



## RECOUPING POTENTIALLY LOST SENIORS

Consumer confidence has eroded the traditional senior market. Fear has set in as consumers struggle with a higher cost of gas, double digit decline in 401K plans, home devaluations and higher mortgage payments, job uncertainties and rising food costs to name a few. Being placed under economic pressure, senior portrait sessions have declined from 10% to 35% across the US. Some studios have bucked this declining trend. To be brief, here are some of the tactics they are using. We suggest that studios apply what will work in their markets to recoup lost sessions. Special note: If you do not react quickly, sessions may not be recouped. Plan on 10% of households that intended to purchase senior portraits will NOT while an estimated 26% will spend less than planned.

As a studio owner your goal is sell, sell, sell to raise sitting averages while attempting to attract more seniors away from competitors. Here are tactics that can be set into motion right now!

1. Set up an Ambassador Program ASAP. Select at least six seniors from those you have already photographed. Interview them; get parental approval. Provide them with folios & proof books from their sessions to show to classmates. Give a brief training session. Have them hand out your business card. Offer prizes and rewards that have minimal cost for sessions they book or have influenced to book. Always state the retail value of prizes or rewards. Example: your cost for 24 wallets is \$5.00 but your ala carte price is \$90.00. Most studios would gladly give up \$5.00 to get a \$300.00+ session that they would never have had. Important: you must have at least 6 active ambassadors willing to "show and tell", make phone calls and send out emails to friends and classmates. (See item 2 below.)
2. If you already have an Ambassador Program you may want to tweak it with some of these tactics. Have your ambassadors compile a senior directory for you to include: name, address, telephone number and email address. Provide simple scripts for message content. Ask ambassadors to make telephone calls or send emails as "student to student" not your "studio to student." Emphasize how much fun your sessions are while providing the greatest poses. Follow up with a mailing to each ambassador's relevant contact. Revamp your prizes and rewards accordingly. Have biweekly pizza parties at your studio for ambassadors and their friends to keep interest at a high level.
3. Call your High Schools for extensions of YBG deadlines. Note: see if YB advisor would accept a retouched file as an email attachment.

4. Ask year book advisors to make announcements on the urgency on being photographed for the YB.
5. Ask for permission to put notices on general school bulletin boards.(Some schools do allow this.)
6. To meet YBG deadlines. KEEP your studio open on evenings up to 8:00 p.m. You must make it easy for students to get photographed. DO NOT expect principals to let seniors out of class. If they would, now even more sessions can be recouped.
7. Ask photographed seniors to show their proof books to classmates to select a favorite pose and hand out your business cards even if you have no interest in the "ambassador concept." Note: nearly all studios doing well DO have ambassador programs.
8. Vary your poses enough to avoid the appearance of "cookie cutter sessions."
9. Mention that you offer an "installment payment plan." Using the consumer's credit card number, etc. you can offer a 4 installment plan to make it easier for hard pressed families to purchase from you.

Note: you must always add the 3% charge to each installment.

10. If your studio has gone to electronic proofing, you now must find ways to attract seniors to your web site and senior galleries. Not as easy as it seems. Note: very few cars are sold without a test drive. To touch and feel still goes a long way in the purchasing process. Hard copy proofing, if shared with classmates, will always obtain better results than electronic means. Why? Mom and Dad still has some say here because it takes a hard copy proof to sell a hard copy portrait. This process may not readily connect with your Gen-Y senior, but it still does with Gen-X Mom and Dad.

We suggest that if you have any questions please contact Bill and Steve, your lab consultants. They can add additional anecdotal scenarios to any of the above and help you get started.

Note: We are only sending this E-zine to active accounts even though we have over 7,000 subscribers to our regular E-zine. Active accounts are special to us and as such you deserve our undivided attention during this Senior Crunch.

If you think a friend or studio would benefit from our newsletter, have them contact Pechman Imaging to sign up. <http://pechmanimaging.com/contactpechmanco.html>  
*Let us know your thoughts.*

Email us at: [marketing@pechmanimaging.com](mailto:marketing@pechmanimaging.com)

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