

How Rising Star Catherine Hall Combines Social Networking with Traditional Marketing

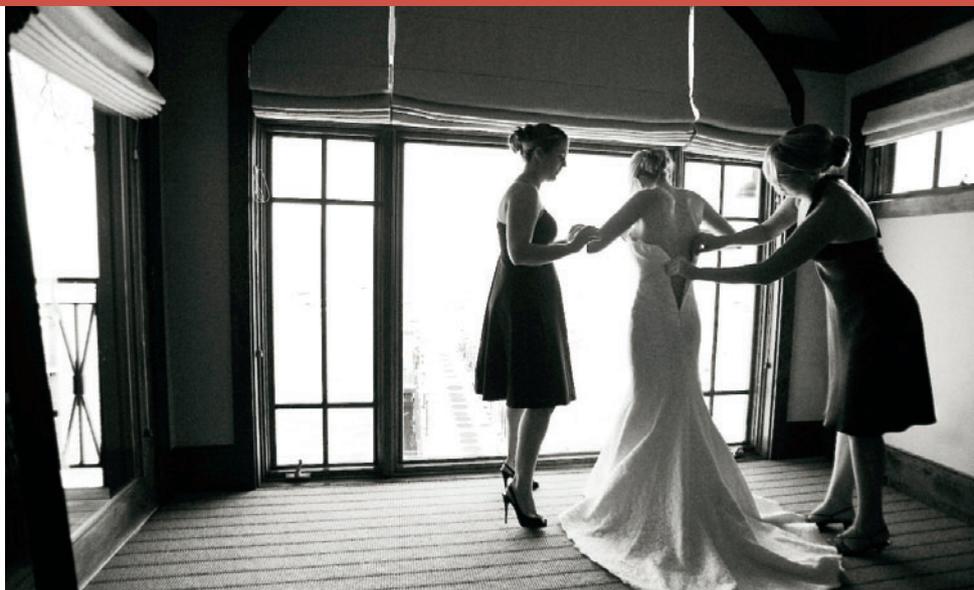
The marketing mix that's right for you depends partly on the demographics of your target audience, how long your studio has been in business, and your overall career goals.

Catherine Hall, the talented, hard-working owner of Catherine Hall Studios in New York and the San Francisco Bay Area, started shooting when she was 16 but has only been a full-time professional photographer since 2006. Her career took off like a rocket after she decided to develop a clear strategy for earning recognition for her talents. So far, her work has appeared in leading photography magazines (*PDN*, *Rangefinder*, *Camera Arts*, *American Photo*), bridal magazines (*Grace Ormonde*, *Modern Bride* and *Elegant Bride*), and in gallery exhibitions in New York, San Francisco and Paris. She has attended the Eddie Adams Photojournalism Workshop where she mingled with photo editors from national magazines and recently became an Adobe Influencer. And she has attracted sponsorships from Epson, Nik Software, and Lowepro.

Speaking to the crowd of young photographers who attended her session on "Modern-Day Marketing Techniques" at the WPPI Conference, she explained how she has combined social media with some of the methods that top photography pros have always used to launch their careers. She attributes her success to getting published, social networking, seeking referrals, networking with vendors, and networking with colleagues.

Publications and Awards: One of the first goals Hall set was to get published. She saw it as a way to receive independent validation of her photography skills and distinguish herself from competitors. She soon realized that one way to automatically get published is to win a competition sponsored by a magazine publisher.

So, she entered as many photography competitions as she could find, recognizing



that competitions level the playing field. The judges don't know anything about the age, experience, or reputation of the photographer who submitted the image. All they care about is the quality of your work.

To stay organized, she compiled a list of all of the major competitions, along with entry deadlines and requirements. Then, she tracked which competitions she entered, because the magazines don't always notify you when you've won an award or your image has been published. Hall's images have won awards in competitions conducted by the WPPI, PPA, PDN, WPJA, Women in Photography, Getty Images, and the International Society of Professional Wedding Photographers.

Once she started winning awards, she found it easier to get the attention of photo editors when she submitted images to other magazines.

Hall got into the wedding photography business partly because of her fascination with photographing people from all walks of life expressing their complex range of emotions. So she routinely submits some of her non-wedding work to publications and competitions.

Once you start getting published, Hall says, so many other good things can

happen. For example, when some of her images appeared on the website of *National Geographic Traveler*, some of her brides and potential commercial clients were impressed. And her application to the prestigious Eddie Adams Photojournalism Workshop was strengthened by her list of awards and publications.

Website: Hall believes building a kick-ass website is essential because the site is essentially your storefront. Choosing which images to display is critical because you will be judged by the weakest image your potential customers see. Getting friends involved in selecting the best images can be helpful because you may have an emotional connection to images that others might not regard as your best work.

"You don't need millions of images on your site, but every one of your images should be great," says Hall. "The images on your website should also reflect your target customer. If you want to attract clients who are fun and spontaneous, show images of people who are fun and spontaneous."

Blogs and Social Networking: In addition to keeping the images on her site current, Hall has published a blog since 2006. She



Catherine Hall enjoys wedding photography because she likes photographing people of all ages and backgrounds. Many brides are impressed to see that Hall's images have been published in *National Geographic Traveler*, *The New York Times*, the *Sydney Morning Herald*, and in promotional materials for 15 international non-profit organizations. She was one of a handful of top-notch photographers invited to travel to Tasmania to participate in Mikkel Aaland's *Photoshop Lightroom 2 Adventure* which was published in book form in October. This image of a child was part of the collection of portraits from Tasmania that Hall entered in the 2009 WPPI Awards of Excellence Album Competition. Entitled *Adobe Lightroom Adventure: Tasmania*, Hall's prints won First Place in the non-wedding category.

doesn't use the blog just to show work she's done for clients. She also uses it as a diary of career milestones. This enables her to keep the bio on her website concise and easy-to-read, while making the complete list of her accomplishments and publications easily available through the blog archives. Hall uploads fresh content to her blog every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, then uses Facebook and Twitter to call attention to each new entry. The posts aren't always written the day they appear online. If she knows in advance when she'll be too busy, she writes a batch of posts in her free time and schedules them for publication later.

She considers her Facebook page as free advertising because "It gives you constant exposure to people who might not be actively looking for photography right now, but may need it sometime in the future." At WPPI, Hall advised young pro photographers to keep their Facebook profiles interesting but business-oriented. One of Hall's Facebook albums highlights wedding images; another album shows clippings of the various publications in which her work has appeared.

Hall has only been using Twitter since January but has already posted more than 180 tweets. She started using Twitter to

guide people to her blog. Now she promotes the work of fellow photographers or calls attention to interesting ideas or activities. (See for yourself by following Catherine Hall on Twitter @Catherine_Hall.)

E-Newsletter: Hall maintains a list of clients and contacts and sends them an e-mail newsletter quarterly to remind them she's still working as a professional photographer and available for assignments. She keeps each newsletter very short—usually presenting one of her recent images and talking about the story behind it.

Referrals: Hall has quickly learned the value of seeking referrals from clients, vendors, wedding coordinators, and colleagues. She says brides, vendors, and wedding coordinators will be especially eager to refer you if you succeed in getting images from their wedding published in a major bridal magazine.

When she posts slideshows of her favorite weddings on her blog, the brides featured in the slideshows will send links to all of their friends and relatives. To get referrals from vendors, Hall donates images to them with the stipulation that they provide a proper copyright notice and photo credit. She then

posts a link in her blog when her images are used on a vendor's website.

Hall believes photo-industry conferences and trade shows provide excellent networking opportunities because you can introduce yourself to vendors, trade-magazine editors, and seminar speakers. Other good ways to connect with influential people is to attend photo events, seminars, and gallery openings.

Although Hall's presentation at WPPI was focused on newcomers to the photography business, her advice applies to photographers of all ages: "You must actively put yourself out there. It doesn't require spending lots of money, but it does require focusing on promoting yourself through multiple channels."

Self-Promotion Resource Guide: Catherine Hall's *Self Promotion Resource Guide* includes detailed guides for: entering print competitions; publishing a blog; e-mail marketing; writing and submitting press releases; writing your bio; and social networking. The guide also includes a list of all of the major photography competitions and advice for contacting all of the editors at the top bridal magazines. To order, e-mail: guide@catherinehall.net