



# Arlington Camera

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## Portrait Selling Tips

by Michael Redford

Using a sales system that has your client respond from the emotional (right-side) of the brain during the sale is one of the most powerful ways of getting your sales averages up! The following is the sales process we use each and every day at our studio. This sales system has generated well over 1 million dollars each year, for 20 years, for us!

### The Phone Call

We first qualify prospects by "ball parking" our prices. When a prospect calls, and after giving basic information, we inform them that "most people in their situation, (child, family, high school senior, or portrait session), can maybe plan on spending between 300 and 800 dollars, to receive one larger, and a few smaller portraits for family and friends". We don't get into sizes at this point, and most people accept our "ball park" statement.



Once they are ok with this ballpark we assume that they are the kind of client we wish to work with. If they find the ballpark too much, we let them continue shopping for another studio. Truly good prospects happily accept our verbal ballpark pricing on the phone. We have found that the majority of prospects who want a great deal of detailed info are usually price shoppers and not usually good prospects. These people have proven time after time that they steal our time for a very little return. If you are getting a lot of these kinds of prospects you simply need to improve your marketing. Good marketing brings good prospects. Sorry, but it's best to learn this truth now!

### After the Session

After the session we ask the client to assume that we have succeeded. We ask them to look over the printed price list that we hand them. We also let them know that it's best to think about where the images will be placed in the home, and to give thought as to whom might receive gift prints. This basic preparation information is also printed on the backside of the price list.

### Preparing the Images for the Sales Presentation

We photograph with a Canon EOS 5D camera. We have it set to capture a raw AND small jpg of each image taken. We separate the jpgs from the raw after downloading the CF card. We load the jpgs from the session into Pro-Select software.

You can download a free 30-day trial of this software at [www.timeexposure.com](http://www.timeexposure.com). If you decide to buy the software after 30 days you can save 10% by including the code REDF when you purchase. This software takes about 30 minutes to learn how to use. It takes longer to learn all the facets, but in a very short time you will be making more money with this software. You WILL love this software!

After images are loaded into the software we edit the images very, very carefully. It is my opinion after presenting to over 20,000 clients that it is imperative to edit down to just the very best images from the session. The best clients do not want to wade through all of the images. You know what is good. Edit Well! Too many images are overwhelming to clients, and it will almost kill your chances of getting money that day.

Too many images will bring out the...."I really want to think this over objection"...A sale killer!

I carefully put the very best images from the session up front so that those images are seen first. This insures a great first impression! I show only the best 20 or 30 images from each session. (I usually shoot around 100 images during an average session).

### **The Portrait Sales Presentation**

Clients usually return 1-7 days after the session. We begin our sales presentations by projecting a slide show with music of their images. (You can program music into the Pro-Select software by the way)!

We then go back to the beginning and show one image at a time. We ask the client to let us know if each image is a "maybe" or a "no". I hope to have them say maybe to at least 10-15 images. The more maybes, the better chance of a good sale.

### **Our Price List**

Once the clients have narrowed down the images I verbally go over the price list. I have found that it is imperative to have a very, very simple price list so that the client can mentally understand it quickly. Having a complicated price list can very much slow down the entire process. I believe a complicated price list also promotes the hated "I need to think this over" objection!



Our child, family and portrait price list is, and has been for over 15 years...Ala-Carte price for each size, and/or a collection.

The collections include a wall portrait, (1) 11x14 up to a 30x40, and 5 smaller images. (Our high school senior price list is a bit different because of their different needs but is still very uncomplicated).

We have 5 collections that have the same contents except for the size of the larger one. 8x10's, 5x7, or smaller are smaller images. 1 8x10 also equals 8 wallets of the same image.

Our 8x10's and smaller are all the same price. This makes our prices very simple for them to understand.

If we are asked by the client why they don't get 2 5x7's or 1 8x10 like the mall photographers we tell them that we make the photographs one at a time, which we do. We tell them they are "handmade" with much more care. I rarely (almost never) get objections to this statement.

The client may choose up to 6 different images from the session for their collection.

Our collection prices go up \$100 per wall portrait size, so the collection prices are based on the wall portrait size. (Our family price list is 100 more per collection because of the extra Photoshop work needed)

I tell them that our collections include a wall portrait and 5 smaller images. I point to the sizes of the wall portraits on the wall during this pricing explanation. After about 30 seconds they really do understand our pricing system very well.



### **The Dream Sequence During the Sales Presentation (this is the best part)**

After telling them the prices of collections...(I never go over the ala carte prices unless they ask), I then tell them that it's truly best to pretend that the photographs are free!

I recommend that they put a "dream" package together for their home, family, and friends, and to not give thought to price or collections at this point. I tell them that I will figure out the money thing after they tell me their dream package!

I hold off letting them know about coffee table books, 3, 4, and 5-piece framed & matted collections, and framing, at this point. I will bring those up when it is called for. I want the commitment of the collection first in most cases.

Women, at this point, have no problem putting a dream package together. It is truly amazing how this works!

After the client puts the dream package together I calculate their dream package.

There are many trades available in the package by the way. For example 2 8x10's equal 1 11x14 and so on. I figure the final price and tell them the final price. I, at that point, am very careful to stop talking. I let the final number sink in their head and wait for their response.

It is my opinion that Americans can handle one price (no matter how big) much better than adding up smaller prices on their own. It's one decision, not a lot of smaller ones.

We also offer 3, 4, and 5 piece framed and matted collections, canvassing on the wall portrait, and of course framing. These items are merchandised on our sales room walls. These are mentioned only after I get agreement on the basic collection, if these items happen to fit their needs.

Almost all clients have us frame the wall portrait. The frame price presentation is a separate sales presentation that is not covered in this short article.

This sales process takes a little practice but when you learn how to do this you WILL be amazed how easy it is for people to dream their way into much higher sales for your studio!

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**Michael Redford** has a complete line of DVD video presentations on the operation of the contemporary portrait studio. Much information on marketing, photography, and sales of portraiture is available at [www.michaelredford.com](http://www.michaelredford.com).

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