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I see you over there, blowing up Google with questions about your photography business card. What should my business card say, should it have one photo or many photos? Or maybe I'll just have my phone number and email on thick paper or even wood. Stop! There's a reason why your business card hasn't magically sprinkled sessions all over your calendar and that's what I'm going to share with you on this episode of the Joycast. 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. 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 started my business career, I remember having one of those big fat Rolodex's on my desk for anyone who doesn't remember the Rolodex, be glad it's not something you'll ever miss, but it was sort of this... I don't even know. It's hard to describe. It was a circle and you would spin it on the side and all of these little see-through sort of index cards would snap into this circle. Then it was separated by alphabet letter, ABC, so when you collected a business card from someone, you would tuck them in the B category or the C category based on their name. You would spin it around when you were looking for someone, you'd spin to P and you'd see, oh I'm looking for Sarah Petty and you'd find your card, you pop it out and you'd lay it on your desk and you would call that person. It was kind of a big deal. I mean you had status if you'd go in someone's office and they had a bulging Rolodex with Post-it notes and all these cards shoved in it.

I remember when I started, I was collecting business cards like it was a contest. Because I felt like, okay, people who are successful have big fat Rolodex's. I think to some degree, that

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was probably a little bit true. But for me being new, it just was a way to keep my head trash from telling me I was brand new, didn't know anybody and didn't really have contacts. But here's the thing this was pre-cell phone, pre-cell phone era. So if you wanted to contact someone, you needed their office phone number, you would be at your desk, you would pick up your phone and you would call them. It was before Google had been invented. So if we needed their address, we'd have to look them up in the phone book. That's even cringey to say once in a while now I'll say, let me look them up in the phone book. I mean, in Google. It's a bad habit, right?

But we needed to know where people worked. If we were looking up their name and we didn't know where they worked, we couldn't find them because their business wasn't listed by their name. If you looked in yellow pages, you could just look up a business name. Now you can Google a person and likely come across where they work, or you can go to Facebook and you can find out where they work. But back then, you really needed a business card.

Having a cool business card was sort of a badge of honor, at the ad agency we were always looking for ways to make our clients business cards stand out. We wanted them to be cooler than everyone else's. So I get it like plastic, wood, see through. Even when I started my photography business, I created one that had a spiny wheel built into it. So you could spin to see different things on it. It was very, very cool.

Then the world changed, cell phones, texting, email, LinkedIn, Google can find someone that you met, and you can find just about anybody. You don't really need a business card. When someone even hands you one, where do you put it? Nobody has a Rolodex on their desk anymore and if you're that one person, please send me a photo of it and tag me in Instagram, because I really want to share that vintage little tool with our younger audience. It's probably valuable if you put it on eBay, for sure.

Look, I get it in the business world, business to business if you're a sales rep, you want those business cards, you're out there just beating the streets if you're targeting business, people who are sitting at their desk all day, it may be different. But we are portrait

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photographers. Our clients are mommies, they're daddies, they have little babies at home, they're high school seniors. What are the high school seniors going to do with a fancy two by three piece of paper that I give them? Nothing.

We love the business card because it helps us tell ourselves, hey, I'm official now. This is marketing. I'm doing marketing. I see how the business card makes us feel professional. When I got my first job, as my dad would say, I thought I was the cat's meow, right? I was so proud of those business cards. Back in my early jobs, before I got an official business card, I felt like there was something wrong with me. That adds to our head trash that we're a fraud. So there's something to be said for the business card, being our little security blanket. But there's a reality when you think, and you're telling yourself that you're marketing, that's really the lie that we tell ourselves. That this person is going to take our business card, they're going to run home, they're going to sit at their kitchen table and pull out their three foot by four foot planner and they're going to look at their dates and then they're going to pick up their rotary, dial telephone, and call us to schedule their session. It just doesn't happen.

In reality, that business card will get cleaned out of the bottom of that person's purse in six months. It's going to have gum stuck on it and some coffee spilled on it. They're not going to call you. But what you're doing by telling yourself this is that you're giving away your power in any control you have over this situation. If they're telling you they're interested, the worst thing you can do is give them a business card. I'm going to share in a moment, two things to do instead. But if you do that, you give them the business card, you're building up the head trash that people aren't calling you because you're not good enough or some other unconscious reason and you're telling yourself, well, I put myself out there. I was marketing, I gave out business cards, they must not like me, they may think I'm too expensive, they found someone better. No. Stop telling yourself this lie and know this.

Their life is busy. Likely they got their kids sent home from school during the "Rona" and they're trying to balance it. They're just trying to hold it all together like the rest of us are, and you aren't doing them a favor by adding something to their, to do list. If you're supposedly

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partnering with other local businesses and you're laying business cards out next to a display or sticking them on community bulletin boards, this is not marketing either, stop it. You're actually doing more damage because you're screaming out to the wrong customers, hey, I'm just another same old, same old, cheap, vanilla commodity photographer.

All right. Grab your pen and paper and your Joy Journal, hopefully you have one where you put all of your ideas that you get from this Joycast and you get them into your internal being, because if you're just listening and you're not applying any of these things, no change will happen. So I have two things for you to do instead of just keeping that business card and handing it to people who don't want it.

Number one, serve them. If you're having a conversation with someone, and they mentioned that they're interested in photography and they've told you, oh my gosh, it's been so long since we've had our family portrait taken, that's when you'd say, well here, let me give you my business card. But now you see, that's not serving them. You serve them by getting their information and following up with them. Yes, right there. Right then you pull out your cell phone and you say, "hey, give me your best cell phone number and when would you like me to connect? Or would you like me to email you? Or let's connect on Facebook." Find out how you can serve them and you guys think you have to be all tricky with this. No, they'll tell you, Oh my gosh, the next two weeks are crazy but could you call me at the beginning of this next month? Let's get on the schedule, right? You're doing them a favor.

Think about it in the reverse suppose you're somewhere and you're visiting with someone who you find out is a dog groomer and your dog groomer just went out of business. You've been having to wash your own dog and trim his little eyes so he can see, this has happened to me recently. You've been looking for a groomer. You've tried some that you didn't like, and you're frustrated and you meet someone who's a groomer. They say, "here, take my business card." You lose it. You can't find it. They work out of their home. You're super frustrated later, right? If you even think of it. Versus them serving you and saying, "Hey, Sarah, I have an opening. Let me call you. I have an opening, I think on every other Friday afternoon or

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the first Friday of the month, would that work for you?" "Oh my gosh, that would work for me. Great. Let me call you. What's the best way to call you and get this scheduled."

Even if they pulled up their calendar, I'd say, just put me on your calendar and email me the time and I will make sure my dog is there. Do you see the difference, how that's serving me? Yeah. So many of you hate this, this word we call sales because you think it has to be pushy and yucky, no. Good selling is really just serving people. Stop shoving a business card in their face, it doesn't serve them.

Second, market differently. This is a more advanced tactic that I teach really to my year two students, because it's a little more stealth. It takes an investment. It's a little harder, but I want you to see that marketing for a boutique business is totally different than what you would do for what we call a high volume, low price business, which in our industry is really that shoot and burn photographer, the one where people order online or they're giving a CD for a couple hundred bucks.

So in my photography business from the day I started it at least once a year, if not twice a year, I create a marketing piece that I call my dog whistle establishing peace. This is not a tri-fold brochure. This is not something I get in Photoshop and design myself and print at cheappostcardswhatever.com. But it's a super cool elaborate, gorgeous printed marketing piece. So it's always a different shape, it twists, it turns it has bells and whistles, gorgeous, professional design, and beautiful, emotional copy.

Look, we are photographers, people know what we do. We don't have to blah-blah-blah on about the techie specs of what we do. We want to reach them emotionally, so I invest in this and I have, even when I couldn't afford it, because I knew that this is how you attract better clients. That's what we did at the advertising agency and look, nobody in our industry will do this. They're all looking for cheap, cheap, cheap, and then they want to be worth the value that they want and need to charge to be a boutique photographer.

But here's what I do, when I'm in a conversation with anyone and I'm talking about that, I'm a photographer and they say, "oh, I might need photography. Do you have a business card?"

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I say, "oh, you know what? I don't, but I do actually have this." Then I reach into my purse and I pull out this gorgeous dog whistle piece and I hand it to them and oh my gosh, I can tell immediately if they're the right client for me. Because they look at it and they go, "oh my gosh, oh my gosh." I've had people run around the room at a business function showing everybody. There might be just one other person in the room who loves it. You know who I follow up with? Those two people. I don't have to waste money on thousands on Facebook ads or mailing to strangers or any kind of mass media, because I've just identified two clients. If I land one of them and I get them into my system and I thrill them. They more than pay for that dog whistle piece for the entire year.

I use it, I mail it out, I fundraise with it, I use it a bunch of different ways, but I always make sure I print extras and I keep them in my purse. Because even though I own a company called Joy of Marketing, I hate business cards. So don't ask me for one, if you run into me because I will tell you I don't have one. It's not because I can't afford it, or I don't want to have it designed. It's a conscious reason. It doesn't serve our client and it doesn't serve us.

Now, here's the thing I want to share a little bonus nugget with you guys. I keep one of these dog whistles with me, wherever I go. I created a tool for my students that they use and it's called Matchstick Conversation Starters. Think about it, you can carry matches around all day and unless you strike it upon something else, nothing happens. Before a match can start a fire there has to be friction, two things rubbing together. That is you having a conversation with someone else. You can't sit at home and not strike your match because you're never going to get clients that way.

But I also know that photographers are scared to death, horrified to get in conversations with people. But you're walking through life, talking to at your kid's sporting events, at different activities, heck even at the grocery store. I know during the Rona right now, while we're all hanging out at home more because of the virus, we aren't coming in touch and in contact with so many people, but that's why it's even more important to have these skills.

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So here's how it works I created these Matchstick Conversation Starters to strike up conversations with strangers. You can do that, whether it's about them having a pet or being on vacation or whatever random topic you get into. Then I use one of many strategies I have to get them to ask what I do for a living. Once they ask me what I do, and I say, I'm a photographer, that's when the conversation gets interesting. That's when I go through the seven B's, that's when I can pull out my establishing piece, whether or not they even ask for a business card. They don't have to ask for a business card, but sometimes people do. And I say, "oh, you know what? I don't have a business card, but I do have this." So that's how I know who my excellent prospects are, if they don't go giddy over this promotional piece, which again, it takes a budget. But look, if you're trying to create a business without ever investing anything in it, you can go two ways. You have to get out there and hustle, or you can invest your money. You either have time or money. So if you have time, we use different strategies with our students, then if you have money. If you do it, well, one client should pay for the whole thing, which is pretty cool.

Now are these two strategies harder? Talking to people and serving them by following up with them and marketing differently with a dog whistle piece, for sure, they are because no one's doing them. If they were easy, like a cheap postcard, everyone would do them and they would be ugly and bad and they wouldn't work anymore. Which is exactly why cheap, ugly, poorly designed postcards don't work.

But the thing is, once you get good at them, it completely separates you from your competition. I think it's harder to do fake marketing, like setting business cards out at another business and then dealing with the head trash that comes from it. That is harder to me. So I get it, having a business card makes you feel legitimate, but having a business card doesn't really make you legitimate. Having strong business building skills and knowing how to talk to people and book them, that makes you legitimate. Being able to connect with others and confidently, get their contact information that makes you legitimate. Then putting them into your strong business model and serving them at the highest level that makes you legitimate. Getting their glowing referrals makes you legitimate.

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Look, these are the places to invest your time and money doing, not creating a business card. You can do this.

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