

Why Choose Custom Photography? and Why Does It Cost More?

It is inevitable that at some point clients will question the price of prints. "Why do you charge \$35 for an 8x10 when I can go to Walmart and get it printed for \$4.99."

Here is a great article that explains why photographers have to charge more than your neighborhood drugstore.

Why Does Custom Photography Cost More?

Digital technology is brilliant. The digital revolution has brought some amazing flexibility and amazing amounts of control for the photographer, the hobbyist, the professional, and the amateur. With flexibility comes a price, though. Camera equipment is still considerably more expensive when you factor in its' lifespan, the need for additional resources for processing those images, the time it takes to get a usable image and the effort that goes into all of this.

Even though you pay \$4.99 for a print at your local drugstore and paying for film is a thing of the past (although you still pay for memory) you may be wondering why you may pay upwards of \$40 for a custom photography print. The answer is multi-faceted and has a lot to do with the time, equipment costs, artistic vision and reputation of the photographer, the expertise, and the usual costs of running a legitimate business.

Time of the Custom Photographer

Approaching it from a time standpoint, let's imagine that you have hired a photographer whose work you love and that will be traveling an hour to your on-location session.

Time Breakdown:

- session prep time (30min- 1 hr) includes equipment and back up equipment checks
- one hour travel time to session
- 15-30 minutes prep time at client's home
- 1-3 hours with client photographing
- one hour travel time from session
- 30-45 minutes uploading time from digital cards to camera
- 30-45 minutes time spent backing up images
- 2- 10 hours editing time to present you with a gallery of edited images
- 1 hour prep time getting ready for ordering
- 2-3 hours time with client ordering images
- 1 hour sorting through and checking order
- 30 minutes - 1 hour prep time for delivery
- 30 minutes- 1 hour getting order shipped
- any additional phone time or time needed for an add-on order, shipment issues, quality issues

As you can see, average client time for a session ranges from just under 13 hours to over 20 hours depending on the photographer's level of service. This is time dedicated only to your session. When the photographer charges \$150-\$300 for the photo shoot, you are not just paying for the 2 hours of session time. You are paying the photographer for the many hours spent to complete your session.

Cost of the Custom Photographer:

Regarding equipment costs, a good quality professional camera with a selection of good optical quality lenses, digital storage mediums, and computer set-up can run from \$10,000-\$30,000. Even though you can purchase a really good quality digital SLR for about \$2100, there are still other costs related to photography. A good lens for

portrait photography can run from \$900-\$2500. A dependable computer system with software loaded for business and creative usage can run from \$2500-\$8000.

Then come lab costs for specialty products. A good photographer knows the lab is integral to their success. Photography labs dedicated to the professional photographer often cost more and offer a range of products that allows the custom photographer to continually offer new, innovative products for you, the discerning client.

There is much more: including costs of running a business, taxes, studio rental/mortgage if the photographer has a studio, vehicular costs, costs of advertising/marketing, cost of sample pieces that the photographer will likely bring to your session, etc.

Oftentimes, the client will mention to their photographer that X studio in the mall/department store only charges \$25 for an 8x10 or they may mention other things related to discount photography chains. The fact is those discount chains make their money on volume, not on customized one-on-one service. In February 2007, a rather well-known discount department store closed down 500 of their portrait studios across the nation. The reason is simple: You cannot make money on 99 cent "professional" prints if you do not sell enough of them. Interestingly enough, those same studios that offer cheap packages, often charge much more for their "a la carte" prices (as high as \$40-\$50 for an 8x10). The whole reason the big department stores began offering portrait studios in the first place was to get you, the consumer, in through their door so that you could spend more money with them in other departments.

Going to a chain studio, you don't have the benefit of one-on-one attention for 2 hours at your home where your child is allowed to explore, play and be comfortable in their home environment. Nor do you get the experience that many custom photographers are known for, or the lovely captures of natural expressions. You simply get a bare bones, "Say cheese" experience. Keep this in mind when selecting a photographer.

Reputation/Expertise of the Photographer

Being in demand, being well known for quality work, having a good reputation often costs time on the photographer's part. Their expertise comes at a cost, their time learning their craft and learning the intricacies of lighting and the commitment put forth on their end to create a persona about their business that oozes professionalism. A great number of photographers go a very long way from the time that they purchase their first good camera to making money at the business of photography. Many photographers, when first starting out, rush in thinking that the business will be easily profitable in no time. How expensive could it be to get a camera and use it to create their dream? They often neglect to factor in the cost of business, the cost of equipment, software, back-ups, etc.

Being of sound reputation, a good professional photographer knows that they must always reinvest in their business to create the reputation of being top notch. To create good work, good, reliable equipment and good back up equipment is a necessity. The photographer who desires to be known as better/best/unparalleled reputation-wise knows that the most important thing they can do for their business is reliability and dependability. This is how reputations get built. Good work is often a wonderful side-product of building that good reputation.

I hope this article sheds some light on WHY a custom photographer is a better choice for your family's memories. The photographs that are produced as a result of the professionalism and dedication that your photographer has will be cherished for more than a lifetime and great thought and consideration should be placed into hiring who is right for your family's most precious investment.

thanks to www.professionalchildphotographer.com for this invaluable information.