

Creating an Unforgettable Photography Website





INTRODUCTION

We are Zenfolio. We have been powering the websites of tens of thousands of professional photographers since 2006. Photography and the business of photography is what we live and breathe, and we'd like to share our expertise with you. This book offers tips, tricks, and best practices you need to know to create a photography website that really works, whether through Zenfolio or another website provider. As you go through the process of building a new website or evaluating your existing one, use this book as a guide to help you get the most effective presence online.

For a professional, your website is an essential tool to promote your business, acquire new clients, and provide existing clients with online proofing and ordering. If you're a student or hobbyist, your website helps you present your work in the best possible way and can pave the way for turning your passion into a business.

Typically, a professional photography website includes the following essential components:

- Online Portfolio
- Client Proofing
- Shopping Cart
- Management Back End

Read more photo website and business best practices at blog.zenfolio.com/blog

Your portfolio website is like your very own online window display, artfully highlighting your work and including such elements as your blog, online scheduling, social media, price lists and client ordering. It also has a back-end component for running your business with features such as post-processing, file backup, sales and reports, and marketing – all crucial elements in any successful photography website.

Every Zenfolio Account Comes With:

- **Portfolio website** with completely customizable, professional layouts
- **Unlimited galleries** with client proofing and slideshows
- **Integrated shopping cart** to sell work directly through your website with order fulfillment by professional labs such as Mpix, MpixPro and One Vision Imaging. You can sell more than 500 products directly from your website.
- **Intuitive marketing tools** such as a blog, email, SEO, and more to promote your business



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1

Defining Your Photography Business

There are many types of photographers: wedding, landscape, and portrait just to name a few. If you have yet to determine what type of photographer you are, it is best to narrow it down to one or two genres you are passionate about. From there, you can determine what type of style you demonstrate. Having a clear idea of your genre and brand will help establish you as a professional and attract the right clients for your type of photography.

Your Style Sets You Apart

Establishing your own unique photography style will set you apart from others. It shows your personality, and it is why customers want to hire you and buy your work. Identifying your style in words is a helpful first step in determining the creative direction of your website design. Look over your portfolio and see if you can identify common aesthetics. A great place to start is by asking your family and friends to give you honest feedback. Once you have a good sense of the your style, it's time to develop a brand around it.



2

Branding Your Website

A brand identifies and distinguishes you and your business from the rest. Branding includes your business name, logo, and website address as well as all details of your style such as colors, fonts, design treatments, writing tone, etc. Your brand should be in sync with your photography style, so it is important to keep all elements of your brand present and consistent throughout everything that pertains to your photography, including marketing materials and social media pages.

Choose Your Domain Name

Your website address is an integral component of your brand. Hosting companies often let you use your name as a prefix, such as hummingbirdphotos.myhost.com. However, having your own domain, such as www.hummingbirdsphotos.com, comes across as much more professional.

Generic	www.hummingbirdphotos.myhost.com
Your Own Name	www.hummingbirdphotos.com

In addition to setting up and managing domain names, domain registration companies may also provide services and email. Here are a few popular registrars:

iwantmyname

I Want My Name
iwantmyname.com

YAHOO!

Yahoo Small Business
www.smallbusiness.yahoo.com

1&1

1&1
www.1and1.com/domain-name

network solutions

Network Solutions
www.networksolutions.com

register.com®

Register.com
www.register.com

Once your domain name is registered, you can point it to your homepage, which can be hosted with another company.

Create Your Logo

Your logo is a visual representation of your brand. If designed well, your logo can increase your business' recognition and help you develop repeat customers.

A successful logo has a carefully thought-out graphic and color scheme, a skillful use of typography, and is professionally executed. While you may have the software tools to create a logo, and there are several websites that build simple logos for you, carefully consider whether you're the right person for the job. If photography is your forte but design is not, invest in a good designer or design program to get the logo you want.

Your logo should be clearly displayed on all your web pages, marketing materials, and if you choose, as a watermark on your photos. Having your logo as a watermark is a great opportunity to further promote your brand and keep your photos protected. Some photographers include their website URL in their watermark to increase the chances of a return visit from a viewer. And remember, making the watermark visible but not overpowering is important so it doesn't take away from the photo itself.

It's Easy with Zenfolio

It's easy to brand your website with Zenfolio. Easily upload your logo in several sizes, and it will appear throughout your website for consistent branding. You can also upload your logo or any other watermark as a PNG image with transparency and apply it as a default to all your uploaded photos, as well as show the watermark on the images you export to social networks.

Key Things to Remember:

- Your logo should be clearly visible on your homepage so visitors know who owns the website.
- Save your logo as a PNG file with transparency (or alpha channel), which allows it to be displayed nicely over different backgrounds.
- Use your logo prominently on your homepage and as a header for your other website pages, or even as a watermark over your images for branding and photo protection.

Get Inspired

Typographic Logo Examples:

ANNE MCFALL
PHOTOGRAPHY

Taylor Reese Keller photo

Symbol Logo Examples:



3

Determining Your Site's Look & Feel

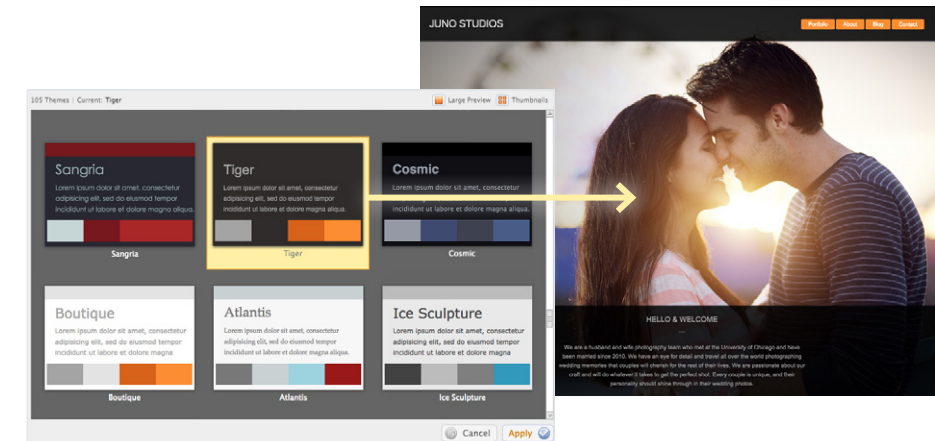
Your professional website should represent your best work and act as a beautiful showcase for your photography. The design, colors, typography and any graphical elements should complement your photographic style and specialty. Most photography web hosting services will have a selection of design themes and templates that will be a good start to find the best match for your photography style.

Theme

Website themes are comprised of coordinating colors, backgrounds, and design elements that have been carefully selected to work together for a professional presentation of your photos. Some themes are simple and minimal and can be appropriate for most types of photography. Others are decorative and stylized and are great for giving your website a bit more personality.

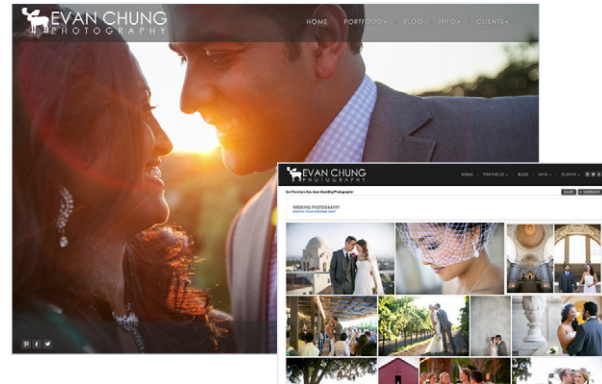
When potential clients visit your site, they don't just look for quality photography; they are looking for a style and personality match, so your website needs to strike a chord with them.

For an in-depth look at how to customize your website, read our ZenBlog article at www.ow.ly/FDmVm.



Get Inspired

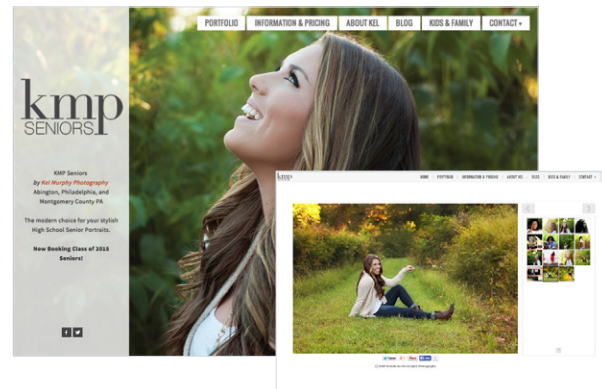
If you feel stuck or could use some creative inspiration, check out these great examples:



Evan Chung

www.evanchungphoto.com

This wedding photographer showcases his photos with a stunning full-screen homepage slideshow and dynamic grid layout for an elegant presentation.



KMP Seniors

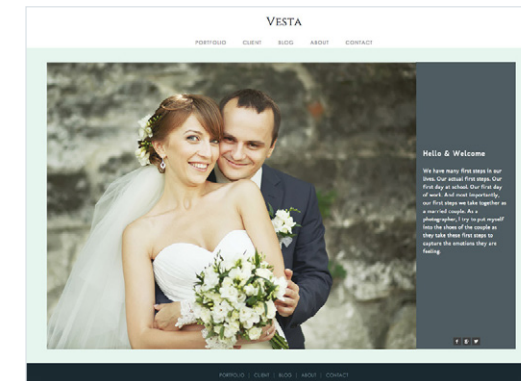
www.kmpsensors.com

This senior portrait photographer selected one of the many Zenfolio professional design presets, Concordia, to complement her photography style.

If you still feel stuck, feel free to contact support@zenfolio.com for a list of great sites created with Zenfolio tools.

Color Palette

Color can set a tone, stir up emotion and change the mood. Your color choices for your website should complement your photography. Pick a palette of three to four distinct colors and use these colors (or shades of them) consistently throughout your site. Also, legibility is important. Does your text color have enough contrast with your background? Can your visitors clearly distinguish links from text? Have you tried looking at your website on a variety of monitors? If your visitors cannot legibly read your text, they will quickly leave.



Choosing Your Colors

Select a color family that complements your brand. This example highlights elegant, simple colors appropriate for a wedding photographer.

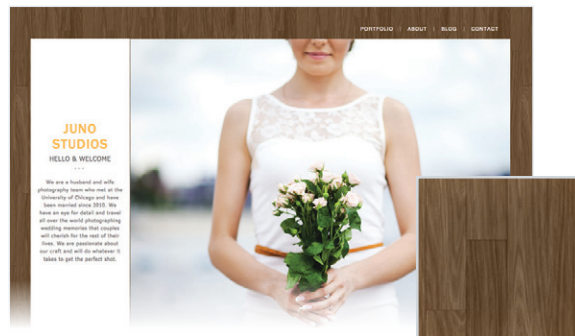


It's Easy with Zenfolio

Every Zenfolio account comes with a selection of themes and templates that you can apply to your website pages. And with the Zenfolio Theme Designer, you can automatically generate a color palette, change colors, upload background images and other decorations, adjust fonts and sizes, and much more. You can browse through the wide selection of professionally designed website presets that will transform your entire site in a single click.

Using Background Graphics and Decorations

Have some fun and show your personality by applying custom background graphics and decorations strategically through your website. Using a custom background image, pattern or texture can give your website new life, but remember that in general, less is more.



Customize Your Background

Show off your personality by applying a custom background. This photographer opted for a rustic theme with a wood plank background.

Content First, Layout Second

When creating your website, start with content first, layout second. Assign each element to its appropriate main page and subpage. Doing this will help you determine the flow of your site as well as what else you need to do, such as selecting and categorizing photos and videos to feature, writing your text and more. When designing the layout, make sure it is easy to navigate so site visitors will have a pleasant experience.

It's Easy with Zenfolio

With Zenfolio you can easily design a consistent site menu with drop-down selections. Link menu items to your galleries, external web pages or PDF documents. The menu will consistently appear on your site to ensure the easiest possible navigation for your visitors. And with 600+ Google fonts to choose from, you can make your website your own.

Typography

Typefaces come in many different styles, each one with its own personality. Typefaces are classified as either:

- **serif** – Serifs are the little feet at the ends of the letterforms. *Examples: Times or Georgia*
- **sans serif** – Without the serif. *Examples: Arial, Lucida, or Tahoma.*

Choose fonts for your website that are easy to read. And just like colors, fonts can look different across various computers and mobile devices, so remember to check your website on a variety of devices to make sure it looks and functions as you intended.

When to Hire a Designer

We're not all designers, nor is every person tech savvy. The design is crucial to attracting clients, and with the large number of sites competing with yours, you often have just one chance to win over a potential customer. A professional designer can help you deliver a lasting impression by putting together key elements of your design—branding, layout, and color—resulting in a winning combination.

Typography Tips

- Pick one or two fonts and use them consistently throughout your pages; any more fonts and it can start to look messy. Deciding on one font for headers and another for the main text will make your site consistent and easy to read.
- Larger font sizes with ample line spacing are easiest to read.
- Limit each line of text to 50-60 characters. Keeping the line length short allows for a quick and easy read.
- Headers should clearly stand out from the paragraphs so visitors can quickly scan your content and find the section they are interested in.
- Text color should have good contrast with the background color to be easily readable on all displays under varying lighting conditions.
- The color for links should be different than the text so that your visitors can clearly identify the links.

4

Creating Your Homepage

Your homepage is the first thing visitors see, and it's your best opportunity to create a great impression. People will decide within seconds whether to stay on your site based on the design and quality of your work, so make your homepage the best representation of your brand, whether this is a blog as your homepage, slideshow, video, or whatever best defines you and your brand.

Showcase Your Best Images

Your homepage should include a selection of your best photos. You may have a large collection of images you want to showcase, but limiting your selection to the strongest pieces is more effective. Too many images in your portfolio can increase load times and provide the viewer with too many options. If you limit your selection to a curated sample of your best work, the viewer will get a better sense of your style and what you're capable of. People generally spend just a few seconds on a web page; so if your best work isn't front and center you can bet they won't go looking for it.

Your portfolio-viewing experience should be pleasing for all visitors.

Layout ideas include:

- Full-screen
- Widescreen
- Photo grid
- Blog style homepage
- Three column
- Slideshow

Think about sequencing your portfolio images in a strategic order. If you place your best images at the beginning and the end of the portfolio, you'll make a stronger impression. Grab their attention right from the beginning and leave them with something to remember at the end.

It's Easy with Zenfolio

Easily put together a professional slideshow with music and transitions to include on your homepage. Zenfolio accounts come with 50 free soundtracks from Triple Scoop Music for use in your slideshows.

- ☑ Make the labels for navigation straightforward.
- ☑ Use menu titles to clearly describe linked content.
- ☑ Limit the number of top-level menu items to no more than six.
- ☑ Make menu titles and ordering consistent on all pages.
- ☑ Link all menu items to corresponding web pages.
- ☑ Have the menu location consistent on all pages, either at the top, left or right hand side.
- ☑ Use a large enough font size and a contrasting background color so your text is easy to read.
- ☑ Always provide an easy way to get back to the homepage.

Tagline or Welcome Message

Once a visitor sees who owns the website, they'll want to know what kind of photography you do. This is where the About portion comes in. The tagline can be a part of your logo, or you can write a longer description of the photography services that you provide. The first thing to mention is what type of photographer you are. Are you a wedding photographer? A landscape photographer? Are you a freelancer or do you work for a studio? Are you looking for commissioned work? Search engines use the text that appears on your homepage to index and categorize your website. It's worth spending time to craft the perfect message that will speak to your visitors and help make your site discoverable.



Menu Navigation

Your menu navigation is the main tool viewers use to find and view your pages, such as: About, Contact, Blog, etc. Keep your wording short so that you have flexibility in the placement of the menu navigation on your pages. Try to keep your menu items limited for a cleaner design, and put any subpages in a drop-down menu.



Contact Information

Getting in touch with you should be easy. Be sure to include your contact information on your site, with a phone number, email address, links to social media pages, and a mailing address if you wish. This can be on a dedicated contact page, or in the header or footer area of every page.

Call to Action

What do you want to get out of your website? Do you want to be hired? Attract more visitors? Sell prints? The homepage should have a call to action, or a next step. Put a call-to-action link in the menu or create a clickable button on one or all of your pages that stands out from the rest of the page.

BUY PRINTS

Request a Quote

It's Easy with Zenfolio

Zenfolio allows you to quickly design your navigation menu with drop-downs, and link menu items to site or external pages and to your galleries. Then, you can customize the look and feel of the menu by changing colors and fonts.

5

Organizing Photo Galleries

One of the biggest challenges facing photographers is setting up well-organized photo galleries. The goal is to have categories that are easy to understand and make it easy for your visitors to find the images they are looking for. You can accomplish this by providing multiple ways to navigate your library of photos.

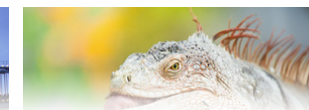
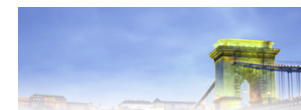
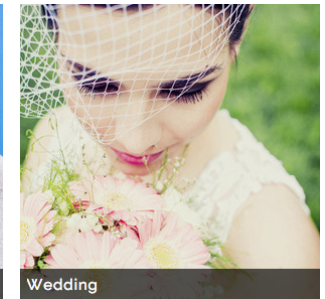
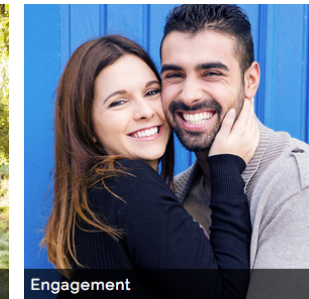
It's Time to Get Organized

The simplest way to get organized is to put your photos into categories, such as

- By date
- By topic
- By category
- By location
- By event

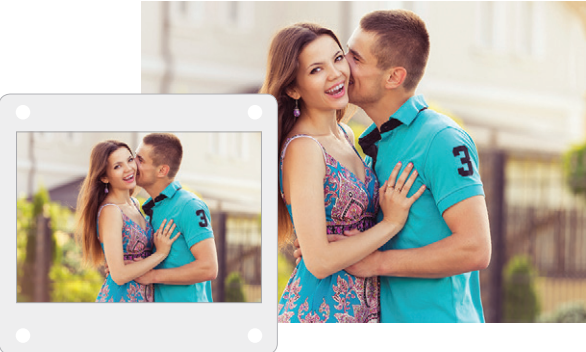
Select the method that works best for you. As a wedding photographer, for example, it might be easiest to organize your photos by event. As a nature photographer, the best solution might be to present work by location.

Home > Portfolio



Descriptions

Every photo and gallery should have a description, including: title, caption, category, and relevant keywords, which makes it easier for viewers to search on your site. This also helps with SEO, so search engines can easily find you.



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Label Your Photos

Provide names and keywords so clients can easily find their photos.

Search

Include a search field on every page of your website, making it easy for your visitors to explore your digital images library simply by typing a keyword, a location, or a last name. For multi-subject shoots, having a separate mini site is great, so clients can easily find what they're looking for.

Search for:

wedding

SEARCH

Client Access

Providing each client with an access code is a great way to protect your photos. When clients type their access code they will be taken directly to their gallery, without the need to search by name or browse through your entire archive. You can also store and sell the Raw files from shoots and have clients access these files with their code.

A photograph of a young child with blonde hair sitting inside a blue suitcase.

Enter your access code to view your gallery.

Please enter your gallery ID

GO

Locked with password

Password

Keep Photos Private

Use client access for shoots not meant to be seen by the public. Provide the access code to the client so only they can view their personal photo gallery.

It's Easy with Zenfolio

When you upload your photos to your Zenfolio account, titles, descriptions, and keywords are automatically imported. You can edit them individually or as a batch.

Your Zenfolio account comes with a Client Access page. Use it on your Zenfolio website, or link to it from an external website. It will prompt your clients for a code and take them directly to the appropriate gallery, so they don't need to spend time searching for it.

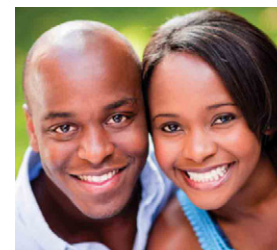
6

Presenting Photo Galleries

Photographers put an enormous amount of effort into getting that perfect shot lined up, spend endless hours retouching, and make a significant investment researching and buying the right equipment. So, it's important to present all that hard work in the best way possible. Your photos will look much better if your presentation is clean, modern and uncluttered. Think of it as an art gallery—a clean, uncluttered wall is what makes the photos stand out.

Preparing Your Photos

The online presentation of your photos deserves the same careful attention that was put into taking them. Your photos should be sharp, true in color, and displayed as large as possible so that they take center stage. Quick loading speed and simple navigation are also very important factors for delivering a delightful viewing experience.



This low-resolution, non-calibrated photo presents a fuzzy and non-impressive image.



That same photo really shines when it is displayed in high resolution and color calibrated.

It's Easy with Zenfolio

Zenfolio delivers the best possible presentation of photos online. Your uploaded originals are automatically resized and scaled for optimal display on any device, including mobile. The photos utilize all available screen space on clean, professional layouts with rapid loading and simple keyboard navigation.

Presentation Checklist

- ☑ Show large images that fill the browser window but can also be resized to fit on smaller screens, such as tablets and mobile devices.
- ☑ Do not compress your photos too much. While strong compression reduces file sizes and allows faster uploading, it often results in serious degradation of image quality.
- ☑ For the best presentation of your photos, use JPEG format. It is supported by all web browsers and supports color profiles, plus the file size is much smaller than when using TIFF format, resulting in much higher quality.
- ☑ Calibrate your monitor to soft proof your photos before uploading to the web to achieve the best color reproduction across most devices.
- ☑ Protect your photos with watermarks to prevent unauthorized usage of your images.

7

Integrating Mobile Devices

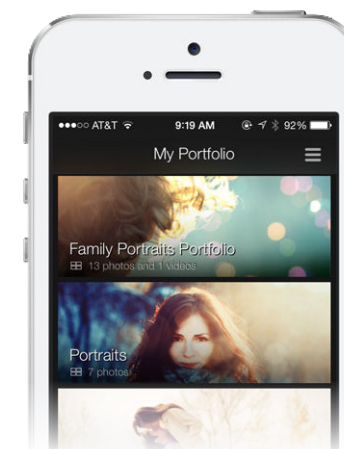
In today's on-the-go world, having a mobile phone- and tablet-friendly website is a must. If you want to show off your work while meeting with potential new clients, you'll need a website that looks just as good on a mobile device as it does on your desktop. And because a large majority of online browsing is done on mobile devices, your mobile site should also be just as user-friendly as the laptop or desktop version.

Managing Your Website on the Go

To optimize your mobile website, make sure your provider offers an app designed to manage your photos, easily make changes, and share to social media while on the go. Look for an app that supports your mobile device, whether it's Android, Apple, or BlackBerry; allows you to organize your galleries, add captions, and upload new photos; supports in-person proofing with the ability to select favorites; and has the ability to share photos via email or social media.

Mobile & Tablet Considerations

- The layout is automatically optimized for screens of all sizes.
- Pages support touch navigation and common gestures like swiping for browsing and pinching for zooming.
- Images load quickly and scale dynamically for a variety of screen sizes.
- Slideshows and videos can play without Flash.
- It offers the same access controls to protect your work.
- Tablets are better suited for in-person proofing.



It's Easy with Zenfolio

Zenfolio offers a free app applicable to Apple, Android and BlackBerry, where you can show off your photos at a moment's notice to family, friends and clients. Conduct in-person proofing where clients can select favorites and purchase right then and there.

8

Building Your Web Pages

There's much more to a successful photography website than showing off beautiful images. When your visitors want to learn more, you'll need to provide them with easy access to more information about you. Details about your background, awards and accolades, pricing and packages, schedule availability, and general information should be easy to find, read and understand. These pages also act as an advertisement for your brand and can help your customers better identify with you.

About Page

This page is all about you, so let people see the face behind the camera. Share your background, where you came from, how many years you've been in the business, etc. You should answer the question "Why would people want to work with me?" both personally and professionally.

Write in first person and attach a headshot or photo of yourself in a casual setting, such as posing with your camera or pet, to show off your unique personality. Make yourself look not only hireable but someone who is fun to work with.

Talking Points

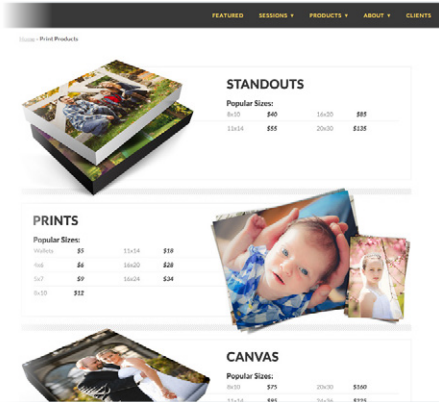
- The creative vision you bring to your photography
- Any relevant, personal information that makes you unique
- Where you live and work
- Years of experience
- Education, work experience and expertise
- Awards, accomplishments, and professional recognitions
- Contact information and a link to your blog and social media pages such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Twitter, Instagram, etc.

It's Easy with Zenfolio

Zenfolio allows you to create as many Custom Pages as you would like and link to them from the main menu or drop-down menu. You can also embed buttons, banners, photos, slideshows and videos, and have the ability to upload PDF documents. Each page gets its own URL, and you can edit the title and Meta description fields for better SEO indexing.

Testimonials

Having a dedicated page for customer testimonials can tremendously increase your photographic and professional credibility. In an age where it's standard to check online reviews before purchasing, having an area for customer reviews is pretty much standard. It also allows your customers to interact with and be a part of your website. Be sure to regulate who is allowed to comment, as well as monitor comments before publishing to weed out spam.



Custom Pages

To further enhance running your business online, consider adding Custom Pages to your site. We suggest adding pages for price lists, booking instructions, an online interactive calendar, client proofing, and tear sheets for customers to download and print. You could even create video pages with your own tutorials or live shoots.

Pricing Page

If you are working in consumer photography, such as weddings or portraits, having a pricing page is essential.

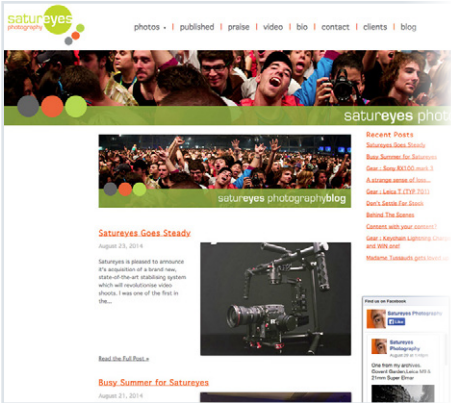
Keep it simple and straightforward: Include your price range or starting price. This will provide instant gratification and remove any sales pressure for visitors. If you have been in the business for some time, you will know the minimum price.

Blog

Having a blog on your website is a fantastic way to advertise, show off your personality, and keep visitors in the loop about what's going on in your professional life.

Why you should have a blog:

- You can show your expertise by writing educational tips and tricks on shooting, posing techniques, etc.
- It builds a following of visitors who might become clients.
- It provides instant gratification, for instance posting one or two images from a shoot you did that day as a sneak peek.
- It gives you free publicity through search engine results.
- It will bring more web traffic to your website.
- It makes your website more lively and friendly.
- It shows your style and personality.



It's Easy with Zenfolio

Every Zenfolio account comes with an integrated blog where you can share photos, videos and slideshows to easily display your work. Visitors can subscribe to your blog via RSS feed so they will never miss a post. If you already have a blog elsewhere, you can easily migrate it to Zenfolio with free migration tools.

9

Incorporating a Shopping Cart

Many photographers only use their website to display and share their work. But if you want to turn your passion into a career, you will need to create an online store. An online store that allows visitors to make purchases should be a fully integrated part of your site. The second your visitors have an impulse to own an image, a Buy or Purchase button should be just a click away. The easier it is to buy, the more you will sell. Make your shopping cart and checkout process seamless and easy for your customers to use.

Tips for Setting up Shop

- Implement an online proofing process to help clients review and select photos.
- Feature a customizable product list, outlining what is for sale with categorization, descriptions, and prices.
- Have a secure and seamless checkout process with the ability to accept all major credit cards and PayPal.
- Capture shipping information, issue refunds, and keep a detailed record of every transaction.
- Be communicative with your customers. If there is an issue, you should be easy to get in touch with.

Online Store Must Haves

- Collect sales tax or VAT, which may be required by your local tax authority.
- Provide detailed reports that you can use for record keeping, sales analysis, and exporting your transactions to accounting software.
- Facilitate client communications and support throughout the entire shopping experience.

It's Easy with Zenfolio

Zenfolio partners with the best labs, including Mpix, MpixPro, One Vision Imaging, Nulab and NuShots. Each lab was hand-selected for the best quality and timely delivery. All you have to do is choose which products you want to sell and Zenfolio handles the rest: taking orders, forwarding them to labs for fulfillment, handling the payment processing, and having customer support available every day.

Order Fulfillment

You can have orders fulfilled by a professional lab, or fulfill them yourself. Another option is to offer digital downloads, which is becoming more and more popular with clients. Self-fulfillment gives you much more control; however, it is time-consuming with a high volume of clients. So make sure you do have the option for your website provider to handle orders for you if that is something you do not want to deal with.

Order Approval

In order to deliver an exceptional customer experience, it is best to review every order before it is sent to the lab. For example, poor cropping choices made by customers is a frequent reason for reprints, and a simple typo in the address form can result in delayed orders. Having an order approval process through your website provider will help avoid these mishaps.

It's Easy With Zenfolio

Zenfolio partners with the best labs in the industry. You can choose to sell products directly through these vendors, or if you choose to fulfill your own orders, you can alleviate the payment process by getting a merchant account. Using Authorize.net or PayPal Payments Pro, you can collect payments without customers ever having to leave your site.



Client Proofing and Favorites Selection

The client proofing process starts with a professional presentation of photographs online. When customers like what they see, they buy more. Oftentimes, a buying decision involves several people looking through photos together and then deciding which ones they want to order. This can be done with client access and email invitations. Client access involves a password-protected gallery that can be shared with a password. Email invitations involve a similar experience but are a bit more elegant.

Managing Your Online Store

Your online store should allow you to put together price lists and assign them to galleries. Most likely, you will need more than one price list, and in some cases, you may even need to provide prices in more than one currency. Managing long price lists with many paper types, color options, framing and mounting can get cumbersome, so look for a system with modern and powerful tools such as batch price editing,

Zenfolio Selling Accounts Come With:

- An integrated shopping cart
- Price lists
- Vendor products
- Ability to sell packages
- Client communication: email and social media
- VAT
- Global selling capability
- Self-fulfilled products
- Coupons and gift certificates
- Sales reports and account statements
- Pending order approval
- Digital products
- Event mini sites

To view each plan in detail, visit the pricing page tab at zenfolio.com.

10

Marketing Yourself

Once you have set up your online store, you need to let people know it exists. The solution? Creating a carefully thought-out marketing strategy. Turn visitors into loyal customers with common marketing tools such as: offering promotions, product packages, expiring galleries, gift certificates, coupons, email and social media marketing.

Discounts

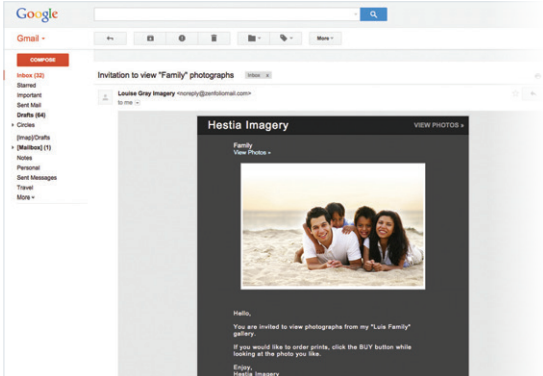
Who doesn't love a good deal? People respond well to value-based offers. There are many tools to utilize this: coupons, gift certificates and promotions are much more likely to get customers to buy. In addition to being the simplest discount, coupons can mark items down by a specified percentage, have an expiration date, or be limited to a certain product category or a gallery. You can also offer a print credit bundled together with a session fee by giving your clients a gift certificate to spend on your website. Turn buyers into return customers by offering client accounts, where they can have their payment and contact information saved on-file so checkout is that much easier.

Product Packages

Bundling products into packages is common practice in the photography business and is a great way to help overwhelmed customers. By offering packages, you give a handful of options to choose from, usually three or four. Bundling items together for a discount makes them purchase more because they feel they are saving money. Make sure your online store supports packages, which includes pricing them and giving your clients simple drag-and-drop package configuration.

Email Marketing

Your website and online store can help you grow a list of clients that you turn into repeat buyers and can be an excellent source of referrals, if marketed correctly. The key is having ongoing communication with your clients to maximize your profits, and email is one of easiest ways to do this.



Basic Email Marketing Requirements

- Ability to capture customer email addresses, which can be done with a visitor sign-in, so newcomers are prompted to fill out contact information prior to accessing your site or certain galleries
- Capability to schedule periodic email campaigns to your client list with promotions, specials, news, and more
- Customer lists separated by events or galleries
- A record of clients' activities and analytics of marketing efforts

There are many robust customer relationship management and e-mail marketing systems available online, such as MailChimp, iContact, Constant Contact, Bronto Software, and others. You should be able to export your list of customer emails into these systems if you have high-volume customers and need to streamline your contacts and keep track of your email campaigns.

Expiring Galleries

Most orders are placed within a short period of time after the photos have been taken, so adding some time pressure can be a strong driver of sales. Photographers can use time pressure by limiting the amount of time an online gallery is available for ordering and following up with a notification email to clients, possibly with a special offer. Setting an expiration date will get clients to act faster, and if a client does want to purchase after the expiration date, opening it back up for purchase is easily done with a few clicks and can be used to drive additional revenue around the holidays.

Social Media Marketing

What's the cheapest and easiest way to promote yourself? Social media. Social media platforms allow photographers to authentically and emotionally connect to a worldwide audience. Twitter, Facebook, Google+, LinkedIn, YouTube, Instagram and Pinterest all connect photographers with their target audience. Your website should support this growing trend by making it easy to engage your customers right from the photo viewing experience.



- Give your clients the ability to share photos on Facebook, Pinterest, Google+, Twitter or Instagram, making your name spread virally through clients' social circles.
- Link your website with your business pages on your various social media channels, which will bring more visitors to your website.
- Keep your audience engaged by publishing your best photos, upcoming project announcements, posting polls and even notes (much like posting a story in a personal blog).
- Add fans to your business page by displaying the Like, Follow, or +1 button on your homepage.

11

Protecting Your Work

Online portfolios are now even more important than in-person galleries when clients are first discovering a new photographer. But this online exposure comes with certain risks, and you should take the security of your photos very seriously. If your photos aren't protected, anyone can save your photos and use the images for their own purposes without your permission or payment. That's why it is extremely important to protect your images so you won't have to worry about photo theft, keeping your photos and brand safe.

Watermark Your Photos

One of the best ways to protect your work is by adding a watermark on each photo you post online. A watermark is a faint image or logo that is superimposed on top of your photo and shows that you are the creator and owner of that image. In other words, you are telling the world, "this is my brand and you cannot steal it." You can create your own watermark using graphics software, such as Adobe Photoshop, or hire a designer. Watermarks are shown in different percentages of transparency over the photo located at the top, middle or bottom of the image.



Protect Your Work

You want to show ownership with your watermark, but don't overpower the beauty of your photos.

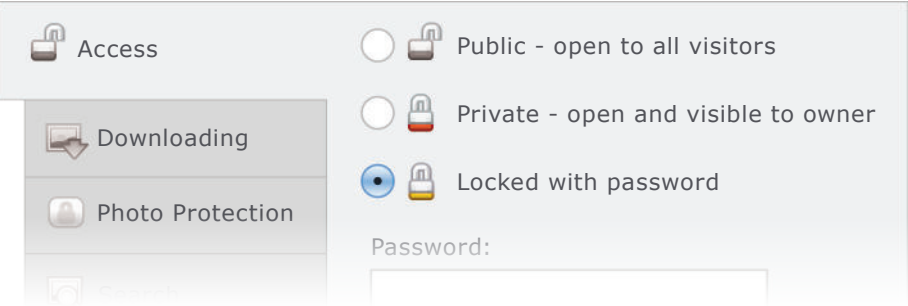
Copyright Your Photos

From the minute you shoot a photo, it's your work. You own the copyright, giving you full legal rights to publish, license or sell that image, whether for commercial purposes or for a private client. For your own legal protection, you should present and copyright your work properly, register your work, and know your rights. When writing your copyright notice, include the copyright symbol [c], the year of your photo's publication, and your business name.

Register your photos with the U.S. Copyright Office. This is particularly important in case you find out that your work has been stolen or infringed and you need to pursue legal action in court. You can learn more about your rights and how to register your work at <http://www.copyright.gov>.

Control Access to Specific Photos

You may have client photos that you want to keep private, such as wedding, maternity, children's portraits or boudoir. Features like password protection, restricting the access to original files, and making your images completely private are a must for a secure website.



Password Tips

When creating the password for client access, make sure people cannot easily guess it. Combining numbers and characters is a great way to keep unwanted visitors out. There is usually a hint given underneath the password field, so make sure the password isn't so obvious that anyone can get in.

Secure Storage

If you're shooting or recording regularly, it's likely you're accumulating many gigabytes of photographs and videos a month. You need a solid backup strategy to be able to store your files in case a disaster strikes. Your web hosting service can be part of this by allowing you to store your original Raw files online and download them back to your computer if needed.



Back Up Your Work

It's important to choose one or two methods of backing up such as a cloud storage system or online storage in case photos are damaged or deleted.

It's Easy with Zenfolio

Zenfolio has powerful access control features that allow you to fine-tune the security of your galleries down to the individual photo level. You can make your albums public, private, protected with a password, or open only to a list of clients. You can restrict access to original files, as well as limit the largest size that can be displayed on the screen. All of your photos and files are stored in geo-distributed data centers, so you can rest assured knowing you have a backup of full-size original photos and files available for download any time.

12

Writing Your Website Text

The text on your website is equally as important as the design. Your content should communicate your branding message, speak directly to your target audience, be professional with proper grammar and spelling, and be well crafted with keywords for search engine optimization. If writing is not your strong suit, consider enlisting the help of a friend or colleague with great writing skills or hiring a professional writer.

Find Your Tone

How do you want to be perceived by your potential customers? Communicating your message with the right tone will give your audience confidence that you are sincere and passionate about your photography business, giving an overall boost to your branding message.

If you sell or license your photos to businesses, you might have a more straightforward, to-the-point approach. For wedding, portrait or pet photography, your tone might be more friendly and personable. Think about how you would talk to a potential customer in person and then translate that into your writing. Once you decide on the right tone, be consistent in all of the writing throughout your website.

What tone describes your business?

- Formal and serious
- Professional and to the point
- Quirky and fun
- Warm and passionate
- Humorous and witty
- Laid back and conversational

Keep Your Text Short

When people visit a website, browsing through pages is usually a quick process. Make them stay a while by grabbing their attention with your short, succinct writing. Make your communications professional by leaving out any “fluff” sentences that don’t add information or value, unless it’s on the About page.

Make Your Text Easy to Scan

Most people tend to scan web text rather than read every single word. When you have a lot of content, such as booking instructions or pricelists, present your text in digestible chunks. Use bold fonts to emphasize important points or keywords, headers, subheads and lists where appropriate.

Are You Global?

If you plan on selling your prints and products outside of your home country (if you do destination weddings, for example), make sure you are able to localize the language and currency on your site to suit your clientele. You'll want to choose a print vendor that can ship worldwide.

If you want to adapt your site for multiple locales, you will most likely want to have multiple websites (for example, mystudio.fr vs. mystudio.de) and then tailor the content on each to the country you are targeting.

It's also important to understand the cultural meanings of color and its symbolism before designing your site. If you photograph destination weddings, for example, you are targeting an international audience that spans multiple cultures. While white is the traditional color of bridal dresses in Western cultures, it is the color that people wear when in mourning in many Eastern cultures. When designing your website make sure you're not unintentionally putting off prospective clients.

Here is a good resource to learn more about cultural meanings of color and its symbolism: www.empower-yourself-with-color-psychology.com/cultural-color.html.

Grammar, Spelling and Proofreading

Your writing should be as flawless as your photography. It is a good idea to first write your text in a word processing program to catch any obvious errors. Enlist the help of your family and friends to review your website and make sure it gets proofread. A fresh pair of eyes can catch mistakes as well as offer suggestions.

How to Write About Yourself

Most of the time, people love to talk about themselves. Take advantage of this when crafting your About page. Many photographers let their personalities shine on this page, some even providing fun photos and videos that show off their personality. Think of it like a dating profile: what makes you likeable and unique where people will want to work with you? Aside from mentioning your accolades and accomplishments, highlight what makes you, you. Your favorite hobby, your weird habit, your love for animals, and more. If you're still having trouble, ask a close friend to write about you.

Proofreading Checklist

- ☒ Use a consistent writing style
- ☒ Consistent capitalization
- ☒ Working links and forms
- ☒ Proper functionality in common browsers, such as Firefox, Safari, Chrome and Internet Explorer
- ☒ Check for grammatical and spelling errors
- ☒ Make sure all proper names and places are accurate and spelled correctly
- ☒ Double-check that your contact information is correct

13

Using Video

Video is particularly useful for photographers, because their clients make purchases based on emotion. Including video in your presentation enriches your client's experience and may engage them more than still images alone. There are many ways for photographers to use this medium to their advantage, such as an 'about me' video or behind-the-scenes footage at a photo shoot.

Connect with Your Clients

Using video can help you develop an instant bond with potential clients. With video, you can give a short introduction to your photography, tell a story, or show how you interact with clients on your About page. The goal is to highlight the sides of your personality that are impossible to showcase with photography or text.

Photo Fusion

Combining photo and video coverage of events is known as photo fusion. It is meant to enhance and augment still imagery, not to replace professional videography. This can be a nice add-on to a client package.

Using Video to Educate

You can use video to educate your clients by showing them what to expect when working with you. You can go through the ordering process with clients, for example.

It's Easy with Zenfolio

In addition to selling photos, you also have the option to sell video, which has become increasingly popular as of late. Engagement, wedding and event videography is especially popular, which means more revenue for you.

Video Ideas

- A personal introduction of who you are for your homepage
- Exclusive behind-the-scenes footage from a shoot or from your studio
- Sound bites from happy clients to go on your testimonials page
- Slideshows to show off your portfolio from your best photo shoots
- Highlight reels from client shoots that can be easily downloaded and shared on social media
- A personal message, story or bio on your About page
- Slideshows from Animoto or ProShow Web to sell as part of your services

14

Improving SEO

Unless a reference, friend or family member shares your URL, most visitors will not have direct access to your website. That's why it is crucial to provide relevant keywords and register your site with popular search engines so your website will pop up when potential clients search for a photographer. If your website does not come up on top of the search results, you are missing out on potential clients.

Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

On a typical website, there are two sections: public and private. The private section should be hidden from search engines and only be accessible by clients. The public section should focus on SEO: keywords, making sure they show up on pages, tagged images, etc. Search engines are constantly optimizing their algorithms to better understand the content of pages to provide better search results, but there is a limit to how well search engines can operate if you don't use SEO, the proactive practice of optimizing a website for increased traffic from search engines. The optimization includes internal factors, such as website content and its positioning, as well as external ones, such as the number of sites linking to the website.

Google and Bing are the two major search engines. To avoid being cheated by spammers, search engines are not very forthcoming about how they determine relevance, and that's why they constantly tweak their search algorithms to make sure "spammy" pages do not overtake search results.

Search Engine-Friendly Websites

Search engine-friendly sites are easy to use and navigate. They provide actionable information and are accessible on current browsers.

Tips on Making Your Site Search Engine-Friendly:

- Write pages for users, not for search engines. Also, don't present different content to search engines than to users.
- Make sure that your website has a clear, logical hierarchy and text links.
- Write copy that clearly and accurately describes your content.
- Include keywords that visitors might use to find the information on your site, such as "photographer," "wedding," "portrait," etc.

HTML format allows the content of your website to be indexed. Images, Flash and Java applets are invisible to search engines. A beautifully designed Flash website will look like a blank page and will not be indexed or ranked.

Search engines will never find pages that cannot be accessed by following links from your homepage. Be sure to link together all the pages of your website.

Carefully craft the text on your pages with keywords that describe your website content. Search engines know which pages to retrieve based on the words entered into the search box. Their interpretation of the text used on your site helps determine its relevance. One of the best ways to optimize rankings is to ensure that keywords are prominently used in titles, text, and metadata.

It's Easy with Zenfolio

In every Zenfolio account, SEO fields are clearly marked with a green SEO icon so that you will not miss completing this important information.

Using Keywords

Keywords are just one of the parameters used by search engines to determine the relevance of the page to a search query, and they also describe photos such as place, name, time, and event, and you can add any number of keywords including keyword phrases and separate them by commas. There are specific recommendations on how to optimize the placement of keywords.

Keywords Placement

- As close as possible to the beginning of the title tag of your page
- In the body of your page at least three times
- In bold, at least three times, for your most important keywords
- In titles and descriptions of images
- In the link (URL) at least once

Know Which Keywords to Use

Online tools, such as Google AdWords, can help you discover and fine-tune the keywords that will work for you. The primary purpose of AdWords is for advertising on the Google network by bidding on keywords or phrases. However, the Keyword Planner tool under Google AdWords can also be used to research keywords. There are numerous online guides and videos available to help you learn how to get the most from Keyword Planner. Learn how to use it and you will develop a much better understanding of which keywords will increase the exposure of your website.

Using Title Tag

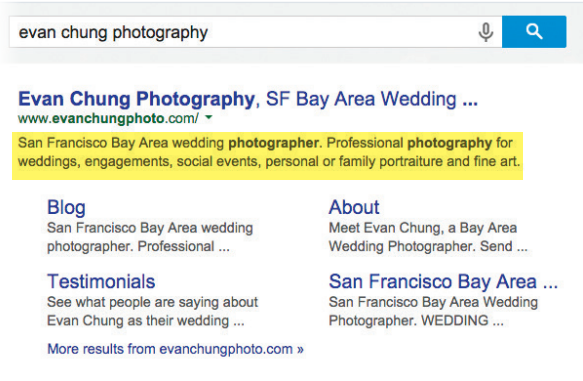
The title element of a page is what appears in the web browser's title bar. It is essential for SEO and is meant to be an accurate, concise description of a page's content.

Search results pages will display about 70 characters per result, so keep your title tag short and place important keywords in front. Start every title tag with the name of your business to leverage your branding. Create a compelling message to generate more visits to your site, since the title tag appears in search results.

Using the Meta Description Tag

The meta description tag is not visible on the page itself. It lives in the page code as a short description of a page's content. Meta descriptions are the primary source for the snippet of text displayed beneath a listing in the search results.

A readable, compelling description containing important keywords can draw readers to your site from the results. It is a general practice to keep meta descriptions to fewer than 160 characters.



Meta Description Tag

This is where your meta description tag shows on a search result page.

Using Friendly URLs

- A friendly URL makes it easy for readers to predict the content of the page by the text that is displayed in the browser bar.
- Shorter is better. Shorter URLs are easier to copy and paste and share, as well as being fully visible in search results.
- If your page is targeting a specific term or phrase, make sure to include it in the URL. We also recommended using hyphens to separate words.

Growing Your Site's Popularity

By analyzing links between pages and how visitors follow these links, search engines evaluate websites and rank their relevance and trustworthiness. When a visitor clicks on a link in search results, he or she "votes" for the page and search engines record this vote for calculating page rankings.

Search engines use the following factors to measure the rank of a website:

1

Global Popularity

Having your site linked from prominent and popular websites will be very helpful for moving your site up in search results.

2

Topic-Specific Popularity

Links from sites that have a narrow focus can also help. They provide pages that are the best match for what a person is trying to find.

3

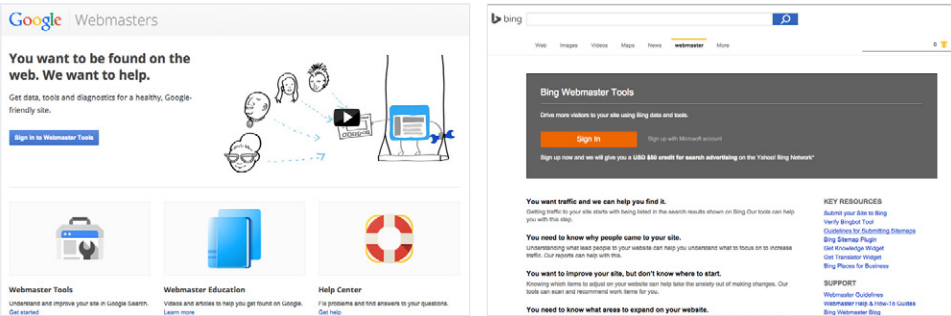
Link Neighborhood

Be selective about the sites you share links with. If a site in your "link neighborhood" appears spammy to search engines, your site ranking may suffer.

Link-Building Strategies

Natural

As you grow your business, other sites and pages will notice it and will want to reference your pages. You can monitor these by using free webmaster tools, such as:



Google Webmasters
www.google.com/webmasters

Bing Webmaster Tools
www.bing.com/toolbox/webmaster

Proactive

Proactively seek opportunities to generate links to your site by emailing articles or news releases to bloggers, submitting your site to online directories, or paying for placement in these directories.

Many websites offer their visitors opportunities to create links through guestbook signings, forum signatures, blog comments, or user profiles.

Ask your clients to link to your site from Facebook, a blog post, forums post, or an article—and reward them for doing so.

Create valuable content that your clients will be compelled to distribute virally. Share funny stories from your photo shoots, add videos, review a product in your blog, or give new photographers advice.

Paid

There are websites and blogs that will publish links to your website for compensation. Take a look at directories of wedding photographers, bloggers with pay-per-post programs, or paid search engine advertising.

Hiding from Search Engines

While it is important for your website to be discovered by search engines, there are times when you want some photos to stay invisible. Your website and gallery service should allow you to hide photos or galleries from search fairly easily in the access control settings.

It's Easy with Zenfolio

Zenfolio gives you all the tools to implement SEO on your website. All pages of Zenfolio websites are built with HTML, so search engines can easily index them.

Zenfolio allows you to build a site navigation menu, which is very effective in helping search engines move through your website easily to find and rank your pages.

You are always in control of your website with Zenfolio, because your site is integrated with webmaster tools from leading search engines. You can get detailed reports on how search engines see your site and make necessary tweaks. Zenfolio also offers integration with Google Analytics, which gives you information about your website's traffic by showing you reports on the number of visitors, where they are coming from, how long they spend on our site, and much more.

Resources for SEO Strategy

These online resources can help you improve your SEO strategy:

- Google Analytics - www.google.com/analytics
- Google Webmaster Tools - www.google.com/webmasters/tools
- Google AdWords - www.google.com/adwords
- Inbound.org
- Forums.digitalpoint.com
- Wordpot.com
- Webmasterworld.com
- Searchengineland.com
- Zenologue.com

Special Thanks

Zenfolio extends a deep appreciation to these wonderful photographers for letting us use their images as inspiration and examples throughout this book.

- www.evanchungphotography.com
- www.chrisboniniphotography.com
- www.kmpsensors.com
- www.satureyes.com

Take the next step

Whether you are an established photographer with years of experience or an enthusiast just starting out, your photography website is more than just a place to display your photos online. It is a reflection of your brand, a marketing tool, a way to engage with your clients, and can also serve as a foundation for your entire photography business.

A successful photography website must:

- Be well designed and provide fresh, relevant content
- Display your photos in an elegant way
- Effectively communicate your brand
- Be search-engine friendly
- Facilitate your business workflows, such as ordering and enabling client favorites
- Be easy to update and modify

We welcome you to try Zenfolio, the ultimate website solution for photographers like you, and we guarantee that you will immediately start receiving compliments on your work. A Zenfolio website is easy to set up, a breeze to customize and configure, and is very cost-effective.



As a photographer, your online portfolio is the foundation of your hobby or business. Visitors come to your website to see your work before hiring you, or to buy your work, so you need a website that is not only beautiful but functional, unique to you, and e-commerce friendly.

This e-book outlines everything you need to know in order to build a successful photography business: from design tips to marketing tools to selling online and everything in between.



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