

Win-Win Strategy

Provide Digital Negs to Couple, Still Come Out Ahead

Like most wedding photographers, I used to consider couples and their parents my primary re-order clients. Making re-order sales took a lot of follow up and active marketing—and hoping that the couple had money left to buy reprints after all the wedding bills.

This 'hard sell' process is draining and can cause a bad reputation for wedding photographers. With online fulfillment, our business doesn't have to be "us vs. them" to be very profitable. If we make it easy for clients to buy something they want, they will.

Today, when I photograph a wedding, I process and convert my images in Photoshop CS and save as many copies of my 'negatives' as I need on archival CDs or DVDs. Then I upload the entire processed wedding to a password-protected site, give the couple a complete set of 4X6 'proofs' to keep, and a complete set of the 'negatives' on archival CD. I wish them a happy life and bid them to remember me for future work and in referrals.



By now, you're probably cringing because I've broken the most sacred commandment: Never relinquish thine 'negatives.' There is logic to my 'sinful' behavior though. Since 1985, I've shifted my attention from selling mostly to the couple and their parents (who are usually cash poor after an event) to selling to the other 150 to 250 guests at the event.

I make sure that I'm well paid to photograph the event in the first place and that my clients feel they are getting good value for their money. They respond by paying me well, and bringing me lots of referrals and future work. I have simply shifted from selling to two to six people to having sales from 100 to 300 people—for the same amount of work.

The key to my increased re-orders profitability is the online event album at *Digiproofs.com*. With the couple's help at the event, I distribute printed invitations with a unique password to all of the guests. Anyone in the world with an Internet connection and this password can go online and view the photos.

More important, though, anyone can order them online at any time—even in their pajamas at 3:00 a.m. if they wish. The prints are drop-shipped to a buyer's door a few days later, all at a very reasonable price. If we make it easy for clients to buy something they want, you can be sure they will.

The beauty is, *Digiproofs.com* streamlines my workflow, saving me time as well as money. No more having to chase a proofbook, take many small reprint orders, deal with billing for all of those individual orders, and arranging printing and shipping for all those individual orders.

Instead, I get an email every time someone places an order. Any time I want, I can visit my studio manager site and see who ordered what and in what size (which tells me what sells best, for future reference). The Digiproofs staff does all the work with fantastic quality and customer service and sends me a good sized check on the 10th of every month for the profit margin I set for each event.

No longer do I shiver at an event when Aunt Sally asks me to "waste film" on taking photos of her bow-riddled schitzu because Aunt Sally will be buying at least one 12x18 of Poochykins in a week or two.

This new paradigm is a win-win situation for my clients and for my business. That's the best anyone can ask of a small business. ♦

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