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This may sound a little bit savage, but hear me out because the coach in me can't help but get a little fired up when I see you out there just dabbling in your photography business. Now, before you say, "What? Who, me?" And you snuggle back into being content with making whatever money falls in your lap from photography this year, listen up. If you're thinking about throwing in the towel for the year because your photography business hasn't looked like you thought it would back in January, right? That goal that you set on New Year's Day. Please, no one's photography business looks like we thought it would back in January, mine included. But here's a little secret it took me a few years to learn, a portrait photographer makes all their profit from September to December. And in this episode, I'm going to show you how the last four months of the year completely turn your 2020 around. It's super juicy. So stay with me right now.

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

When I worked at the advertising agency most of our clients had seasonal businesses, right? We would meet with them, we would learn about their business. They would say, "Oh, you know our business is up this part of the year and down this part of the year." They'd even know to the day of the week often if they were a retailer or restaurant. But when I started my photography business I had no idea what that looked like. And so I figured out pretty quickly that I wouldn't have level cashflow. I mean, most businesses don't have level cashflow where they have equal sales every month of the year. So that's something after a couple years in business you start to learn, especially if you're on your own. It might even take you a little bit

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longer. But learning what those cycles are and how do you plan to get through first quarter without having as many clients as you have fourth quarter? It was just a lot of things that I had to learn.

And of course it depends on weather a little bit, based on where you live, if you're in the Northern part of the country or wherever you are in the world actually, because I know some of you are listening in different countries. We have so many of you listening in different countries. So hey to all of you guys. But if you're living in Florida or Hawaii you're going to have a different season than if you live in Wisconsin. But I started analyzing trends of my numbers because I love numbers. It's so funny, it's one of my favorite things because I learned early on that the answers are in the numbers, right? The answers to whatever you want to know in your business, the answers are in the numbers. So you got to learn what the numbers are.

So I've always looked at the numbers, not always knowing exactly what I was looking at or how to make those decisions, but I definitely started learning certain things like there are trends. And one of the biggest ones was that, Oh my gosh, I can make double what I made in the first eight months of the year in the last four months. Sometimes it's more than double, sometimes it's in the last three months, or two months of the year which is crazy. Then I became a mentor for a division of PPA, the Professional Photographers of America, that was created just to help photographers make more money. And that division isn't around anymore, but it was pretty cool because as a mentor I saw photographer's bookwork, and I saw all of their numbers. And over and over again, with the photographers I was mentoring, I was like, "Oh my gosh, you're making as much in that last three to four months just like I am."

So as I started coaching with my own students I tell them, "Guys, you get to August and September, it's go time." It's not like, "Oh, I'm not really doing great this year. I should just hang up the towel." No, that's what motivates me to be like, "All right, let's wash the car, dust it off, and we're pushing the pedal down on the foot feet because it's not time to park it in the garage. So even if you've had a terrible year based on COVID or the economy or whatever it

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was, you can still make money this year. You can go out and make a lot of money this year if you have the right mindset. Okay?

So, got some really good tactics for you guys, first off, and you might want to write these down, look for opportunities. Okay. Number one, look for opportunities. So what does this mean for you, right? First off, don't write this year off as a loss. The reality is, and the truth is it's not too late at all. People need us now more than ever in this pandemic. People need healing, families, teens, everybody needs healing right now. It's such an emotionally straining time. And if you're telling yourself they don't have money, look they do have money. They do have money and they're looking for ways to spend it that make them feel better. Look at how online companies are doing great because people are sitting home doing retail therapy like, "Oh, it will make me feel better when UPS drives up with some pretty things." Even though I don't know if you're like me, but I've been eating my way through COVID a little bit. So I quit ordering because I don't want to order bigger pretty things. So I'm going to refocus here, right? Now that I'm refocusing with you guys.

But look, people have built in needs. Here's the biggest thing, there are things they need. For example, Christmas and the holidays, they're right around the corner. People have Christmas budgets. They know they're buying gifts for people, for grandma, for grandpa, for all the people in their lives. And if you don't celebrate Christmas, that's okay. Many of your clients probably do, especially in the United States. I mean, gosh, what is it? The day Halloween's over like the next day the Christmas things are in all of the stores. And so people need Christmas gifts. They do, and they have a budget for this. So why not just reroute that budget to you for gifts for grandparents.

I believe people need new artwork for their homes because they've been hanging out in their homes looking at all the old out-of-date photos, or the artwork, or things that they just don't like that the decorator had them put up, or their husband's posters from college. It's time for us to come in and save those women from the college posters. Look, home improvement spending has gone through the roof. It's been a 22.6% increase this year according to the latest

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US census Bureau report. 57% of homeowners are investing in a home improvement project this year. We are part of that guys, we are a home improvement project.

There's nothing you can do in your home to improve it more than adding artwork. Maybe a can of paint first and then artwork. Literally, I tell my clients that when they're young, "You can buy this sofa later, you got huge folding chairs and a folding table, right?" When my parents got married that's what they got as a wedding gift, a folding table and chairs. And you get good artwork, get a cute little tablecloth and you are ready. You're set, that's all you need. And I truly believe that, I'll tell my kids that when they get their first place. But they need artwork to put on their newly painted walls or redecorated rooms because that's what makes a house a home. I say, it's what gives your house a hug. It's like that big group hug that wraps its arms around your house and makes it a home. Otherwise you look a furniture store I think.

Holiday cards, people need holiday cards. Guys seriously, I'm going to get my dude voice on here. When I start saying, dude, you know I'm really emphasizing. Dudes, it is up to us to save the world a little bit with holiday cards. We have to create amazing holiday cards for our clients and encourage every single one to spread the joy. People haven't been to get together, people haven't seen each other's kids. Don't you have families that you're with and you're friends with where you only see their kids every year on their holiday card? That's really important, people need that right now. If they have home offices they need artwork for their offices. If they work in a remote location at a physical office, they need new artwork for there.

High school seniors, oh my gosh, their senior trips have been canceled. They need an experience. One of my students is doing every month a session where seniors get them in all the different seasons, summer, fall, spring, winter. And they get this amazing experience because they're not getting high school. What can you create for seniors, right? They have a need.

So first off, number one, look for opportunities because they're out there. Number two, reach out and solve their problems, right? Reach out and solve their problems by serving not selling. How do you reach out? I mean, you pick up the phone, right? You pick up the phone.

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You write what we call Notes of Joy, which are just love notes to people. We run into them. We do a fall mailer that's fully charged, emotionally impactful. We call it a dog whistle mailing.

In episode 16, I talked about the drip and the hammer, right? You drip out by doing little things. And then you come in once or twice a year with a big hammer. Like we do a big hammer mailing every fall. It's really important to us. Okay, so reach out and solve problems for your clients because they're not sitting around thinking about photography because they're distracted by everything happening in the world. They need you to reach out.

And third don't be afraid of objections. It's not scary, right? If they say, "Oh, I need to lose a little weight." Right? Maybe they do, but look people have been active, they've been outside. And remind them, "Hey, look I get posing and lighting. I can make you look and feel beautiful." And your kids don't look at you and say, "Mom you're the best mom in the world and you're so beautiful. You'd be even better if you'd lose 10 pounds and get a little bit of a tan." Right? No, they don't call you pasty, overweight Mom. They say, this is my mom and I love her, or my dad and I love him. Right? So you're cheating them of beautiful images with you. And so no, when clients come at me with that stuff, I tell them, "No, I'm going to make you look and feel amazing. And look, if they turn out and some you don't like, we'll just delete them. Right? It's fine. Nobody needs to ever see them, but why not?" Right?

And if they are concerned about COVID, what can you do to make them feel safe? You can wear masks, you can stay socially distanced, that's a good reason to get that 72 to 200 lens that you've been wanting. Right? Like my favorite, I'm kind of joking there. My filter is I only buy things if they help me make money in my business. And right now, if you don't have the profit to pay for that lens, don't do it. Okay? Because it's not going to make you money. It's a nice to have, not a need to have.

But if it gets cold you're shooting outdoors, you might need to start shooting indoors. You can shoot at clients' homes if it's raining. There are lots of things you can do. Don't be afraid of no, don't be afraid of, "Oh, it's not for me." Or whatever their questions or concerns

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are. You can fix them. And if you can't, if it's not a good fit, that's fine. There are plenty of people that you can help.

Will all of this be hard? Well, most people think running a business is hard. So if you're trying to do it by guessing, it will be even harder and things won't go well. You'll tell yourself, "Oh, it's because I'm not good enough." which isn't the truth, right? But if you attract the right clients and you serve them at a high level, you'll be rewarded with confidence in yourself and money in your pocket.

My student, Jen Pisani did this, she used to do mini sessions and her life was like not great. She hated it, she gave up life with her family, with her kids. She did 65 sessions one year, missed out on everything. Then she switched to boutique, made more money and did 12 sessions and made more than doing the mini shoot and burn. And she got to be with her family, which is what I'm always talking about, family first. Right?

What if you took these last four months and you turned everything around for your business. If you stop dabbling, went all in and actually created some great revenue for your family. How would it feel if you made more in these last four months than you made all year this year, maybe even all year last year? You'd feel amazing and you could always say, "It was in a pandemic too." You'd get confidence in your business and have an outlet from your family, right? We all kind of need that. Sorry, family, if you're listening because you're probably all together right now, but it's true. We all need a little break from each other. And if you think it's selfish to put your business first during this time of struggle, remember, your business not only makes you happy and gives you a little bit of a release, but it's the budget expander.

Look, I'm right here with you. I'm running a photography business, I'm managing life with a hubby, three kids, a dog, and a cat, trying to find the balance in my life, managing the voices that tell me, pull back, lay low, wait till next year. But you know what? I know that now is when the money is made. My girls volleyball seasons have been canceled. So I might even have more time to spend on my business and be with my family. Remember I opened my first studio two weeks before 9/11 in 2001, I survived the housing market and economic crash of 2008-

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2009. I've weathered a ton of small storms. And what I've learned is that there are people right now hungry for artwork in any economy to decorate their homes. They just need someone to point it out to them and hold their hand through the entire process. You can do this too, without waiting for Corona to go away. But it starts by being all in.

Today my goal for you is that you stop that voice telling yourself to give up on this year and dig in. It's not too late, don't give up on yourself, and go make some money this last four months of the year. It is out there, people have it to invest, and it's your time.

Probably one of the most fragile phrases of going boutique is that tender spot where you're fired up about the possibilities, but you don't have a ton of income coming in yet because you haven't gotten your first thousand dollar client. The person we call your Julie. Going boutique really turns your business upside down in a good way with new systems for selling, for marketing and for pricing. And it can really be heart-pounding and nerve wracking. Well, one of the ways I've made the transition easier for photographers is my 30 day fast track course, Boutique Breakthrough, where we scrubbed through your prices, your photography, your brand, and your selling system to make you fully boutique. We only open this course up a few times a year to a small group of photographers because my team and I literally hold your hand through the transition. A new class is starting soon. So if you're interested in learning more, go to boutiquebreakthrough.com for a free training to see if Boutique Breakthrough is right for you.