

4 Signs You're Ready to Pursue Professional Photography Full Time



If you're like most would-be professional photographers, you first started pursuing your passion as a part-time hobbyist. Then things got a little more serious. You started showing your work at galleries, selling prints of your best shots, and even freelancing when it comes to what you do.

Now the day you've been fantasizing about for so long is finally here – the day you actually ask yourself: “Is this it? Am I finally ready to quit my day job and really do this?” Here are a few signs that you might finally be ready to take the plunge.

1. You've fully considered and assessed the risks

Naturally, the biggest deterrent to anyone thinking about quitting a day job in order to pursue a career in any of the arts is going to be the possible consequence of failure. A good sign that you're ready to make a move is that you've really weighed those consequences, preferably more than once.

The more responsibilities you have in your life – such as children to support or debts to pay off – the more there is at stake. However, more responsibilities also mean more incentive to actually work hard and succeed. A photographer that's ready to take the leap is both willing and able to accept all of this.

2. You have a solid business plan in place

Being talented and passionate simply isn't enough when it comes to succeeding as a professional photographer. You're embarking on a full-time business venture with what you do, so you need a business plan. When you're ready to say goodbye to your day job, you have a strategy as to how you'll make consistent money and continue growing into the future.

Part of coming up with that strategy should have involved talking to other photographers that started out where you are, speaking with a financial consultant, or otherwise seeking guidance from authorities on the matter.

3. You have a decent stockpile of resources built up

Before you quit your day job, you need a cushion in place to fall back on while you get your business off the ground. Part of this is absolutely about having enough savings piled up to support yourself for at least six months to a year.

The other part is about building a circle of colleagues, business contacts, family members, and friends that you can count on to help you build your business and make it great. Every entrepreneur needs a support system in place.

4. You've actually proven yourself

If you bought your first camera and took up photography a few months or even a year ago, it's probably not the time to quit your job and strike out on your own on a wing and a prayer. Remember, it's not enough just to be talented and driven. You need to have established that there's a sustainable market out there for what you do for you to tap into, effectively immediately.

When you're ready to quit your day job, you've been testing the waters for a while – preferably for years. You've built a diverse portfolio and developed multiple marketable skills related to what you do. You've performed (and been paid for) plenty of professional shoots. You have an actual list of clients who count on you. In other words, everything's in place and you're doing well enough to be sure you can support yourself.

If you can honestly say you've done everything on this list, then it could indeed be time to consider going full-time with your work. If not, work on things for a while first. You'll be glad that you did.