



Photomint

EMPOWERING PHOTOGRAPHERS



FRESH, TASTY &
ON THE ROCKS



CREATING *Oh!* MOMENTS

THE *Weekly Mint*



BRANDING BY BRAIZEN

Your Brand

Branding can be a frustrating and confusing concept. There is a lot to consider when developing a brand, and it goes far beyond the logo. It is important to brand yourself correctly and consistently.

Your brand is the value you create, the thing that differentiates you from other photographers, your eye and vision, and the way you interact with clients. Your brand is how clients see your business, and it permeates through all parts of your business. Every touch point in your business is a part of your brand—from your email signature, website, and product packaging, to the way you dress, how you answer the phone, your reputation, and your visual style.

When Geoff and I started our photography business, Geoff's personal style was Silicon Valley appropriate—collared polo shirts and loose-fitting, pleated khakis. Upon entering the high-end wedding photography market, we realized that look did not work with the brand we were building. I delighted in giving my husband a total makeover from head to toe! His style went from business casual to artist practically overnight. This was an important move for our business because his personal style needed to align with our brand of photography.

At its best, a brand creates a connection with your clients.

It is imperative that your branding match how you want your prospective clients to see you. If your goal is to shoot high-end weddings and formal events, you need a brand that is serious and more formal. You wouldn't want to call your company *Happy Fun Time Photos* and use logos that look like crayon writing on pink paper—although, that might work great for a photographer specializing in children's photography!

Let's be clear: Your logo is not your brand. Your brand is much more than just the logo. Your product is also not your brand. The iPad is not the brand; the brand is how you *feel* about Apple. Many people confuse branding with a logo and spend too much time and money in the early phase worrying about getting the perfect logo. It's a better use of your time to build your business by learning about who your clients are and what they want.

Building a brand and can seem time-consuming, especially when you are starting out and still developing your style. Remember that everything you do in your business is part of the brand, so always ask yourself, "Is this how I want my business to be known?" when making any decisions.

Authenticity in your brand is key. If you don't believe in what you do and the value you offer, how can you expect your clients to? Be yourself. It's one of the best ways to distinguish yourself from the competition.

Figure out what makes *you* unique, and build on that as part of your brand.

One of the ways Geoff and I did that when building the Geoff White Photographers brand was to build on our personal flair for attention to detail and passion for perfection. What this has done is draw clients who connect with that approach to us. Many of our clients are classic type A personalities who delight in the extreme attention to detail we take with shooting, image quality, image protection, products, and every other aspect of our business.

Brandings Mistakes to Avoid

As artists, we know how important our image is and how important it is to get the branding right. Here are some of the biggest mistakes I see that photographers starting out make and how best to avoid them.

■ *Focusing on branding over business.*

Choosing the perfect business name, selecting the right colors, designing a new logo, putting together a new website, and creating business cards can be fun—and can take a lot of time. How do you narrow down all the color combos, fonts, and styles? It's easy to get distracted by all the choices and details. Instead of spending time working on booking clients, it's tempting to spend it looking over fonts and design elements. You want it to be

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You get what you pay for—when it comes to wedding photography, there couldn't be a truer statement than that. At Geoff White Photographers, we believe in providing the utmost level of customer service, drop dead gorgeous images and superb quality product and prints. We believe in doing it right. And we are proud perfectionists when it comes to our images.

When you commission us to photograph your wedding day, we make a commitment to you to provide you with the best possible experience from start to finish. Leading up to the wedding day, our Studio Manager is a resource to our clients, giving recommendations for vendors, tips for putting together a timeline, and making sure all your questions are answered.

Once your wedding day is over, our real work begins. Raw image files in hand, we begin the laborious process of editing, color correcting, processing and archiving your images. From there, we put together your album pre-design. We make several revisions before you see it, because we know that brides are not professional album designers, and it is much easier to create a gorgeous, custom album that your friends will envy if you have a professional head-start.

THE GW EXPERIENCE

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HOME KELVIN LARA GEOFF HIGHLIGHTS INFO PROOFING BLOG CONTACT

Stickler for details: One of the ways we infuse our personalities into our brand is to let clients know about our perfectionist ways when it comes to their images.

perfect, but if you spend all your time on branding and don't have any clients, it won't matter how great it looks.

During your first year I recommend studying branding, and learning what it is and what it can do, before investing in a professional branding package. Over time, you will figure out your style and evolve your brand. That way, if you feel you need to work with a branding specialist once your business has matured a bit, you will have done the work needed to create a strong vision. In the meantime, I recommend buying

a customizable predesigned template logo (more on this later in the chapter).

- **Waiting until your branding is perfect.** Networking to find clients can be scary. While it's something you probably know you should be doing, chances are you don't want to. Many times, we use not having a great portfolio or website or business card as an excuse to avoid putting ourselves out there. That is a *huge* mistake. Networking is about building relationships with people, the same people that will do business with you later. And those relationships are

not built on your branding; they're built on your people skills. You don't need a great portfolio or brochure to build great relationships with people.

- **Copying your competition.** When you start out, it is a good idea to check out the competition in your niche and look at their branding—but do not copy them. It's difficult to establish yourself if it looks like you stole your ideas from an established photographer. Do the work to develop your own style and branding, and your clients, colleagues, and even the competition will respect you.

- **Offering too many styles.** When starting out, most of us don't know our own style yet. We experiment with different angles, compositions, lens choices, and color choices. There is nothing wrong with that...unless we show this mix of styles in our portfolios or websites. It is confusing to a prospective client to see a wide range of styles in your work. Moody black-and-white landscapes, tightly cropped expressions, kids doing silly things, sepia images, an image with a vintage action right next to an image with a heavy color pop. It's too much. It's key to keep a consistent look and style in

How I Found My Style

Composition has always been one of my photographic strengths. After spending so much time shooting couples and reviewing my work in the editing phase, I began to see that I had a preference for tight crops, creating intimate images of couples in love. That is the type of imagery I am drawn to, and it's what I like to create. As I realized this about my style, I began to focus on it even more, perfecting it. You have to give yourself time to let your style develop.



The images that Geoff White Photographers are known for have strong lines and bright color pops, both representative of our recognizable style.

your portfolio. Ask a new photographer to describe her style; chances are she will say something along the lines of “capturing the moment.” This is what all photographers do, but it doesn’t describe the *style*. Again, this takes time to develop, so have some patience. Don’t wait until it’s perfect. Branding is a process that evolves over time.

Name Your Business

Your business name is important for multiple reasons and needs to be chosen with care. Many times a photographer uses his own name, or his name followed by the word *Photography* or *Photographer*, such as Geoff White Photographers. That is one option but it is not always the best one, depending on how you want to grow your business later (perhaps by adding other photographers to your staff).

The other option to consider is excluding your name from the business, such as Cowbelly Pet Photography. Think carefully about what your business name says about your business. It’s the first impression a client gets and, once you establish your business name and reputation, it will be difficult to change later. Let’s look at some things to consider before deciding on your business name.

Reasons to use your personal name as part of the business:

- You enjoy a personal approach to business. In other words, you are the brand.
- You don’t see yourself expanding your business down the road.

Keep It Short and Simple

Keep your website address short and sweet, and the same goes for your email address. For example, our website address for Geoff White Photographers is geoffwhite.com and emails go to whoever@geoffwhite.com. This keeps it easy to remember and type.

- You’d prefer to build the business around your personality and developing one-on-one relationships with clients.

Reasons *not* to use your personal name as part of the business:

- You want to expand the business down the road by hiring photographers and/or other staff to take on more clients or ease off the hours a bit.
- The ability to earn profit is a key motivator for starting your business (as opposed to being more motivated by the opportunity to create art for a living).
- You can foresee selling your business one day.
- You plan to scale the business up as it grows (adding multiple locations, photographers, and product lines to serve more clients).

Ultimately, you are the one who has to live with your company name, so take time to envision where you’d like to see your business in 3 years, 5 years, 10 years, and



so on. The answer is unique to you and how you want to run your business.

When Geoff and I started our business, we didn't give much thought to the name. It seemed that everyone named their photography businesses after themselves. We purposely decided to brand the

business around Geoff, as he was the only main photographer at the time.

That worked well in the beginning, until we wanted to grow the business and add staff. That's when the name of the business became a problem.

7 Tips to Choosing a Good Business Name

1. **Make it memorable.** It's no good to have a great business if no one can recall your name, so choose a name that can easily be remembered.
2. **Say it out loud.** How does it roll off the tongue? Is easily pronounced?
3. **Pay attention to the feeling or concepts the name conveys.** Be sure the feeling of your business name ties into the feelings you want to evoke in your customers. For example, the name Bugs and Butterflies suggests a lighthearted playfulness, which is perfect since the photography business specializes in kids.
4. **Make it easy to spell.** People need to be able to find you online. That means your business name needs to be easy to spell. Don't use weird spellings that might seem clever, as this will hurt you when people start searching for you online and can't easily figure out which listing is you. Avoid using *f* when you mean *ph*, and don't just remove letters to shorten the name.
5. **Short is usually better than long.** I know this seems simple, but a shorter name is easier to remember and is easier to type into a browser than a long name.
6. **Check the meaning.** You might be doing business in a small town in Oregon, but your business name is international. Have you heard the story of how Chevrolet introduced the Nova? In the United States it sold well but when they introduced the same car in Spanish-speaking counties the car didn't sell. At all. The reason was that in Spanish, *no va* means *doesn't go*. Who is going to buy a car named *doesn't go*?
7. **Make sure the name is available.** There are three distinct places your business name needs to be available before you can call it your own:
 - **Trademark search:** uspto.gov/trademarks
 - **Website domain name:** networksolutions.com/whois
 - **Business names in your state:** Search online for "*your state* business name search" to locate the correct database. For example, I would search for "California business name search" in order to find my state's directory of business names.

PhotoMint Was Almost Named PhotoBacon!

When PhotoMint was only an idea and I was thinking of possible names, I toyed with the idea of calling it PhotoBacon. The concept was “bringing home the bacon...with photography.” Hmm, glad I abandoned that stinker. An Australian friend reminded me that the word *bacon* has no connection with money outside the United States. I knew that the PhotoMint audience would be made up of photographers from around the world. As I thought more about what the site would be about, I realized I wanted something more elegant and sophisticated. PhotoMint addresses serious business ideas and concepts. Hence *PhotoMint* and not *PhotoBacon*.

No one wanted to talk to anyone other than Geoff. Every time the phone rang, the caller asked to speak to Geoff and seemed put off when dealing with anyone else, including me. As I began to go to more networking events, the first thing people would say to me was, “Where’s Geoff?” Even though I was right in front of them, people still wanted to talk to the person at the top, and thought he had all the answers. Little did they know Geoff was shooting, while I was the one running the business side.

This problem was compounded when we expanded our services to include another photography team for weddings. We considered changing the name entirely at that point, but eventually settled on Geoff White Photographers (changing *Photography* to *Photographers*), so that we didn’t lose all the branding we had built. If we were starting over, I would not use our name, as it caused problems as our business grew.

When to Hire a Graphic Designer

Many photographers have great vision and a good graphic sense, but that doesn’t make them graphic designers. A graphic designer can take an idea of a logo and turn it into a fully developed design, and some can help with creating a full branding package.

I recommend waiting to hire a graphic designer or branding specialist until after your first year in business. In your first year, you are still figuring out what your business is all about.

You don’t truly understand which path your business will take yet, what type of clients you will have, and the market you are targeting. That makes it likely that your actual business and branding will evolve over the first year in business. Now I’m not saying branding isn’t important; it’s just that in the early days of starting a business, you likely don’t know much about your brand and will be grasping at straws. It takes a

while to figure out your style, understand who your clients are, and what makes you different.

A good graphic designer can help with a logo, create website headers and banners, create a great business card and stationary, and make sure that your look is consistent over all your outlets.

When I started PhotoMint, I had some vague idea that it would be about earning money as a photographer, but didn't quite know how the brand would evolve over time. So I hired a student designer to create a simple logo featuring imagery and style from a dollar bill. From the start, I knew it wasn't quite right, but had to move forward. A year later, PhotoMint had taken on a life of its own—and it's about more than making money. I knew who my readers were, and I knew what PhotoMint was all about. It had outgrown the original logo quickly. It was time to invest in a proper branding package.

When I hired Ashley Jankowski from Braizen, PhotoMint was ready for a rebranding. I had a firm grasp on who the readers of PhotoMint are and what they needed. I also knew the direction I

wanted to take PhotoMint. Her team spent a lot of time learning about PhotoMint, its audience, and the brand itself. Once they felt like they understood PhotoMint from the bottom up, they were able to create a new logo and identity based on the brand that I had already established. At the beginning of this chapter is the branding concept that Braizen put together for PhotoMint. As you can see, it's not only a logo, it's a brand. They did a fabulous job, and set a high standard for branding companies out there.

Had I gone to them in the beginning of PhotoMint, it would have been too soon. At that point, the brand was not established. I had some ideas and concepts, but was unsure of how the brand would eventually unfold, how readers would respond, and how to connect with the core audience.

At the early stages of your business, you have hopes, dreams, and ideas. Your brand is more of a seedling, an idea. Give it time to develop, and you won't regret it. When you are ready to work with a graphic designer or a branding specialist there are things you can do to make the process go smoothly.

The original logo for PhotoMint. The word "PHOTOMINT" is written in a bold, teal, serif font. Below it, the tagline "THE BUSINESS OF PHOTOGRAPHY" is written in a smaller, teal, sans-serif font.

Before

The original PhotoMint logo (before rebranding) and the new PhotoMint logo created by branding specialist Braizen, which perfectly expresses my vision for the PhotoMint brand.

The new PhotoMint logo. It features a stylized leaf icon above the word "Photomint". The leaf is split into two colors: green on the left and brown on the right. The word "Photomint" is written in a lowercase, sans-serif font, with "Photo" in brown and "mint" in green.

After

- **Look at other logos.** Check out the logos of other photographers—especially those in your niche and market. You do not want to copy their designs. Ever. However, it will give you an idea of what you like and what you don't.
- **Get samples.** In the same way your clients shop around for photographers, you need to shop around for designers. The design process involves back-and-forth to get the logo just right and that's not easy if you don't see eye to eye.
- **Define the job.** When working with a designer be clear about your expectations. Don't assume that since he is working on a logo, he will design your business cards for the same price or create a series of web banners. If you want logo design work and a business card along with a web banner, discuss that up front.
- **Get a contract.** Just as you wouldn't shoot an event without a contract, you should never hire someone to do work for you without one. The contract needs to specify what it is you get for what cost, how many revisions, what type of files you end up with, and how you can use the logo.
- **Put together a Pinterest board.** Use Pinterest to collect ideas of colors, fonts, and designs you like. You may start to see trends and styles that particularly appeal to you.
- **Define your unique selling proposition.** What makes you different is the heart and soul of your business. How can you describe your style in a way that will not be confused with your competitors? Is it your pricing, your customer service, your eye for composition? Take the time to dig deep. Don't be afraid to ask clients or vendors you work with—they might be able to give you perspective.
- **Choose words carefully.** Don't get lost using the same tired and generic words that many photographers use. You know what I mean. "Capturing the moment" could describe any photographer.
- **Know your competition.** The more you study and understand your competitors, the easier it will be for you to carve out your own piece of the market by differentiating yourself.
- **Be yourself.** Are you funny or serious, sophisticated or relaxed, artsy or classic? By understanding your style, you can better tailor your brand to match your personality.

Template Design

So if I suggest that you don't hire a graphic designer right away, how do you look professional in the meantime?

Template designs are great when you are in the early stages of developing your business. Instead of getting caught up in an endless loop of graphic design and the search for perfect, you can choose something that works for now so you can move on to the profitable stage of your business.

Once you are ready to invest in a designer, you have some questions to answer. This exercise will help you develop a look and a logo that truly reflects your business.

Where Can You Get a Predesigned Logo?

Here are a few designers I recommend who offer predesigned logos and marketing kits for photographers:

- **Swoone:** swoone.com
- **Design Aglow:** designaglow.com
- **Photographer Café:** photographercafe.com
- **The Shoppe:** theshoppedesigns.com
- **Jamie Schultz Designs:** jamieschultzdesigns.com



The Swoone website.

There are lots of predesigned logos for photographers you can purchase at a reasonable cost, and have your name and chosen colors swapped in within a day or so. You can find beautiful collateral kits that include a brochure, address labels, business cards, notecards, stickers, and other pieces you need to give your business a professional look. You'll have something to start with that looks professional for an affordable price and you can get back to focusing on making your business profitable.

Logo Design

Your logo is probably the first thing that your prospective client will see. The logo is an important part of your branding and needs to convey the proper message about your business.

There are three basic types of logos:

- Text logos
- Mark or symbol logos
- A combination of the two

By developing a strong brand you will be able to charge higher rates and reach more clients.

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The Geoff White Photographers logo is a text style logo.

Geoff White Photographers is a text logo (uses font only), while PhotoMint is a combination logo, as it incorporates both text and a symbol.

Here are some tips about designing/choosing a logo:

- Make sure it can be scaled.
- Color is important.
- See how the logo looks in black and white.
- The style needs to match.
- Typography matters.
- It needs to be easily recognizable.
- Take your time.

When we first designed the Geoff White Photography logo, we studied fashion magazines and looked at ads. What we discovered was that most high-end fashion brands do not use any kind of mark, and logos tend to be text only.

We also looked at the fonts used, and found that most major fashion brands use classic fonts that you see over and over again. We chose Futura font for our logo, as it is a classic font with a clean, modern feel.

We looked at different color combinations and eventually settled on plain old black and white. Black and white is a timeless, classic color combination and works well with images. At first we tried to add in a



The GWP packaging incorporates the timeless colors of black and white for a simple yet sophisticated look that appeals to our target clientele.

third color to spice things up. We chose fuchsia, because we wanted our brand to have a sexy edge to it. What we found though, is that fuchsia felt out of place on our website, and didn't match nicely to the many vibrant images in our portfolio. I kept trying to add in colorful touches, thinking that it was needed. Eventually I dropped fuchsia and fully embraced the black and white. I began to see all sorts of gorgeous black and white patterns everywhere, and it was easy to find packaging supplies.

When you are ready to design a logo, it's key to understand who your clients are, and the personality and voice you present as your business. Start with some questions:

- What emotions do your clients experience when enjoying your product?
- What is your voice or personality? Are you funny, relaxed, and easygoing? A perfectionist? Let that be part of your brand. Find ways to infuse your personality throughout your brand. Choose fonts that convey your personality—modern, vintage, timeless, sophisticated, fun, and so on.
- How would you describe your brand? Elegant, casual, sophisticated, affordable, high-end, fun? (Don't say *vintage-modern*, the trend of the moment!)
- Are your clients mostly moms? Do they identify more with Target or with Neiman Marcus? Clients who shop at Target tend to be more drawn to light-hearted fun design, while Neiman Marcus shoppers will be drawn to a more sophisticated color palette and design.
- Do your clients tend to choose products themselves and ask lots of questions, or do they prefer to be told by the expert what is best?
- Are your clients do-it-yourselfers or busy executives? DIY'ers will want options to get more involved in the product design process, whereas busy executives will prefer to rely on the expert (you) to make most of the decisions.
- Do you like to stay on the edge of trends or do you embrace trends once they are more established? What about your clients?

Business Cards

I have a whole drawer full of business cards. It seems that I never throw any of them away. I sort them by type of business and find myself going back to flip through them looking for a specific vender or contact. Your business card acts as your representative and needs to be congruent with your business branding. I can easily tell the high-end businesses from the feel of their cards before even looking at the design and information on them.

Business cards are meant to be touched and held, so keep these suggestions in mind when ordering your cards:

- Paper weight
- Paper texture
- Glossy or matte finish
- Die cuts and rounded corners
- Foils and special ink



The Geoff White Photographers business card. The back of our cards features a signature image used throughout our materials.

What to put on your card?

- **Logo.** Your logo needs to be on your card. It ties all your branding together.
- **Company name.** The business name might already be on the card if you use a text-based logo. If your logo does not have the business name as an element, then you need to place it on a prominent part of the card. When a person looks at it, she needs to easily recognize the company/person she is looking at.
- **Phone number and email.** You want the client to be able to contact you, so make sure that the phone number(s) and email address are easily readable.
- **Address.** If you have an actual studio or office and expect to meet clients or receive mail there, you need to include your mailing address.
- **Website.** Your business has a web presence and you want people to check out your work, so you need to tell them where to go. You do not have to write out *http://* or *www.* anymore. The folks getting your business card will figure that out for themselves.
- **Name and title.** A title is not necessary if you do everything at your business but could be useful if you have employees with specific jobs.
- **Images.** As photographers, we like the idea of putting an image on our business cards, but be careful because that image will be representative of you for quite a while. Some printers offer the option to order a set of cards with a variety of images so that you can create different cards for different niches. For example, if you shoot both weddings and portraits, you could have a different card for each with a different photo. That way you can match the card to the client.
- **Tagline.** Not everyone uses or needs a tagline, but if you have one you might consider putting in on your business card to reinforce the message.



Always carry business cards.
You never know when you'll meet
someone who needs a photographer.

For many people your business card is their first impression of your business. There are some things to avoid when it comes to creating your business card:

- **Ordinary or poorly printed images.** Nothing makes a business card look crappy as quickly as a poorly chosen image. Make sure that the image quality is high enough to print well on the card. You're a photographer running a photography business and you'll be judged by the quality and uniqueness of the image on your card.
- **Poor quality paper.** A cheap, flimsy card says a lot about your business—none of it good. I always find it amazing when people spend lots of money on a logo and design help, and then print their cards the cheapest way possible.
- **Crowded.** Business cards are usually 2 1/2"x3" and even if you use both sides, that's not a lot of space. Keep the layout simple, and don't cram too much information onto the card. Do they really need your fax number?
- **Using a pen to edit information.** If something in your business changes and the card is out of date, get new cards. It looks tacky and cheap to cross out information with a pen.

Keeping an empty space on the back of the card allows you to add a note or special instructions, a gallery link, or a password for the client to log into the website. Usually, the rule of thumb is not to deface a business card because it looks unprofessional, but if there is an actual spot for it, then it's fine.

Custom Packaging

Custom packaging enhances the client's purchase like beautiful wrapping enhances a gift. Packaging is important to your business because it's a way to set your brand apart from your competitors. It's also key because it lets your customers know the value of your product.



When you ask a customer to spend \$50 or more on an 8x10 print they could get at the corner store for \$2, the custom packaging is a visual cue they are getting more than the paper the image is printed on. They are getting your boutique brand, your customer service, and your reputation. If you aren't certain, ask yourself this: Would you rather be seen carrying around a ripped plastic Walmart shopping bag, or a blue Tiffany shopping bag?

I still have the Tiffany bag we got when we purchased our wedding rings 11 years ago. That packaging represents an important moment in my life, so I cherish it even now. That's the power of a brand. Imagine your clients having a similar experience with your brand, and holding on to the packaging their prints came in. The packaging would serve as a reminder of the great memories you created for them.

Your Online Presence

The Internet, and especially social media, have made it a necessity to control your online identity and monitor your brand and reputation online.

Make sure you register for a website domain name, as well as sign up for a Facebook page, a Google+ page, Twitter, and so forth. You don't have to use all these Internet identities right off the bat, but you do want to grab the name on each as soon as possible.

The other big benefit is that simply by filling out the account basics and adding a logo or a few images, you are establishing a stronger reputation online. When someone does an Internet search for your

business, you want there to be multiple hits in addition to your website. Lots of search results will give your business the appearance of being well established.

Set up the following for your business:

- Website domain name
- Facebook page
- Google+
- Twitter
- Pinterest
- YouTube
- LinkedIn
- Google Places
- Yelp

We will get into actually using all these different online identities in Chapter 16, "Marketing Strategies," but the thing to keep in mind is to be consistent across the board. Use the same name, photo, color scheme, and icon everywhere.

Google Alerts

Google has a service that allows you to monitor the Internet for specific content. In this case, we are going to use this service to monitor our business. The first step is to go to google.com/alerts, where you can enter the search query and control what happens with the results.

1. Search query. This is where you add the keywords to search, such as your name and business name, and the word *photography*. For example, I have alerts set up to monitor the following: Lara White, PhotoMint,

Geoff White Photography, Geoff White Photographers, and Geoff White. This enables me to keep an eye on any online mentions of myself or my businesses.

2. **Result type.** This drop-down list allows you to narrow the results. The choices are: Everything, News, Blogs, Video, Discussions, and Books.
3. **How often.** You can receive an alert as it happens, once a day, or once a week. Personally, I think once a day is perfect since it allows you to deal with mentions on a timely basis.
4. **How many.** This is where you determine the amount of results sent. There are two choices—Only the best results or All results.
5. **Deliver to.** This is the email you want the results sent to.

Once you've filled in all the fields, click CREATE ALERT. That's it. Google will now send you alerts that match your Search query on the schedule you specified.

Yelp

Yelp lets people leave reviews about businesses. You can create a Yelp business profile (and more) using the Yelp for Business Owners tools accessible at biz.yelp.com. If you have an account with Yelp you can log in at the top right side of the page; otherwise, you can click the *Create your free account now* button in the middle of the page.

Enter the name of your business and its location. You will then get a link to add your business to Yelp. Once you've entered

Some Great Branding Specialists for Photographers

- **Get Braizen:** getbraizen.com
- **Ribbons of Red:** ribbonsfred.com
- **Bittersweet Design:** designbybittersweet.com
- **Identity Kitchen:** identitykitchen.com

all the information, Yelp will send you an email before your profile goes live.

Once you have a reputation online, it's important to actively monitor it for both positive and negative remarks. If an unhappy client is badmouthing your business all over town, you'd want to work with that person as quickly as possible to resolve issues before too much damage is done to your reputation. It's the same thing with your online reputation. By monitoring mentions of your business, you will spot something negative and can quickly address it. You might write a response to a bad review or take action to prevent a similar situation from happening again. You could also reach out to that person directly to resolve his complaints.

The other benefit to monitoring your brand online is that you can quickly spot positive mentions, great reviews, and unexpected editorial coverage. All of these make great fodder for your blog.

Signature Images

When you start putting together a portfolio of your work it's smart to select a signature image. This is one you will use repeatedly in your branding and marketing to create brand recognition. You may get bored of seeing the same image after a while, but your clients (and prospective clients) won't. They will learn to recognize you by that image.

Flip through any wedding magazine and you'll find dozens of photography ads, and most of them are difficult to distinguish from one another. But imagine a client sees

one particularly strong image consistently: She sees it on the photographer's business card, on the website, when visiting a venue and that image is hanging on the wall, and when flipping through bridal magazines and the image is featured in an ad. There's that same incredible image again. The bride begins to recognize your brand. And that is exactly what you want to happen.

Brand Consistency

You want to ensure that your brand stays consistent through each touch point of your business. Here are some ways to make that happen:

Using a single signature image on your promotional and marketing materials keeps your look consistent and reinforces your brand because it's memorable.





- Use the same colors everywhere.
- Use the same photo for social media profiles, so people can recognize you from the image across different mediums.
- If your logo is soft and feminine, for example, don't introduce packaging pieces that are inconsistent with that look and feel.
- Match your working clothes to the style of your brand—if your brand is classic style, dress in a way that reflects that.
- Match your voice to your brand—if your style is casual, go for a causal tone in emails, if it's more artsy, let that come across in your blog posts, voicemail, and client correspondence.
- Consistency is also important in image treatments. For example, instead of using a variety of black and white and sepia, choose one and stick with it.



Industry Insiders:

Tamara Lackey on Branding for Photographers

Tamara Lackey is a renowned professional photographer, author, and web series host. Besides running a full-time portrait studio, Tamara devotes a great deal of time to the photography industry by mentoring new photographers and putting out educational resources. I chatted with Tamara about her ideas on the importance of branding for photographers.

Tamara works with and advises many photographers, and she feels branding is critical to a photographer and it's important to get it right. She suggests that photographers starting a new business should spend some time studying branding so they understand exactly what branding is and what they should do for a business.

“Branding is something that is important to study in the beginning to understand what it is.”

© Tamara Lackey Photography



Branding needs to be a consistent message across everything you do and offer. If you are a high-end photographer and you talk about discounts on your website or in your client presentation, that's not a consistent message in your branding, Tamara explains. There's a disparity between messages, and it confuses your audience and dilutes your brand.

Beginner Mistakes

What's the most common newbie branding mistake Tamara sees in the industry? Photographers who start out by trying to emulate their competition instead of separating themselves. When to try to copy your competitor in their branding, presentation, and style of images, it's an obvious imitation. Besides being noticeable to clients with a discerning eye, other photographers in your area may spot you for a newbie without your own style, instead of viewing you as a new artist to respect.

Template Websites: Good Idea or Bad?

Wondering whether you should go with an easy and affordable template website, or splurge on something completely custom?

"For years, the advice has been to avoid a template website because it was difficult to stand out from your competition when you have a cookie cutter approach to a website. Now, templates are so customizable that two photographers can get a different look and feel from the same template."

This is great advice, as there are so many expenses in the beginning of starting your business; you want to keep your costs down so you don't go deeply into debt before you turn a profit.

Match Your Branding to Your Target Market

Tamara shares that it's important to match your approach to branding to your target market and the methods that your potential clients use to find you. For example, when Tamara was photographing mostly high-end weddings, her target market was actually wedding vendors (as opposed to the brides themselves). In order to market to high-end wedding planners and caterers, it was critical to have polished brochures and fancy business cards that would catch the discerning eye of someone in the wedding industry who is used to working with lots of photographers.

“Invest in reaching your target market. In order to do that, you have to know who your target market is and how they find you.”



© Tamara Lackey Photography

With her portrait business on the other hand, her clientele is reaching her mainly via word-of-mouth and online methods. Therefore, she doesn't need to invest in fancy promotional handouts, but instead invests in a great website design and search engine optimization (SEO). Those marketing methods are what bring people in the door for her, not brochures. So why waste the money on something that's not going to bring you business? By taking the time to understand your clientele and which marketing methods are effective, you can determine what pieces to invest in, and which ones are not needed.

Should You Invest in a Branding Agency?

One of the biggest challenges for a new photographer with branding is figuring out who you are, what you are offering, and what your style is. A lucky few can answer these questions instinctively, the rest of us probably need a year or so to figure this out while our business develops.

“Building your brand starts with you.”

This is work that only you can do, and should be figured out before investing in a branding agency to create a new logo and customized website. If you haven't done the work to figure out what makes your business unique and separates you from your competition, a branding expert cannot figure that out for you, and you will mostly likely end up with something that isn't quite right, or isn't quite *you*.

“I didn't figure out my branding until a couple of years in. Most people don't have that clarity or focus right away.”

This is common, and it's why I advise against investing too much in customized branding, websites, and brochures until you can truly understand what makes your work different.

Relationship of Branding to Style

It's critical to understand your style and who your audience is, and how that relates to your branding. For example, if your style is about capturing kids at their silliest moments, you don't want your branding to scream edgy. That's a complete mismatch of your style and branding. It goes back to having a consistent message across the board. ■■■