

Stock Photography Service

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There is always high demand on the internet for affordable royalty free stock images. Whether for websites, print advertising or branding this industry isn't going anywhere. Stock images websites rely on sophisticated databases and programming, if you're an accomplished programmer this might be an affordable start-up, if not be ready to spend big when starting up.

Before The Start-Up, Let's Not Get Ahead Of Ourselves

You don't need to be a photography expert to manage a stock imagery service. Most databases are too big for every image to be checked by a person, they rely on their software to ensure each submission is correctly formatted.

You will need is some experience marketing and promoting a smaller websites and start-ups. If you've never started your own online service before, consider starting with a smaller affiliate marketing or similar venture first.

The Start-Up

A website will be your largest start up expense. Do careful research into what goes into a great stock website. Your site should be as automated as possible, work with your web development company to program in all the necessary photo submission criteria such as format and size. Your site should be well integrated with a credit card system that accepts both payments for purchases and pays out commission to photographers. The standard commission is 50% of the sale price.

To run you're website you'll need a work space, desk, computer and high speed internet connection. Start your service without any employees, as your work load rises consider hiring reviewers and updaters on a commission basis.

Making It Work

There is hot competition in this market with big boys like stockxpert.com owning a significant share of all business. If you don't have the capital to establish a service that can compete with the more established sites, pick a niche, the major sites usually lack images of niche activities, events and areas. Also consider reading The Work Pad's article on being an [Online Retailer](#) in addition to this article.

Marketing

You're likely to start with a small marketing budget so consider the following; start a free stock imagery website along side your pay one. Ensure that when a search is conducted on your free site, several images from your pay site also appear. This is the model followed by some of the markets largest services.

Once you are able to calculate a visitor value also conduct a pay per click campaign using Google's Adwords or Yahoo's Overture.

Remember to market your service to both image buyers and sellers. As your service gets more established and well known in photography circles you won't need to market much to photographers, it is however essential during your start-up.

Don't Forget

There are numerous ways to structure your site, consider offering monthly or yearly memberships, as well as once of purchases. Also consider compiling similar and popular images into bundles and burning them to DVD. Web design and advertising firms often prefer to buy in bulk rather than hunt for single images.

Finally don't forget to monitor your bandwidth costs as your traffic starts to rise.