

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

Welcome to the hair of the dog podcast. I'm Nicole Begley. And today we are going to be talking about that cheap competition. Come on. You know, you have it, you know that it's everywhere. We're going to be talking about it. So stay tuned.

Speaker 2 ([00:13](#)):

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 photographer, travel addict, chocolate martini connoisseur, Nicole Begley.

Speaker 1 ([00:31](#)):

Hey everybody, Nicole here from hair of the dog. No guests today. It's just me. So get prepared to listen to me, drone on for a little bit about something I feel pretty passionate about, and that is pricing. Let's see, where do I even want to start today? Well, I know where I'll start. I was on Facebook, you know, as we tend to get sucked into and I'm scrolling along and I see an ad for this new company offering photography services, and you'll never guess what the price is. All right. Do you have a guess? What is it? Um, it's probably lower. Let's lower that a little bit. The Bryce was actually a free photo shoot and pay only for the picture you love for \$15 each or less or less than \$15 each you guys, this takes the cake as a new, low in the pricing that I've seen for photography industry.

Speaker 1 ([01:26](#)):

And it's not even an individual photographer because an individual photographer really cannot possibly have a successful business or a business that will be around for the longterm with those prices, because it just doesn't even pay us anywhere close to minimum wage with the amount of work and time and effort that goes into working with our client and photographing, but even crazier is this is another one of those big companies that offers these shoots in pairs clients up with photographers in their area to show up and take cheap pictures. Now, do I have any ill will towards this company? No. Do I have any ill will towards the photographers that work for that company? No. Do I think it's going to be the downfall of my business or your business? No, not at all. Actually. I think it's pretty brilliant. These companies have found a need in the market and people want not all people.

Speaker 1 ([02:18](#)):

Let me rephrase that. There is a segment of the market that wants cheap, easy photography services when they want it, where they want it. And they are not stuck on the value. They don't care about the final product. They have just a quick need and a company like this is here to fill it. And they are basically just taking a piece of whatever it is. So they create the platform. They find independent contractor photographers. They hook them up with the clients. They get paid, they paid the photographer and they keep a little portion of it. So it's a pretty brilliant business model. They have no employees. They're all independent contractors. Yeah. And they're filling a need in the market. And there is always going to be a need in the market for cheap photography. Now you guys have a choice where do you want to be in the market?

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

Do you want to fill the need of cheap photography? You can do that. You can absolutely do that. And you can do cheap photography at high volume. That's a very doable business model. Things like school, photography, sports photography is a volume model business. And it can be very, very profitable, but it's

set up as a volume model business. It's not set up as, Oh, I'm going to photograph a couple of clients a week and I'm going to spend hours editing these photos. And I'm going to create these beautiful artistic edits. Yeah, no that doesn't compute with cheap. So let's imagine there's a triangle and on each corner, one is fast. One is good and one is cheap. Now you can only usually have two of those three things in any product or service. You can have fast and good. You can have good and cheap.

Speaker 1 ([03:51](#)):

You can have cheap and fast, but you can't have fast, good and cheap. It's just not possible. So you need to determine where you want to be in the market and who you want to serve in the market. So when you see businesses like these and ads, like these pop up on social media and even individual photographers in your market under cutting themselves and selling everything for a very low price, don't worry about it. They are going after the market that is in need of fast and or cheap or fast and cheap. They are leaving the market wide wide open for good. They are leaving the market wide wide open for service. Then there are always people in our markets looking for service and quality all the time. No matter what you're selling, there are always people looking for service and quality. I was flipping through one of my travel magazines couple of years ago.

Speaker 1 ([04:42](#)):

My favorite thing to do, usually on an airplane, haven't been able to sit on an airplane very recently. So now I read them on my porch, not nearly as exciting. Anyway, I'm flipping through and they had a little page with different beach towels. Now I'm the type of girl that, you know, if I'm going to splurge for a beach towel, I'm getting it from Costco because it's the same price as target and extra thick. But, um, I'm certainly not going to be getting my beach towels from like Nordstrom or, you know, someplace like that. Well, they were highlighting different beach towels in one of the beach towels was, are you ready? \$450, but there is a market out there guys for \$450 beach towels. That seems insane to me, but apparently people will buy it. So I guarantee you there's people that will spend money for good service, good photography and beautiful products.

Speaker 1 ([05:31](#)):

So that's the choice we have today is what are we going to do in our business to stand out from the sea of cheap and fast? What are we going to offer our clients? How are we going to create our experience for our clients that shows them the value? And they know that it was money well spent and they look back and they loved the images and they loved the experience and they tell their friends and our business continues to grow. So what are some different ways that we can stand out from these other photographers and these other companies? Well, what can we create that our client can't create on our own, um, spoiler alert. That's something beyond prints, digital files. Of course we can always offer prints and digital files. But if you want to run a boutique business, it's so important that you focus on product.

Speaker 1 ([06:21](#)):

One of the other things we can do is his offer in-person sales. Now I think we should change the name. I don't think it should be called in-person sales because that little five letter word at the end, that sales word just strikes fear into the heart of photographers worldwide. And it conjures up images of sleazy car salesman, trying to sell things. They don't want being high pressure, all these bad negative connotation. So no wonder so many people out there thinking, Oh my gosh, there's no way I'm going to do in person. Yeah, yeah. Yup. That's not me. I'm not a salesman. So let's change that. How about in person consultations in person consultations or viewing consultations or decorating consultations, whatever

you want to call it, change the name. Let's offer those. If you've listened to some of the other points, God cast episodes here at hair of the dog podcast of some of the other successful photographers I've been interviewing, you will notice.

Speaker 1 ([07:18](#)):

There is one very common thread that runs through all of their businesses and that is they do in person sales or in person consultations, whatever you want to call it again. And I think the biggest key to changing that is just to change our mind mindset around that, get rid of that word, call it whatever you want. And know that from those of us that are offering the service to our clients, it often becomes our client's favorite part of the session. They thank us for having these consultations with them, because put yourself in their shoes, say you had this wonderful experience. You went with the photographer, you created these images during the session. You're nervous that your dog's not behaving, that these images aren't going to turn out and you know, thankfully they are and they do. And then your photographer just sends you an email.

Speaker 1 ([08:10](#)):

Here's your images. Let me know what you want. And you open it up and you see beautiful images and there's 60 bucks, beautiful images. And you have no eye DIA. They sent you a price list with an album, some wall art, some prints, some digital files. You have this online gallery. You don't know how to possibly choose. You love so many of them. So what do you do while you shut down the computer? Because somebody needs some dinner or the dog needs to go outside or the mailman's here. And do you ever come back to it? Yeah. At some point, but it becomes this thing. I know you guys have of these on your, to do list to where it's been on your to do list for literally months, I actually had to make a phone call to my insurance agent about a renewable policy.

Speaker 1 ([08:53](#)):

And it was on to do list. Guys. This is embarrassing for like almost 60 days. And guess how long it took me once I actually picked up the phone. Oh, 10 minutes. So that's the kind of procrastination you are giving to your clients. You're putting them in that position when you send them that online gallery and just in price list and tell them to pick out what they want. They don't know they are overwhelmed. They just don't know. The other thing, even if they do know can go through and they have a system and they kind of figure out what they want, guess what they're going to order what they know and what they know are digital files and prints. They're not going to order that 40 by 60 above their couch. That's going to look amazing and be an incredible showstopper because they need your permission to do that.

Speaker 1 ([09:37](#)):

And your permission looks like them coming into a place and seeing samples, whether you're going to their home or they're coming to your sales room or your studio, you don't need a studio. That's another big belief in misconception. And in-person consultations sales is that you need to have them come to you. No, I went to numb for the first six years of my business. I went to their home. That's actually, I think even a higher service because you're coming to them. You're bringing samples into their home. You can see their walls, you can offer suggestions. It's a great service to offer. So it doesn't matter if they're coming to you or you're coming to them. But regardless, when you see them in person, they're able to see those samples. They're able to see what it looks like. Printed. They're able to see how beautiful and acrylic is or framed canvas or a traditional print.

Speaker 1 ([10:24](#)):

They can see the different frames. They can see what size it could look like on your wall or on their wall. So all of these things give them a subconscious permission to create the artwork that we are hoping. They create that doesn't, it happened with an online gallery. Now, the other ways that we can differentiate ourselves from the, you know, see a fast and cheap photographers and options out there on the market are to create beautiful images. So, you know, these companies that are offering these like, you know, photographer on demand for \$25 or a hundred dollars, and you get 30 images, these are not pet photographers were pet photographers. This specific John rhe requires knowledge of dogs. It requires specific knowledge on how to bring out their best behavior on how to photograph them and get the best expression. Most of the photographers on these other platforms can't do that.

Speaker 1 ([11:16](#)):

They are probably also very minimally editing images. That means they're not removing leashes. That means they don't necessarily even know the safety protocols of having to photograph dogs on leash, in different areas of the world and the different areas of the public like parks and cities and things like that. So these are all value added selling points that we can use to build the value of what we offer and how that is different. They also are not going to spend time creating something and unique and Photoshop. And I'm not saying you have to do that, but if you will have a higher end offer like painting or composites, or just taking a piece of, uh, an image and taking it through Photoshop to create something just really, jaw-dropping on beautiful for artwork on the wall, then those are the things that they can possibly offer at those lower price points.

Speaker 1 ([12:10](#)):

So those are the things that you can use again, to differentiate your business, guess what else they can offer at those lower price points. They can't offer the level of service. They can't offer the professionalism. They can't offer the individual service that you're going to offer to your clients, where you talk to your clients, you find out about their dog, about their dog's behavior, about where their dog's going to be most comfortable for their session, about what location, you know, what do they want in the location? What are they looking for in the backgrounds of their images, where you can then offer different locations of fit with that dog's behavior with the outcome that they're looking for, you're creating this full custom experience for them. The other services can't do that. So what do we actually really need to create this boutique experience to create this value experience that clients will pay 10 or a hundred times more than these cheap services that are offered online?

Speaker 1 ([13:05](#)):

So what do we need? Well, number one, we need a website. Our website acts as our storefront. It is the place where everyone is going to go and check out our work and check out who we are and what we do and who we serve. So imagine this, what if someone like they have a dog they're super excited. They actually ask a friend for recommendation and say, Hey, I know you used a pet photographer. Who did you use? So this is a hot lead. They are ready to book. They are ready to buy and their friend tells them, you know, XYZ photography. You can't tell me, they're not going to go to your website before they call you. They're 100% still gonna check you out. Even if they get this incredible recommendation from a friend, they're going to go to your website. So what's your website doing?

Speaker 1 ([13:49](#)):

Is your website helping you earn business or is your website driving business away, easy to navigate? Does it load quickly? What, or on your website, do your images have a consistent look and feel? Is there information about you on your website? Because let's face it guys. We are a personal brand. We need to, um, be visible in our business so that people know who we are because it's just us. We're not a big corporation. And again, that becomes one of our values. Two ads that we can give to the marketplace, next area that we can stand out is during the inquiry process. Does that look like now, remember this doesn't mean we need to spend a ton of money on, on beautiful, fancy printed piece bases and all sorts of bells and whistles. The name of the game, same here is personalized service and being responsive and being available by phone.

Speaker 1 ([14:43](#)):

If your potential client wants to speak, speak to you by phone. Now I hate that the phone, as much as the rest of you do I really despise the phone. I hate talking on the phone and I really hate calling people. I don't know, on the phone so much. It's like when I was a kid like ordering pizza, just scared the bejesus out of me. But anyway, now in our busy, busy world with our emails that are overflowing, I've found that I actually start to prefer the phone and I'm picking up the phone to call companies and get my questions answered. Because if I just do an email, then I don't hear back right away. I'm scared I'm going to miss it because my email's so full. And you know, it's just, it's easier sometimes now to go by phone. So some people are actually, you know, going back to wanting information by phone.

Speaker 1 ([15:31](#)):

So I like to give my clients a choice and let them know I'm available by phone or email and make sure I'm always giving my phone number too, in case they're interested with that. But what are some other ways that you can make your inquiry process a bit more exceptional? Well, the first thing is to make sure that you are responsive and you get back quickly. So that can be an automatic email reply that set up whenever somebody fills out a form on your website or a contact form that they automatically get an email that says, Hey, thank you so much for your email. Here is a little bit of general information about my studio, and I'll be getting in touch with you in the next 24 to 48 hours. So they at least have a little quick something because our attention span is shorter than a goldfish here in 2020, our human brains are just devolving into, I don't know, just we need more information all the time and people are not patient.

Speaker 1 ([16:27](#)):

So being able to get them a little bit of something, even if it's not personalized information right away is a great thing to do. Another way is to find a way to get them personalized information. You know, you can definitely call them. One other thing you can do is create a loom video. So if you go to loom L O M I think it's loom.com, but if you search loom screencast or screen recording, it's a free service. It basically will just open up on your computer, on your webpage or whatever page you have open. And there's a little picture of you in the corner. And you can just say, Hey, Jane, thanks so much for reaching out. I'm Nicole. Here's how my process works. Here's what we can do. Make sure you check out this area of my website and you can be on that page and show them where the information is.

Speaker 1 ([17:15](#)):

You can show them how to access your inquiry guide or your product guide, things like that. So that becomes a really easy thing to do that is going to set you head and shoulders above everyone else. So number one, website, number two, what's your inquiry process important point number three, to make

you stand out from the sea of shooting burners is what's your planning process for your session? You know, we've got to do a lot more than just show up at the park and create photographs. We want to know what they want to do with these images. How do they want to display them? What is the design of their home? So what do we think we might be printing these images on? Are they interested in albums? We start to talk about, you know, their dog's behavior, what types of images from our website that they love.

Speaker 1 ([18:02](#)):

So we can do something similar. Um, do they want a more urban field? Do they want a more natural feel? What colors are in the room that they're going to be hanging this portrait in? Is there a way that we either coordinate or make sure that it's not, you know, distracting and competing with the colors there? So things like that allow you to elevate your game above what the shoot and burners can possibly offer. So number one, website, number two, inquiry process, number three, planning process, and number four, our session, the session itself should be fun, should be relaxed. We have time. We have the ability, if the weather's not good to reschedule and get them in, in a sooner timeframe, then, you know, if you are booked with 10 sessions a week and you have to reschedule, you're not going to be able to get them in for like three more weeks.

Speaker 1 ([18:52](#)):

So being able to offer them a high level of service at the session and making it memorable and easy and having things like extra poop bags in our bag, and you know, some water for the dog in case they forgot it. Just little things like that. Take it above and beyond what any of these online services can possibly offer. All right, a number five is our viewing and ordering appointment. Again, this is a service that we're offering. Don't make me get back up on the soap box. It's not high pressure. It's not about sales. It is a service we are offering to allow our clients to choose exactly what they want with their images and display them in a way that they are going to love. And it's going to bring them joy for years to come. This is a huge service. And then finally, number six is how are we delivering our products?

Speaker 1 ([19:48](#)):

How are we following up at the end of our session at the end of our experience? Because one of the things that's really important is for us to realize that this client relationship doesn't end when our products are delivered, it's really just getting started. That's one of the beauties of being able to run these boutique businesses is we create relationships with so many of our clients. And I often find myself thinking of my clients, or I see something that reminds me of my clients, or if I see one of their old images, you know, maybe I'll just send them a quick email and check in on them and see how they're doing those little things like that just mean the world to our clients in a world where personal interaction is so hard to come by. And when you go to the mail and it's nothing but junk mail, heck I hardly even get bills in the mail anymore because they're mostly electronic or just direct debited.

Speaker 1 ([20:39](#)):

Like we don't even get bills. It's really just junk mail. So to take a moment and just write a little handwritten card to a previous, letting them know you're thinking about them, Oh my gosh, you guys low hanging fruit. So easy to do and has such an incredible impact. So to wrap this episode up, I want to say that the rise of these companies offering these photo sessions for next to nothing is not the downfall of our industry. It's a call to action. It's a call to action for you to take your craft and your business to the next level, a level that isn't crowded with cheap photographers, a level in which clients appreciate your

service and a level in which you are creating art and an unparalleled experience. Those are the keys to success. Now, shameless little plug. If you're looking for help with those keys to success, make sure you check out the hair of the dog Academy, because that's what we do there.

Speaker 1 ([21:40](#)):

We help you elevate your craft and we help you grow your business. And we help you set up your business in a way that you are bringing a great client experience to your clients and creating value and memories and experiences that will keep bringing clients back year after year. If you want more information on the Academy, just head on over to www.hairofthedogacademy.com/academy. And we look forward to seeing you there. And of course, we always have a bunch of free resources as well@hairofthedogacademy.com. Check that out. We have our pricing one Oh one course, our editing one Oh one course, both of which are free. So definitely check that out and get some help that you need to help elevate your craft and your business. And I can't wait to see where you take it. And I hope to see you here next week.

Speaker 2 ([22:29](#)):

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