

Stephanie Reed

Dade City, Florida



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Learn about Florida Entrepreneur Stephanie Reed:

Stephanie Reed, owner of Stephanie Reed Photography, has enjoyed photography since she was a teenager. As luck would have it, when Reed was studying for her English Education degree at the University of South Florida, she picked up a job coaching new models at the Barbizon Modeling School in Tampa. It was there where her passion became more than just a hobby. Reed emphasized how that experience laid the groundwork for eventually starting her own photography business.

After graduating from USF, Reed put the modeling and photography world on hold to start working as an English teacher. She worked in Hillsborough County schools for three years before moving north to Pasco County. Reed has horses, and she needed to find a place where she could have them closer to home. She found exactly what she was

looking for in Dade City. She was hired for an English and journalism position at Pasco High School in February 1998 and has been there ever since.

"I was the yearbook adviser at PHS from 1998 to 2006," she said. "Once I was no longer tied to the yearbook, I had more time to work on my own personal photography projects. Those projects quickly turned to business prospects, and I started doing photography for clients again. In the last few years, I've focused on building my business so that I can shift to that full time once I retire from the classroom."

From the beginning, Reed focused on education and learning as much as she could, not only about photography technique, but also how to properly run a photography business. She joined the Professional Photographers of America and has received tremendous guidance through that organization. Along the way, she discovered her business was gravitating towards head shots, personal branding portfolios for entrepreneurs, and alter ego – creative concept work. Reed explained the latter and her decision to niche down.

"The market is pretty saturated with everyone thinking they're a photographer," she said. "Everyone has a smart phone with a camera. It's important to distinguish yourself as a professional photographer. I love the Alter Ego work. It's challenging. It gives me the opportunity to take someone's creative vision and figure out the best way to light it, pose it, costume it, plan it, and make it happen. Another thing that distinguishes my work is the fact that I started in the film days. Back then, photographers had to get everything close to perfect before they took the shot, or they would end up wasting time and film. Even since I

transitioned to digital, I constantly check my composition and lighting to get the shot right in camera, so I don't have to do much Photoshop work afterwards."

Reed loves interacting with her clients and getting them to open up in front of the camera. She tries to make it fun and works hard to capture their true personalities in print. Reed shared that according to one of the photography instructors she's studied with, 85% of what photographers do is psychology, rather than photography. If a photographer can't connect to the client, that client is not going to get the images they need. Connections like that build repeat clients.

Looking ahead, Reed's future goals are to build the business to the point where, by 2025, she can retire from the classroom and take on the photography business full time. She also wants to be known as the premier head shot and personal branding photographer in the area.

What advice does Reed have for aspiring entrepreneurs? "As scary as it seems, sometimes you just have to take that first step," she said. "Don't give up. It's cliché but it's true. There's an enormous amount of work behind the scenes. Running a photography business is not all glamorous. I usually come home exhausted and grubby after photo shoots. The key above all is to put in the work, keep practicing your skills, and always look for something new to learn. Success doesn't happen overnight."

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