

HAND OUT – As a photographer how much do I charge? – An age old question to which there is no single answer or formula?

Creative freelancers take pride knowing their take-home pay is theirs and no one else's: there are no employees to pay, overheads are limited and red tape is often minimal. But working alone means they have to be self-reliant. No HR or Finance department exists to calculate the daily or monthly rate for supplying their services.

Rates for jobs can vary from sector to sector and from job to job. One of the main things to understand about a photographer's income is that it is usually derived from two parts, from commissioned work and from selling stock photos.

When deciding how much to charge, it's a question of research, common sense, competition, profitability, project time and materials used.

1. **Research your market** – what are clients likely to expect to pay? What will the market sustain at bottom level and at top level? Where do you want to position yourself? Venture – Studio 56 – Dick Trickle Portraiture!

2. **Common sense** – you can't quote a regional paper £150 for a press shoot when you know they don't pay more than £25 a job plus expenses. However, for exactly the same job (well nearly very similar) you might get away with charging a PR client £150. Crazy – but true.

Things like setting your mileage cost claims way above the level set for the public sector is not justifiable either if you think about it! (Currently 0.40p)

Repeat business – can you offer a reduced rate for regular repeat clients. You have a day rate for PR work (£250 – half day), but early doors where there is an opportunity to secure regular work from a PR company can you entice business with a repeat business rate of day (£200 pound half day rate)

Scaffolded pricing – i.e. for PR work - £100 per hour, £250 per half day (normally 3 hours), £450 for full day up to 6 hours, but a day shoot for a wedding you might be charge £1000 because the market can sustain that!

3. **Competition** - How much are competitors charging? Given the costs of materials and equipment can you beat or match that? If you can't beat on price can you beat on quality or service? How do you communicate that?

4. **Project time and materials** – do I charge just for shooting time or for shooting time and post production?

I wouldn't advise that you breakdown your cost too much and it makes more sense to provide a rate that includes shooting and the post production rate. I can offer one way of looking at it

Start by calculating all of the costs associated with running your business, including your own income, over one year. In order to make calculations easy, let's assume for a full time freelancer that total comes to £40,000 (have a look at the Pete Jenkins handout on the annula expenditure for operating as freelance photographer . . . it soon builds up!

Allowing for holidays, reckon on a maximum of 200 working days in the year for a full time freelancer.

A simple minimum day rate can then be calculated by dividing your total costs by 200, which in this example comes out at £40,000/200 days or £200 pounds per day.

However this assumes that you will be fully employed every available day of the 200 which is unlikely. It is better to cost on the assumption of being employed 80% of the days available. Hence 80% of 200 days would be 160 and so the day rate would be £40,000/160 or £250 per day. That's £250 a day just to meet the expenditure of operating as a freelancer at a high level. Of course many can operate drastically way under those running costs but through this example you can start to see why photographers charge £350 - £400 per day.

A photographer set up on a part timer basis is simply pro rata of these rates – just because you are part time doesn't mean you charge less than full time you simply do it less often. The expenditure needed to run your business may be less but you have fewer days in which to make your money.

Remember this 'ball park' figure of £250 the minimum you would charge for a day's work – in reality you charge what the market can sustain. For example, a photographer at the beginning of their career covering a wedding for a 'full day' you could easily charge double at Least £500-£600

5. Profitability - The goal of the business is to make a profit and you have to keep that in mind when setting your prices.

But be cautious on exerting too much of a downward pressure on the industry. If you begin by greatly undercharging it is very difficult to then raise your prices.

There are some jobs where you don't charge any shooting rates?

Examples of this type of photographic work include;

- weddings where you generally sell a package
- nursery/school portraits and some event photography where your income is driven by sales.

But the ball park figure is . . . should you be doing anything if you are getting less than £150-£200 a day as a minimum return?

A great website when considering your fees is;
<http://www.londonfreelance.org/feesguide/phcalc.html>