
Professional Photography Quote/Proposal/Invoice Data and Topics

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Professional work usually begins with a proposal (initiated by the Photographer) or answering an RFQ (Request for Quote), RFB (Request for Bid), or RFP (Request for Proposal) from the Client. Although this formality is sometimes overlooked and, for example, an AD or Designer or other client simply asks you how much it will cost for a given project, you should generate an official proposal to submit to them. In the end this will protect both parties and stop most problems before they even begin. Besides, it is the professional way to work. It should contain the following data:

Introduction

The introduction section announces that this is a proposal from the photographer (or business name) for the Client for the provision of photographic services enumerated below. It may contain the date limitations for the prices given (sometimes important if you are basing costs on volatile price quotes from your own vendors and/or a date by which the proposal must be accepted in order to hold the quoted fees.

Detailed Project Description

This should restate the project as you understand it in excruciating detail. Nothing that could have the slightest budgetary effect, or that could in some way be seen as criteria for success should be left out. It most certainly needs to restate the location (and any scouting needs), the item or items to be shot, any needed special equipment, models, props, sets, etc., any needed travel, special fees or insurance, plus important deadlines and time issues including any necessary approval times.

Some break these down into two sections: (A) what the photographer will provide, and (B) what the client will provide (such as locations, sample or customized products, etc.).

Rights to Images/Work

Here you need to clearly state or restate the business practices to which you will adhere relative to the basic ownership of the images you will be shooting. Make sure it is clear that this project is being undertaken as an Independent Contractor and is NOT being done as Work For Hire. This will form the basis for later discussions of usage rights for the images and cover you legally if a problem arises.

Estimated Charges and Fees

This section should present a breakdown of the fees you will charge based on the description detailed above. If possible, make this a “Hard Quote” meaning it WILL be the maximum amount charged for the job. If there are areas where costs or items are still unclear then carefully specify those and the effects of estimated modifications to the final cost.

1. **CREATIVE FEE.**

This is the project fee for YOU the photographer. It includes your time, skill sets, knowledge, education, insurance, amortization of basic equipment, personal and project overhead and your profit. It used to be based on hourly or day rates but modernly those are seen as rates for “tradespeople” not creative “artists” such as photographers. It may also include a location scout/survey.

2. **SPECIAL EQUIPMENT.**

This is the rental fee for any special equipment above and beyond the bare bones equipment someone of the skill level you advertise would be expected to have. Even if you own this equipment, you should show a rental fee because if something breaks you may need to rent it after all and need that cost covered. After the job you can decide to “discount” the final bill or not. This cost can be marked up to cover time and costs involved in performing the rental and the finance charges on your credit card if rented via CC.

3. **ASSISTANTS, STYLISTS & OTHER PERSONNEL.**

Include the charge for your assistants or stylists (such as Food Stylists). If you are paying Workman’s Comp or other “Insurance or benefits” include the amounts that would be applicable to this project. If you hired a “producer” to put the shoot together it would go here.

4. **MODEL/PROP/SET FEES.**

This will total the fees that will be encountered from the use of professional models. Include wardrobe, makeup, props etc. It would include the costs for design, construction and striking of any set pieces needed for the shoot. You can summarize these in your quote though the hired talent may have a breakdown of their own in their quote to you.

5. **TRAVEL CHARGES.**

These are the charges for all of your related travel costs when shooting on location other than your studio or beyond a specified range. They include gas, insurance, licenses, and other annualized auto costs (usually based on a per mile cost), lodging, meals.

6. **OTHER FEES.**

Any additional fees such as locations fees or special insurance requirements for the project. This would also house any catering, security, etc. charges.

7. **SUPPLIES/PROCESSING/DIGITAL COSTS.**

This would be the fees and costs for downloading, basic editing (such as a lab would do with a *standard* print). Some Photographers include transfer onto a CD and the cost of

the CD-R media here; others make it a separate category or put it in “Fulfillment” noted below.) If this is a film shoot it would include the costs of film and processing plus markup for time and travel involved.

8. **RETOUCHING AND CUSTOM IMAGES.**

This is the fee for your (or an assistant’s) time doing editing and image manipulation above and beyond a standard lab print’s efforts. It is usually based on an hourly rate. It would also note additional media used to supply client’s request.

9. **FULFILLMENT.**

This contains the fees and costs involved in delivering the product to the client. Some put the cost of the CD here. It includes any packaging, delivery, and shipping costs.

10. **MISCELLANEOUS COSTS**

Here you itemize any anticipated charges that do not appear elsewhere.

11. **TAXES.**

Any anticipated Taxes that must be charged.

12. **CONTINGENCY FEE.**

For any large job, it is common to have a contingency fee of 10% to 15% (sometimes more on really complex projects. It is expected that if this fee is not needed it (or any unused portion) will be subtracted from the final invoice.

13. **USAGE FEES.**

These are the additional charges based on the client’s stated intended use for the delivered images. It is spelled out carefully and in detail along with a warning about inappropriate other uses entailing additional charges.

14. **TOTAL PROJECT COSTS**

15. **TERMS.**

Here you specify the payment terms you will accept and what, if any, discount you may give for timely payment.

Project Modifications

Here is a potential lifesaver section. This should list the means in which modifications will be handled depending on how they occur. These can be:

- a. Client requested modifications that increase costs
- b. Client requested mods that decrease costs
- c. Photographer requested mods that increase costs
- d. Photographer requested mods that decrease costs

- e. Natural but unforeseen occurrences that effect the project (weather, sickness, client location that is not ready or as described, etc.).

Conclusion

Here you thank the client for the opportunity to submit the proposal and note that they should contact you for any additional information (although this should be so complete they have but to call and give a go-ahead). Note that if they approve the proposal you will submit a contract/agreement for services based upon this proposal and be prepared to start immediately upon execution (signing) of that agreement and the receipt of payment of any required deposit or first part of a phased contract.

Package and Presentation

This proposal is YOU. It will represent YOU to the client and to the several client managers and officers who will see it and perhaps have to approve it (even though they may not have seen your portfolio of work). It needs to be as professional looking as you want them to assume your work will be. And it ought to be design-consistent with your other materials as well.

Follow-Up

Usually there is a project deadline and from that, working backwards, you would have derived a date by which your proposal would need to be accepted in order to give you the time to complete the work. The proposal itself will have stated this date. As it approaches, if you have not heard, it is appropriate to follow up with your contact and if that date slides, and there are any budget impacts (as you indicated there might be) you need to follow-up and let them know the quote will have to be adjusted because your costs just went up.

Whether or not you are awarded the project, hand write a nice Thank-You card for having the opportunity to submit a proposal along with hopes for a chance to work with them in the future.

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