



A photobooth is not a Photographer

§ Recently, a Pro Photographer wrote this entry on a blog:

"I just met with a potential client who I have a good feeling might book me. . . . The bride says, "oh, by the way, We're thinking of using [a photobooth]. The photographer they mention has a thriving business in town and it appears they've added a separate feature of this photobooth."

These are legitimate concerns. Here is some food for thought:

§ A Photographer brings some advantages:

An ongoing connection in a community

A wedding photo leads to a baby picture that leads to a confirmation that leads to commencement.

Sometimes these share the same subject for the entire chain.

More typically through a chain of referrals. This is classic word-of-mouth advertising – there is none better.

§ THE KEY DIFFERENCE between a photobooth business and a Photography business:

Photography runs the gamut from art to journalism. Photography will either DOCUMENT what happens or CREATE something - through lighting, pose and composition. Of course, any one picture will draw from points along this continuum and *every* Photographer blends the two.

- A photobooth can contain a stool but a photobooth is not furniture
- A photobooth might have a strobe but it is neither a lamp, nor a lantern nor torch
- While it is true that a photobooth might use a camera remember that a photobooth is about entertainment *not* photography. Even if the printer jams, just seeing the images while *inside* the booth is almost good enough - it is perhaps 80 percent of the fun! The prints are *almost never* the point. At best, they remind the viewer of the fun *inside* the booth.

Cumbria

London

New York

§ A KEY QUESTION

Could a photographer lose business to a Photobooth?

We've never known it to happen.

In theory, a couple that is *really* short of cash might just go with the booth. In reality, if they are that hard up against it, they'll *always* skip the booth and go with a low-cost photographer.

Frankly, a photobooth is a big-ticket item. In the UK, the 'average' wedding costs approximately £15,000 to £20,000 and the cost of a booth can 10% of that - a VERY big chunk! A more lavish wedding might go for £50,000 and a booth for such an affair is a *much* smaller slice of the pie.

§ A KEY DEFINITION: Who is the customer?

One Photographer, with great honesty wrote:

I guess the unvarnished fear I have is that guests will think it's the greatest thing on earth and maybe want to hire them for their wedding instead of me

It is CRUCIAL to remember who the customer is: the wedding celebrants – the Bride or In-law, but NOT the Guests. The guests might think a photo booth is the greatest thing in the world but the Bride will still get all teary-eyed over the things that really matter.

- * EVERY bride wants that portrait of the gown and train with her groom somewhere near
- * That cherubic smile of the ring-bearer
- * The hail of confetti as they walk out of the Church

To document or to create *these* moments is at the top of the Photographers remit. The fun guests have inside a Photobooth after four hours of drinking really is not!

§ KEY BUSINESS INSIGHT

I have read on another blog that " . . . in Minneapolis, I'd say I see photo booths at 1 in 5 weddings" WOW - THIS is a measure of the power of photobooths. Are Photographers starving in Minneapolis? Not that I have heard.

Let's play with this a bit. OKAY?

- As a matter of technology, it is worth observing that the expensive printer in a photobooth is *also* ideal for doing on-the-day quick prints for the photographer who will go back and do retouching, crop an print for high-end salon work later.
- The photobooth experience can create added photo-ops
- The photobooth activity can distract the guests from the work of the Photographer

- A photobooth company and a Photographer can cross-refer

§ A KEY LOGISTICAL UNDERSTANDING

"Hey, my brother-in-law does pretty well with a disposable, maybe he should be a Photographer." Have you priced a Hasselblad lately?

One writer asked can she "buy one to keep?"

Running a SUCCESSFUL Photobooth Service is NOT a simple proposition. Well, actually it *is* simple - to do it badly! To do it well is another, more complex affair.

There are equipment issues, logistical issues and staffing issues. There is the requirement for custom graphics. There are sub-specialties - I'd call it industry knowledge. For example, a wedding is NOT the same as an awards ceremony for 1,500 Solicitors!

Can photobooth services be a good business? Yes of course.

Are there things to learn beyond where to send a check? What do you think?

§ CONCLUSIONS

- A Photographer can work WELL with a photobooth company
- A Photobooth service works WELL as an added service for a photography company. Any effort to diversify your product line is worth exploring - the idea of a portrait station is another example.

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