

FAQ's and Myths About the Business of Photography

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Why are digital files so expensive?

Truthfully, they aren't. Many of my photo compadres will agree with me when I say digital photos are considered a luxury item. They allow for the fastest turnaround time for customers. When you consider the amount of work that goes into transforming a RAW file into a digital file, it's a more cost-effective and timely option than printing. All digital images usually come with a print release, which will enable you to print those images as often as you want. They also allow for easier sharing with friends, family and, of course, on social media. Economically, they are the easiest way for a photographer to deliver photographs to their customers without lab printing costs, shipping and handling, and other fees associated with getting pictures from my computer to your mail box. Most will use some kind of file transfer system like Dropbox or Google Drive to deliver their digital images.

Digital files often times save customers hundreds of dollars because they can get them printed locally vice having their photographer use print labs they partner with. Simply put; In the world of "instant gratification," this is the most economic and timely solution. I take pride in every photography with my name on it. It has taken me almost 20 years to figure out how edit images to a high standard. My goal is to make the images I deliver and the customer service experience one that will make you a customer for life.

What is a RAW file?

A raw file isn't really an "image". It's a bunch of data that comes directly from the camera's sensor. It requires special software (most commonly Adobe Camera Raw, Lightroom and/or Photoshop) to view and edit. Raw files are very large files with very low contrast and sharpness. You can't print them straight from the camera and they require editing. The best part about RAW files is they don't lose any data each time it's saved because it's an uncompressed file. When compressed (often times to JPEG), it becomes smaller in size with higher sharpness and contrast. JPEGs can be shared and printed directly from the camera. However, JPEGs will lose data each time an edit is made.

Why are photographers so expensive? *I'm sure my answer is going to be met with some stark disagreement. But, I don't care ☺

If you're searching for a photographer and he quotes you some outrageous price, there are a bunch of factors you should consider. Every photographer will charge what they think their work is worth. Work includes their customer service, professionalism, and final delivered product and how fast they got it, which is really what consumers care about. The average cost to hire a photographer is \$100-\$250 per hour depending on their skill level. Event photographers charge \$150 - \$300 per hour with a minimum of 2 hours. Wedding photographers will typically cost anywhere from \$1,000 - \$5,000 for 4 to 6 hours of coverage. Not to mention, "high-end" photographers will usually charge anywhere between \$50-\$300 per EDITED image.

This truly isn't a matter of how much you want to spend. It's a matter of what you value as a consumer. There is a reason why we are seeing more and more Teslas (for example) on the streets. The cars are expensive, but the customer service that comes with being an owner is second to none. Photography is no different. Consumers will pay for what they value most.

How long does it take for photographers to send digital photos to customers?

For me, there are two questions I have to ask: 1. How big is the job? 2. What kind of job? Here's why. If I'm shooting a family photo session (Average family of 4 usually takes about 20-30 minutes and will produce about 15-20 digital photos), I can usually send customer their fully-edited photos in about 3 days. The faster turnaround is attributed to fewer photos I have to take because posed subjects are easier to capture than moving subjects like with sports or weddings. I can usually get a wall-worthy shot in about three snaps of the camera with any given pose. In a shoot where I did 20 different poses with the family, I'll usually take between 60 and 80 total photographs. Sports

and weddings more “machine-gun” style with many more pictures to sort through. A typical sporting event or wedding will usually yield about 1,000 photos (on the low end). Of those 1,000 sport photos, a photographer may only have 25 or 30 USABLE photos. Weddings are closer to 90 or 100 USABLE photos. I say USABLE because not every photo that’s in focus is necessarily a good picture. If the subject has a weird face, the picture isn’t very flattering to the subject (in my opinion), it’s too bright, it’s too dark.

Good photographers NEVER send customers or display images they wouldn’t put their names and reputations on. If you get a photograph from me, you can believe I’m 100% confident the photo represents one of the best of the shoot and I’m okay if you say “Freddie Coleman took that picture!” when you post it on social media - please tag Freddie Coleman Photography if you do.

Why do photographers charge up front?

Please remember time is money for photographers. FACT: Most photographers will collect a fee up front to hold a specific time and date. I use the word “fee” because deposits are often characterized as monies that are refunded. Usually \$50-\$200, which will be deducted from the total amount. Common practice is for the remaining balance to be due before the shoot day. This will guarantee the gallery and photos will be delivered in a timely manner. If a client cancels on the photographer, with enough notice ahead of time, it’s common practice (for most sole proprietors) for them to fully refund, or hold it as a credit. That window of time fluctuates with each photographer. It’s also common for photographers to not refund fees. The reason is because for you to get that specific time and day, he had to tell a potential customer “no” and that’s income he doesn’t generate. To make up for the loss, those fees, often referred to as “sitting fees” are usually held or not refunded. Your photographer should be upfront about fees and how they are collected.

MYTH: Photographers who collect their full fees up front won’t care about the work they do because they already have your money. Their ability to be marketable is dependent upon the quality of their work and customer service. Like any good businessman, no photographer wants the reputation of taking a customer’s money, underperforming, or not showing up to the shoot. No photographer wants a bad customer review and one like that will pretty much ruin a photographer’s reputation. Don’t be afraid if a photographer asks for full fees up front, depending on the cost. It’s important to do your homework on several photographers before selecting one. Part of that includes how their fees are structured.

How do I pick a photographer for what I need?

Tampa Bay is SATURATED with photographers. The simple answer is research. While you’re planning to have pictures done, give yourself plenty of time to do your homework on photographers. There are plenty of groups on social media to where if you post the question “Who’s the best photographer around the area?” This question will give you about 100 different answers, most of which are from photographers who promote themselves. I recommend starting with your friends who have recently used a photographer. If you like work their photographer did and they have good things to say about them, your search just got a lot easier. Don’t hesitate to look at their social media and websites to see any other work they have done. This could also be a great way to discover a look and style you maybe want. It’s okay to tell your photographer you’re going for a specific look and feel. Be sure to communicate with your photographer often before shoot day. Great photographers have great customer service. If you have an idea, your photographer should be working with you to make it happen. Remember, it’s YOUR shoot, not ours. The customer’s wants and needs always come first. Some key phrases to listen for from your photographer are: “What kind of shoot did you have in mind?” “I’m open to any ideas you have.” “Are there any specific poses you want to try?” “Is there any pose or look you want to try before we finish?” The saying in business goes “Low-prices and discounts will get you a one-time customer. A positive attitude and great customer service will get you a life-time customer.” Treat searching for a photographer just like searching for an employee. Their work, their reviews, their experience will get them an interview. Conversations you have before the shoot, their personality, and their business model will get them the job.

What is the difference between a freelance photographer and a professional photographer?

There are two answers to this.

First answer: By definition, professional photographers earn 100% of their income from photography. Freelance photographers earn part of their total income from photography. Most freelance photographers have full-time jobs.

Second answer: The term “professional,” in my opinion, has nothing to do with a status or how much money they earn from photography. It has everything to do with their attitude, business practices, personality, and the quality of their work. There are really good freelance photographers that can produce images that can rival any professional photographer.