

WORTH EVERY PENNY *joycast*[™]

Here's something that may actually shock you. I don't plan out my photography marketing more than a few months in advance. Does that surprise you? Now, before you say, "But, Sarah, I've followed you for years," if you have. "I know how much you love to plan." It literally is one of my favorite things. "I've seen your marketing calendars." Let me explain. I've got three kids. My kids have a ton of activities and I get their sports schedules a couple of months before the season starts. And I run a second business, as you know, the Joy of Marketing, why I'm doing this podcast, but that's where I coached you guys, you photographers, about how to make a profitable business and how to make money. And a lot of times, cool opportunities come up for me that I want to do. So, if I tried to plan all of my marketing in detail for a year at a time, none of it would actually happen on the exact day I planned for it.

So in today's episode, I'm going to share with you what actually works better for me when it comes to planning my photography marketing. If you're staring at a blank calendar and you're not sure where to start, what to do, and I don't want you to panic and say, "Oh my gosh, I don't have any clients. What do I do?" Or if you're overwhelmed by the thought of planning beyond tomorrow due to all of the uncertainty in the world right now, this episode is for you. I'm going to share one simple tool that I call, get this, the drip and the hammer. Maybe that's two tools. I don't know. It's kind of one word. Well, it's four words, but you know what I'm saying. I learned this back in my days as a marketing director at an advertising agency, and it literally changed everything for me. I'm pretty sure it will change how you look at your marketing going forward too. Get ready, friend, let's do this.

So the real question is, how are portrait photographers like us able to run a profitable business and still put our families first without selling digital files for cheap and working all the time? I'm Sarah Petty, your host of the Worth Every Penny Joycast, and I went from a stressed-out overworked mama with three babies to being named one of America's most profitable photographers without working my kids' lives away. Each week, I'll show you how to find and serve boutique portrait photography clients in a world where we compete with free, thanks to everyone having a digital camera in their pocket. Take the first step to adding more joy and

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profit to your life by downloading your free photography business tools at joyofmarketing.com/podcast.

Years ago, when I was working as a marketing director for an area advertising agency, part of my job was to do my planning for my clients, right, the marketing planning, which includes the strategy, the rationale, what they should do, where they should invest their money, and then we would do the creative as a group that went along it. And I worked with all of the media reps to create the media strategy. So I negotiated and purchased media on behalf of our clients. And I was pretty new. I'd worked at Coca-Cola, but I didn't do that there. And I'd worked in advertising sales a little bit for a newspaper, and we did some direct marketing. But when it came to different media, like radio and TV and some other things, I was pretty green. And so a little bit of it was trial and error and, really, from college, from my education, they would give you like \$3 million budgets to create this campaign, which isn't real life.

We were in central Illinois in a small market. We didn't have \$3 million media budgets. They did get bigger and bigger, but we had to really maximize the money. And I would have new reps sent in to call on me for my different clients. And I remember the new ones would try to sell anything they could. They just wanted to make a sale. And so they'd come in and they'd say, "Here's a little starter package." It'd be like a month of radio or whatever it was. And I remember the radio station manager, his name was Phil Voth, at a local radio station. He was such a nice guy. I love having relationships with salespeople who are good people that you trust and you learn from. And he was one of those people that really impressed a lot of things upon me when I was a new, young marketing director. I was still trying to figure out how to really serve my clients at a high level.

And he sat me down and he said, "Sarah, so here's the deal." The thing. The thing or deal, right, that's the deal, and that's a word I just made up. But he said, "Sarah, here's the deal." He said, "There are two different things you have to do in a good radio campaign," and, really, this is true for all of your marketing. He said, "We like to teach our clients that it's the drip and the hammer." All right. The drip is what you put out that's like a leaking faucet. Have you ever

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had a sink leak where you look over at it and it's like drip, drip, drip? And then we all know what a hammer is. If you take a hammer and you just swing it and you smash it down on the counter, or you break something, it's like, you can't avoid seeing it. It's just, bam, right there in your face.

And that's where you're dominating the conversation. And so, really, once I learned the drip and the hammer, it all started to make sense for me. So then you can plug the marketing activities in. So let me explain to you what the drip and the hammer really are and how it can help you be a better marketer and have a better plan, instead of waking up and saying, "Oh my gosh, I don't have any clients this month. I got to do some marketing. I don't know what to do." It can't work that way. The drip, it's like that faucet. Drip, drip, drip. People need to know that you're always there. There are so many photographers. It happens in every industry. Businesses start and they fail. They come and they go, but especially in the photography space. Right? I mean, there's no barrier to entry to be a professional photographer.

So, really, everybody is one. They get a nice camera. They put on Facebook, "Hey, CD of images for \$200." They're a photographer. And so they're here today, they're gone tomorrow. They're on Groupon. They're doing all these just really low-end marketing activities but without a plan. They're just doing it. So if you're doing the drip properly, it will feel like you're everywhere. Have you ever thought of a business? And I remember when we were working at the advertising agency, that was our goal for our clients. These were small business owners and we wanted to create the impression that they were everywhere, even though they didn't have billion-dollar budgets. Remember, as small business owners, we're competing with the giant budgets now, everywhere. Coca-Cola, Budweiser, Nike, all of them, they're out there buying ads and saturating the marketplace so we have to do things to make our drip more cost-effective.

But there are businesses out there if you think about them, you're like, "Oh my gosh, they're everywhere. I feel like everywhere I go, I see them. I think about them. They're coming up in conversations." Those things don't just happen. They're part of a, basically, a drip strategy. So, for example, in my photography studio, my drip strategy is to stay out there all the time. So how do I do that? Well, I'm writing notes. Every Friday, I clean my office. I stack my papers and

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my to-do list. And I go to my to-do list where I have a little column that says notes, and I sit down and I write all of the notes, and I end my day by taking them to the mailbox. That's when I pay bills too if I pay bills. I don't pay many bills because that's all automated. I have a team that does that, but sometimes I have bills I need to pay, personal bills, things like that. But I'm writing notes. So all the time, I'm out there. That's a drip.

I volunteer every month, and I mentor some high school students in a class called CEO, Creating Entrepreneurial Opportunities, and they go to class every day from 7:30 to 9:00 AM or virtually, we'll see how that goes, but they learn how to start a business. And they start a business. They write a business plan. They have to raise money. They do all these cool things. And they come to my studio twice a month and I run a leadership program for them. So every year, think about it, 50 kids, I've been doing it seven years now, 350 students who are now going out into the marketplace in jobs and careers, they're very familiar with who I am. So they're talking about it. They're talking to their parents about it.

I speak to leadership groups throughout the year. The Chamber of Commerce has me come in and speak to different groups. And I get, I'm a professional speaker. I speak all over the world. People pay me money to fly in and speak as a keynote at their conference. But these I don't do for pay. I do these to be a drip in my market. It's free. I'm educating people on photography. I'm educating them on business portraits or how to decorate their home or whatever the subject is. I go speak to new mom groups at the hospital and I get in with the mom groups. There are so many speaking opportunities that you can do with groups of 5 to 10 people if that's your opportunity and, boy, you get into one mom group and, wow, watch the referral engine take off. I'm featured in the newspaper at least once a year. Last year on 9/11, I pitched the media about a story that happened.

It was a baby I photographed on the morning of 9/11 when the Twin Towers were attacked and the first one was attacked. And then I went to the 9:00 AM session and the mom was there with this baby. She was about nine months old. Her name was Sammy and she had a little yellow polka dot bikini and two blonde, like white blonde pigtails just sticking straight out,

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little juicy bird. She was so precious. And I went there and I said, "Oh my gosh, something just happened. A plane hit this tower in New York City." But I didn't want to pull the session down. So I said, "Yeah, it was just kind of weird." And she said, "Oh my gosh, I was packing up the baby. I didn't even see it." So we just went on and I tried to keep the focus on the baby.

Well then, when we both got home, we realized what had happened and, oh my gosh. So I'll never forget that day, and every year I think about this little girl. And the mom got divorced and we just lost touch of each other. And last summer I was at a wedding. My husband and I were at... Oh, actually, it wasn't a wedding. It was a visitation for someone who had passed. And she came up to me and she said, "Sarah, do you remember me?" She said, "I'm Sammy's mom. You photographed her on 9/11." And I immediately knew who she was and it kind of gave me chills. I was like, "Oh my gosh, how is this little baby because I think of her every year?" And long story short, she said we should do senior pictures. And I said, "Oh my gosh, we totally should," and I thought the media is always looking for positive stories.

So we called them. The newspaper is there, two TV stations. It was amazing coverage. The front of the newspaper, in full color, was a picture of me showing her a roll of negatives from that session because these kids, they didn't grow up with negatives. They grew up with digital files. So it was pretty cool. So again, those things don't just happen. That's what we teach at Joy of Marketing. Right? That's what I teach my students how to do, how to stay in the press. We just had a mural built and I hired a college former CEO student to come and paint a mural that was inspirational, that these students could come and take photos in front of. So they're coming out to my studio.

We come in on weekends to grab something and there was a whole family with graduation outfits and they're taking photos by this mural and the TV station covered it. And so did the newspaper, full-page article, but the TV station, they didn't have any news so they just kept running it all week, over and over and over. They never do that. It was crazy. Right? So that gives the impression that we're everywhere. These things cost me no money. Right? Sure, we do some marketing. I partner with people. We raise money. We do different things, but I want

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people to see that I'm everywhere, when they go to their child's school fundraiser, I've donated to the auction. Realtors talk about me. I'm networked in my community. Right? Those are drip activities. Drip, drip, drip.

So if you're not dripping in your business and you don't have that little bit of drip where people are going, "Oh, this is so-and-so. She's a photographer," when you wake up and you go, "I don't have any clients. I'm panicked. What do I do?" you're forced to turn to discounting or, heaven forbid, doing some kind of Groupon offer where you're attracting the price-sensitive, high maintenance, cheapo people. Right? The buyers who are just looking for cheap. That's not going to build your brand or be profitable. At Joy of Marketing, for a drip, I'm also always dripping out content, right, at my studio, I'm doing things in my community. Well, Joy of Marketing, which is business to business, right, I have a business teaching photographers. This podcast is a drip activity. Right? It's just out there, reminding you, "Hey, we're here. We're here to serve you. We have programs that can help you. We have ways to teach you how to do the marketing activities." We have emails that go out all the time with just, "Hey, remember this," or "Here are things you can do to keep your business on track."

We're just always trying to be out there where you remember us, because just like a dripping faucet, you may not notice it. You may go to work. It's just there. You're not paying attention. And then all of a sudden, you're like, "You know what? I need to give that attention." Right? It's like on your radar and you come up and you're like, "Oh my gosh, I'm at a point. My baby just went to kindergarten and I need to build my business. I've been listening to Sarah Petty. She's been on my radar. I'm ready to figure out which one of her courses are right for me." That's why I'm on Instagram all the time. I don't use Instagram for my studio. I use it for you guys, right, to keep on your radar, so you're remembering to be positive, that your business has to have the drip. Right?

So when you see me, you come across me, I want you to know that we're out there. We drip on Pinterest. We have all kinds of cool pins. If you're ever on Pinterest, go check it out. So much great information that we put out there all the time. Here's the conflict or the challenge

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with the drip. Okay. Because I know in your business, you're like, "Okay, it's time. I've got to make my business work." Well, here's the thing. If you want the drip to work for you, you've got to commit to the long game and you've got to have patience. The drip doesn't happen overnight. Right? It just can't. You can't make a drip happen faster than it drips. It just doesn't. So you've got to pick your marketing activities and stick with them. Right? Just like I'm sticking with this podcast. Just like I've been writing notes for 22 years in my business.

I keep note cards on my desk. It's just part of my habit. It is just a drip that I've always done. Right? It just doesn't happen. We have dozens of activities that I teach in what we call my marketing silo. I'm in the Midwest in a cornfield. So we have silos of education. So in my marketing silo, those are the things we teach. Right? I don't want you to get caught up on what is it? What is that activity? What is that drip activity? We have dozens of them that I teach that just keep you out there over and over and over again. My point today is that you've got to commit to the drip and to having patience and knowing that the drip doesn't work overnight. All right? Just like building your life and building your friendships, you don't build a gaggle of great friends overnight.

You give people love over and over and over, over the long haul. Okay? If you want to know what our marketing activities are and how you can learn them, you always can reach out to one of my strategy coaches. Email my team. Our contact information is all over our website at Joy of Marketing and see, "Hey, I'm ready for these. I get it now. I have to commit to this." But just knowing those things doesn't help you if you're not willing to commit to the drip and the hammer. Okay.

Now, the hammer. Let's talk about the hammer. The hammer is, bam, when you own the conversation. When I was at the advertising agency, we would do huge campaigns like 50, 30, 50, 75, \$100,000 in a week where we just dominated the market. We would do TV ads, radio ads. We would have live radio remotes set up at our client's location.

We would mail to their entire database. We'd mail to rented lists in the entire market. We would just saturate, saturate, saturate, and dominate the entire market. That costs a lot of

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money. Right? It can, so as we'd get smaller clients, we'd have to say, "Okay, how can we mimic the hammer that we do for clients with large budgets for clients with smaller budgets?" And then when I got into business for myself, I had no budget. I had to figure out, okay, how do I mimic the hammer with a very small budget? Because you have to have some kind of budget for the most part, if you're going to do a hammer.

But some of the things I do at my studio to create a hammer, I have events. Now, obviously, in COVID we're restricted there. Right? But events don't have to happen in person in a small amount of time or a small space with a lot of people. An event could happen over a month with a charity where you're driving traffic during a week, or two weeks, or three weeks, and you're dominating the conversation within a smaller group. Right? It's not your entire market. It's within their listeners, their viewers. If they do a podcast, if they do email, if they do mailings, all of those kinds of things.

I've partnered with the Animal Protective League to create an event where we put posters in every pet facility that we could in town, from groomers to doggie daycares, to veterinarians, and then the APL mailed it out. So we were, again, to pet parents, we basically saturated the market during this few week period. So when they took their pet in, they would see it. When they went to get dog food, when they went to get doggy treats or board their dog, they would see our message. So it was a way to have that hammer activity and what's cool about the hammer activity often is that there's scarcity and urgency because something's only happening right now, you have to take action and it creates excitement. And it's a buzz. It's like a big hit to your business.

We do dog-whistle mailings, where it's a gorgeous mailing and we can use those in small ways. We always do an overrun and we can mail to a small charity, like I did something once with Junior League where we had an offer, right, that their session fee would get donated back to them and so many moving parts to this. I don't want you to get caught up in the details because they can definitely be done incorrectly. But it creates such a buzz, such a hammer with that smaller group. We did a senior launch event when I launched my high school senior

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business because I did it wrong. I never thought I wanted to do seniors, but my little babies and my clients' babies were growing up and, all of a sudden, the demand created itself. It's only logical that they would come to me, their family photographer, for high school senior portraits. And I did it wrong three years in a row.

Finally, I figured out how to do it correctly. But when we figured that out, we went ahead and launched and we had a fashion show where we invited a couple of kids from each high school. And it was amazing. It just put us on the map. Kids for five years were saying, "Oh my gosh, I came to that and I knew I wanted you to be my photographer." Right? It was a hammer. People couldn't not know about it. If you were in our target audience, I'm pretty sure you knew about it. And we did it through these students. Right? They were the ones out promoting the tickets and getting their friends to come.

It wasn't a giant thing. And then we traded with the radio station. We made them a partner. And so they did the promotion of it at no cost to us. It was amazing. It was so much fun. I'm all about being thrifty. Right? I'm all about finding a way to do things that doesn't cost the 50, \$75,000 budget. We just don't have that. We have to have better hammers that are more strategic, that are well thought out. At Joy of Marketing, so the podcast is a drip. Right? Well, when we launched it, it was a hammer. We gave away a camera. That was a bam. We had a contest where people, and maybe you were a part of it, which, yay, but 500 of you, over 500 of you, went and rated it, and then you reposted on social media about the camera. And it was just a blast.

We really saturated the photography industry. Not the whole world, but it would be hard to be in the photography space, especially our community, and not see that somewhere. Right? Once or twice a year at Joy of Marketing, we do some kind of bang, like a free challenge or something where it's like, we give so much gold and it's a fortune in Facebook ads. Right? That's why we don't use Facebook ads for my studio because we're a business to business business at Joy of Marketing. My studio is very different. Right? So we have to employ different strategies and tactics, but we invest a ton in giving you guys a great free challenge. We actually

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have one coming up in a couple of weeks. No one knows that yet. You guys always get the best information to my closest community. And if you're here listening to this joycast, you are one of my people. Right?

Because you're getting it. You're doing the work. You're listening. I want you to be rewarded. So when this challenge comes out, be sure to jump in that group and play full out because it's really, really fun. Here's the sort of conflict with your hammer activities. Right? In your business, if you're going to have an event, or you're going to do a mailing, or you're going to create a buzz for a charity and you want them to mail for you, it can be expensive. You're going to have to make an investment so your hammers are likely going to have to start smaller and get bigger as you grow. They also take a commitment and planning. You can't just create a hammer activity in two weeks. It just doesn't happen. You have to plan for it. You have to look at the timing. You have to look at your target audience.

You have to make sure all of the ducks are in a row so that you get the outcome that you want. Hammers, definitely, they take more money. They take more planning. You need professional design for everything. You need relationships with partners. A lot of the hammer activities we teach in my programs. I teach my students how to create these partnerships. You don't just walk in with your portfolio and pitch. Please don't do that. Please. That is such a transactional activity. We want to be relationship-based. So you've got to build those relationships. You don't get someone to marry you the first night. I hope you don't and if you did and it worked out, hey, good for you. But I think pretty much, that's not going to end well. Right? You want to build that relationship and your partners want to work with you, but you've got to build that relationship first. Those things don't happen overnight.

The other thing is you can't constantly be hammering. Right? The hammer is the fun. That's the studio grand opening where you have an event and you have all this fun stuff happening, or you're launching your senior business, or you're raising money for a charity. Maybe you do that once or twice a year. Okay? You can't do a hammer over and over and over again. If you're doing a mini-session event which please do it the boutique way that we teach,

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please don't just make it up or do what everyone else in the market does because then you'll be crying and saying it doesn't work and it failed, but a mini-session can be a hammer if it's done properly. But without any drip around it and shoving it out the door without great design and without a strategic sales plan and a strategy to serve these new consumers at the highest level, it's not going to be successful.

So, again, the drip needs the hammer. The hammer needs the drip. They have to work together which is why most people aren't willing to do this work. They aren't willing to learn. What are the drip activities, Sarah? How do I do them? What are the hammer activities, Sarah? How do I do them? And making that long term commitment. Guys, if you want a successful business, it doesn't happen overnight. It doesn't happen when you wake up and decide, "Oh, it's time. I'm going to go full-steam ahead." You go full-steam ahead by committing to learning the drip and the hammer. Okay. This is why my top-level coaching program starts at 12 months. Right? It's a 12-month program. And many people stay years because to create one hammer activity each year, you need a plan. And so often with my students, they're building the relationships, but they need support doing it. Right?

What do I say? What do I do now? Right? And all along, while they're creating these hammer activities, they're learning the drip activities. Drip, drip, drip. The drip alone doesn't do it, and the hammer alone doesn't do it. Guys, look, I've done over \$100,000 practically every single year in my photography business, except for a few, in my studio alone. Right? That's got nothing to do with Joy of Marketing. It runs on its own like a well-oiled machine. I've built a... Gosh, I don't even know what the studio is, 13,000 square feet and, of course, my husband's on one side, I'm on the other. But this is where I bring my photography students to be able to study and be immersed in education. None of that would have happened without the drip and the hammer in both of my businesses.

So if I can share anything with you today, it's not like, "Sarah, what strategies should I do today?" Or "What marketing tactic? What activities should I do today?" I will tell you what I tell my students. Learn the drip and the hammer. I just think most business owners are so reactive

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instead of proactive. Right? I've been there where you look up and it's like, "Oh my gosh, I need clients. I panic. I want to shove things out the door." I did that a few times. But if you look at your marketing calendar from here on forward like a drip and a hammer, whether you plan a month at a time or two months at a time, you will stay consistent. Okay? You've got to stay consistent. You will give the perception to people that you're everywhere. People will be like, "Oh my gosh, Sarah, I see you everywhere." It's so funny. And I have such a little budget. And I feel like I do less and less because my business just keeps running better and better.

But in my photography business, people are trained. Right? They see me in all of these places because I'm committed to the drip. And if you're overwhelmed with this and you're still trying to figure out how this business fits in your life, please consider joining our challenge that's coming up. It's free. And you're crazy not to do it. Well, at least, I think you are. So there is help out there for you to learn all of these things because look, when you can master the drip and hammer, you'll start seeing people respecting you and treating you differently. You'll feel even so much more amazing about yourself and you'll have so much confidence to take risks and do cool things in your business. And when that happens, your business will just keep growing and growing and growing. And you're going to have so much more time with your family, which is what everything I teach is about. Right? Higher profits and family first, but it starts with the drip and the hammer. Write it down and commit to it.

Hey, photographer. It's Sarah again, with a quick question from you. Do you ever wonder why some photographers make \$300 a session and others make 3,000? I know I did. So I dug deep into what's going on and I wrote a book for you called Worth Every Penny. You can get a free copy at joyofmarketing.com/freebook. Inside this book, you'll learn four ways to price your photography and why there's just one pricing strategy that attracts the best clients, what to do when you need clients, and why paying for ads doesn't work and what to do instead that's way cheaper, the do's and don'ts of social media, what most photographers are doing wrong that lowers their profits, and what to do instead. I'm not sure there's a book on the planet that more photographers have read. 23,124 photographers have it already. So I want you to have it

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too. Grab your copy of the hardcover book free here. Just pay a little for shipping and handling at joyofmarketing.com/freebook.