

Speaker 1 ([00:00](#)):

Welcome to the hair of the dog podcast. Today we're going to be talking with Kim Hartz from Kim hearts photography and we are going to be talking about the key to client inquiries. We've got a great episode and we're so glad you're here.

Speaker 2 ([00:15](#)):

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've come to the right place. And now your host, pet photographers, travel addicts, chocolate martini, calmness, sewer, Nicole Begley.

Speaker 1 ([00:33](#)):

Hey everybody. Nicole from hair of the dog here. And I am here with Kim Hartz from Kim hearts photography down in Houston, Texas. I'm an incredible photographer and I'm so excited to chat with her today with you guys. So, Hey Kim, how are you? Doing well, thanks for having me. Awesome. Thanks for being here. So yeah, I guess tell us a little bit about you and your business and when you started and kind of your story to get us started.

Speaker 3 ([00:57](#)):

Sure. So, um, let's see. I started, I actually opened my studio in 2010 and right before that I had gone back to photography school and I interned with a photographer in Houston, uh, for awhile. And then I was like, okay, I'm ready to open. And I started leasing a space right away, which I don't necessarily recommend but um, but yeah, I kind of just dove right in and now it's been 10 years and God, when I started I kind of did everything cause I thought you had to do kind of general portraiture to be successful.

Speaker 1 ([01:28](#)):

Yeah, I did the same thing. I started about the same time 2010 and I did families and pets because I was like, there's no way you can do just pets.

Speaker 3 ([01:36](#)):

Exactly. Yeah. And then it was funny because like six months in I was like, Oh my gosh, I really don't enjoy a lot of these other things. Right. Yeah. It was just like pulling teeth and I thought I was going to be a boot bar photographer when I started out. No, really? Yeah. Yeah, definitely don't do that anymore. But yeah, I kind of did everything. And then about six months in, I just realized I was not very happy photographing a lot of these other things. And so I love pets. We had just gotten a golden retriever, my husband and I, and she was our baby and I was photographing her all the time. And I thought, well this could be very interesting. And I started doing a lot of research and at the time there were like four other people that were photographing pets and nobody was photographing them exclusively, right in Houston.

Speaker 3 ([02:21](#)):

And I thought, well this is a good opportunity to really get in there and be, you know, become the expert and be the person that only does pets or you know, does them really well. And so Houston's climate too is kind of tricky and it's so hot. So I knew that I wanted to do studio, so I didn't want to limit myself. And there was only one other photographer in Houston doing studio and he was shooting mainly high key,

which is totally not my style. Right. So I knew I wanted to do mid to low key. I know we went to studio and so six months in I kind of rebranded everything and made it for pets and just went after it and hit the pavement hard and really worked to, you know, make a name for myself. I remember telling people, you know, Oh I'm going to just do pets. And so many people were like, Oh that's never going to work. Nobody's ever going to pay to have their pet photographed. It was just too late.

Speaker 1 ([03:08](#)):

Aha. I still guess that not as much, but even like three years ago from other photographers in the field that have been doing photography for a long time, they're just like, well can you make any money doing that? I want to be like, honey, my pet orders are bigger than my family orders and my family orders are a couple of thousand dollars often. So yeah.

Speaker 3 ([03:29](#)):

Oh yeah. Yeah you can't, I remember it was funny cause I always ran, run everything business related past my dad. I love to get his opinion, especially cause he, it's, you know, it's also somebody who's outside of your business who's not in the photography world, who has a different perspective. And, uh, I remember when I told him I'm going to shift my business focus and I'm going to specialize in pets. And he was the biggest devil's advocate. Like that's not gonna work. And I remember getting my first big sale on a client that wasn't a family or a friend, you know, person, right. That was completely just found me organically and it was a \$3,000 order. And I remember calling him and being like, see you, they're out there. What's funny is later down the road, the woman who had come to me, it was actually one of his neighbor's daughters, but funny at the time. And he goes, well, didn't I help you get that? I was like, no, no, you did not.

Speaker 3 ([04:24](#)):

It's really funny. And she's come to me twice since with different dogs. But yeah, it's, it's very possible. And uh, I think it just takes perseverance and you know, a whole lot of hard work for sure. You could do it. Yeah. No, that's crazy that you started with the studio space. Um, yeah. I don't recommend that either. I thought that I needed that to seem like legit real deal. Yeah, exactly right. To being professional. I needed a studio space and you know, it was nice in that, you know, at the time I didn't have kids. Right. I could go and just kind of beat. I worked all the time though. Like evenings, weekends, I was always there and um, Abby would come with me, my golden retriever and people started to want to meet her. It was really funny. Um, she became the face of my business. I love it, but it just kind of, you know, the rent, the overhead was insane. Like I was dedicating \$18,000 roughly a year to overhead, just, it's just ridiculous. And as soon as I moved to a home studio like I was, I was keeping so much more money. It was making money, getting it all back to keeping my lights on. Yeah. So, I obviously do not recommend that, but at the time it just like back then in 2010 like home studios were not as big of a thing as they are now.

Speaker 1 ([05:38](#)):

Yeah. And I think a lot of people feel that way, excuse me, that they start to think, Oh my gosh, if I don't have this, then um, no one's going to take me seriously. Or you know, whether that's a studio or whether that's in person sales at their house or in a rented space or you know, wherever it is that they just feel like they have all these boxes they have to check to have a professional business. But this actually dovetails nicely into what we were going to talk about. That where you're conducting your

business isn't nearly as important as how you conduct your business and the experience that you start to bring it to your clients.

Speaker 3 ([06:10](#)):

Oh no, for sure. I mean, I, I remember. So I was in my studio, my rent, his face for two years and we were looking for a new house anyways because we knew we wanted to start a family and we were in a townhome and it just didn't make much sense. So we started looking. But everything I looked at, if it did not have a separate studio like garage apartment, like I wouldn't even look. And those are hard to come by. But I knew and I know sometimes you have to have it in your house and that works totally fine for lots of people. I just knew I was going to have kids, right? I have my own animals and I just needed to keep it separate. And so it was really tricky. And when I found, I found a wonderful house, which we're still in and the studio space is amazing, but I remember being terrified to take my first clients in the home studio because I was worried they would be like, Oh it's at our home.

Speaker 3 ([06:55](#)):

I'm not going to pay, you know, whatever she charges. And it was funny cause I was really nervous and I actually ended up raising my prices a little bit because I, you know, reevaluate them every year and it was just time to make some adjustments and I started getting clients and nobody seemed to care and I realized that it was because it was still providing the same level of service, the same experience and the same quality products as I was when I was in a studio. And as long as you do that and it's, it's easy to let that slide. I mean you've really got to continue to work on that, especially the customer service that people really won't care. And I've continued to raise my prices since I've been here. I've been in the home studio eight years versus the lease space for two years. Yeah. So it, nobody has cared. Not one person. And they usually walk in, they're like, Oh this is really nice, but I've made it look like a business when they walk in. Like, you know, even if it's in your home, you still need to make it look professional and you can, it's not like that's hard to do. It just takes a little bit of thought and putting things together.

Speaker 1 ([07:53](#)):

Absolutely. And even if you don't have a space, cause I know when I started I mostly have always shot on location. I did a little bit of studio work here and there. I, I tend to get bored easily. So I'm like Oh wait I can't do studio and then I want to shoot outside. But then I toot outside for a while and I'm like man a studio would be nice right back and forth. I'm like Oh I want all of the things. It goes both ways. Yeah. Cause cause there are times,

Speaker 3 ([08:15](#)):

yeah, I remember I had this yellow sofa cause I used to use a lot of very antique funky props and I remember somebody came in, they're like well I have to have my dog photographed on your signature.

Speaker 1 ([08:25](#)):

That was the last session I did with that sofa. I was like it's out of here. Like, cause I was so sick of looking at it. Yeah. So studio definitely get to the point where sometimes you're like, Oh my gosh, I have to change something cause I feel like I'm photographing the same thing over and over. But then I go on location and I love it, but at the same time I have to lug so much more gear and worry about the weather and wait until the light's nice and like I love duty or they could be like two o'clock on the tiniest day of the year, whatever. Great. Oh yeah. Yeah. That is really nice about

Speaker 3 ([08:56](#)):

studio. I was going to say when I first started doing a little studio, I actually had people come to my garage. So even if you don't have a home studio space, you know, you can set it up in your garage, clean your garage, and provide the good service and it's, it's still fine. Um, you know, completely. It's like I have lots of friends that shoot in their garage. I have friends that shoot in their living rooms. Yeah. Sell in their living rooms. I mean it's very a realistic thing to have that in your actual home. Like I'm lucky that it's separate, but also I have, you know, a kid that's, I have a four to five year old, I have two dogs that are three years old and I have a cat. And so it's just like have a husband. So it's too much. It's too much, you know, and I don't want to have to clean my house every time a client comes.

Speaker 3 ([09:40](#)):

So with the studio I can, the links have that separation. But like, you know, I have a friend who, um, you'd walk into her house, she had this tiny little shooting space right off the front door and she made the most beautiful images out of it. So I mean, the only limitations are what you create for yourself, I feel like. Absolutely. So did you start out when you started your business, did you start out with like an in person sales creating beautiful products or did you have the digital to product transition that a lot of us have? So I'm, I'm one of those people that does a lot of research. I want to be fully prepared before I jump in because I know that if I'm going to do something, I have to just do it, but I want to be prepared. So before I officially opened, I attended imaging USA for my first time.

Speaker 3 ([10:26](#)):

I was already a member of PPA. I was at imaging in Nashville in 2010 for a solid week. I don't think I walked outside for a solid week. I did. I was there. That was my very light imaging to where it was. I was going to start my business that summer really? And I was like, there's gotta be a conference or something. Oh yeah. So I just randomly Googled it. I found that a friend of mine in Philadelphia was starting a photography business as well. And I'm like, Hey, I found this. You want to go? So we went and before that conference I was like, Oh, well I'll just, you know, do a session for \$175 and gives me a digital, it's like, Oh my God, that's so much profit. Like \$175 an hour. That's amazing.

Speaker 3 ([11:06](#)):

I'm gonna make so much money. And then I went there, I was like, Oh, maybe like in, um, it was Alison Taylor Jones filler Jones Jones. It was her platform session where she was talking about pro select and putting our work on the walls and all these things. And I was like, Oh my God, my mind was blown and totally changed the entire way that I structured my business, which was a totally good thing. So I attribute like being able to start off in, in that like boutique business model purely for a random Google search. Well, it's funny because I, I, you know, I always knew I wanted to own my own business and then photography just kind of was always kind of there and I decided I was going to go back to it because there's a level of flexibility, you know, I knew I wouldn't a family and so I wanted to be able to do all the things for my kids but still work and it's been great.

Speaker 3 ([11:57](#)):

But yeah, going to that conference. So I had a kind of idea of a little bit of what to expect, but I was kind of going to say just to make sure that I was ready. And I turned deep codex, um, uh, pre-con class that was like the basics, you know, starting out in photography. And I remember taking it being like, okay, I can, I know my photography stuff. And then I took the business basics class after that. And so I gave me a lot of confidence and I went by myself knowing no one. And I remember to packing for it. It was like

business casual. So I felt like slacks and stuff, everybody's in jeans and what to expect. But I remember getting a ton of information. I'm trying to meet as many people as I could. And so when I got home and I was, I felt confident that I could open, cause I literally opened my business in February, 2010 because I had the space, I had everything.

Speaker 3 ([12:49](#)):

So January I was like, I hope I'm ready. So I started with in person sales. I started with higher prices and grid. I did the digital, like when I was in photography school and when I was interning, I totally did that. But when I officially opened, like I was, I had, I did all of that like a, so I've always done the in person sales. I do it a lot better now. I can tell you that for sure. Yeah, it has changed to be definitely more profitable, but I had a lot of help too along the way. Like I um, did the SMS program through PPA, which unfortunately you don't have anymore. Um, but it helped you really refine your numbers and helped me to become more profitable. And they, they, you work with an accountant at PPA and you also get a mentor. And actually Alison Tyler Jones was my mentor with her a lot.

Speaker 3 ([13:35](#)):

Yeah. So, um, I got to know her really well and she's obviously a wealth of knowledge, so, but that really prepared me to start. But I was set up like, so PPA recommends success where, I don't know if they recommend it still, but it was, it's a studio management program. You have to like numbers to use it. So a lot of numbers still like, um, I've used it since I opened and I still love it. So like I was set up with a lot of stuff like that, but there was still a huge learning curve for racially. Oh yeah. That's so funny. That was, you were there too, is your first year.

Speaker 1 ([14:07](#)):

I know it was a giant Gaylord. So overwhelming. So many people. Gosh, yes, yes. I remember like just getting in bottlenecks after platforms open. Like you can't walk in the hallways, don't make people, and knowing our post Corona world, we're like, Oh my, and I, I can't imagine everybody going up to six feet. It's going to be interesting how conferences next year. Yeah. Yeah. It's going to be interesting how everything, I know everything is moving forward. Yeah, that's true. Good. Then I think all of us as a collective species are going to have like this fear of crowds and everyone's going to be like, even when it's okay, it'd be like, no, Nope.

Speaker 1 ([14:47](#)):

I know this has changed my outlook on what is an acceptable amount of busy, um, in my life. And I've actually, I mean I've, I've had enough now and it can be done now, but um, I, I have discovered that like, Oh, the reason I hated cooking dinner was because it was like I'd be working, I'd have to hurry up and feed them. I'd have to like run to somebody's soccer practice. I'd have to figure out how we're going to eat. It's now quarter to eight. They need to get to bed their school tomorrow. It was just like this constant run around that I'm like, okay, that that needs to like not happen so much anymore

Speaker 3 ([15:22](#)):

activities with kids once they start to get older, it's just insane. Yeah. Ours are fairly limited and it's still insane. Well, the cooking though, I, I'm not excited about, I cook normally like five nights a week. It's no big deal. But my husband in the last two months decided to become vegan and I wanted him, not that there's anything wrong with being vegan and just you have to prepare vegan meals now and you're like,

what? It's done and I don't, I don't know how to do this and the kids aren't going to eat vegan. Then I have the kids' meals. I have mine, I'm not vegan and I'm just like, I want to kill you. Like good for you.

Speaker 1 ([15:57](#)):

I'd be like, go ahead. You're well you can do that. You have to cook.

Speaker 3 ([16:00](#)):

Well I feel bad because I had like a mental block about cooking for a long time and then I finally was like, just make your own dinner. Be like that. But I was like, I can't do it. It's too much. Too much. Maybe vegetarian. It's so much easier. We've had this conversation a few times, but yeah. That's funny. Oh man. Crazy. Alright, well back to back to actual photography things. This is what happens when you have people you know on, anyway,

Speaker 1 ([16:31](#)):

let's talk more about, so I know we want to talk about like just some of the customer service and like the brand value and just how you create this value for your business that helps you stand out from the other people in your market. Then maybe shoot and burn or don't offer the level of service that you do. So maybe just tell us a little bit about what a,

Speaker 3 ([16:51](#)):

so being, you know, a small business in a boutique studio, you know, it's always great cause you get lower clients, higher, a lower volume of clients, higher dollar amount per ticket, but you can't do that if you don't approach it in a way that really maximizes that experience. So I don't have any employees. I've, I've had interns and stuff and you know, virtual assistants, but nobody that faces off with a client other than myself. And I think that's a big part of it. But a lot of studios are like that. But to make it really maximize that and really make people feel like they matter and like, you know, their, their specialty, your business, cause you do have to remember that we rely on these people to have, make sure that our businesses is doing well and you know, staying afloat and being profitable. And so we need to treat these people accordingly.

Speaker 3 ([17:39](#)):

But so like one of the biggest things that I always like to mention about customer services from the initial point of contact. So when people either come to my website or they give me a call or however first reach out, like I put on my contact form on my website requires a phone number. And I know a lot of people, it's funny whenever I teach or talk to other photographers about this, they're like, Ooh, I don't really like to talk on the phone. And it's funny cause like when I started I didn't either. But you know, but it's kind of not, I try to put it in perspective and that, okay, well listen, so let's assume that this one client is contacting five other photographers and they're all kind of prefers and they're, you know, different but close enough that you know, they could kind of go with anybody to say, I mean hopefully you've differentiate yourself and so forth.

Speaker 3 ([18:25](#)):

That's another topic. But so let's say they do that. I guarantee you, if you give them a call on the phone and most likely it's going to go to voicemail, but if it doesn't that you will be the only one who does it. And it's sad that that is true. And it's funny because every time I've called somebody and I've actually gotten them on the phone, there's like an overwhelming thank you so much for taking the time to call

me. It's like you're not, they're not just another number again, you actually care. You actually want to talk to them about what you can do for them and how you can, you know, fill that need that they're calling you about because, and don't feel weird. Like if somebody reaches out to you because calling them back, you're not cold calling like cold calling is the worst, but no, that's a warm lead. They obviously want you to reach back out. Yes, go ahead. Go. No, no, no. I mean, I was just gonna

Speaker 1 ([19:09](#)):

I say that I know my own outlook on the phone has changed dramatically over the past couple of years as I've gotten busier with kids, my business and everything else that like I used to be someone that would say, Oh my God, I hate the phone. I hate the phone. Like go and ring. And I'm like, Oh, stop. Um, and I still don't like talking on the phone. However, as a consumer, when I want to find the answer for something, I'll go to their website and find it or you know, and if I can't find it or if I have additional questions, I just want to call and talk to somebody, you know, if it's, if it's something a little bit more involved, like I don't want, I'm actually starting to put down now on the to prefer us to email you or call you. I'm like call because I know it could get lost in my email. I have so many filters like Michael over here, I might never hear from them. So I actually prefer the phone now and I'm like, Oh, could it be that some of my clients actually prefer the phone now too? A minute.

Speaker 3 ([19:59](#)):

And if you think about it too, from the perspective of who your client is. So like I know I have several different clients. Like I have my dual income, no kids, I've got my young professional women and I've got my empty nesters, which are probably the best bucket that I pull from. But, so I like to think of these empty nesters. I always try to picture somebody that I know that fits into that area. And so I always look, when I think of empty nesters, I think of my mom when my brother was a senior in high school, my parents got to Cavaliers and as soon as he went they had babies again. You know, we don't even went to college. Yeah. And so I think about her and I think, okay, let's say that she miraculously went to my website and filled out the contact form.

Speaker 3 ([20:39](#)):

Debatable. But you know, if you think about, you don't know who this person is. And if my mom were to fill out my contact form, put all her information, I emailed her, I would never hear from her. Never. She sh it would get so buried in her email. But if I called her I would get her. So think about it from that perspective too. Like if it's the young professional woman, again you don't know, you know who it is, but it call first leave a message if they email you back, cause I always give them my email in the, in the phone message and then, you know, you can contact them that way. But the fact is is that you called initially, you took that time initially and that goes a long way, even if you don't get them. So,

Speaker 1 ([21:15](#)):

and even if they're one of the younger, that's gonna say, even if they're one of the younger, the younger people, like you're a dual income, no kids that are, you know, maybe, uh, you know, gen Y that just don't want to really be on the phone that much yet. But yeah, you call and you leave a message. If they don't want to talk, they're not going to answer the phone. And if you just leave a message and then give them the opportunity to call you back or email, I do the same thing. I always give people both chances. Like, here's my phone number here. It's my email. Get back to me however you feel more comfortable. Um, yeah. Yeah. Like they're not going to get that message from you and be like, Oh, what a horrible person she called me. I'm not going to do business with her.

Speaker 3 ([21:55](#)):

No, no. And I guarantee you, you're going to be the only one if not like one of two maybe. And I, that really starts to narrow down the field because if you think about it, they contact five people. You're the only one who takes the time to call them. So what I do is I call them if I either talk to my phone or I leave them a message and then I follow up with an email right after I've left a voicemail and I just say, Hey, I just left you a voicemail. Would love to chat with you, blah, blah, whatever. And I've already, you know, reached out to them multiple ways, told them I'm very interested, I want to help them and that's going to put me way above the rest who either some drivers won't even email back or they might just shoot you a price list to be like, here you go. Which says nothing. Right. Yeah.

Speaker 1 ([22:32](#)):

It's just an automated response. Exactly. Which I do. I do like an automated response but I like an automated response that is automated and obviously automated and says, Hey thank you so much for submitting. Like I have mine come from my cat and I'm so they know it's, it's cute. It's, they know it's automated and it just lets them know what the next steps to like let them know, Hey it's Nicole will be calling you in the next, you know, as soon as she can and um, you know, and just telling them what the next steps are.

Speaker 3 ([23:01](#)):

Right. And I think that's really important cause I have one of those two so people, you know, email me directly cause I have my email on the website. If they send a contact form, they get that automated email and it says that I'll be contacting them within the next, I don't know, 24 to 48 hours and the key is stick to that but don't, don't let it go. And I also put in there, I'm very specific between normal business hours and then I tell them what those are so that they expect that during the normal business hours and that they also kind of sets the tone for don't expect. So, um, but yeah, no I think it's important to be very connected but to have that personal touch because a lot of photographers won't do that, which it's really detrimental to your business. Cause if you're running this

Speaker 1 ([23:46](#)):

boutique type business where you're facing, you know, client facing all the time, people know that they talk with you. If you don't give them the attention and the time, why should they give you their money basically? Yeah. I don't know if you found, but the people that I get on the phone and I have conversations with almost always

Speaker 3 ([24:05](#)):

convert to be a client. Oh yeah. If you can get them on the phone. I, I very, I think I've had, since I've been open since 2010, I've had two people that have actually gone from the phone to coming into a planning session that didn't book, but 10 years. I mean, yeah. So I mean, if I can get them on the phone, I can get them to come in and it's just talking with people and it's not, it's not like we're talking about the price or we're talking about, you know, what they're wanting and then, you know, you shift the conversation to be geared towards their pet, which people that are pet people love to talk about their animals and you know, making sure that you understand that relationship that they have. I think that's really key to being a successful pet photographer is really understanding the relationship people have with their pets and having no judgment.

Speaker 3 ([24:50](#)):



And there's a lot of people, like I, I did a, uh, I worked with a branding coach years ago and one of the things he made me do was reach out to my top three clients and ask them why they loved me, which is a tough thing to do. It's a little uncomfortable. And I did it. I set up calls with them and one of them I'll never forget, she's come to me since I opened and, um, absolutely loves her dog. And I asked her, you know why she chose me? Why she come to me? And she said, well, well, the first time you ever met my dog, you didn't call her it, you called her, she or by name. I was like, to me that's just normal. You know? And then she was like, and they're, you never judged the way I was with her because she was, you know, off the charts in love. This was her baby. But to me that was normal, you know? But it's a big part of what we do. And I think really understanding that, you know, that relationship. And I think it helps obviously if you have your own pets and if you're crazy like everybody else in the dog world, that world, whatever. It helps to understand that relationship and people want to work with somebody who's not going to judge them based on how they treat their pets.

Speaker 1 ([25:55](#)):

That's a great, great point too and one thing that I think that a lot of pet photographers fall into the trap of is trying to speak to everybody in their marketing and their messaging and be like, well, anyone with a dog is my market, is my client, my potential client. And that's really not the case at all.

Speaker 3 ([26:14](#)):

No, it's not. I mean you have to be very specific and I know that there's a lot of things out there about marketing and branding and people get overwhelmed and it can, you know, initially when you're putting this stuff together it can seem overwhelming and daunting. Like there's all this information, how am I going to do this? But really if you sit down and you, you do it once and it's going to take some time, it's going to really set the foundation though for your business moving forward. I've kept a pretty consistent message. I may have tweaked it over the years, but I like to be specific about who I want to target. And, and you're, you have to keep in mind too, like your, your demographics and your target market are not the same as your branding. The branding is that message is going to speak to that perfect client of yours and the demographics and the target market are basically just the cold hard facts of who you're going to be targeting, like occupation, you know, age, things like that.

Speaker 3 ([27:01](#)):

But having that message that really speaks to that perfect client is where your brand comes in. And um, one of my favorite quotes, I hope I get it right about branding is from Jeff Bezos. And it's your brand is what people say about you when you're not in the room. Well. Yeah, and I love it because it's so true because you have the capability to create what that is that people say about you. And it can be positive or negative. And I feel like people don't always think about that. Like think about if you walked into a store and you had a horrible experience, like moving forward, you're not gonna want to go back. That horrible experience is stuck in your mind. And for example, tell a quick story. Um, I was, let's see this, I was going to Starbucks and I don't go to Starbucks a lot, but I remember, uh, I had just said, my daughter, she was like three months old.

Speaker 3 ([27:43](#)):

She was in the backseat asleep in her car seat and I think we just go to the doctor or something. And I was like, I could use a coffee. So I go wait in the line for like 20 minutes, get to the front, pull away, it's the wrong coffee. And I was so mad. I was like, okay, I've just waited for 20 minutes. I can either get my daughter out of the car in her car seat or just go home and be bad. And I was like, I'm just going to go

home and be mad. And I was so mad that I actually tweeted Starbucks, which I never do anything like that. Yeah. So what does Starbucks do? Within like an hour, they private messaged me on Twitter, apologizing, asking for my address and they said they were like, we're going to send you free drink vouchers.

Speaker 3 ([28:20](#)):

And within a week I had five free drink vouchers from Starbucks with an apology. And so they took a really bad situation cause I was so mad and they made it a really good situation. So that's taking, you know, they could have left it, I could have never gone to Starbucks again or they could have, you know, flipped it like they did. And that's one of the best times that you can really take a bad situation turned into an amazing customer service experience for your client is when something bad happens.

Absolutely. Yeah. And I think people are so scared to admit that something, you know, something didn't go as planned, but I have found that if you just say, Oh my gosh, you know, I know I told you that your artwork would be in it came in, it's not perfect. You know, whatever is, this isn't quite perfect for you.

Speaker 3 ([29:05](#)):

You know, this is such a special piece. I want to make sure it's 100% absolutely perfect. I'm going to order a new one. It's going to take a little bit more time. If you just let people know what's going on. They're like, Oh, okay, that's fine. Yeah. Thank you so much for doing that. Oh, you know like being transparent, being completely upfront with how things are. It's very important. Like I had a client once who came in, I got had her piece, she had a framed, she took it home, everything was perfect with it. She took the tape off and for some reason like got it caught on the frame and it pulled some of the lacquer of the frame off and once it left my, you know, now my fault. You know, I shouldn't do that. She calls me and she's like, I wanted to let you know that this happened.

Speaker 3 ([29:42](#)):

I was like, uh, no, no, I'm going to come pick it up. I will fix the frame at my costs and I will not hand deliver it back to you. And she was just expecting me to say, Oh, I'm really sorry. Yeah, right. I want it to be right. And so she's going to remember that I went above and beyond to make it work. Yeah. So that's huge for customer service. And I feel like a lot of times now people are just like, Oh, you know, I'm sorry. That's right. Well, and I think they get worried too. They're like, Oh my God, I can't afford to replace it, or you know, this or that. Which brings us back to that pricing point that you need to make sure that your prices aren't a point where you can afford to do these kinds of customer service things when they come up, but doesn't happen all the time.

Speaker 3 ([30:18](#)):

Thankfully, it doesn't happen that often, but you need to be able to make things right when you, when the situation happens. So you want to make sure that you have that which do a quick, um, a shameless plug that if you guys want some more pricing help, if you go to [hair of the dog, academy.com/pricing](https://hairofthedog.com/academy.com/pricing) have a free pricing masterclass that will help you get your pricing all in order to make sure you are profitable, depending on how many clients you want, how often you need to work, how many hours it takes you to go through an entire client and what your goals are. So it's really numbers made just for you and your business. So definitely go check that out. Yeah, for sure. Because pricing is so, so important and people are so often looking at somebody else's pricing if they put on their website and you have no idea what their costs are or what they're doing on the backend.

Speaker 3 ([31:05](#)):

And it's really important to, to start building some sort of reserve or a cushion, I think. Um, because when I had my home or not my retail studio, my landlord deposited six rent checks at the same time and I wasn't accruing my vet checks because I was broke and I had to get a second loan, which was super fun. Yeah. So I've obviously never done that again and I keep a decent cushion or things that come up like right now, like the way the world is, I can still pay myself right now because I have that cushion. I still need to eat my family needs, you know right now. But also if one of those customer service things comes up, I have money in there that can cover it. So the cushion to you could be anything from 500 bucks to, you know, a lot.

Speaker 3 ([31:49](#)):

I, it's whatever makes you comfortable, but it's important to have something in there in case things happen. Absolutely. Like if your computer dies and you know, you can't work without a computer or a camera or whatever else. So yeah, super, super important. And I think a lot of another spot that some people get in trouble, like the first really their first busy year of business where you know, third quarter or fourth quarter is so busy and usually from us photographers, that's by far the highest grossing quarter. And many people are paying their sales tax quarterly and they go through this crazy awesome, you know, quarter or they're having all these sales, then it's Christmas, then it's all this. And then January 20th or 18th whenever it's due, here's your sales steps bill, a couple thousand dollars and sometimes people were like, what? Oh my God. Oh yeah.

Speaker 3 ([32:37](#)):

So you got to keep track of that too and make sure that your stories of being like, I had such a great December, I went out and bought all these, I bought new lens, I've read this. And then the sales tax bill comes and it's like, Oh no. Right, right. And even worse sometimes as the April 15th actual federal income tax bill, like Oh, excuse me. Oh I know, I know. So I mean some people I know will have a separate bank account just for sales tax. So every time they have a job, they'll separate it. Um, so I mean there's lots of ways you can get, you know, make sure you don't do that

Speaker 1 ([33:10](#)):

fan of that. I have so many like random bank accounts. I have a bank account for work and money. I have a bank account for like just a savings account. I have my regular operating account, I have, you know, a tax savings account. And then my personal side, you know, I have

Speaker 3 ([33:22](#)):

various ones for different things there. It's just, it's crazy. But it's, it's smart though. I mean I, you know, I have all these separate accounts as well that, well my husband's a financial advisor so he sets up all my savings and all that stuff and manages it, which is great. Um, so I'm just like, here's a check. Do, do, do good things to be. Exactly, exactly. It's funny cause right before all this Corona virus stuff, uh, he bought zoom and he's like, yeah, this company zoom this doing really well. Have you ever heard of him? I was like, yes, I used all the time. He was like, Oh, all right, cool. But you know, it was great cause it made me some money. It's funny like, yeah, I'm really up on it. Ted, you know, working at home, zoom, all the, all the memes. They're just like hysterical of the, I saw one the other day with just said, um, me, the show is boring box. This is your office meeting. I just started following this thing on Instagram called Wolf Wolf TV. And it is hysterical. I mean it's a lot of golden retrievers too. So of course I'm partial. I just love a good golden retriever. But there was one this morning, it's a golden retriever, like standing, looking over

the fence very quietly while these neighbors fight. It's hysterical to check it out, look it up. It's, it's just, it just makes you smile. It's just funny. I love it. I love it.

Speaker 1 ([34:41](#)):

Cool. Awesome. Well thank you Kim for being here with us. So you guys might not know that Kim is also one of our coaches in the hair of the dog Academy and also one of the coaches in our elevate program, which is our higher level group coaching program to help pet photographers. Just scale their businesses faster and further was awesome to have you here, Kim chatting with you. Can you tell us a little bit too about where people can find you on all of your places?

Speaker 3 ([35:08](#)):

Sure. Well my website is Kim, uh, hartz.com. Sorry to think about that. I know, jeez. Uh, and it's H a R T, Z and then I offer a different, you know, teaching and programs, but I think most of it's inherited the dog Academy or an elevate. So yeah, your

Speaker 1 ([35:26](#)):

pet photography program is in the Academy now, which is my gosh, it has studio lighting, outdoor lighting with flash natural lighting. Like really everything you need to know for, you know,

Speaker 3 ([35:38](#)):

photographing dogs in the studio or outside. It's a great, great course. Yeah. And it's exclusively inherit the dog Academy. So, um, yeah, it's, that's probably my main course right now that, uh, that I offer. So that's, I also have a consulting site if you want to work with me. It's just Kim heart's consulting.com. But, um, yeah, the majority of my stuff is in there cause I want to help out all the pet photographers. It's, that course too is pretty much what I would have loved to have when I was starting out as a pathogenic real cause there was nothing and, and I did workshops which were helpful and I did other, you know, workshops that weren't pet based. Cause even when I started there was no pet based workshops. Um, yeah. So it's kind of what I created trying to help people. And even if you're starting out, it's still helpful in that like if you want to add off camera flash, you want to add studio or how do you photograph, you know, with natural light in a client's home and you know, best, you know. So there's a lot of good information working with dogs, all that good stuff. So yeah, no. And then, um, yeah, I'm an elevate too, which is really fun. If you're looking to take the next step, I actually have a coaching call later today going over some assignments I've put out there. Nice. Fun. Yeah, I love it. Awesome. Well, thanks again, Kim for being here with us and um, we will be talking to you soon. All right. Thanks so much for having me. It was a lot of fun.

Speaker 2 ([36:56](#)):

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