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everybody. It's Nicole, vaguely from the hair of the dog podcast and welcome to episode number two. Today I have Kimberly but Kerry and Bud Thorpe from Kimberly Sarah Photography in the master lighting course. And they are going to be talking with me all about their client experience. They've created an experience that not only results in fantastic sales but also results in their clients having an experience that exceeds their expectations every single time. And they're sharing their secrets with us. Stay tuned.

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Welcome to the hair of the dog podcast. If you're a pet photographer ready to make more money and start living a life by your design, you come to the right place. And now your host, Pet photographer, Travel Attics, Chocolate martini connoisseur Nicole Bigly.

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Hi, everybody. Nicole here from hair of the Dog podcast. And I am so excited to bring you guys a very special duo onto the podcast. Today we have Kimberly, but Kerry and Bud Thorpe from Kimberly Sarah, photography up in cold, snowy New Hampshire. Welcome, guys. Welcome to the podcast.

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Thank you for having ash. Nickel. It's a pleasure.

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I'm so excited to have you here. Thanks. So So much. So one of the reasons I wanted to have you guys here is you guys have created quite an amazing boutique pet photography business. And, you know, you always hear all of these buzzwords off. Oh, we need to be batik. We need to bring value. But I think it's sometimes so hard for people to figure out. You know what exactly that is or what exactly that means. And, you know, I would love to just chat with you a little bit about how you guys bring some value to your business and and, um, get that across to potential clients and yeah, I think you have so much great stuff to share. So I'm excited to have you here. Thanks again for being here,

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of course. Of course. So that is really something we decided early on to do is to be ah, boutique business. We wanted to offer a service and, you know, into kind of wow our clients and give them what we call a great experience. Yeah, if we don't have really built that and yes, yes. And it started out from the very beginning. I've always loved animals as most of us and probably all of us listening in, um, in. So it was just kind of a natural flow. I loved photography. So at some point, the two of those came together for me, and I was doing, um, dog and pet photography on the side while I had my full time job as an executive assistant in a large hospital just north of Boston. Um, and that was probably going on for 10 years. And that was about four years ago. So in total 14 years doing that, you know? Yeah, But after 15 years of working at this large hospital that I won't name I I got laying off right bearing, um, at an age that I need to really make solid decisions. Um, because time wasn't on my side. Uh, and I did the opposite thing like, I could have gone back to her, do something else. But I decided on pet photography, and it was scary. There was no steady income. There was no insurance. There was no, you know. And even then, they wasn't a lot of information that I could find out. They're building a dog photography business. It was hard to find. All right, but you know, but And I talked about it and we said, We're gonna We're gonna make this work and we can't started off by doing a couple of classes that Bud ran at his studio on the art of dog photography was the name and Fitz Day smile. Was the the dog part of it? Um and then they took off. I mean, they really had a great turnout. And we said, OK, yeah, We're just gonna keep going down this road and we never look back.

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That's awesome. So did you always just do pets you didn't start off doing on humans of some variety?

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Yes, we have. And I have. But more so than I

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can say that I'm covering wedding photography. 11. I always joke that my my price for weddings now is \$50,000 because that's about what it would take to get me that you want. And if someone actually paid that, I think I'd be happy about it. But short of that, I don't think he's happy. 100 weddings in over 30 years as a wedding and portraitists. Yes, a lot of high school seniors over the years as well, but really, for more than a decade. I've really been running a training studio up here in Manchester, New Hampshire, which is also a bit of a photo co op. So I teach quite a lot of photography, actually.

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Yeah, that's fantastic. Yeah, the wedding, the whole wedding photography thing definitely takes a special special person does. E. I knew that was never my calling. So I I Yeah, I admire I admire the beauty of some of these wedding portrait. That's actually where I find a lot of my, um, inspiration for different lighting or different. You know, I wish we could take dogs into all some of these Benny wedding menus, cause I think Oh, my gosh. I want you

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to know that face I know I've seen Well, it's a service dog. It's a service dog, I but I think we're, I think

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weddings my experience there. But our experience jointly in knowing somebody, photographers hundreds locally formed very much our experience in our notion of what our business model would be. Yeah, And to that point, if you think of on average wedding photographer and how many hours they spend both courting their client but also serving their client both on the day, and what I would describe is a mountain of postproduction, right? These air folks putting 40 hours in it, least for every single wedding. Absolutely. It least those working at a higher level of quality are. And so when you think that so many photographers are getting to \$3000 for a wedding, there are really reads when you discount things like the cost of their overhead and actually getting paid is really quite low and great for Kim and I, um, and I won't say a number about our age, but we're not 20 years old. I don't know. Uh, just listening in. This is not a video. No, we're not youngish into that point that we value time equally as Muchas dollars. So we wanted to build a business model that bit very much a lifestyle that we chose to live. And so we may the business fit our life and not vice versa, Which I don't know that a lot of folks do it that way.

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Oh, man, I love that. And I am a huge proponent to that, um, that really I mean, we're running our own business. We could make this look like whatever we want to stand, and long as you run the numbers, you could make it profitable. If you want to. Just d'oh! I just shoot like a small, like limited edition sessions. Two Saturdays a month. You could make that profitable. Oh, I want to shoot three clients for full sessions a month. You could make that profitable. I just want to do studio. I just want to do outside. You could make anything profitable. You just need to know how to do that.

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The writing is having

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a goal that Max sense in that that goal can very much be time. And I say time because Tim and I are both over the age of 50 there said a

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number 29 21 in a few

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for you lost something. Yeah, don't make me do I minored in math. You wouldn't know it, but or it could be that you are a 20 something and you have small Children at home and you need that to balance that family time. And so you know that maybe it's not a full time thing. Maybe it's supplementary income, but again, as long as that goal is measurable, reasonable. You can build a business model around it, I feel. And that beauty of photography as this is a small business enterprise is that if you've seen one, you've seen one. There's lots of ways to go about it. And just because someone chooses to do something different than the business

model than Kim and I have adopted doesn't mean that we don't love what someone else is up to two now, absolutely, they're not exclusive by any stretch of the imagination. When we share what we do, we simply hope that someone can take a piece out of that that might enrich their lives in some way.

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And for us to travel was very important for us and spending time with our aging parents. You know, we don't have Children, so you know our time is ours, and we want to spend it with the people that we love and be able to care for them when they need it. Um, you know, right now, Winston, my corgi, he is 13. He's having those hip problems in the week, you know, Hind end, um and he needs a little more care. And it seemed yet senior years. And if I were working, I would not be able to do t. Oh,

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my gosh, yeah, I mean, that's just this week my son had the flu, So he's been home all week, and I'm thinking, you know, what do parents you know? My husband works from home. I work from home, so we're really, really blessed and lucky in that respect. I'm thinking, Oh my gosh, how do parents that both have to work out of the house? Then someone has to make the decision. Who's gonna use their sick day or who's gonna call in and got, you know, to be able to have that flexibility has definitely what drove me to start my business, to be able to work for myself and have that flexibility. Thio really designed my life in a way that, you know, doing something that I love. That also made money that, you know, I could also have time to do what I want to D'oh you know, it's It's

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That's a brat. That's exactly it. And I think every time that you know, as we were kind of building this business, there was plenty of road blocks and plenty of obstacles and plenty of negative thoughts going through. And I said, You know what? I'm gonna make this work because it's better than a cubicle. And, you know, I am not directed the cubicle firm.

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Absolutely. Yeah, The one thing I encourage everybody to do All of you guys out there, you know, however you are running your business is tracking your time and your income to see what you're actually making an hour is such an important thing to do because yeah, like you said, we can have these businesses. You can be, You know, like sports school volume photographers can make a great living doing volume work. Same thing with doing, you know, however, you want to set your business up, but it's important just to keep track of what time you're spending. So you're not inadvertently giving your client's bootsy client hours, But you know, volume pricing, because then that becomes challenging right to make your hourly rate profitable? Exactly. Yeah, Awesome. We'll

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tell me a little

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bit about, um, you know what you guys do differently than than other photographers that your potential clients might be looking for. How you how you make the experience special for them.

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This is my favorite thing to talk about it. I love it. Said so we again when he decided it was going to be boutique, it was going to be an experience that no dog mom or Dad had experienced, especially in our area of New Hampshire. Um, I don't know of anyone else that does it the way we do, so you know it. I wanted to be a little glamorous, right? I wanted to be something that people talked about like, Oh, my goodness, you have to go do this. You know, I wanted to do something that that people spoke of in highly. So what we dio is different. There's different ways of marketing probably won't get into that. But the actual service itself is it is very hands on. And we are on the phone very little through email, very little through automation, because I still want to keep it personal again at our at the amount of clients that we see weak. I can do that like I'm a little kind of, you know, it's so manageable. We know everybody in the family. We know their name. We know about the dog. After a phone call. We invite them in for design consultation. They come to the studio. Our studio has been redone recently. We have

beautiful artwork. Um, we have a 30 by 60 40 by 50 down. The smallest is a 20 by 30 on, Of course, right. Show what you sell and it because it does work. There's all those magic things that I'm sure your folks have heard about out on hair of the dog. You know, we all know that. So it's more of the experience. So when they come in, ah, they're greeted by a nice warm fireplace and they sit down and the China is laid out on the table. Ah, we have tea or coffee. There's always some nice snack to have, and it's really about, um, asking those personal questions and finding out what the relationship is with their dog. Now most people like to talk about their dog, so we don't find that very difficult. But you know, a difficult conversation to have, but it's always keeping people on the emotional side. It's very rare that we go off topic. We try to narrow it in speak about the dog, and we do talk about pricing. Then we talk about sizing. We do offer in this metal's final prints. Um, you know, we don't do packages at this point, and he pricing is always, you know, has always a question for people. But we're pretty happy with our pricing where it is in packages, you know, packages. It's always a thought, right? Should I do album? Should I do folio boxes? You know so But anyway, then getting off topic,

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they're like, Don't worry story

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it is. It's about building the relationship. It's about people seeing us as artists and not just someone who pushes, pushes a button on a camera. And so that is a lot of what we talk about and what we show people. Yeah, you show them the art.

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Yeah, I can imagine the getting across that. This is more of art. This is not just a photograph that you're going to start with a photograph. It's your medium. But it is becoming art because then that starts to build that value, and it's something that they can't do on their own. Um, I'm a big believer, especially as technology continues to improve and I mean, our iPhone cameras are getting pretty regular that that we have to continue to step up the game and offer things that people can't do on their own. Though, you know, they're they're, of course, never gonna have your eye. So they're not going to see things that you see. Even if these lenses on these phones continue to improve and you know, you can get more separation and smaller depth of field and all that stuff examined, I still they don't have the eye they they can't remove, you know, leashes and things like that. And they certainly can't take that image and give it that artistic finish that you know that a professional can offer them,

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offer them. Exactly. And I'm always happy to hear that someone, um, has a black dog, right?

No, because they always say, I can't photograph this dog. He just looks black. I can't Have you seen the eyes? And I'm like, that's what we're here for,

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you know, when they're always there always asking to like, Are you sure you can do

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a national looks like? Yeah, we're

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at my website. Many black

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talking, right. We

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just up on their wall or include not one but two different. One black dog, one black cat. Yeah, really? On black backgrounds, no less to make the point because it comes up so often for us, Right to go back to Kim's point about relationships. You know, people do business on candidly, spend money with folks that they trust. And we are trustworthy people

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when not sales, not a fault. I mean, it

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doesn't affect the shells. Average mine, right, but right. But the point is, we are so confident in what we do in what we provide, Um, that that confidence without coming across his cocky not at all or arrogant. Better word there candidly, that comes across in the quality of the experience the customers having with us. And that is really a mainstay of what we're talking about is the quality of the experience the customers having when they're with us, whether it be the design consul to studio session or ultimately, the ordering session, or even when we go to their home to install the art for larger orders, quality of that experience If you think about it, when's the last time you went into someone's business and they offered to take your coat and hang it up, right. It's a little thing, right? If I do that the first moment they walk in, they realize this is different. Something is different here. They're actually paying attention to me. Absolutely. It is about them. Is the customer first? And I think that would be one of our mottoes if we ever had one. Is that the customers first, in terms of the quality of their experience, I mean, we're all dog photographers were all animal pet photographers. I mean, the folks we're gonna listen in to this podcast, certainly. So you know the importance of if the dog Now let's say it's an accident in the studio. We always talk about how you should clean that up very quickly. But again, the quality that experience it should be as if it never happened, because you want the associations with the artwork that you're creating to be so buoyant and positive. So that way looking this artwork five years down the road there, thinking about the positive experience they had not that the dog had an accident in the studio. All right. Everything we do is about that positive experience from the the care that Kim takes and picking out the napkins that we use with the tea set. And, yes, I said tea set in China. And, yes, I know how to serve tea and

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even we even have a menu. Oh, nice. Well, do we have a menu for the dog treats for the session? And we have a menu for the humans during the portrait session as well, and then again for their ordering

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session, we bought champagne by the case. Well, it's actually not champagne. It's Moscato. I must say it that way. By champagne, by the case for the ordering sessions,

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they put in their order than before. Like,

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you know, well, that ideologies, Or if there ain't a vegetarian or black this intolerant are all these other things find out so we don't ever, ever, ever serve them something they don't like.

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And then right when they choose a treat for the dog, we offer different things. Um, I have a relationship with the boat T good dog and horse. Yeah, boutique. And I go there and I buy them and they package it up nicely in their little bag, and it's it's a little gift. If we don't, you know I buy them two bags and one they can take home with them. And when we use for the session, so that's fantastic. All right. A little thing,

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Yeah. You know, I think so many people are looking for What's the secret thing? Like, what's the one thing I need to do? But really, you know, it just it comes down to Dean how you convey best. Serve your your client and just making sure that their experiences is beyond their expectations, that they know what's coming next. My personal rule is always every time I'm talking to a client or have any interaction with a client at all, I always let them know what the next step is or when there are for me again, because I never want them to be sitting there and thinking, Wait, should I Am I supposed to be doing something right now? Why, if I had, I had not heard y stone cold, you know, and everybody gets so busy, I think that's one of the the easiest things that people dropped the ball on different shores is just that basic client interaction. That client experience, right?

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Absolutely on the business that I had worked out where I got laid off. They spent hundreds of thousands of dollars for an agency to tell them that exact same thing again. This is a hospital, right? Doctors, patients, hospital. And they said we, you know, they needed to be better at

informing the patient of what to expect next, right? For thousands of dollars. And I'm thinking, God, my mom taught me that. Yeah, right, right. All you say hello to people looking in the eye. I

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feel like common sense is not always so common anymore, huh?

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Exactly. Exactly. But I do think we're confident, too. And that kind of frees us up a little bit. Like Bud was saying, Not arrogant, but it frees us up to do those other things. Like we're We're pretty well set. When we're doing the photo sessions, the portrait sessions, it helps us relax. I know a lot of people when they work in the studio, and maybe just with any client, whether you're outdoors or in studio, you know, there's some anxiety about it. Am I going to get it right? Am I doing the right thing? Is the right is the light in the right place, All right, things that kind of gone for us, and if I could just say it's because of But, uh oh, it's just lighting it. See, I call in the lighting guru, right? It's all. But

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in practice I mean, you've been doing this for gosh almost 15 years now. So one of the thing, you know, when? When at any time you're starting anything new, you have to spend so much time thinking about the mechanics of it. But then that becomes second nature. And then it's so much easier toe. Let's continue to offer to think about the other things that make the experience and know that you're gonna nail the artwork.

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Exactly. And it's such a wonderful thing to offer to our clients that if they have a vision, and that's a lot of what we talk about in the design consultation. My question is, if you could dream of any portrait of your dog, what would that look like? And to know and have the confidence that we can create that That's a good thing. Yeah, a lot of clients

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will say they don't know, but when the client wants you dead in the eye and says, I want to dress up my dog like Ruth Bader Ginsburg and be prepared to be able to do that. And we've done it, man. Thanks, Burg session. And that went off famously very again. Very often. The client doesn't necessarily No, But it's our preparedness in the studio, both from the notes that we've taken from the design console right after we've met with them, We sit down together, we right, Are we right at our session notes of what our plan is and we're making a set list.

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Yeah, UFO matters

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work full matters and then about, you know, in our studio we really only need about 1/2 an hour to set up for a client. But we book out an hour to make sure we're completely set up. We're typically setting up a least four sets per client, sometimes last. Sometimes war depends what's going on in the studio. Our studio is quite large compared to many in our studios, 25 by 75 or 80 feet long. So we set up multiple sets in the same room so that we moved from set to set will go into the room, make sure everything's set up will in many cases choreographed what we're going to d'oh so that to the client, it looks very effortless. Um, you know, it's just like a bit of a dance, and we're moving from this thing to this thing to this thing.

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And the practical side of that, too, is I think we want to move less things while the dog is there, some not to skate dog, right? Yep, because we have big boom arms and we use in the big softball.

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You know, it's been a lot of things.

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Yeah, it is for a new environment for a dog. So yeah,

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and I think that's a big part of our business model. Is that I would say, on average, we're spending somewhere between 15 and 20 hours total per client. Oh, yeah. I and I can tell you that I'm leaving that number a bit vague, but it's in that range per client. It really depends.

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And that's everything. That's from beginning to end.

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The correspondent and yeah, so I think the thing to think about how many hours are we spending for client and then our business model, We rather purposely said we don't want to be rushed, so we're spending about 15 to 20 hours per client now. I think it's important to realize that when we say that number Kim and I count are ours separately. So if you were with him and I Bernauer, that actually counts as two hours.

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Okay? Yep.

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So, um, design consults. You know, all the stuff you have to do to get the client in the door all the way through, packaging up their order and sending them out the door in either delivering it aren't installing it. All those hours add up to at least 15 hours, sometimes as many as 20. If we're delivering on location and we don't want to rush that time, we white because that time is valuable and as a result of that business model, along with our wanting theft time off, and could be able to travel, we know that our business model is low volume as a result of that. Yep. Then that those two things together dictates our pricing structure. Absolutely So. And that's what I hope your listeners, regardless of which business model they might select. That's the part. I hope that they'll get out of that? Is that how much time you intend to spend? And then that will dictate according to your schedule, how many clients you're going to be able to see? Yep. Never mind how money you're gonna be able to find. That's a whole other already,

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right? You gotta know. Gotta start with yeah, how many you conserve. And

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then that will dictate your pricing. And I think while I think a beginning thought of thinking about your pricing based upon cost of good soul, I think it's a fine discussion to have, but I think it's horribly misleading. But the average photographer, because this rule I'm doing air quotes from his rule of four or five times your lab cars to cut costs is absurd. Yeah, I'm positively absurd because I think in many cases on our on our price sheet that not that I want to get into that But it probably is in order of 100 year Winston. Our dog there, guys,

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that's okay again. It depends. Photography podcast. So if anyone has a problem with the dog barking, they're probably not the right audience. I

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wanted to join in. Winston is a 13 year old court

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No, I love Courtney's fund. A photograph there, So impressive. They are one of my favorites. Yeah. No, that's great points about the pricing. I, um shameless plug on hair of the dog academy dot com There is a price stain master class that you can download for free that walks you through that process to figure out powder your costs. Like what cost do you have to be in business? What are your costs for your product's gonna be How many hours can you work? How many clients do you want to see? How many hours per client do you anticipate needing to basically come down to your target session average? Because you can't determine your pricing until you know Oh, I need to average \$2000 per client or \$1500 per client or \$3000 per client. Whatever it is that gives you a starting point. And then you can start to build your pricing in a way, they get sure your clients to that point, though, Yeah, that really got out. A few guys didn't help with pricing out there and hair of the dog land.

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And can I can I give you a little plug to only be completely I not I You know, I think I think you are absolutely the bee's knees, for sure, but also for people who are starting out and who are not sure what it is they want to do. Hey, the core sit one. It was the best information I found. And I worked hard. I really did. I am. You know, I am tech savvy. I can locate anything on Google Wars was the first thing that I paid for. And I paid for some other stuff that did not work

out to my benefit. But yours was the first thing when I said, Oh, my God, we can do this, you know? No. Nicole, really. Honestly. And that was That was from the beginning now Oh, my God. Oh, right now, you've got everything covered. I just Just kudos to you and

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all. Thank you enough. Nothing makes me happier than when students of mine take the information and run with it like you guys have. Yeah, apply it. And it's there's magic in the action because right, I think a lot of people get stuck with they consume education of some kind And then it's like reading a book. How many times we read a great business book. You're like, man, that is fantastic. And the next day you go straight back to your old habits and your old way of being, and you didn't change anything. Exactly. What happens a lot with education to our people are like, Oh, that's great. But then they don't actually, you

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know anything, right? Yeah,

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they don't implement it.

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And I would say that your course is probably one of the most undervalued courses out there and undervalued in that you're under price for the sake of getting now, bear in mind. When Kim purchased your course, it was, ah, standalone course. Back then. It was not right. A membership for a subscription based program. And she ponied up the cash to do it. And it became very apparent trust very early that she was robbing you blind candidly. You think about it. All the things you need to know to run a business from howto operate your camera howto operate, you know, dub sado or whatever. You might be using information in this range of a 1,000,000 task in between that if you don't know how to do those things. You need to figure them out, right? I mean, this is quite a lot. And so it turns out that you can buy that information in the form of education to fill in those gaps of your own self learning or your own formal education. And really, at that price point the filling that many gaps. I don't know why anyone wouldn't do it. And then, of course, I believe it was this Last year police cracked me from wrong. You converted to a subscription model which lowered the barrier to entry there. Or I mean, granted, I don't think everyone could consume everything that you have in a month, even if they wanted to. But there's a lot there and allowing folks to see that value for what I think is a very economical price point. I'm not really sure why folks aren't doing it more often if their series about their business, Um

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and we believe in education, I very much I'm constantly learning. I wantto as much information as I kept, and we're absolutely I

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still Yeah, I still got a workshop for going to bench, and I'm, like, super thrilled I can't wait to go learn

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from Tremblant. Excellent. And yet and And I've, you know, I've worked with coaches and mentors and, you know, happy to do it. I'm happy to pay the rate because it's great information. You have to learn yourself with the right ones. Of course. You know, flying the right people that are out there for you, but yeah. Yeah. Sometimes

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you just need someone to help you to help you show you the way and encourage you to take action. I pay for business, coaching myself, men up. You know, I I would not be here. This podcast wouldn't exist. The membership wouldn't exist. Um, the summits wouldn't exist. Really? Yeah. All the things that have happened in the past year and 1/2 and hair of the dog would not have existed without putting that that money where the my mouth is and investing in education for myself and coaching for myself because it's too easy to let our self like stop for fear or just in action with overwhelm of just Oh, my gosh, I don't even know. I don't have all the answers, so I can't possibly do anything because I'm completely overwhelmed. Yes. Where? Yep. In actuality, once you start taking action, it just at least the clarity. And you don't need to

see the whole road. You just have to get started. And then then there's so many so many other places you can go that you don't even know where the endpoint often is when you get started. And you know,

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that's exactly And I do think that you need Thio. Your heart needs to be in it. I don't know. I do know some photographers who are family photographers and wedding and corporate and, you know, whatever. And so they're just gonna add pets to it, and maybe it Maybe it works. I don't know. But my thought is, Is that pet photographers or special breed? You know, no pun intended. But, you know, our hearts are in it, and it's becomes quite a difficult thing to have someone look at your at work. It really can be quite difficult, you know, And judged by that,

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the one thing that you mentioned that that made me think of it is just the other passion for what you're shooting. I think that critical no matter what genre you're shooting you would like. You know if and you can again with photography and how you build your business, you could make any genre very profitable and fit the life that you want to live. Yes, but you need to love what you're shooting because if you don't it I mean nothing. You might as well go out and get a job that you don't really love because that's what it was become, though, and I think our potential clients can definitely definitely see that.

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Oh, absolutely, thank you. Dont

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say this very often toe other local photographers who might be looking to add pet photographer read to the repertoire. And the first thing I'll ask them is, Do you own a pet? No. Right. Um, bad news for you in our world, especially in the higher end of the dog dog, specifically, but also pet photography. These folks will sniff out a non believer in a minute. Um,

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if you can't have a conversation about dogs, behavior and its

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example letting photographers in the class burning person studio lighting class and we have this big bucket of tennis balls, you may have seen it somewhere behind the scenes pictures but it's a big bucket and it's maybe 30 or 40 tennis walls in there. It's clear acrylic, and we use it when we do the tennis ball shot that we feel the tennis balls in the air around the dog. It's hilarious. If you haven't seen that, you can check it out on our website. But we had a photographer asked me, Why do you need a big bucket of tennis balls? And I looked at him when you don't own a dog. Do you

spk_0

know I've never been around a dog?

spk_2

Because all the pet people look at that and think it's hilarious and get it instantly

spk_1

and the guy gets one when they go home? I

spk_2

don't wanna be parting gift if they play with the ball and they wanted tea. Yeah, well, I have buyer base of 36 now, so why not? And I think and I think that leads me to my next point. And it also leads back to my point about the value receiving you. Of course not that I want our entire podcast to be about your course because we're really not sail. But right now I'm trying to say about value. So if you're a small business owner and you're worried about spending \$50.100 dollars, I think you probably should go back to your day job. And and I don't mean to be disingenuous when I say that. It's just being a small business owner means you're going to have to spend some money on things. And the question is, do they return on the value that you spent? Yeah, Big something like hair of the dog or honestly, a case of tennis balls sounds crazy when you go to buy him and go. My gosh, I've spent another 50 bucks on tennis balls affairs. Who cares what the tennis balls cost? Because I have priced myself such that those costs are statistically insignificant, you cannot save your way into profitability. The idea that

you're going to save money and make your organization more money is something that cubicle dweller thinks someone who works on that treadmill off a cubicle job and they're never given the opportunity to earn more money. They're only given an opportunity to save money for the organization. Our yeah, while business owners used to earn money in the small business, and I'm not saying we're gonna spend irresponsibly here. I'm not saying we're getting a private jet that go day B p i or something. I'm just saying, you know, to be reasonable about those expenses and there are some things you're gonna have to pay for. And

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I love that quote that you can't save your way to profitability.

spk_2

No way. No

spk_0

fantastic. And so, so accurate

spk_2

to give your listeners idea we spend on our clients not counting lab fees. Just the things we do cost us anywhere from 80 to \$115 per client stuff spend on them, all right. And it could be an

spk_1

act, you know? It doesn't fall exactly

spk_2

more, but yeah, but the point is, yes, I have to spend some money out. Then I say, let's week, him and I if you don't know, we're engaged. Couple. We're getting married in October. Ah, congratulations. Thank you. So when I say I am really saying we But you know, when we spend those those money Uh, yeah, we know. They said at the end of the month ago out. We spent a lot of money on macaroons this month. Seriously, we have a macaroon buzz it

spk_0

know that that would be trouble for me.

spk_2

Let's travel. It is. Actually, neither of us really likes them, which is the reason we want them. I do not eat the leftovers. We tend to send them home. Um, which we have to buy more of those little gift boxes, by the way, send people home with the matter. Um, but and I don't worry about those numbers I worry about. The other side of the balance sheet is way more recently. What are we taking it in the camera? In the quality of service in the quality of the products that were delivering the client are, by and large, our true focus. And, yep, that that comes from a comfort that we built ourselves. If you're listening to this podcast, you're thinking, Oh, well, they both had customer service backgrounds or whatever, and they know I am a career paramedic. I'm in two years. I was a paramedic in on the field, and I was also a healthcare educator to in the college presser and all these other things, but and Kim worked, you know, as the assistant to the president of the hospital, in corralled executives to keep them from, you know, running for walls and things. And think about it. Yeah, there's some skills, that crossover, but we forced ourselves to learn the skills that we have that we bring to bear on our business. Now. Yes, I've been a studio photographer for decades and decades, and it really helps. And that competence brings confidence in the studio. Sure, absolutely. And I have more brain time available. Torrey, about refilling the tea. And you know, it's a model water or whatever it might be and, you know, refilling the water bowl for the dog. And you know all these other things, Of course, in the middle of a session. Yes, there's time for that.

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Yes, yeah, I think that's another important point, too, because I was guilty of it. When I first started, I thought that I had to be in motion photographing every second of my session that I couldn't like take a break because if I took a break, then my client would think, Oh, she doesn't know what she's doing. The right shoe. It's just probably my fear insecurity of just not having the practice that that I felt like I just had to keep going so they wouldn't see that. Oh, wait. You know, it doesn't know all of these things yet, right? That's one thing I encourage everyone to do is just take a breath. Take a minute. Let your clients know at the beginning. Hey, we're gonna This is gonna be easy. This is gonna be low key. We're gonna take some breaks if you

need toe. Like, have a minute to get your thoughts together. If you're shooting on location, sometimes for two reasons. Number one if I really don't know what the light looks like, like around the corner of a building or something. I don't want to make my client like, schlep all their stuff over there, so I'll just be like, hang on for a second. I'm gonna run and check this out. I'll be right back and they're totally fine. Toe toe. Wait and take a minute. And they appreciate me running ahead to make sure it's good. I'll say it looks great. Let's go or no, it's a little too bright over there. Let's go over this way like it's okay to to breathe him

spk_1

It is. And don't come in to call those timeouts for a little bit. Yeah. Yeah. We often tell them you give the dog some love. We're just gonna change some things up. We're gonna check the camera, make sure where you know we're on track. We and we don't rush people. Oh, we we don't book sessions back to back you up. So, you know, they were not concerned with time. And we take our time. And people don't seem to notice when you intentionally take those brakes, right? I

spk_2

would say I have a saying that I've used before. That may not work, but I'm just gonna throw it out there. It's called Be the duck duck. Isn't quack be the duck show on the surface of the water? The duck is just gliding along. Yeah, but under the service, he may be paddling like crazy, but you'll never know it by looking at the service. And as long as you're calm and controlled and organizing what the client sees, you can have your own mental angst going on if you want. But take a break. If you need to run over and use the restroom for a minute, think over. But I'm used the restaurant people understand You don't want. It's how you address them. And I would just take one quick breaks. I'm gonna step out to the rest room. I'll be right back. You know, when you come back in, how's everyone doing on water? Awesome. All right, we're gonna move over to this wonderful brown set over here. To do that, I'm gonna move some gear around. So if you guys could step to this end of the studio so we won't have any part Two lights collision. Perfect. They're off we go. And very directive yet guiding the little nudges and a man for great experience for the clients, mind candidly, it's rare for us to have a client not comment at the end of the ordering session. Now, bear in mind that we've just dropped thousands of dollars with us that they have them go. This was just such an awesome experience. Yep, we and that all the time.

spk_0

And that's what leaves two referrals. People are always asked, like, what can I do for a referral program like a very and free eight by 10 is not gonna motivate anyone. Talk about the experience unless the experience is gonna motivate them to talk about the experience?

spk_1

Exactly. Exactly. That's right. Now, that's right. And we and we follow you. No. Again having the clients back for the ordering session. Um, it's the same thing. They come back into our client lounge, we call it and you know, we again. We break out the china, we break his crackers, Fruit, champagne. We know whatever people want. Um, and then we take our time there as well. We use pro select. We put everything into pro Select, and we we go through. Um you know, I think a lot of photographers do it this way. There's a slide show, and then we go through each image individually, and we just kind of guide them, and we tell them exactly like you said earlier. What is this next step? You know, a man would say we just want you to sit back and relax. For now, we're just gonna watch the slide show. You don't need to make any decisions at this point after the slide show will go back and look at each image individually, and you're gonna decide whether you like it or not. And you know, and we explain further liking. It means at this point, you just like it. You don't need to decide what your purchase, you know, And we just kind of keep going a couple of Rome's, and we're pretty good with it. Yeah, Yeah, I know what

spk_0

you guys. Mainly I know you focus on wall art. What do most of your order to consist of to get to those nice? You know, multiple \$1000 orders is usually just wall art. Or what else are they buying? In addition to that,

spk_1

it's just, well, art that we sell their large pieces. Our smallest piece that usually goes out the door was a 20 by 30. Fantastic. Is it is in metals Have seemed to be kind of all the rage. Yeah, really has I'm in, and I'm not sure if it's because of the photography that we do. That kind of lends itself to being a metal. Um, but I think

spk_0

people also see that it's still somewhat unique. Like you can't get in a Costco yet, right? Yes. Oh, so they you know, a metal tow us this photographers, we see them everywhere but the clients, That's still a pretty unique item. that I think that might be parting that your style definitely needs to lend to that. I personally don't do metals because my style tends to be a bit more muted, though it just doesn't look right on the metal where I much prefer it on. Ah, canvas there a printer paper?

spk_1

Exactly. Now you know it's funny because when we're shooting on white, almost 10 out of 10 I'm gonna say it ends up being a medal. When we do something a little bit on the darker side or more Richard Tones, we care people towards the canvas because we think as artists that that you know more of what it needs to be.

spk_0

And that's also why they're paying you. I have found to when you get to a certain price point that you know the four figure sale. At least then the clients are coming to you, looking to you for your suggestions. Absolutely don't know how to do this. They don't know the difference between all our different types of artwork and what looks good on what looks bad are not as good. I should say exam, though it's up to us to to give them suggestions in a nice way of you know, I think this image would look stunning on this finish. Don't be afraid, Thio. Do let people know everyone out there. What you think as Thea artist? What medium You think it would look good in or what size people ask all the time. Like, Oh, what if it's a four by three? But they want it in a four by five. Like, Well, if it works in a four by five and I say yes. And if it doesn't, I explain. Well, gonna crop here and this really doesn't look the best pretty image. So why don't we put it in this size?

spk_2

Okay, also, And if you've done your job, maybe I'm being a little direct saying it that way. When you if you tell your job in the design, consult early on you you have a good feeling about where this artworks going to go. You know what their wall colors are like and what their decor is like. And, you know, we've had we've asked people what your dick or and then when we have kids, that's our decor

spk_1

our dog way. Have great dame.

spk_2

Great. So there's no decor. I get that. I got it, you know, and then we'll know because we'll have taken scrupulous notes. When we're going into this, the studio session, We'll know which way to lean into the artwork such that it's gonna make the client really, really happy again. That customer first principle that what making them happy matters. And so, by listening carefully to all the information, they're giving you overtime, you know, beginning middle and end. All of that comes into play in the ordering session. The ordering session is the last 10% of this. Yeah,

spk_0

100% out

spk_2

of it is the design Council.

spk_0

Yeah, I always tell everyone to like if you approach tales from a place of just honest listening to your client and with the intention of just serving them and helping them get something they will love, there is no reason to be nervous about it. And it 100% by the time you get to the sale session like sale's been made,

spk_1

it's a star, adds a

spk_0

little backing out. What image you want to put on the artwork. Or maybe if they want to add on some other things

spk_1

that's like exactly yeah, we don't sell the images, sell themselves and the design consultation because we know sometimes I mean most of the time. Really, No, no. What size we're shooting for. I mean, go on, and that makes a difference. If someone's going with just a couple of 16 by twenties or whatever, it doesn't happen that often, but at least we know that we need the dog a little bit closer in the frame. Um, you know, it's so it matters to us. And I think having that conversation in telling them why we need to know up front really makes them go. Oh,

spk_0

exactly. Explaining why that it's not just you saying you need to decide right out. There's a reason why you can provide better service if you have an idea of what they want to do with the images. So,

spk_1

yes, and I've got a great way. We've even talked clients down to a smaller size because a larger size just wasn't gonna be the right thing for that

spk_2

phone call. Two weeks we deliver something saying this thing's too big and it's taking over there. I don't want that

spk_1

you can't write and Of course, someone wants a huge portrait, but when it's in the hallway, it's not gonna work, All right, I

spk_2

know that they won't want them to be happy now forever, because, you know, we're making generational Portrait's here. We know that that's not gonna be in the life forever. We know that we want this art to be in their life forever. And we have a responsibility candidly to our clients to make sure that they're gonna be in love with it now

spk_1

and for a forever relationship building.

spk_0

And that builds trust, too. And that also leaves two referrals and least a great experiences, right? I do have one quick question for you guys about the beginning of your processor inquiry process. Do you have any suggestions for ways that that encourage people to come in and meet with you? Do you have do do you find it challenging? Sometimes in this era of everyone being so busy and so hard to nail down? And quite frankly, some people difficult to get on the phone? What have you found? That works really well to get people to take that that next step and come in? I imagine once they come in to meet with you there. The pretty high booking rate once they come in, right?

spk_2

Well, So the two points first, when folks say that a lot of time to talk with us on the phone, I really don't have a lot of, I don't know. There's not a lot to that in my mind because if they want to sit there text or message or whatever back and forth for three days, we're not about that at all, because it's such a waste of time, all right, we can. Can we get a lot of this figured out Because we cannot get our tone and the quality of what we do across by those means. We need them on the phone, and that bone is five, maybe 10 minutes, not much longer than that. Kim's time is quite valuable for that sort of work. That's hymns. End of how we divide labor amongst us. But her goal is to get them into the studio, the on leeway literally. The only way you could have a studio session with us is if you've come in for the design, consult if you haven't done that, there isn't a studio session. I'm not reach to Kim because I know she's chomping at the

spk_1

bit. I haven't I haven't found it as difficult as I have heard that other people have found it. So I guess that's a good thing. I don't know. We've been lucky. Or

spk_0

you. I do mention that, like on your website is they're looking into like that. That's part of the process.

spk_1

It is absolutely okay. Yeah. Absolutely. And you know what, Nicole? I think My goodness, I don't know. The last time I think we Achter or had some kind of correspondence you and I were talking about our target market. And mine has changed quite a bit in the beginning, I think my target market, it was young women single with a dog and a job. Now they're they're a bit older. They're about 50 40. Plus you and these people don't mind getting on the phone and they don't mind Reitman in. Uh, no. When I tell them over the phone what to expect from us. And, you know, you want to see the art before you even go ahead with this process. And you know

spk_2

you want to see our

spk_1

student were. You want up, dog? Yeah. You want the dog to come in. So they're not nervous the second time. They come for the studio site, you know? So there's a lot of reasons we give why they should come in. And that is the way. It's just kind of just the way we were so

spk_0

fantastic. If that's, um I think having it on your website of, like, you're studying the expectation And I'm sure you still have random price shoppers that call, But those people that aren't really serious

spk_2

about hearing, though.

spk_0

Okay, up. Um thanks so much, guys. I want to be cognizant of your time. I really, really appreciate you guys taking the time and dropping some awesome knowledge for everyone to help increase their value in their client experience and be able Thio, you know, create the experiences for the clients that get their clients talking, though, Thank you so much for being here. Can you tell everyone you know a little bit about where they can find you And

spk_1

can I think Yeah, thank you again for having us, and I think people know howto reach out to us and ask us more questions We're happy to, you know, show people what we know, But I'm at Kim. Kimberly, sarah photography dot com on the website is Kimberly Saara photography dot com But do you wanna

spk_2

Yeah, I'm an info at the master lighting course dot com Teach a lot of studio lighting, as you know, both Locally up here in New Hampshire. And of course, we do an online course which many of your hair of the dog folks know me already because they've seen the work we've done in hair of the dog academy. And also the work we've done in the, um, online summit down line Something Sorry. Couldn't quite forward. Of course, we have a rather lengthy 120 video plus course. Um, you want t add location, location? Leading lady will be coming up soon. Um,

spk_0

yeah. It's a great resource for anyone that wants to learn more about student shooting in studio right now. Um, it seems like you guys have Ah, incredibly comprehensive course there for that.

We

spk_1

do. Thank you, Nicole. Thank you. Yeah, but wonderful. It's been wonderful. Okay? Yeah.

Thank you

spk_0

so so much again, guys, for joining me really, really appreciate it we'll see you around in the big hair of the dog. Facebook group in the Academy.

spk_1

Excellent. Bye, everybody. Bye. I thanks for listening to this episode of Hair of the Dog podcast. If you enjoy this show, please take a minute to leave a review. And while you're there, don't forget to subscribe so you don't miss our upcoming episode. One last thing if you are ready to dive into more resource, is head over to our website at [www dot hair of the dog academy dot com](http://www.hair-of-the-dog-academy.com). Thanks for being a part of this pet photography community.