

5 Common Mistakes That Lose You Business

**And How To
Attract Your Ideal Clients
Like Crazy**



by Jamie M Swanson for

THE MODERN TOG

HEY THERE!



My name is Jamie Swanson and I am the photographer and author behind The Modern Tog. You can click to [read more about me & The Modern Tog here](#).

Thanks for downloading this free e-book available exclusively from The Modern Tog!

I believe in providing people with quality advice that will help you to create a successful and profitable business.

My hope is that this e-book would be a catalyst to your business, helping you to get more clients and money by avoiding common mistakes that many photographers make.

You'll also find links to other helpful posts and resources throughout this book. Links to products are affiliate links, but please know that I only recommend products that I truly love and believe in. I don't think I'd be able to sleep at night if I was just pushing things for the few small dollars I'd make from it.

If you have any additional questions regarding this book, hop on over to our [Facebook community](#) and leave a comment on the wall. I'll answer it as soon as I can.

If you like this e-book and want to share it, I ask that you please send people to [The Modern Tog](#) to get their own free copy instead of just passing this along to them.

Here's the direct link for sharing: <http://www.themoderntog.com/5-mistakes>

Thank you for understanding!

Wishing you many clients and much success in your business!

Warmly,
Jamie

P.S. If you find this book helpful, please take a moment to [tweet about it](#) or [post about it on Facebook](#). It's one of the best ways of thanking me for sharing it with you. Thanks!



INTRODUCTION

The hardest part of getting your new business off the ground is learning how to attract your ideal clients (or any clients) so that you can build your portfolio and really get your business off the ground.

Time and again I see new photographers making the same 5 mistakes that actually drive clients away from them that are easily avoidable.

It may take a bit of time to implement the changes that you need to make, but most of them can be done for free and can make a HUGE impact on your business. It's completely worth all the time you invest in this.

SO HERE'S THE 5 COMMON MISTAKES THAT LOSE YOU BUSINESS:

- 1. YOUR CLIENTS ARE CLUELESS**
- 2. YOUR CLIENTS ARE CONFUSED & OVERWHELMED**
- 3. YOUR CUSTOMER SERVICE IS HORRIBLE**
- 4. YOU ARE TRYING TO BE EVERYTHING TO EVERYBODY**
- 5. YOU AREN'T GIVING YOUR CLIENTS WHAT THEY WANT**

1. YOUR CLIENTS ARE CLUELESS

I recently was turned away by a bride who was considering hiring us because someone else was offering the "same package" as us for at least \$400 less, and I wasn't willing to negotiate on price.

So in my "best wishes to you" e-mail, I asked her if she'd be willing to share who they ultimately decided to work with. Most people don't get back to me about it, but I'm always curious to see their final choice.

She quickly e-mailed me back with the four other photographers she was still considering.

It became clear to me that this bride had absolutely no eye for photography at all and didn't know what she really wanted.

The photographers ranged in quality from quite good to really awful (to be blunt) and the styles ranged from clean and crisp photos to overly photoshopped images that will date themselves quickly.

It was a great reminder that most people cannot tell a good photo from a bad photo at all and really have no idea what they want.

If you're going to be successful in your business, there's something you need to learn and accept right now.



THE SUCCESS OF YOUR BUSINESS HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH THE QUALITY OF YOUR IMAGES

Having beautiful images is certainly helpful, but this does not determine success.

It's all about educating your clients.

Think about how you approach buying something you've never purchased before that you don't know much about.

Think about the first time you bought a flat screen TV.

If you simply take 2 televisions of the same size and set them side by side they both accomplish

the same thing - they allow you to watch shows & movies. So why should you pay SO much more for one than the other?

Unless you've researched about what to look for in a television, the only thing you have to compare is the price. So of course the lower price looks better than the much higher price.

Once you know what to look for, such as how screen resolutions affect image quality, you can make a more informed decision and decide if the extra value is worth paying for.

If no one tells you why the expensive features will make you enjoy this television more, you'll never spend the extra money.

Are you telling your clients why you are worth so much more than the cheap crappy photographer who produces bad images and practically gives their work away for free?



If they don't know what to look for, why should they do anything except look at price? Why shouldn't they hire the cheapest person available?

Give them a reason. Tell them why you are better. Show them that you're worth it.

Because you are.

The clients that you really want, the ones who truly value photography and the memories they preserve will be willing to pay more to get the experience and images that you will provide to them. They'll know why buying a wall print or canvas from you is worth paying a premium for instead of just getting them from some cheap retail store that makes your photos look like junk.

BENEFITS VERSES FEATURES

As you're telling them why they should go with you instead of someone else, make sure to speak in terms of benefits and not just features of your products.

A feature is the "what" and the benefit is the "so what".

Let's look at how you'd tell your clients to order professional prints through you.

The features of buying professional prints are that they are printed on archival paper with archival inks. This tells people "what" the product is.

The benefit of professional prints is that their memories will be preserved for years to come. This answers the question, "So what?"

So when educating your clients, tell them "By purchasing professional prints, your images will be preserved for years to come, ensuring that you won't forget the joy of the first few days of your child's life."

See the difference? No one cares about the print itself - only about what it stands for and means.

Always be thinking in terms of benefits. If a client can't see what's in it for them, they won't buy it. If they want the benefit you are sharing with them, they'll be hooked and happy to hand over their money.



2. YOUR CLIENTS ARE CONFUSED & OVERWHELMED

One of the most common places I see people losing clients is through clutter and confusion. It's absolutely essential that you make it as simple as possible to hire you and buy your stuff.

Think about how many times you have to go back and forth via e-mail or the phone to book a client.

How can you streamline this?

Every single time your prospective client has to do something, whether it be as small as clicking a link or as large as meeting with you, there's a chance that they'll never do it and you'll lose the sale.

IDEAS OF HOW TO SIMPLIFY

People tend to ask the same questions. Create a FAQ sheet that answers them, or talk about them up front before they even need to ask.

When asking for consultations or scheduling sessions, instead of saying, "What works for you?" ask them if X time or X time would work better for them. They can always tell you if one of those times doesn't work, but this saves an extra e-mail or two if one of the times does work for them.

Pick up the phone and call instead of going back and forth several times via e-mail. Then just send a follow-up e-mail to summarize your conversation and remind them about meeting times, pricing, etc.

Schedule multiple meetings at the same time. So set up your portrait session date plus your [in-person sales meeting](#) at the same time so that you don't have to be consulting calendars twice.



YOUR WEBSITE TURNS THEM OFF

Make it as easy as possible for people to find what they are looking for on your website.

While you're familiar with where things are found on your site, your clients are not and you need to make the things you want them to see and the things they are looking for blatantly obvious for them to find when they visit your site.

They want to see if your work is nice and what your pricing is and how to contact you. Ask someone who isn't familiar with your site to sit with you and find these things. Watch them as they do it, but don't tell them where they are. Do they find what they are looking for easily or do they have to search for it? The harder it is to find something, the easier it is for them to simply click away and find a different photographer to hire.

Just because everyone and their friend uses the same type of website template, it doesn't mean that you have to do that. [Select a great website template](#) and make it easy for clients to navigate.

A CONFUSED MIND WILL NOT BUY



Make your pricing and product offerings as simple as possible.

When faced with too many choices, people get overwhelmed and shut down. They simply can't decide, so they don't get anything at all.

Think about how long it can take to choose a meal from a restaurant with a huge menu.

There may be several meals we want to try, and it's hard to deny ourselves so many things by having to choose just our favorite in the moment. What if we choose wrong and we want someone else's meal once we have seen it?

Do not offer everything you can possibly get.

Trust me on this one. I know you want to make sure there's something for everyone, but you'll have better sales when you carefully select what you want people to purchase and simplify your listing.

Choose 3-4 different types of items and only offer those. For example, I offer prints, canvas, and albums. I only offer standard sizes so that my list is not too cluttered. My main goal is to sell at least one wall portrait (either a print or a canvas) for the client to smile at every day when they walk by it,

some small gift prints for them to share with friends and family, and then an album to tell their story and reflect who they are or what the event was like (depending on if it was a wedding or portrait session.)

Make your price list simple. Cut it down to only the products you really love, and then sell those like crazy.

Need pricing help? Check out our [free photography pricing guide series](#).

SIMPLIFY YOUR PRICING STRUCTURE

I absolutely guarantee that if you have complicated pricing, you'll lose clients left and right.

You should be able to explain your pricing quickly.

If your pricing includes all sorts of clauses and special discounts that are confusing to understand, people will be more hesitant to buy.

The easier you can your pricing to understand, the better off you'll be.

Make sure everything is clear and that nothing is withheld until "later".

Surprises are bad, especially when they involve money, so make sure they know how much everything costs before booking you.



3. YOUR CUSTOMER SERVICE IS HORRIBLE

People will pay more for companies that have a great reputation for customer service than risk the frustration that comes with paying less but having no service whatsoever.

Be honest with yourself. Are you responding to e-mails promptly? I'm talking all e-mails, not just the new client inquiries you're getting. Are you placing orders in a timely manner, following up with them, and going above and beyond in order to make their experience with you fantastic? Are you delivering things when you say you will?

It is vitally important that you do these very things as best as you can. It's easy when you are first starting out and things are good, but it gets much more difficult to keep on top of things and keep track of stuff once you become more popular and your business starts to take off.

You'll also have fewer problem clients and get more clients through word of mouth advertising when your customer service is amazing, so make this a priority for your business.

Is your e-mail out of control? Get e-mail relief with our free 7-part series and [Take Control of Your Inbox Once & For All](#).



ALWAYS RESPOND PROFESSIONALLY

At some point, you're going to have an unhappy client to deal with. Make sure that you respond to them promptly and professionally while still sticking to your policies. It can be incredibly difficult when someone doesn't like their images, or leaves you a negative review.

You will also get some requests that you simply can't meet, such as significantly lowering your prices to meet a client's budget, requests to work for free, requests for full copyright, etc. If you're not good with words or aren't confident, it can be hard to know exactly what to write in order to still sound professional. If you struggle with this, [download 10 free sample templates](#) and/or purchase the [Go-To Guide For Client E-Mails: 100+ E-mail Templates For Photographers](#).

4. YOU ARE TRYING TO BE EVERYTHING TO EVERYBODY

It's my pet peeve when I see people say they specialize in something and it's a list of things that are very broad. Don't do this. It reeks of "fake it until you make it" and people see right through it.

When you specialize in something, you do one thing really, really well. You rock the socks off of it, and people come to you specifically because you are known as being THE person to go to for that one thing.

I understand the temptation to generalize, though. By doing many different kinds of photography, you may feel like you have a bigger potential client base as you can reach a lot more people.

The problem with doing everything, however, is that no one gets passionate about it, and people will pay lots of money for things they are passionate about.

THE GENERALIST VS THE SPECIALIST

People are passionate about their kids.

If someone really wants to have gorgeous photos of their children taken that they can keep for years to come, who do you think they are going to choose:

The photographer who specializes in only children's portraiture or the generalist who does a little bit of everything?

Or better yet, say you have severe allergies and want to find some relief. Would you rather talk to a general practice doctor or an allergy specialist? Who would you be willing to pay more money to?

When you're first starting out, you'll shoot anything and anyone to get more practice, but only show the stuff that you really want to shoot long-term. As soon as you figure out what you really love (and that may take a bit), remove everything else from your website and portfolio and only show that one thing and focus on it 100%. You'll get more clients who will pay you more money because they see that you share the same passions that they do and they'll value you more.



THE KEY TO GETTING YOUR IDEAL CLIENTS

Specializing can be even more powerful when you incorporate your branding and shooting style into the mix.

It may seem too narrow to specialize in something like "family portraiture for hipsters", but you'll attract the exact type of clients you like working with (who will be super passionate about working with you) and you'll repel everyone who doesn't "get it".

That's a good thing. Trust me. This is the key to getting the type of clients you want. The more you can appeal to your ideal client and make them excited about working with you, the more wonderful they'll be as clients and the more they'll talk about you to their friends who are likely to want to book you and be ideal clients as well.

Don't worry about the clients that go somewhere else. They aren't your ideal clients, and you'll make up for it far more easily by the ones that hire you and love you instead.

Take some time to identify your ideal clients. Get specific. Once you've got this set, make sure that these types of people resonate with your style, your images, and your branding. Find where they hang out and then market to them in those places. The better you know your ideal client, the easier it will be for you to attract them in the first place. Everything you do should revolve around giving them their own ideal experience of working with a photographer.



5. YOU AREN'T GIVING YOUR CLIENTS WHAT THEY WANT

When is the last time you bought something you really didn't want (and didn't HAVE to buy)? Very few people look at a pair of shoes and say, "Wow, I really don't want that. Guess I'll buy it anyways."

The key to getting sales and clients is to offer exactly what they are looking for.

This may sound obvious, but very few photographers actually take the time to think about what their clients want and end up creating packages and offering products that their clients don't want.

It may be that clients don't exactly know what they want, or they think they want one thing (like an 8x10) but they really want another (a big wall portrait, but they think an 8x10 is a wall portrait), but with education you can help them to both realize and fill the need or desire that they have.

WHAT DO YOUR CLIENTS REALLY WANT?

There's several things you can do within a photography business to set yourself apart from the rest by giving clients what they really want without sacrificing quality or income. In fact, by implementing some of these things, you'll get more clients because they'll love how different you are from other photographers.

1. NO SESSION FEES

No one likes paying money and "not getting anything" out of it. Yes, you deserve to be compensated for your time, but you just need to build the session fee into your pricing so that it only looks like there's no session fee.

For example, charge a \$200 retainer fee to book a session that goes completely towards their print order after the session. Bonus points if you offer to refund this if they don't like the images. If you're really getting your ideal clients in the door and are taking solid images, you'll never get a refund, and you'll get more people in the door who don't expect to spend much but will fall in love with the images you take and will buy much, much more than they originally thought.

If you aren't doing in-person ordering sales, you're [missing out on significant amounts of income](#). Make them a part of all your portrait sessions. I promise you won't regret it.



2. NO ADDITIONAL FEES

People hate the idea of paying "extra", so include as much as possible into your standard pricing. Avoid travel fees, shipping fees, extra editing fees, or any other fee that you have for buying a product or service from you that is in addition to your standard fees. While there are times when fees are very appropriate (such as cancellation fees or rescheduling fees, because your time is valuable and needs to be treated as such), getting rid of unnecessary fees is a good thing.

When I first started shooting weddings, I didn't include a disc of the full-resolution digital images. They could purchase them if they wanted, and everyone did, but there was a negative feeling that they weren't included in my packages but they were included in other photographers' packages.

So I raised my prices the exact amount that I had been charging for the disc and included it. After that, no one said anything about it or got upset. Simply including it at the start made for less tension and happier clients, even though they were paying the same either way.



3. PACKAGES THAT CONTAIN EXACTLY WHAT THEY ARE LOOKING FOR

If people keep asking to swap the engagement session out of your package for something else, perhaps you should make that an A la Carte item and only offer the things clients really want in your packages.

People also want to feel like they are getting a good "deal" with their packages. Having a good package structure that gives them the feeling that they're saving money or getting a good value by upgrading is beneficial for both of you. Your client feels good about the savings, and you get more money in the end.

I highly suggest buying [Creative Pricing & Packaging for Photographers](#) by Tofurious to help you set up smart packages. It talks all about the psychology of choice and how to get people to buy the package you want them to buy, and it's utterly fantastic.

It's exactly what I'd write about the subject, only better, so I cannot recommend it highly enough. My average wedding sale increased significantly after implementing his package building strategy, making up for the cost of the e-book many times over. I hate to think about how much potential income I lost over the years prior to making the changes he suggests, especially when they were such simple changes. Go check it out.



4. SMALL UNEXPECTED GIFTS

There's no better way to get someone telling all their friends about you than by sending your client a small unexpected gift.

After engagement sessions, I send a small brag book with 4x6 photos to my couple with my favorite 15 images in it. I don't tell them that I do this, and I just send it to them as a gift, and they show all their friends the images and talk about how awesome we were for sending it. I've had people tell me they heard about us while looking through one of these books, and they cost us less than \$10 to create and send to our clients.

It doesn't cost much to do these things, and if you add in a bit extra to your prices up front knowing you'll be doing this, it won't even cost you extra to do it in the end.

5. ADVICE ABOUT WHAT TO BUY

Clients often have no idea what they really want, so the more you can help them decide what will best fit their needs, the higher your sales will be. If they're looking to preserve the memories of their kids, they may just be thinking about purchasing a few prints, but an album might be a better way to capture this chapter of their lives.

By suggesting other products that better fill the desires and needs of our clients, we're serving them and they appreciate it. They also appreciate hearing what photos work better for various items. They want to know that what they are buying will look great, so offer up suggestions freely and help them understand why you'd choose that.

It all comes back to education. The better you educate your clients, the more empowered and confident they feel about buying from you, and the higher your sales will be.

LAST WORDS...

I hope you've enjoyed this free eBook from The Modern Tog!

I'd love it if you'd be willing to spread the word about it in any photography communities (such as Facebook Groups, Forums, etc) that you are a part of. Please send people to the following link to sign up for their own copy of the guide:

<http://www.themoderntog.com/5-mistakes>

YOU CAN ALSO SPREAD THE WORD BY CLICKING THE BUTTONS:



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Say "Thanks" by
Tweeting This!

Thank you! It means a lot!

If you have any additional questions regarding this book, hop on over to our [Facebook community](#) and leave a comment on the wall. I'll answer it as soon as I can.

Best wishes to you in your business!

Warmly,
Jamie