

LIGHTING ESSENTIALS

A PLACE FOR PHOTOGRAPHERS

“What do you charge for...”



Five scary words to a lot of photographers.

There is so much of US wrapped into those five words. I think they may be the scariest words we self employed creative folks ever hear when we are first starting out.

Although it is exactly what we want to hear... someone wants to hire us. All that marketing paid off. The emails, promos, tweets, status updates, pins, Instagrams, and Tumblr posts worked!!!

We have someone who actually wants to hire us... or do they? Maybe they are from our competition trying to weasel out our price points? Perhaps they are looking for someone to bid higher than their buddy so they can use our higher rate as a justification to hire their buddy? Maybe they are really some sort of corporate spy bent on destroying my business because of something I have no idea I ever did?

Actually no... they just want to know what it costs.

What if I am too high? What if I am too low? What if I don't really know how to do what they want? What if they want something I cannot do? What if I fail to deliver? Do they have an army of attorneys waiting in the wings to sue me into oblivion at the slightest amount of sensor dust?

Do they have a [goon squad](#)?

"Go away or I'll call the goon squad."

"I'm on the goon squad."

"You are the goon squad!"

As I like to point out... "It costs what it costs". Now we have to discuss what it costs with someone who may or may not want to pay what it costs, and we have to be clear to them and ourselves on why it costs what it costs.

Relax... take a breath. Think about what you say next.

Because it can be very, very important... as it can become the 'base' of all that comes afterwards. It can become a touchpoint, and as such can hinder all attempts at negotiations.

Perhaps someone says "How much do you charge to do headshots?" You quickly respond with, "well, headshots are usually \$200."

You have just created your top rate. All negotiations will be focused on lowering that rate, and you simply tossed it out as a reference.

Now the client smiles... "That's great", he says, "I need a headshot of me in my office in Denver. When can you come up and do it?"

Remember that \$200 you tossed out there... now it has to be changed. And the client is going to resist that change, as they have already gotten the touchpoint figure of \$200 in their head.

Yes, of course it is a stretch story... all examples are stretch stories in order to make a point clearly. Most of the time the differences are more subtle, and the client expectations more nuanced.

Or not.

What if the guy was asking you how much for a headshot, and you blurt out \$200 and he does a quick calculation that to do the entire office staff of 30 people it would be \$6000 and that is a grand over budget. So he thanks you and hangs up.

You had no idea he was talking about 30 people. Surely that would have been a better 'per shot' price for most of us.

When we give a price, we usually base that price as our highest point in the mind of the client. What we want to do is 'base' that price as the lowest point. This gives us more room to negotiate as needed.

NOTE:

"My rates for headshots are \$200." Bad... it creates a base high point.

"My rates for headshots start at \$200." Better... it creates a base low point.

"My rates for headshots can vary according to the job, but they start at around \$200. What are the specifics of your job?" Best... this one creates a base rate that then requires more feedback from the client. We call that dialog and it is very good for establishing relationships.

Number three takes care of establishing a price point by noting that they START at \$200, and we indicate that there is room for negotiation based on the facts of the job.

Beware of being vague.

"How much do you charge for a headshot?"

"How much you wanna spend?"

"What is your budget?"

"I dunno, what do you have in mind?"

Vague means you don't know, and are making it up as you go along.
(HINT... yeah, many of us do just that on occasion... shhhh...).

That neither instills confidence or trust, and we get down to negotiation stance before we even know what we are negotiating for.

I suggest for single off jobs you have an established "starting at" rate, and go from there to the inquiry of the specifics. If you have let them know that you are open to making considerations for possible special circumstances, and that you are also able to charge more for the work, you have a bit more of a platform to stand on when discussing the rates.

For larger jobs with lots of moving parts, it is ALWAYS better to get the specs for the job before even mentioning an number which could become a touchpoint for the client. They asked off the top of their head and you gave them a specific number... done. No... don't do that.

Is there a time when it is OK to ask what their budget is?

Yes... once the negotiation has begun. Once the figures have been established as real, and fluid if necessary, you can then ask if there is some way to work within their budget.

But be careful not to give the farm away. That will not help you establish yourself as anyone of consequence in this or any business.

Bid:

Headshots for 20 people.

Shoot fee: \$170 per person.

MUA/: \$75 per person

Stylist: \$50 per person

Digital Tech: \$550 for the day

Assistant: \$500 for the day

Travel to location: \$200 for the day

Gear Rental: \$200 for the day

Client comes back and says you are a bit over their budget. That is a tip that they want to work with you but of course want the best price they can get. If you are way over their budget, you will probably not hear back from them. That should not be a problem if you are indeed confident in your value.

I would then ask... what is the budget. "If we can get within your budget, I will be glad to work it out."

By line-iteming each of the cost figures laid in the bid perhaps you can trim a bit. The client feels better about sharing the budget with you because you have just laid your prices out for him.

If you must trim a grand off... there are ways of doing that.

If you must trim five grand off, walk.

To trim off five thousand dollars makes a mockery of your bid. And if you do it, never expect to do anything of value for that client again, as they know that your bids are paper tigers, easily shredded by desperation.

And desperation fueled by fear is most definitely NOT a good place to be for negotiations.

PART TWO

What We Do Has Value... Lots of Value

Understanding what we are worth, and how to construct a pricing structure that we feel good about is quite challenging for many of us. But it is a necessary challenge for us to overcome – see previous newsletter. This week we will look at bidding a job for a larger entity – a corporation or ad agency.

Usual corporate assignment work will come from the Marketing / Communications department. Referred to as MarCom, these departments can be as small as one person or as large as an entire floor. Or two.

MarCom's are like agencies that are in-house. In larger corporations, you may find C-level managers working with creative staffs that can dwarf many ad agencies.

Occasionally these MarCom's will work with outside agencies on special assignments, or if a specialty is called for that they cannot handle... like TV or Radio.

The basic structure is the same as an ad agency. Creative leads work with art directors and designers on everything from cafeteria menus to annual report documents.

And they hire photographers when they need them.

Ad agencies can run from one-person shops to entire buildings devoted to making and creating advertising for consumer and B2B businesses.

The lead of the creative teams are usually called Creative Directors, and then you have Art Directors, Designers and Junior Designers. The largest will also have a position titled "Art Buyer".

Creative Directors are the final approval point for most hired freelancers. Art buyers can be the most important influence on who gets hired when working with an agency that uses an art buyer.

Art buyers look at work. Think of them as casting agents. They steep themselves in the creative work that the agency is doing and then look at the photographers that come in as a sort of match maker. The Art Buyer will assemble a selection of photographers and the final decision will then be made by the Creative Director or the Lead Art Director for final hire.

In agencies without an art buyer, the senior art directors and Creative Directors will make that call.

Your job is to stay top of mind with art buyers, creative directors and art directors. And I personally think that special efforts should be cultivated toward the junior art directors as well... they don't stay junior art directors for ever, you know.

Bidding a job for an ad agency differs from mom and pops because ad agencies and MarComs KNOW the way the business works, and are familiar with rates and rights and copyright.

That does not prevent them from asking for a buyout with no extra compensation and oh, by the way can you do the job gratis cause the last guy screwed it up and used up all their budget, but no problem they will make it up to you next gig...

Always remember you do not have to agree to anything, but they may ask.

When working with an agency or MarCom, I find the most efficient way to get to a price is ask questions. Lots of questions. The answers can make the bidding process go so much smoother. If you know this information, and you articulate the bid, they will understand that you know what you are doing.

Simply blurting out a price without asking a lot of questions will reinforce in their minds that you do NOT know what you are doing. That's never a good position to be in.

Getting the answers to these questions can make the gig go so much smoother.

1. When is the shoot scheduled and when are the final files due? If you are already booked, it may not make sense to pursue this bid. Finding out what they have in mind can also help you look at your schedule with different priorities. If it is 30 below for the next month and the shoot is in the Bahamas for a week, it can make a difference... heh.

2. How did you find me? This can establish a lot of information. If they found you off the web, they may have been looking for someone in your area, or with your expertise or vision. The fact that they were looking for talent instead of working with someone they know is good information to have. If you were referred, then you are 'endorsed' and that carries third party weight that may give you an edge. (It also means a thank you note to the referrer.)

3. Are there layouts and are they flexible? As a former agency Creative Director, I can not stress enough how important it is to understand the process of working with clients to get approvals. The CD and AD and their teams may have gone round and round with the client for approval of the layout they have. It is the fruits of late night negotiations and lots of bitter coffee. Don't take for granted that it is a guideline and you can do what you want.

Sometimes you can and sometimes you can't. Find out before you bid so you can make the necessary plans to work within the approved layouts. Do the job for the client and if you can,

give them an alternate or two. But again, ONLY after making sure you have their shot in the can.

4. Usage: What are the plans for this shoot? Is it for TV, print, web... all of it? Knowing what the final use is can help you bid the job. Not only from a price point, but from a gear and team point as well. Knowing what you are shooting for is important for creativity as well.

5. Who will be doing the legwork and pre-production? Will your studio be in charge of props, models, stylists, location scouting, craft services and transportation? Or are they contracting those out to their own vendors? Why bother bidding that stuff if they are going to provide it, and knowing how they work with the outside vendors in these situations is also good knowledge for future bidding. (Note: some of these may of course be broken out... the agency has a location scout, but looks to you for hair and makeup. Good to know so you can bid accordingly.)

6. Will there be a need for extra insurance? Jewelry, pre-release electronics, possibly dangerous locations may require additional insurance... who is purchasing that? If it is you, then you know that it must be searched for and purchased. This may require quite a bit of additional resources, and the agency/MarCom needs to be aware of those costs.

7. How will location costs be handled? Are they up to you to be on the final bill or will the agency be handling that through their own people. (NOTE: I am a photographer, not a friggin' bank. The more of these upfront charges I must bear, the less capital I have to work with. And if the agency is going to take 60 – 90 days, my capital is tied up in a job I already completed... I personally do not front gigs, but there are some photographers that do. You will have to choose which way you go with the knowledge of how much capital you can work with.)

8. Who will be on set or location to approve the work? Will it be a senior AD, someone from the client side, both or will the work be done by the photographer without approval and supervision of the shoot. (Note: that rarely happens in big ad / MarCom shoots, but it can be found in some genres – adventure photography for one.) It is very important to discuss this – especially if you have not worked for them before. Approvals during the shoot are imperative on ad shoots – and you must be able to trust that the one doing the approving actually has the authority to approve.

9. Who will be handling post production? Will the studio be doing all of that post work, or will images be delivered for the agency to work with? On hard drives or FTP? Formatted or RAW? What level of post-production is required? Some of this is based on your style. If you are a very manipulative photographer creating photo illustrations, it may naturally fall to your studio to do the post. If you are more of a 'straight' photographer, they may want to handle the post-production themselves for consistency across their presentation.

However, if you feel that post processing is something that is indeed a part of your work style, then let them know that you prefer to do the post, and include it in your bid.

10. Options? There are always options. What kind of licensing do they want? What kind of licensing do they need? Sometimes the two are not the same, and it behooves you to help your client understand the best way for them to go to get what they need.

And not only in the licensing area, but in the entire shoot. Become an ally, a partner in the work. Help them see how something can be done better, or with more efficiency, or with a different spin. Showing genuine enthusiasm is quite important and can help tilt the scales in your favor.

When you know the answers to these questions, you will be able to look at that blank piece of paper and start to fill in the line items with much more ease and accuracy than if you had no clue. Eliminating the frustrating parts of not knowing, makes the tally simpler and more in tune to what they are asking for.

I am a big believer in lots of line-items – not only for clarity, but for negotiations as well.

(PART THREE)

Working and bidding for small businesses and entrepreneurial startups.

Mom and Pop businesses, self-employed artisans, service providers, entrepreneurs and all of the small businesses that are the lifeblood of the economy are a major source of revenue for commercial photographers.

There are simply far more of them than ad agencies or large corporate entities. And they all need photographs, brochures, menus, portraits, catalogs, web banners and editorial for content on their sites.

Pictures... they need a lot of pictures.

However, unlike Ad agencies and corporations, small businesses may have a far tighter grip on finances and budgets and that will always affect how we handle and work with them.

Expecting the same kind of budget you would get from an agency to shoot for Audi, for a car detailing franchise in Kentucky is not only not realistic, it makes no sense to the customer as well.

We take those things in mind when we are bidding for small business, and I am going to share MY views on this process. They may diverge a bit from conventional wisdom, but I diverge from conventional wisdom many times. Conventional wisdom said we couldn't run a 6 minute mile. Conventional wisdom was we would never get to the moon.

My take:

Here are ___ things I take into consideration when bidding and working with small businesses.

1. They are generally frugal, and want the maximum bang for the bucks they spend. I want to accommodate that within the constraints of understanding that I TOO am a small business and must make revenue and profit to stay in business. (In fact, I have used that simple factoid on occasion and been met with signs that they didn't even think of that... yeah, we just have fun with cameras and stuff... heh.)

2. I know that some of the ways I work with media companies, ad agencies, PR firms and corporate communications may seem foreign to them. I do not think it is my job to try to educate every person on the planet about copyright... hell, we cannot even teach JUDGES about copyright, so I rarely try. I do however hold to some basic – and non-negotiable – tenants for dealing with usage.

3. In many cases they are looking to the photographer to provide much of the creative thought that a designer or art director would have brought to the shoot. This can be fun and it can be excruciatingly difficult... sometimes at the same time. (Project 52 photographers are getting a heavy dose of that situation, as it is so vitally important to master.)

4. Keeping it as simple as possible is a good thing, as is not bringing in negative influences that can worry them, or take them from a buyer to someone who finds working with you too difficult. When they go buy a refrigerator, they own it. That stack of brochures they had printed are theirs, and they like to know exactly what they are getting when they buy something.

So let's address these from MY perspective.

The first thing I do when approached by a small business is to do a little research on them. I use a new-fangled thing called the internet. And it can be a lifesaver when dealing with small businesses.

I look for their website to determine what they have already. Are these professional photographs taken locally or were they hired out of the area? Are they stock images? Are they stolen from the internet? [Google image Search](#) makes this task a lot easier, AND they are perfecting it every day.

If they are stolen off the web, or stock I have two ways to go. I can bring this up to them during the pre-bid process to find out if they are even aware of it, and I can deduce that they have in the past not had a nickel for photography. (I could jump to the conclusion that they do not respect photography, but then they did ask ME for a quote... so I hold off on that judgment for now.)

If they are images from photographers that they have hired regionally or locally, I check out that photographers site to get a feel for the quality and professionalism of the work, and to get an idea of what the charges would be. A high end photographer generally has a high end looking website. (What does your website say about you? Wait, different article. Sorry.) This can also open you to make the inquiry, "I see you have used Aper Ture' as your last photographer, what can I do to make sure you want to continue to use me after this engagement?"

Yes. Ask them how you can not screw up like ol' Aper did, as they are NOT using him this time. This is a valid and often used question in sales, so do not ignore it.

You now have a pretty good idea of what they have spent in the past, and what they did or did not like about their previous shooter.

You can use this information to help you form your bid.

Before I get into a "Usage Rights" discussion with them, I look very carefully and closely to what possibilities there are for usage. I do not want to open up discussions of something potentially confusing if there is no need.

Let's take a mom and pop restaurant that is having some new menus made, and they want to use the images on their website. I know they are not currently nor are they planning on any TV commercials (cause I asked them when I was preparing the bid... "what do you want them for, and will you be using them on TV?" to which they responded with a laugh that they didn't have that kind of ad budget.)

Ask. Answers are cool and useful.

I know they are going to use them on their menus, and when asked they said they like to change the images on the website every 6-8 months.

So I am not going to add a bigass "rights" clause that discusses usage for a year, and extending it for two years, and how many hits the site gets and if they are going to use them for their in-house newsletter (10 copies) or any other crap. And remember that they said they want to reshoot every 6-8 months – and I want those gigs too.

I know, pretty much KNOW, that they are going to be using them for menus and website for a year. I simply state in the contract what they are getting the images for, and let it go at that.

Bringing up the issue of copyright is always a good idea, and the way I do it is to INFORM them that as a service and a protection to them I copyright all the images, and give them the sole license to use them... and I guard their unauthorized use by anyone else so they don't have to worry about it.

See what I did there...

I then ask to see what they are looking to create or re-create. I know they may not have an Art Director, but they do indeed have an idea in their minds on what the images should look like, and I need to know what that is. We MUST come to an agreement on the creative direction BEFORE we commence shooting.

You wanna have a disappointing experience... right here is where you can make that happen by NOT nailing down what, where, and how you are going to produce the images. And be understanding and patient as you go through the process. They know how to run a restaurant, but they are not marketing gurus, creative directors, art buyers or award winning graphic designers. They need some photographs that look sorta like those they saw on...

Yeah. Cool... let's look at those for a moment.

If they are expecting styled images in a lovely natural light courtyard, they better have that courtyard. And if they don't you must be ready to offer alternative places and be ready to explain why there has to be a change. If they are not going to have a stylist and they do not have a courtyard, they must understand what would be better... and that is YOUR job on this gig.

Explain it to them with patience and grace. Show them alternatives, tell them why that will save them money or time and will look better. Most people are not stupid. Trust me.

Offer solutions, not roadblocks. A photographer standing there going "We can't do that, and we can't do this, and I don't see how that can happen" is not very exciting or engaging.

"Hey, let's look at this area... I think if we bring in some..." is far more engaging. And it positions you as the creative on this project. You are the expert, and the solution maker.

If it happens that during this part of the process, the client becomes self absorbed and disparaging of your every attempt to work within what they have, graciously bow out.

If it is a bad mix at the beginning, it will never get better. In fact it will be fuel for more infuriating situations down the road.

Been there. Done that. **Sucks.**

Preparing the estimate/bid should be as simple to understand as possible. I have seen some contracts put out by organizations that are full of "party of the first part and party of the second part will seek arbitration to include but not necessarily exclude the third parties interest in and monetaty investment the first party..."

Bullshit. I wouldn't sign it, and it would raise red flags all around me if I was that restaurant owner. I want some photographs of my "Signature Salad" and I get a contract that looks like I am purchasing land in Bolivia.

KISS – Keep It Simple, Stupid... Yes.

However, not so simple that they do not understand what is going into the gig, who is responsible for what, and how payment is expected to be provided.

I line item everything I can – even if there is N/C... it is important that they take those things into consideration when bidding the next gig, and it is my subtle way of educating them as to what it costs to do this work.

I insist on a deposit. Non-negotiable (except for rush gigs from long-time clients). Trust them? Sure... but trust is a two way street, right?

In fact, I expect a member of their business to be present at the shoot. That person is contractually responsible for approving what is being done. That person has to be one with the power to approve the work, and not a go-between. And if they are not going to provide that person, then they AGREE to have me be the final arbiter of all imagery. Done.

In fact here is my short list of non-negotiable practices.

- I will always get a deposit.
- I will always work with the responsible party (or a contractually designated responsible party). That means that someone will be there to sign off on the images, and if that doesn't happen, they OWN what I shot and will pay for it. Period. (I get sign off while working on each and every shot if there is a client representative there, and that representative has to have the power to sign off.) Ignore this rule at your peril.
- I expect to be paid in 30 days or less. It is in my contract. I demand it. Sure, there are exceptions, and they are in writing.
- I own the copyright for the image, but will license up to unlimited and exclusive usage. If they want the copyright, then they will pay dearly for it. A LOT of money. (Yes, I can be bought. Not proud, just honest.)
- I have the right to show the work in any and all of my promotional materials and for any educational / editorial work that features me. (Barring embargoed dates and contractually agreed on third party usage.)
- If the owners/stakeholder is 'too busy' to devote any time to my questions, I walk.
- If I don't feel good about the gig, for whatever reason, I walk.

I also deliver what was expected and a little more, on time and on budget. I hope you do as well.

Putting together a bid for any kind of photography gig can be fraught with challenges and what if's... and that will probably never change. Knowledge is power. Going through all the

different things one must do in order to present a consistent and winning strategy for a bid is a lot of work.

It is. **So?**

BTW, it also helps to have a full understanding of what things cost, and an idea of what you should charge before charging in to the bidding process.

—

(PART FOUR)

What is the value of a photograph?

Seriously... what is the value of a photograph?

If you need a calculator, go ahead and get it... I'll wait.

What's that... you need more information to make that calculation?

OK, sure... well, let's see... it was taken on an old Nikon, with a manual focus lens on black and white film. I am not sure of the shutter speed, but the aperture looks somewhere between f-5.6 and f-8, and the image is a bit blurry in some parts. Oh, and it was taken in a little village somewhere.

How's that?

How about this one then... a color photograph of a martini glass in the sand with a pyramid upside down in the reflection of the liquid. Shot on location with a MF camera on a tripod at a bit of a wide aperture, normal lens, natural light. Shutter speed unknown.

What... you cannot tell the value of the photograph from all that information? And you think it was a trick question too?

Oh come now, gentle reader... would I trick you?

One more... color shot of a baby laying on a maroon towel in window light taken on a P&S camera from above. Not sharp, not remarkable. (BTW, the value of that one is priceless. It simply is.)

There is value to a photograph. And finding that value means we have to take important considerations in mind when making that call.

A photograph generally carries two values. One is given to it by its creator – you, the other by its value to others. A photograph can be priceless to you, but of little value to others. The

baby shot I described is the first photograph I made of my first born on her first day at home. Priceless to me – meh snapshot to you.

A grainy black and white shot taken in little village may mean little, unless it is THE grainy black and white shot taken of a South Vietnamese Policeman executing a captive with such a seeming cold bloodedness that it could be considered one of the seminal moments that turned a nation away from war.

One single frame on a roll of Tri-X. And a nation was sent reeling.

[Eddie Adams:](#)



[Bert Stern:](#)

An up and coming photographer was hired to do some creative work for a small, very new company wanting to introduce a Russian drink made from potatoes to America during the height of the cold war.

Stern wanted the image to be iconic of the “Driest of the Dry” indicating the very dry Vodka Martini. He also insisted on shooting it on location, in Egypt. And he held his ground.

The ad is considered to have opened the doors to the little Vodka company, Smirnoff, a \$5.5 Billion dollar company today.



So let's see... at the time it was taken it was a single image on a piece of Ektachrome, value \$.40, then it became an ad shot which launched a new product worth billions. It is now an image that stands alone and is for sale at Christies for \$4000.

Pyramid shot at [Christies](#)

Valuable photograph? Or still a frame from a roll of film.

The value our work has is many times dependant on the value it represents for someone else. Can you imagine Stern considering his shot worth \$4? That is serious markup for a 40

cent image (materials). Let's say he throws in travel and such... and it comes to \$1500.40. Tacking on a comfortable margin of 50% he adds another \$750.20 to the image.

Silly?

For a shot that helped a company increase profits by millions?

Silly for sure.

The value of our work is tied to the values we place on it and the values our customers place on it – combined.

Take one of your favorite shots and find an out-take from that shoot. Is it of much value to you? Perhaps you don't like the expression of the subject, or the background is a bit out of focus... whatever, you did not choose it.

Cool... now let's say I see it and ask if I can use it.

You ask me what I am going to use it for and I answer I want to blur it and use it for the background of a banner for my new personal website.

What is the value of that image now?

Well, it's a personal website, and we are friends (we are friends, right?) and I let you know that I am happy to pay you \$50 for it. Do we have a deal?

Probably. From a value of 0 to \$50 – not bad.

How about if I exclaim that I am knocked out by that image... that it is the most perfect image I could have ever thought of for launching a new line of Jimmy Choo shoes. In fact, I want to build an entire campaign around that image, and our ad budget is \$17,000,000 for North America alone.

Still worth \$50 to you? We are still friends... so why would it be worth more than what you quoted me for my personal use banner?

BECAUSE IT IS!

It will be representing a 17milliondamndollar ad campaign. If they are thinking about spending \$17M on ads, they are planning to make a BILLION.

And that image is key for that to happen. It has value. A lot of value.

A hell of a lot of value.

Now how do we understand that value as we begin working with people who want to give us their hard earned money for our hard earned photographs... and create a win-win situation?

(HINT: Win-Win situations make happy photographers and happy clients that like to work together.)

We research and learn. What is the image being used for? How will this benefit the client? How much is the client worth? How much will this image mean to them at the bottom line?

Hard questions... made harder by a lot of people in business who don't have any idea how important good photography is, and how it can help their bottom line. We can try to educate them, and we can look for clients that do indeed know the value that great work carries.

Educating the client to great work, and why it matters could be done in person, or in the proposal you make... showing the value you think great work provides by demonstrating it.

Clean, neat and professionally presented proposal.

Clean, professional logo

A professional website

A professional portfolio

A professional set of working documents (Rights/Releases/Business Forms)

A professional demeanor and being professional in your presentation.

I have seen proposals on dull, uninteresting emails. I have seen websites that are subdomains of the same website my 10 year old daughter used for her "My Little Pony" website. I have seen slovenly produced books and business forms that were right out of Microsoft Word.

And they want to tell me that the visuals matter? Apparently they have not understood their own message. Walk the talk, folks. Visuals matter... to us as well as them.

I think that mood boards are also an important tool when working with clients who may not understand the value of the work and how it relates to the bottom line effectiveness of the communications you are working on.

(What about the people who don't want to meet with us, or only want an answer via email? Well – then send them a well-designed email with some links to previous work, a set of links you have for similar work (high end) and a justification for them to use you OVER and above the dollar sign attached. You know, most others will never do that... help the client understand the value and you stand out. Even if you are too expensive for them now, they remember the value you added, and the fact that you are a premium brand.)

A mom and pop simply may not have the big bucks to spend that an ad agency would spend for a franchise. They will also see much smaller gains in real dollars, although the percentage of increased value may be the same. You must price accordingly.

Scenarios:

Author calls you for a headshot for his new book. The book, an E-Book is his first, and he is putting it on Kindle at a price point of \$2.99. A schoolteacher by day, he is a hopeful Science Fiction author with a new blog and big dreams. He lives in your area and would come to your studio for the shot.

Author's Public Relations firm calls for an author headshot. They need it for the back cover of his 10th novel, and want North American and European rights for a usage period of two years. Paperback rights will be negotiated when the time comes. He lives in your area and will come to your studio for the shot.

Same bid? Not hardly... one could be a \$150 – \$200 shoot and the other a \$10,000 shoot. You will have to figure out which is which.

A local pet groomer (two stores) wants some photographs of happy owners and their pets for her website, and possible use on some ads in the local / regional magazine. You would be able to be totally creative with the images, as long as they would fit her vertical format. Estimate 4 hours for four portraits. You are on your own for the shoot.

A national pet store wants some shots of happy people with their pets. You can be totally creative with the people you shoot, but must stay within their vertical layout. You will be joined by the Creative Director, Art Director, copywriter, and Client Relations person from the agency as well as a VP of marketing and his assistant from the client side. You will need a stylist, a MUA and a digital tech. Oh, and each of the talent is coming with their 'handler' as they animals are well trained. Estimate 4 hours for the shoot.

Will these shoots be priced the same?

Of course not. But where they fall will be as much research and 'gut' feelings as you can muster for the first one, and a bid program like BlinkBid or assistance from someone like Agency Access for the latter.

Welcome to the wonderfully nebulous world of foggy inaccuracy, gut decisions and seemingly pure guesswork – pulled from thin air – that is bidding commercial photography. I have seen bids vary by tens of thousands of dollars... and one time the bids ranged over a hundred thousand dollars difference.

So we are back to that question?

What is a photograph worth?

Depends a lot on you and your client reaching a mutual understanding based on the knowledge that the image will help do what they want to do.

Sell more stuff.
Get more clients.
Increase awareness.
Recruit better employees.

It is up to you to make a photograph that does what it needs to do, striving to make it the best it can be and comfortable that you are doing the best job you can for your client. And the true value is derived from doing just that.

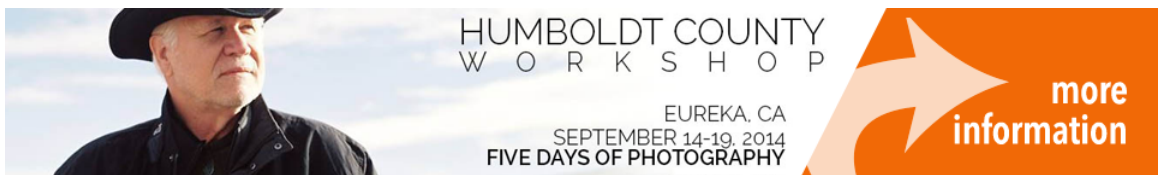
.....

I hope you have enjoyed this article on the value of photographs and how to think about bidding jobs you are approached to do.

For more of my writings, see **Amazon.com** – keyword: Giannatti

Lighting Essentials is where I write and post about photography, and it is free:
www.lighting-essentials.com

You can also follow along at our Project 52 PROS sites at:
www.project52pros.com



FOR WORKSHOP INFORMATION SEE WWW.LIGHTING-ESSENTIALS.COM