

Newborn Photographer's MARKETING GUIDE





Marketing for your Newborn Photography business

Getting clients in the door can be tough, especially now as there are more photographers today than ever before. So how do you increase your reach and stand out from the crowd?

Well I'm not going to lie to you – It's challenging! But we all know that running a small business isn't easy; it takes hard work and commitment – that's why when your business is successful the rewards are great. And we mustn't forget that for each of us the definition of "success" will be different as we're all travelling on our photography journey at different levels and speeds.

The first thing you have to communicate to your potential clients is your brand, what services you offer and what products can you supply them with – Something they can not create themselves. So make sure your website, blog and social media pages are up to date because you only have a small window of opportunity to impress your audience. This also means making your sites easy to navigate through.

Before creating your marketing plan you should have a good understanding of...

Who are your potential clients? Women / couples that have just found out they're expecting a baby or babies. Their ages will vary.

What do they want? Beautiful portraits of their brand new baby. Lasting memories.

Where will the session take place? What area & surrounding areas are you servicing? Do you have a home Studio or are you mobile?

When do they require it? When is their baby due to arrive? Availability and what are your set hours of business?

Why? They want to document this incredibly special time and you offer a service that they can't create themselves.

Knowing the above will allow you to answer any questions your potential clients will have when they are searching for the 'right' photographer for their family.

I have found that there are 3 main reasons why a client will book you...

1. They simply love your style of work. If you are outside their budget they will usually find a way to afford you.
2. You are the closest, most convenient photographer within their budget.
3. Because they have been told you are the best regardless of your price.

The above 3 types of bookings could come from any of the following effective ways to market your business...

- Website
- Blog
- Social Media
- Word of Mouth
- Networking with local businesses
- Advertising in publications
- Mailbox Pamphlet drops
- Email list
- Local fairs and tradeshow

Each of these ways will put you in front of a larger audience – with some being more effective than others.

WEBSITES & BLOGS...

Your website and or blog, will be the fastest way for your potential clients to find you.

Today everyone has the Internet at their fingertips, it's so easy to search for what we're looking for and find it in seconds. That is why it's so important to make sure that your sites are up to date and have all the relevant information clients need.

Understanding the web, search engines and page rankings can be very overwhelming! So you can learn how it all works or find someone that can help you. What you do need to know is; the content that you do put into your site about your business has to describe what services you offer. When a person types into Google 'Brisbane Baby Photographer' for example that search engine will be locating those "key" words in the millions of websites on the Internet. Key words need to appear in your URL, content, post title, tags and image name.

Here's what will help you be more visible on the net...

- Don't use a flash based website, search engines cannot access the content inside these websites.
- Have enough content about the services you provide that contain the key words your potential clients are using in their search ie "Baby Photographer Sydney"
- Use tag words when posting on your blog
- Post regularly not just with photos but with content that describes the post
- Enabling your site map on your blog and or website
- Use key words in the title of your photos when posting them online
- Use external links – back links. Linking your site to other websites ie. Social media sites & online advertising sites or other websites that are mentioned in your post

Make sure that your sites are updated regularly. If your website has old images on there replace them with your best current work. And use key words in the file name of those images because a lot of people are now searching for what they want in the images section. Don't have too many images in your galleries, having too many can make your site take too long to load. I would keep each gallery to around 10 images max and make them all different showing your versatility and creativeness. These galleries represent your style of photography and your brand. They are what a client will expect when they come for their session. Make sure your text sections are also regularly updated as well.

Try and blog at least once a week. Even if you haven't photographed a session. Find something that you can share with your audience that can be related to your genre of photography or business – I have often blogged about a new product or an event I have attended just to add content to my site. Your posts should not just contain images they need words – around 200 – 300 words per post. Each post should have tag words added with the key words that have been used throughout your post and your post title should also contain those key words. Adding links to other websites and social media sites to your post will also help your ratings.

If websites and blogs are not something you understand completely, there are businesses that can help you. I don't have time to learn how to install plug-ins or anything else like that that will help my search engine optimization so I use Garrett, Your Blog Mechanic. www.garretthollis.com

SOCIAL MEDIA...

The key to social media is being present. There are now hundreds of social media sites that you can choose to be active on. The biggest platforms are Facebook, Twitter, Google +, Instagram, Pinterest and Youtube. Trying to keep up with all of them can be a fulltime job so linking them together can make it easier to manage. You don't have to be on all 6 of the above but I would recommend being active on at least 3 of them and have them all linked back to your website and or blog. So I don't have to post on all 3 of mine I have set up my facebook business page so that my posts automatically post on Twitter. This is done in the settings of both accounts.

Getting likes and followers on facebook can be difficult and take a long time. Some choose to pay for likes by promoting their page or using companies that guarantee page likes, others run promotions in conjunction with other pages. If you don't have the connections or the money you are going to have to work hard at it. Posting every day on your facebook business page will help get you noticed. But not just posting a single picture. Your posts need to be engaging; they have to make the audience want to interact with it – ask a question, post a topic that creates conversation.

By having someone comment, tag, like or share your post this then boosts your post into their news feed opening your page up to a bigger audience.

At the end of every session I tell my clients that I will be editing a image of their baby and will be posting it on facebook later that day (always with their permission). This gets them excited to see a sneak peak, when they comment, like, tag and share the post with the image of their baby all of their friends are very quick to respond to congratulate them and tell them how beautiful their baby is. This has not only pushed your post into the client's stream but into all of the streams of the people that have interacted with it. Gradually your page likes will increase and increase to potential clients. You have to think about **who** your target market is when it comes to likes. Pregnant women usually know other pregnant women and they trust their friend's judgment when it comes to booking a photographer. Having other photographers like your page or inviting them to like it won't increase your bookings or your bank balance unless you are offering a product to other photographers.

When you post make sure you are active in that post when your audience comments. It's not only polite but it boosts your post back into your feed. Because of the nature of facebook and other sites the feed will keep moving, if your post receives no interaction it will disappear down the line in your audiences news feeds and they wont see it.

Also if your audience follows you on all of your social media platforms there is no point in sharing the exact information and content on all of them – they will soon get sick of seeing the same material and un-follow you on most of your social media sites.

WORD OF MOUTH...

The best Marketing of all, is HAPPY clients.' Quote by Susan Stripling

Creating an extraordinary experience for your clients with customer service, products and professionalism you can guarantee they will tell their friends about you. And now that social media is a part of everyone's life you can't go wrong but if you don't deliver to your clients expectations – and remember you set their expectations with the information you provide them you won't be receiving any referrals.

It's true, every client that comes to see you will form an opinion – it's up to you on whether it's a good or a bad one. And it shouldn't stop at the end of the session. The way you package their products and including a special gift for them will ensure you leave a lasting memory. A gift can be something as simple as a beautiful poem on a card, an item of clothing or a packet of sweets with your name on them.

One of my favorite quotes by Maya Angelou is – *"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."*

Word of mouth means referrals. THE most important way to market your business. Unfortunately though bad word of mouth is just as effective, as good.

One of the best pieces of advice I received about 16 years ago when working in retail was "leave your bad attitude (for whatever reason) at the door. No one is interested in your personal life or drama. They come here for one reason – Product and Service!"

I can't emphasize how important the first impression is. We have to remember that when our clients book us for the first time that they have no idea how the images they have seen advertised are created. They could be expecting something totally different to what they get. Be mindful that if you're running a business from home it's not just your studio that they are seeing, bringing a brand new baby into a new environment can have them feeling a little cautious about cleanliness, also with public liability you will have to make sure your place of business doesn't have any

potential dangers for your clients and their children. Another thing to be weary of is how you dress and present yourself. All of these things can have an impact on how you and your business are received and can set the scene for the session.

I recommend after you have made a booking with a client to send them a "What to expect" guide. Include all the information about what's involved in the session along with some photos of your studio. Or if you travel to client homes you could include an image of what you will be bringing with you so they're not overwhelmed when you show up with a boot full!

In the past 10 years I have had quite a few of my clients refer their friends and to say thank you I have sent thank you cards, flowers, movie tickets and offered mini sessions. This lets them know how appreciated they are and they continue to tell more of their friends.

Networking with local businesses...

For anyone new in business, the importance of networking cannot be underestimated.

A great way to get your work noticed is to have it on display in local businesses. When I first started advertising I created a small book with my best images and had it on display in 2 obstetricians offices. Other local business that you could approach where pregnant women frequent would be maternity clothing stores, gyms that offer antenatal exercise classes, child care centers, children and baby clothing stores, General Practitioner surgeries. Anywhere that offers antenatal services.

When I approached the obstetricians I got dressed up like I was going for an interview and had samples of my best work with me. When other businesses refer you they want to know they are recommended another quality service.

Starting a network with other photographers and businesses can be very beneficial, you could have monthly meetings to discuss what's happening in your local area and brainstorm ways to reach a bigger client base, even come up with promotions that help each other out. For example if you offer maternity sessions you could approach a local hair salon and makeup artist to create a package together or a referral program.

Advertising in publications...

There are quite a few different types of printed publications out there. Free magazines in your city, newspapers, newsletters from local businesses, schools and hospitals.

This can be quite costly depending on the publication. Quite a few years ago I paid for a couple of ads in small local magazines and to be honest it was a fair outlay for not a great return. But I didn't do my research very well! The success of your ad will depend on the publication and who its target market is and its distribution area and numbers. A good way to keep track of how many client bookings you receive would be to offer a promo code or ask at the time of booking 'how did you find me?'.

Mailbox pamphlet drops...

With the majority of material now being sent digitally a mailbox drop in your area could be a great way to share any promotions or new services. A small flyer the size of a post card with a couple of beautiful images and your contact details will definitely catch peoples attention when they're collecting their mail. This would be a lot more appealing than a bill! There are distribution companies that can deliver them or a couple of local teenagers looking for some pocket money could be hired. Also the local newspaper could include it with their deliveries for a small fee. Some Hospitals also allow local businesses to hand out information as well. They also give new Mum's in the maternity ward sample bags, there is a fee to be able to place advertising material in them but the reach is great.

Email list...

Creating a group email from a database of your past clients and enquiries is becoming a very popular way for businesses to share their weekly newsletters and other business announcements. If you love writing and have regular promotions this could be a great way to share this information. There are sites that can help you build / create email lists – like **Mailchimp.com**

Local fairs and tradeshow...

There are a few different types of fairs and tradeshow where you could set up a display stand. This is a great way for you to display your best work and the beautiful products you provide. There are Local Sunday markets that sell items from arts & crafts to second hand items, Shows, School fetes, right through to large Pregnancy and Baby expos. The price of the stall will vary greatly on the type of venue and the size of the event. Yearly Expos in exhibition centers and halls can cost quite a lot per square meter but they will give you access to an incredibly large potential client base as they are targeting your prime audience. These types of expo also have sample bags that are handed out on entry that you could have a flyer in. Smaller markets and fetes will often have expecting parents out and about shopping and stalls are usually very affordable.

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Building a client base can take some time depending on your location and budget. All of the above ways and ideas will provide you with a larger audience, but its up to you to decide which will suite you and your business and which will be affordable to your marketing budget.

To stand out you need to be inventive and creative. Stop worrying about what everyone else is doing and concentrate on your goals and the direction you want your business to go in. And remember you have to be persistent and have patience.

I wish you all the very best on your photography journey.

Kelly ☺