we're unlikely to get an instant booking due to the higher value of the transaction, so we have to lead our potential clients on a journey towards knowing us as a

THE CONCEPT OF AIDA IN MARKETING

A = Attention

I = Interest

D = Desire

A = Action



photographer, and gradually persuade them we'll be the right fit.

So, in my case, my initial marketing objective would be to just ask them for their email address. Once I have that, I can send them a series of follow-up emails to help them with their decision-making process and, over time, I'll hope to entice them to become my client.

Imagine if I'd structured an expensive advertising campaign that led this same client to a 'Book Now' page. That's not how wedding photography works, so my campaign would inevitably fail.

RULE 3: Attention-Grabbing Ads

Now we know our client and our objective, how do we get them on the hook? This is where we introduce the concept of AIDA, an 'aide-memoire' that stands for Attention, Interest, Desire and Action. These four elements should be present in every marketing campaign you create.

To create a successful advertising campaign, you must first think about capturing the Attention of your perfect customer. This can be done either through a snappy headline, or an amazing image. I like to grab their attention through a headline. For example, 'Calling all Brides-to-be! DON'T BOOK your wedding photographer until you have seen this FREE report!'

Once you've got their attention you generate Interest in your product or service, by providing information about what makes your offering special. In my case, my sub-heading on that particular

ad might be something like 'The Insider's Guide to Wedding Photography.'

From there, you must create a Desire for the product or service. This is where I rely on the power of my images to make my client aspire to have similar wedding pictures shot for themselves.

Finally, you encourage the customer to take Action. Every advert must have a clear and concise call to action telling your perfect client what to do next. In my case I want them to download my report.

By following the AIDA model, you can ensure that your advertising campaign is structured in such a way that it has the very best chance of generating results.

Keep these three fundamental marketing rules at the front of your mind at all times and you'll be well on your way to creating a successful marketing strategy for your photography business. PP

Next Month

Alan takes these three core marketing fundamentals further by illustrating where they can be used to maximise client engagement and conversion.

Alan Hutchison

Alan Hutchison is recognised within the industry as an SEO and marketing specialist, and he provides training to help photographers grow their businesses. Pick up more tips about building a successful business at:



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