

00:00:00 Hey there, you're listening to the hair of the dog podcast. And I'm your host, Nicole Begley on today's episode, I am so honored to welcome one of the leaders in the portrait business worldwide in helping photographers up-level their business, get more clients in the door. And most importantly, earn a living that gives them freedom and earns what really we should be earning as a business owner.

00:00:27 So if you're in business or thinking of starting your business, you definitely want to take a listen to this episode. A great conversation with Megan and we are diving all into what it takes to be a Luxe business. And it's not necessarily what you think. So stay tuned. 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,

00:00:52 you've come to the right place. And now your host, pet photographer, travel addict, chocolate martini connoisseur, Nicole Begley. Hey, everybody. Welcome to the hair of the dog podcast. I'm your host, Nicole Begley. And today we have a very special guest with us. The one, the only Megan DiPiero from Southwest Florida and Megan DiPiero photography.

00:01:16 Welcome Megan to the podcast. Well, hello, Nicole. Good to be here. I'm So excited that you're here. Yeah, I am so well, let's back up before we distill, like I just sometimes get so excited and I dive straight into things. So before I dive into the book that we're going to talk about and all your incredible pricing,

00:01:35 sales and knowledge, why don't we take a step back and let everybody know a little bit about you and where you live and what you do and all that good stuff. All that good stuff. Yeah. So I am in Southwest Florida, lovely sunny, Southwest Florida. And I've been in business as a photographer for the last 10 years. So in that time,

00:01:55 built my business up to a half a million dollars, love it there. And then I had a choice. I'm like, you know, do we keep going bigger? Or do we take that step back and enjoy some other ideas and opportunities? So my real goal for myself and also for my, my coaching community is that I like to say, how can we get your business to a place where you're making multiple six figures?

00:02:17 And then while you're at it, let's give you the time freedom to so a perfect world. I like folks to be working three, four days a week and just making the money that they want and having that freedom and that time freedom and money freedom to, Oh my gosh, absolutely because let's face it. Most of the reason that most of us got into this business to work for ourselves was freedom.

00:02:37 And then all of a sudden we realized like, holy cow, I'm working, you know, a gazillion hours per client. I'm taking all these clients because I'm trying to, you know, hit the elusive six figures. I'm trying to make this the money, but I haven't really done my numbers. So I don't even realize that I'm could be making more at Starbucks for the amount of hours I'm working.

00:02:58 So yeah, it's a really important to know these numbers so that we can actually reach this place of working a reasonable amount of time. Yeah. And, and the much easier thing instead of struggling and trying to increase your volume. And I mean, that's where everyone goes first. They're like, I need more clients, more clients, more clients. And I'm like,

00:03:15 actually hold up. What if you just make more money with each client? And can that be rewarding for both of you? And the answer is yes, because actually people find that they feel more rewarded and more satisfied when they spend more money, because that means it's something that's true and real and valuable to them. And you just invite them into that opportunity.

00:03:34 Like spending more is a joy for your clients and not a burden. Yeah. Yeah. So you have a book that you just wrote, she sells, which is awesome. And you guys sent me an audio copy. I've been listening. I was shopping at Costco the other day and I hadn't been in like two months. So as I'm walking down all the Isles,

00:03:50 you actually cost me like \$700. Cause I listed to walk down all the aisles, but like so much stuff. Now I'm happy to be your shopping buddy. Oh my God. True, dangerous. But anyway, in the book you were talking about the, the different levels of the market and how the internet has changed the basic market sophistication of people.

00:04:13 And I thought that was fascinating. I, for a long time kind of been saying and thinking that that middle, that middle section of the photography market is dead. It's just like no man's land where if you are decent and high volume, low cost, okay. Yeah, you can, you can make a business there. And the people that are,

00:04:32 you know, doing the shoot and burn, like, yeah, they're busy. Maybe they're not profitable, but there's demand there. And then you can also be on this high end of the market. But for the people in that middle of the road, it's, it's really, really hard because you're not cheap enough for the value seekers and you're not exclusive enough for the high end.

00:04:51 Exactly. And I mean, Costco is a perfect example right there. So there is a very busy world in our economy, in the value sphere. So you will get Amazon target, Costco, Walmart, these places are making bank. And then on the flip side of it, you look at luxury malls and you see, you know, in our area we have in a luxury malls,

00:05:11 they've got no free space. We were like chomping at the bit to get into those establishments. And you look at like things like all the philanthropy Gallas and you look at private schools. I mean, there's no lack of people trying to get in on this higher end endeavor. But what you see falling out completely is that mid-market. So if you go to like,

00:05:31 I think of the high-end mall near us cranking, and then meanwhile, our favorite movie theater is in a mall. That's like a ghost town. There's nothing there. The entire food court is closed. Every store is closed. All there is, is the movie theater it's barely

hanging on. Like the ceiling is peeling down. I'm like, really this place is next,

00:05:50 but it's because that mid market does not exist in today's economy. So if you're trying to charge \$800, even a thousand dollars, you might be missing both spheres because you are too expensive for that low end shopper and too low for that high end shopper. So you need to change, choose a lane. And my best advice is choose that luxury lane because if portrait innovations and Sears portrait studio and glamour shots with all their resources and all their money and time,

00:06:18 if they cannot stay in business on the value end of things, how can we as solopreneurs do it like that business model just doesn't seem to work in our service based industry, but the luxury camp that works fantastic for us. Yeah. Yeah. I love that. And I love how you were talking about just people being able to pick and choose like,

00:06:37 Hey, I'm going to go low, you know, economy, economy, class here, and I'm going to go first class over here and they can pick and choose what they value for me. I will go spend a lot of money on a really nice dinner or like a really fancy hotel. But like, if I even have to buy a new wallet or a purse target,

00:06:58 I'm like \$40 stupid. It's totally different for everyone because it's so fascinating. As I ask people, I'm like, you know, what do you spend on? Because it is going to be different. Some people, yeah. They're restaurants. Some people are vacations. Some people are closed. You know, some people are who knows rent and stuff, horses,

00:07:16 hunting. I have no idea. Right? Everyone's going to be something different on where they spend their big bucks and where they economized. But one thing we can all agree on a photographers. This is my favorite question to ask. I say, okay, listen, if you don't think you spend big pop quiz, what's in your camera bag right now,

00:07:33 like plays a number on the amount of gear that's in your camera bag. And without doubt, almost everyone says minimum \$5,000 and many times they'll say like \$10,000. So then I turn it around and I say, look, if here's you, whatever walk of life you come from, let's say you identify as, as middle-class consumer here's, you middle-class. And yet you have spent \$10,000 on something you value.

00:07:59 So if you can do it then other people like you can do it too. Everyone can spend on what they value. They may not do it as frequently as they go to Costco, because Costco, you might be doing every week. Whereas your high end restaurants, you might be doing once a month, you know, some people once a year, but people can value what they value.

00:08:16 And they'll put the big bucks behind that. Yeah. Oh my gosh. Absolutely. I think one of the other interesting things too, with this change in the market is, you know, we have our target market, our target client, but I feel like that is not so much like, oh, a demographic, but so much more, a value driven look at who they are.

00:08:41 So like for pet photography, my target client is someone whose dog sleeps on the bed. Someone's whose dog is like truly family. Like they're going to the brewery, they're taking the dog with them. It's not going to stay at home. You know, they're, they're doing just everything. High-end food. They're having a dog sit or come when they're out of town,

00:08:59 you know, in that actual demographic piece might actually be pretty different. Yes. And I get to this piece in it's actually so fascinating because when I was writing the book, I thought, okay, I need to step outside of photography for a minute here. And imagine a business. That's nothing like my business, but it is probably going to be more like your business to call.

00:09:20 And that is pet boarding. I was like, okay, I don't have a dog, but let me, I love cats. But I said, let me imagine what a pet boarding business would look like on the luxury end of things. And so I stretched myself to say, you know, who would be that client? And I came up with these fictional characters and I was like,

00:09:36 you know, this is the client who they recognize their story is that our pet is our family. And so whoever identifies like that, like my pet is my family. Then they're saying, sell me my story. And my story is that nothing is too good for our pet. So then that person is not going to want to put their dog in a kennel when they're going on vacation.

00:09:56 And they're not going to want to have some random person off care.com come into their home. They're going to want an expert, a professional, someone who knows what they're doing, and they're going to trust their family member to only the best. So as we think about it, we have to think who is that person who wants only the best? Why do they want only the best?

00:10:12 And then we just step in and serve that need. And because we're making big bucks, we have more ability to serve that need. We can give our clients more time. We can put more resources behind it. We can spoil them with product and service and experience and all of that, which in the mid market, and certainly in the value market,

00:10:28 you cannot do that. You just don't have the time or resources to fill that need. Yeah, absolutely. And I think one of the other important pieces too, especially when you're working with people that value their dog, as much as they do as a family member that as pet photographers, whether you specialize only in pets or maybe you have a family business and pets,

00:10:48 I've said for a long time, I feel like the people that love photographing pets and love photographing kids have like a giant wide open, huge untapped market of families that have dogs, the want to include them in their family photos. Oh my God. Yes. To have the messaging around, like, I love your dog as much as you do, as much as your kids,

00:11:13 like your dog is part of the family. I know dog behavior, like I'll get the best of it. Like kid behavior, the dog behavior, you sit back and relax. And I see no one doing that.

Yes. Oh my God. Itself magic. And, and here's the thing. I'm not a pet photographer specifically, but I love the energy that different personalities bring.

00:11:32 And I count dogs as part of that, you have to know the toddler energy, the team between energy and the puppy energy. You have to know all these things. And so when I work with pets, here's a magic little thing that you all and that we all have as folks who photograph pets. Imagine you've got a family with three daughters. Now,

00:11:51 if you're photographing those three daughters, you photograph daughter one, two and three solo, and you can photograph the three daughters together, but you cannot photograph daughter one and two and daughter two and three, because now you're leaving a hole. You're separating them out. But guess what? As soon as you involve that fourth party, that pet, you can now photograph daughter one with pet daughter two with pet daughter three,

00:12:11 with all the girls together with pet the pet solo, you just doubled the number of saleable shots because the pet can connect on different levels to different people. So just immediate opportunity. And one time I found it, I always love to do end of year analysis. Cause you know, we love metrics. We love numbers. And I'm looking at my end of year analysis.

00:12:29 I always evaluate who are my top 10 clients. And I was looking at the sales and I even put pictures with them to kind of refresh my memory, who that client was. And of the top 10, six of them had pets in the shoot. I am not a pet photographer. And yet six of my best vendors had pets. So this tells me the opportunity is so untapped in that market.

00:12:51 If all you do is include pets and people, boom, your sales can explode so much. Yeah. Oh my gosh. Absolutely. It wasn't very long. I started my business about the same time he did 2010 and it used to be, I was actually, I started families and pets when it started because of 2010, it was like, well,

00:13:08 I can't just do pets. That's crazy. Turns out you can. You know? And I had so many people back then. Gosh, even as recently as well, the last like industry conference I went to, which was right before COVID so like 2019 portrait photographers, like old school portrait photographers that would just tell me like, you can't make any money in pets.

00:13:29 And like, oh no, no, no, no. Like my pet clients would spend as much, often more than my family clients. And you know, those were \$3,000 averages way back in the day too. So like, yes. And I think it's because like you said, you're speaking their language, you're speaking about their needs. You're reaching them in a way that they're not seeing from the rest of the portrait industry.

00:13:55 And so all you have to do is show them. I see you. I hear you. I understand your needs and you problem solve that with them. Yeah. Oh my gosh. I love it. I love it. I love it. So as I was listening to your book, there was another piece that I would love to go

into. And that is your Lux model or,

00:14:13 you know, building the value because I think this is one of the things that we hear so many times, like we need to share value. We need to share value. We need to give them service. We need to do this. And that. And people are like, well, but, but what does that look like? Right. Yeah.

00:14:27 And I think there's a very scary word that we've been dancing around, which is the word luxury. And many people get afraid of luxury. They're saying, ah, now your audience, isn't gonna hear this, but both of us are showing up on t-shirts today, right? I mean, we're like casual where we enjoy our casual time and people think,

00:14:43 Hey, I'm a t-shirt girl. I'm not going to dress up in Louis Vuitton's and I'm like, listen, you don't have to. And you don't have to do your shoots in like designer clothes. You can do. That's the thing. So when people hear the word luxury, before we go any further, I want them to understand that replace the word luxury in your mind with full service,

00:15:02 because that's the kind of luxury we're talking about. We're not talking designer this and that though. You could, you could talk that language if that's what your brand calls for. But for those of you who like to roll around in the field with dog, you can do that too. So what Lux is, is I define it as this, the L in Lux is learn the deeper concern.

00:15:22 The you is up your game. The X is X, expand. Your role, took a little Liberty with that. One E is elevate your prices. So when we look at that, the first three, right there are just about understanding where's your client and how can you solve their problems better? What extra elevated service can you bring to them? How can you listen deeper than the next photographer?

00:15:45 How can you bring more value, more service to them? And then of course the E is just elevate your prices, right? Because if you're going to do all that, then why not charge more for it? And the secret thing about elevating your prices is that when people spend more money, they value that more. So taking it back to that example of what's in your camera bag,

00:16:02 those same people who tell me they have \$10,000 a year, I say, would you give that to your kid to go tote around? Would you hand that off to a stranger? No. If you're in an airplane with a \$10,000 bag of gear, you hold onto that, like, it's your baby. So when people spend more money, they value something even more.

00:16:19 And they might look with fonder eyes upon the experience because of what they've paid for it. So we want to do all the service things, but then we also want to claim the price that elevates the way our clients feel about it. And we're in that we deserve to do that. And it actually makes the clients feel happier because of it. Yeah.

00:16:37 I always encourage my students, especially when they start to get around

sales and they, you know, hear the word sales and start to feel that like icky, like used car salesman pitch, which is actually not true anymore because I'm trying to buy an, a car and I can't find anyone to help me. Have no cars. Anyway, they just get this like yuckiness around that.

00:17:00 Oh, hold on. I just totally lost my train of thought. What was it? Oh, I remember. Okay, nevermind. They get this yuckiness around the sale. So I always encourage them to think of something that they, maybe it was a little bit of a splurge. Then they spent more money than maybe they were planning to, or they saved up for was just a big investment and well,

00:17:22 how they felt when they were doing that, how they felt towards the service provider or the business they were spending it with. Cause I think a lot of people get in their head thinking like, if I charge this, people are gonna think I'm terrible. Or you know that I'm a crook or overcharging or insert adjective here. Yes. But if you can then turn it around,

00:17:43 how did I think about that? Oh no. I was excited to spend that money. Yeah. And then to take it even further and look at it as all right. I spent that money a year ago, five years ago. What's my feelings towards it now. Like, is it still, oh, that was the best thing I did. Yeah.

00:18:00 And you can have touchstones in your life where you remember all those big spends. And I think the reason why we have that icky feeling and we lean that way is because we're comparing it to the value end of the spectrum. Because if you're walking down the lanes of Costco and you've got a cereal box, that's 50 cents and a zero bucks, that's a dollar 50.

00:18:20 And then all of a sudden it's zero bucks. That's \$50. You're going to be mad at that cereal box. You're gonna be like, how dare they, why are, why are they overcharging? Who do they think they are? We're mad at them because we're in a value realm looking at a Lux product. But if you're in the Lux realm,

00:18:35 if you go to a gourmet restaurant and they want to charge you \$50 for cereal, I mean, I'd actually be curious, I'd lean in. I'd be like, tell me about this cereal. What is so special about it? Like I would be intrigued and we've all heard stories of exorbitantly priced things. You know, like the, a burger that costs a thousand dollars,

00:18:53 you know, an ice cream cone that costs X, Y, Z. And when we hear these extravagant tales, we lean in, we get curious, but it's like to the buyer who spent that money, they feel proud of it. And we don't have to be so exorbitant. We need to like really, when I think about it having a \$2,000 or \$5,000 or even a \$10,000 sale,

00:19:11 these are not really exorbitant prices. If your home value is such that you're paying \$2,500 a month, that means you're paying it 12 times a year, 12 times a year, 2500 2500, 2500. That is therefore a comfortable number for you. So your clients can spend that. And if your mortgage is twice that they can spend that. And if their mortgage is three times

that they can spend that.

00:19:33 So the number is all relative to the disposable income. We have what we value and how we feel about the person and how much they're solving the problems that we have. Yeah. I love that. And one of the things I noticed, I went to Yellowstone last summer and we were in Bozeman. Now we're walking down and I go into one of these art stores,

00:19:51 a gallery, and I'm looking at the prices and I know the price of what the medium of those are because some of them were like acrylics and things like that. Like I know how much that costs and you know, they're selling them for five, six, \$10,000 and mental note. I was like, this wasn't created specifically for someone, this is something they are just creating and selling.

00:20:16 And people are purchasing a piece of artwork. Like how much money do clients spend purchasing artwork for your home? Yes. Because if you get that series, that's like, it's going to be numbered on the back. It's going to say number one of 36, right? We are creating not one of 36, not one of a hundred. We are creating one of one.

00:20:35 You're the only owner of this piece of art that was custom made for you. So if in a gallery, the one of 36 can sell for 10,000, then your art can absolutely sell for 10,000 because it is personalized. And<inaudible> yeah. The other thing that came to mind too, when you were talking about the cereal and like the \$50 cereal at Costco is I feel like this is why products are so important because people are going to take,

00:21:01 if you're a photographer and you're selling just digital files, but you've done your prices. And you're like, I know I need to sell my digital files of \$2,000 for a session, like an all inclusive something. People subconsciously are going to compare that product to the \$200 digital files of photographer, be down the street. And they have no idea whether yours are better or worse.

00:21:23 Like they don't see that you could be, award-winning like JIA nominee from PPA. And this person could be like overexposed and like out of focus. And they're like, I don't get it. They should be the same price. Why is this one so expensive? Yeah. Yeah, exactly. And you should also have the sense that, you know, if you've ever had the experience where you walk into a place and you just suddenly,

00:21:44 like, this was probably like you in that gallery, you walk in and you're like, this place is going to be expensive. And it's like, you can't really put a finger on why it's just like something in the air. Like the way that the staff is attentive or the way that things are laid out or the lighting, there's just something happening in that environment that makes you feel this is going to be more expensive.

00:22:01 That's the feeling we want our clients to have. So images aside, the experience should come down to that. Like when they work with you, they get, this can be expensive. You know, they should feel that. And the way they feel that is most likely not

through your art, although that can be a factor it's most likely in how you listen and how you care for them.

00:22:21 And so if the shooting burner is hiring them and it's like, fill out a form on the website, I'll get back to you. And then they email you back. Yeah. I can meet you on this date at that park, blah, blah, blah, completely different perception. And the photographer who gets on the phone and says, tell me about your vision.

00:22:38 Tell me about your pet. You know, what, what can you tell me about their personality? And then taking it even a step further, maybe you go to their home, you do a consultation, you meet the dog in person. Now you guys are friends when you're together at this shoot, you and the pet, even, you know, the whole group of us,

00:22:52 we're all connected now. And now we're delivering on the friend level. All of these things lead up to at the point at which you say, and this is the cost for this product and this experience. Now it makes sense. It's not a mystery. It's not surprise. And it's pleasantly looked upon. Yeah. Agreed. And along with that, I see so many people that are so scared to make that connection.

00:23:13 And so scared to like even have a picture of themselves on their website or be visible, or, you know, especially in the pet photography world, a lot of us are introverts and a lot of people are like, well, I got into pet photography cause I don't really like working with people. But last time I checked, most dogs don't have a checkbook,

00:23:30 so I need to still work with the people. So just making that connection, I think can be really scary, but it's such an important piece. And I know I've been stressing a lot too of trying people putting video on their website and just like on their inquiry page, you know, I actually had a student that did on their inquiry page. People fill out their contact form,

00:23:55 you know, to get more information inquiry, page little video, Hey, our next step is to book a consultation with the calendar link, right underneath 75% conversion to people booking their flight or the booking, their call right there. And ah, gosh, I just, I feel like that video, you know, you get to see so much more of a person because even though you don't have to be available right at that second,

00:24:22 they get to see you. They could see your mannerisms. They get to like, I don't know what the stat is, but it's within like two seconds that we make a decision. If we like someone or not. And people are always worried. What if they don't like me? I'm like, well, they're going to find that out. And they're probably not going to work with you anyway.

00:24:37 So I might as well get out there Yourself, be seen as the friend. That's the, that's the really big takeaway. And I think in some ways I think shoot and burn photographers might have us beat on that note because I see a lot of shoot and burners are working within their circle of influence. If you're a mom on the playground, your clients are

moms on the playground.

00:24:59 If you're in the, you know, the mops group for preschoolers, your friends, your clients and friends are there. You know? So we, as, as Lux providers, as people who are doing the higher end service and experience, we need to also be where our clients are, wherever that is, wherever you identify that this is my perfect world.

00:25:17 This is my perfect circle of influence. And you know, it's not always going to be the most obvious thing. Cause sometimes when I'm talking to pet photographers, they're like, oh, okay, well I have to be at the pet food store. And I'm like, maybe, but who is your ideal client? Is your ideal client. The empty-nester maybe you're meeting them at a philanthropic gala.

00:25:34 Maybe you're meeting them at the symphony, you know? Or is your client, is your client people with teenage kids? Maybe you're meeting them at the, I don't know, maybe you're meeting them at the, at the schools. Right? There's like, you're going to find people in different avenues, but you must first know who is your avatar? Where are they?

00:25:51 Where do they spend their time? And then you need to be there with them. So think of it, just like that shooting burner on the playground, what's the playground you're playing on. What are the communities in the context that you connect with? And then you want to be that person who's there with them because people do work with people they know trust and like,

00:26:07 and so to your point about if they're meeting you on the website for the first time, what else can you do to deepen relationships? How can you be the first person they think of and the person who delivers for them? Yeah. No, and I can a hundred percent here. My, some people in my audience right now, as they're listening to the saying,

00:26:23 oh, but Nicole, I don't belong in those circles. Like for whatever reason, their identity is not one of, you know, and I think this is pretty common in a lot of photography, just industry in general, like maybe they grew up, you know, lower class or lower middle class or even middle-class, but they feel like the people with the disposable,

00:26:43 you know, all these lifetime of money beliefs are just out of reach. Yeah. So one thing you said in your book that I was like, oh my God, I love that. I'm going to write that down is don't be nervous, lead with service. So I'm like, that's so great. It's the absolute truth. Yes. And I think that,

00:27:06 you know, if you just simply boil everything down to numbers, I love that you not love numbers. Like I do Nicole. It's like really, you can reverse engineer success. And sometimes people say, oh, you make it sound so simple. It literally is that simple. So if you think of it like this, who's the most successful photographer,

00:27:21 the photographer with 10 contacts, the photographer with 20 contacts or the photographer with 200 contacts. So you need to be the person with 200 context. It's

literally that simple. And then if you want to fill your books for us, we do about seven shoots a month. We do 45,000 a month. And it's like, how do you get to 45,000 with seven clients?

00:27:39 Okay. How do I get seven clients? Well, I probably need to ask 14 people because half of them are going to say no. So calling my leads, doing outbound, reach all these things, you know, this is what I need to do is just reverse engineering and going for it. So when you think like a business owner, you do have to leave behind your past beliefs and you have to overcome these money blocks because I was like,

00:28:00 raise my hand when you say lower middle-class. And that was me. That's how I was raised. In fact, my mom worked at a very expensive private school in New York city. And there were a lot of money beliefs handed down to me about how, you know, are rich people greedy. Do they take advantage of people? You know? And I break that up because how can I work with not just rich people,

00:28:20 but how can I work with all people? If I walk into a relationship with prejudice, you can't do that. So now I have to say, okay, my clients will have more disposable income. If I search them in these circles of influence, I need to be the photographer that has more reach more contacts in those worlds. And then you need to bust apart the money beliefs.

00:28:40 Because if you spend your life thinking, rich, people are other rich. People are bad. Rich people are greedy. They want to hurt me. How can you become rich? Because you just told me that rich people are bad people. So no way do you want to be part of that world? But I don't see it that way. I see it as rich people are people,

00:28:58 people are people and people want to be served and people want to feel good and people want to feel valued and you can serve anyone with that attitude and idea. And so stop thinking about yourself, take your ego out and say, don't be nervous, lead with service. How can I serve more people and be the person who knows and helps more people?

00:29:17 Yeah, absolutely. Cause when you put it that way too, like by us not asking people and not reaching out to people, we're actually doing them a disservice because our dogs don't live all that long. And if you don't actually ask, it's going to be too late. And then now this person, their dog has gone and they've never actually gotten something beautiful to remember them by.

00:29:40 So like us asking is actually helping it, helping them it's it's a service. And the other thing I think people get hung up on is they're like, well, I don't, I don't know what to say, but guess what? You're a pet photographer. You'll hopefully love dogs and pets and whatever you're photographing and your owners love dogs and pets. So just ask them about their dog.

00:30:06 And I love book recommendations. I love business stuff so much. I'm going to recommend another great book for your audience. And that would be the introvert's

edge. I love the book, the introvert's edge. It's by Matthew Pollard. He's fantastic. And he talks about that. You know, we think of extroverts, like I'm an extrovert. I'll say I,

00:30:23 I feel great in a room full of people, but that's sometimes bites me in the butt because as an extrovert, a lot of times we rely on our charm and our charisma and we just show up unprepared. And so that can work in my advantage sometimes. But many times I have put my foot in my mouth. I have so many horror stories of times I've tremendously embarrassed myself and my clients,

00:30:45 But I need my hand here. I'm like, yes. Speaking, without thinking and relying on charm alone is not going to work in the long run. It is going to work many times, but not all times. So actually the person who wins, and this is the premise of the book, the introvert has the advantage because an introvert is not going to go into a situation unprepared.

00:31:07 Cause that would be death, right? You're not going to walk in and just be like, oh, let me just wing this no way. So an introvert will go in with a plan, with a script with, with the concept of what they're trying to do. And then if it doesn't work, they can refine and keep polishing and come back with a new,

00:31:22 stronger script. So I, as an extrovert can learn a lot from that. And I read the book being like, how can I improve my script and my plan and my process? How can I listen better? Cause I mean, that's another huge advantage that introverts have extroverts love to talk. Introverts are great at listening, listen to your clients and they will love you.

00:31:42 You just have to give them that reason to talk. And yes, it's about ask them about their dog who wouldn't want to talk about the thing they love and the, and their family member, that's so important to them. So you just have to give them the floor and they will feel more valued and closer to you because of it. Yeah. I mean,

00:31:57 absolutely. I, how many times do you ask someone like you, they, you mentioned their dog, like in a conversation, you're just talking to someone and they immediately go to their phone and pull up pictures of the dog. Actually, even when I travel, hopefully my kids don't listen to this. When I travel my husband and I like send pictures of the animals back and forth to each other,

00:32:15 the kids are still alive. Right. Okay. Good. All right. Here's the cats really cute. Yeah. Terrible. Terrible. Yeah. No, I love that one other introvert point too. I'm like right on the edge. So it depends kind of which test I take. I usually lean slightly extrovert, but definitely have introverted tendencies, but introverts,

00:32:39 a lot of people think, you know, I'm an introvert. So that means I'm not good at just performing, talking, like being on. But truly the introvert just needs time to alone to kind of re re decompress and regroup where I've seen a lot of introverts. There are incredible. They like flip a switch and they are just like, they are on,

00:33:05 they can present to a room full of people. They can like get the sale. They can do all the things and put themselves out there because it's almost like they have this little alter ego. Yeah. That they're just like, all right, I'm here for this. And I'm coming at this from service and I am just here to serve this person.

00:33:20 And here we go, Love it. And I think the point there is whatever you perceive as your weakness, there's a flip side to it. There's the alter ego to it. That's going to be the strength. And so if you think, oh, I'm too young, no one takes me seriously. Awesome. Lean into your youth. Think about the innovation.

00:33:37 Think about how you think differently than older generations. If you think on the flip side, I'm too old. No, one's going to take me seriously because they're not going to think I'm in touch. Okay. Think about your experience. Think about the wealth of knowledge you have working with people working in, in business and in life, you know, whatever is that thing you perceive as your limitation flip it,

00:33:55 there's some goodness in there and you can just strengthen that and pump yourself up with the mantras of all that you're capable of and all that you can do. And you can also fill in the gaps. If there's something you're not strong in, fill in the gap, get your education on practice with people. You can get anything better if you believe you can.

00:34:13 Yeah. I love that. I love that so much. Oh man, this is such a great conversation, but there's something else that I kind of would love to touch on. We started to touch on kind of making those relationships, but I know a lot of people like the question of the week in every photography forum across the land is always like,

00:34:34 how do I market my business? How do I get more clients? How do I get more leads? Like just help. Yes. What do you have to say about that? Oh my God. That was such the question. So, okay. Before we go there, I think that the thing to look at is to say, what are your goals?

00:34:51 And so, you know, I already told you that we do 45,000 a month and here's the thing. Someone who's got a thousand dollar average is looking at that number 45,000. And they're like, oh my God, okay. I need to get there. So how do I do that? Do I do 45 clients in a month? And here's the thing you cannot do,

00:35:06 45 clients in a month. Like, I don't even know what that looks like. What, what does even the math on that, like, I don't have that many hours in a week and we already talked about you. Can't like glamorous shots. Can't do it. Portrait innovations. Can't do it. The volume formula is broken for us as service providers.

00:35:21 So then I say to myself, you know, what, if I can't go bigger, let's go deeper. Let's deepen the sale, deepen the connection, deepen the service, all that stuff. And so really 45,000. Well, if you're at a \$6,500 average, that's how you do it. You just do fewer clients, deeper sales. And even if that number intimidates,

00:35:40 you don't look at a \$6,000 average. You know, we have plenty of people, myself included who regularly have \$10,000 sales. And that's what lifts that average up. But what if that number is freaking you out? Okay, don't go 10,000 as, as you're in your mindset. Think of it. Instead as, Hey, instead of a thousand dollar average,

00:35:55 let me have a \$3,000 average. If you triple your prices, you will reduce the workload by two. That Right Now don't have to search for all those clients because I just have to go deeper with the clients I have. And as, as long as you're out of that mid market, like I said, that 800 to a thousand dollar range, the client's spending 2000 Ken also spend 4,000.

00:36:18 They can also spend 6,000. You're just not inviting them to do so. So understanding why it's in their interest to spend more and what can you do to help them achieve more of their dreams? That's going to be the better question to ask. So before people go saying, how can I get more clients? I want people to take it back to the studs and saying,

00:36:38 how can I get better sales? That's the Better question to ask. And then you're not running yourself, ragged looking for all those contacts. I love it. I love it. What do you say to people that are like, oh my God, \$4,500 sales session. Like I need a paper bag to breathe into. Like they just like, oh yeah.

00:36:57 What do you have? What do you say to them? Well, it used to scare me too, for sure. And I never thought it was possible until it was. And so I just say to people do it scared because the only way to get past fear is to do it scared. You're not going to be comfortable with a sale like that until you have it.

00:37:14 And you know, one of the big things that, that I do as a coach is I try to normalize the number 10,000. Cause it is an astronomical number when you're starting out. And so, you know, we've got our 10 K club that's people who have a sale, \$10,000 or higher. Some people in my own students have beat me with their sales.

00:37:31 You know, we had like 50,000, 60,000, \$70,000 sales. I'm like what? And so that number feels astronomical sometimes too, but it's not once you do it, right. You just have to like do it scared and trust that the numbers are gonna work out. But, but don't just trust it, like in a atmosphere kind of way, put numbers down black and white paper,

00:37:52 put your salary goal down, put your studio goal down, put your marketing goal, your education goal, your product costs, you know, put these numbers down on paper and see what truly does it take to make the business of my dreams and the number's probably going to be higher than you think. So when she sells, I walk you through that.

00:38:08 I'm like, here's how to consider your variable costs, your hard costs, you know? And like, let's look at that. Let's look at real numbers and let's shape goals based on real numbers, not on our guts. Cause our guts will steer us wrong. Yeah. It got somebody

like, oh that's enough, \$700. You're good. You're no,

00:38:23 you're not. You're not. Do you recommend if people are like just getting started in their business or maybe they've been at this place with, you know, a thousand dollar average and they're like, all right, I'm going to do it. I'm going to do it, Megan. I'm going to quadruple my prices. Do you recommend them doing that? And then maybe having like a,

00:38:49 like, I, I at least recommend for people starting out, like let's figure out what your numbers need to be to be profitable. So we're talking in that like 2,500 up average sale goals, then I'm like, you don't have to come out of the gate and make the first person pay full price. So do you like, and I tell them,

00:39:08 you know, basically like it's an introductory special kind of thing. Like yeah, my first couple of clients here, yes, you can get a special rate or a credit, a product credit they could put towards things that brings the cost down and then helps you feel better with those prices. So then you can start to believe in yourself and you could take that away.

00:39:28 And then he is, those clients are not referring you, their friends thinking that you are an inexpensive photographer. Exactly. Yeah. So like let's just use big round numbers. So my album is pretty close to this. My album price starts at \$4,000 and I have people who've spend, you know, \$9,000 on an album as they start adding on more things.

00:39:52 Well, let's just work with that ballpark. Number 4,000, say that you decide my average sale must be \$4,000. Well, if you're going to sell any kind of product that has the majority of the images from the session in it, it therefore must be priced at that average. So I say, okay, well then an album's got a lot of images in it.

00:40:10 So let me start that at the average goal, 4,000 before thousand is freaking me out. I can't deal with that. Let's do two scary. So what I would do is I would give my 10 favorite VIP clients. People who've worked with me in the past, or if you haven't been in business long, just people, you know, and that you respect and that you think will come along.

00:40:28 This, this new ship with you and you say, you know what, let me treat you to this. I would love to give you a thousand dollars credit because I've got this brand new product line. I'm so excited about these new experiences. I'm offering, test this out with me because I trust you. And I know you trust me and I want to show you what I can do for you.

00:40:44 So I would cover your session fee. And I'm going to give you that thousand dollar credit, by the way, my portraits are priced at \$250 per image. So right there, you can see you're welcome to redeem your favorite four portraits or, and this is really key or if you're tempted to do so, you are welcome to buy anything else on my price list,

00:41:03 if you're attempted to do so. So now you're not holding their feet to the fire. In fact, you should be happy letting them walk away with just exactly what that image

credit covers. So this has to be a gamble that you're okay with more than likely when they see that amazing session you do, and they feel the love. And they're just so indebted to you,

00:41:21 this is what we call reciprocity. They're going to want to pay you for the work that you've done. And they're going to take that thousand dollar credit. And suddenly that \$4,000 album at 3000 bucks, doesn't sound so bad. And now you just made potentially three times what you would have made in the past because previously your album was priced at a thousand dollars.

00:41:38 So now you're making more money clients happier. You're easing into the prices. Client now knows that that album is valued at 4,000. So they don't refrain, refer their cheapo friends to you. And they feel really special too, because you trusted them and you invited them in as an insider into your new brand. I love it. I love it. So win-win for everybody.

00:41:57 Absolutely. Yeah. Oh my gosh. This has been such a great conversation we had on all the things. I love the pricing and the mindset and just all of the things your book was so good. I think it should be required reading or listening for anyone building a boutique portrait business. And we have a little special giveaway. We do. We not.

00:42:21 Yeah. Yeah. We are loving the pet world and I love all that. You're bringing to folks. And so we want to help elevate this as much as possible. There's so much joy and wonderful, or I'll say it wealth that can be gained in this industry. So I want to share the book with everyone. And so if, if your listeners go to,

00:42:39 she sells gift.com, she sells gift.com. Then we will give them a copy of the audio book so they can listen on their walks or while they're folding their laundry or walking their pets and get some new best business education in their minds. I think it's going to really elevate their mindset and give them some concrete strategies so that they understand it's not salesy. It's not dirty to sell big.

00:42:59 It's actually a wonderful thing for everyone. I love it. I love it. So you guys heard it. She sells gift.com. Go grab your audio book, copy you won't regret it. It's a really read, just be careful listening to Costco. You're going to keep walking around and therefore you're going to keep spending money do so at your own risk depending where you are.

00:43:22 Oh Megan, thank you so much. Can you let us know again where we can find you online as well? If people want to connect with you? Sure you can find me@megandipierocoaching.com and then my favorite group on the internet, a rise to the top with Megan. DiPiero loved that group there and we talk all things business. Awesome. Thanks so much for taking the time to chat with us here at hair of the dog and yeah,

00:43:45 we'll see you soon. Thanks for listening to the hair of the dog podcast. This was episode number 151. If you want to check out the show notes for access to any of the resources that we mentioned, simply go to www.hairofthedogacademy.com/ 151. Thanks for listening to this episode of hair of the dog podcast. If you enjoyed this show, please take

a minute to leave a review.

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