

GOING PRO
your guide to running a
photography business

I have run my own photography business for 40 years. Along the way I have learnt a thing or two. Here I give you a leg-up ... find out what to go for, and what to avoid.



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#### INTRODUCTION

So you're thinking of becoming a freelance photographer ... what a good idea. However, let me ask: "Why?" There are two likely reasons why you want to do this, a) you love photography, b) you would like to make money working for yourself ... and if you can do that from your passion, only the better.

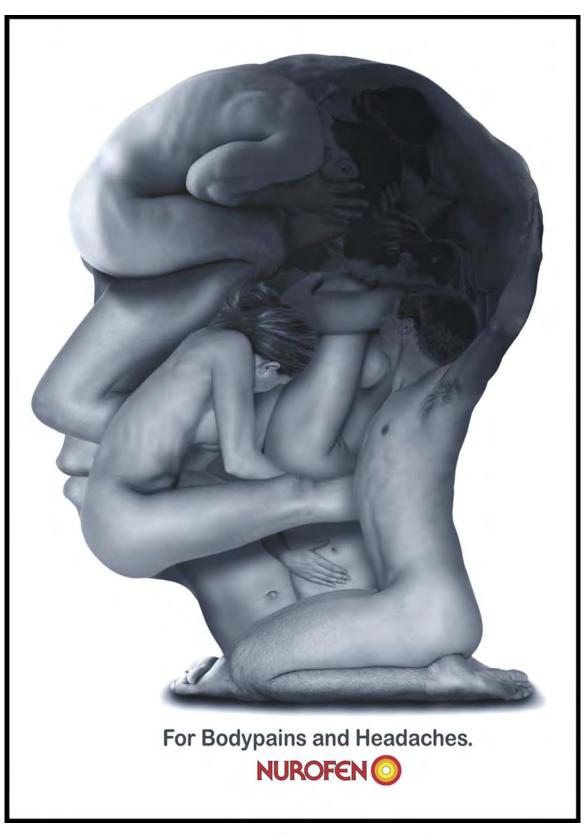
Now you have to figure out which of the two is the greater motivation. There are fields in professional photography where a lot of money can be made ... then there are ways of indulging your passion, where you become an artist.

If the latter applies to you overwhelmingly, your case is quickly dealt with ... do what you have to do, but be prepared that you're not going to make much money. Some artists are successful and rich, including some art photographers, but let's face it, most are not. Artists, on average, live on approximately a quarter or a third or even less of what the rest of the population earns.

But don't despair, there's the 'middle way'. You can, on the one hand, become a hard-core commercial photographer, with not being too concerned about being 'artistic'; you'll likely satisfy your clients and serve them well, you'll find it not too hard to stick to a given budget and you'll not have your artistic integrity compromised. You can work like this in many fields ... commercial / advertising; wedding / portraiture / fashion; architecture / real-estate; magazines / editorial / books and for industrial or rural applications. You quite likely will find your niche wherever you are, in any town, large or small ... but you'll succeed only if you're adaptable and ready to compromise.

Let me quickly point out that there's nothing wrong with any of that, since it probably is a rather safe way of running your business ... you'll have long-term clients, who'll keep you busy until your retirement.

You will likely have your own studio and a solid amount of gear. You will succeed with a level of competency that is easily maintained and you won't need the very latest equipment; neither will you be asked to master the latest software tricks.



There are twenty three different layers in the NUROFEN head.

## INTRODUCTION

You probably will do all your own retouching, so you'll need to learn Photoshop quick smart. The point is that in this mode it's very possible you'll find the time to do your personal work and - the 'middle way'. With your personal work you then will do exactly what you want to do, i.e. follow your passion. You will not have the pressure to make money with it and who knows, you could well run a successful side line of selling the odd art print or portfolio.

On the other hand, you can be an artistic pro shooter, one who aims to be among the very best of commercial photographers; now you'll find yourself in a very competitive field. You'll be subject to 'fashions' and 'fads', you'll have to up-skill constantly, operate on the edge of what technology has to offer ... both in hardware and software.

You'll be aiming at the higher end of the market and you may or may not own the very best (read: Expensive) equipment ... you can hire whatever you need for the assignment, beginning with a studio that suits the shoot you're assigned to do.

If you succeed as a high-end commercial photographer you can become very rich indeed. You will need an outstanding portfolio, which you will have to upgrade constantly. You'll probably work through an agent (who will get you work and typically takes 20% to 35% of your fees). You will not work in just your home town, but nationally, even internationally. You will probably need a 'style', a shtick that sets you apart from every other photographer. It helps to know the right people, be at the 'right' parties ... 'play the game'.

The fields to work in are advertising or fashion; where you may work both for ad agencies or direct clients, as well as fashion magazines or directly for fashion houses. You may work as a high-end editorial portrait photographer, where - once you're a celebrity shooter - the sky's the limit for what you can charge!

As a commercial photographer it's likely you'll specialize ... perhaps in car, food or beverage, people, or still life and product photography.

## INTRODUCTION / WEDDINGS

You can work in one of two modes ... you either do your own retouching, or you just shoot and your RAW shots are then taken to a third party retouching studio (maybe a combination of both).

But be clear about this: To succeed in this realm, you need talent. And tenacity. And with all of the above there still is no guarantee you'll succeed.

Then there's an attractive third way: Other than being an outright artist, a hard-core or high-end commercial photographer, you can aim at being an independent, creative advertorial photographer. You'd work both in advertising and editorially for magazines, or for corporate clients doing annual reports and corporate brochures. You may travel the world, either shooting landscapes and cityscapes or events and reportage assignments.

You may work for agencies like Getty Images ... or on your own, with your own website and selling process (in which case you'll have to work out how to be seen ... not easy, trust me). Your customers will be magazines and advertising agencies as well as corporate clients. You may choose to shoot much of your work on your own volition and offer it for sale, but - if you're successful - you'll also get assignments. There are many areas to specialize in; you can be a wild life photographer, a travel, reportage, sports or landscape photographer ... or indeed any field you fancy.

Again, to succeed you need to be an outstanding photographer ... because this too is a field that's very crowded with contenders. But in our digital age this is a very cool option, where you use the internet as your selling tool.

So, which is the safest way to make money with photography? It's often said that the photographers most likely making good money are wedding and portrait photographers. If you run a successful wedding business, complimented with family, baby, dog (and other pets) photos, you've got it made! That's what they say, anyway. If you looked at my websites, you know I don't work in this field, nevertheless, here is what I know about vwedding photography:



If in doubt ... back-light it. Canon 70-200mm f/2.8.

## **INTRODUCTION / WEDDINGS**

You'll shoot mainly on weekends, often beginning Friday evening with covering the preparations. You'll know for approximately a year in advance what you'll be doing with your weekends (weddings are planned well ahead) and you cannot *not* show up on the day! ... unless you have an associate as a fallback.

In principle there are two ways to do weddings, a) you keep the finger on the shutter release button (shoot 'the crap' out of the event!) and then you dump every single picture (well, you'll whittle them down, delete the un-sharp ones) onto a DVD and supply it to the clients, who'll do with the shots what they want; or b) you are more discriminate with what and how you shoot and you offer your clients a specific range of products, such as albums (both printed and online), framed pictures, posters etc. The second way of working is the more lucrative option; you keep the copyrights and your clients (and their relatives) order prints & products.

Personally, I have always found shooting weddings somewhat stressful. Having said that, if you can apply yourself and you're running a successful wedding studio, where you've hired a few staff, including two or three photographers - and especially if you win a few awards - you'll be driving your sports car pretty soon.

I am sure there are many more ways to go pro; furthermore it should go without saying that those examples - from art photographer, via general commercial and high-end, award winning power shooter, to the independent, artistic advertorial freelance photographer, who travels the world - can all be found in the one operator ... to varying degrees.

Only your talent (which you are born with), your skills (which you accrue through ceaseless learning), your commitment (which you generate with limitless enthusiasm), your effort (which derives from getting up early, turning in late and *never* stopping in-between) ... but wait, there's more: your luck (not the 'Lotto'-type of luck, but the luck of the passionate, sincere, diligent entrepreneurs, who use their opportunities well, make the right moves at the right time and know how to net-work, the "everybody-makes-their-own" type of luck) ... stand between you and a successful career in professional photography.

## THE BUSINESS OF PHOTOGRAPHY

It is quite simple, really, isn't it? I mean, this success thing is not a *Secret*? No? Just remember these five prerequisites: Talent. Skill. Commitment. Effort. Luck.

But with all of the avenues I have pointed out, one thing needs to be borne in mind in each case: You have to be well organized and run a tight ship, so to speak ... and that's what this booklet is about.



How many dogs did we have for this shot? Well ... two, of course.

The little white poodle was shot more than 100 times in different positions,
while the blue heeler was as stoic as she looks ... she didn't once move from her spot.

There's a whole lot of retouching in this picture; 5 dog shots ... and the sky's a different shot too.

## THE BUSINESS OF PHOTOGRAPHY

There is an aspect of a successful career in pro photography that is most important: Apart from being a good photographer you must be a good sales person. In fact, this is true for every person working freelance or independently, or in any other way in their own business: You have to be able to sell yourself. Do not under estimate this; it's not easy for everybody, while it is second nature to some ... and they who can promote themselves easily, most certainly are the ones who'll find their groove more readily.

Cynics may say, an average photographer with good selling skills will succeed sooner than a good photographer with average selling skills; again, this probably is true in any field where the success of the business depends not only on the quality of the product offered, but also the personality of the operator.

The fact is: You could do worse than taking a marketing course alongside your photography course. And while we're here, let's face another reality: It helps to be a good business wo/man; so, together with that marketing course, do a business course. Learn how money works. Become an astute financier ... an efficient manager of finances.

You can of course partner-up with a person who has these skills, and just concentrate on your photography. Working together with an agent may also help ... the agent will not only represent you to clients - which is their primary purpose (they are also called representatives, or reps) - but may also help in business related matters. You will then be part of a 'stable', a group - probably a dozen - where photographers are represented alongside industry related technicians ... like stylists, make-up artists, model (fx = special effect) makers etc.

Talking about partnering up ... you may well investigate if it is at all feasible to find partners in crime, other photographer(s) who might join you on your journey of going pro. To start up a studio with another photographer or two is a well trodden path; look around, there may be someone next door you can fall in with ... the advantages are many... not least that you can share equipment and experiences.

## THE BUSINESS OF PHOTOGRAPHY

One thing you probably will do pretty soon, once you are successful and very busy, you'll hire a manager ... either a business manager or a studio manager, who runs the clerical and organizational aspects of your photography business; s/he may also run around with your portfolio and drum up more work.

But let's not get ahead of ourselves; let's say you are at the very beginning of a potential pro career. You're an amateur photographer; you love what you're doing: Picking up the camera, taking photos. People may in the past have said to you: "Wow, that's nice ... you should be a photographer!" So where to now?

The first thing to do is *not* to run out right away and buy an expensive camera ... that comes later ... first determine exactly which field you wish to be working in.

Having said that, now-a-days even reasonably priced cameras are good enough to produce sellable picture files. I go into details on this subject in my ZEN PHOTOART book; in fact - as regards technical stuff - I guess the ZEN PHOTOART book is a prequel to this book ... they compliment one another. Anyway, on my website you find the *Resources* page ... go to zen-photoart.com / About & Contact / Resources; I will mention that section repeatedly throughout this book, I'll say for instance: *Resources: Camera Formats.* You'll appreciate that webpage as you read on in this book.

No, first of all you want to work out whether what you like doing is useful for potential clients. To begin with: Define what you're good at ... it is one thing to take nice shots of friends ... but another to do commercial portraits, where you must follow a brief. You may be able to do pretty flower pictures ... but how do you shoot a product in a way that the merchandise jumps off the page?

So, as to what to do first, my advice is to collect your best photos - probably a dozen or twenty of them - into a portfolio. Start work on your printed portfolio, and consider an online one ... but preferably you'll do both. Your online portfolio - your website - is rather easy to put into place, but don't neglect the printed portfolio. Think about it:

In the long term your pictures must stand up to being printed, so it's probably a good routine to see your photos on a sheet of paper (your laser printer may be good enough). When you see your pictures printed, you are able to be more critical with them, you see more detail ... for good or for worse.

Find (or make) yourself a nice portfolio case that you will present your pictures in. A case or folder is preferable to a fixed book ... this way you can update it readily; it's easier to replace single prints, rather than re-doing a book. There are many commercial portfolio cases available; this is probably one of your first expenses.



The background of the 'Stem the flow' picture is made up in Photoshop; the bottle & wine are about half a dozen shots. This is a visual for medication that's used on battlefields to stem the blood flow of injured soldiers.

## WHAT TO CHARGE?

The not Usage Rights Managed fee has many advantages, both for myself and the client. On the face of it, I may be missing out on larger usage payments further down the track (some busy photographers make tens of thousands of dollars p.a. this way). On the other hand, a client may pay me an additional 100% of my basic day rate for a job, where it turns out, in the end they never would have paid more than that anyway ... probably they only needed one additional usage item that would only have cost them 50% of my fee. Furthermore, I get all my money right from the start and I don't have to worry about chasing up extra moneys later on.

For the client the advantage is that they never have to worry about additional charges coming in at a later stage. And they may actually have saved money. These charges often need to be seen in the context of talent charges (model fees). Often the charges for the photography fees are less than the talent charges; talent is expensive ... and the model agencies are very diligent when looking at usage charges. My experience is that there is very little room to negotiate when you want a certain model for your job, especially when the exposure for the talent is great; then it is easier for a client to justify 'buying the photographs out' because they may have to buy the talent out anyway.

However, the client may not want to commit themselves to a larger up-front payment than necessary. They do not yet know that the advertising campaign will be successful ... whether the shots warrant extra exposure than the initial ads; they may only further down the track be able to sell the campaign to overseas offices for further usage; they may want to hang onto the extra funds as long as they can, preferring to spread the cost for photography over two budgets etc.

So for the client there may be many reasons why they decide to go for the USM fee ... and let's face it, if you trust the agency and you can hang in there, you'll be better off, since in the long run you'll get paid more. Imagine being on holiday, you check your email and there's a request from an ad-agency to invoice them for more usage for a certain campaign you did last year ... great; money for nothing! On the following pages I have a few admin documents; the originals you find on my site:

Resources: Filemaker Pro Documents

BurmeisterDigital Pty/Ltd - ABN 69 050 048 701 - 59 Parraween Street - Cramorna NSW 2090 - Sydney - Australia

# BURMEISTER DIGITAL.COM

Digital Photography & Retouching - Carsten Burmeister Photographer - 61 2 9904 1472 - cb@burdig.com

## PRICE LIST 2012 AU\$ - excluding tax (GST) Fee-Schedule for Advertising Photography:

photography dayfee (not Usage Rights Managed) \$6,000.00 photography dayfee (Usage Rights Managed) \$3,000.00 retouching dayfee \$1,500.00 assistant's, stylist's & production dayfee \$750.00

The Usage Rights Managed (URM) dayfee of \$3,000 includes Basic Usage Rights (BUR) for two media, one year and one territory. Additional usage is charged as Extended Usage Loading, which can be paid separately, or at a later stage.

The non URM dayfee of \$6,000 is available as on alternative for jobs where unlimited usage rights - Buy Out - is required from the outset

## **Production Advance**

To lock in the shooting dates and for pre-production to commence, a production advance of 50% of the total estimate is due upon acceptance of the quote and issue of a purchase order.

## Usage

The basic Usage Rights Managed (URM) dayfee includes Basic Usage Rights (BUR) for two media, one territory, one year. Extended usage attracts Extended Usage Loading. Please specify your usage needs in your brief.

### **Media Categories**

News print - consumer magazines - consumer brochures - consumer posters - trade press - trade brochures - trade posters supersites - outdoors - calendars - annual reports - point of sale - direct marketing - packaging - bus sides record covers - tvc stills - cinema stills - book covers - world wide web

### **Extended Usage Loading**

Of the photography dayfee add 50% each for one more country, one more media or one more year's usage. For regional usage, all print media (consumer or trade), two years or more, add 100% each, to a maximum of 200% 200% of the photography dayfee is a regional Buy Out, global Buy Out of usage rights (unlimited usage) is 300%.

## **COMMERCIAL WORK Terms of Business:**

- Legal title of all photographs stays with the photographer until full payment of the invoiced amounts has been received, i.e. the client or client's agents shall not use the photographs before full payment has been made.
- Client and client's agents are authorised to publish the photographs only according to the usage agreed to in the job's quote / invoice and - specifically - to the exclusion of any third parties.
- After the exclusivity period, as specified in the invoice, the photographer shall be entitled to use the photographs for any purposes. Worldwide copyrights to all images remain with the photographer.
- Shooting dates are confirmed only through issue of a purchase order and payment of the production advance.
- 5. The client and client's agents indemnify the photographer against any claims arising from the use of the photographs.
- 6. All postponements after job confirmation and booking of a shooting date will be charged as follows: 1st postponement: no fee, but all expenses incurred. For every other postponement thereafter: half the agreed fee, plus all expenses. The full fee will be charged for postponements that turn into cancellations. All cancellations after confirmation and/or after booking of a shooting date will be charged at half fee plus all expenses - but any cancellation less than 3 business days before a scheduled shoot will be charged at full fee, plus all expenses incurred.
- 7. On the day of the shoot a client representative should be present at the shoot with the authority to accept the shots as executed. Any reshoot resulting from a misinterpreted brief in absence of a client representative will be charged like a new shoot.
- 8. Payment terms: 50% upfront; balance 7 days. With accepting the quote and issue of a purchase order, the agency / client agree to these terms.

## **TERMS OF BUSINESS / QUOTING**

Once you start shooting you'll quickly learn that you have to quote every job in great detail ... the first step, I think, is to put your pricelist with your Terms of Business (ToB) in front of your client (see previous page). The next thing you'll learn is that once you have quoted a job, it is likely you will have to re-quote again and again, until an acceptable budget for the shoot is arrived at.

You want to specify on your quote your Terms of Business and spell them out in great detail ... especially your terms of payment. When working with ad agencies it is quite likely they will put you on deferred payment terms, like it or not; in my experience they often charge the client, receive the payment ... but then like to hang on to the money for a while. Working for direct clients seems to be easier, where your payment terms could be accepted more readily.

An important aspect of my terms of payment is the 50% production advance. Especially for jobs with large expense components, I ask for *at least* 50% upfront. And the remainder I always would like to be paid seven days from the invoice date. The point is, once your quote is accepted, the money is there at your client's or the ad agency's; if they don't pay you, then that's purely to make a little bit of interest in the bank with *your* money. Be clear about this: The money you're due for your job, once the job is delivered, *is yours*, it's not anymore theirs. Make the point in your ToB that they may not use the pictures *before* full payment for them is made and received by you. This is a tricky area, though. An ad agency may not agree to your Terms of Payment, they may have their own. What to do? Will you reject the job just because they want to pay you in their own time? Hmmm.

Let's talk about job expenses. Firstly, you should not work without an assistant, that's unprofessional; next, you'll spend more time on the job than the actual shoot. There will be pre- & post- production, where you have to organize the shoot and later on the files; you also may do some retouching ... indeed, some 'file-handling' will apply and probably RGB proofing as you go along; as well as DVD burning. When shooting in the studio I like to do a quick print (RGB proof), where we'll see more - and especially the client does - than on the computer screen.

BurmeisterDigital Pty/Ltd - ABN 69 050 048 701 - 59 Parraween Street - Cremorne NSW 2090 - Sydney - Australia

# BURMEISTER DIGITAL.COM

Digital Photography & Retouching - Carsten Burmeister Photographer - phone 61 2 9904 1472 - cb@burdig.com

## PHOTOGRAPHY COST ESTIMATE 2012: AU\$ excl. GST

To prepare a cost estimate print this pdf, call me and we'll fill in the red center column together, using the cost estimate samples on the right as a guide to suit your budget

			V.			Cost Estimate Sample				s:
	item	price	#	item total	#	total	#	total	#	total
10	photography dayfee, not usage rights managed (world wide buy-out inclu									
11	photography dayfee, usage rights managed (subject to usage loading)	\$3,000			1	\$3,000				
12	retouching dayfee	\$1,500			1	\$1,500				
13	photography dayfee, short day	\$2,500					1	\$2,500		ic.
14	photography dayfee, Aaron	\$2,000						323	1	\$2,000
15	assistant's dayfee, Aaron	\$750			1	\$750	0.6	\$500		
16	junior assistant's dayfee	\$350			1	\$350			1	\$3.50
17	production day fee	\$750			1	\$750	0.6	\$500	75	
18	computer time & retouching, hourly rate	\$150					6.6	\$1,000	1	\$150
19	digital imaging fee, file handling, per picture/motive or per day	\$500			1	\$500	0.8	\$400	0.8	\$400
20	studio expenses: couriers, phones, miscellaneous materials etc., per day	\$100			1.5	\$150	1	\$100	1	\$100
21	location expenses: mob. phones, car hire, misc. materials, insurance etc.,	per day \$200								
22 🔲	hourly shooting fee, min. 1.5 hours	\$500					-		-	
23 🔲	large studio hire, per day from:	\$750			-		-		-	
24	photography dayfee, corporate work, not usage rights managed	\$4,000			-	_	-	_	_	
25	photography dayfee, corporate work, usage rights managed	\$2,000			-	_				
26	retouching & production day fee, corporate work	\$600			-	-	-	_	_	_
27	assistant's dayfee, corporate work, Aaron	\$400			-		-	_	_	-
28		to be estimated			-	_	-	_	-	_
	location scouting fee, per location appr.				-	_	-	_	-	_
29	location fees appr. (provisional figure only; could be up to \$2,500)	\$500			-	_	-	_	-	_
30		\$1,000			-	_	-	_	_	_
31	hire of hi-res 45mp digital camera equipment, per day	\$1,250			-		-	_	-	
32	styling dayfee from:	\$750			-		_	_	_	_
33	styling hourly fee	\$150			-		_	_	_	_
34	props, per shot appr. (provisional figure only)	\$250			-					
35	wardrobe, per person appr. (provisional figure only)	\$250								
36	backgrounds appr. (provisional figure only)	\$250								
37	set building dayfee	\$900			_					
38	set building materials appr. (provisional figure only)	\$350								1
39	food styling (home economist) dayfee	\$900					1			
40	food expenses, per shot appr. (provisional figure only)	\$150							K	
41	casting - electronic, by email only	\$37.5								
42	casting - studio, pictures (aken and emailed	\$750					576		0.0	
43	talent, adults, per hour (min. 2 hours) \$250 + 16.5% agent's commission :	x2 hrs \$585								
44 🔲	talent, children, per hour (min. 2 hours) \$150+ 16.5% agent's comm. x2	hrs \$350			-					
45 🔲	hair & make up, per day	\$900						7.15	7	
46	hair & make up, per hour	\$150								
20		300 S			1 4	\$7,000	95	5,000	-	3,000
ob:	subto	tal: AU\$					_	-	_	
lient:	conti	gency: %				mple cost ed produc				
ob#:					i		5107.3			
ontact:	TOTAL FOR PRODUCTI	AUS AUS								
ontact.				Talent loading.						
nedia:		Please note: The basic photographer's shooting fees includes usage for two media, one territory, one year.			cost estimate approved					
pasie erritory	extended			ctly with the del agencies.	budget target: your local currency:					
sage	for extended usage add appropriate		THE STATE OF THE S			you	ua auca	m corre	, y	
luration	percentage of photography fee:	%			1000				-	
	NETT TOTAL FOR JOB: including extended usage los	ading: AUS			AUS					
hotogra		proposed			1					
dead		shooting dates:								