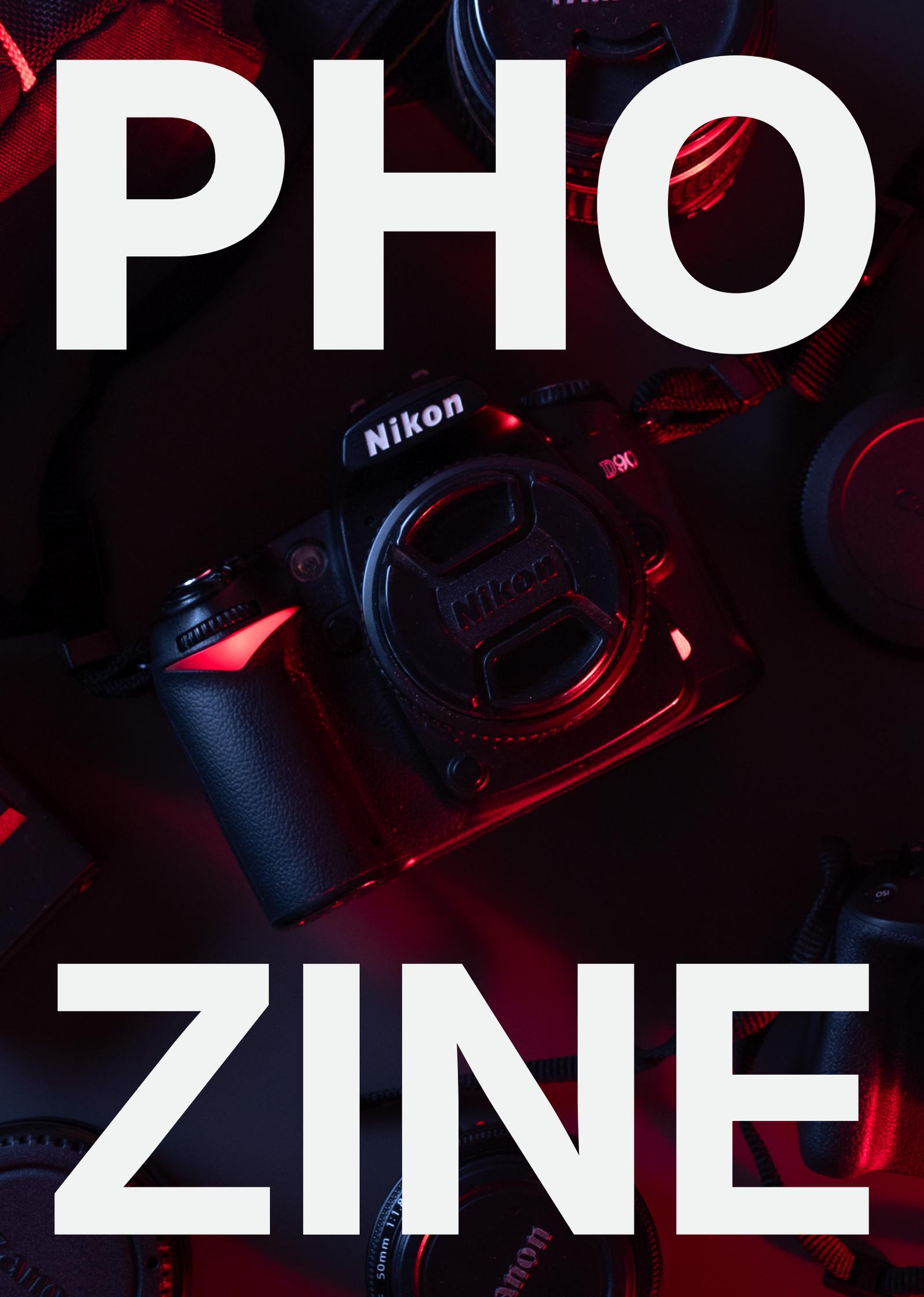


# PHO

A Nikon D90 camera is the central focus, lying on a dark surface. The camera is surrounded by several camera lenses and accessories, including a lens cap and a lens with a '50mm 1:1.8' marking. The entire scene is bathed in a strong red light, creating a moody and artistic atmosphere. The Nikon logo is visible on the camera's top and lens cap.

# ZINE

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# FREELANCE PHOTOGRAPY



## AS A BUSINESS OR ART

*How to Balance Both*

Many photographers jump into freelancing because they love the art and crave the freedom of being self-employed. But once the work starts rolling in, reality sets in fast: freelance photography isn't just about flexible hours and creative shoots. It's a business you have to build from scratch — and passion alone isn't enough to keep it running.

As a freelancer, you're not only taking photos; you're selling a service and delivering results that clients rely on. That means wearing every hat in the business: photographer, marketer, accountant, customer service rep, and sometimes even legal advisor. It can feel overwhelming, especially when the work you imagined as "just taking pictures" suddenly includes invoices, contracts, branding, and constant communication. This is why treating your photography as a business first is essential.

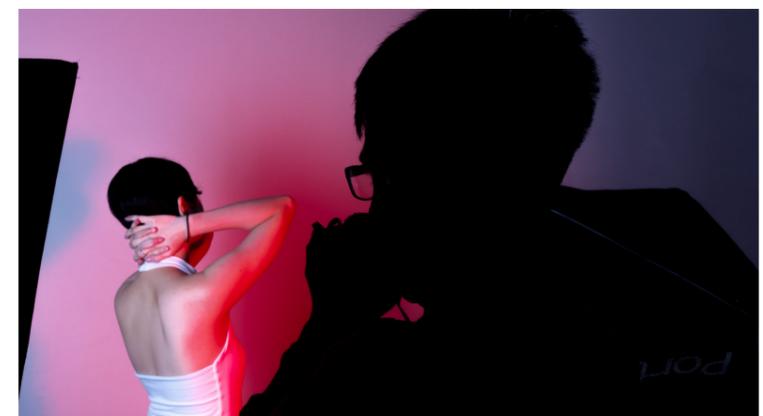
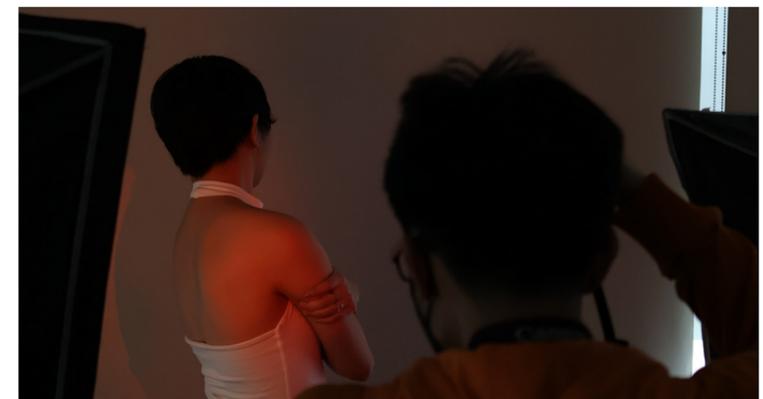
Still, there is room for joy and creativity if you find the right balance. Start by handling the business side so you can sustain yourself, then use your remaining time to pursue personal projects. Passion projects keep your creativity alive and strengthen your portfolio — a double win. Another powerful approach is aligning your artistic style with what clients want. If you love cinematic lighting or documentary storytelling, make that your brand. When your portfolio reflects your true interests, you attract clients who want your eye, not just someone to press a shutter.

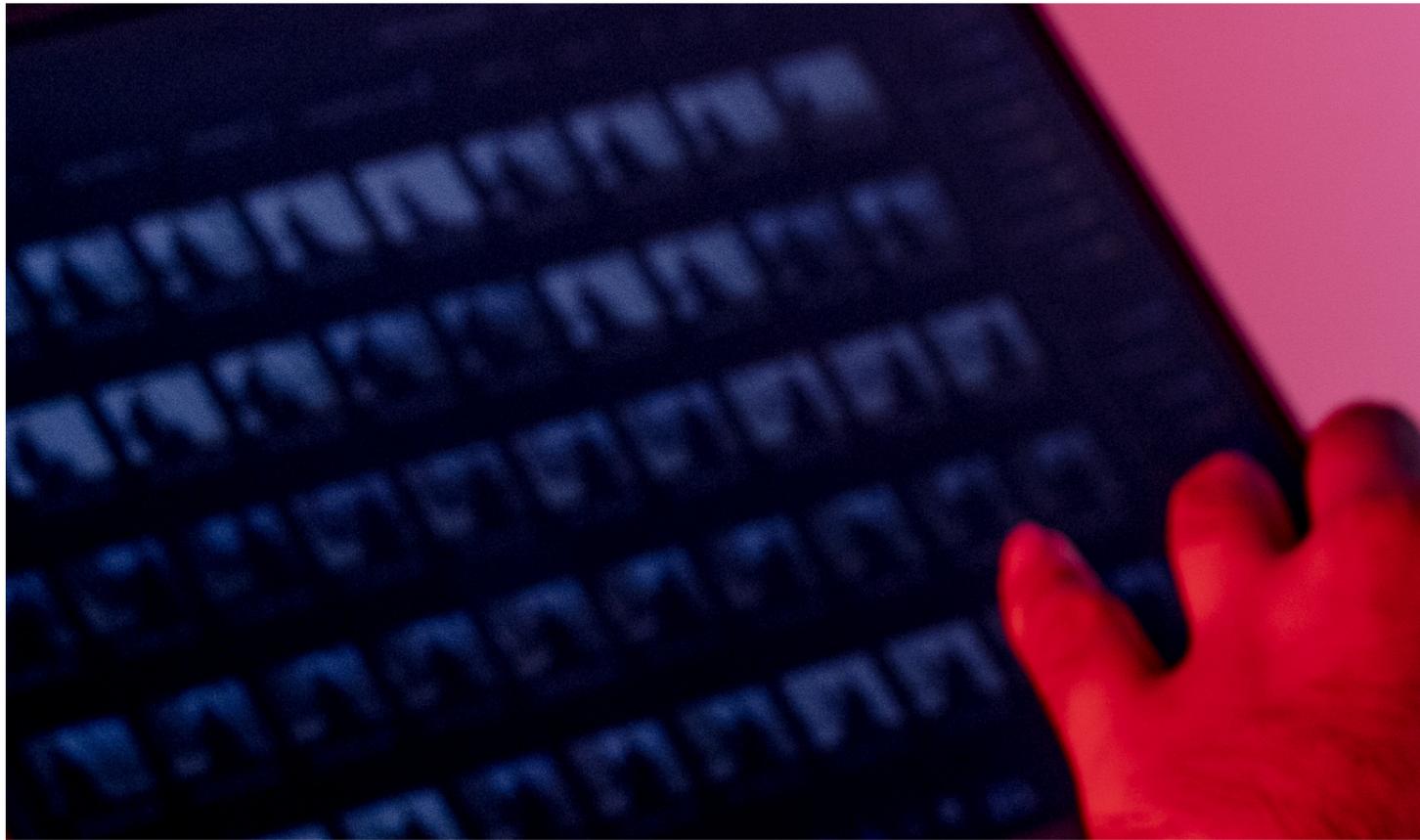
To protect your creativity, avoid taking on jobs that drain you just for the paycheck. Instead, choose work that supports your financial goals, improves your skills, or expands your network. As your business grows, reinvest in yourself — new gear, workshops, travel, or personal shoots all fuel long-term growth.

Above all, remember that clients come back for results. Treat every shoot like it matters, because to your clients, it does. They care about the final images and whether those images meet their needs — not the effort behind the scenes. When you deliver consistently strong results, you build trust, reputation, and a sustainable freelance career where both the business and the art can thrive.

# EVOLUTION

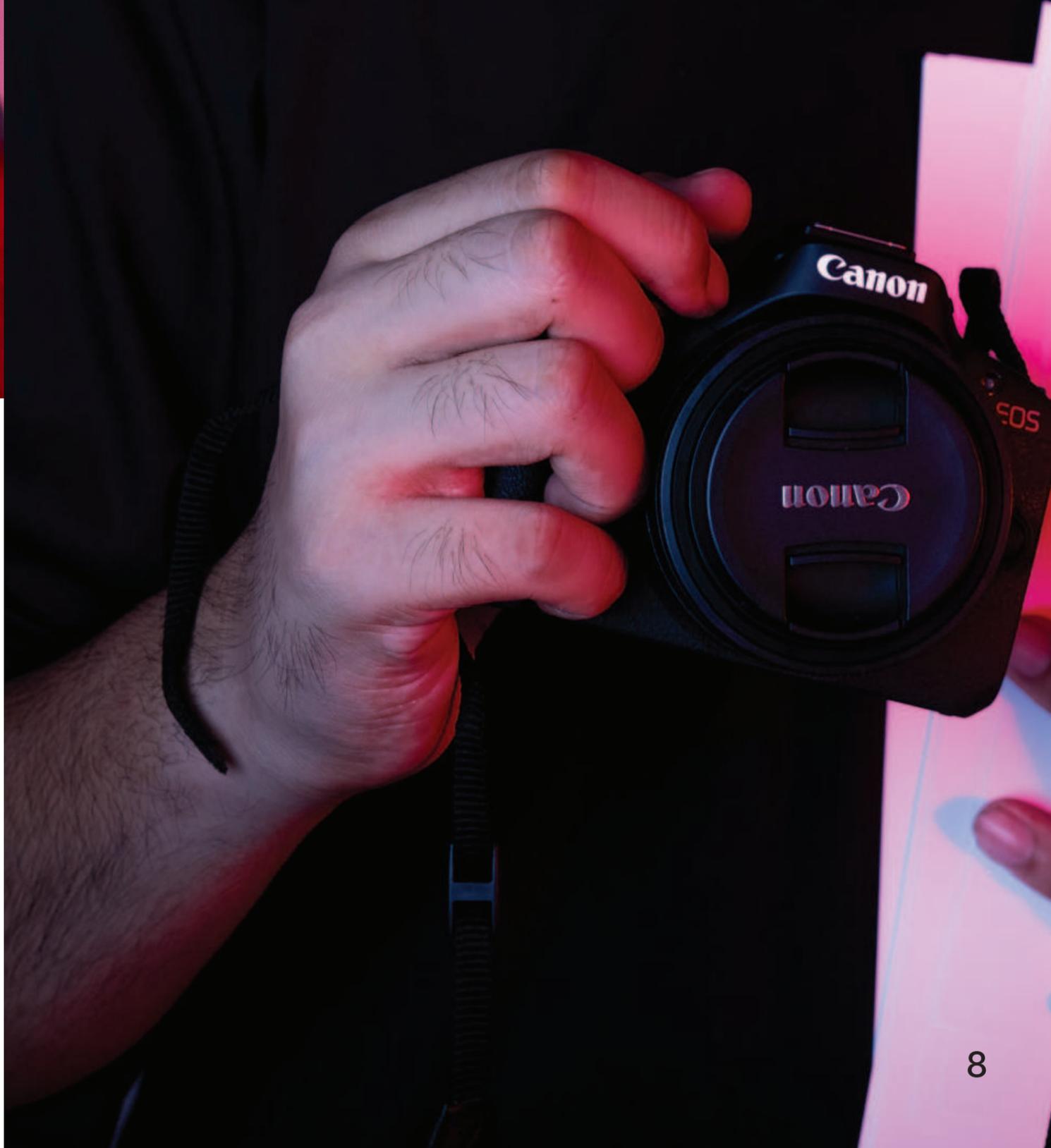
*How your portfolio  
will evolve into the  
perfect portfolio*





# IF YOU HAVE A 2ND JOB

*as a freelance photographer*



For freelancers, a portfolio is more than simply a collection of images; it's a combination of your identity, reputation, and resume. But it takes time to build the ideal portfolio, it changes over time as a result of exploration, experience, and creative development.

Most freelance photographers begin by shooting a variety of subjects, including portraits, products, events, and fashion. This stage allows them to identify their capabilities while appealing to a diverse clientele. Clarity increases with experience; by emphasizing the kinds of work they are most passionate about and skilled at, freelancers start to hone their style and specialization.

Portfolios gain credibility when personal projects gradually replace personal endeavors and teamwork. Each new project provides an opportunity to demonstrate not only talent, but reliability and professionalism. As the portfolio increases, consistency in editing, lighting, and tone becomes crucial. One distinctive visual identity that distinguishes one freelancer from another is by being consistent.

The best portfolios are meticulously curated. Every image should have a purpose, presenting a tale about growth and confidence. Clients benefit from clean presentations, smart sequencing, and clear descriptions, which help them grasp the photographer's vision and versatility.

It's great that you will have a photography career helping you earn income, and yes it makes sense that you would take multiple jobs at the same time if you want to maximize your income, however it does not just mean that you should accept every job offered to you for the sake of earning money even if it's at a very appealing amount. Your personal life and well-being is just as important as your career.

One way to balance your work is to set yourself a monthly limit as to how many photography jobs you can take at a time depending on the schedule and workload, one client may need more time and resources from you than another, so you must know how much you work but also learn to decline any offers to you that may clash with your current work.

This applies also to those who have other gigs on the side whether in office or online, the workload will greatly differ from one another which you must take into consideration.....

## *How to deal with toxic clients*



# BOUNDARIES

*Whether we like it or not, there are bound to be times when we encounter clients who ask for unreasonable requests*

Whether it's regarding deadlines, pricing, or revisions, these clients are definitely a hassle to deal with in the freelance part of the creative world. But look on the bright side, there are actually ways to help solve these situations that clients put photographers in.

First off, we'll tackle the issue of clients wanting things done in too much of a rush. Most of these cases can be because of poor planning on the clients part and usually comes at the cost of a polished product. Negotiate with clients for a compromise that is realistic for both parties. Establishing good relationships with your clients will help you in the long term.

The next type of problematic client would be the ones that try to ask for your services for less than what you priced them at initially. Know your worth and stay firm with your pricing. Break down the cost of each aspect of your services and explain to your client how not paying for the full package may affect the quality of the output they expect. But if ever it comes to it, especially when your client isn't willing to shelve out for the price you give, you can always say no for your own sake.

In freelancing or whatever kind of work you do for clients, you always need proof or "receipts" if anything like extra revisions or other issues come up. Make sure you clearly state the terms and conditions of how many revisions you can do in your contract to the client if anything falls out of line with what you agreed on. Document your progress and revisions to prove any contradictions. Anything beyond what was initially agreed should cost extra for the work you put in.

Remember, although these types of clients can be a hassle and very stressful to deal with, they are still people at the end of the day. So, we should still give them respect to a certain degree. Know your worth and remember your rights.



If you're struggling to book clients, it's tempting to assume your prices are too high. Many new photographers respond by lowering their rates, hoping cheaper sessions will draw in more work. While this may boost inquiries at first, it also feeds a larger problem in the industry: the gradual devaluation of creative labor.

Taking on more jobs at bargain prices may seem like a good way to build your portfolio, but the reality catches up fast. Each shoot comes with hidden hours—editing, client communication, travel, gear upkeep—and low rates can leave you exhausted and barely covering costs. Burnout doesn't just drain your energy; it dulls the passion that drew you to photography in the first place.

There's also a ripple effect. Undercutting your prices doesn't just impact your income—it reshapes client expectations for everyone. Once clients see photographers willing to work for less, they begin to assume all photographers should. Worse, consistently low rates can signal that you don't value your own work, making serious clients more hesitant to trust your professionalism or skill.

Protecting your business—and the broader freelance ecosystem—starts with knowing your ideal client, curating a strong portfolio, and standing firm on your pricing.

# NO TO LOW PRICES



## *How it affects the Freelance Ecosystem*

Explain your rates confidently and walk away when necessary; not every client is worth the compromise. Discounts should be strategic, not habitual, and rate increases should reflect real costs like taxes, inflation, or rising business expenses.

Instead of chasing volume, aim for sustainable work that respects your time and talent. A manageable schedule gives you room to rest, grow creatively, and refine your portfolio—ultimately attracting clients who value quality over bargains. As a beginner, recognizing the importance of fair pricing early on helps you build a healthier, longer-lasting career—and supports the entire photography community.

# RENT



# OR

# BUY?

## *Freelance Photography on a Budget for Beginners*

Freelance photography is not just about what photos to take, but how you will take the photo, there are numerous peripherals and accessories available that can help, but the necessary tools can be a financial challenge to come by.

Renting gear is a practical option for beginners as it allows them to test out equipment without much financial burden and it will help you decide if you want to invest in these types of gear in the future.

If you plan to shoot regularly with these tools, consider buying them to make them worth the investment especially when reaching the professional level. While secondhand equipment is also an option especially for beginners, there's no guarantee of the condition and warranty. Buying equipment online can be useful if you want to experiment with various setups and techniques, but you won't be able to get a feel for their quality and performance beforehand.



Smart financial planning is a must when starting freelance photography. Invest in essential gear with a financial strategy in mind. While quality equipment helps, success depends more on how creatively and skillfully you use it. Having the right equipment is one thing, but it will ultimately be about how you will use them

# FINDING YOUR BALANCE



# Pricing Photography Services as a Freelancer

When it comes to pricing photography services, there is no one-size-fits-all solution. Every freelancer begins by checking at what others charge; some rates are surprisingly low, while others are high-end and premium. However, the idea is *not to copy; rather, to understand what works best for your situation, niche, and ambitions.*

If you prefer hourly pricing, reserve it for events with varying durations. It is critical to establish a realistic pricing that still generates profit after accounting for your time, skill, and energy. Per-layout pricing, on the other hand, is better suited to tasks like portraiture, where the outcome is more predictable and the session lasts little more than one hour.

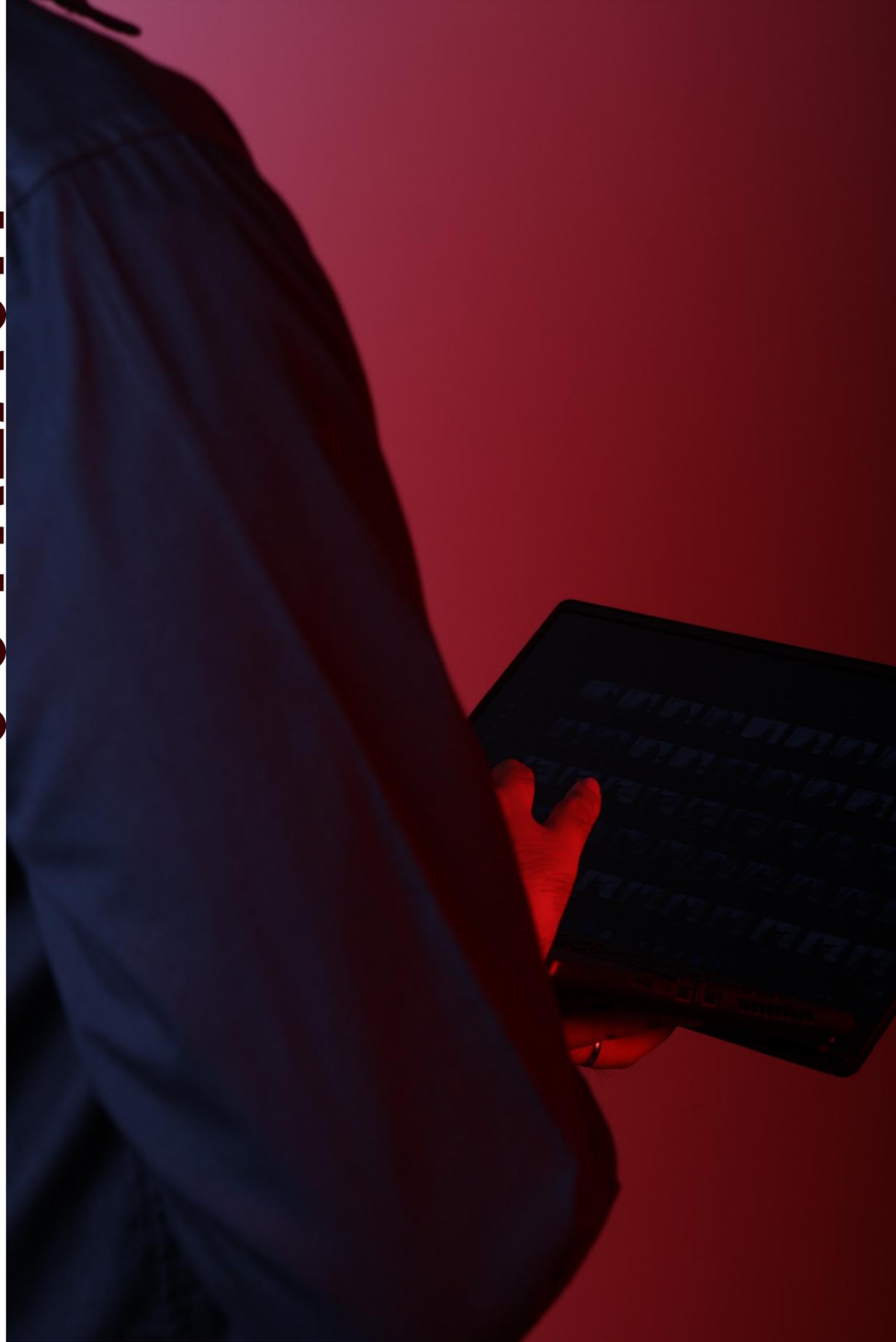


Always evaluate your niche and amount of risk; some shots, such as conceptual or outdoor ones, one call for additional planning, safety precautions, or work. Your pricing should reflect that. Remember that your prices should not only cover your but also help with the payback and maintenance of your equipment. Cameras, lenses, and editing softwares are long-term investments, and your prices should reflect that.

Don't forget about the other expenses: transportation, editing time, and software subscriptions such as Adobe Creative Cloud. These minor details add up, therefore incorporate them into your pricing structure rather than bearing the cost yourself.

Most importantly, remember that clients pay for quality, not time. If you're having trouble making ends meet, it could be because of the value your work provides rather than your charges. The more unique and sophisticated your photography style develops, the more clients are ready to invest. After all, good work attracts rather than chases clients.

# OUTREACH



*How to take advantage of  
online platforms for marketing  
and building a network*

*Before the internet became widely accessible and photography was still done on film, freelance photographers primarily relied on newspapers and magazines to advertise their services.*

These traditional media outlets were among the few ways they could promote themselves and earn a living. Additionally, working with film was often more tedious and costly compared to today's digital processes.

Now that the internet is easy to access and photography has largely gone digital, freelance photographers have many more tools at their disposal to market themselves and build a client base. Yet, despite these advances, many beginners still wonder: how can they effectively leverage modern online platforms to promote their work and grow their network?

Before you can begin marketing yourself or building a network, you first need to establish your brand. Ask yourself: What kind of photographer are you? What services do you offer? How do you want people to perceive you when they encounter your work?

Going back to the basics, start by creating something memorable. This could be a logo (optional, since many freelance photographers use their own face or name), a catchy slogan, or most importantly—your portfolio. Your portfolio is the most valuable element of your brand. One way to strengthen it is to make it stand out from others. For example, you might develop a signature lighting style and use it consistently in your work. This creates a recognizable visual identity, similar to how a director's unique style makes their films instantly identifiable.

Now that you know how to build your brand, it's time to explore different ways to put yourself and your portfolio—out into the world. Thanks to social media, you can establish a presence on multiple platforms—for free. Don't limit yourself to just one platform like Facebook; try expanding to others such as Instagram, Twitter (now X), and even job sites like Indeed.

The great thing about social media is that it can function like a constantly updated website where you can regularly post your work and explore new ways to market yourself. For example, with the rise of short-form content like Reels, you can reach wider audiences. Just make sure your content aligns with the audience you're targeting if you're aiming to attract corporate clients, avoid comedic sketches and instead focus on work that showcases professionalism.

On Facebook, you can join groups dedicated to freelance creatives where potential clients might discover your work. The same applies to Reddit, which hosts active photography and freelance communities that welcome portfolio sharing and networking.

Don't overlook YouTube either—it's not just for portfolio showcases. You can also create helpful guides and tutorials for aspiring photographers. This positions you as a knowledgeable content creator who subtly promotes their own skills and services.

Finally, consider joining freelance marketplace websites like Fiverr, Snappr, and even niche platforms like Phozine. These can help you get discovered by clients looking for specific photography services.



One effective strategy many established photographers use is investing in their own website. A personal website allows you to showcase your work with high-quality images, display testimonials from past clients, and present yourself as a professional. It also provides space to include additional information that builds credibility, such as your biography, services, and contact details.

The main drawback is cost—depending on the domain and hosting platform, maintaining a website can be expensive for newcomers, with subscription fees ranging from monthly to yearly. Despite this, creating a website is a valuable investment in your professional image and online presence.

*The key to making the most of online platforms is to manage your expectations. Building a presence takes time, consistency, and hard work. Sometimes that means promoting yourself through DMs, messenger apps, or relying on a bit of luck. What matters most is that you don't give up—and that you use any downtime to keep improving your craft.*

Suppose you want to start out with building a network; get to know people such as potential clients, collaborators and it snowballs from there in the hopes it would help boost your Photography career, but if you are going to go out of your way to build said network, a good way to start would be to give a "Trial Shoot" or a free Photoshoot with a potential collaborator. It would be a good chance for you to put your skills to the test as well as for the client to see if your skill level is just what they are looking for for their project.

*How it can still help build your network*



Of course, it is not to say that you should give free photoshoots to just anyone the first time just for the sake of making connections. It is true that your client will be able to put your skills to the test, but you also have to have professionalism when working with them; treat them nicely, converse with them with civility, it helps in building rapport and potentially landing you a regular client.

For a good start to your photography career, give your client a great first impression with your portfolio if you have one, as it shows how skilled you are with your photography skills and it will be a factor for your client in deciding if you're great enough for their project, even better when they might consider hiring you again in the future. If your work exceeds their expectations, they might just refer you to other potential clients and collaborators in the future.

If you're taking a particular college course with production-based subjects, and is said college has creative organizations, then that's a great starting point for your portfolio, as you can take part in their creatives committee, you get to learn from your seniors as well as meet professors who are involved in the industry, which is also a great opportunity for networking.

*Does word  
to mouth  
still work?*



# BUILDING REFERRALS



*One thing has endured throughout the years in the highly competitive and frequently erratic freelance photography industry; word to mouth*

Despite the popularity of social media marketing and online portfolios, personal recommendations are still the most effective and honest way to establish a client base.

Freelancers frequently lack the marketing support that studio photographers enjoy; instead, they rely on self-promotion, networking, and client satisfaction to keep their business running. As a result, referrals became their most effective method of advertising. When a client is pleased with your work, not only they return but also spread the word. That single referral can generate a consistent stream of reservations without the need for advertising.

In the end, it doesn't just work, it builds careers. It is not about chasing every client, but about cultivating relationships that lead to long-term collaborations. For freelancers, trust, inventiveness, and genuine satisfaction are the most effective marketing strategies.

However, quality and consistency are essential for word of/to mouth marketing to be successful. Standout experiences are shared by clients: original ideas, easy communication and a professional approach. Developing a distinct photography style also contributes to a lasting impression, making your name easier to recall and suggest.

Collaborations are also important in addition to clients. Working with stylists, models, makeup artists, and event organizers broadens your network and leads to fresh recommendations. Every relationship you make in the creative profession has the potential to lead you to a client.

# TARGET



# AUDIENCE

*How to know your audience  
for your network*

*Success in photography is more about getting to know your clients behind the lens than it is about becoming an expert photographer.*

*Identifying who appreciates your work, who will hire you, and who will recommend you are all part of identifying your target audience. So how do we find them and get in touch with the appropriate customers?*

One of the most important indicators of your target audience is the demographic information. To understand your clients, you need to know what they are going through. You have to evaluate their age, location, and especially their budget. Over time, you'll notice the patterns that help you tailor your offerings and marketing strategies.

Another aspect that helps you know your target audience is word of mouth. When your previous clients refer you to others, they aren't just spreading your name but they are revealing who resonates with your work. They refer you to potential clients who share the same tastes, needs or industries.

Know if your niche mixes well with your clients. Having a particular niche makes your work distinct. So you should ask yourself this: are you adjusting your style to meet your client's needs, or do they come to you for your unique vision? Make sure to attract clients who want what you naturally offer. When your niche aligns with the client, it means that they are drawn with your aesthetic, your vision, and it makes your communication with them much more clearer



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