Flickr owner SmugMug says it needs more money to ‘keep the Flickr dream alive’

Photo hosting service SmugMug has penned an open letter asking fans of the photo site Flickr, which it acquired from Yahoo two years ago, to sign up for the platform’s Pro subscription to help “keep the Flickr dream alive.” The letter, authored by SmugMug founder and CEO Don MacAskill and obtained by *The Verge*, details Flickr’s ongoing financial woes and makes the case for Flickr Pro as a way to keep the service afloat.

The letter opens with a bit of self-deprecation, in which MacAskill calls Flickr “the world’s most-beloved, money-losing business.” But his plea for help is a serious one, and MacAskill says he’s not fishing for donations. He adds that every Flickr Pro subscription “goes directly to keeping Flickr alive and creating great new experiences for photographers like you.”

“We cannot continue to operate it at a loss as we’ve been doing.”
Last year, SmugMug ended the terabyte of free storage Flickr had offered to standard users since 2013, and it also limited those users to 1,000 photo uploads. The goal was to focus more on the Pro offering and hopefully create enough value that photographers would subscribe instead of using more generic cloud storage options like Google and Dropbox.

“We didn’t buy Flickr because we thought it was a cash cow. Unlike platforms like Facebook, we also didn’t buy it to invade your privacy and sell your data. We bought it because we love photographers, we love photography, and we believe

Flickr deserves not only to live on but thrive," MacAskill writes. "We think the world agrees; and we think the Flickr community does, too. But we cannot continue to operate it at a loss as we've been doing."

MacAskill says SmugMug will run a holiday season promotion for Flickr Pro that officially starts December 26th, but the letter, which was sent to existing Flickr users, says the discount can be redeemed today from this link. Flickr Pro typically costs $49.99 per year, but the discount gets you a subscription for a little more than $3 a month.

"We've gone to great lengths to optimize Flickr for cost savings wherever possible, but the increasing cost of operating this enormous community and continuing to invest in its future will require a small price increase early in the new year, so this is truly the very best time to upgrade your membership to Pro," MacAskill says. "If you value Flickr finally being independent, built for photographers and by photographers, we ask you to join us, and to share this offer with those who share your love of photography and community."

https://www.theverge.com/2019/12/19/21030795/flickr-pro-smugmug-don-macaskill-open-letter