



Stock Photography By: Mike Adkins

One of the best ways to improve your photography is to learn from others.

The Internet has provided a great resource for photographers to learn from professionals in the business. And the real definition of a professional photographer is one who makes a living or at least charges for his or her work. Stock photographers have discovered the rule of supply and demand.

So what is stock photography? Stock photography, including stock art, is the business of creating a photo or piece of art that is generic in nature or follows a theme so that a wide audience would like to purchase the rights to use the photo or art.

Graphic design companies, advertising companies, and even individuals who are looking for a particular type of photo or art can for a very reasonable price purchase the rights to reproduce or use the creator's work. Photographers and artists will post their work online at one of the many stock photography sites (Google the term stock photos).

The licensing and download fee depends on the site. Here is how it works. A photographer posts a photo he took of a chef baking bread. He then catalogs the photo so that it would be easy for a prospective client to find on the site. Then, let's say, an Advertising Agency gets a contract to produce an ad for homemade baked bread. The graphics department may subscribe to a number of stock photo sites or may just pay as they go.

The ad agency then searches and finds the photo of the chef baking bread and it is determined that this will work great in their ad. They purchase the rights to the photo and download a high-resolution version of the print. The cost to the agency may be as little as \$10.00 for full usage rights. It would be much higher if the agency wanted exclusive rights to the photo. The stock photo site may only take \$1.00 for the transaction fee and the photographer gets the rest.

This may seem like a very small amount of money to receive from a large photo agency and it would be if that was the only download that you received. However, in stock photography some photos get picked and downloaded thousands of times.

This is an extremely profitable business for some photographers. The stock photographer that I have been following for the past year is Nickonken and his web site is <http://www.nickonkenconnection.com/shoptalk/> . Even though Nickonken does some commercial work his primary income comes from stock photography. He travels all around the world with some of the world's top models just to produce more marketable stock photos and his commercial work was a result of agencies getting to know his style and work from stock sites. Nickonken spends a lot of time in Hawaii producing fashion stock photos so that should give some indication as to the scope and profitability of stock photography.

So, you ask, what does it take to get into the stock photography business?

The answer is one single photo. You can set up accounts on a number of stock photo sites and even upload your photos to as many as you like. Some stock sites keep your payments in a kind of bank account that has to reach a minimum before they send you a check or transfer the money into your back account or PayPal account.

What kind of subject matter is on stock photo sites? Just about any type of subject you can think of. There are any number of themes and subjects. It is always a good idea to try to keep your shots generic just so you can attract a greater number of clients.

Does stock photography include things such as landscapes and macro photography or images that we would enter into club competitions? The answer is yes, anything can make a stock photo. The real key is finding out what people are willing to purchase.

What about photographing people. Most stock photo sites require that you have available and are able to produce a model release if any photo was taken of an individual. Even people's pets will require a model release from the owner. The liability always remains with the photographer. Most agencies who want to use the image may require a copy of your model release or they may even require you to use their own form.

Finally, if you love photography and draw inspiration from other photographers then you should spend some time looking at stock photo sites. You will be amazed at the range of photos and the quality of some. Take a look at the download counters on each photo. You will also be amazed at how much money some of these photographers make on a single shot.

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