

# EPISODE 59: HOW TO ORGANIZE A WORKSHOP FOR YOUR CREATIVE BUSINESS

with Peter Hurley

Marketing for Creatives Show  
at [IntNetworkPlus.com](http://IntNetworkPlus.com)

**Announcer:**

Turn your hobby and freelance work into a profitable business! Make your marketing easier by applying the strategies of experienced entrepreneurs and have more time to do the work you love. You are listening to the Marketing for Creatives show with your host Marina Barayeva.

**Marina Barayeva:**

Hi everyone. This is Marina Barayeva. Welcome to another episode of Marketing for Creatives show. In this episode, we gonna talk about how to organize a workshop for your creative business.

It can be a way to make extra money or even have it as a business model. Let's go through the example of organizing a photography workshop.

We will talk about what you need for that, why shouldn't you worry if other people will kind of steal your business ideas and what mistakes to avoid.

Our special guest today is Peter Hurley.

Peter is the premier headshot photographer in New York City. He is known for the genuine expressions he captures in his actors' headshots and executive business portraits.

**Marina Barayeva:**

Hi Peter. Welcome to the show. How are you doing today?

**Peter Hurley:**

I'm good. How are you? Thanks for having me, Marina.

**Marina Barayeva:**

I'm very good and I'm so happy to have you here. I was following your work for a long time and I'm so excited to share your story. To hear your story, to share with other people. Tell us, how did you become so successful photographer?

### Peter Hurley:

I would say, my story's kind of crazy and long, but I'll shorten it. Kind of fill you in. I was training for the Olympics in the sport of sailing. I met a photographer. I did a job. I was sailing my boat but they were looking for real sailors to do a job for Ralph Lauren for Polo Sport.

I showed up in with my boat, went sailing and this cool photographer took pictures. His name was Bruce Weber. We became friends and he continued to take pictures of me.

I ended up coming to New York and starting a modeling career, which was great. It was fun. I enjoyed it. It got me into acting a little bit, but I was like the model-actor-bartender dude.

I was working till 4:00 AM in a bar for try to make ends. I did fairly well as a model but it wasn't enough to really sustain on a nice lifestyle in New York City.

I ended up leaving, going back and training for the Olympics again. I made the US team in 2000.

Then when the ceiling was ended I came back to New York and I was like, "Oh my gosh, I got to figure out something so I don't have to go into the bartending again."

I picked up a camera and I was going to make this work. I focused all my attention on photography. It was amazing. It just took off. I was really passionate about it. I was just all my focus and all my energy and everything went towards it.

I concentrated on shooting my friends first, which were actors and models and then the actors' headshot market in New York was very vibrant at the time. So, I started doing headshot photography.

That is kind of how I got my claim to fame. I became known as the best headshot photographer in New York. That was it. It was all basically headshots for years and years and years.

The only time when things changed, it was when this photography blog known as the **fStoppers** contacted me and they said, "Hey, we're interviewing photographers. We'd love to interview you."

I had never really been interviewed before and I said "sure". They came in and they did this interview, which was nice.

All of a sudden more photographers started to contact me than my clients. I was like, "what's going on? This is crazy."

I thought that was really interesting. I decided to kind of capitalize on it and decided to teach my craft. That was in 2010 that they did that video. In 2011, I created my first workshop and I was petrified.

I remember the first day or the night, even the night's coming up to it, I was like, "Am I giving enough value? Am I teaching the right thing? Am I doing enough?" It was just really nerve-racking, but it went really, really well.

I've actually been doing this workshop now for seven years, I think. The first one was in 2011, in May of 2011. It's been seven years and it's still going strong. It is my signature workshop and I'm still continuing to do it and keep it going. I've done it all over the world.

**Marina Barayeva:**

What is your main focus now, do photography? You still have your photographer studio, but you have also your assistants there. Or you focus more on the workshops?

**Peter Hurley:**

I focus on the photography. But I basically took the workshops and I think this was just a really amazing move that I did, is that it created a website that is a coaching website. So, people will partake in the workshop and then they get involved with my coaching site. Then we've created this group. It's called the headshot crew.

I coached these photographers. Then I have a referral service that gives them jobs. If they're good they can be found through the site. Then the coaching goes on there. So, they go through.

Some of them, find the headshot crew directly and don't take my workshop. Or they take the workshop first, then they get on the headshot crew. Or sometimes there'll be on the headshot crew and then they'll take the workshops.

It's great. It both feeds themselves both directions. It's an amazing kind of thing that I've got going on here at the moment.

**Marina Barayeva:**

So it's kind of a mix for you? You do photography and do your workshops. Two businesses perfectly match each other.

**Peter Hurley:**

Basically, every day I'm working on something different. If I have a shoot, I do a shoot. If I don't have a shoot then I'll work on products for the teaching.

**Marina Barayeva:**

For so many years you're trained so many photographers and you have even the website who help those photographers to get new jobs.

When you share all your work, do you share all the secrets with people: how you do it, how you make money out of these, how you grow business?

**Peter Hurley:**

Everything. Yeah.

### **Marina Barayeva:**

If you do this, there's a lot of creatives struggling with this. What if they will share all their knowledge with people: how they create stuff, how they build a business, what if all of those people will start their own companies and they will just take your clients? What if you will be without the job?

### **Peter Hurley:**

It's interesting. The first workshop I did, one of the photographers came in and he asked me the same question. It was the very first workshop I was doing.

He said, "You're teaching us everything. What if we... I mean, we're here in your city doing the same thing and you're teaching us how to do it."

I think a couple things. One is there's enough to go around.

And two if there's not, if you're afraid of that, then you're never going to push yourself to move forward. If you keep doing the same thing over and over and over again, you're either creating or your disintegrating.

If you're afraid of competition, you're not really creative anyway. If you're a creative person and a creative type, then you wouldn't care about the competition and you'd just be creative.

By the time somebody I teach... I can teach people how to make a great living by taking headshots. To get to the level that I'm at and where I'm at would be... it can be done. I've seen photographers doing it and I love it. I love the fact that I had a hand in that.

But for them to do it in there, in my city next to me, the way I do it, I mean, nobody can be me. And nobody can be you. It's like you can't.

You can teach all you want. What I do is I have this analogy that I teach people because I have a big personality. I'm behind the camera. I'm coaching my subjects. I'm talking like a crazy person. A lot of people can't relate to that. If they're quiet or introverted.

When I'm teaching, they need to know that I'm teaching the way I do it. They have to incorporate the way they're going to do it. Since we're all human beings, we're all individuals, we have all got our own take on this thing.

I like to liken it to I'm baking a pie. My technique and all my photography knowledge for the last 18 years are wrapped up in this pie. That is, if you bite a piece of the pie, it's really, really good. It tastes amazing.

And it's my pie. It got all my ingredients, how I shoot, what I do, what I teach has got everything in this pie.

But the pie is still actually baking. I'm still adding new ingredients to it all the time and taking old ingredients that don't work anymore away. So I'm constantly making this pie tastes better.

The person that I teach is going to get all the ingredients that are in my current time. Everything I know is in that pie.

They've got their own pie that they're baking. They're not going to take all the ingredients for my pie, stick it in their pie because it's not going to work.

They're going to take bits and pieces. They're going to learn. They're gonna get a sense of what should be in their pie.

They're going to take what does work, put it in their pie. It's gonna accelerate their career, opens up doors for them and gets them going in a way that they never had before. Otherwise, it just wouldn't be worth it for me to be teaching this workshop for the last seven years.

It's really something like that. People have to be their own individual. They also have to put the work in, the time in and be passionate about what they're doing.

For somebody to come and take my business away or surpassed me or whatever, it's never been a concern.

### **Marina Barayeva:**

Do you teach only one workshop, you picked one topic or you have different levels or different topics that you teach?

### **Peter Hurley:**

The main workshop I teach is called the Headshot Intensive. It is a two-day workshop. I actually do a three-day workshop with it. The third day is called Headshot Intensified. It's the third day.

But I just teach a workshop on headshots right now. I used to have another workshop on teaching photographers how to light, but I stopped doing that.

I might start that one up again, but I really like doing, I'm most competent doing the Headshot Intensive and I love it. So I continued to do that one.

### **Marina Barayeva:**

How would you pick the topic for a workshop or how would you suggest other people pick the topic based on their knowledge?

### **Peter Hurley:**

It's got to be based on your specialty and especially you have to be an expert in the field. It's upsetting to me when somebody who's not an expert in the field teaches a word. Like there's a lot of photographers who just pick up a camera, start doing headshots and then start teaching headshots.

They're not really experts in the field. It's kind of funny to me. Their work doesn't throw me, doesn't amp me up and they're trying to compete with me I guess. I just don't get it.

You should be an expert in whatever you're doing. You can't just start teaching something that's a specialty if you're not actually a professional at it and doing it for a fairly substantial number of years I would say.

### **Marina Barayeva:**

That's interesting. How to organize a workshop? What's the difference between your first workshop and what you have now?

### **Peter Hurley:**

I think it's fine-tuning it. I basically based mine... I talked to other people doing it. If you talk to people in your field and you become friends with them, you can ask them advice on how to run a workshop.

I think basically you have to figure out the time and make sure that time is filled with value. Doing exercises, laying out your... not only speaking about the topic but having exercises are very important. However long that takes.

My two-day workshop I used to do from 9 in the morning till like 2 in the morning on Saturday. Then from 9 in the morning until 6 in the afternoon on Sunday. I was just exhausted and I was like, "All right, this is crazy, why am I doing this?"

I did it because another photographer told me that that's what he did. He just went until people got tired on Saturday night to late in the morning. I was like, that was the dumbest idea. I don't know why I did that.

I stopped and I decided I started at 9... and I used to give them breakfast, lunch, and dinner. So it was included with food and everything.

So I said, "Wait a minute, if I start at 9 they're going to need breakfast, then we'd give it a break for lunch, then we're going to go to dinner and then we're going to stay in the studio until like midnight.

I was like, "Let me change this." So I changed it to start at 10 and I was like, "By then everybody should have breakfast, so I don't need to worry about breakfast anymore." Which was important I guess.

Then we break for lunch and I was like, "You know what, I'm traveling all over the world with this workshop. I don't have time to figure out... I remember I was in Zurich, Switzerland and hamburgers were like, the cheeseburger was like 40USD.

I was like, wait a minute, how am I going to account for feeding everybody? So I bought lunch, I was like, "This is crazy. I got to figure out this."

Then I was like, let me take, knocked down the price of the workshop so I don't have to buy them lunch.

Then I was buying them dinner and I said, "Let me not buy them dinner." I got rid of all the food because of the stress and the hassle. I started at 10:00 AM and I finished at 10 at night and I guess it wasn't very clear. Some workshops, they'll expect you to feed them.

I was in the Netherlands and everybody got upset that I wasn't paying for their food. I was like, "I thought it was clearly stated on the website." So food became an issue and a cultural thing.

Make sure you have that nailed down when you're doing a workshop. But for me, it's about the content. It's not about making sure everybody's comfortable and everything. But I let them... Now what I do is I say, "Hey, if you want to go to lunch, go find something that you like, come back at this hour. If you want to come with the group will go as a group"

At dinner, same thing. You want to go, go ahead. If you want to come in as a group, come in as a group.

That was something that took a while for me to figure out. But it's much easier not being responsible to feed your people. But if you're with them for an extended period of time, you have to make sure they're comfortable.

### **Marina Barayeva:**

Let them take care of themselves. (Laughter)

### **Peter Hurley:**

Basically.

### **Marina Barayeva:**

What about the place for the workshop or team, if you need one? How do you organize those things?

### **Peter Hurley:**

I need a photo studio. I can do it in a room that's fairly sizable. I could do it in a hotel or an event space, but I like photo studios. I searched for photo studio specifically.

Usually, they have white walls and I have to photograph that. Sometimes they have light stands or lights that I can use. I usually look for photo studios. I try to find them in the cities where I'm going and sometimes they're really helpful in actually helping me find people to sign up for the workshop.

If they know you're coming, if you've got somebody that let's say that somebody follows you on social media and they're a big fan of yours and you say, "Hey, I'm going to come there" and they're like one of those organizing types, they might say to you, "Hey, can we organize a get together at a local bar or restaurant or something? Or could we organize maybe a talk before your workshop for people in the area who might want to meet you?"

I love doing it. I do it all over the world. I think it's really nice and if you have a free talk that gives some people some insight into what you're doing, it might inspire them. They get going.

If you got free space in your workshop, it might get people to sign up or it might get you a client down the road, who knows?

### **Marina Barayeva:**

How do you set the price for the workshop?

### **Peter Hurley:**

You've got to look at your industry. It's kind of based on what people value what's your value. You're putting a value on a price on yourself.

For me, I want to make money with it, but at the time it's my time. If I'm going to spend 12 hours from 10:00 AM to 10:00 PM on Saturday and another eight hours on Sunday from 10 to 6 I've got to make sure that I make enough, that there's value there for me.

I charge \$1,500. It is what it costs for my workshop at the moment and I have 12 or 13 spots available. The 13th spot is for somebody who took the workshop previously. You can do that. You can have them come back.

If they're taking the workshop and they want to take it again they can come back for half price. They've already taken it. They come back, they take it for half price. I tell them I might need them to help me out here and there.

I don't use assistance. I try to run really lean, so I don't need an assistant for the workshop. Most of the people who come, the students are very helpful and if I do need an assistant, it will be that person who comes in, takes that half price.

But I'll ask, I'll lean on them to help me with anything. But most of the time it's just, for instance, I'm going to Houston in two weeks. I don't know the restaurants around the studio. I'll ask somebody, "Hey, find a restaurant. Find a couple of restaurants around the studio that we can get there together. Easy to get to.

That's the other key. Make sure if you're doing that, that they're available, they have space. You can get in and out. Because you have teaching to do. You don't want to take too much time away from that. That's about it.

And the price is based basically on what I want to make over the weekend. I also am a photographer, so I photograph everybody that comes into my workshop.

For somebody to get in front of my camera for a half hour, it's a thousand dollars. They're getting a thousand-dollar value just out of the picture I'd taken them. That kind of stipulates the price.

I'm not going to go under a thousand dollars because that's what I get if they came in and shot with me anyway. That's kind of another area where I can figure out my pricing due to my expertise, my shooting.

### **Marina Barayeva:**

For those who are just growing their workshops, maybe starting, maybe they've done some of them, when would you suggest do them for free or like you do some gathering with people and teach some stuff? And when would you charge? What would be the difference?



### **Peter Hurley:**

Well, I wouldn't do any workshops for free. Except for a talk or something that's like only an hour or maybe two hours. Sometimes I do a two-hour talk for free. But you have to have something to sell in order to do that.

So product for me, I have a book. I wrote a book so I sell the book. The book gets them into the headshot crew, which is or my classes. And if they buy the book they get into the coaching and all of that is great.

But if you don't have anything to sell or anything going on, there's teaching for free doesn't make much sense to me.

If you teach a little bit for free and then giving them something for free, it is a way to get their attention and get them on your program, but you no need to do a workshop for free

### **Marina Barayeva:**

Then you would do maybe some talks and then still you would offer them something valuable that you can sell or try to offer the workshop or the book or something? Or would you just do the workshop? The paid workshop, right?

### **Peter Hurley:**

For instance, I'm going to Houston. I'm doing a talk on Friday night for two hours for a room full of people.

Some of those people may be in the workshop on Saturday. Some may not. I sold out the workshop for the weekends, so what I was thinking was I do the thing Friday night and then maybe people would sign up for Saturday, but now it's sold out. It's almost like I'm doing the Friday night workshop for free.

But I set up a second workshop that has one more space in it. It's really not the best scenario because now I'm doing a free talk but I don't have space to put people in so I'm going to try and sell some product of some sort hopefully to get people on my program. Maybe if I ever go back to Houston they will come into the workshop.

### **Marina Barayeva:**

That's interesting. How to market a workshop to get people?

### **Peter Hurley:**

I usually do the workshop just through the website, then I'll do social media and then I'll run some Facebook ads or something like that.

I have a little video that runs on Facebook. You could target an area, make sure you have some content about your workshop, maybe some testimonials, that kind of thing. That gets people kind of fired up.

But most of the marketing to the workshops happens because the following, because of what I do and I've been out there like doing YouTube videos that are on my YouTube

channel. People watch and absorb all the free content they can. They get to know me through that.

I'll travel the world and people will come up to me on the street and all should bang and stuff and I'm like, oh my gosh.

It's the whole persona. You've got to get yourself out there. Doing actually three videos and putting them on a YouTube channel and growing that channel helps feed the workshops.

**Marina Barayeva:**

That means that social media marketing works well for you instead of just direct selling to people.

**Peter Hurley:**

Yeah.

**Marina Barayeva:**

And what do you do after the workshop? Do you follow up with people somehow or you just have done it and that's it? Or they go to headshot crew?

**Peter Hurley:**

Yeah, they move over to headshot crew. What we do in each workshop, we usually put together a Facebook group. I just don't have separate groups, smaller groups on headshot crew to put them in these buckets basically.

What we do is we create a Facebook group for the workshop itself so people stay in touch through that and they also get on headshot crew and get the coaching through the headshot.

**Marina Barayeva:**

Interesting. What mistake did you make when you started organizing your workshops and all of these years of growing that?

**Peter Hurley:**

I think the food thing was a mistake. (Laughter) Going past midnight was a mistake. I think the other thing is that you have to have a clearly defined schedule as to how this workshop is going to go and what they're going to learn.

I want people to know to go in what it is that they're going to learn. If you're not very clear about that, people can get disappointed, "This wasn't for me. This wasn't what I thought."

I think a lot of people have to understand that your teaching based on your experience. A lot of my teaching is based on things that have happened to me. That's why it's so powerful.

I've been doing it so long. I have so many stories in my brain that I can discuss. Pull content from those stories really helps make the teaching memorable.

For instance, if I teach something technical, if I add a story to it it's going to be much more memorable than if I just teach the photographic technical stuff because that gets kind of boring.

A lot of my teaching is based on my stories. If somebody doesn't want to listen to my stories, they're not going to be sitting in the class and they want to be technical. I'm not that guy. They should know this is based on the experience that I've had in my career and that's the way the information is going to come at you.

They need to just make sure you lay it all out for them so that they know what they're getting.

### **Marina Barayeva:**

At the beginning when you started, did you write everything down, practiced in front of the mirror? How did you become so comfortable to do those workshops?

### **Peter Hurley:**

I think if, again, if you're practicing what you preach, it's very easy. Now I don't even look at my workshop and I just show up at 10:00 AM in the morning. I have zero nerves. I just do them and I have fun. I don't even think about it.

When I started, I would stay up at night and couldn't sleep the night before wondering whether the information is good.

It just depends. If you're acting, you've got to walk your walk and talk your talk. If you're trying to sell snake oil or you're trying to sell something that you're actually not an expert in, you're going to have a hard time.

You're not going to feel comfortable. I don't care how good of an actor you are, it's not going to come across and you're taking people's money. There has to be based on value.

If your value is there, then you should be confident. I'm very confident in my value of what I teach and the experience that these people were having. It helps.

### **Marina Barayeva:**

Peter, could you please give our listeners kind of a strategy, what are the main steps they could do to organize a workshop within next month?

### **Peter Hurley:**

Within the next month? The best thing that they can do is figure out what their most important tips are that they want to teach. Then flush those out so that they have kind of a game plan in terms of what they're going to teach first. They should build upon themselves.

Whatever it is as your creative, whatever you're trying to teach something to somebody to do something, there's got to be a process. Your process is going to be different than anybody else's process.

If you start to think about your process and really dissect it. Some of the most amazing things that I've learned about the way I do what I do is from the students watching me. Because they'll say to me, "You know, you're doing this and you're doing this."

One of the students said to me, "Do you know you do that in like a system the way you shoot?" I was like, "what?" He's like, "Yeah, you do it like this, then you do this, then you do this." I was like, "I do don't I?"

That became that idea that this student came up with for me, became what I call the Hurley headshot system, which is the system that I use to photograph people. I wasn't aware of it. It became a thing which I wouldn't have been aware of without my students saying that.

I think the thing is once you figure out where your value is, what you do best, and then have a system for how you're going to teach it and building blocks so that it's usually a build. There's a step by step process to teach what it is that you're teaching.

I think once you have that, then just go for it. If it's your first one, you get your feet wet. Maybe you don't go out of the gate charging something that makes you nervous.

I did. I charged. I was like, "I'm valuable. I'm going to charge this." And I charged a pretty penny. I started charging \$1600. I took it to \$1500 when I got rid of the food. I was like \$100 less that I need to spend on a person. I'm gonna give it back to them. Anyway, things like that.

### **Marina Barayeva:**

Food. The most important is to get rid of the food. (Laughter) How did it help your personal brand? How did it help your business to launch and host all of these workshops?

### **Peter Hurley:**

Oh my gosh, it's been huge! Because it turned into... my decision to become a teacher turned into getting invited to speak and become a speaker. Then the speaking created a following.

The following got sponsors to look at me, so I got sponsored. Then the sponsorships point more eyeballs my way. I get to do all this. Then I created the subscription service to capture everybody that came my way.

You know, I'm sponsored by Cannon and I'm a photographer. What's better than that? It's amazing. It's just so cool.

That would've never happened if I have not done the workshops. The workshops really propelled a lot of what's going on with me.

### **Marina Barayeva:**

That's very interesting. Thank you, Peter, for your great tips. Please share with us how can we find more about you and just follow you.

### **Peter Hurley:**

My website is [PeterHurley.com](http://PeterHurley.com). My coaching site is [headshotcrew.com](http://headshotcrew.com). If you're a photographer out there, check it out.

If you're not, checking it out anyway because there is everybody listening to this needs a headshot of themselves.

If you're going to do a workshop, that's the other thing. You need to put a picture of yourself there.

### **Marina Barayeva:**

Why?

### **Peter Hurley:**

Because if they're going to be in your presence, they want to get a sense of what you look like. How could you not do that?

You need to have an approachable headshot saying, "I'm an expert and I take this seriously."

If you go to [headshotcrew.com](http://headshotcrew.com) hit the find a photographer link. You can find one of my photographers near you that have talent because I coached them. They can get their headshot done. Your headshot did for you. So keep that in mind.

If you want to follow me on social, it's [peter\\_hurley](#) on [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#). [Facebook](#) is just [PeterHurleyPhoto](#) and [YouTube](#) [PeterHurleyPhoto](#).

### **Marina Barayeva:**

Fantastic, Peter. Thank you so much. It was so much pleasure to have you on the show.

### **Peter Hurley:**

Thanks, Marina. Thanks for having me.

### **Marina Barayeva:**

All right. I hope you got new insights that you're ready to try in your business. If you missed something or would like to go back to some parts of this interview just go to [intnetworkplus.com](http://intnetworkplus.com) where you will find the show notes and the full transcript of the episode.

And if you have the questions or topics that you would like to hear about on the show just email me to [marina@intnetworkplus.com](mailto:marina@intnetworkplus.com).

### **Announcer:**

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hottest topics about how to grow your business. You were listening to Marketing for Creatives show. See you next time.

### Resources from this interview:

- Learn more about Peter Hurley on [PeterHurley.com](http://PeterHurley.com)
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- Check [fstoppers.com](http://fstoppers.com) for a ton of photography lessons
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