PHOTOGRAPHY
BUSINESS
ACCELERATOR

HOW TO BOOK MORE CLIENTS *in 30 days*

BRYAN CAPORICCI

Bryan Caporicci

Bryan Caporicci is an award-winning wedding and portrait photographer based out of Fonthill, Canada. In 2014, he was awarded his Masters of Photographic Arts (MPA) designation by the Professional Photographers of Canada (PPOC), making him one of the youngest Canadian photographers to receive this level of achievement.

Bryan is the lead content creator at SproutingPhotographer.com and the host of the Sprouting Photographer Podcast. He teaches workshops across North America, including industry-leading conventions and conferences such as WPPI, Shutterfest and Canada Photo Convention. Bryan is also the CEO and Founder of Sprout Studio.

If you’re looking for some ways to grow your photography business, did you know that we have a FREE educational website dedicated to the business of photography? We have articles on every topic you could imagine - marketing, pricing, selling, work/life balance, and more.

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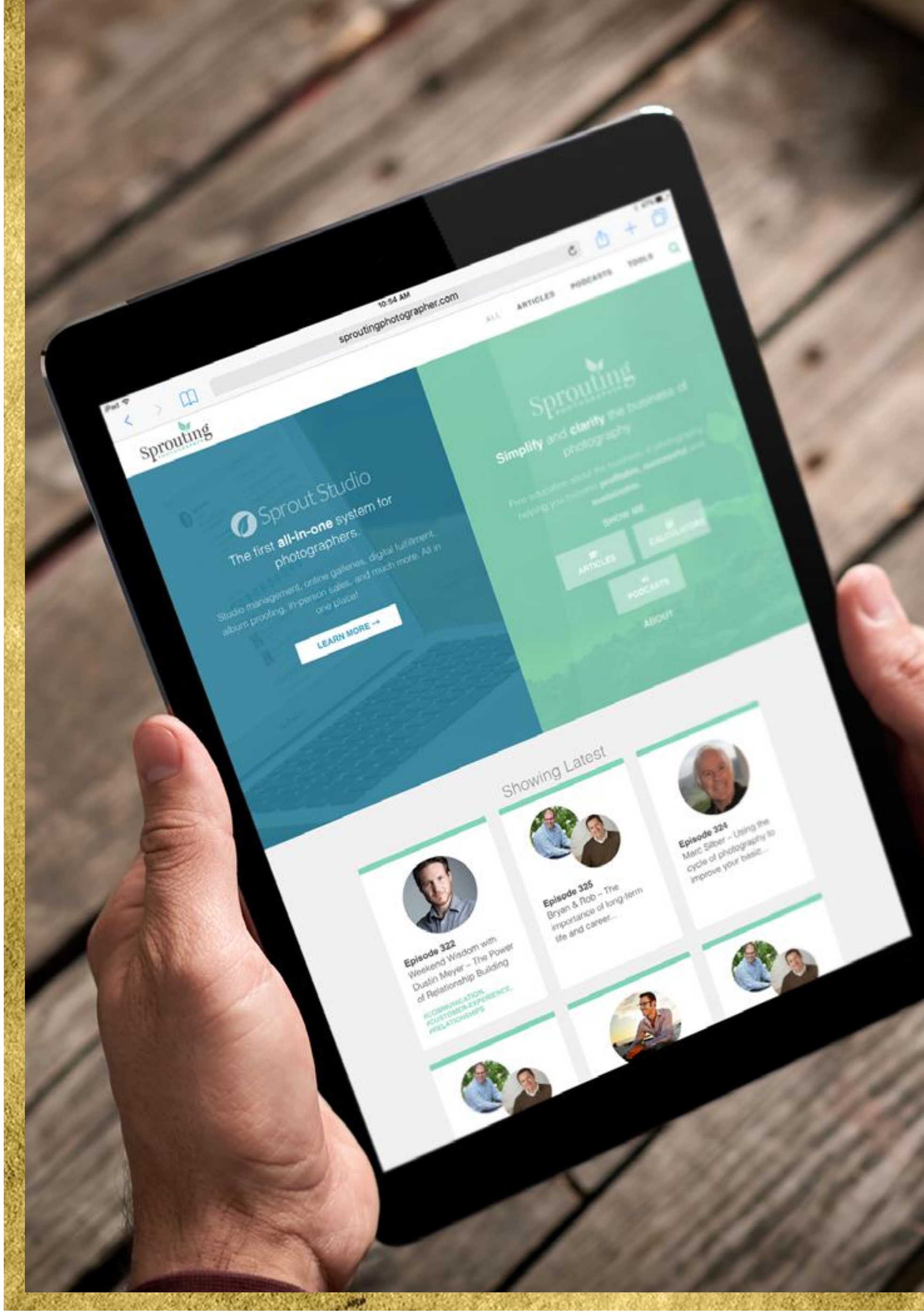


Lesson 4

Encouraging Engagement

Accelerating the warm-up period

This is the first significant milestone.

Once a client gets in touch with you, they progress further down the customer journey. They go through a huge milestone; they're now officially a lead! They were unknown to you, and now they're known. They were a visitor on your website, and now they're a person that you can connect with.

This is a huge deal!

For you, and for your customer.

Give this stage of the customer journey the attention it deserves.

First, let's lay the groundwork. Like the "Developing Desire" stage of the customer journey, your customer has a few goals. They'll decide whether they want to continue the relationship based on a few questions.

These are the same questions they asked earlier. And you've already passed the test; you have to do it again now.

It is your responsibility to again, influence this decision:

1. Is this a good experience?
2. Can I see myself knowing, liking and trusting this person?
3. Do I like the work, style and approach?

Avoid this one common mistake most photographers make

How could they have such an excellent reputation with a poorly designed customer experience?

I was planning my brother's bachelor party. We were planning on going to Montreal for the weekend. We knew we wanted a limo for the trip.

I got in touch with one of the more reputable limo companies I knew of to ask them for details. They got back to me almost right away.

It's almost as if they were sitting in their inbox, continuously clicking the "refresh" button, waiting for emails to come in. It felt a little desperate and rushed if I'm completely honest.

Either way, the email reply was friendly and courteous. But it ended with something you may be familiar with.

It's an ending that I see many people use in their emails.

It's a way that most photographers end their replies.

They said, "let me know if you have any questions."

And then ... nothing. That's it. Done. Ended.

Here I was, a hot lead for them. I was interested. I was ready to talk and take the next step. I wanted them to help me and walk me through the process. And they let me sit there.

As an entrepreneur, and someone who teaches business, I thought I would test them. I was curious. So I didn't reply back to them. I didn't respond for an entire week.

As I suspected - they didn't follow-up.

They didn't check-in.

They didn't touch base to see if I had any more questions. Heck, they didn't even email me to make sure I received that first email!

You can learn from this.

Three essential rules to improve email conversations

When your client first inquiries, you're at the point of the customer journey where they've committed. You must treat this with the respect, attention, and priority that it deserves.

1. Reply fast
2. Guide the next step
3. Follow-up

Follow these three simple rules for your first reply to a customer. In fact, this is a good framework to follow for every piece of communication to a client.

Reply fast, but not too fast. Replying the same day is perfectly acceptable. Replying within 24 hours isn't unreasonable, either. But don't reply too quick; I would not suggest replying within 15-30 minutes

Guide the next steps. You must be crystal clear on the next steps for your client. Don't leave them hanging. Don't assume they know what to do next. Guide them through the experience.

Design a follow-up sequence. There are many reasons someone may not reply to your first email. Don't assume it's because they're not interested. Maybe they got busy. Maybe they forgot to reply. Maybe your email got buried in their inbox. Or maybe it landed in their spam folder. Either way, it is up to you to follow-up with them.

Following the "Laws of Persuasion"

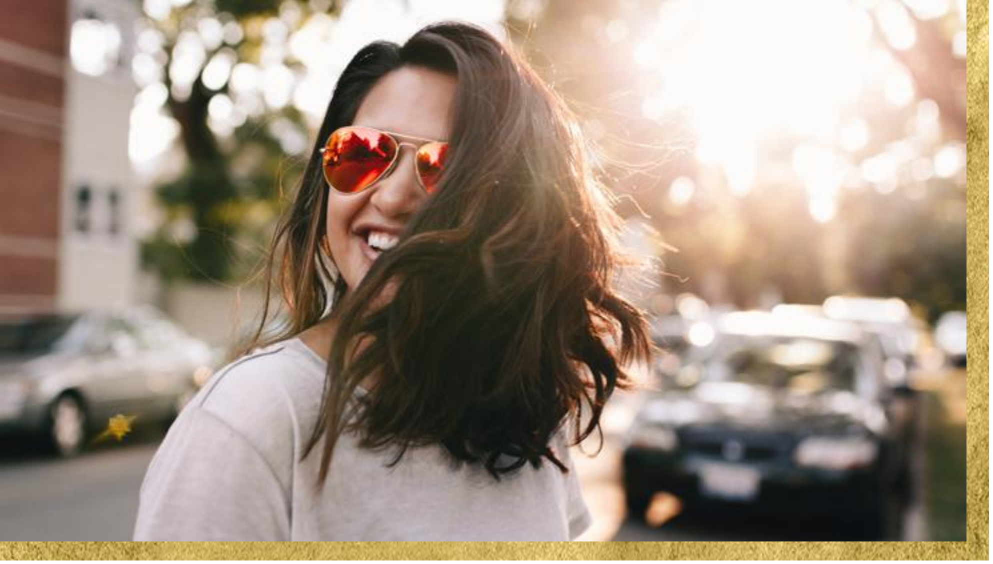
Your reply to their inquiry is a part of the sales process. Whether you like it or not, and whether you call it that or not, this is sales. Sales doesn't have to be a dirty five-letter word, either. All you're doing is guiding your client through the customer journey. You're coaching them to the next step.

We spoke about Robert Cialdini's book "Influence" in a previous lesson. The "Laws of Persuasion" can provide a framework for writing this first email. I'll weave them through the tips that follow, and the email reply formula we'll go through later in this guide.

Here are the laws, broken down by the Project Management Institute:

Law of Reciprocity

In general, people try to repay what they have received from others. If someone gives you something you want, then you will want to reciprocate because now you feel obligated. For example, the address labels you receive in the mail from various non-profit groups requesting charitable donations—even though they are a minor, unsolicited "gift," sending them out has increased donations to non-profits significantly, because people feel compelled to "return the favor."



Law of Commitment and Consistency

Consistency of (or at least the appearance of) thoughts, feelings, and actions is important. Once a position has been taken, people tend to stick with it and behave in ways that justify the position, even if it is wrong. Commitment to a decision, position, or cause (however small) is usually easier to increase than it is to abandon. This is why salespeople attempt to get customers to agree with them multiple times; after saying "yes" repeatedly, it is almost impossible to say "no" when it is time for the close or direct request for the sale.

Law of Liking

The old adage "opposites attract" does not hold true when it comes to influence and persuasion. When you like someone, or believe that they are "just like you," you are more inclined to wanting to please them. Successful salespeople work hard to establish rapport, demonstrating how similar they are to you. They explore your background, noting the similarities to their own. They are people you know; sometimes your friends. Think about the in-home sales parties you may have been invited to, in which your neighbors are providing the testimonials for the product, and you don't want to disappoint them by not buying something.*

* Brown, S. T. (2010). How to use the six laws of persuasion. Paper presented at PMI® Global Congress 2010—North America, Washington, DC. Newtown Square, PA: Project Management Institute

Law of Scarcity

If there is a limited supply of an item and only a few are left, then it must be good or popular, which is what the law of scarcity suggests. If something you want becomes "the last one available," you tend to feel like you have to act immediately or you might miss out. After all, the limited supply must mean that others are buying it, and delaying might mean you won't be able to get it again anytime soon or maybe never again.

Law of Authority

Advertisers count on the law of authority when using celebrity endorsements or "expert" testimonials. When people you admire promote a product or service, you may think, "If it's good enough for them, then it's good enough for me." In addition, if you use it, you may become more like these "heroes:" better looking, wealthier, and more famous.

Law of Social Proof

Why have television sitcoms used canned laugh tracks for years? Producers wouldn't use them unless they worked to produce audience laughter and higher ratings. Part of the reason you laugh along anyway, and in spite of yourself, lies in how you decide what socially "correct" behavior is. If you aren't sure how to act, then you rely on those around you (or in the virtual television audience) to help you find the way to properly react. If others are doing it, then it must be the right thing to do.

Eight secrets to writing the perfect email

Personalize the subject line of the email. For example, use "re: your wedding on Aug 8th at Queens Landing" instead of "re: wedding photography."

Use your client's name and use it often. Dale Carnegie said, "A person's name is to that person the sweetest and most important sound in any language." Always address your client by their name.

Be personable. Your email reply should not sound formulaic or robotic. You must be personable and warm. Remember, your client is trying to decide, "Can I see myself knowing, liking and trusting this person?"

Talk about something contextual. In the last step of the customer journey, you designed your contact form to ask a question that gives you insight into your client's needs. This first reply is when you can use the insight you gained!

Ask a thought-provoking or unexpected question. It is a pattern interrupt, where you nudge them out of "auto-pilot" mode and get them to think about something they weren't expecting to think about. This is an excellent way to stand out, become memorable and create a unique connection with them.

Always think about WIIFM - "what's in it for me?" People are most interested in hearin about what's in it for them. Talk in terms of benefits to your customer.

Be clear about next steps in full detail. Don't assume they know what to do next. Give them something obvious to do next.

Use your email signature to establish authority and provide social proof (the last two laws, above).

A proven framework for selling

There is a popular copywriting formula that provides a great framework for sales copy. And remember - that's what your email is; this is sales, whether you like it or not!

This framework is AIDA, which stands for:

1. **Attention** - Grab your client's attention.
2. **Interest** - Make it personal to engage their interest.
3. **Desire** - Build desire for what you're offering.
4. **Action** - Ask for a response.

With the AIDA framework in mind, we'll create a formula for writing a high-converting email reply.

Crafting the perfect email to boost replies

Section 1 - Congratulate and thank them

First, acknowledge your client's email and thank them for getting in touch. If congratulations are in order (for example, if it's a wedding inquiry), then offer your best wishes.

From the beginning of the email, you want to build a strong rapport. You must establish an agreement with your client. There's no better way to do that than to offer sincere lavish and praise. One of Dale Carnegie's rules is to "Begin with praise and honest appreciation."

Start your email off on the right foot and begin with a sincere, positive gesture.

Section 2 - Make a personal connection

Your client is trying to decide, "Can I see myself knowing, liking and trusting this person?"

Make a personal connection quick. Build rapport, find common ground and continue to establish an agreement with your client.

You can use some of the insight from the last step of the customer journey here. You'll recall that in the previous lesson, we talked about:

1. Asking your client an insight-gathering question on your contact form.
2. Inviting your client to connect on social media on the thank-you page for your contact form.

Use this insight to connect in a more personal way.

For example:

If a client followed you on Instagram, acknowledge that and find common ground in something they recently posted.

If you're married, and a client is inquiring about wedding photography, establish a common ground and show that you can relate.

If you just sent your oldest child off to University, and their son is getting close to that age, draw a connection.

You don't have to be long-winded here, but find some common ground (if you can) and make that personal connection.

Section 3 - Agitate the pain and tease the solution

Your customer's journey begins when they have what I call "an epiphany moment."

The epiphany moment is when there is evidence of symptoms for which photography provides a solution to. They come to a realization, start to feel a "pain" or have a moment of truth.

That's why they got in touch with you. They want you to help them.

For this part of the email, you need to agitate the problem a bit. You need to spotlight it and call attention to it so that you can more obviously present a solution for it.

Think about how you can help them and create a "gift" around that. This could be an eBook, a guide, a mini-course, an info-sheet, or something similar.

For example:

If they're inquiring about wedding photography, maybe you can make a PDF that covers the "top 5 tips to hiring the right wedding photographer."

If they're inquiring about family portraits, maybe you can give them access to a mini-course you wrote that guides them through "how to enjoy your photographs at home."

If they're inquiring about newborn portraits, maybe you can give them an info-sheet on "how to prepare your baby for their first photo shoot."

Think about how you can help your client with their epiphany moment, their pain, their moment of truth.

Now that you've agitated the problem a bit, you can tease that you have a solution. Tell your client that you have something that will help them and that you'll give it to them later in the email. Doing this does a few things. First, it makes them want to lean in because you have outlined that you "get" them and that you can help. Second, it creates an open loop in their mind. They know that something is coming (the gift) and so they'll want to keep reading to get it. Third, this follows the "Law of Reciprocity" because you're giving them something. They'll want to reciprocate.

Section 4 - Speak to the context

You have insight into your client's story because you asked the right questions on your contact form. Maybe you know where they're getting married. Or you know how old their kids are. Or you know how long it's been since their last family portrait.

Either way, you have some level of detail that allows you to talk to them more relevantly. So now you must speak to them with through that context.

Section 5 - Propose your value proposition

If I walked up to you on the street and said, "Here are two dimes, can you give me a quarter?" What would you say to me? You'd probably tell me to take a hike, right? But what if I said, "Here's a $5 bill, can you give me two-quarters?" You'd probably be reaching into your pocket pretty quickly, wouldn't you?

Why? Because in the first example, what you're giving is of greater value than what you're getting. In the second, it is the opposite. This is what I call the "Get-Give Principle" at play.

The "Get-Give Principle" for a buying decision is as follows:

1. When what you're getting is of greater value than what you're giving, then it's desirable (a great deal) for you.

2. When what you're getting is of lower value than what you're giving, then it's undesirable (not worth it) for you.

Your clients use the "Get-Give Principle" subconsciously.

You must give greater value than the prices you are charging. When you do, clients see you as desirable, or a good deal. The reverse is true too, though. When you ask for more money than the value you're giving, clients see you as undesirable, or expensive.

In this part of the email, you need to start building up the value of what you do. Talk about benefits. Talk about what's in it for your client. Talk about why they should hire you and how you can help them.

Section 6 - Provide a clear call-to-action

Only use e-mail as a stepping stone to the next stage in the customer journey. You are not trying to book your client through email. Email is only a temporary communication vehicle. It's meant to guide your client to the next step of the journey, which could be a phone meeting or in-person meeting.

The way you close your emails is the most important part of the email. It can make-or-break the entire thing.

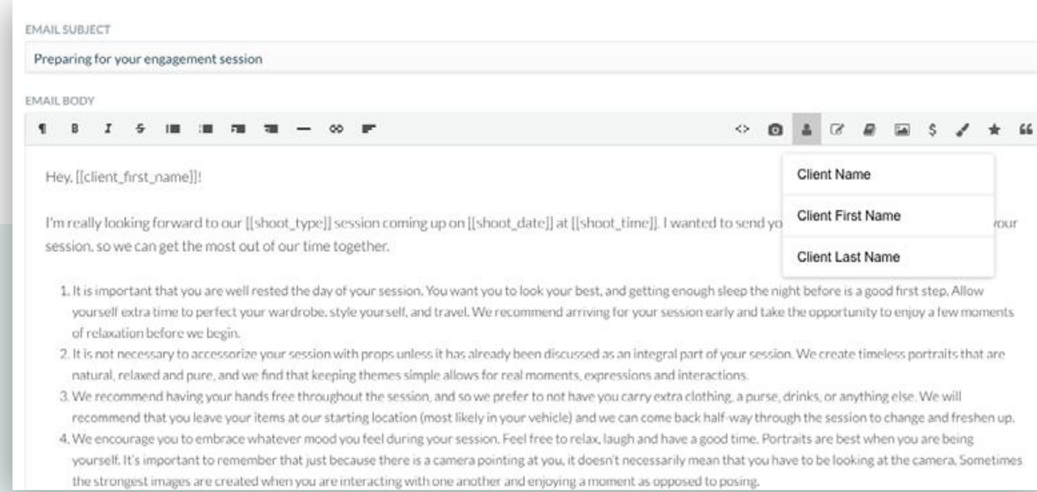
Finish your e-mails with a question or very specific call-to-action.

The best way to sign off is with an either/or question; give them two or three choices. Doing this eliminates the "no" option (some photographers ask a yes/no question). It also eliminates the need for too much thinking (some photographers ask very open-ended questions).

For example:

I'd love to schedule a time for you to visit the studio for a meet-and-greet. I have next Tuesday and Thursday open in the morning. Or, if an evening is better for you, then I have next Wednesday available from 7pm-8pm. What works better for you?

This Principle in Action



If you want to save time and have better email replies, you should be using email templates!

When you use email templates, you write the reply once and then reuse it over and over again. This means you only have to put the mental energy into writing a well-thought-out reply once, instead of having to do it every single time. Of course, you can tweak the email as you need to every time you send it to a client, but it gives you a good starting point.

Many different studio management systems allow you to make email templates, or you could have a text document with all your replies that you copy-and-paste from.

In Sprout Studio, one of the most powerful parts of email templates is their use of variables. Using variables in an email template allow you to insert a placeholder that will be replaced with the specific client or shoot details once the email template is used.

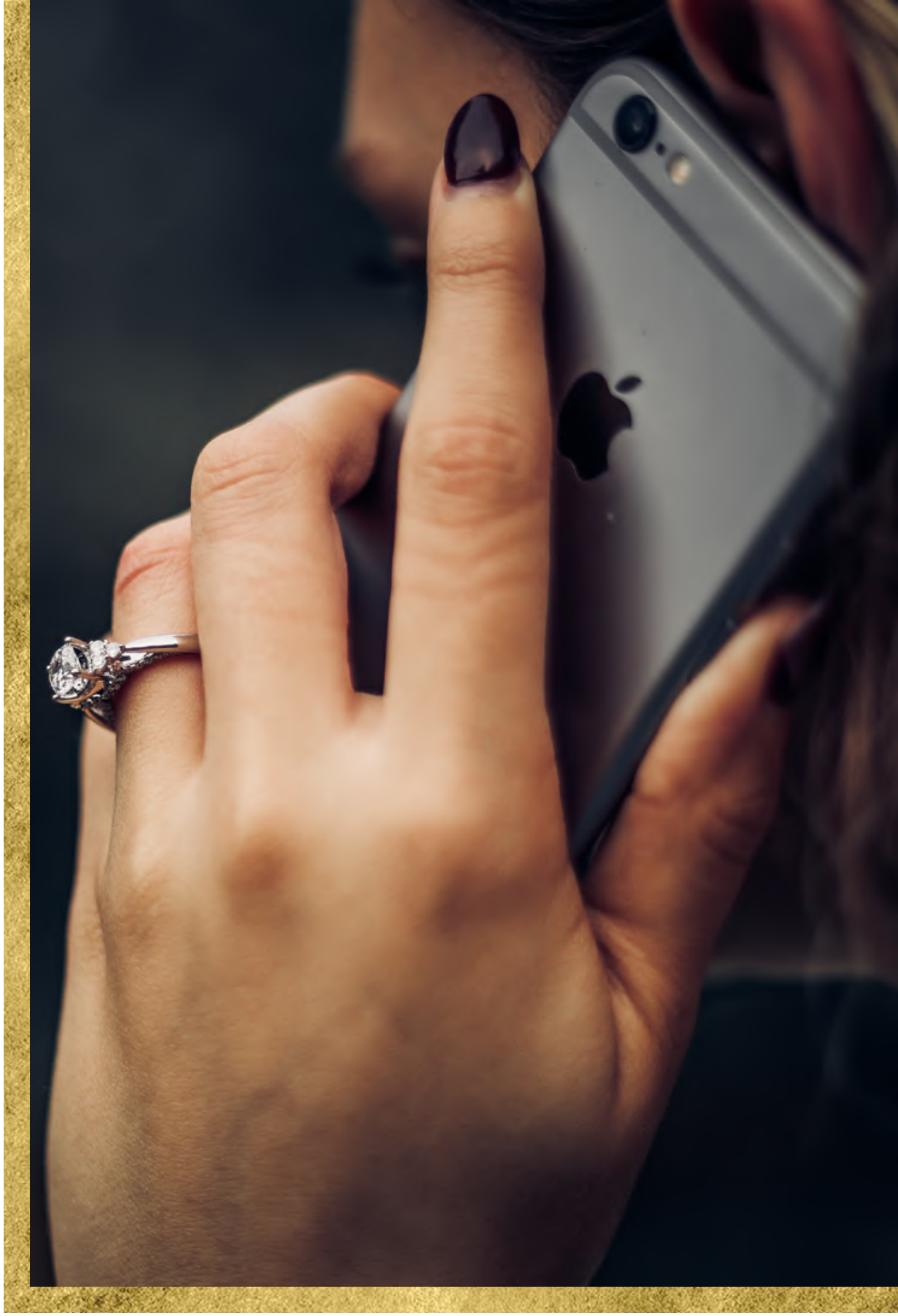
For example, you could insert the "Client First Name" variable into an email template. When that email is used with a client, it will replace that variable with the client's actual first name. This allows you to do all the work up-front, once, and then easily send relevant and personable email replies with ease.

Keep guiding your clients through the customer journey

When a potential client gets in touch, it is a big deal. They've moved on to the next step of the customer journey. Now you can now get involved. The spotlight is on you.

This is a big deal. For you and your client.

Just don't forget to follow-up! It's the third rule of improving email conversions.



This Principle in Action

You need a system for follow-ups.

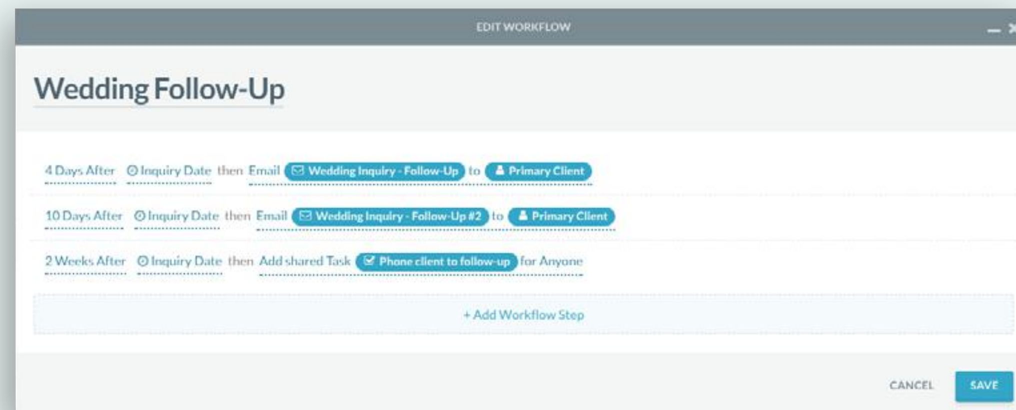
You can't rely on your memory to follow-up with the right people at the right time, every time.

You'll find that reminders will eventually fall through the cracks if you keep it all up in your head.

In Sprout Studio, a tool we've built for you to do this is called a Workflow. A Workflow in Sprout Studio allows you to define a step-by-step process one time and then apply it over and over again. This means you can save time and create a more consistent experience for your clients.

You can easily build an extensive and detailed follow-up sequence for a new lead with the few clicks of a button.

Whether you use Sprout Studio or some other system, it's important to make sure you have a system, so that you can stay consistent with your customer experience.



Sprout Studio

EASY CLIENT MANAGEMENT

Never lose track of where your clients are in your studio workflow! Statuses help you keep everything organized and move your clients along a progression, so you are always on top of everything.

LEARN MORE

Homework

1. Write an email template for your inquiry follow-up.
2. Design a follow-up sequence for your inquiries.