

Photography

Business start-up guide

Photography industry overview

Photography businesses tend to focus their operations on specific geographical or demographic areas, such as child portraiture in a certain shopping centre, or in niche areas, such as wedding photography.

In recent years, professional photographers have had to face a declining industry as well as an economy-wide slowdown. Finding a competitive edge, such as by offering specialised services and building a good reputation, will help your business be successful in the industry.

Starting or buying a photography business involves many essential steps. Legally, you must ensure that you apply for and receive the correct licences.

This guide explains how to start a photography business in Queensland. It will help you understand the challenges and opportunities of entering the photography industry so you can make good business decisions.

Getting into the photography industry

Before you start a photography business, you need to understand how the industry works, what things you need to consider in your planning, and the legal requirements you must meet.

Finding a competitive edge in Queensland's photography industry

Queensland's professional photography industry is very competitive due to the:

- low to medium initial investment costs; and
- high number of small players and sole traders operating in a specific geographic area.

Price is the most critical point of competition in the industry along with quality of service.

Offering a range of added services such as print and digital formats, plus framing options can give you a competitive edge in this industry.

You can also find a competitive edge by offering specialised services and excellent customer service, which can help you build customer loyalty and find new business through word-of-mouth referrals.

Key success factors for a photography business

To start a successful photography business, you need to:

- be creative
- have marketing expertise, including online marketing
- produce photo formats that customers want
- access niche markets
- be located close to key markets
- use specialist equipment or facilities
- have effective quality control
- have a good reputation.

Photography industry entry barriers

There are very few barriers to entry in the photography industry. However, there is strong competition within the industry, and increasing external competition from amateur photographers who now have easy access to professional equipment.

Since the industry-wide adoption of digital cameras, establishment costs have fallen. Professional photographers are now able to work using only a camera; some basic accessories like lenses, lighting, a tripod; and a personal computer.

Qualification requirements for the industry are also minimal.

(Source IBISWorld, March 2012)

Photography industry requirements

When starting a photography business you may need to satisfy the following requirements.

Working in bathing reserves

To take photos in bathing reserves you may need an Activities in Bathing Reserves Licence from the local council. These activities are regulated in order to ensure public safety and convenience in bathing reserves. Check with the [local council](#) to see if you need this licence to photograph in their bathing reserves.

Working in council parks, reserves and foreshores

To work as a photographer in council parks, reserves and foreshores, you may need an Approval for Activities on Council Parks, Reserves and Foreshores from the local council. Check with the [local council](#) to see if you need to have this approval to undertake activities on public open spaces and council controlled venues.

Working in council controlled areas

To work in council controlled areas, you may need a Commercial Filming/Photography Licence from the local council. Check with the [local council](#) to see if you need this licence to undertake any filming and still photographic shoots of a commercial nature in areas under control of council.

Working in national parks

To conduct commercial photography or filmmaking activities in a national park you may need a [Commercial Activity Permit](#) from the Department of National Parks, Recreation, Sport and Racing. This permit stays in effect for a maximum of 3 years and cannot be transferred.

Working in Commonwealth national parks

To conduct commercial activities in any Commonwealth-managed reserves, including marine reserves, you may need a [Commercial Activities Permit](#) from the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities. This permit will be issued for the duration of the intended activities and it can be transferred.

Legislation that may apply to your business

- *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*
- *Local Government Act 2009*
- *Nature Conservation Act 1992*
- *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*

To access copies of legislation, visit www.legislation.qld.gov.au.

Useful industry contacts

Business Support Unit

For more information on licences, regulations, market research, business planning and other support services phone 13 25 23 or visit business.qld.gov.au

Australian Institute of Professional Photography

Phone (03) 9856 0700

Visit www.aipp.com.au

Australian Photography Association

Visit www.australianphotographyassociation.com

Photographic Society of Queensland

Visit www.psq.org.au