



SUCCESSFUL STOCK PHOTOGRAPHY

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Stock photography has gone through it's phases. From assignment out takes, to commercialization, to royalty free disks. This article stresses success in a commercial environment. This includes stock photos sold through agency catalogs and online web sites.



Step 1 - Approach stock photography with the right attitude. Without it, your chances of success are slim to none. The right attitude means you view it as a professional and go after it like you mean it, expecting obstacles but remaining undeterred by them.

Step 2 - Hone your skills. (For some, this may be step number one.) Learn to take good, commercially viable photographs. Study the market to understand what these are keeping an eye changing trends.

Step 3 - Don't shoot just anything and everything. Concentrate on people (lifestyle photos), business, technology or some specific aspect of travel or nature. "Conceptual" photos are another possibility.

Step 4 - Remember that your equipment is not as important as your ability to make good use of it. Technology continues to make photography easier, but it can't improve the way you see. Your images are all that stock agencies and their clients will be interested in, not in what you used to take them.

Step 5 - Shoot only slide film. For 35mm this once meant Kodachrome, but most any "chrome" will find acceptance today. Use Kodak processing or the services of a good custom lab for E-6 films.

Step 6 - Use attractive models and always get releases. For commercial use you will need property releases, too.) Plan your shooting sessions and change settings, clothing, activities, people, lenses, and angles. Think variety. Make sure props, styles, and clothing will not date your pictures. Avoid showing any trademarked items or product names in your photos.

Step 7 - Establish yourself with the best stock photo agency willing to accept your work. Then work with it! It all takes time, and success goes to the producers. Be prepared to stick with it for the long haul. The typical agency contract calls for a 50/50 split on each sale and your expenses will be considerable as you build your files. Stock photography can be lucrative but it takes patience, will power, commitment and some upstart capital to invest in equipment, travel, film and processing. Remember that you will be competing with the best photographers in the country. There is no room for second best.