

Be the business everyone loves to work with. Respect, friendliness and rewards for loyalty make you a long-term favorite with clients.

# Ties that *bind*

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS IS JUST GOOD MARKETING

You've heard the saying, "It's not what you know, it's who you know." I'd like to add that it's the strength of the relationship you have with the "who" that makes all the difference. Your success in business is determined in part by your ability to foster caring professional relationships with your employees, clients and other businesses.

If people like you, they'll want to be your client. Employees who respect you and know that you value them will both treat your customers well and willingly chip in when you really need them. And if you have a friendly relationship with your vendors and neighboring businesses, they'll want to help you succeed. As a codicil, the company you choose to keep can help or hurt your business, so work with reputable businesses.

**CLIENTS.** The more time prospects spend interacting with your promotional pieces, the stronger their desire to relate to your brand. Create dynamic, involving promotions that your clients will want to share with their friends and family. Use a blog on your Web site to build relationships with your clients by giving a face and a personality to your brand. Share your positive thoughts and feelings about your clients, even tell cute stories from their sessions. Get a site that allows you to continually update the messages and the

images. The more time clients spend interacting with your brand, the more emotionally attached they become.

Reward your best clients the way fancy restaurants reward their regulars with the best seating with no waiting. It costs much more time, effort and money to bring in new clients than to cultivate ongoing relationships with present clients. How much time do you have to invest in educating a new client about your products and services and what to expect in a portrait session?

Find ways throughout the year to reward customers for their loyalty. And don't underestimate the power of a handwritten note. Congratulate or console clients with flowers. Include images of their children in your promotions. During the winter holiday season, we actually rank our clients by the amount they've invested in us that year. We send the top clients a special gift, personalized photo greeting cards printed by

White House Custom Colour, beautifully packaged in boxes from Nashville Wraps.

We also had a local artisan create handmade leaded-glass ornaments with images from our best clients' sessions—talk about facilitating strong relationships! Anything you can do to treat the best clients in a special way solidifies the long-term value of your brand.

**B-TO-B AND COMMUNITY.** It's smart to get other businesses to share the task of marketing. At times you can tie in with other businesses for events, fundraising and various other community efforts. Become a top client with businesses that share your target market. Make friends with the owners and let the staff know you appreciate their service and enjoy working with them. When an opportunity to partner up comes along, they'll be happy to participate.

Create relationships with your vendors! We wouldn't be able to deliver such high-quality products as consistently as we do without our top-notch suppliers and service providers. Just as we ask our own clients to pay fair prices for outstanding photography, we expect to pay for quality ourselves. From labs, to album companies to framers, we want to do business with companies who treat us like their most valuable client.

Don't be afraid to ask vendors to help in your marketing programs. For example,

Give back to the **community**. We have created a charitable endowment fund that's **distributed** yearly to the charity of our choice. It not only generates **goodwill** and **publicity**, it makes us feel great.

when you embark on a huge promotion that requires 20 large framed portraits, call those companies with whom you've fostered a relationship and see how they can help you in your endeavor. It can only benefit the frame-maker to show off their wares with your dazzling portraits between the borders. You only sell what you show and so do they!

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**STAFF.** Surround yourself with people who have relationship-building skills. When you interview prospective team members, see how well they can carry on a conversation with just about anyone, in addition to having a positive, willing-to-please attitude. It's so important to have friendly people answering the phone, dealing with problems and helping to further relationships. Show you value your employees' efforts by supporting their relationships with their families by allowing a little flexibility in scheduling, so they can participate in special activities like their children's school performances and family vacations.

**SYSTEMS.** To be a great relationship marketer, you need to use accessible, multi-functional studio management software and a database that accommodates all kinds of info about every client, supplier and business you have a relationship with.

Database launched, you must regularly communicate with *everyone* in it, not just those extra-special clients. You strengthen your brand by reaching out to clients, friends and prospects during their emotional experiences, such as the birth of a baby, the holiday season, even the week of Mother's

Day—a good time for a mother and child promotional special.

Yes, building relationships takes an investment in time, but it's doable if you specifically allocate times to concentrate on

each of your major tasks without interruption. And tea time or tee time, schedule some time to be good to yourself. ■

*Sarah Petty Photography is in Springfield, Ill. (www.sarahpetty.com).*

## Enhanced Presentations

### Supreme & Double Supreme CD/DVD Follios

- Cameo cover w/magnetic closure
- Leatherette material
- Presentation box included

**#174 Supreme**

- Holds one CD/DVD
- Inside photo
- Available in black, red & pearl white

**\$8.50 ea. 12/case**

**#174D Double Supreme**

- Holds two CD/DVD
- Available in black & pearl white

**\$12.50 ea. 12/case**

### Self-Stick Album Series

- Presentation box included • Full page adhesive • 8 Sizes to choose from • Leatherette material

**Square Format - 10" x 10", 8" x 8", 5" x 5"**

<b>#6823</b> • 2 1/2" x 3 1/2" • Holds 10 photos <b>\$4.00 ea. 12/case</b>	<b>#6845</b> • 4" x 5" • Holds 10 photos <b>\$6.00 ea. 12/case</b>	<b>#6855 (cameo cover)</b> • 5" x 5" (Black) • Holds 10 photos <b>\$8.00 ea. 12/case</b>	<b>#6853L (cameo cover)</b> • 5" x 5" (Blue) • Holds 10 photos <b>\$8.00 ea. 12/case</b>	<b>#6855P (cameo cover)</b> • 5" x 5" (Pink) • Holds 10 photos <b>\$8.00 ea. 12/case</b>	<b>#6846</b> • 4" x 6" • Holds 10 photos <b>\$7.00 ea. 12/case</b>
<b>#6857</b> • 5" x 7" • Holds 20 photos <b>\$10.00 ea. 12/case</b>	<b>#6888 (cameo cover)</b> • 8" x 8" • Holds 20 photos <b>\$15.00 ea. 12/case</b>	<b>#6881</b> • 8" x 10" • Holds 20 photos <b>\$20.00 ea. 12/case</b>	<b>#6870 (cameo cover)</b> • 10" x 10" • Holds 20 photos <b>\$30.00 ea. 12/case</b>	<b>#6875 (cameo cover)</b> • 10" x 10" • Holds 30 photos <b>\$40.00 ea. 12/case</b>	<b>#6800 (sample set)</b> • 8" x 8" • 5" x 5" • 4" x 6" • 4" x 5" • 2" x 3" <b>\$40.00</b>

**Vertical Format - 8" x 10", 5" x 7", 4" x 6", 4" x 5", 3-1/2" x 5-1/2"**

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