

# Photography Studio Management — Workbook

This workbook turns the course into the operating documents a real studio runs on. Each section maps to one module: you will cost your space, build rental and product pricing, configure your booking systems, and stand up a workflow and financial dashboard. Work through it with your own numbers, not placeholders, and you will finish with a costed, bookable, measurable studio.

## The Studio as a Business Unit

Cost the space, find your break-even, and plan realistic capacity before you sign or renew a lease.

### Worksheet: Break-Even and Contribution Margin Calculator

Fill in your real monthly fixed costs and your average session economics from your last 10 invoices. Divide total fixed costs by contribution margin to find how many sessions per month keep the doors open.

Monthly rent

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Insurance (liability + property, per month)

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Utilities + internet (per month)

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Software subscriptions (Adobe, CRM, galleries, per month)

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Equipment financing / loan payment (per month)

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Total monthly fixed costs

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Average session price (last 10 invoices)

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Average variable cost per session (prints, packaging, fees)

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Contribution margin per session (price minus variable cost)

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Break-even sessions per month (fixed costs / contribution margin)

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### Exercise: Occupancy and Capacity Reality Check

Calculate your available billable hours and compare them honestly to what you can personally deliver. The gap is what rentals and workshops must fill.

- How many billable hours does your room hold per month (open hours x days open)?

- How many client sessions can you realistically shoot AND edit per month as the operator?
- What occupancy rate (booked hours / available hours) covers break-even plus a profit buffer?
- Which non-camera uses (rentals, workshops, content days) will fill the hours your shooting capacity cannot?

**Checklist: Lease Evaluation Checklist**

- Confirmed whether the lease is gross or triple-net (NNN adds taxes, insurance, maintenance)
- Total occupancy cost is under ~12-18% of projected annual revenue
- Negotiated a free or reduced-rent fit-out period (1-3 months)
- Capped annual rent escalation in writing (e.g. 3%)
- Lease explicitly permits subletting / renting the space to other photographers
- Ceiling height is 10 feet or more for full-length and boomed-light work
- Verified enough electrical circuits to run strobes and continuous lights without tripping breakers
- Checked natural light, parking, ground-floor/elevator access, and shared-wall noise

**Building the Rental and Product Revenue Engine**

Price studio rentals and physical products so idle hours and finished images both generate margin.

**Worksheet: Studio Rental Pricing Builder**

Research three comparable local studios on Peerspace and Giggster, then set your own rate card. Bracket your hourly rate between bare-room and fully-equipped comps for your market.

Comp 1 studio name and hourly rate

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Comp 2 studio name and hourly rate

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Comp 3 studio name and hourly rate

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My hourly rate (with 2-hour minimum)

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My half-day (4hr) block rate

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My full-day (8hr) block rate

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Add-on: lighting kit fee

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Add-on: backdrop / seamless paper fee

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Monthly membership rate (pre-bought hours)

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Deposit amount and overtime rate per 30 min

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## Worksheet: Product Pricing and Markup Sheet

For each core product, enter your all-in cost (lab + framing + packaging + fees), apply your target markup, and round to a clean price. Confirm a 15% discount still clears at least 2x cost.

Product name and size

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Lab cost

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Framing / mounting cost

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Packaging + shipping + card fees

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Total cost-of-goods

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Target markup (3x-5x art, 4x+ albums)

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Calculated price

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Rounded retail price

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Effective price after 15% discount

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Margin check: is discounted price  $\geq$  2x cost? (Y/N)

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## Exercise: Design Your In-Person Sales Session

Script the IPS experience end to end so it is repeatable for every client, not improvised each time.

- How will you set the expectation at booking that images are revealed and ordered in person?
  - What client info (wall photo, wall dimensions) will you collect in advance to show art to scale?
  - How many final images will you cull to, and what music/slideshow opens the reveal?
  - Which three collections will you offer, and how does the middle one anchor the choice?
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## Checklist: Rental Protection Checklist

- Signed rental agreement covering damage liability, equipment use, and house rules
- Deposit collected or card held on file before access is granted
- Overtime billed automatically in 30-minute increments
- Written cancellation policy (e.g. full refund 48h out, 50% inside 24h)
- Listed on Peerspace/Giggster for discovery but repeat renters driven to own booking page
- House rules posted in-studio (no shoes on cyc, no tape on walls, restock policy)

## Booking Software and Client Systems

Select a CRM and configure the automated inquiry-to-deposit workflow and a collision-free calendar.

### Worksheet: CRM Selection Scorecard

Score Studio Ninja, Sprout Studio, HoneyBook, and Dubsado against the features you actually need. Run one real inquiry through your top pick during its free trial before committing.

My must-have features (contracts / payments / scheduling / galleries / IPS)

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Monthly budget ceiling

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Studio Ninja score and notes

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Sprout Studio score and notes

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HoneyBook score and notes

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Dubsado score and notes

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Integrates with my payment processor (Stripe/Square)? (Y/N)

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Integrates with my calendar (Google)? (Y/N)

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Chosen platform

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Trial inquiry tested end-to-end? (Y/N)

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### Exercise: Map Your Inquiry-to-Deposit Workflow

Write the automated steps your CRM will run for every new lead so nothing depends on your memory during busy weeks.

- What does your instant auto-reply contain (pricing guide, booking link, response time promise)?
  - At which step does the client self-schedule, and from which live availability?
  - What deposit percentage (25-50%) and contract terms trigger on booking?
  - When do the 1-week and 1-day reminder emails fire automatically?
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### Checklist: Calendar and Anti-Double-Booking Checklist

- Two-way sync enabled between scheduler and main calendar so a booking anywhere blocks everywhere
- Buffers (30-60 min) set before and after each session type
- Minimum booking notice set (e.g. 24 hours) to prevent same-hour ambush bookings
- Rental hours fenced off from client booking, or limited to approved windows
- Daily session cap set to protect editing time
- Client shoots, rentals, and workshops color-coded for at-a-glance readability

## Workflow Efficiency and Studio Financial Health

Document the shoot-to-delivery pipeline, build a KPI dashboard, and design offers that fill a soft calendar.

### Exercise: Document Your Shoot-to-Delivery Pipeline

Write the standard operating procedure for every job from card to delivered gallery, naming the tool and rule used at each stage.

- What is your ingest + backup rule (apply the 3-2-1 rule: 3 copies, 2 media types, 1 offsite)?

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- Which tool culls (PhotoMechanic / Lightroom) and what rating system do you use?

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- Which editing app and preset gets you to 80% of the look in one click?

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- Which gallery platform delivers and sells (Pic-Time / ShootProof), and what is your promised turnaround?

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### Worksheet: Monthly KPI and P&L Snapshot

Pull these numbers from your CRM and bookkeeping (QuickBooks/Wave) at month end. Calculate net margin and compare to last month and the same month last year.

Total revenue (sessions + product + rental)

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Number of clients

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Average order value (revenue / clients)

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Occupancy rate (booked hours / available hours)

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Inquiries received vs sessions booked (conversion %)

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Cost of goods sold (prints, albums, second shooters)

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Gross profit (revenue - COGS)

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Operating expenses (rent, insurance, software, utilities, marketing)

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Net profit (gross profit - operating expenses)

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Net margin % (net profit / revenue)

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### Exercise: Design a Calendar-Filling Mini-Session Day

Engineer a themed mini-session day to convert a slow week into revenue and new full-price leads.

- Which slow week and which theme (seasonal, holiday, branding headshots)?

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- How are minis priced to fill the room AND upsell into prints and full sessions?

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- How will you open self-serve, pre-paid booking through your CRM?

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- What is the follow-up sequence that turns mini clients into full-priced bookings?
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### Checklist: Studio Marketing Foundations Checklist

- Google Business Profile fully completed with categories, hours, photos, and services
- Structured review request sent after every delivery, plus a referral incentive
- Recurring content/behind-the-scenes posting cadence set for Instagram
- At least two local cross-referral partnerships established (planners, salons, boutiques)
- A styled or content shoot scheduled each quarter to refresh the portfolio
- Mini-session or studio event planned for each historically slow period

### Your Action Plan

1. Complete the Break-Even Calculator with real fixed costs and your last 10 invoices to learn your monthly break-even session count
2. Run the Lease Evaluation Checklist against your current or prospective space and renegotiate any failing terms
3. Research three local rental comps and publish your studio rental rate card with a deposit and overtime policy
4. Build your product pricing sheet with markups and confirm every item survives a 15% in-room discount
5. Choose one CRM (Studio Ninja, Sprout Studio, HoneyBook, or Dubsado) and run a real inquiry through its free trial
6. Configure the automated inquiry-to-deposit workflow, including the instant auto-reply and reminder emails
7. Turn on two-way calendar sync and set buffers and a daily session cap to prevent double-bookings
8. Document your shoot-to-delivery SOP with named tools and a 3-2-1 backup rule, targeting a 1-2 week turnaround
9. Set up your KPI and P&L snapshot in QuickBooks or Wave and commit to reviewing it on the first of every month
10. Schedule one mini-session day in your next slow week and promote it to your list and Google Business Profile











