

the PHOTool

Using the PHOTool to increase sales and income.

The PHOTool is a very robust program for helping photographers and artists maximize their online business. Composed of a suite of tools, the PHOTool offers essential online visibility and e-commerce units that work in tandem with the artist's web site.

I will take apart each component and show the value and unique opportunity that it offers,

Private Galleries.

Probably the most ubiquitous of online systems is the Proofing component. There are many online services offered in this arena. Most of the services are offered by labs and photo finishing companies as tools to capture more artists - and increase their market reach.

Many of these services were originally offered as consumer solutions. The budding digital photographer would upload their files to the lab and receive images in the mail. At the time these services were created, there was much confusion in the digital print arena - especially as it related to consumers. There was no clear media preference, and no standardization of format. Consumers didn't know how to get images from their digital cameras to prints. Companies such as Ofoto and others were originally created to meet those challenges.

When professional shooters adopted digital photography, additional players entered the field. The most prominent of those, Pictage, went after the event and wedding shooters with millions in venture capital and a model that supported both the digital and film shooter. Online proofing had really arrived and photographers wanted to get into this new world of customer service and increased sales. Pictage will post and maintain the photographers work and create the galleries for the customer to order online.. Pictage is a lab. They print the images and fulfill the orders. They take a percentage of the sale and the cost of the print, and send the balance to the photographer.

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There are many services that offer image "sharing" and some of them allow for the 'sale' of the image to visitors. Most of these services are geared to the amateur and advanced amateur, and even when there are a few 'Pro' services, they are surrounded by cutesy graphics and banners encouraging visitors to 'share your photos'. The professional photographer is also operating on another domain, even if there is a login involved.

This is not professional, and working pros need to brand their work, their site, their images and everything that is part of their operation. The PHOTool was designed specifically for professionals and working photographers who need to develop a robust and powerful web business.



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The PHOTool is different in several ways.

First and most importantly - we are not a lab. We take no commission, fees or percentage of the transaction between photographer and client. Because we are not a lab, photographers with "dry" processing abilities can now use the power of online proofing and sales and make the prints with their own equipment. With the advent of inexpensive printers with higher and higher levels of quality, it is now cost efficient to print the work yourself and make substantial profit.

However, the PHOTool also supports photographers who want to send their work to a lab. Our "Lab Module" is designed to forward very detailed orders to any lab the photographer would like to work with. The lab must be able (and willing) to take email orders and possibly shipping, but that is totally left up to the photographers and the labs they choose.

Because the orders come straight to the photographer, it is the photographer that makes the decision to print it themselves, or send to one of the defined labs that they work with. This flexibility is a hallmark of the PHOTool and is one of the reasons it is becoming so popular with commercial and event shooters everywhere.

Private galleries are defined by the photographer and are then 'applied' to the users specifically to that gallery. In the event that there is more than one gallery to be applied to a specific user, the user is then shown a menu of 'their galleries.

Users are defined by the photographer and are given usernames and passwords to the galleries that are specifically assigned to them.

An Example

Event: Wedding: Mark and Stephanie Smith
Photographer creates a username of 'mark' and a password of 'stephanie'. This 'user' is then 'assigned' to the galleries of their online proofs.

In the password protected area of the site, the photographer creates the galleries. There are several that must be created: Pre-Wedding, Wedding, Formals and Party. When the visitors to the site enter the username of mark and the

Case Study

Portrait Photographer
Santa Barbara, CA

While maintaining a portrait business in the Santa Barbara area, this photographer has increased his family and senior work by utilizing the PHOTool in a unique way.

In the summer, many families visit the area on vacations and holidays. He takes advantage of the situation by becoming the "Roving Photographer". Making up a few dozen cards on his printer, he hits the beaches looking for 'obvious' tourists and families. Introducing himself, he offers to do a family portrait for free. He will also let them know that he will come to this part of the beach the next morning so they can be ready for him and wearing nice clothes.

He also leaves his card with cell# if they need to cancel. He is averaging about 50% of the families that agree to be photographed showing up the next day.

He shoots a nice portrait, some singles and whatever they want. Spending no more than 10 - 15 minutes per family. He uses a nice fill flash, cleans up the sand and shoots them with the water behind the family. He then adds the family name to his list of logins. Bill Jones becomes bill / jones login info.

Upon return to home, the families come up to their Private Gallery and see these beautiful photographs, which are produced with 'frames' around them and the average purchase is running nearly \$800 per. He is getting nearly 80% of the families buying within 90 days.

This is a substantial part of his income now.



Case Study

Jimi G, a Photographer / Designer working in LA uses the Private Galleries as a way to show the models he shoots their proofs.

"The best thing is about it is I let the agents know the password and they all go in and make favorites and share with other agents," Jimi says. "I am getting more and more referrals cause they all think it is so cool. And since I don't live in the area, it is so easy to have the agents order the images online and I mail them out in a day or two."

Jimi G (www.jimiget.com) also uses the Public Galleries in a unique way.

"I put up lots of proofs from the shoots and let the clients know they can view them at the site. When they get there they see all of the other similar work we do and they spend quite a while seeing a lot of the images and work that I have done. I am getting more and more work from clients who got the link from a visitor who thought they should see my work."

JimiG also has a Total-Control-Site where he is hard at work creating content and keeping clients updated on what is happening at his studio.

password of stephanie they are taken straight to the appropriate menu list of galleries. They can view the thumbnails and also see the images in larger (and even larger) sizes. Visitors can also view the galleries as a slide show.

Image Variations

Visitors may now click and view the images as they would look in black and white and sepia. These variations are created in real time on the server, so there is no reason for the photographer to make these variations themselves. Visitors wanting to order the image in sepia can simply choose it in the order menu. This popular variation can increase sales ñ even of the same image.

The visitor can create 'Favorites' of the images and save them for sharing with the other visitors. They can order images and pay by check, CC or PayPal. Again ñ it is the decision of the photographer which methods of payment they wish to accept. All of the pages have customized text that is entered by the photographer to help establish the brand of the site.

(Industry Note)

Many photographers are noting a decrease in print sales in recent years. There are so many shooters now giving the images away on CD, that it has been a marketing dilemma for many shooters. Whatever you choose is of course up to you. It has to work in your business model. When that happens, many print sales are lost as the client will simply take them to Costco and get their own prints. However, when it comes to the out of town guests and extra work that can be sold, it makes little difference. Newlyweds do not make good labs. There is lots of effort that goes into making prints for family and friends as they dribble in. In that case, the PHOTool can make the ordering and delivery of those images simple and easy for the bride.

What we do: We offer the CD as a gift on the first anniversary portrait session, which is done gratis. It is in our contract. At the one-year anniversary, the couple can come in and get a complimentary photo taken. They also receive an 8x10 or 5x7 as well as the DVD of images from the wedding. After one year, we do not get very many reorders and this encourages those who want images to get them as soon after the wedding as they can. We also turn the anniversary 'free' session into nearly \$600 in print orders.



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During the wedding, we make sure that we shoot pictures of everyone. We take our time to make the images interesting and unique. We also make sure that all of our subjects get a card with the login and password on it. We print them in advance and have them at the ready when shooting. We have noticed a significant increase in print orders since we began doing this in earnest.

Public Galleries:

Few (if any) of the services that were created for the event shooters offer 'Public Galleries'. This area of the PHOTool is accessible by any one visiting the web site. It offers the photographer many additional ways to show - and sell ñ their work.

With the PHOTool, the photographer can create multiple categories of work and place unlimited galleries under each category.

Selling Art Prints

Photographers can sell their prints as fine art or wall art and make substantial profits. Simply decide what print sizes you will offer and attach a price. (More on the pricing module later.) Visitors can order and pay for the images with the PHOTool's commerce module.

Favorites

Visitors can also create 'Favorites' of the images they are considering. This 'favorites' file is saved and an email is sent to the photographer alerting them to the fact of the created 'favorite'.

This is a fantastic way to measure the popularity of your images. If certain images are being saved in many different visitors' favorites, then you know the type of images that your visitors find appealing. If you have images that are never saved in favorites or purchased, then you have valuable information on those images as well.

All of the images can have attached 'keywords' and significant descriptions. This will allow the built-in search tool find the images that are designated searchable. All images in the public galleries can be searched on keywords, but attaching the keywords is an option for photographers.

Case Study

Wedding / Portrait Photographer
Phoenix, AZ

Ron Chilston of Arizona Wedding Photographer (www.arizonaweddingphotographer.com) uses the PHOTool to increase sales and also create a 'buzz' about his work.

Ron will shoot lots of extra images at weddings: people, kids, couples - anyone who he thinks may want to buy a photograph. He gives them the login and password on a card that celebrates the couple's wedding and shoots a few frames.

Immediately after shooting a wedding Ron will edit and upload the images to his PHOTool. "I have found that the faster I get the images online, the faster I see sales from the wedding guests", Ron states emphatically. "I get sales on the first day after the wedding. It's really great."

Ron also carries his Digital SLR with him wherever he goes. He loves to shoot sunsets and has a photoblog devoted to them at (www.sunsetphotoblog.com). From that site he directs visitors to his PHOTool site and has sold images from there as well.

What is really intriguing is the way he will find subjects as he is out and about. A bicyclist in the park, a family on an outing in Sedona, people everywhere. He meets them and shoots some photos - then posts them on his PHOTool.

"I generally make a sale," he says, "and sometimes the sales are really big. One family liked the pictures I had done of their boy so much that they bought several hundred dollars worth, then hired me to do family pictures and now I am getting some referrals from them. Go PHOTool."



Case Study

Visualville (www.visualville.com)
Phoenix, AZ

Visualville is an extension of AdStock, a rights managed stock agency, in Phoenix (www.adstockphotos.com). While also creating and selling one of the best computer systems for Photoshop and photographers, Visualville is also creating a new model for digital stock photography.

"We are amazed how powerful this tool is", says Scott Condray, Visualville owner, "We will be able to run the entire stock site with it. We spent tons of dough on our AdStock site, and while we still love it, and the PHOTool site will allow us to do a lot of new work for very little added expense."

With the power enough to run a stock agency, it is certainly the tool for the individual photographer to use to create their own stock agency.

Showing More Work

While photographers show their work in tightly designed 'portfolios' the public side can be used to show many other images, in galleries, to prospective clients. For instance, a photographer may have only 6 or so still life images in their online portfolio, and show several dozen more in the public side of the PHOTool.

Stock Images.

The PHOTool has a very robust Stock Image tool built in as well. From keyword management to searchable images, there is enough power in the PHOTool for a medium sized stock agency to run their business. Visualville (www.visualville.com) will be launching their online stock agency with the PHOTool in the first quarter of next year.

For photographers, selling their own stock is one of the ways to increase bottom line and gain more recognition. As the larger agencies become mega-sized goliaths, art buyers are starting to look for smaller, boutique solutions for their stock needs. Many photographers who do not have tens of thousands of images to submit to the large agencies can create a very robust site to sell their own images.

Sales Methods

Many photographers do not have a merchant account with the ability to take credit card payments. The PHOTool has a built-in PayPal tool to allow any photographer to take credit card payments directly into their PayPal account. (Recent changes at PayPal now allows anyone to pay with CC and they do not have to have a PayPal account.)

The PHOTool also allows for pay-by-check. The customer tells you that the order will be paid by check and you can then hold the order and send it to the lab when the check arrives and clears. (The photographer personalizes all pages in the visitor process.

Collaboration: A great tool for the Commercial Photographer

Commercial art buyers can save images to their 'favorites' and then share those images with their peers or clients. They can discuss the image with the built-in collaboration tools. As with previous 'favorites', the photographer will receive an email when the favorites are created.



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This gives the photographer the ability to monitor the collaboration, even join in when appropriate.

Search Feature

Stock shooters will put their images in categories and galleries, attaching keywords and descriptions. Clients can search across categories for results. The PHOTool has no limit on images that it can hold.

The search link can be hidden until there are enough images in the database to insure results, and then it can be shown for visitors to use. The search link is an option. Some photographers will not need this feature, but it is part of the PHOTool for those who need it.

Modify Colors to Match Current Web Site

It is simple to change the colors of all the elements in the PHOTool. Use this tool to make the pages match the look and feel of your current web site. While the basic structure of the pages remain in a template, the various items that may be customized will make the pages appear seamless to the visitor.

Pricing Tools

Photographers will create a list of default price items (for instance: "5x7 Glossy on Photographic Paper / Price: \$12") for use in the galleries. These prices are 'default' and will be applied by the photographer to the galleries that are appropriate. If there is a reason to alter the default price, it can be done at the gallery level. In other words, if you want to change the 5x7 Glossy price to \$8 for a specific gallery, you can. The change will not affect the other galleries or the default price in the tool.

You can create as many price items as you want. Add novelty items, framed prints and more.

State Sales Tax

Set the sales tax that is appropriate for your area. When a client enters a shipping address in your stat, the sales tax is automatically applied. Out of state clients are not charged.

Case Study

Creating Your Own Stock Photography Site

"Search Fatigue." That's what one prominent stock shooter calls what he sees as a turn away from the larger stock agencies and toward the individual stock shooter. When going to some of these large sites for stock, there is a feeling of non-personal 'accommodation' that can be off-putting.

A photographer who manages his own stock can make more money, create their own brand and see stock searches turn into assignment work far more than if he/she were with a large, impersonal agency.

Mark A Culbertson has created his own stock site for his quirky, unusual images. He calls it "JunkStock" and is actively marketing the site online.

www.markaculbertson.com



"Voices..."

"After installing Phototool on to my server, my website became the most powerful marketing tool for my business! The fully interactive applications of the Phototool, allowed not only my clients the ease to navigate through my site and their private galleries, but gave me the total control to update and change my content at a click of a button."

- Mark Skalny, Owner/Photography Visual NatureImages, Inc

"I've made extensive use of the public galleries which allow me to show several hundred images, which again can be edited at any time from my browser. The tool allows me to market stock and display images online with the ability to handle search functions and financial transactions directly through the site. Technical support is excellent, new features are added on a regular basis, the learning curve is quite doable, the cost is affordable and well worth the added value I can now offer my clients. I have no complaints!"

- Mark Culbertson,
Mark A. Culbertson Photography

"The PHOTool is the only professional photography software that will streamline your business online while freeing you to do what you were born to do... make great images. With The PHOTool, you can then easily present your work, easily market your work and easily sell your work. (But then again, to a photographer, it's never WORK). But The PHOTool does make it easier."

- Don Stevenson
Stevenson Photography

More testimonials on our site:
www.thephototool.com

Shipping

We have set the shipping item rates at three levels. You set the price per level.

1. Up to \$75.01 - You set Price
2. \$75.01 to \$150 - You set Price
3. \$150 and over - You set Price

We are constantly looking for more solutions for shipping and the ability to add premiums and special offers. As we develop those tools they will automatically be added to your PHOTool.

Billing

There are times when photographers who may not have a Merchant Account would like to take a CC payment. (You know, when the client looks at you and says... "Well we're a little short on cash this month, can I pay you with Credit Card?" And you know they know you don't accept CC. Not anymore. Now you can smile and say "Sure" .) We have built a very simple tool to bill anyone with your PayPal account. Simply fill in the information and send the email. The client will get a simple link to your Paypal account (fee applied) and they can pay with any major credit card.

You can use this to sell anything; images, fees, used equipment, personal sales items... anything.

Order Management.

When a client orders images, you will get an email stating that the order has been placed. Logging into your PHOTool will show you the most recent orders and you can click to see the particulars of each order.

The order will show you a thumbnail of the image, what size and variation were ordered, quantity of images, comments from the client and all the pertinent shipping information.

After you view - and process - the order - you can mark it as completed. Before you mark it as completed, it will remain an "UnProcessed Order." You can keep track of your orders easily. It is also easy to sort the orders into many different groups.



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After viewing the order, you may choose to forward the order to the lab of your choice. Simply click the lab of your choice and then "Send" it. The lab will then notify you of the order being received (by email) and then they will mark it as "completed" upon shipping. The photographer is also notified when the order is marked completed by the lab.

You will be able to sort your orders many ways and to archive older orders.

Text Customization

Nearly every page of the PHOTool has the ability for the photographer to create their own text. This is vital for photographers to create a sense of style, brand and personality. It is as simple as a word processor. Change the text on any page at any time.

Web Site

The PHOTool includes a free web site for photographers who are just starting out or those wanting to have a separate web site for their online ordering system. The template is a classic style and features 4 content pages as well as links to 'Galleries' (public galleries) and 'Login' (Private Galleries). This site is similar to our Total-Control-Site, which allows for complete management of all content on the pages.

Full content management means text and images can be added, edited, deleted - in short, the photographer is in control of the pages and can alter them whenever the photographer wants. In addition to this level of control, photographers can also manage the page name and the Meta tags (keywords and key content) for each page. This is vital for search engine optimizing and ranking placement.

If a photographer is planning any kind of PPC program (Pay Per Click) like Google Ad Words or Overture, this ability is absolutely a necessity.

Hosting

It is best if the website of the photographer is hosted on the same server as the PHOTool, so we have removed the cost factor from this decision. You can host your current website at the PHOTool server for no additional cost. We do not charge for DNS switching to our servers and your current web designer(s) will have all of the necessary access to continue maintaining your site.

Features

- Unlimited Galleries
- Public Galleries
- Private Galleries
- Full Shopping Cart
- PayPal Ready-to-Go
- Multiple Payment Methods
- Full Stock Keyword Management
- Stock Image Search (Keyword)
- Managed User Permissions
- Order Management and Reports
- Order Notification (email)
- Client Created Lightboxes (favorites)
- Notification of Created / Modified Lightbox (email)
- Collaboration with Images
- Lightbox Management and Reports
- Sales Tax Management
- Shipping Fee Management
- Custom Site Colors (change on-the-fly)
- Dynamic Billing Through PayPal (fees)
- Fully Customizable Text for the Site
- Default and Custom Pricing for Images
- Image Protection
- Free Lab Module
- Lab Module Documentation
- Photographer Defined Labs
- Visitor can view and order images in color / black & white / sepia
- Images can be 'zoomed' by visitors wanting a closer look (photographer decides on/off)



Getting Started is easy.

- a. Visit the site and fill out the getting started form.
- b. call us for immediate assistance

the **PHOTO**tool
3401 E Broadway Rd
Phoenix, AZ 85004
602.276.6862 or 602.434.1765

For more information on the PHOTool and selling images online,
visit the following sites:

www.thephototool.com
www.photographicmarketing.com
www.total-control-site.com
<http://wizwow.blogspot.com>
<http://phototools.blogspot.com>

