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How Much Should You Pay The Photographer?

From my perspective, the answer is simple: a huge amount! But you may have different ideas. So let me answer a different question: what does it cost the photographer to deliver high quality results?

First, what makes one photograph better than another i.e., what is a high quality result?

- Well composed with no extraneous information. *One* photo should tell *one* story. If the shot is taken in the foyer, it should not include the powder room.
- Well produced. No slanting walls, no excessively bright or dark areas, no jackets hanging on a coat rack, etc. Visible graininess removed. Correct size and resolution.
- Taken from the perspective of a visitor to the home. When a shopper goes to a showing, you want them to feel like what they see is just like the website listing that brought them there. Unpleasant surprises are not helpful.

The photographer's expense – mainly his/her time – goes into making these things happen.

Does it cost more to photograph a higher priced or a larger listing? No! In fact, the opposite is true. Generally, higher priced listings may have a few more rooms but they mainly have more total square feet. This usually translates into larger rooms. And larger rooms are much easier to photograph than smaller rooms because it is easier to avoid furniture etc. blocking features you want to highlight. Making a sow's ear into a silk purse is time-consuming and higher priced listings are usually closer to a silk purse than a sow's ear.

In my experience, nearly any home can be photographed in less than two hours on location. Size really does not matter until you get to a really big home.

Should you pay for so-called HDR (or HDRI)? Again, no! HDR, or "high dynamic range imaging", is a technique for combining three or more photographs into one finished photo in order to overcome the effects of very bright and very dark areas (the dynamic range) without losing detail. For example, a living room might be correctly exposed but the living room window might be way too bright. With today's cameras and a bit of Photoshop magic, HDR is *rarely* necessary.

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How much should you pay for editing photos? Nothing! You paid for a professional job didn't you? Should you pay for Photoshopping? It depends. Here are two photos. In the one on the left, the neighbor's open garage door detracts from the effect. This was corrected in the one on the right. Total time to do this? About 45 seconds. Additional charge to do it: nothing.



How much should you pay per photo? I can only answer that by telling you what I have learned on the job. Your objective is to get qualified buyers to a showing where they will connect with the listing or not. Too few – or ineffective – photos run the risk of not grabbing their interest. Too many, and you might show them something that turns them off. In general, an optimal number might be 25 to 35 or perhaps a few more if they are really good ones. This means a proof set of around 35 to 45 photos from which you can choose the ones you like. The photographer will make many more than the ones you see. (I will usually make 120 to 150 individual exposures comprising 40 to 50 scenes.) Short story: you should not pay extra!

I haven't answered the question, have I? But, I hope I have provided a bit of insight from the photographer's perspective.

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