

How To: Start a Successful Photography Business



Welcome!

Whether you want to make photography your full time career or a side hustle, your creative business should bring you joy AND revenue.

It has never been easier to jump into photography, but there are still some necessary things you've got to do to get started.

With time being money, we have put together this nearly 20 page guide to help you start your photography business, and make money from it!

This guide goes over, in detail, how to get started in your photography business and how to make more money. We've even included some [free email templates](#) to get you started off on the right foot and be a true professional from day one.

Let's get to work!

Meredith Gradle,
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Iris Works



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HOW TO GET STARTED



Registering Your Business

1. Choose your business name and make sure its not already trademarked
2. Choose to create either a Limited Liability Company (LLC) or sole proprietorship. Get help setting up through your state's Department of Revenue/Business Services website.
3. Learn what permits and licenses you need to operate in your state. Likely you'll need to register for a Sales Tax account.
4. Set up your business finances and make sure you are aware of which taxes you need to pay.

Setting Up a Website

All photographers need a working website to get potential client information, show their work and book sessions. Some great website creating platforms include [Wix](#), [Squarespace](#) and [ShowIt](#).

Four important pages to have include a home page, portfolio page, a blog so you can share new content often, and a lead page (where potential clients can get a conversation started with you). Other page possibilities include an 'About' you page and an investment/pricing page.

*Pro-tip: Start pricing low as you build your reputation and experience, probably around \$200-300 depending on your location and market.

Building a Portfolio

Your portfolio shows potential clients your experience and past work. Don't be afraid to hold free sessions with friends and family to build up your portfolio. Remember that potential clients will look to these photos on your website to see your photography skills and style. Make sure to keep this updated and true to your brand.





Photography Business Tools You Need

Photo Backup Tools

As a professional photographer, you will need a secure platform to backup your work. We suggest [Google Drive](#) or [Dropbox](#) to get you started. A more sophisticated and more long-term option would be to invest in a gallery service such as [Shootproof](#), [Pic-Time](#) or [N-Vu](#). These services allow you to store your images and also share them with your clients, plus sync up with professional labs to sell prints and products.

Editing Tools

Clients will expect their photos to be professionally edited. While there are many editing options, an industry go-to is [Adobe Creative Elements](#). This subscription includes Photoshop and Lightroom - the two most popular editing platforms. The majority of your editing can be done in Lightroom - which has a smaller learning curve than Photoshop. Check out YouTube for tutorials to get you started.

WHAT TODAY'S CLIENTS WANT



Clients want beautiful photos that capture irreplaceable moments in life. You have the camera, you have the talent, so step one is already complete.

The next step is to focus on the business side of photography and think about what makes a client experience a positive one.

No one likes work.

This is why every step of your process should be easy and painless - for you and your clients. Booking, communication, payment and gallery access should all be integrated and simple. For every part of the process, put yourself in your client's shoes and gauge the effort level of your workflow.

Professionalism is Everything

Photography is a service business, so when clients pay for your photos, they are investing in you. Communication that walks them through every step and makes them feel comfortable is crucial to overall satisfaction.

It's All About Connections

Photography is personal. You're capturing milestones, family memories, intimate moments and more. People want to feel connected to the person behind the lens and feel like you care. Communication should be constant and customized to each client.



Hey Client!

I am so looking forward to our upcoming session on Wednesday, January 13th at 03:47PM!

I wanted to send along a few tips for our shoot, just to help put your minds at ease and help us have a fun and smooth family session.

- Relax! That's the best advice I can give you. I will run the entire show, and I promise that I'll get exactly what I need. So don't stress - let me do the work!
- Your kids might 'mis-behave' - trust me, I've seen it all. So again, relax! I'll do my best to make this fun for everyone.
- Not sure what to wear? Ask me! I love to help my clients get outfits put together - I have tons of ideas.
- Enjoy each other! Use this as family time - have fun with your kids, love on your spouse, and allow me to capture all of that love!

Let me know if you have any other questions, or if there's anything special we need to do for your shoot.

See you soon!

1234 Fade Address Way, City, ST

Megan

Attachments:

- [What_to_Expect.pdf](#)



Never Lose a Lead

Lead pages, when optimized, are the difference between mild interest and booking a session. Make your lead pages **short**, **simple** and **easily accessible**. Put this page on your website and ask only what's absolutely necessary - Name, Email/Contact Information, and what type of session they are interested in. All of the research shows that shorter contact forms equal more leads.

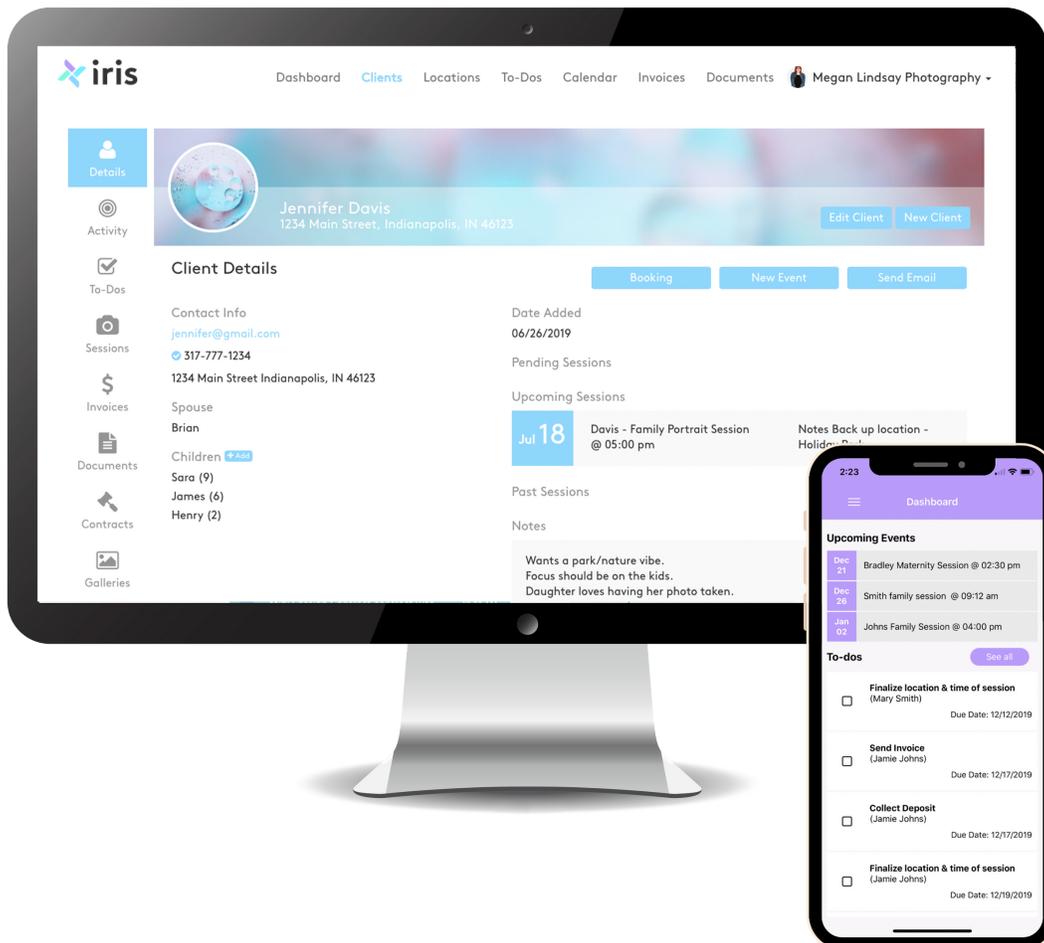
You should email every lead that you get from your website. But we all know that it can be easy to lose track with everything else going on in your business and your life. Through [Iris](#), you can create a branded lead page that integrates into your website and Iris will automatically email your leads for you. This quick response shows potential clients how dedicated you are and keeps people interested in hiring your services.

Make Booking Easy For Everyone

Choosing a time, signing a contract, filling out a questionnaire and paying an invoice are all necessary steps a client has to take. But how many times have you forgotten to send a crucial email or had to repeatedly ask for payment?

All of these steps can be integrated and automated through Iris. Customized emails that are cued to send after each step is completed keeps customers informed and makes you look entirely professional.

We recently conducted a survey and found that **80% of clients would prefer to book online** through an online calendar. Have a competitive edge by making your booking process user-friendly, simple and most importantly, online. Iris allows you to set up your online booking process in minutes.



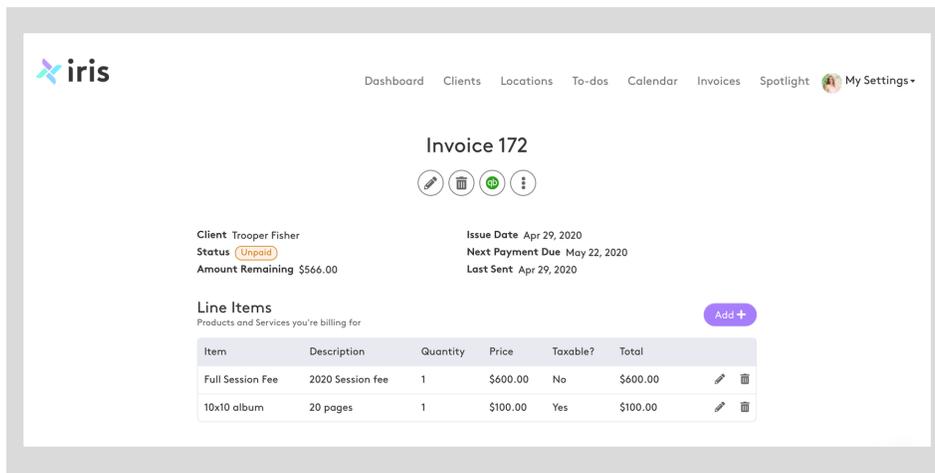
KEEPING CLIENTS HAPPY

Happy clients will hire you again AND spread positive word-of-mouth that leads to more clients. So what keeps clients satisfied with your business?

Easy Payment

You provide a quality service and your clients want to pay you. So why is it awkward asking for money? Take discussion out of the equation and turn to invoices. Invoicing makes getting paid easier and it's frankly just the professional thing to do. Clients will see your services as more of a business transaction and typically remit payment faster.

[Iris](#) allows you to create and send invoices, develop payment schedules for clients and is compatible with Square, PayPal and Stripe for online payments.



Great Communication

Clients want attention. But sometimes you sit down to write an email and writer's block hits. We've all been there! At Iris, we offer many free email templates to get you started with email automation and to save your creative energy for sessions. All of these templates are ready to go as is but are also completely customizable for your business and your clients. Easily automate your communication while still sounding authentic to you.

Wondering how to make lead pages shorter in questions while still getting all the information you need? Here's an email template for following up with leads and ensuring a booking.

"Getting to Know You" Email Template

Hi (Client First Name)!

Thank you so much for reaching out. I would love the opportunity to work with you and your family.

I've attached a short questionnaire so that I can (1) get to know you and your family better and (2) learn more about what your goals are for this session. Please take a few moments to complete this.

If you have any questions, I'm happy to answer them. Once you've decided to move forward with booking, we'll want to get you on the calendar quickly. Sessions tend to book up fast and I want to make sure that you're taken care of.

Please let me know if you have any other questions.

Thanks!
(Your Name)

TREAT YOUR TIME AS CURRENCY



As a small business, every cost counts and you will want to cut down on expenses everywhere you can. While this is important, keep in mind that **your time has value**, too. Your talent drives your business and nothing sucks away creativity like being bogged down with business tasks. Automated workflows do all the heavy lifting for you and give you more time to improve your business using your unique skill set.

With automation saving you hours of a time a week, what else can you get accomplished? To be a successful photographer, you have to constantly push yourself to be better. **Challenge yourself once a month** to break up your routine and try out new techniques. Shoot in a new location, take on a project that is out of your comfort zone, mix up your editing style. By trying to push your artistic limits, you will become a better photographer and your business will benefit.

Iris Marketplace

Want to immediately get yourself on track? Iris subscribers get [exclusive access](#) to top-to-bottom workflows from leading photographers in the industry. Leverage their experience to set your business up for success. Plus, Iris also has contracts with model releases available from TheLawTog - the go-to expert for photography contracts.





DOUBLE YOUR BUSINESS THROUGH REFERRALS

You set up your website, built up your portfolio, but leads are not coming as easily as you thought they would. The photography business is built largely upon word-of-mouth so having happy customers is imperative. Happy customers can become brand ambassadors who tell their friends and family how amazing you are to work with. One way to encourage this word-of-mouth is through our follow-up/referral email.

"Follow Up Survey and Referral" Email Template

Hi (Client First Name)!

I hope that all is well with you and your family. I also hope you are loving your images and have had a chance to print and display some of your favorites.

Like any business, I rely heavily on reviews and referrals from clients to help continually grow. I would love if you could leave me a short and honest review about your overall experience with me. You can do this a few different ways.

1. You can simply fill out the attached questionnaire.
2. You can leave a review on my Facebook business page.
3. You can reply to this email with a simple quote.

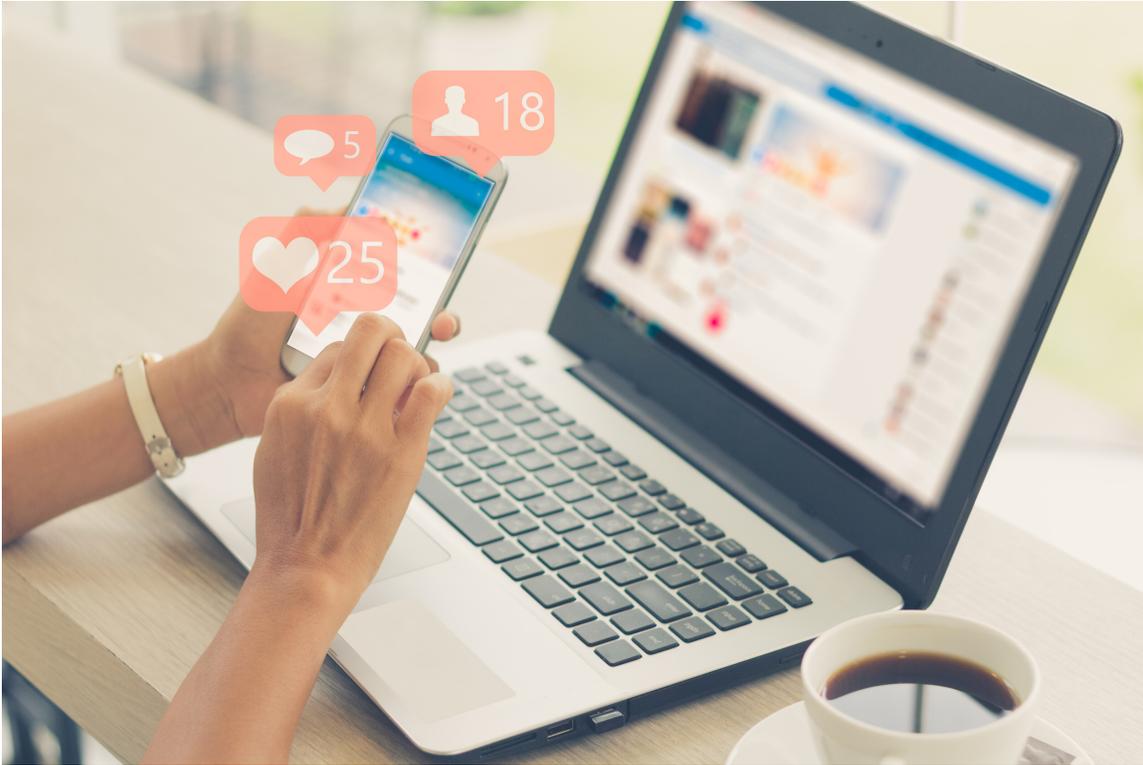
I would also love if you could send over any friends or family members that you think may be interested in photography. You can also simply provide my name and contact information to them.

Your support means so much to me. Thank you, in advance, for your help!

(Your Name)



USING SOCIAL MEDIA TO INCREASE BOOKINGS



Social media is a great tool to showcase your work and grow a follower base. We recommend starting off with two of the most popular platforms, Facebook and Instagram, and focusing intently on your social strategy there first. These platforms are an amazing place to share your portfolio, interact with potential clients and learn from others in the photography community.

Here are some quick tips for how to gain more bookings from Instagram and Facebook!

Social Media Tips

1. Set yourself up as a business account and use analytics to see what posts engage followers and encourage them to go to your website.
2. Attach your website link to every Facebook post and have your website link in your Instagram bio for easy client access.
3. Make sure your links go to relevant pages- your portfolio, home page or lead page.
4. Post shoots that capture not only what you are doing now, but where you want to go. People will hire you to do what they see in your website and social media portfolio.
5. Don't be afraid to get personal- people want to hire photographers they feel connected to.
6. Use Instagram and Facebook stories as well as posts to capture as much reach as possible.
7. Give love to get love! Follow fellow photographers and comment on images that inspire you.



BUILD YOUR BRAND WITH A BLOG

A blog is a great way to share content from your latest sessions and increase your search engine optimization. However, this is just the tip of the blogging iceberg. Blogs also offer a fantastic opportunity to educate your clients and better connect with your audience. Here are some blog topics you can use to get started. Additionally, we have a [blog](#) as well that you can check out for weekly business tips!

Top 5 Blog Ideas

1. What you strive to capture during a session
2. Tips for what to wear to your session
3. Locations you love for photography sessions
4. The value of current and updated photos
5. Stunning new products to display your photos

BOOST REVENUE WITH PRODUCTS



Your clients will want to display the beautiful photos you take, so why not increase your revenue by offering products from a professional printing company? Some of our favorite product labs include [Miller's](#), [Bay Photo](#), [Black River](#), [ProDPI](#), [CG Pro Prints](#) and [Kiss Books](#). These companies make your work come to life with stunning prints, albums, and display accessories.

With any lab you choose, we recommend ordering a few test prints before deciding to make them your default printing option. By offering both digital and printed options, you increase your value to your clients and can increase your revenue paths.

Thank you!

We hope this guide helps you feel confident diving into your new photography business. Becoming an entrepreneur is no small feat and we applaud you for taking the first step.

At Iris Works, we are always here to support creative businesses and help them thrive. Please check out our [blog](#) and social media for more helpful tips, and try out our [software](#) to see how studio management can simplify your work life and increase your revenue.

Good luck, we can't wait to see all the amazing things you are about to do!

Follow us and join our community!

[Instagram](#): @iris_works

[Facebook Page](#): Iris Works

[Facebook Group](#): Iris Works Community

www.iris-works.com