

WORTH EVERY PENNY *joycast*TM

Are you actually good enough as a photographer to make money and make consistent income? Can you replace your income so you can quit your day job? Are you good enough to decide when you work, or be fully okay telling the wrong clients no? Good enough to look people in the eye and tell them, "Hey, I'm a professional photographer," without feeling like you have that flashing neon sign on your forehead saying fraud or imposter. Stick with me to hear the lesson I learned about being good enough, because what I say may shock you.

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, living on social media, or working all the time for little profit? Follow along in this Joy Cast, as I show you how to find and serve boutique portrait photography clients in a world where we compete with free now that everyone has a digital camera in their pocket. My name is Sarah Petty, and welcome to this worth every penny Joy Cast.

Here's my backstory. Both of my parents were teachers by trade. My dad was an entrepreneur as well, but the way I was raised was you go and you get a degree in college, and then you're qualified to do that thing. Well, I got a business degree and I started my career at Coca-Cola and I thought, "Okay, this is great. I'm in the marketing department. I have a marketing degree. This is perfect." So, when I decided to be doing photography, I had no training. I'd taken some little classes at, I think K's Merchandise Mart. Is that story even around anymore? I don't think so. But, no formal training, and so I had a lot of head trash about not being good enough and not being qualified, sort of that imposter syndrome, fraud.

I felt really guilty. I felt really bad and yucky. Like, you can just decide, I have a camera. I'm a professional photographer, and people were paying me money to take photos, so I legitimately was a professional photographer. I was paying taxes on the money. I was collecting it and I was paying it, and I was a professional photographer. But, it was just a hobby for me. Even when people would ask me what I did, because I was already staying home from the ad agency, I would say, "I'm a photographer," and they're like, "Oh, where'd you study that?" And

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all this mind stuff and this head trash came out. I don't know if that's you, but I had a lot of feelings of being that imposter.

Maybe ask yourself, like, what's the struggle you're facing about going forward with your business, right? You're not good enough. You failed before. Right? If you failed before, how could you possibly succeed this time? Or, maybe you just haven't suffered long enough or you just don't deserve success. Well, you know what guys? This is head trash. I hated that feeling, so I thought, "Okay, I'm not going to go get a whole other degree in photography, but I do need to find that person who's doing it and I can pick their brain and I can get it out of them."

As I mentioned in the first podcast, I went to conventions and I felt like I was collecting random puzzle pieces from all of these different speakers. But, I did see a top photographer whose style I really loved and admired. I thought, "Oh my gosh, this is a person I can learn from." I literally looked him up and I just picked up the phone and I called him and I said, "Hey, could I come and study with you for a day or two and pay? What would you charge me?" I was willing literally to pay about anything, and he charged me \$3,000, which was a lot of money. That's still a lot of money, but I also knew what I was losing in lost income if I spent years not making money. I thought, "Okay, if I can learn how to make money, that's going to be well worth it."

A day and a half I got for this \$3,000, and I was eight months pregnant with my second child. It was winter, and my mom said, "I'm going with you. You're not going alone." She was a trooper. I remember the drive, it was like going to the convention. So much anticipation because I'd already gone one place and I didn't get what I needed, and I thought, "Okay, this is it. This is it." I felt like I was going to meet the great and powerful Oz. I got there and we dug into lighting, which I needed that training as well, so I was learning, learning, learning, taking notes, taking notes. We had lunch and I was ready for it. I was ready for, how are you making money? How are you getting clients?

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I realized very quickly, he wasn't. He was guessing. He was really good and he was highly acclaimed, but in his smaller town, nobody really knew that. He actually told me he had a second job to pay bills. I was so bummed. But, you know what? I had the epiphany. I realized that right then and there, this amazing photographer was amazing and he wasn't making money, so all the head trash I had about someday, Sarah, when you're a really great photographer, you can make money, I realized, okay, that alone is not enough.

So, that was my epiphany. It's not about being a great photographer, and you might want to write this one down. It's not about being a great photographer, but it's about being a great business person. That's how we succeed in business. Now, I'm not telling you not to work on your craft. I had a student get really angry at me once because she was a trained photographer and she said, "You're telling people to go out and make money when they're not good," and I said, "No, I am not telling you that. I'm teaching photographers how to make money, and if some are probably not as good as a photographer as you are, but they're going to be making more money than you," and she was wanting to do one of my classes and she was too angry to do it because she said I'm teaching photographers to make money who aren't good.

I think about her now and then, and I think, here's this talented girl, probably making money \$200 at a time. But, always work on your craft, and I even went and got my master, what's it called? I think it's called a master of photography degree from the Professional Photographers of America. It's just, you enter competitions and you get these lone prints, and once you get so many, you get this designation, because I wanted to prove to myself that I was good enough. I never even told anyone. I don't put it on my website. But, I needed to prove to my bully voice in my head, okay, I am a good photographer. Whatever you need to do to improve your photography skills, that's great, but keep working on the business part at the same time.

After this experience, I realized there's not really anybody with a fully comprehensive laid out system for me. I had to learn what I could from many people. I was scrounging, I guess

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you could say. I prioritized every dollar I was making and I put every single thing I could back into my business by investing in learning from whomever I could find, the top photographers out there. What's cool because of my marketing background and my marketing training, I was able to get access to some really amazing top photographers, because they would teach me photography and I could pick their brain on their systems, and then I would help them with their marketing. It really stretched my budget.

But, none of these photographers had companies teaching this nor did they have written systems, so I would have to pick their brains, take notes, go home, and try to figure out, okay, what in my system can I make better from that? Then, when the sale wouldn't happen or clients would get frustrated and they couldn't make a decision, and I took it always as, what did I do wrong? What did I do wrong? I would go back to my system and I would add a step. There was something I missed in the consultation, or I should have asked this question or that question. That's what has gotten me to the system I have today 20-some years later, because I still do that. I'm still working and shooting in my business, and I think that's why it's important to have a mentor who is still doing what they're teaching, because I think it's impossible to teach a business, teach business, really, when you're not doing it, you're not weathering the storms. Look at the economy right now, things that used to work or are not really working. We have to pivot. We have to do things differently.

And so, I love being in business. I love the photography business and I hope to be doing that until I physically can't anymore, which I hope is a really long time from now. But, my point is that when your internal voice is trying to hold you back in the name of, you aren't good enough, or you haven't paid your dues with years of photography school, I want you to know for certain that, that isn't true. These are lies your bully brain is telling you to keep you safe. Our brains, they're hard wired to keep us from failure, which also keeps us from taking risks so we don't get hurt. Back in our caveman days, this served us because it kept us from getting eaten by lions and tigers and bears, oh my. But, now as an entrepreneur, I want you to start identifying that you can change this conversation in your head.

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Most of the time, it isn't fear holding you back, but it's anxiety. Anxiety is the worry about an outcome you don't desire, and you might want to write that down. Don't give energy to an outcome you don't desire. Fear can serve us, because it saves our lives from walking off a cliff or in front of a car. But, anxiety steals our dreams. A friend of mine once said, "It's like sitting in a car in the driveway and revving the engine, run, run, run, run, run, run. You're either going to eventually run out of gas or you're going to burn out your engine," and I think that's true for people too. That's what anxiety does.

What I want you to know is that if you can start to believe in yourself, because you know that many before you have created successful businesses being photographers, it's like learning how to follow a recipe from a chef who has dedicated his life to creating recipes and teaching them. You can be taught everything you need to know. So, put your car in gear and start moving, even if it's in reverse first. It doesn't happen overnight. It doesn't happen without investing both time and money in yourself. It doesn't happen without surrounding yourself with others who believe what you believe. But, one thing I know for certain, Dorothy, you've had the power all along.

Hey, hey. One of the most exciting things is seeing you grow your photography business. If you've had any a-ha's when you listened to this episode, let me know. Take a screenshot of this episode and tag me on Instagram at Sarah.Petty. It helps me create more episodes like this that truly make a difference for your business. Plus, I love connecting with you from behind the mic. Remember, friend, you're worth every penny.