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How to maximize your architectural photography budget in the new economy

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The state of the economy has dramatically altered how we all do business. How can you maximize your photography budget? Consider the following ways to control the cost.

Multi-party contracts

Identify other parties who may be interested in sharing in photography with you: the architect, general contractor, engineer, owner, property manager, landscape architect, lighting designer or subcontractors. Although each party may be interested in different images, your photographer can coordinate the process. Since more than one party would share in the photography, the overall cost would typically increase due to additional usage, but the cost per party would be considerably lower than if photography was contracted for by just one firm. In addition, the photographer may offer a discount if one client takes the lead on coordination, rather than the photographer doing it himself.

Plan ahead

If possible, schedule a walk-through of the property to be photographed with your photographer. If not, go yourself. Take some snap shots to pass on to your photographer, along with a floor or site plan to help in planning preferred camera angles. Evaluate the site to avoid any unwelcome surprises at the time of photography. Is the property ready for photography? Are there punch list items that need to be addressed? Are light fixtures and bulbs working? Is landscaping in good order? Are props needed? Does clutter need to be removed? Do you need to obtain security clearance or special releases prior to photography? Are there obstructions such as dumpsters, temporary signage, etc? Are there scheduling issues? When is the property cleaned?

At this time of year, the sun low in the sky and there are fewer daylight hours, making perfect timing for photography trickier. Take note of what time the natural light brings out the best in the property, whether exterior or interior.

Your photographer will spend less time on the day of photography if everything is in order and lighting concerns are previously addressed, saving you money. Visit <http://asmp.org/commissioning/overview.html> for great tips on planning ahead.

Shop locally

If your project is at a distance away, let your local photographer know about it. Perhaps she could combine photography of your project with that of another client in the project area. This typically works well if your time frame for photography is flexible. Alternatively, consider using a photographer local to that distant area. A great resource for this is <http://asmp.org/find-a-photographer>. Photographers listed here are members of the American Society of Media Photographers, an organization of experienced professionals over 6000 strong.

Be flexible with your time frame

If you can be flexible with your deadline for final images, your photographer will have more control

over his calendar, allowing time to wait for great weather and ease of scheduling. This may help keep your costs down as well. Discuss this as an option.

Trade-offs

If you have a limited need for your photographs, you might negotiate a lower rate for usage rights. For example, If you are only using images on your website and not in brochures or advertisements, you may be able to negotiate a lower usage fee than if you were going to use the photographs in multiple ways. Likewise, if you replace your images on a regular basis, you may be able to negotiate a lower usage rate based on usage for one year (for example) rather than a longer period of time.

At Damianos Photography, our philosophy is to ask key questions so that we may better understand the scope of our clients' projects and communication needs. We believe that photographic projects are collaborations between our clients and ourselves. An open dialog, especially relating to budget concerns, can result in a win-win for all.

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