

This is a can't be missed episode of the Hair of the Dog podcast. If you are selling pet photography or any kind of photography in any form, you need to listen to this podcast. So stay tuned, grab those earbuds and let's get into it. Welcome to the Hair of the Dog podcast. If you are 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. Welcome back to The Hair of the Dog podcast. I'm your host, Nicole Begley, and I'm so excited to share this information with you today. If you are selling photography in any form, you need to listen to this podcast because guess what?

You're not actually selling photography. Yeah, that's right. I said it. That's what we think we're selling and then we think we're talking about the features and the benefits and all these things. But yeah, it goes a lot deeper than that and we are really gonna dig into that today in this podcast episode. Now, I don't need you to go away and listen to this right now,

but maybe after this episode, I highly encourage you to go listen to episode number 1 9 8 1 9 8. You can go to [hair.of.the.dog.academy.com/ 1 9 8](http://hair.of.the.dog.academy.com/198) to listen to that. And the title of that one is Not Everyone Needs a 10 K Sale. I see this so many times of educators saying, you know, oh, 10 K, 10 K, you gotta get to this five figure sale.

And yeah, there are certain people that that is a great goal. I'm not gonna say that we don't want a 10 K sale, that's amazing. However, I've seen a lot of photographers feel just really start to feel like their business isn't enough. They're not reaching for enough, or that their pricing is not working. If they have their price list geared towards getting consistent,

two to \$3,000 sales. The two to \$3,000 sale is the bread and butter of a portrait business. That is your fastest path to a six figure business is 35 to 50 clients spending two to \$3,000. That is doable for just about everyone in just about market and just about every market. And you don't need to be the most amazing photographer in the world.

Of course, we wanna always improve our craft. However, as long as you are at a level of proficiency that you are producing good work for your clients, you can absolutely achieve those, those numbers in any market because there are people with disposable income in every market. But anyway, I don't wanna dive into that soapbox here on this episode because I already did an episode 1 9 8,

so definitely make a note to go listen to that. What we are going to talk about here today is I wanna talk about how we can create value in our business. Now, we've heard this said so many times, you have to create value, you have to share the value, you have to get your client to see the value before you tell the pricing.

And I've been asking for years, how the heck do you do you do that? What does that look like? How do you share the value? Like we know what the value is, but how do

we communicate that to our clients? Well, today we're gonna talk about that. Now, before we dive into this, I do wanna go over the different stages of a photography business in general.

We have those that are just starting to embark on this journey where they're learning their, their settings. They're just starting to master their craft. And you know, maybe they are offering an all-inclusive digital offer, less than \$500. That's okay, we're not shaming you here. You can start there. I want you to start collecting money for your services. And you know,

maybe you're still at the point where you're like worried more about F stops than you know what type of product to offer or all these different pricing models. That's okay. So that's kind of our starting level is you know, maybe you're doing kind of portfolio building level of your business. And then we have stage two, which is really where you start to make the transition from selling digital artwork to selling tangible artwork.

And for that, maybe you are starting to sell, you know, some tangible products. You're maybe hitting that first four figure sale. So you're first a thousand dollars sale and you're starting to get a little bit more confident with this whole boutique pricing model idea. And then stage three is when we are on the path to six figures that I believe is the two to \$3,000 mark that I think the vast majority of us should really be aiming for in our portrait business.

And that is often product based. So we're selling artwork and albums. You may or may not be adding on digital files. I love to add on digital files because it becomes an easy yes to encourage our clients to get to that expected spending point. And then of course there is the fourth level, which is the beyond six figure level, which is,

you know, the people that are really truly touching that luxury market. They are, you know, having average sales of \$5,000 or more. They're getting those five figure sales periodically. But you don't start there. You kind of have to work your way up through the levels. You don't have to spend a lot of time at portfolio building or any, you can jump right into that,

that second level where you're selling products for about a thousand dollars and quickly move up to the through two to \$3,000 session average. But you have to spend some time in stages two and three to start to perfect your workflow, to start to know what sells, to start to know what your client's like, to perfect a style or to start to build your style.

You don't have to perfect it, your style's never perfected, but you do all those things, you have to do those. There's no shortcut to open this business and immediately start to serve the luxury market at the highest end of the of the spectrum. So we generally have to move up through those levels. Like I said, it can be a different amount of time at each level.

But here's the thing, I see so many photographers out there looking for the next shiny marketing strategy, and I admit I was one of those photographers too. I was

just thinking, okay, maybe I just need to do this kind of project. Okay, maybe I just need to do this type of marketing and I would pick and choose these random things and always be on the lookout for some other new strategy to get clients in front of my lens.

Now, yes, we should use some strategies. We do need to have some marketing ideas and some marketing promotions that are putting out into our business. But there was a missing ingredient that I didn't realize for quite possibly the first 10 years of my business. And that missing ingredient is the messaging that we are creating around what we are actually selling. And spoiler alert,

we're not selling photography. Nope, nope. Not selling photography. We are selling so much more. We're selling emotion, we're selling connection, we're selling memories, which sounds so cheesy. So we wanna get like a different way to explain this. But let me kind of share with you a couple different examples. And I think you might start to see this.

So when we're on that stage one of building our business, that portfolio building level of our business right there, then we are selling photography. You know, we're, we're selling photography because we're low priced, we're you know, good service. Like it just, it's an easy yes. Like clients can see, oh yes, I want this. It's almost like an impulse buy because we're at that lower price point in the market.

But as we move up in our price point, we need to build that value. We need to increase our level of marketing sophistication, a k a, our messaging as we increase our price. Because no one really wakes up in the morning and says, I wanna spend \$5,000 on photography today. Maybe if they're looking for a wedding photographer, but generally as a portrait photographer,

people are not waking up saying, I wanna spend five grand on my portraits today. It just doesn't happen that way. So we need to let them know why they are going to wanna do that, why it's a great investment. So let's talk about these. We have really five levels of marketing sophistication and we're gonna start here with level one. We're gonna pretend that I am a chocolate importer.

I know, I know. That's not really a stretch. If you guys know me. You know I love chocolate. So let's pretend for a minute that I have discovered this whole magical chocolate thing and I bring chocolate into a new country that has never seen chocolate, those poor souls. Anyway. So we start to bring this chocolate in and to sell that chocolate to people that have never had chocolate,

they've never seen it. There's no other competitors. Think pet photography back in like 2012. Then all I have to do is say, Hey, I have chocolate. This is what it is. Here's the price. Do you want it easy? Right? That is very basic marketing sophistication. We're basically just saying, here's what I have, here's the price.

Are you interested? So that is something you can do again at that kind of portfolio building place because your price point is low that it is easy for people to be like, oh yeah, I'll try that. That looks fun, let's do it. But then we start moving

up. Level two is what happens when some other people find out about this chocolate and they say,

Hey, I'm gonna start importing this chocolate too. This is pet photography circa 2015 where there starts to be more pet photographers in the market. So now we're starting to talk about the benefits of our chocolate and we are going to try to out benefit each other. So this is where a lot of people get stuck in their marketing of their business. You know,

we know that we're supposed to talk about the benefits, so not the features. And so we talk about the benefits, but then everybody's talking about the benefits and there's really a hard, there's no easy way for us to stand apart from all the other chocolate importers slash pet photographers in our market when we are just trying to out benefit each other. That is stage two.

That is often kind of our second level of business as well. When we're moving from digital to product based, we're starting to sell some wall art, some albums we're talking about the benefits of it. So again, we're moving up in the levels a little bit, but this is not the, the true key that is going to bring potential clients flocking into your business.

Number three, this is the third level of marketing sophistication is when you're moving from a benefit to a unique mechanism, your unique selling prospect, a proprietary method if you will. It could be a certain type of style, it could be a background and animal behavior. It could be just all sorts of different things. Maybe you photograph only on the lake,

maybe you photograph only in the studio. This starts to be whatever makes your offerings unique from those other people that are offering things. If you went back to the chocolate example, maybe this is a unique proprietary way that you farm the chocolate to that other people aren't, or a unique way that you're roasting the chocolate beans, something like that. It is proprietary method is level three.

And generally if you were to move it into pet photography, this tends to be maybe pet photography closer to 2020. Now we have more people, well forget about the pandemic, pre pandemic 2020. Now we have more pet photographers in each market. You know, we have talked about the benefits, but now we're focusing on what makes us unique. Maybe a unique way that we offer the pet photography,

like a niche within a niche or our unique backgrounds or a unique style or something like that. So that again is level three. Now, level four, this is where the magic starts to happen. You guys, if you can start to unlock level four and five here, this is where you are going to attract your target market like moths to a flame.

You still need to do some marketing promotions or different marketing things to get awareness out there to get this offer, this, this marketing in front of people. But then once they are, they are going to be so much more motivated to move forward with you because you are gonna be connecting with them on such a deeper level than any of these other marketing levels that we've talked about so far.

And that is appealing to a specific part of the market by tapping into the why of the consumer. We're starting to tap into the emotions of the consumer. So let's take this back to chocolate. Okay, so number one, level one was that I'm the only one selling chocolate level two, somebody else is starting to sell chocolate. We're starting to out benefit each other.

Level three, we have our proprietary method. So I have a unique way of harvesting my chocolate. Now with level four, I'm starting to tap into the health benefits of the chocolate or to the environmental, environmental benefits of how we harvest the chocolate. And then level five really goes hand in hand of level four. That is when you're why that you are talking about in level four connects to your customer's identity.

It connects to them on an identity level. These are things like, oh, I'm now offering fair trade chocolate for someone that caress about the chocolate producers all along the lines. And maybe it's somebody that cares about how the chocolate is farmed. So that's ecologically sustainable. Maybe it's talking to somebody that really caress about the health benefits of that dark chocolate. So do you see how when you start to dig into these deeper wise,

you're starting to tap into the identity of the consumer. So someone like myself that caress about the free trade chocolate also caress about the environmental impact. I will pay more for like a single origin free, fair trade chocolate than I would for like just going to the store and buying like whatever the cheap off the shelf chocolate is because I care about those things and I'm willing to to pay more for it.

I can also be sold chocolate by tapping into the identity of it being unique, high-end. Because here's the thing, I really love chocolate and I can pay more for unique kind of like crap chocolate. Like I really kind of wish I liked beer because I feel like I would love going to these different breweries and tasting these different types of beer where it's really unique and it's not offered in the mass produced.

So you get all these unique experiences and it just feels totally different than going to buy like a Budweiser from the store in a can. It you're gonna pay more for that other experience when you identify as someone that enjoys that type of experience. Does that make sense? So that I will pay more for a unique chocolate bar that I don't see in the store very often where it's,

you know, truly when I'm on vacation and there's a chocolate shop that they're like creating their own there. Or it's a regional chocolate shop, I am buying some chocolate. I'm probably gonna spend 50 or \$60 buying chocolate like they are tapping into my identity for all of those things where it's like a single origin bean where it's fair trade, where it's craft created,

that it's not mass produced and it's unique and I'm not able to get that anywhere else. Those are tapping into my identities. There's no way that I would pay that same amount for a Hershey's kiss. It just doesn't appeal to my identity there.

Might I eat it every once in a while? Sure. Maybe especially my kids come back from trick or treating and there's a whole bunch of random candy in my kitchen.

Yes, likely I am going to eat some of it, but in order to get me to spend \$50 in the store, you better be tapping into those other identities. So what could the identities potentially be as our, are our clients? Are we selling dog photography anymore? Mm, nope. Not at all. We are not selling dog photography. We are selling an experience.

We are selling an emotion. Let me tell you a quick little story. I'm sure you guys might've listened to the podcast that Heather and I did about the \$35,000 Hermes purse, which by the way, always thought it was Hermes. It's Hermes. That is episode 1 23. If you go to hair of the dog academy.com/ 1 2 3, you will listen to that podcast.

It's Money Trigger s o s with Heather Lotton. She called me in a tizzy and I walked her through it on the podcast because somebody she saw on social media purchased a \$35,000 investment Hermes purse used, used purse for \$35,000. Anyway, so there are brands like that, Hermes, Tiffany, Burberry, I don't even know. These are not my brands,

they don't tap into my identity, but they are definitely selling an identity. Are those clothes that much better than say, white House, black market or like mid-level clothing? Not, not really. Maybe a little bit, but not that much nicer to account for that much higher of a cost. There is something else going on there in the luxury market and that is appealing to the buyer's identity.

Same thing with like a luxury hotel. When I walk into a luxury hotel, even if I'm just going to go like have a cocktail at the bar, go get an appetizer. Like I will hang out in the airport lounge and in a fancy hotel lobby all day every day because it appeals to my identity of someone that loves to travel, loves to experience new things,

loves to eat, loves to have delicious chocolate martinis. It just appeals to my identity. So I will spend money on a nice hotel, on a nice dinner that I will not spend on a bag or a shirt. Is there anything wrong with either one? No, not at all. We're all just wired differently. So we need to be able to speak to our clients in a way that is pulling out that,

pulling out that identity as it relates to the type of photography that we are offering. Whether it's pet photo, family photography, senior photography, new photography, whatever it is, we are not selling photography. We are selling an emotion. Now, Nicole, oh my gosh, sounds great, but how the heck do I figure out what my client's identity is?

You ask them, no, you're not gonna just ask them, Hey, what's your identity? What do you identify with? That's, that's not what we're asking here. Instead, it's as simple as when you're talking to prospective clients during your discovery call is just asking them what's most important to you and your photography experience. That's it. My favorite question used to be how do you plan on displaying your

images from our session?

And that's, that's my second favorite question. Now, I still love it, I still ask it every planning que every planning session, but the most important question that I ask them now is, what's most important to you in this photography experience that's gonna elicit their values? Maybe they start talking about, you know, that they've had this dog since they were in college and they grew up together and they went through so many things and the dog moved across the country with them and yada yada yada.

And they're going on with that, okay? I know that their identity is a dog parent that absolutely loves that dog that that dog they see is one of their best friends that they want to value. They value that relationship. They want to, you know, capture that relationship and and capture those memories because this is a relationship that means the world to them.

So I'm gonna speak to them about the experience a little bit differently than someone that says, you know, when I ask them what's the most important to you in your photography experience? And they say, I'm redecorating my living room and I wanna have a really epic showstopping piece of artwork over my couch, I'm gonna speak to them differently. I serve both of those identities and I will speak to both of those identities when I am creating copy on my website.

But by me asking them, when we start to talk about how I can help them, how I can serve them, I then know what to focus on because for that client that calls and says, you know, I really want this epic show stopping piece of artwork over my couch. Awesome, great, I can help you with that. Tell me about your decor.

Tell me about your room. Tell me about what you have in vision. What are the colors in your room? I'm gonna go full on into interior design mode because that's what they are valuing. They have the identity of, you know, creating this amazing home. You know, they probably likely still have the identity of them loving their dog because they wanna create artwork of their dog inside this amazing home.

But do you see how the way that I am talking to them and explaining my services is different? It's the same service. I'm just appealing to a little bit of a different identity when I talk to them about those things because I have asked them what's most important to them. I hope you have found this helpful. This is a game changer once you can get your head around this.

Because once we can start to speak to our clients from that place, from that level four and five, the why of what we do appealing to the identity of our client, then it doesn't matter what your price is, they are going to pay whatever your price is because you are speaking directly to their identity. You are speaking directly to them, you are appealing to who they are.

You can't compete with anyone else at that point. They, you could have 37,000 other photographers in your market, all five to 10 times cheaper. And this client is going to choose you every single time because you're speaking to what matters most to them. I wanna share one quick story as we wrap this up. And that is when I was

looking to rebrand my business back in 2015,

when I stopped photographing families and wanted to go full on photographing pets, I was looking for a graphic design firm to create a new brand identity for me. Now, the going rate of most of the places that I found were about 2,500 to \$3,000 at the time. And I found some great options. I probably had three options that I really liked. They would've done a great job.

I loved their work. But there was one company, there was one company that appealed to my identity because they were fun. They were just on their website being true to their personality, having fun, being silly, making jokes like the whole brand just had this energy to it where I was just like drawn into it because they were appealing to, Hey,

are you like basically a fun creative entrepreneur? Like we are the brand for you? And I reached out to them hoping that they would work with me. And when they got the price, it was three times what everybody else was three times. And I said yes in a second because of what they appealed to in me, which was my identity and my aspirations of my brand being that fun and that magnetized to clients as well.

And I also realized during that lesson that this is what I want my clients to feel. I want my clients so freaking excited to work with me that when they send in that inquiry, they're thinking to themselves, man, I hope she says yes, I hope she's able to take me on as a client. And even if it was a second of like,

oh gosh, this is more than I thought I was gonna spend, let me catch my breath. All right, yeah, let's do this. I was happy to pay. There was no piece of me that was thinking they were ripping me off, that they were charging too much, that I was judging them of who do they think they are? No,

they appealed to my identity and I gladly, happily paid so much more than what I had to pay if I would've chosen another company. So I hope that brings this all full circle to you, and I hope if nothing else out of this, you will start asking your potential clients when you have the discovery calls, what they value most out of their experience.

And that will be eye-opening and you will start to see exactly what matters to the clients that you are serving. So you can start building your messaging around that and making sure that you are talking about that because that is gonna, what is going to be what attracts them to your brand and what cuts through any sort of price sensitivity. If you found this helpful,

I would really love if you would reach out to me on Instagram at Nicole Begley official. Let me know what you think about it and let me know how you found it helpful. And man, have fun out there. And if you find any amazing craft chocolate, well keep me posted because I just love it. All right, I'll see you guys next week.

Thanks for listening to the Hair of the Dog podcast. This was episode number 213. If you wanna check out the show notes for access to any of the resources that we mentioned, simply go to [www.hairofthedogacademy.com/](http://www.hairofthedogacademy.com/) 2 1 3. Thanks for listening to



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