

41st ANNUAL EDITION

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PHOTOGRAPHER'S MARKET® 2018

HOW AND WHERE TO SELL YOUR PHOTOGRAPHY



TIPS ON STARTING A PHOTOGRAPHY BUSINESS & GETTING FREELANCE PHOTOGRAPHY JOBS
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ARTICLES & INTERVIEWS

SO YOU WANT TO BE A PROFESSIONAL PHOTOGRAPHER

Scott Trees

Talent and desire are not enough to make photography a steady job. It also requires perseverance, good customer service, patience, and some degree of business sense.

For many people, the idea of being a photographer traveling around the world, camera in hand, sounds exotic and exciting. Certainly, it can be. However, it is also a *lot* of work. Most of the time, it's not all that glamorous and taking pictures can be the least time consuming aspect of it all.

Advances in photographic technology have made the act of taking a picture very simple. Whether you're using an iPhone or a sophisticated professional camera, pointing a camera at your intended subject, pressing the shutter and getting reliable results in terms of over-all exposure and image quality has never been easier. Additionally, the fact that producing digital images is much less expensive than developing film has given everyone the ability to take an unlimited quantity of pictures.

Walk into a restaurant today and ask for a pro photographer and about half the people in the room might raise their hands. Today, everyone is a photographer. With so many people taking pictures, and with platforms like Facebook where everyone can share their work with an admiring public, the world is inundated with images. For this reason, the perceived value of a good photographic image has dramatically declined.

As someone who has been taking photographs for over forty-five years, I would have to say it's more challenging to make a living as a photographer today than it was when I start-

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Hesitation, shot during one of Scott Trees' workshops.

ed. There is far more competition for work, and this era has brought about a mentality that "good enough" is the acceptable norm. Certainly, there are a lot of talented photographers who can, and do, make a great living with a camera. But over the years, more of them have been struggling to make ends meet in a highly competitive marketplace.

Talent and desire are not enough to make photography a steady job. It also requires perseverance, good customer service, patience and some degree of business sense. Indeed, once you find yourself trying to make this your full-time job you will soon learn that taking pictures is actually the easy part. What requires a tremendous amount of time is actually running the business. There is a lot of time that goes into the day-to-day operations of any business, and photography is no exception.

In my Business of Photography class, I share with my students that it's the little things that can contribute to the failing of a business. Many photographers don't consider all of the costs involved in making a business profitable, and as a result, they don't charge enough to cover all of the costs.

You have to charge enough to pay your overhead, your taxes and leave something for yourself. For simple math, the rule of thirds can be applied. A third should be set aside for self-employment taxes, a third goes to overhead, and the last third is yours to keep. Simply put, for every dollar you want to produce for yourself, you have to generate a minimum of three dollars. Most of my students are shocked at what they would have to generate in terms of income to pay themselves what they're earning at their current jobs.

The NPPA Cost of Doing Business Calculator is one of the best I have ever seen in terms of providing a realistic perspective of what it costs to run a photography business and pay yourself a salary. This calculator can be found on the NPPA site: nppa.org/page/3275.

When I'm asked for advice by beginning professionals, I encourage them to be realistic about what it costs to create their images and to reflect that in their pricing. I often see too many who willingly work for next to nothing just to get the job. Something that needs to