HOW TO BOOK MORE PORTRAITS THAN YOU EVER THOUGHT POSSIBLE

3RD PARTY MARKETING
The Voucher System for Portrait Photographers

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HOW TO BOOK MORE PORTRAITS THAN YOU EVER THOUGHT POSSIBLE

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by Andrew Hellmich
For Linda… always
For believing in me, in my crazy dreams and ideas.
For always being there. For always saying yes.

And

For PhotoBizX listeners.
Your support and belief in me is more valuable than you’ll ever know. Seriously, thank you.
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INTRODUCTION

Having the phone ringing or receiving bookings is the lifeblood of every portrait studio. Without bookings, there are no shoots and without shoots, you don't have a business. Sure, you need to make sales but it’s the bookings and shoots that must come first. And that’s where TPM comes into play.

Follow the processes laid out in this book and you will book portraits, lots of them, that’s a promise. I can make that promise because what I’m sharing, are tried, true and tested methods that are currently working for photographers all over. I know because I’ve interviewed, spoken and questioned them on exactly how and what they do for their TPM.

TPM isn’t the only strategy to get the portrait bookings, and is even frowned on in some circles because of the underhanded sales techniques and “strategies” some photographers are employing to accompany these promotions. I’ll uncover more about the actual implementation and how to avoid the more dodgy approaches later but I draw attention to them here for good reason. The less scrupulous photographers out there are using TPM to great effect because it works.

It works so well in fact, one photographer describes TPM like a tap for portrait bookings. He simply turns “the tap” on, when things are quiet and back off when he’s too busy to take any more shoots on.
The strategies are not a magic bullet, they do take effort to set up, implement, and service but they work. They shouldn't be relied on as your sole source of lead generation (I almost lost my portrait business by relying on TPM alone, as did Bianca Duimel whose story I share in the book) but are a terrific option to add to your arsenal of portrait marketing and advertising strategies.

If you’re not already employing TPM strategies for your portrait photography business, you’re missing out on a LOT OF BUSINESS, you need this book.

If you’ve tried TPM with mixed success, you’ll learn what you’ve been doing wrong.

In summary, if you want more portrait bookings, read on...

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THE IMPORTANCE OF MARKETING IN YOUR PHOTOGRAPHY BUSINESS

Without marketing you don’t have a business, not for very long anyway. Yes, you need sales from your marketing but no marketing equals no sales. Marketing is mandatory for success. As a photographer and small business owner, you need to be working continuously to find clients, attract and entice clients, make contact with clients or encourage them to contact you.

Without continual marketing, your clients cease to exist... Actually, you cease to exist for your potential client.

Good, consistent and varied marketing keeps the phones ringing, the email inbox full and people talking about your business.

No matter how good a photographer you are or plan to be, without effective marketing, you will never have a viable and profitable business, not one that’s worth anything.
What’s interesting though; you can be an incredibly good marketer, be an average photographer and have a fantastic business. It may not be fair but that’s life. In an interview with Sue Bryce, she admits to still not being a great photographer and that her success comes from marketing and sales. She is aware of her perfect target demographic, women who want to look and feel beautiful and she targets those women in her marketing. TPM played a role in her success and it still does.

Her first big business and marketing breakthrough came while operating out of a garage, “I sent out 1200 copies of my special offer and within two weeks I had 131 sittings booked in, pretty soon we were doing $15,000 a week, all from a garage in the country.”

Although Sue feels and says she’s not a fantastic photographer, I don’t believe that. She’s incredibly talented but there’s no denying the success from her early marketing campaign and I’m sure, she was not the photographer then, that she is now. The point being, her marketing is what catapulted her business, not her photography.

Embrace marketing, make it part of your life, part of your business, and you will always have people to photograph. You will have a business. Marketing is what makes a professional photographer a professional. That and charging for their work. Something you can’t do without clients.

You get the gist, marketing is super important.

The good news is you’re about to learn one marketing strategy in detail, that will continually put bums on seats for your business. And that’s pretty cool.

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WHO AM I?

Why read this book and consider making changes to your photography business and life as a result of what I say? Fair question, especially if you’re new to Photo Biz Xposed, the podcast. My name is Andrew Hellmich, I’m the principal photographer and business owner of Impact Images located on the Central Coast of Australia, one hour north of Sydney and right near the Coast.

I shoot weddings, portraits and some commercial work and have been in business for over 15 years. Photography has been the prime source of income for my family and I for ten of those years and it has provided us with a great lifestyle, private school education for my children and overseas holidays most years. Photography has allowed me to live what I consider a fantastic life and continues to. It still is the prime source of income for my family. My wife Linda also works in the business.

Depending on where you are in your business, that may be enough of a ‘resume’ to read on and hopefully take action on what you find ahead. There’s a better reason though.

WHAT MAKES ME THE RIGHT PERSON TO LISTEN TO WHEN IT COMES TO YOUR MARKETING?

Almost two years ago, I started an interview based photography podcast - Photo Biz Xposed or PhotoBizX for short. If you’re unfamiliar with the show or podcasts for that matter, let me explain briefly.

A podcast could be described as an on demand, online radio show that is available for streaming or downloading. You can listen to these shows anywhere, anytime, on your smart phone, tablet or desktop computer. Podcasts are available on just about any topic you can think of.
The PhotoBizX podcast is an interview based podcast about the business of photography. I invite photographers from around the world onto the show and interview them about what they do, what they’ve done, what’s working and what’s not in their business. We go deep on the marketing topics where guests are encouraged to share exactly how they book the shoots they do. If it’s not a photographer on the show, it’ll be a business, marketing or social media expert and again, we focus on the business of photography.

It’s these very candid interviews, of which there have been over 90 at the time of writing, that I’ve drawn on to write this guide. I’ve used the content from the free podcast interviews plus, what my guests have shared in the premium (paid) portions of the episodes. I’ve also used TPM strategies extensively in my business.

If you are a Premium Member of PhotoBizX, there is every chance that you’ve heard all of the content and steps I’ll share in the book, just not in an easy to follow step by step format you’ll find in the pages ahead.

As a purchaser of this book, you’ll have access to all the interviews, free and premium, that I reference in this eBook. You won’t need to listen to the audio to understand and use the concepts, but I figure it’d be a nice additional resource and a way for you to hear it from some of the “horses mouths” so to speak.

There are also my very own experiences with TPM that I’ll be drawing from and sharing where applicable. Not all of my experiences have been good and should add a balance and a dose of reality in regard to implementing what you learn or may experience yourself.

Here’s a brief list of what we’ll cover:

Who is this book for?
Where does the information come from?
How to use this book
Other forms of marketing
A word of warning
What is TPM?
Why use TPM?
The stigma surrounding TPM
Who should you partner with?
Which TPM strategy is best for you?
The Voucher system
How to make the system work for you
The businesses to partner with
The vouchers
The all important stubs
Printing costs
Calling your clients
Building your database
Links
Step by step instructions
Conclusion

That’s plenty to cover, so let’s get started...

* * *

WHO IS THIS BOOK FOR

This book or guide is for professional photographers or amateurs looking to go pro.

You could say it’s for portrait photographers but in reality, it’s for any photographer that wants to shoot portraits as a business or add portraits to their current photography business - wedding photographers for example.
There’s no denying that the most difficult part of creating and maintaining a portrait business is booking clients to photograph. I’ve no doubt that as a photographer, your clients will love what you capture and produce for them. They will fall in love with your beautiful projected slideshows played to an emotional soundtrack at your sales session. I’ll bet they reach for the tissue box in your darkened sales room to wipe their emotional, happy tears away while seeing beautiful photos of them, their children, family or pets.

I can picture you with a similar emotional tear in your eye. For the beautiful moments you’ve captured and the incredible sale you feel is imminent. You know you’ve delivered exactly what this family wanted from this shoot.

There’s a classic saying amongst portrait photographers, “if they cry, they buy” which has been so true in so many cases for me. I’m guessing it’s a similar scenario for you too?

I DON’T MEAN TO SOUND CYNICAL

I don’t mean to sound cynical now, that’s not my intent. I truly understand the joys of beautiful photography, capturing moments in time that my clients will seriously treasure. The artwork that I’m able to create which will be displayed on the walls in the homes of the people and families I feel strange to call clients, when they feel more like friends following a shoot.

All this is beautiful and the reason most portrait photographers do what we do, or at least started out doing what we do. The sale following the shoot is the reason we get to keep on doing what we love to do for a job, as a business.

Here’s the catch though. As good as your photography is. As good as the experience is that you provide your clients, no matter how
much they love what you have created for them... none of this exists, unless you get the bookings first.

If you are that photographer that wants to make a living from portrait photography, add more portrait shoots to your current schedules or are finding it tough to book enough shoots to be profitable, this book is for you.

* * *

**How to use the book**

My suggestion is to first read from cover to cover (that’s the way I like to read, even if it’s a “how to” style book) but that’s not a requirement if you want to get stuck right in.

Feel free to jump straight to the step by step guide and start implementing by referring to the relevant steps in detail as you go. Or, if you’re already using the voucher system and are having trouble with a certain aspect, head to that chapter now.

Because I’ll be teaching a ‘system’ though, I would urge you to read front to back first to have a solid foundation how all the pieces fit together. Then, head back to the step by step guide and start implementing by referencing the relevant chapters as you progress.

At each step of the process, come back to that chapter to give yourself the best chance to make this work from the start or find where you may be going wrong. If you follow the steps, there’s no reason why you can’t be shooting more portrait sessions than ever before.

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LINKS TO PODCAST EPISODES

In addition to the book text and the step by step guide, you can head to http://photobizx.com/tpmbook1 for additional resources including PSD voucher files and relevant audio interviews normally available to Premium Members of PhotoBizX only.

You won’t need to listen to these hours of interviews to get the most from the book. They are there as an additional resource and a source of inspiration that the methods described really do and are working for other photographers right now.

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As effective as it is, TPM should not be your sole source of portrait lead generation. And certainly not a single promotion with a one vendor (third party) only. This is a recipe for disaster.

Bianca Duimel, the portrait, fine art and supremely talented photographer from New Zealand was doing exactly this with a Mothercare promotion when they went into solvency and subsequently closed down.

All Bianca’s leads were coming from a single and very successful promotion with Mothercare. So successful that she took on more sales and shooting staff to cope with the workload. When the Mothercare store she was affiliated with closed their doors, Bianca was left with no leads and too many staff. She had to make some tough and very fast decisions to stay in business. Primarily, she had to lay off staff fast which was both terrible for Bianca and her staff.

Following that lesson, she has vowed never to rely on a single store or marketing promotion for lead generation. She currently runs TPM promotions with a series of stores in her local area.
I was in a very similar position with the same Mothercare promotion in my local area. They too closed down, leads dried up and I had to work extra hard and fast to generate more leads, bookings and sales to support my family and staff. It was scary for a while!

**THERE’S MORE TO LEAD GENERATION THAN TPM**

In addition to TPM, there are a variety of things you can be doing to bring in business. Firstly, there are the other TPM strategies (I’ll be covering these strategies in a future eBook) which will help spread your vulnerability to market changes.

**There are a myriad of other options available to you too, which include:**

- Content marketing - writing great content for your prospective customers
- Guest blogging on websites that your prospective customers visit
- Improved SEO for your site
- Join and be active in Business Networking Groups
- Have a great website that’s easy to navigate, shows off you and your work while helping your site visitors
- Advertising on other blogs that your target clients visit regularly
- Targeted print advertising
- Facebook advertising
- Facebook posting with links back to your website articles and posts
- Run a Competition - online or offline
- Exhibit your photography
- Run a Google Adwords campaign
- Shopping centre displays
- A stand at an expo that targets your niche
• Hire a photography marketing coach

The list goes on but you get the idea. Most marketing experts will insist that any business should always be running multiple marketing campaigns simultaneously. That’s the only way to ensure continual bookings, sales and potentially growth.

The trouble with TPM is it’s so effective, it’s easy to become complacent, rely on it and find that all your eggs are in one basket. Everything is rosy till the crap hits the fan and your leads dry up overnight. That’s a position you don’t want to be in, can’t be in if you and your family (or bank) are relying on a steady income.

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A WORD OF WARNING

One thing has become clear in my years as a photography business owner; things don’t get done by themselves. No matter how good an idea is, it won’t work unless YOU put in the effort and actually do something.

Be warned, there will be some squirmy and uncomfortable moments when implementing the strategies in the book, especially if you find it difficult to approach and talk to strangers. When I say strangers, I’m talking about other business owners and potential portrait clients that have freely given they contact details.

If that’s not a problem for you, bonus! What can be the most difficult part for some, will be a snap for you.

The good news is you’ll have the tools and scripts to make these approaches easier and once you understand that you are offering something of value for the ‘third party’ - that initial contact or approach becomes a whole lot easier.
A REAL EXAMPLE

I recently initiated a TPM promotion with Scott, a local Veterinary Clinic owner. Following my short presentation which I could see he liked the sound of, his first questions were,

“So, how much will this cost me?”

I answered, “Nothing, I’ll cover any costs.”

He replied, “Ok, let’s do it, what’s the next step?”

It really was that easy and you’ll find that too.

In all honesty, even though I’d done this before and I knew there were benefits for Scott and his vet business, I still feel a little nervous when I turn up to make a presentation. It’s silly but still, there is some deep and hidden fear of rejection. I find though, once I get started, any fear or trepidation disappears and it becomes two business people chatting about a mutually beneficial marketing idea. We’re both looking to help or benefit our own business and if the benefits are clearly laid out for the other, they will be just as excited to work with me as I am with them.

It’s a struggle for everyone in small business so if you can offer another business owner an idea that will help their business, they’ll be happy to listen to what you have to say and offer.

TAKING ACTION

Getting back to the implementing or taking action, none of this happens or works unless you take the first step. You have to do something to get something in return. This eBook and the strategies inside do work. I guarantee that. Here’s the thing though.
They won’t work if you just read the book and carry on doing what you’ve been doing or move onto the next thing. If you want to see the results, take action.

Enough said... let's get you started.
3rd Party Marketing - The lowdown

WHAT IS TPM?

Third Party Marketing is a cooperative way to generate leads for your business via another person or business that has access to or an affiliation with your target demographic.

Put simply, TPM is a way to encourage shoppers at one store to connect with and book you for your services.

For example, if you are a baby portrait photographer, other businesses that have access to your target market would be baby stores that sell clothing, prams, toys, educational products etc. These stores are the perfect ‘marketing partner’ for your TPM campaign.

Once you have found a marketing partner that you’re going to approach to work with, it’s a matter of implementing one of a few different TPM strategies that will either encourage your marketing partners clients or customers to contact you for a photography session or to freely give up their contact details for you to be able to call them. This can be done via gift vouchers (covered in this eBook), competition boxes or gift certificates.

For TPM to be effective and have longevity as a marketing tool, there needs to be a mutual benefit for you and your marketing partner, AND FOR THEIR CUSTOMERS.

If you fail to have this mutual benefit in place and easily recognisable to all parties, you’re not likely to have a successful marketing campaign and you may damage brand.
Don’t ever use sneaky or high pressure sales techniques if you plan to build long term, strong relationships with your customers and marketing partners. Photographers have a bad reputation for using shady tactics and combining them with TPM to give both this lead generation strategy and photographers a bad name.

There are countless Facebook threads and blog posts about bad experiences with photographers. Here is a link to one such article that references TPM and a terrible experience:

The Verve Experience by Lana Brindley on July 14 2014, as seen on http://www.medium.com

This isn’t an attempt to turn you off TPM, only gentle advice to do the right thing by your clients and marketing partners. The problem with the strategy I describe is it can be so effective at lead generation, some businesses slip into the idea that they can push as hard as possible for a sale knowing there will always be more leads coming down the funnel. That’s a recipe for a bad reputation and not a good way to do business in my opinion.

Treat your clients as you would like to be treated in business, to grow and sustain a photography business that your community will want to experience.

* * *

**WHY USE TPM**

It’s an easy choice for me; it works. TPM generates leads consistently and effectively.

Surely you’re aware of the amount of advertising surrounding all of us today? What about the number of businesses fighting for our attention and dollars? It’s so... so persistent that we almost become immune to it. It’s everywhere. The mailbox, television, radio, most podcasts, the cinema, the internet, email, roadside
billboards, pamphlets, flyers, magazines even behind airplanes along the beaches in summer!

If you feel the way I do, all this advertising has become a kind of “white noise” it has become easier to block out. It’s difficult to not feel cynical when I see another great offer, another great deal, another special.

Chances are, your target clients feel the same way.

I know, target clients sounds terrible doesn’t it! I could be more politically correct but really, that’s exactly who they are - people who suit our style of photography, value our style of photography or ‘Wall Art’ (depending how comfortable you are with recognising that you do truly produce art work for your clients) and would be happy to pay for it and display it.

If our target client has become as immune as we have to the noisy advertising and marketing, we need to use strategies to get their attention and excite them about experiencing a photography session with us. If getting them excited about our service is a stretch, we at least want to be able to pique their interest enough for them to engage somehow.

This is where TPM works so well.

By establishing a relationship with a marketing partner (your chosen vendor) that has your target client already doing business with them, we have the perfect ‘in’ to establish contact with that client using the help of our partner. There has to be something in it for the vendor too, and there is. More on that component coming up.

YELLING FOR ATTENTION IS NOT THE ONLY WAY TO GET NOTICED
Sure, we can do something similar with Google Adwords and targeted keywords, or Facebook advertising and refining our target demographic down to gender, age, interest, marital status and even the things they like. We can write helpful, engaging blog posts, record YouTube videos to generate interest in our photography to get discovered and I’m not suggesting you don’t implement these strategies. These styles of advertising and marketing can be likened to waving your arms while struggling to swim, hoping someone will notice and rescue you. That’s ok if it’s not so busy in the water and you’re easily seen. It’d be more difficult on a crowded and hot summers day at Bondi!

Now if you’ve ever seen an episode of ‘Bondi Rescue’ you’d know that the life guards do a top job of saving most swimmers that get into difficulty. They can easily spot someone that’s struggling to stay afloat or drowning. What happens when there are a group of swimmers in difficulty, how do the lifeguards choose who to help first? The most attractive, the noisiest, the closest to shore, the adults or the children?

Imagine your photography business as one of those swimmers fighting to stay afloat. Which swimmer represents your marketing and advertising approach? The loud screamer, the one swimming close to shore and closest to help, the quiet one - not making a fuss and just going under or the swimmer farthest from shore?

I don’t want to be any of those swimmers and I don’t want to have my business in that position either!

Why not be the swimmer that asks the lifeguard on the way to the water, where is the safest place to swim, where do they recommend you go for maximum fun and enjoyment without having to worry about getting into danger? You can do the same with your marketing. Work with someone else that can maximise your fun and enjoyment of a successful business. You can do that
with your marketing partner/vendor that already has a clientele that know, like and trust them.

Make use of the personal relationship that your marketing partner has with your target client. Work with them to facilitate an enquiry with you. It can be the perfect match.

Your marketing partner has an established relationship with your target client. She is already doing business with that client. That client, your target client, already likes and trusts that business owner. If that business owner, or their staff, can refer their client to you, wouldn’t that be a fantastic referral for you and for the customer? Yes, yes it would, especially if you’ve taken the time to build that relationship with your marketing partner and they know what you do, how you operate.

If your marketing partner knows, likes and trusts you, they will happily refer their customers to you.

If you can build a win win relationship with your vendor, you have the basis for a successful marketing campaign that will see you with more portrait bookings than you ever thought possible.

Value the relationships with your marketing partners and your clients and TPM will be good to you. It’ll be good for you because it works.

* * *

**IS TPM RIGHT FOR YOU?**
That’s a difficult question to answer, here’s why...

Some photographers feel the overall spend from a lead generated by TPM is lower than customers that booked a portrait session via other marketing avenues. I don’t have any figures except my own and in my case that’s true.
Brian Chapman of Family Image Photography, who I interviewed for the podcast and is a good friend of mine also confirms this is the case for his clients. Those shoots generated by word of mouth, internet searches for a portrait photographer, bookings through shopping centre displays always spend more (on average) than those clients booked through his TPM strategies.

In saying that, Brian is one of the most ethical photographers I know when it comes to sales and marketing. I’m certain, he could employ heavy handed sales techniques to increase his sales figures from TPM leads but he chooses not to and focuses on his clients coming away from an experience with his studio feeling good about the whole process.

I have found the same thing in my business; clients who book my services after specifically looking for a portrait photography via a Google search for example, are more likely to spend more on their wall art than a client that comes via TPM... on average.

**AVerAGE SALES WILL BE DOWN FOR TPM STRATEGIES**

TPM strategies often have an enticement or offer to coincide with the promotion to encourage the potential client to call you about booking a shoot or to leave their contact details for you to call them.

If for example that offer is a complimentary 8” x 10” print (which is a pretty standard giveaway) and the portrait photography session - there is every probability that some clients will simply take the free session and print without purchasing anything else. This is a situation tag that you have to accept and be comfortable with.

When that happens, there’s no denying that it blows. It took me a while to learn and accept. It wasn’t until I learnt from another
photographer, that it’s the averages that count. It’s only, the averages that count. Here’s why.

**Lets say you have 5 portrait sessions booked with a TPM promotion and they spend the following amounts:**

1. $1800
2. $0
3. $0
4. $0
5. $3200

How would you feel after these 5 photography shoots and sales sessions?

In the past, I would be happy with the first, totally bummed and annoyed following session two and three, probably angry and wondering what I’m doing wrong after the fourth then back on a high after the fifth sales session. It was an emotional and very frustrating roller coaster for me, my wife and my staff. It was terrible.

After learning to focus on the averages, everything in my business seemed better. There was real incentive to go out and do our best at every shoot, every sales session and every call we made to book shoots in.

**I SEE AN AVERAGE OF $1000**

We had a complete change in the way we looked at TPM bookings and stopped feeling like we’d totally failed as a photography studio when a client didn’t make a purchase. Yes, it’s still frustrating when I know the photos are fantastic and the clients really are missing out by not purchasing more (or any) prints but if I’m trying to run a business, which I am, it’s only the averages that count.
Now $1000 may not be setting any records for photography sales but I was much happier. So was Linda, my wife, because my moods weren’t like a roller coaster attached to the last portrait sale and the staff became more enthusiastic and happier too. Here’s why.

If my averages per shoot are $1000 I know that no matter how many shoots I do, whether the client is buying something or not, that shoot is worth $1000. It became much easier to run a business this way and less about getting upset and concerned about my photography. This is tough to come to terms with for creatives but if your aim is to run a business, get used to looking and working with your averages.

I mentioned the interview I did with Sue Bryce earlier. She’s an amazing business woman and a true success story. Sue is adamant that averages are the only numbers that count when it comes to running a photography business and it’s a number that not many photographers either know or are comfortable with.

Sue says, and rightly so, average sales aren’t a number between $2000 and $3000 for example. To find your average sales figure, add up the number of total sales from shoots over a given time and divide that total by the number of shoots. That’s your average sales figure. And yes, you need to include the no sales and the highest sales - they all count toward your average.

**HERE’S WHAT HAPPENED IN MY BUSINESS WHEN WE FOCUSED ON AVERAGES**

My staff, once I explained that we need to focus on averages, had less reason to be personally affected if a sale didn’t go as planned. No matter how gorgeous the photography was, average sales became the focus for all of us. Sure, we strive for better sales, better photography, better customer service, better phone scripts, anything we can to improve our numbers. By focusing our
attention on the averages, the more confident we became in our TPM and our business.

Another positive to come from focusing on our averages is our clients never feel pressured to buy or spend more than they are comfortable with. My studio is in a relatively small area and a bad reputation through sleazy sales techniques would not see us last long in business. Plus, I see my clients when I go to the beach, shopping, to watch my kids play soccer. I don’t want to feel embarrassed or nervous when I bump into them. I want to be able to walk up with a big smile and ask if they’re still enjoying their beautiful photography and chat about them, their kids and the fun we had at their shoot.

**IS TPM FOR YOU?**
If you’re looking for more leads to more targeted clients then its a resounding, yes.

If you’re expecting great sales from every client books with TPM, you’ll be disappointed.

There are ways you can discourage those clients that you expect may only want your free offer but if you made the offer, you must be prepared to follow through. Not doing so, will be bad for your business.

If you can work with averages and run your business like a business, TPM will work for you and should definitely be added to the marketing you’re currently doing.

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**THE STIGMA INVOLVED WITH TPM**
If you’ve done any research on TPM, read about it in different photography Facebook groups or forums, heard about it on podcasts or been to workshops where its been discussed, you may
be aware there is some stigma attached to the strategies. I won’t say the stigma is unfounded but there’s no need for you to be either tarnished with the same stinking brush if you are prepared to follow a few simple guidelines.

**THE NUMBER ONE GUIDELINE:**
Treat your customers as you’d like to be treated if you were a customer.

I know, simple right. But it does go a little against the adage; run your photography business like a business person, not an artist.

Let me explain.

We’re constantly told by business and marketing experts (and some photographers) that the only way to succeed financially, as a photographer is to run your business like any other business person would run theirs. By the numbers. It was only the last chapter that I was preaching at you to do the same... with your average sales... the numbers.

If you follow the numbers, you’ll have a road map to success. BUT, you don’t want to do this at the expense of creating a bad name for your business. Run your business by the numbers but don’t focus solely on the numbers, there’s a difference.

There’s a story I heard about a very successful Melbourne based portrait photographer a long time ago. I’m not sure if this is urban myth or fact, I don’t have a source that can confirm either way. I believe it’s true and his techniques would be extremely effective...

This photographer would invite a family (or parents) back into his studio for the sales session following a shoot. He would have all the photos from the session printed as 8” x 10” prints (this was back in the film days but I’m sure would be just as effective today)
and stacked on the coffee table in front of the parents. The prints were gorgeous, this photographer knew how to shoot.

He would then explain to the parents that they were going to go through the photos one at a time and he needed them to say “yes” to the photos they liked and “no” to the photos they weren’t as excited about.

The first photos in the stack were of the couples children.

As the photographer held up the first photo, the couple agreed that they loved it and that was the start of the ‘yes’ pile of photos. The photographer held up the second and third photos and both received a resounding “yes” from the couple. When the third photo of one of their children was held up, the couple were unsure and decided no, it wasn’t a photo they really loved.

The photographer, without a word of warning proceeded to tear the photo in half, then quarters and dropped it into the rubbish bin beside the table. The parents, as you’d expect were gobsmacked and in shock, “Why did you do that?” they asked.

Dead pan, the photographer replied, “You didn’t like that photos, you weren’t going to purchase it, I have no need for it.”

What do you think was the result of that sales session?

If you guessed the couple walked out empty handed, you’re dead wrong. They purchased ALL the remaining prints!

The photographer in question, if the stories are indeed true, had a very successful business. The question is, at what cost? Is this a tactic you could employ in your business? I hope not, I hope you’re in as much shock as I was when first hearing the story. True or not, this style of sales tactic are still being used today by photographers everywhere that run their businesses, purely as a
business. That’s not something I aspire to be doing with my business and I’m hoping you feel the same.

BACK TO THE NUMBERS AND RUNNING AN ETHICAL PHOTOGRAPHY BUSINESS

Let’s say you average $1000 in sales per portrait shoot. And by average, I mean exactly that. An average sale includes ALL the no sales, the bad sales, just as it does the once in a lifetime huge sale.

Now, let’s imagine you’re shooting 5 portraits per week and to get those 5 bookings, you need to call 20 leads.

Extrapolated out, every 20 leads equals $5000 in sales.

So, to increase turnover, this photographer can do a few things. Shoot more portraits by generating and calling more leads or increase their average sales.

Increasing sales is a totally separate topic so let’s focus on increasing the number of shoots for now. If this photographer in our example wants to book more shoots, they need more leads. By increasing the leads to 40, the numbers indicate they should book 10 shoots in the week which in turn means a $10,000 turnover for the week.

Yes, they may need another shooter or sales person but the numbers don’t lie. More leads, means a higher turnover, irrespective of an increase in sales per session. I’d like to say, more leads equals more profits but that will depend on other factors like staff costs, particularly if you need to hire extra shooters, sales staff or admin staff to cope with more leads and shoots. You’ll have to do the math for your business but the point is, you can easily increase your session numbers with an increase in leads.

And this is where TPM can be so effective, it’s a lead generating machine.
So far, so good, the photographer hasn’t done a thing wrong to tarnish this lead generation strategy.

Things turn bad when the photographer has reached their limit of leads and the only way to increase profits is to somehow generate more leads again or increase sales per customer.

To increase leads, the dodgy photographer increases the value of their TPM vouchers and in turn has to increase their portrait prices to make the vouchers viable.

**ANOTHER EXAMPLE**

Lets assume the photographer raises their voucher value from $250 (which is pretty standard in my experience) to $1000. The only way this photographer can stay profitable with this strategy is to massively increase their print prices to offset the voucher value.

A framed 8”x10” print goes from $200 to $600 and a session fee from $100 to $400.

Now, can you imagine what the sales process is like for these studios? From the things I’ve read and heard, they are high pressure and absolutely horrible for the customer. The customer is often never made aware of the print prices before their portrait session let alone the sales appointment.

The studios relying on these hard sells and what I would call bordering on dishonest tactics are happy to push on because they have a seemingly endless supply of leads through their TPM systems. The problem is, they are destroying this style of marketing and creating a horrible name for professional portrait photographers.

Wedding photographers already have a tough time, often being labelled as ‘rip-off-artists’ because it’s a wedding they are
photographing and the media has helped create this stigma and perception that these photographers are inflating prices to exploit couples on their big day. If the greedy and unethical portrait photographer practicing sleazy and underhanded sales and booking tactics continue, it won’t be long before all portrait photographers are tarred with that same brush.

HOW DO YOU AVOID BEING LABELLED A SHONKY AND DISHONEST?

Easy. Be honest and up front with any of your marketing, including TPM.

There is absolutely nothing wrong with generating leads via TPM. It works fantastically well and there’s no reason why it shouldn’t continue to yield great results for honest portrait operators.

The best way to be seen as totally honest and upfront with your marketing is to do exactly that - be honest and up front. Let prospective clients know what prints cost. This could be via your website, in an email, a letter in the post or all of these. Don’t hide your prices from your clients, the idea is to encourage them to spend money on the beautiful art work you create for them.

Yes, they are entitled to whatever their voucher includes but don’t hide the fact that you will be doing such an amazing job on the shoot that there is no way they are going to be able to resist buying more photos. DO NOT HIDE THIS FACT.

If your TPM clients turn up to your shoot, have a wonderful time then turn up to the sales session expecting to be choose one free photo to take home or to be spending only their voucher value... have one guess who is at fault. YOU!

You absolutely must educate your clients before the day of the shoot about the process. There are different ways to do this that
I’ll cover in a later chapter but the point here is to be open and honest.

The beauty of being honest and upfront before the portrait session is if the prospective client really doesn’t want to spend a dollar more than their voucher, they may decide to cancel the shoot altogether. This is a good thing for you. Not doing this shoot saves you time and helps your averages.

There is a chance you may be able to convert some of these voucher holders to photography buyers but you only want to take this chance after you’ve had a chance to educated them about the process first. You do not want to be ambushing them at the sales session. That’s not fair and I’m sure you wouldn’t be impressed if the roles were reversed.

Let’s be clear, some voucher holders will still want their free portrait session and print even after you’ve educated them on the process, your print prices and what other families usually spend, if that’s so, you must deliver. You’ve made that commitment with your vouchers and marketing.

One very successful photographer I know, who does use TPM and learns that his client is adamant they only want the free print and shoot will take a series of five to ten images and have the client choose one from the camera LCD screen at the shoot. He then posts that printed image rather than doing a sales session.

This isn’t something I’ve done in the past but I’ve definitely felt like it. There’s two ways to approach this type of client. Show them your usual way of presenting photos after a shoot, using software like Pro Select, a slideshow with music and wowing them with your photography hoping they’ll purchase something or at least talk about the great experience and refer friends. The other option is to get them through as quick as possible by shooting less, doing less preparation with the images after the shoot,
forgetting the tea or coffee when they come to the sales session and just getting through it.

It’s easy to see that the right way is to show every customer the same great service. However, it’s difficult when you absolutely know, the customer only wants their free print.

I’ll leave how you decide to tackle this scenario to you once you’re on your way. In my studio though, we shoot a little less at the portrait session, take a bit of shortcut in the image preparation for the slideshow but still treat them as we do any other client. They are certainly not rushed out the door and if they truly can’t afford to buy something, I’m still happy for them to talk about Impact Images as a great studio with amazing work to their friends. If they add that we’re expensive, that sits fine with me and adds more value to what I’m offering through my TPM campaign.

***

WHICH BUSINESS TO TARGET AS YOUR MARKETING PARTNER

Finding the right businesses to align yourself with is the first step to a successful TPM campaign. You’ll need to identify businesses with your target demographic as their existing customers. Your aim will be to attract those customers or clients to your business for a photography session.

The first step in identifying the right businesses for you is to have a clear idea of who your target client is. There are a couple of ways you can do this, starting with your existing client database (if you have one) and it’s detailed enough to give you a clear indication of your past clients.

You may think that your clients are varied and that you’re happy to shoot and attract anyone, which may be true. That doesn’t help you strategically come up with businesses to target for your
marketing though. Your net will be too wide and that’s too vague a starting point, you need to focus down and be more specific if you can.

If you’ve ever tried to create an avatar of your perfect client, you can use that same avatar as a basis for your business targets. If you’ve never created an avatar and want to, it’s a matter of coming up with a detailed description of your perfect client.

**AN EXAMPLE OF A PORTRAIT CLIENT AVATAR COULD BE:**
Mary and John, married with two kids, Rebecca aged 4 who attends the local pre-school and Ben aged 6 who attends the local grammar school and plays soccer in winter and is part of the local surf club nippers in summer. Mary is a stay at home mum but had a professional background as a legal secretary and will be returning to work part time soon. John works in insurance, has a company car and earns $120,000. They live in Erina which is an upmarket suburb, close to the beach and full of large and new homes. They have a medium sized pet dog, are a sporty family and spend a lot of time at the beach when they have time off. Both Mary and John belong to the local gym, drive nice cars and dress in recognisable branded apparel.

The more detailed you can be with your avatar, the more clues you will have for who you could align yourself with for TPM. Do you have any ideas of possible businesses that it could be worth aligning yourself with when reading the family description above?

Which businesses would Mary and John be frequenting that you could align yourself with? Where would they take their kids, where would they shop, where can you see them spending their money? There are a lot of clues from the one paragraph above once you start making a list.
Some businesses that come straight to mind for me include:

Pre-school, primary school, day care centres, toy stores, kids clothing stores, sports stores, soccer clubs, car dealerships, tyre stores, women’s clothing stores, jewelers, hairdressers, beauty salons, surf shops, local restaurants and cafes, home improvement stores, home furnishing stores, doctors, dentists, chemists, physiotherapists, chiropractors, vets, gyms, personal trainers... the list goes on.

The idea of this exercise is not to come up with a list and target everyone on that list, it’s to firstly, come up with a list of possibilities.

Once you have your list, you’ll need to think about which businesses are most likely to be servicing a large number of more of your target clients. Once you have a narrowed down list, put them in an order that will best serve your needs and the businesses at the top of your list become your first targeted businesses.

You may find that there are a number of different businesses within each business category and that’s perfect. The more choice, the better. You’ll have more chance of building a strong and mutually beneficial relationship with the right business.

Which business is the right business for your marketing strategy?

If, for example you decide to target a local surf shop and there are three local surf shops, you get three bites of the cherry to kick off your TPM strategy. So, which of the three should you target? That’s a tough question because the automatic assumption is to go for the biggest or busiest store. More clients, means more leads, right? It depends...
Let’s say you simply ‘click’ with and build a good relationship with the smallest and least busy of the three surf shops in town and they would love the chance to get involved and work with you. Wouldn’t this business owner sell your services and your offer with more enthusiasm than the busy store who reluctantly agrees to just give your vouchers a try? Yes, definitely yes!

You may find the smaller, not so busy store will produce the best leads for your business and you have the basis for a long and fruitful working relationship.

Unfortunately, there is no right or wrong answer here and it will be a bit of trial and error on your part. It would be foolish however, to make the same offer to all three surf shops at the same time and with the same offer. If your offer is a good one, the store should be able to use your offer as a ‘bonus’ and with exclusivity in their store. That bonus loses all value if it’s available in every surf shop in town.

Because this strategy is a numbers game and the more leads your partner store generates, the more sales you ultimately make, it’s difficult to go past the business and biggest store when looking for your marketing partner. That’s the store I suggest you target first. If, however, that store is part of a franchise or chain, you’ll probably find they will need to seek all kinds of permission before committing to a TPM agreement. In these cases, it is possible to get in but it usually requires a lot more work and it may not be something you want to consider pursuing.

**BIGGEST AND BUSIEST IS NOT ALWAYS BEST**
I tried a few years ago to establish TPM relationship with a popular franchise for kids clothing - Pumpkin Patch. Their customers were my PERFECT target demographic. The beauty was, the store manager knew of me, had heard about Impact Images from multiple sources; portrait and wedding clients and
she was excited about my proposition for vouchers and free shoots for her customers.

This particular store ticked every box for being the perfect marketing partner. They were close by, located in a busy shopping centre, stocked expensive merchandise and their shoppers had to have some expendable cash to be shopping there, otherwise they’d be in K-Mart, Target or the like.

Unfortunately, and with no lack of trying from the store manager or myself, the marketing partnership never eventuated. Being a franchise just meant too many hoops to jump through. I wrote plenty of emails and had a number of conversations all to no avail. In the end, I moved on and approached the next store on my list.

**DIFFERENT OFFERS FOR DIFFERENT STORES**
Although you should not have photography vouchers in similar stores in the same areas, you can however, have different TPM offers in different types of stores and following both my personal experience and after interviewing Bianca Duimel in episode 81 of the podcast, I highly recommend you spread your lead generation targets between different businesses and never ever rely on a single source for your leads. No matter how good they may seem at the time.

Bianca was collecting enough leads through a single local baby store in Auckland, New Zealand to generate enough work to consume all her portrait bookings for her entire business. There were so many leads and shoots as a result of the voucher system that Bianca hired more shooters and digital artists to cope with the workload. Things were good, business was great!

That store later went into receivership, stopped trading and closed their doors with almost no warning. No more customers, no more leads, no more shoots for Bianca. She had to make some drastic
cuts and make them fast. Those cuts were to lay off staff, one of the toughest things she’s had to do in business but with no choice.

Trying to keep a business afloat where the costs to stay open are more than the business is generating equates to financial suicide. Better for Bianca to make some fast cuts, recover and grow her business, then rehire again. This is exactly what she did. Plus, she made a change to her marketing practices. Not the style, she still uses and swears by the vouchers, the way she implements the voucher system has altered slightly.

Bianca now has multiple marketing business partners around her city, always looking to minimise her exposure to one lead generation source going bad or drying up. Bianca has vowed to never rely on a single source of leads again.

I have an almost identical story, with the same baby store chain and learnt the same big lesson.

Going forward, the plan for you is to implement the voucher system with one store first, get it running smoothly, effectively and profitable. Once things are going well, implant the vouchers with another store, one not in competition with your first store OR implement a different marketing strategy all together to spread your risk of leads drying up and increase your chances of having a constant wand health flow of leads coming into your business.

Never, ever, rely on one source of marketing for your business, no matter how good it seems. Promise me that.

* * *
WHICH STYLE OF TPM IS BEST FOR YOU?
It depends...

I believe the best styles are the ones where you get access to your potential clients contact details as opposed to having an offer that relies on them calling you.

But really, it depends.

Although this book concentrates on the voucher system, let’s briefly look at the different options so you have a better idea when making marketing decisions and keep in mind, my earlier advice. Never have all your lead generation eggs in one basket. Yes, you can (and I believe you should) use multiple TPM strategies for your lead generation methods, there’s no need to use just one.

THE VOUCHER SYSTEM SIMPLY WORKS
The voucher system works so well because the shoppers (your potential clients) fill in their details on a check book style butt and tear off the voucher (the check part of the book) to take home for themselves - that’s their photography voucher.

Once you collect the voucher butts, you have the details to start contacting your potential clients. The strength with this system is the shopper has voluntarily filled out their contact details in the knowledge that it is a voucher for photography services with you.

The down side is the voucher details are only filled out if the store staff (owner or manager) really back the promotion and encourage their shoppers to fill out their details on the vouchers. There are some fantastic ways to ‘encourage’ store staff to promote the photography vouchers and never forget to remind their shoppers to fill out the vouchers. I’ll cover these methods in detail in the following chapters.
Gift Certificates puts the ball in your clients court

Gift Certificates as a lead generation tool, rely on your potential clients calling you after receiving their certificate to either validate it or to book a photography session.

The big difference between the gift certificate and the vouchers is you are relying on having a compelling enough letter from your business marketing partner, a great offer and a time sensitive call to action to have your potential client pick up the phone and call you. If they don’t call, you don’t make a booking. You’re left with no follow-up action apart from a second mail out - which may not be possible or viable.

I’ll go into more detail about using gift certificates as a TPM tool in a follow up eBook. If you’re looking to get a head start, check out my interviews with Israel Smith, Dean Mansbridge, Bianca Duimel, Sue Bryce, Jeremy and Katie from Heartstory Photography in the PhotoBizX archives. These episodes are currently only available to Premium Members but you can trial the membership and hear all these episodes for $1 from the trial membership page here: http://photobizx.com/trial.

If you’re on my email list (which you should be if you’re reading this book) I’ll email a reminder when the follow up book is released.

Competition Boxes, good and bad

Competition boxes are another TPM strategy that leaves you with the potential clients details, which is a good thing for you. They work like any competition you may have entered yourself - enter your details and go in the draw to win...

The success of this system relies on having a competition (prize) worth entering for the shoppers and being VERY clear in your competition details that you will be contacting the entries that did...
not win to receive a ‘secondary’ or ‘runner-up’ prize... a portrait photography voucher.

Being intentionally unclear with these details is where photographers in the past have crossed the line and been seen as using sleazy or dirty sales tactics. DJ Payne, a successful Gold Coast photographer (recently moved to Geelong) had massive success with competition boxes and describes this method of lead generation as one of the very best, especially if they haven’t been used by a lot of photographers in your area in the past.

The relationship you build with your partnering business will, like other TPM strategies, have a bearing on the success of your campaign. There are things you can do to encourage the business owners and staff that are hosting your competition box to recommend (soft sell) customers on the idea of entering the competition which I’ll cover in more detail in the follow up book.

If you’d like to get a head start on that information, have a listen to my interview with DJ Payne on the PhotoBizX podcast. Again, you will need to be a Premium Member to hear this episode by the time you’re reading this - use the link above to access it for $1 - a very worthwhile investment!

**ARE CLIENT REFERRALS A MARKETING STRATEGY?**

The final TPM strategy is client referrals. It was a toss up whether or not to include referrals as a form of TPM but at its most basic form, TPM is really a lead obtained via a source other than your direct marketing or advertising. That, coupled with the fact referrals really do work, are one of the best lead sources and can easily be enhanced with a little work, the decision was made to include them as a relevant strategy.

At a recent Australian Professional Photography awards (APPA’s), I interviewed five successful baby and newborn
photographers, some of whom live and operate their businesses in close proximity to each other, and all five agreed that client referrals were the single biggest source of bookings for their business.

Granted, interviewing five photographers at one time in less than five minutes was not conducive to getting the best marketing advice from any of the women, I was surprised to hear that this was their greatest source of bookings. When pushed and cajoled a little by me to give up something more concrete like vouchers, certificates, competition boxes, they were adamant that referrals were number one for bookings.

That short interview alone was enough to encourage me to firstly include referrals as a TPM strategy and is something I will explore more closely and share how you can improve your number of referrals in the following book.

**WHICH STRATEGY WILL YOU BE EMPLOYING?**

Although there are different TPM strategies available, plus many other marketing opportunities to generate leads for your business, you’re reading his book, I’m guessing, because you’re looking for a way to generate more leads and improve your business right now. That’s great and means there’s no need to wait for future books, look for different ideas or consider whether or not the voucher system is right for you.

If it’s any motivation for you, I decided to write this book first because I know it works, I believe in it and I know it’s repeatable and will be successful for any photographer willing to follow the steps.

You have a clear, easy to follow road map laid out for you in the next chapters and this system works. All you need to do now is get committed to this one idea, this one strategy and implement it...
into your business. It doesn’t take a lot of time or effort to get things going, especially if you take a little step forward each day. Forget the big picture once you’ve made your commitment to act and just focus on getting the next small step done.

In a week or month or six months, you’ll look back and wonder both why you didn’t start earlier and just how easy it can be to get more leads, more bookings, more sales.

Read, plan, do. It’s that simple. Let’s go.
The Voucher System

How exactly does the voucher system work?

Once you have the business you will be partnering with, your vouchers are in store and you have some point of sale promotional prints, posters or canvases on display, the rest is up to the staff and to some extent, the shoppers at the store.

To receive a voucher for a complimentary photography session, the shoppers will be required to spend over a certain amount in store. This amount needs to be set by you.

NOTE: You will have to experiment and work on what is the right amount for you and your store for your minimum spend. In my experience, $250 was a good amount for the first store I worked with, which stocked plenty of large ticket items and made the minimum spend relatively easy to achieve. $250 also made the photography voucher ‘feel’ more legitimate in the eye of the shopper since the photography portrait voucher was to the value of $250 and included an 8” x 10” enlargement and the photography session.

The problem with a high minimum spend is there will always be less vouchers being completed which translates to less leads.

After some time and seeing a drop in leads, I reduced the minimum spend required to be eligible for a photography
voucher to $150 in store and the number of completed vouchers (leads) increased dramatically.

The drop in the number of vouchers being completed by shoppers at the $250 spend limit was, I think, down to a few factors.

1. The staff were not incentivised enough to encourage shoppers to complete the vouchers following a purchase

2. The regular shoppers were becoming familiar with the promotion

3. There were still a large number of sales happening in store that were under $250 despite the big ticket items on display

After dropping the spend limit to $150 and increasing the incentive for the store staff to have shoppers complete a voucher following a sale, my leads jumped from under 10 per week to over 30! More on the staff incentives shortly.

**IS THE OFFER TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE?**

There didn’t appear to be any concerns from shoppers that the voucher offer or ‘deal’ was too good to be true but if I know, if I were the shopper, I would be questioning a voucher for $250 worth of photography for spending $150 in store. The voucher value and qualification to receive one is something that you have to weigh up yourself. Finding an amount you and your store owner or manager are happy with that is also balanced with the number of leads you’re acquiring may take a little experimentation.

**BACK IN STORE**

Once the shopper has made their purchase, the store staff member making the sale will prompt the shopper to complete their details on the voucher stub to receive a complimentary
phography session for their family, child or children. Herein lies
the power of this system.

By having the shopper complete their details, they are giving you
permission to call them to book in their complimentary
photography session. Bear in mind, some mums will have
completely forgotten or have no idea what you’re talking about
when calling to make a booking and will need some reminding.
It’s par for the course when they have so much going on in their
lives.

This is important and I want to reinforce: the success of the
voucher system relies on having your voucher stubs completed by
the shoppers. The number of completed vouchers hinges heavily
on your store staff encouraging the shopper to complete their
detail. I have some tips in regard to that encouragement that
make all the difference between success and failure coming up.

Each week, you collect your completed voucher stubs, return to
your studio and start phoning the shoppers that filled out their
details on the voucher stubs to make bookings for shoots. I have a
script to get you off to a successful start because it’s here that your
real work begins.

This call will be the make or break for a successful booking, shoot
and future sale.

Once booked, it’s up to you to produce some amazing
photography, capture the moments and feelings your clients want
and (great) sales will follow.

As with any TPM strategy, you will always have some no-shows,
cancelled bookings, low or no sales. There are ways to minimise
the affects of these on both your time and average sales that I will
cover. One of the biggest things to remember and focus on, as
we’ve discussed earlier, is to focus on your averages. If you can
lock that it in and really believe it, you’ll have a system that you can build on and a real business on your hands.

Let’s get into the nitty-gritty and break it all down step by step.

* * *

**WHO TO ALIGN YOUR BUSINESS WITH?**
Finding the right business and establishing a good working relationship, even friendship, will go a long way to making your voucher system a big success. The first step is finding the right business to partner with and approaching them with an offer to make partnering worth considering for them. You need to be clear; what’s in it for them?

The best businesses will be ones that have shoppers and clients that fit your target market, so if you have a good idea of your avatar or perfect client, you can start to narrow down who you’re going to target for your marketing campaign.

One mistake is thinking the higher end the business, the more successful your marketing will be. That may not be case. High end stores will be less likely to have any desire to get involved with vouchers and your marketing strategy, but you may find the gift certificate approach a better fit. High end stores will traditionally have less shoppers which means less leads. The leads you do acquire, may or may not be a good fit for your business - this will depend on you and your business.

For example, lets imagine you approach a high end boutique kids clothing store and they are happy to trial your vouchers. Being high end, usually means expensive, which in turn means wealthy or ‘well to do’ shoppers. Sounds promising so far. Now, if you’re just starting out in your photography business, are operating from a small room at home and can’t display the kind of wall art these
clients may be interested in, you may not get the sales you expected.

Obviously, there are exceptions but my point is to try and partner with businesses that actually have shoppers that DO fit your target demographic right now.

**SPECIFIC STORE TYPES TO CONSIDER**

Targeted stores to align with for baby, children and newborn photographers will include baby stores, kids clothing stores, toy stores and day-care centres.

Pet photographers will have success with dog washing companies, veterinary clinics and hospitals, pet supply stores.

If you’re targeting families, you could broaden your net to include sports stores and centres, hobby shops, beauticians, hair salons, chiropractors, physiotherapists, massage therapists... anywhere that services or supplies to your target client and preferably a store that is frequented by customers with a somewhat disposable income.

Independent rather than large chains or franchises are easier to start a marketing relationship with as the store owner can make decisions without having to make applications, get approval or seek permission through a head office or a franchiser. It’s not impossible to get something going with these stores but it is more difficult. Go for the ‘low hanging fruit’ first, especially if it’s your first go at TPM. This’ll make life easier on you and you’ll see results faster.

There’s nothing stopping you having vouchers in more than one store and I suggest you do. Spreading your marketing reach will reduce the chances of interruptions to your business and cash flow if something happens to your one and only store. Marketing is one area where you do not want all your eggs in the one basket.
Multiple source of leads for any business and especially a portrait photography business is a GOOD thing.

Bernie Griffiths, a successful photography business owner for over 30 years, now photography marketing coach insists that portrait photographers should have at least six lead generation sources in place at all times. I interviewed Bernie in episode 30 of PhotoBizX, his advice was a big eye opener for many listeners.

Once you have a list of your targeted stores, you’ll need to organise a meeting to discuss your ideas. This is best done in person. Call to make an appointment with the store owner or manager or go in to make the appointment. Face to face will always be more effective than a phone call. If you’re serious about your business and the success of your marketing strategy, do not use email to set up an appointment. It’s too easy or the store to ignore, delete or move aside for later. You need to actually make contact which means in person or phone at the very least.

Once you have your appointment, a great tip is to treat the store owner or manager to coffee. It'll give you a chance to have an uninterrupted meeting with their full attention. Most businesses operate near a coffee shop and a 15-20 minute chat away from the store will usually be well received.

Most stores will have a cafe close by but if your suggestion for a coffee is turned down, a meeting in store can be just as effective. All you need is some attention for a few minutes to explain your marketing idea and how the vouchers work for the store.

**WHAT’S IN IT FOR ME?**

So, what’s in it for me... is exactly what the store owner will have at the forefront of their mind at the meeting. It’s important you’re clear about the benefits and get to them early in your conversation.
There are definite benefits for the store and they include:

A free gift or reward for the stores customers - a portrait session and enlargement/dollar value - when they spend over a certain amount in store.

An incentive for the staff to up-sell or the shopper to spend more to reach a dollar value and be entitled to their photography session.

No cost to the store!

The offer will be exclusive to their store or style of store in that area and not offered to any other similar stores in the same local area.

These points alone will be enough to get the conversation started and your meeting heading in the right direction. Once you get into the details of how it all works, you’ll still have one big benefit for the store owner to be revealed.

You’ll pay the store, preferably the store sales staff, a commission for each voucher they have completed by a shopper.

This is big for both you and the store for a couple of reasons but first the advantage for the store.

The commissions are a great incentive for the store staff to provide great service and promote sales over a certain amount to qualify their shopper for a photography voucher.

There are other big benefits for you by offering commissions which I’ll cover in just a minute. Firstly, some more incentives for the store owner at your meeting.

Other ways to show the store representative that you are serious about the promotion and working with them is to organise a
shoot for them or their staff to experience what you offer and how good you area as a photographer. You want them to experience what you do.

If you have testimonials, bring these at your meeting - either digitally or printed is fine.

Show some of your best work if you have a laptop or iPad... only your best work. Better to show half a dozen jaw-droppingly gorgeous photos than thirty images with your best ones peppered throughout.

You can organise point of sale material for the store in regard to the voucher promotion.

You’d be happy to do some complimentary in store photography; either products, staff, promos etc.

The idea of this meeting is to show you are 100% committed to working with the store and owner/manager and that they have an opportunity to provide an amazing gift to their best shoppers. Going out of your way to build this relationship will pay dividends for you in the long run.

**WHY PAY COMMISSIONS PER VOUCHER?**

Back to the commissions and how they are a massive benefit to you! In my experience, having the vouchers available in store is just not enough. Shoppers will rarely complete their details unless they are encouraged to do so. By paying the store staff a commission for every completed voucher, you have recruited the sales staff to work for you at every sale.

And for good reason, they have a monetary incentive now. Before commission, the staff would only be reminding shoppers to complete a photography voucher if they remember and because the store owner asked them to. It’s too easy to forget or to come
up with a reason why they didn’t; the store was busy, the shopper was in a hurry, the shopper wasn’t really interested, their baby was crying, their husband was waiting in the car, etc, etc. Provide a good incentive and they will never forget.

I’m guessing your next questions is how much commission should you pay? It depends. I’ve paid nothing, $1.00, $2.00 and $5.00 per voucher to the store staff for each correctly completed voucher stub. I’ll bet you can guess which yielded the most leads… that’s right, $5.00 per voucher.

I would in fact pay up to $10.00 per voucher if I needed to but I know my numbers and what each voucher lead is worth. You must watch your numbers closely or your commissions can get out of hand fast.

Remember, you should be working with averages and they extend all the way down to number of leads to number of bookings to number of actual shoots to average sales.

If you’re booking one shoot for every 10 leads that you call, that’s $50 per booked lead at $5.00 per lead. If your average sale is $700.00 you need to take that $50 acquisition cost into account… plus all your other expenses. The plan is to have a high lead conversion rate and higher average sales. The higher these two numbers are, the more commissions you can afford to pay per lead.

My advice is to start at $2.00 per lead but don’t be afraid to go to $5.00 if you’re not seeing the number of completed voucher stubs you’d expect. Usually, a realisation from the store staff that our vouchers actually hold true value for them is enough to see your lead numbers (completed voucher stubs) jump significantly higher.
KEEPING TRACK OF COMMISSIONS

A simple way to make sure the correct store staff are being paid the correct commissions is to have them write their name on the back of any completed stubs that their customers fill out.

In my studio, we have a very simple spreadsheet (a piece of paper actually) with a list of the names of the store staff and we tally up the number of voucher stubs following each collection from the store - usually once per week.

When the tally of stubs for an individual staff member reaches $20 in commissions, we allocate them a gift card as a reward - the gift cards are instead of cash - and their card is delivered with ‘fanfare’ at our next visit to the store to collect more voucher stubs.

**NOTE:** the vouchers I use are Coles/Myer Cards and can be used like cash in many places including petrol stations (fuel stations), department and grocery stores, supermarkets etc. These cards are as good as cash as a sales staff reward and there are big benefits for your business. The main one being they are a business tax deduction - a cost of doing business claimable against your annual turnover. This is a good thing and something not easily done with cash. Please seek your own accounting advice in regard to paying commissions from your accountant.

The gift cards are also more classy than handing over cash, they’re also easy to track and monitor in your own business.

Once a sales staff member has been allocated a voucher, their stub numbers are crossed off my spreadsheet, any surplus numbers carried across and they start accumulating their numbers for their next voucher. It’s a simple but very effective system and the shop staff love and respond to the reward well.
THE IMPORTANCE OF THE STORE VISIT

Store visits will serve a few purposes during your promotion.

1. To manage your vouchers - collect the completed stubs and replenish supplies of incompleted vouchers ready for use.

2. Hand out your reward card/commissions; always fun.

3. Sustain and build sales staff enthusiasm for the promotion and keep building on your relationship foundations.

All three are equally important and combine to make your visit beneficial for you and the store staff.

Managing your vouchers is vitally important. If your store runs out of vouchers, your leads stop, it’s that simple. You’ll need to monitor when voucher books get low and more importantly, make sure you have sufficient books on order from your printer, allowing for printing lead times.

**NOTE:** Do not rely on the store staff to let you know when they’re running low or out of vouchers. They often won’t. Even with a good commission structure, gifts and rewards every time you visit and a good relationship, the vouchers become routine and people just get busy.

*They complete a sales, notice there aren’t any vouchers and simply move onto the next customer, the next task, they forget. It’s up to you, to keep your vouchers stocked. Visit weekly, it’s your promotion to work on and sustain.*

I prefer to leave only a few books at my stores which gives me (or someone from my studio) good reason to visit often and show our smiling happy faces. This shows we’re engaged, interested and
happy to be working in this partnership, plus, the store doesn’t have to manage the vouchers in regard to storage space. The easier you make it for them, the better for you.

Because the vouchers are ideally kept on or at the check-out counter, this area is PRIME REAL ESTATE for any store. The easier you can make it by not dropping off boxes of vouchers at a time, means they only need a couple of spare voucher books as back up and you can check quantities on each visit. Don’t make storing your vouchers an issue for the store.

**WHAT TO CHECK WHEN COLLECTING STUBS**

Part of managing the vouchers includes picking up the completed stubs. You’ll need to check the back of each stub has a name (for commission payments) and if not, I’ve found the best bet is to show any uncompleted ones to the store manager and let them make a decision on where the rewards should go. If the manager isn’t there or available, you can ask a staff member but be aware, they may simply add their name which can cause issues later.

I’ll allocate any unclaimed and completed stubs to the store manager and have found that works well. It’s usually the manager who was too busy to remember anyway - it’s rare a staff member forgets to add theirs when each name can mean $$$ in their pocket.

**COMMISSIONS**

Your second role when visiting the store is handing out gift card commissions. We slip our cards into an envelope (with our logo) and the recipients name on the front and always make a fuss (if possible) when turning up with the cards for staff members. Everyone loves receiving a gift and I’ve found it’s the same with the voucher gift cards.
Making a fuss can be as simple as walking in, catching the eye of any staff and waving the commission envelopes with a big smile stating “I have gift cards to deliver.” It doesn’t matter who will be receiving the cards, everyone is usually keen to see who’s getting what and how much. It’s about letting ALL staff know that you’re handing out rewards. Who doesn’t want to be a part of that!

The stores I’ve worked with have been larger baby type outlets with up to five staff on in a day. When turning up with an envelope or two, the staff always knew someone was getting commission. There would always be happy faces when handing the envelopes out, from both the manager and the other staff. Make it fun!

Giving away your vouchers is a simple and nice way to show your appreciation and letting the staff member know you’re thankful for them following through and supporting the promotion. Reinforcing their importance is another way to build your relationship with them.

If the staff member to receive a voucher isn’t in-store when you’re delivering, check they picked it up next time you visit. Not because there’s a chance they didn’t receive their envelope, more importantly, it’s a good way to acknowledge them personally for their help. Remember, build those connections and relationships.

**COME BEARING GIFTS**
The third reason for visiting your store was building rapport, showing continued support and goodwill with your store manager and staff. A super simple way to do his is never turn up empty handed, come bearing gifts.

For us, it was always chocolates or cake and soon became only chocolates. The cakes meant more time picking something before the store visit and chocolates were something we could keep in the studio, ready for a store visit any time. Plus, who doesn’t love
chocolates... and they don’t need to be eaten that day or go to waste.

Not once were the staff unhappy to see me or someone from my business. No matter the time of day, shop staff are always happy to receive a treat of some sort and by building that expectation over time, our visits were not only well received, I’m sure the staff worked harder to make sure there were voucher stubs to be collected each week.

**SPENDING A DAY IN STORE - ESPECIALLY DURING BIG SALES**

Occasionally the store you are partnering with will have a large sale or promotion. The store will be busy and buzzing with customers, it’s the perfect situation to increase your lead numbers. Then, you find, even with extra voucher books you end up with less leads than ever before. It doesn’t add up until you visit during a sale.

When things are busy and the staff are run ragged, they will sacrifice your vouchers to free up time and move onto the next customer. Remember, their focus is on their store and their customers, not your vouchers.

A simple solution is to go to the store yourself (or a staff member or hire some help) during the sale and encourage shoppers to complete the vouchers following a sale. This frees up store staff to sell, serve and work without thinking about your vouchers. You can still assign each stub to the correct sales person by seeing who completes the sale.

Obviously, you will have to set this up with the store manager but I’ve found that it’s always a well received idea.

By now, you should have a good understanding which businesses to target for your promotion and feel confident about the benefits
for both the store, the staff and your business - it’s up to you to make that initial approach and get it happening.

Once off and running, remember to treasure and nurture that relationship, do everything you can to make the promotion simple for the store staff. Visit often, always with a smile. Be friendly and supportive. I’ve found it takes very little time to build lovely and real relationships with the store staff and its a natural progression that comes from a good working partnership.

Showing the store staff what you do by way of a free session and gifting some prints will also create plenty of mileage in having them talk about you and your business to their shoppers, especially when encouraging them to fill out your vouchers.

If the staff know, like and trust you and love your photography, this whole thing is a cinch.

* * *

**SAMPLE VOUCHERS**

The vouchers I use and recommend are DL sized and assembled in booklets. DL is the same width as A4, only one-third the height. DL measures 210mm x 99mm and is a standard printing size in Australia. There will be similar ‘standard’ sizes for overseas readers.

PSD versions of the vouchers are available at [http://photobizx.com/tpmbook1](http://photobizx.com/tpmbook1)
To redeem your complimentary portrait offer, please contact Impact Images on (02) 4357 0111. Your portrait session is limited only by your imagination and can include newborn, toddler, siblings and family. All portrait sessions are tailored to suit you and the look you are after.

This offer is not redeemable for cash or with any other studio promotions. One voucher per family per 12 month period. Vouchers may be transferred between family and friends. Photography session booking must be made within 6 months of purchase.
REGISTER FOR OFFER BELOW

date ________________________

first name ____________________

surname ______________________

address ______________________

________________________________

day phone ______________________

mobile _______________________

e-mail _______________________

baby due date __________________

$250 PHOTOGRAPHY GIFT CERTIFICATE

A complimentary gift from us to you. Have your family photographed by the Central Coasts most awarded photography studio and receive a free 8" x 10" enlargement (total value $250)

IMPACT IMAGES
12 Hampton Close Terrigal NSW 2260
Phone: (02) 4367 0111 Mobile: 04 2 511 271
email: info@impact-images.com.au web: www.impact-images.com.au

AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF PROFESSIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY aipp
Of the voucher, one quarter of the width is reserved for the stub. The area with blank fields for shoppers to complete their details.

The stub and voucher are separated by a perforated line so the voucher can be torn away, leaving the stub behind. My voucher books contain 20 vouchers per book.

The end of the voucher stubs are stapled together into a book with a wrap around blank (white) paper cover around 240GSM. Think of an old style cheque book and you’ll have the concept.

**NOTE:** *GSM is grams per square meter and used to describe the thickness or weight of paper.*

1. 90 - 100 GSM - used for stationery, text for magazines and booklets, flyers and brochures.
2. 120 - 170 GSM - used for text for booklets, flyers and brochures. The heavier the weight, the more “upmarket” the feel.
3. 200 - 250 GSM - used for magazine and booklet covers. Robust enough to give some body and stiffness when used in a publication, but not quite heavy enough to be used on its own for cards etc.
4. 280 - 300 GSM - used for cards of all sorts and book and booklet covers.

When a shopper is entitled to a photography voucher, they write their details on the stub and remove the voucher by tearing along the perforated line, leaving the stub (with completed customer details) behind and still attached to the book.

The voucher, which the shopper will take home, has the details of your offer, terms and conditions plus contact details of the studio. I also include the logo of the store that is running the TPM offer and a photo or selection of photos from my studio.
The vouchers may seem important but really aren’t as critical as the stubs of the voucher. The stubs are the area that the shopper will complete and it’s this information you need to book shoots. More on the stubs in a minute.

One thing that isn’t shown on the photo above is the voucher number on both the stub and voucher. These are printed (usually in red) by the printer. The voucher numbers are used as an easy form of reference but aren’t critical to the success of the vouchers. If you’d prefer sequential numbering on your vouchers and stubs, leave space for them in your design and discuss this with your printer.

**Note:** adding sequential numbers to your vouchers will increase the cost but only slightly.

The best location to have your voucher books is at the cash register of the store so they are in the mind and eye of the shop staff right after a sale is made.

Remember, the success of your vouchers is reliant on the staff having or encouraging shoppers to complete their details following a sale.

I’ve found having a note on the till about the vouchers works well as a reminder but you will have to have a good working relationship with the store manager or owner before suggesting this.

**Commissions are also a great reminder.**

If there is more than one register at the store, aim to have a voucher book at each and within reach. Make it as easy as possible for the shoppers and staff to complete your vouchers.
Another effective in store reminder about the voucher promotion is point of sale material featuring your photography and the offer. 8” x 10” prints with the promo details can possibly stand on or be displayed at the counter near the registers.

Depending on your store, you may be able to feature larger posters, framed prints, canvases or whatever will work with the look and space you have available in store.

You will need to talk with your store manager and suggest ideas and find solutions that work for them. I’ve found some stores are open to posters and framed prints and other newer stores prefer to keep any space for their own displays.

Don’t be discouraged if you aren’t able to have your photos and information displayed, the results of this strategy are more reliant on the shop staff than your point of sale material but it will help if the shoppers are enticed to ask about the promotion.

* * *

THE ALL IMPORTANT VOUCHER STUBS
The voucher stubs are what you’ll be collecting each week or visit to the store and are the backbone of this marketing opportunity and its success.

When setting up your commission structure with the store, it’s important to be specific when explaining all fields must be completed and legible for commissions to be payable. Without the completed information, the voucher may be useless to you from a marketing and booking perspective. You need these details to be able to contact the shopper.

The less fields shoppers have to complete on the stub, the better.
The idea is to reduce at the amount of resistance to completing the stub and make things as easy as possible for the shopper. Place yourself in the position of the shopper, potentially with kids or a baby in hand, transaction completed and probably needing to be somewhere else and you’re asked to fill out your details on a voucher. It’s unlikely you’ll feel like it but seeing there are only a few blank fields to complete reduces the chances of saying no.

I’ve trialed extra fields like ‘best time to call’ but didn’t find it made a big difference and often a number had to be tried multiple times to catch the mum no matter the time recorded on the voucher stub.

I have trialed and will go back to adding ‘age of children’ to future vouchers because it gives me a clear picture of the size of the family and a bit more of an idea about the shoot before making the call to book a session.

Baby due date is an important field if your vouchers are going into a baby store. It’ll give you a better idea about your call and the direction you might take. For example, you may be aiming to book maternity, birth or newborn sessions. Knowing the shopper has a baby due means you won’t be calling to book a session right away but calling to talk about the possibility of a newborn or family shoot and the best times to schedule that session after the birth.

**COLLECTING THE STUBS**

When collecting the stubs from your store, remember to have a quick check to see each stub has a name on the back and if not, the staff on shift may know who that sale belongs to.

I felt uncomfortable checking for names on the back of the stubs while in store - it felt as though I was counting and checking on the staff and the number of vouchers. It almost felt like counting money in front of others. Weird maybe and possible not a
thought that would enter the staff’s mind but I guess I associated the voucher stubs with cash, hence that feeling. Cash going out in voucher costs and commissions and cash coming in from shoots.

Instead, I would say my goodbyes and thanks to the staff for their help, remind them to enjoy their chocolate or cake and head to my car. Once there, I would check over the stubs for completed details, names on the back and legibility. If there were any issues, I head straight back into the store and try to resolve any issues right away.

Occasionally, the store staff will complete the fields on the stubs for the shoppers - managing kids is usually the reason. There’s a chance if something on the stub is illegible, one of the staff may have completed the details, remember or know the shopper and be able to clarify what you’re missing or can’t read.

RESTOCKING YOUR VOUCHERS
Each time you visit your store to collect the stubs, check stock of voucher books, the condition of any point of sale material and if there’s anything you can do to help make the relationship between you and the store any stronger in regard to the promotion, your services and how it’s all working.

You’ll find when introducing the promotion to a new store, there will be questions from the staff about the way you shoot, where the photography sessions are (studio or outdoors), the sales sessions, cost of wall art, is it really possible to just take the free session and one print? These questions are great and have usually been influenced by shoppers asking about the promotion. The better the shop staff are informed, the smoother your campaign runs and the more successful it will be.

This reason alone is why the best things you can do to ensure the success of your TPM promotion is to have at least one of the staff experience what you do. They will be your best sales tool and
you’ll have more completed voucher stubs (which translates to leads) than you ever imagined.

* * *

PRINTING AND ORDERING YOUR VOUCHER BOOKS

When ordering vouchers, I’ve found books of 20 look good and are functional. Any less and the books are completed too quickly and appear thin, lack substance and look cheap. Larger books start to look ratty and less than ‘up market’ with folded or damaged corners. The voucher books are the shoppers first contact with your brand. As the saying goes, you only have one chance to make a first impression. Better to portray a feeling of quality right from the start.

Your printer will be able to advise you on the best solution for printing and assembling the books. In my experience, there is a big difference between what some print companies suggest and what can be achieved for the best look and functionality. My printer was trying to do what he thought was the right thing and offer the cheapest solution for me but the result was a cheap looking voucher book that did not scream quality at all. We worked together to come up with a more expensive printing and binding solution and the look of the voucher books went from cheap and nasty looking to a booklet that looked like high quality and something only a professional company or studio would be using for their marketing.

WHAT PAPER STOCK (THICKNESS)

You’ll want a paper stock that is easy to write on with pen (biro), without a glossy finish - the last thing you want is illegible smudged writing. Alternatively, you’ll want the text and voucher information, often in small font, to be sharp and easily read which rules out some art type papers. Logos and images also should look great on your vouchers.
230GSM matt or satin paper looks and works well.

As mentioned earlier, to have the best looking books, your vouchers should be stapled together at the stub-end into books of 20. Around the stapled books, a white or plain 260GSM (or heavier) paper stock is wrapped and glued over the staples. This plain wrap gives the books a professional looking finish and protects both the next voucher and the details of the customer who completed the first stub in the book which should remain private and not on display.

**Voucher Costs**

Pricing will vary depending on the quantity ordered - the more you order, the cheaper the cost per voucher. I can’t tell you what quantity to order, this will depend on the size of your store, the number of staff and shoppers, how willing the staff are to get involved and promote the vouchers, how well you have incentivised the staff promote the vouchers to their shoppers.

My advice is to start with a lower quantity at a higher cost and test the waters. Go with what you can comfortably afford and see what happens as you kick off the promotion. You’ll find when being quoted by your printer that there will be an obvious choice where cost and quantity just seem to make sense.

Remember to get a clear and true idea of lead times and make sure you re-order your voucher books in plenty of time before you or the store run out of vouchers. There’s nothing worse than being in the middle of a great promotion and having no vouchers for shoppers to complete. Trust me I know!

When I found myself in this situation, the shop staff ruled up an exercise book for shoppers to complete following a sale. They captured the same details as the voucher stubs and an extra column was added for the salesperson to add their name for commission purposes. It worked ok but was not ideal or very
professional. Lucky for me, the commissions made the effort to capture shopper details worth it for the sales staff.

**SUPPLYING CMYK COLOUR FILES**

If you haven’t worked with a professional print shop before, they will require your voucher artwork files in CMYK colour mode and you will need to allow a 3-5mm bleed around the edges of your voucher artwork. Bleed is simply extra area around the outside that gives the printer some leeway when laying up and cutting. If your artwork has white space around the entire outside, simply add an extra 3-5mm of white space right round your design. If you have images going to the very edge of your artwork, those images need to extend 3-5mm past the edge of your DL sized dimensions.

If you haven’t had work printed in CMYK before, expect some differences. Blacks can look muddy and some colours can appear washed out or entirely different (especially when it comes to reds) to what you see on your monitor. The CMYK colour gamut is mostly smaller than the RGB gamut that most photographers work in. You can convert your files to CMYK in your editing software and make any necessary adjustments before sending your artwork to print.

If you’re inexperienced with this conversion and you’d like your vouchers to match what you see on your monitor as close as possible, have a sample of your voucher printed where you normally have your professional photos printed. Supply this print and the RGB file to your printer and have them make the CMYK conversion using your print as a proof.

If you are very concerned, have your printer supply you with a printed proof before giving the go ahead on the job.

**WORKING WITH YOUR PRINTER**
If you are adding sequential numbers on each of your stubs and vouchers, remember to leave a space for these - four digits should be sufficient. You can add these digits in your artwork but leave your file as a layered PSD so the printer can remove your ‘dummy number’ to leave space for the print run of sequential members.

Printers will prefer your files in PDF format - one each for the front and back artwork. Most printers however, will accept layered Adobe PSD files and will often ‘jiggle’ things around if something isn’t working or lining up with your design. This may be at a cost to you.

You should receive a digital proof via email before your voucher books go to print and this is your last chance to pick up any mistakes. Check, double check then check again; your business details, especially phone numbers... I’m speaking from (expensive) experience.

I suggest you have someone else do a spell and grammar check, even though you would have already done this in your word processing or design software. A fresh set of eyes will always pick things that you have become oblivious to. A mistake here will be costly.

***

**MAKING THE CALL**
Calling your prospective clients, using the details they’ve completed on the voucher stubs is when your real work begins.

This is the most critical step in achieving good sales from all your leads.

Don’t do what we did at Impact Images.
When first presented with a stack of completed stubs, we excitedly jumped in and started calling people in an attempt to book their free portrait shoots. It went terribly bad. Very few people booked shoots, let alone stay on the line long enough to explain the process. We were being treated like a market researcher calling from India. It was horrible.

After talking to other photographers doing similar promotions, it was clear that a lot of us were having similar results and feelings about the phone calls. One studio though, was having great success and it came down to the script they were using. We tried it and our promotion turned around in an instant, it truly was amazing.

Here’s how I originally began a call:

Ring, ring... Ring ring...

“Hello”

“Hi, it’s Andrew here from Impact Images, I’m calling to book in your free portrait photography session following the voucher you filled out at Baby Store X”

“Sorry, who is it and what’s this about?”

“It’s Andrew here from Impact Images, I’m calling to book in your free portrait photography session”

“Look sorry, I’m really busy and I’m just not interested”

And that was the end of that lead. Gone for good and a waste of time, money and effort.

Not a good outcome and the customer was on the back foot and defensive right from the second they answered the call.
We made a slight change and this is a good representation of how future calls went:

Ring, ring... Ring ring...

“Hello”

“Hi, I’m calling on behalf of Baby Store X about the photography voucher you completed at the Erina store last week”

“Oh great, what do I have to do”

A totally different outcome!

It’d be misleading to say that every call was that easy though. Often, the call may take a little more work and go something like this:

Ring, ring... Ring ring...

“Hello”

“Hi, I’m calling on behalf of Baby Store X about the photography voucher you completed at the Erina store last week”

“Oh great... what was it again?”

“Remember you were at Baby Store X last week, you filled out your details at the counter for a free photography shoot - I’m calling to book that in if you’d like”

“Oh ok, great, what do I have to do next”

The success of your call or not, will depend on your opening line, that’s where the secret lays. Get this right and the shopper will be open to listen to what you have to say and that’s the basis for a conversation and a session booking.
Bare in mind, it’s mostly women you will be calling and speaking to. Chances are, they have a lot going on in their lives with children, a newborn or pregnancy and whatever else they are juggling in their lives. She may not immediately remember the voucher completed at the baby store. That’s fine. As long as she is happy to talk, you have a chance to explain and jog her memory. To get that chance to talk, study, memorise and get that opening line right.

**WHAT IF SOMEONE ELSE ANSWERS THE PHONE?**

Often the person answering the call isn’t the person that completed the voucher and won’t know anything about it, usually it’ll be the spouse or partner.

In this case, ask for the person who completed the voucher. You may get them on the line with no fuss, other times, the call answerer will want to ‘screen’ the call which is totally fine and something I would do for my wife if I think someone is calling to sell something.

The screener may ask who it is or what it’s about. Either way, my response is very similar to the above script:

“**It’s Andrew here, I’m calling on behalf of Baby Store X**”

That is usually enough to get the right person in the line. If not and they probe further with a common,

“**What’s it about?**”

I’ll reply,

“(insert shoppers name here) was shopping in-store last week and she filled out a voucher for a free photography session. I’m calling to work out when is a good time to set that up.”
Most of the time, that’s enough to get the right person on the call and you can take it from there.

Occasionally you won’t get past the ‘gate keeper,’ if that happens, I ask if there’s a better time to call. Usually, a better time is given but if it all goes bad, aim to get off the call without having them asking you to not call back or saying they’re not interested. This will give you the opportunity to try for the right person another time. You’ve paid a commission to receive that lead, make the most of it and don’t give up till you’ve at least talked to the person that completed the voucher.

Please don’t be discouraged at the scenario above; this is a worst case scenario and most times, people are delighted to hear about their voucher and photography session.

**ANOTHER SITUATION**

Occasionally a sibling, parent, grandparent or other relation has added a family members name to a voucher instead of their own. This happens mainly when someone is buying a gift for someone else and they want them to have the photography voucher as well.

This is all fine when they let the other person know, occasionally they don’t or simply forget. In these cases, it’s a matter of piecing together the puzzle by explaining to the caller that ‘insert best guess’ must have added your name at ‘store X’ for a complimentary photography session. Once you’re chatting, it’s business as usual and talking about them, their family and the photography session.

**STRUGGLING WITH THE CALLS**

Making the calls can be a real hurdle for some photographers, I’m one of them. It’s not so much that I can’t make them or I’m no good at it, I really don’t like making the calls and tell myself there are other, more important things I could be doing in my business.
In reality, these calls can be the lifeblood of the business and without them, photography sessions just won’t happen. For this reason I learnt how to do them and do them well to make it easier to train someone else how to do them. My advice is you do the same. Learn how to handle the different situations and get a feel for what happens when making the calls. This experience will be invaluable when teaching and guiding someone else to make them.

One of the biggest fears that many photographers face is they don’t value their own work. That feeling may be amplified when employing a TPM strategy to increase bookings. I’m not in a position, not in this book anyway, to do a psycho analysis and convince you that you’re really worth what you’re charging and that your photography is worth paying for. Let’s just agree that you are and it is... it’ll make life and marketing so much easier for you.

Keep your value and worth in mind when making the calls, particularly if you struggle with making them. If you believe in your photography, what you’re offering here is amazing value, ethical and something your clients love! There’s not one reason to feel embarrassed or worried about calling people about their voucher. Call with confidence, a smile on your face (it will come across in your calls) and be happy about what you’re offering, it really is incredible value and a fantastic opportunity for a family to create some amazing memories.

Once you have the call making and booking process all sorted yourself, that is the only time I recommend you start to outsource that work.

**OUTSOURCING THE CALLS**

Some photographers would suggest it’s better to have a woman, particularly those with kids, to make the calls. The argument is they are in a better place to talk to new or expecting mums who...
may make up a large percentage of your calls and prospective clients if your marketing partner is a baby store. I do agree with this notion but DO NOT let that stop you if you’re male. I had as much success when making these calls myself. Admittedly, I’m the business owner and more invested in making the calls a success but anyone that understands and is committed to the studio and the process will have success.

If you decide to outsource the calls, the best way to get someone new started is to use role play scenarios where you can draw on the experience you’ve had while making the calls yourself. You’ll likely find it’s a good idea to get yourself away from making the initial calls to concentrate on shooting or other marketing to bring more work to your studio.

Get things worked out before your employee jumps to the phone and start calling potential clients. Remember, each call has cost the studio (you) at the very least $5 and closer to $10 taking into account setting up the promotion, dropping off and collecting voucher books, printing, cakes and gifts, free shoots to staff etc. You have a lot invested in every one of those valuable voucher stubs, value them, make them count.

Making the calls can be a tough job, not every call will be a conversion and it can be difficult to stay upbeat and positive. In my experience, making calls for two hours straight is about as much as anyone can handle in one sitting. If possible, stagger your call times between other duties or hire someone on a part time basis to do the work.

**CALL STRATEGIES TO MAXIMISE SUCCESS**

To maximise success with your calls, it’s best to stagger the times and days of the week you make them. Calling prospective clients every Monday between 10am and midday means you will probably be missing a lot of bookings. People have patterns and do similar things each week or time of the day and if you’re not
flexible with your call times, you will miss making contact with some prospective clients.

The best strategy is to make calls late morning, early afternoon, late afternoon on different days of the week so you have a staggered approach and an increased chance of making contact. It’s often the case that people will not call you back and you’ll have to keep trying till you catch them.

If you call and go to voicemail or a machine, my advice is to hang up without leaving a message, make a note of the time you called on the stub and try a different time in the future. Leaving a message rarely sees a call back and your aim is to actually speak to a real person. After 3 or 4 attempts, I would leave a message but only then.

* * *

**THINGS GET MESSY QUICKLY**

Managing your voucher stubs is important, especially when their numbers keep growing. Without a systemised approach, you’ll find yourself in a complete mess. There are two approaches you can take for voucher stub management; fully digital or manual.

The fully digital approach sounds like the way to go but it has drawbacks, the main one being time to enter all the details form every voucher upfront and having a system to manage the data. You could use something as simple as a spreadsheet or go to a sophisticated online solution like Lightblue or Tave. Either approach will require someone to enter the stub details.

The manual approach is fast, simple and gets results (bookings) faster but you have the task of adding the details to your database at a later date.
Listeners to the PhotoBizX podcast will know that I have been running a completely manual business until recently. We have now moved to Lightblue studio management software but haven’t yet utilised it for a TPM promotion. That is the plan though.

The big decision you’ll need to make upfront if using studio management software is if you’re planning to enter the details of every completed stub or only those that have been receptive to your first contact. Is it worth the time to enter the details of someone that may not be the slightest bit interested in photography and who only completed the voucher at the insistence of the shop staff?

Another consideration when starting out, is if you’re prepared to pay staff or a contractor to enter the details of every stub before seeing any results from the promotion.

**WHAT WILL I BE DOING IN FUTURE?**

Having run a few TPM promotions, I think I’ll be entering the details from every stub right after a call is made to that potential client. This way, I’ll have the chance to market to them via email in the future and I’ll have some kind of a result following that first call - whether it’s a “booking”, a “not interested right now” or a “call back later”.

For those calls that get no answer, my approach will be to not enter those details till contact is made. If after 5 or 6 tries there’s no success, I’ll add them to the database if an email address is on the stub.

With either approach, you will still need to manage the stubs which will accrue quickly, especially if your marketing partner is a busy store - a good thing!

**OUR CURRENT PROCESS:**
1. Collect voucher stubs.
2. Call client and make a note of call date and time on back of stub.
3. If client books a shoot, details are entered into calendar software for a follow up call to discuss more about the shoot.
4. If no answer to the call, file the stub to be called back at a later time and/or date.
5. If client answers and is not interested in booking, ask if it’s ok to email them in the future, if yes - add to database. If no, throw stub away and keep no information.
6. Call clients that previously were unreachable and repeat.

To manage our physical stubs, we use business card filing containers. These are a perfect size and have dividers to manage the stubs. Once the details of the stubs have been recorded digitally, we bin them.

The stub containers are divided into ‘1st, 2nd, Third, 4th, 5th and 6th call attempts and they are rotated through. It’s very simple and easy to manage what’s happening and where you’re up to with each stub (potential client) this way.

If a potential client answers but requests a call back at another time, their details are added to a 2nd stub box divided by days of the week for call backs. A note is made of the best time to call back - given by the customer. When our staff member who make the calls that day turns up, they’ll sort the days vouchers by time and start calling. Starting with call back requests before moving to the new and uncalled stubs.

**Utilising a database**

I have been operating my photography business for over 14 years now and haven’t had an effective database. This has been a MASSIVE mistake and oversight on my part! Do not follow my
mistake, get yourself a system in place if you haven’t already, no matter the stage you’re at with your business. It’s never too late.

With 14 years of basically unrecorded leads, I’m still marketing to and attempting to attract new clients every day. Life and business would be MUCH easier if I were marketing to a list of previous clients. Looking back, it’s one of the silliest things I’ve done in business. Please do not make the same mistake.

If you need more convincing, have a listen to the Dean Mansbridge of Zanzo Photography and Bianca Dumiel’s interview on PhotoBizX. Both are smart portrait business operators utilising TPM strategies and growing an all import database.

Below are links to the premium episodes of the podcast that are relevant to this chapter.

Both Dean and Bianca utilise TPM successfully in their businesses and Bianca freely admits that the voucher system is her number one source of bookings and subsequently business. At the time of writing (November 2014), she has just opened a new street front ‘modern glamour’ studio in the heart of Auckland, New Zealand.

Dean operates his mainly studio based portrait photography business from one of the larger towns in Tasmania but still relatively small on a world wide scale. He operates an incredibly successful business, only works Monday to Friday from a 2nd floor street based studio and has plenty of time to spend with his wife and children. Dean’s a prime example of a perfect business to model from and you’ll hear, TPM plays a large role in his business. That and a growing and active database he has built on the Lightblue platform.

I’ve included the interview with Hamish from Lightblue to give you a good idea of what can be achieved with modern studio
management software. There are many other options available for studio management software, some of which include:

Tave  
ShootQ  
Studio Cloud  
Simply Studio  
Snapper.vu

They will all have their good and bad points, so it will be up to you to do your research and come up with a solution that suits you and your business.

Dean Mansbridge Interview on PhotoBizX

Bianca Duimel Interview on PhotoBizX

Lightblue Studio Management Software - Interview with cofounder Hamish Symington

Israel Smith Interview on PhotoBizX

For voucher samples, PSD files and other links - head to http://photobizx.com/tpmbook1

* * *

CONCLUSION

I’ve covered a lot in this chapter on utilising the voucher system because it really does work. If you’re going to give this a try, my suggestion is to go back over the chapter to make sure you have a firm grip of what is required and the steps that need to be taken to make this strategy a success for your business.

One area that photographers new to this strategy get unnecessarily caught up with, is the commission structure - paying for leads.
Yes, these costs do add up very quickly, particularly if you have a large and busy store as a marketing partner. These costs, although not irrelevant, should not be a distraction or focus from your campaign. Sacrificing commissions or the amount of commission you pay should not be considered as a cost saving idea. Doing so will see a dramatic decline in leads and ultimately a failed marketing strategy. You need leads for this method to work. Do not be too stingy with your commissions.

Monitor your numbers closely and work with averages. If your average portrait sale from the promotion is $700 and the cost of commissions per actual booking is $100, take that amount from your profit.

Is $600 enough profit for this to be a successful campaign - considering all other studio costs? Maybe, maybe not? That is a decision you need to make.

If not and you need to increase profits to make the campaign viable, look at ways to increase sales, not reducing commissions which will backfire and lead to less leads, less bookings then less sales.

If your average sale can be increased to say $1000, that $100 in commissions to acquire the lead is looking much better now.

Focus on the numbers and if you have to, consult your accountant to clarify if what you are doing is indeed profitable.

Remember, be ethical and upfront with your clients and do what you feel is right for them and you’ll have a terrific platform to build a solid portrait photography business.

If you have any follow up questions, comments or would like to get in touch, you can reach me here: andrew@photobizx.com - I’d be more than happy to hear from you.
AN OUTLINE OF THE PROCESS FROM START TO FINISH

1. Brainstorm different ideas and options for marketing partners, focusing on businesses that are already serving your target demographic.

2. Order your target businesses from most attractive to least.

3. Make an appointment to meet with Number 1 on your list - the meeting should be in person but the appointment can be made via phone or in person, not email.

4. Take examples of the vouchers (download the PSD files from this book and add your logo) to the meeting with the store owner or marketing manager. Voucher examples can be on your laptop or tablet. A great way to win the manager or owner over is to already have their logo on your voucher examples.

5. Understand exactly how the voucher system works so you can explain it clearly and easily at your meeting. Remember to focus on ‘what’s in it for them’ before talking about what’s in it for you. The owner or manager will eventually ask so you don’t need to include that in your initial presentation.

6. Be clear on how your commissions will work; how much you’ll be paying per lead and how you will be delivering the commissions (shopping vouchers, fuel vouchers etc). Remember, the best outcome is for the commissions to go directly to the store
salespeople, not the store in general. Focus on the benefits to the store owner/manager on the staff earning the commissions - increased store sales, a better customer rapport, better service, up-selling to reach a target dollar value.

7. Talk about point of sale material and what they would like. Don’t be pushy here, this is still the relationship building phase and they really don’t know you yet.

8. Offer to photograph the staff for free at a portrait session with their family or kids to show what you do and how you work.

9. If business number one on your list is uninterested - start over with the 2nd business on your list.

10. If they are keen to go ahead, you’ll need their logo artwork to start working on the voucher design.

11. Design voucher and stubs.

12. Send proof to store owner/manager or drop in to show them and discuss.

13. Order voucher books from your printer.

14. Deliver books to store. If possible, set up a quick training session with the staff at the launch of your promo. This is usually best done before store opening hours. If not possible, organise time for one on one training with each sales staff member. Five minutes is usually ample for this training and can be ongoing during the promotion.
15. After one week, collect voucher stubs, remember to bring a cake, chocolate or some sweets - you want to be welcomed every time you show up and this is how to build that relationship from the start.

16. Check all stubs have a name on the back (of the sales staff member) and sort any that don’t with manager.

17. Discuss any issues with staff and/or manager - there are always some teething issues and misunderstandings in the early stages.

18. Back at your studio, log commissions to be paid using the names on the stubs.

19. Enter stub details or start calling leads to book portrait sessions (depending on the database and filing system you’ve decided on).

20. Follow the script carefully and remember your aim is to build a conversation with your prospective client. They may not remember filling out the stub, that’s normal.


22. Enter details into your calendar and/or database.

23. Follow your usual photography session sequence - pre shoot consultation, straight to shoot, excitement calls etc.

24. After another week, pick up more vouchers and keep an eye on book numbers so they stay topped.
up and always available. Ideally, one book with a spare at each checkout counter.

25. As your relationship grows and strengthens with your store, look at adding voucher reminder sticker to each cash register.

26. Always look at building your relationship with the store anyway you can. In-store promotional shoots, staff profile photos, new point of sale material, shoots for staff and their families, offer to help with vouchers during a big sale, etc.

27. A good idea is to always ask for testimonials from every client and especially those through your TPM promotion. Show these testimonials to your store manager, owner and staff. Not only will they be happy to read them, you will see an increased belief from them in the vouchers and what they are offering with each sale. You need the staff on board and helping you to have your voucher stubs completed. Make it easy for them to help you and to want to help you.

Now... It’s up to you. Take action and let’s do this.