

Why would a client hire one photographer to shoot an assignment...

Introducing the “custom stock” business model promoted by OnRequest Images. It’s based on asking multiple photographers to shoot for the same assignment on spec.

By acting as the middleman, this company makes it easy for clients to ask photographers for something that no client would DARE ask for directly — “competitive spec.” And while the client has no obligation to license any of the images, if they do, they only pay stock prices and no expenses!

“Custom stock” is really “competitive spec” and it’s negative impact on assignment and existing stock imagery is clear.

...when they can get five photographers to shoot it on spec?

*This statement is jointly
signed and supported by:*



Photo Trade Associations Speak Out on “Custom Stock” and its Future Impact on Assignment Photography

Recently, a new business model for acquiring professional photography has sprung up. It’s based on asking multiple photographers to shoot on spec for the same assignment, without any obligation for the client to buy. This takes the already dubious business practice of “spec” shooting and turns it into something even more dubious — **“competitive spec.”**

A company called OnRequest Images has coined the term “custom stock” to describe this business model, which it is promoting to clients as a better alternative to both assignment and stock.

“OnRequest Images Custom Stock service combines the creativity and quality typically associated with custom photo shoots with the speed, usability and accessible pricing of stock photography.” — OnRequest Web site

By acting as the middleman, OnRequest makes it easier for clients to ask for something from photographers that they would never dare ask directly. OnRequest tells clients that “the selected photographers (up to 5) compete for your business by shooting the same assignment simultaneously.” What client would ask, not just one, but multiple photographers to shoot for them “on spec” for a project?

While OnRequest acknowledges to clients that photographers are competing for the same assignment, it positions itself to photographers as an enhanced stock opportunity. It appeals to photographers by asserting that it creates stock, that it tells photographers “exactly what stock the clients need” and helps them “create stock that sells.” By always positioning its deal to photographers as a stock opportunity, OnRequest seeks to make the idea of “competitive spec” shooting palatable to photographers who want to get into stock, or stock photographers looking for new opportunities.

By calling itself a stock company, OnRequest tries to make its 50/50 split with photographers sound generous by today’s stock standards. But look closely at the terms of its deal with photographers. OnRequest is not acting as a stock distributor in these transactions, but rather as an artist’s

representative between its clients and contributors. That makes it the only artist’s rep making a 50 percent commission — more than *twice* the compensation that an artists’ rep generally receives.

There is, we agree, one basis upon which the OnRequest can legitimately call itself a stock company: Those spec images will eventually go into the OnRequest stock library. Therefore, we must consider what kind of opportunity this company presents for stock distribution. In particular, we must ask:

- Will clients perceive a company that is positioned as producing images “on request” as a source for stock images?
- How marketable is a stock collection based on many similar images, all created for very specific client assignments?

Moreover, OnRequest faces a stiff challenge as yet another startup that must compete against a crowded field of established stock distributors with developed collections and clients. So photographers evaluating this business model need to assess the potential profitability of stock representation by OnRequest relative to these other alternatives.

OnRequest has every right to promote its business model to clients and to try to persuade photographers that “competitive spec” is a great business proposition. But we have

little doubt that, if this business model thrives, the long-term impact on assignment photography will be negative.

We urge every assignment and stock photographer to carefully evaluate the terms of this and any business proposition to determine if it is in their best interests now and in the future.

The analysis and positions contained in this statement were independently reached, and are supported by:

StockArtistsAlliance – SAA

American Society of Media Photographers – ASMP

Advertising Photographers of America – APA

Professional Photographers of America – PPA

Editorial Photographers – EP

...we have little doubt that, if this business model thrives, the long-term impact on assignment photography will be negative.



ADVERTISING
PHOTOGRAPHERS
OF AMERICA

