

# Introduction

*"Yeah, I'm just so booked, man." "I don't know whether to hire a second shooter or to block off more time for myself."*

*I eavesdropped, listening in to my husband chatting with his brother about how slammed his calendar was for the next few weeks.*

*He continued, "Last year, I would wake up and be booked maybe one or two days out." "This year, I'm booking weeks out in advance."*

The real estate industry is hot where we live right now. And Ben, with his solid work ethic, attention to detail, creative composition and use of light, and an eye for opportunity, well, he's in high demand.

People tell him all the time, "It's a good problem to have."

He's had shoots for 10-million-dollar mansions. This year, his work was featured in *atHome Magazine*, a South Carolina magazine for luxury living. You would think, with this much business, we would be pouring money into ads, spending hours promoting him in social media, and doing tons of networking events.

Ben is only three years into his business. His first job was forty-five minutes away. He showed up with a simple Canon camera and only made \$75. He's grown 40% year over year for the last two years.

But why am I telling you about my husband's real estate photography business? Why does it matter? This book is supposed to be about social media marketing.

It started as most stories do these days: during COVID. We had recently returned from a one-year sabbatical we took with our family—a one-year trip around the US, touring national parks with our kids in an RV. When we returned to our home state of South Carolina, we decided to stay awhile. We parked the RV, took up residence in a small, 950-square-foot home we had been renting out while we were on the road, and began to assess what we wanted to do with our lives.

Ben had spent the last ten years as a bicycle mechanic. He loved the culture but not the pay. It wasn't enough to provide for our family. I had spent the last eight years working part-time as a marketing manager for a small, locally owned pet nutrition store and learning about digital marketing.

With little budget to work with, my goal at my marketing job was to make every dollar ROI-positive for this mom-and-pop shop. I started learning about online marketing and the power of blogging and social media for businesses in 2008. As the pet events dwindled in attendance, I had to look for other ways to bring in new clients and revenue, forcing me to get very creative. I learned on-the-fly, testing new marketing techniques and purchasing online courses to teach me what colleges weren't yet teaching.

Fast forward back to 2018, and we were in our little house. As I unpacked our 350-square-foot RV into our 950-square-foot home, I found myself flipping through photos Ben had taken of our kids. To say they were amazing would be an understatement. Using the exact same smartphone as me that year, his photos captured emotion, movement, and light way better than any "mom with her phone" snapshots I had taken that year.

I asked myself, "He's so good." "How can he make money with this?" I picked up my phone off the floor where I was sitting and looked up our neighborhood's listings on Zillow and Redfin, taking note of the pictures of for-sale homes that realtors had taken with their phones. There were homes listed at \$250,000 and up, with a realtor's reflection in the mirror and patchy grass in the yard. I brought my phone in and sat down by Ben on the couch.

"Look at this. I mean, look. This is terrible. You can do this. You could do real estate photography and kill it." We purchased a \$500 Canon camera on Amazon that night and set out to get Ben clients using LinkedIn, Canva flyers, and no website.

Ben grew pretty quickly that first year. By year two, I decided to leave the position I was in, working as a project manager for people who wanted to build online courses and sales funnels for their businesses. At-home learning during COVID was taking a lot of my attention, and my kids needed me. During the break, I asked Ben what I could do to alleviate some pressure for him. I couldn't shoot; I didn't have his eye, but I had nine years of marketing experience, so maybe I could help there.

I looked through his social media and began to optimize each channel for search engine traffic and conversions, and I got traffic coming through his social media to convert into leads or customers for his business. Little things, like optimizing his Google My Business profile, got him in the Google 3-Pack literally overnight. (The Google 3-Pack consists of the top three Google Maps listings on a local business search.) I was sending the right signals, and the internet liked them. Ben's social media profiles and Google My Business listing now showed on page one of Google for search terms like "real estate photographer Greenville, SC."

I asked myself how I could make the signal to Google stronger for those looking for a real estate photographer in our area. I started playing with Google ads. We weren't spending a ton—less than \$300 a month—but Google noticed.

During this time, Ben was creating all his own posts and content. Trying to stay relevant and post one to two times a week was a lot on top of his already busy schedule, but I knew that posting at least once a day was what it would take to take over the social scene for real estate photographers in our area.

I also knew I couldn't ask him to do that. He was already running at full speed, all gas, no brakes. I didn't have the time to fully commit to running and managing his social media myself, nor did I want to. I had two kids in a mix of virtual school and homeschool, and I had decided to get back in the saddle and take on client work, working with smaller clients at a slower pace so that I could prioritize my family. I also knew from first-hand experience that social media, with the wrong strategy, could become a time suck with little to no return. Time is not a commodity I give up easily.

So I did what I like to do in situations like this. I created a strategy. I analyzed what his competitors were doing and crossed that information with what top names in the industry were doing in the US. I joined a coaching program. I took a few courses. Then, I created a 98% hands-off strategy to manage his social media.

The strategy I use for my clients and what I will teach you in this book is 98% evergreen. I don't chase social media trends—no TikTok dances or challenges here. It also takes less than two hours per month if you use the systems I show you, including using a virtual assistant to help create content. And, to make it even better, I'll teach you how to pull it together with a little SEO magic to use your social media accounts to help you rank on page one on search engines like Google—just like I do for my clients.

Ben still posts to social media occasionally now, mostly for fun. He doesn't worry about hashtags, reach, or engagement because he knows we have those in the bag. He now has the luxury of only posting when he feels inspired. Because his social media accounts are updated daily, he stays top of mind with all his existing realtors and gains new clients often.

I've overheard new clients ask Ben on an initial phone call, "If I hire you, will you share these house photos on your social profiles?" because they know that Ben's profile will get their listings more exposure. They're not just paying for real estate photography. They're paying for real estate photography and marketing—a chance to be featured on his page. So, Ben can charge higher prices than many in the market.

As we stay on top of his Google My Business listing, he stays in the top Google 3-pack search for real estate photographers. Today, he had three calls in less than two hours from people he's never worked with looking to book him on a shoot.

Ben now focuses on what he loves to do: shoot houses and have fun. And let's be real—there's still stuff he doesn't love to do—but he's now able to process and systemize those things as well.

Because he doesn't have to stress about creating content or trying to stay top of mind with clients, he gets to test new fun social media tricks regularly—like shooting video of one of his realtor clients falling into a pool for IG Reels and TikTok. He gets to play.

Social Media On Auto is not a "30 days to fully booked" promise. But it is a promise.

It is a promise of getting your time back...

It is a promise of staying top of mind for your clients to increase and maintain client retention...

It is a promise to reduce your stress...

It is a promise of finding social media for your business fun again...

And if you follow the strategies I outline in this book, it is a promise of continued growth, year over year, for less than two hours a month of your time.

After spending thirteen years in online marketing, working on everything from websites to ads to traffic and social media to increase brand recognition to conversion funnels, I know one thing really well: systems make the world go round. Once you have solid systems in place, you can take your hand off stirring that pot and turn your attention to other revenue-generating (or even relaxation) activities.

The strategies and systems I will teach you in this book are designed to be implemented in as little as one week, but could take you up to thirty days, depending on your dedication to this project and your commitment to getting your time back.

Once up and running, you'll see your social media post reach and engagement tick up between 20% and 200%, depending on how well you follow what I'll teach you. Our first month, we saw more than 40% growth, and that was when I was just starting out.

In this 30-day sprint to automate your social media, I'll teach you how to think strategically. I'll show you how to see the patterns and how to read the algorithm matrix. It's up to you to apply the strategy and do the work.

I will go ahead and tell you that the key to getting this system running like a machine will be hiring a reliable virtual assistant for your business to handle your posts for you. But don't worry about that right now; I'll teach you how to do that as well.

Social media, done right, can fulfill all the promises I mentioned earlier without having you do crazy TikTok dances or Ice Bucket Challenges. It can position you as an authority in your sphere and grow your business and your influence in the community. It can level you up and get you access to clients and the lifestyle you desire.

You may read this and think, "Thirty days?" "I don't have that time right now." I encourage you to make the time. Once you build the system, you'll have an automated system that will help you build your brand this year, the year after that, and for years to come.

You've probably heard it before. "The best time to buy a house was ten years ago." "The next best time to buy a house is today." The longer you wait to get started, the longer you'll wait to have your time back while growing your business on autopilot.

And, if one day you decide that real estate photography is no longer for you, well, you could sell your successful business, fully branded, for a great price and add that to your retirement fund or take a very nice year-long trip yourself.

But what if you're reading this as a realtor? You can roll your brand over to a winning agency or start your own brokerage.

It's time to dive in. In Chapter 1, "How Marketing Works," I'm going to teach you how to build an effective social media funnel to grow your brand, grow your traffic, and bring in leads. Let's get started.