
THE POWER OF EXTENDING YOUR BRAND ONLINE

A Study of Two Very Different Photographers
with Two Very Similar Challenges

liveBooks

THE BENEFITS

Builds brand recognition and respect

Creates new business leads

Exudes trustworthiness and professionalism

Showcases businesses' creativity

Underscores brand identity

OVERVIEW

Emilie Sommer and Carol Stevenson are two unique photographers with very different clients, but, like most creative professionals, their goals are the same: They want to grow their brands and get more work. Both small business owners attribute their recent successes to the online and offline integration of their brands.

Sommer, the founder of emilie inc. photography, a photojournalism wedding studio based in Portland, Maine, branded her studio with its signature pink and chocolate brown polka dots. Likewise, Stevenson, a fine art and documentary photographer who recently became known for her work with elephants in the Asia-Pacific region, has embraced the giant pachyderms as the image for her brand.

The two women keep this branding consistent across their websites, social networking pages and right through to their stationery and business cards. Sommer and Stevenson say companies like liveBooks and Moo have played an integral role in helping them to promote and maintain their brands across all channels.

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Emilie Sommer
www.emilieinc.com

Before Integration

Before working with companies like liveBooks and Moo to facilitate their online and offline brand consistency, Sommer and Stevenson waded through the process of identifying their business goals, creating a logo and turning those ideas into a full-fledged brand.

Stevenson, who came from the corporate world, said marketing her earlier photographic work seemed second nature to her. However, as her business grew and she started to work on more elephant conservation projects, she struggled to bring that interest into the fold. She said, “As the project has grown, new channels to create awareness were needed for a strongly branded campaign, to differentiate the project, and to present a highly professional look and feel consistent with the organizations supporting the project.”

Sommer has an impressive background in photojournalism, but lacked the business experience she needed to start her own company. So she turned to her peers and small business start-up books for inspiration and advice. She followed her gut and worked her way through trial and error. She said she spent “thousands” on magazine ads and listings to promote her business, and while she had a stunning website, it was “a hassle to update and the functionality was limited.”

The Challenge

Once the small business owners decided what their brands would look like, they were challenged to decide what channels they would use to share their work so that their brands would resonate with potential clients.

Both Sommer and Stevenson started this process with a search for the perfect website. They needed a sleek, online storefront that was easy to navigate and update so they could regularly refresh their content and brand. They also sought out companies that could partner with them to emulate that same sense of style and professional prowess on their printed materials, such as their websites, blogs, business cards and stationery.

Problem Solved

Choosing liveBooks and Moo was a no-brainer for these two professional photographers. “liveBooks is the best of the best out there, and I ultimately I want to be driving the Lexus not the Taurus. Their sites, support and community are a springboard to success,” said Sommer.

The business owners said liveBooks makes it easy to provide private access to their sites for clients, and to update their site content and images on an ongoing basis. Both photographers also take advantage of liveBooks' compatibility with multimedia, which allows them to use videos to highlight how they work and showcase their personalities for potential clients.

These websites serve as the foundation for other branding efforts. For instance, Sommer links her site to a successful blog and both she and Stevenson have incorporated their brands into their social networking presence on sites like Facebook and Twitter.

Stevenson continues her branding – and image sharing – on her Moo greeting and business cards. She said she has clients who collect her cards and that, “because of the high reproduction quality of the Moo products, I’m about to begin a promotional campaign for the fine art prints using Moo’s postcards.”

“Moo’s cards leave people wanting to see more of my photography and, in turn, they head to my liveBooks sites.”

Carol Stevenson
www.stevensonimages.com
www.elephantphotographer.com



Return on Investment

Sommer says her liveBooks website and matching blog are the cornerstones of her business and the success behind increased traffic to her virtual storefront. In fact, she said liveBooks' SEO placement has ranked her first in Google searches for "Maine wedding photography" and, since implementing her site, she receives three "organic search" enquiries a day. Previously, she was lucky to achieve three leads a week.

Furthermore, Sommer says her team doubled their revenue and the number of weddings they photographed in 2009. "My photography business was making money before, but with an integrated brand I feel the brand itself is attracting new clients and keeping current clients engaged," she said.

Stevenson said she often cross-references the images on her Moo cards that people select most frequently with the page analytics from her liveBooks site to determine which photographs are most popular. This helps her refine her series and determine which images should be used in her new collections.

As a result of her online and offline brand integration, and the new channels that she's introducing into this process, Stevenson's elephant photography conservation project has gained an immense amount of notoriety. It has been featured on the Nikon website and the series is now featured in a high-end, luxury equestrian magazine in three continents. The project is currently supported by Anantara Resorts, Four Seasons, Nikon, and Lowepro.

Stevenson's partners increasingly use social networking sites to help promote the project and link to her website. While liveBooks' SEO efforts have significantly increased traffic to her site, 50 percent of Stevenson's referrals are now from her partners' websites and from publications that feature her work. Stevenson says her websites and print campaigns are all integral to maintaining a consistent brand image.

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Emilie Sommer
www.emilieinc.com



The Result

Sommer and Stevenson’s online and offline brand integration efforts have resulted in a heightened awareness of their work and more leads from potential clients.

Stevenson says Moo’s quality products reflect her fine art prints and tell the story of the elephants she photographs. By printing her images on her business cards, she leaves people wanting to see more and encourages them to visit her liveBooks sites. The result is more work and greater opportunity.

Sommer has seen her revenue – and her workload – double. She’s also noticed how her branding affects clients’ perceptions of her business. She said, “There is a value in having everything consistent: From the exterior sign to the furniture to the paint on the walls and the sample albums, to our promotional pieces and an extensive line of stationery cards, envelopes, gift certificates, greeting cards, and business cards. This, and our consistency in our online outlets, reinforces our brand. Potential clients take note, recognize it, and it creates an avenue for establishing trust.”