

PROFESSIONAL

photographer

NOVEMBER 2008

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COVER
PHOTO
CONTEST
WINNER
Heather Smith



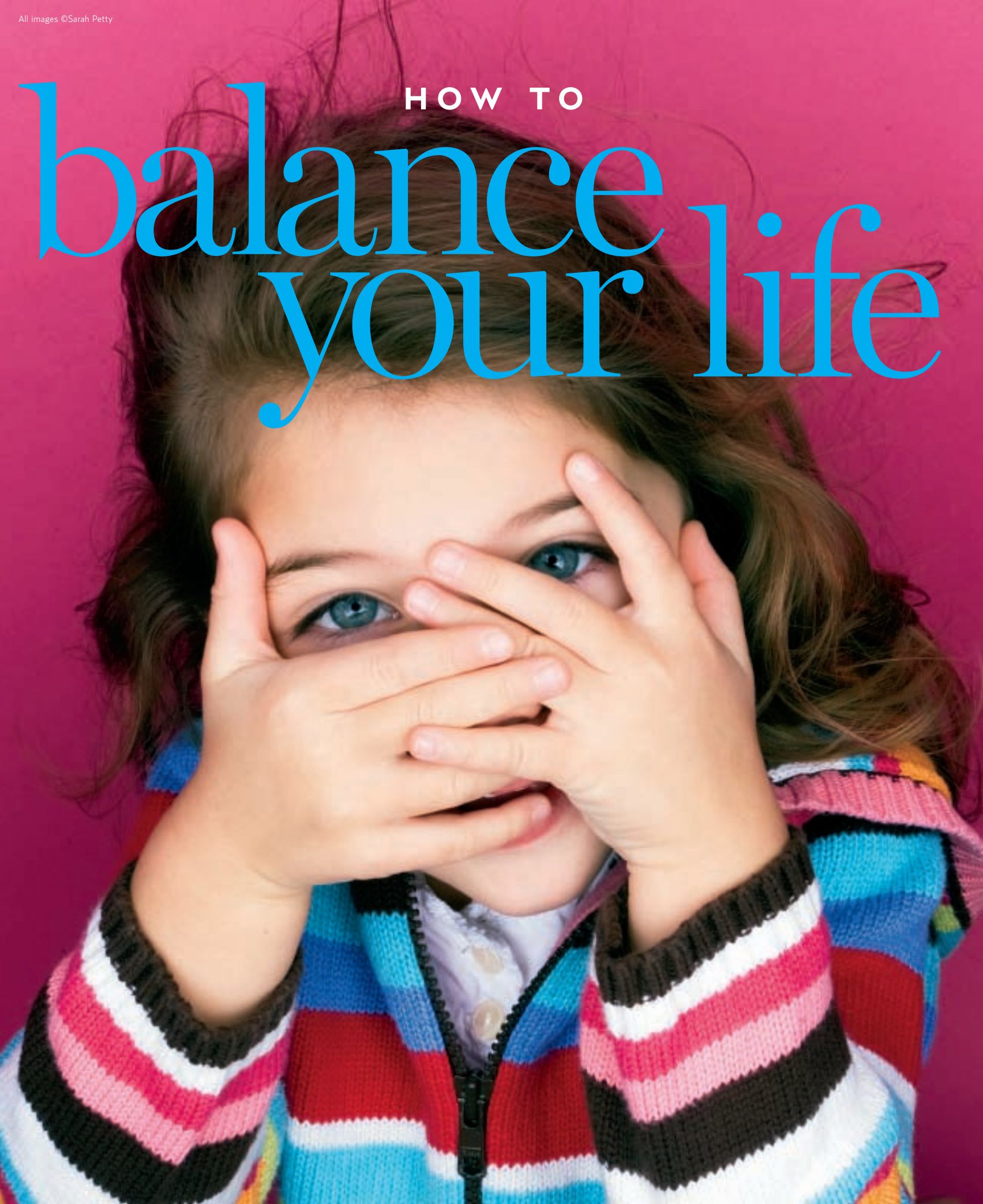
HOW TO *do everything better*

OUR SUPER SPECIAL ISSUE INCLUDES:

- HOW TO BUILD YOUR BUSINESS IN UNDER 40 HOURS A WEEK
- HOW TO LAND YOUR FIRST JOB
- HOW TO ASSESS YOUR FINANCIAL HEALTH IN 30 MINUTES OR LESS
- HOW TO READ A HISTOGRAM, REALLY



HOW TO
balance
your life



Building a successful photography business in 40 hours a week or less

BY SARAH PETTY, CR.PHOTOG., CPP

1501. KEEP YOUR DAY JOB. It sounds like a joke, but I've seen too many business owners bite off more than they can chew, and accrue sizeable debt. Desperate studio owners make drastic decisions like deep discounting, which erodes their brand. Have some income—and confidence—while you build your brand and your business.

2. SCHEDULE TIME TO WORK AND TIME TO BE CREATIVE. We all need quiet time to foster creativity. Try

closing your doors to clients on Mondays and use the time to do the retouching, album designing, paperwork, *whatever*, to clear your evenings and weekends. Or try reserving every other Monday afternoon for creative time. Throughout the week, save up ideas, clippings, art books, or anything that inspires you, to review during this time.

3. UNDERSTAND YOUR BUSINESS. Successful business owners talk about working *on* their business as opposed to *in*

it. Invest the time and money to get an education in business management. You can't make business decisions if you don't understand the numbers. I've seen new photographers with potential, but who can't really afford the studio mortgage or rent they've taken on. Often, just waiting a year or two before taking on more expenses makes the difference between success and failure. Read over the PPA Studio Management Services Studio Financial





Benchmark Survey Analysis to help you gain perspective. It truly clarifies your options. (Members can download the survey analysis from the Studio Management Services resources page at www.ppmag.com).

4. PLAN AND SCHEDULE. John Hartman, M.Photog.Cr., A-ASP, of Stevens Point, Wis., one of the strongest marketers in photography, offers this advice, “If you want to run a successful business working 40 hours or less, the first thing you need to do is determine what those hours will be, then divide them into hours for planning, public relations/marketing, photographing and business (bill paying, tax forms, meeting with insurance salesmen). If you know you

have, say, only 10 hours to plan a marketing campaign, believe me, you will get focused. Then, when you’re in your 15 shooting hours, the creative juices are free to flow.”

Lori Nordstrom, M.Photog.Cr., of Winterset, Iowa, agrees. “I have to schedule *everything* into my calendar,” she says. “I plan everything—shooting, image editing, sales appointments, order placement, packaging, marketing, networking, even the planning is planned. Everything has a place and someone assigned to the task, or it doesn’t get done.”

5. AUTOMATE. For production tasks, maximizing your automation tools in Photoshop and other imaging software is simple and efficient. Set up actions,

use hot keys, use templates.

6. MARKET EFFECTIVELY. Use slowdowns to stretch your marketing muscles. Budget money annually for marketing education. Choose instructors who have similar philosophies, business models and are successful. I recommend learning in small groups from someone who’s where you want to be.

7. LEVERAGE YOUR PRICES. If you’d rather not schedule weekend sessions, price to discourage requests. Charge a higher session fee or minimum order amount. If you’re giving up personal time on a gorgeous Saturday, make it worth your while. Gary Box, Cr.Photog., of Sapulpa, Okla., tells of a

man who insisted that the only day his entire family could get together for a portrait would be Sunday. Box replied, "Of course we can book you then. You know there's a minimum order amount for Sunday bookings?" The man said, "Thursday is lovely." You can also use value-added incentives to get clients to do what you want. For example, if a senior keeps all of his appointments without rescheduling, throw in a few wallets, gratis. If the client orders at the first portrait viewing, reward him with a gift or special pricing valid for that day only. It's amazing how little things like rescheduling and lagging on ordering will erode your productivity.

8. WRITE DOWN YOUR GOALS. A Yale University 20-year study on goal setting among Yale graduates had astounding results: At the end of 20 years, the 3 percent of the subjects who had written down clear goals

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—LORI NORDSTROM

at the start of the study had amassed more wealth than the remaining 97 percent *put together*. At the very least, invest in some planning and projections software and build a goal spreadsheet of your own.

9. SET BOUNDARIES. If you've convinced yourself that nobody notices the laptop in your lap during dinner and family activities, you're deluded. Set a finite time in the evening to your check e-mail, then turn off the computer.

10. BUY TIME WITH YOUR MONEY.

Recently, when I'd fallen into that working nights and weekends trap, I brainstormed about tasks I could hire someone else to do. I outsourced a pile of accounting, tax and payroll tasks to our accounting firm, which bought me about day a month. This isn't a solution if you don't yet have the profits to afford to pay others, but if you do, go for it. ■

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