

# 10 WAYS

to know if photography is the right career for you



# 1.



## **You want to BYOB. (And not in the way you're thinking!)**

Simply put, Being Your Own Boss is awesome. It allows you the freedom to do what you want in a day and choose where and how you spend your time. If you want to spend the day shooting, you can! If you'd rather focus on marketing and building relationships, you can do that, too. It's the ultimate freedom.

It's not for everyone though. With all of that freedom comes the need to be self-motivated and think critically about the best way to spend your time. If you focus on the wrong thing or spend time learning a skill that ends up not benefiting your business, that falls on you. There's no one there to direct you, lead you, or take the blame when something doesn't work.

The good news is that if this motivates you, you just might be cut out for photography. For many photographers, the idea that they are solely responsible for their success is an excellent motivator and inspires them to improve every day!

**Side Note:** While most photographers do run their own businesses, one great thing about "photography" is that there are many jobs in the industry that don't require being your own boss. If that sounds better to you, consider becoming a photo assistant, digital tech, or image retoucher instead! These jobs would allow you to work at something you love without the extra pressure and responsibility of entrepreneurship.



# 2.

## **You are not motivated by MONEY. (But this doesn't mean you don't want any!)**

For some people, their main reason for working really hard is to get a big, fat paycheck at the end of the week. If this sounds appealing, photography probably isn't the right career for you, and here's why:

Photographers will make money. Some photographers make a heck of a lot of money (this depends on how hard and smart you work). But photographers need to work long, long hours -- especially in the beginning -- to build their client bases, their portfolios, and their businesses. Often, those first few years provide very irregular "paychecks." If money was your reason for working, you'd just quit.

To be a photographer, you'll need to be okay with the lulls and in-betweens... being okay with eating all the ramen and dried beans that have been in your pantry for years because the check hasn't come through for that big paying job yet. Photographers love being photographers so much that they work 8-to-10-hours a day marketing and shooting anyway — even when it seems like no one is paying for it.

You'll need to LOVE being your own boss AND working hard even when it feels like you're working for free.



# 3.

## You LOVE to travel.

One of the absolute BEST things about photography is that photographers are needed everywhere. If you have an itch to shoot 5,000 miles away in a foreign country, you could likely find a way to do the work of booking jobs there.

Sure, there is more legwork involved in marketing and networking in a new area, but with photography, it's always possible! If travel is a priority for you, you'll work smart to make it happen, and new doors could open in exciting and exotic places.

When it comes down to it, photography is one of those careers that would let you live in a van, do all your work at coffee shops, and wake up in a new city every month. With photography, you can make your business exactly what you dream it could be if you're strategic about your business practices.



# 4.

## **You want work to... not feel like “work.”**

Do what you love. Always. If you love the ocean, become a marine biologist. If you love math, become a mathematician. In today’s society, almost any passion can be turned into a career. This is true with photography, too.

Work should always be hard—that’s what makes it work—but it should also bring you joy, satisfaction, and a sense of accomplishment. If you dread going to work every day or abhor the classes you are taking for your major, you’re not in the right place. Think about what you enjoy and make that into your career.

You should wake up each day excited to go to “work” and do what you love. Does this mean it will be easy to be a professional photographer? Nope, not at all. But it means that when it gets hard and you start thinking about giving up, you won’t. Because at the end of the day you are still doing what you love.



# 5.

## **You have an innate desire to create every day.**

When creativity is the backbone of your business, you get to experiment, explore and innovate every single day. In fact, your success demands this innovation. And with photography, you can create new images, new promotional materials, new website design, and new shoot ideas daily.

This means you won't be spending your time doing pointless things. Every day is another day to grow your business, to improve your craft, and to exercise your creative muscles. While this certainly includes the less-fun stuff like accounting, legal considerations, marketing, insurance, and building blog post after blog post, it's the artistic, creative time that fuels you to the point where you start to enjoy those nitty gritty things, too. Every part of your business enables you to be an artist by trade, so every part is vital.



# 6.

## **You don't feel like you need a college degree.**

In today's world, more and more people have the opportunity to create their own career out of their unique passion. And often, those passions are not the type that require you to earn a traditional college degree.

If you want to build houses, you should apprentice under a contractor.

If you want to weld machinery, you should go to a trade school.

And photography is a trade, too.

Traditional college is amazing and necessary for many careers, but photography is not one of them. If you don't really care about having a college degree, you're in luck! Photography is the type of career that doesn't require a diploma. A photographer's credibility is based entirely on the work they create, their character, and their dependability.

You don't need a degree to get you there. You just need to work hard, learn how to improve your craft, research the market, keep growing, and keep being creative.

# 7.



## **You're okay spending long hours in front of the computer.**

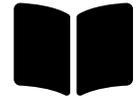
This one is tough.

Most people who dream of becoming professional photographers picture themselves spending 90% of their time photographing and the other 10% behind the computer editing, marketing and maintaining their businesses. Unfortunately, that's not the reality. It's more like 80% behind the computer and 20% shooting, especially when you're just getting established.

If you think about all the things you'd need to do to keep a business alive, actually taking pictures is a pretty small piece of that. You'll spend way more time developing new marketing strategies, communicating with clients, expanding your social media presence, and most of all... editing. Lightroom, Photoshop, Capture One, InDesign, BlinkBid, Excel, and PixieSet will all become your best of friends.

Honestly, if you want to be a professional, you have to be okay with all this computer work — especially in the beginning before you can afford to hire an assistant. The good news is that after you become more established, your time in front of the computer will decrease as your client base grows. If you think about the most famous photographers you know of, they usually spend very little time in front of the computer and much more time shooting. You just need to be willing to put in the years of hard work that it takes to get to that point.

But, if you love photography, it won't ever feel like "work."



# 8.

## **You enjoy learning new things every day.**

The photography industry is constantly changing, and the reality is that you need to keep up with it. Learning the newest industry trends and knowing the current “in” thing is critical to thriving. If you don’t enjoy researching other photographers’ styles, the most cutting-edge editing techniques, and the newest emerging technologies, you will fall behind.

Lucky for you, this can be a really fun process and can expand your creativity. As a photographer you need to be learning constantly, always increasing your knowledge of the craft and building new skills into your photographic, business, and editing skill sets.

Let’s take marketing for example: The strategies that businesses use to stand out really do change daily. Keeping up with these changes will allow you to be seen by potential clients and continue building your list of effective marketing techniques. What works one day might not work the next. This is why research, testing, and experimenting is so important.

Long story short: to keep up, you need to learn. Constantly.



# 9.

## **You love (yes, LOVE) photography!**

This one is simple. You need to love it. Turning your love of photography into a career is incredibly hard. Especially if you want it to become your main source of income.

The days will be long and you might never be sure where your next job will come from. If you love it though, it won't matter. You'll keep pushing. Hopefully the previous eight reasons have led you to realize whether photography is something that you want to turn into more than just a hobby.

We just want to say that you CAN do it. We've helped and watched hundreds of photographers turn their passion for shooting into full-time careers.

It can be done! It will still be hard, but you will be building a life around what you love.

# 10. Here are some statistics about the photographic profession to consider:

**\$32,490**



**2017 median yearly  
photographer pay**

**147,300**



**Number of people  
working as employed  
photographers in 2016**

**68**



**Percentage of photogs  
that are self-employed**

**California**



**State with the most  
photographers**

**Hawaii**



**State with the most  
photographers per capita**

**41.6**



**Average photographer  
age (male)**

**35.6**



**Average photographer  
age (female)**

**Washington D.C.  
Massachusetts  
Rhode Island**



**Top three states for  
photographers earning  
the most money**



## So... is photography the career for you?

We want you to choose the path that fits your goals, and knowing the facts (yes, these are facts) about photography as a career can help you make a decision.

Your path in life is a huge decision and it shouldn't be made lightly. Start by deciding your goals, then research, research, research, and take steps daily to reach those goals.

Hopefully we'll meet you along the way.

— The RMSP Team

*P.S. - If you're considering what it would be like to attend a photography school like RMSP, write us an email with the subject line "Looking for more Info" and send any questions you have to Bob at [bob@rmsp.com](mailto:bob@rmsp.com).*

*Or, just give us a call at 800-394-7677.*

*We're always happy to answer your questions!*