

## Ten Things to Consider Before You Hire a Photographer

# 1

### Be clear on WHY you want to hire a photographer.

If you think you "should" have some photos of your team but are having a hard time determining if it's really a "want" or a "need", we humbly suggest the following possible reasons that it is, in fact, a need:

- You've recognized that first impressions are everything, and these days, first impressions usually take place on the internet.
- Your competition's photos are awesome. Not only do they look professional, intimate, friendly and approachable, but they're used more like ads. They have a great quote above each bio, whereas your photos are just "representation".



- Your existing executive photos don't form a cohesive collection. They were taken over a five year span, by five different photographers, on five different backdrops.
- Your executives have different photos for everything, such as their company website, LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, etc. However, those social profile photos shouldn't be seen by friends, let alone possible business partners or customers.
- Although you are very good at what you do, you recognize that a professional photographer has skills that you don't possess. Composition, direction, lighting, and retouching are second nature to a good photographer. A great photographer will also help you decide on a "look and feel" for your new photos, while giving you some direction on visual layout (and/or copy), if needed.
- Your photos are outdated. It's time for an update!

# 2

### Think about COST - Cheap may be more expensive in the long run.

Not all photographers are created equal. Typically, a professional photographer will give

you a quote without considering how your future photography needs may affect the scope of your current project. Ultimately, that lack of planning may cost you more in the long run.

Things to consider:

- How will the images be used? If they are "multi-purpose", consider that a tight headshot might work for a PR release or a LinkedIn profile but nine times out of ten, it won't work for a magazine article. A good photographer will ask the right questions to reveal usage-needs and any future possibilities in order to make the photos more "multi-functional".
- Is the photographer experienced? Can they direct your people into a relaxed state in which "posing" equates to appropriate body language and natural expressions? Remember that it's better to have too many good images to choose from than too few.
- Is there a chance that the images will be used in advertising print for the company? If so, it is in your best interest to talk to the photographer about usage rights. It is generally less expensive to buy all usage upfront, rather than have to go back to the photographer at a later date for additional rights.

Commercial, corporate photographers\* all use different methods for calculating fees, but no matter which method, it is ALWAYS more economical to photograph as many people as possible on one day. Expect to pay anywhere from \$1200 to \$3500 per day for corporate photography (plus expenses and/or usage).

\*Resist the temptation to use senior portrait or wedding photographers for your corporate shots. They offer an entirely different style and skill set that doesn't usually include the ability to direct corporate photography for use in multiple roles, especially in advertising.

### Understand "Usage".

When a photographer gives you a quote, ask what usage it includes. You will hear terms like, "unlimited", "exclusive", "web, print", "no third party", and many more. Here are a few typical terms you are likely to encounter:

- **Unlimited:** You have rights to use any of the final images for any purpose (as long as you have a model release from your employees or it is stated in their employment contract), for any length of time.
- **Web, Print with the exception of Advertising Print:** Images can be used for websites, newsletters, editorial magazines, collateral brochures, company bios, etc., but advertising print (e.g. billboards, newspaper or magazine ads), would not be permitted without additional payment (model release required for advertising even if the subject is an employee).

- **Advertising Print, Two-year duration, Southwest Markets:** This is specific to advertising in print mediums which could include billboards, magazine ads, newspapers and mailers but only within Southwest markets. If it is written up as such, ask the photographer to be more specific. You need to know EXACTLY what constitutes "Southwest" and "advertising print" in order to put a clear definition of what is and is not included within those parameters.
- **No Third Party:** This simply means that you cannot sell the images to a different company for their use.

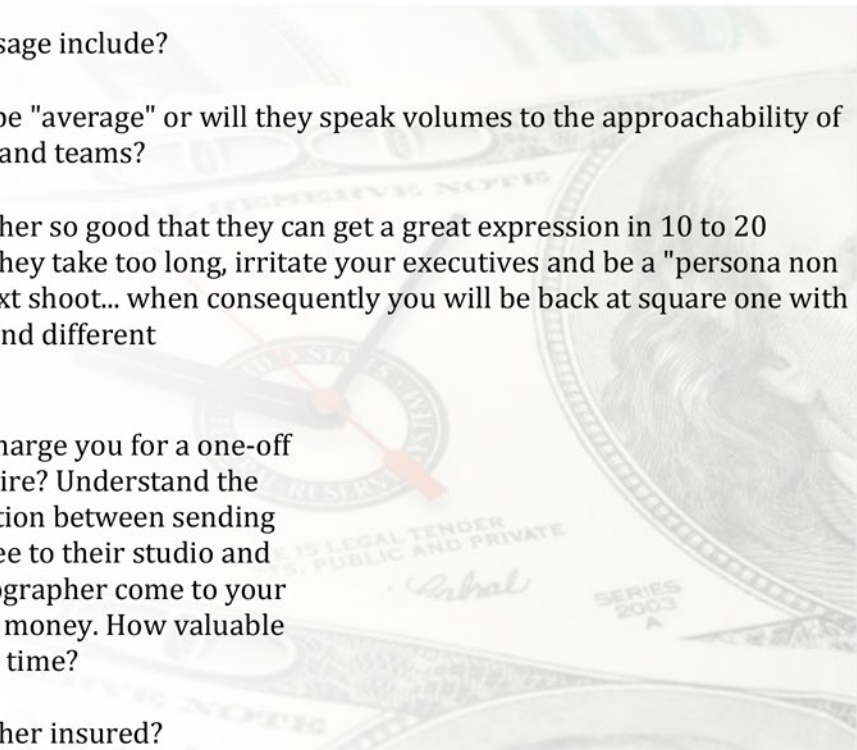
Most photographers' usage rights for corporate photography extend only to **web and print**, not to advertising. This protects the photographer, the client and the subjects. As a side note, always ask the photographer if subjects can use their image for their LinkedIn profiles without further cost. It is not automatically included within the usage agreement.

## Don't confuse "Best Price" with "Best Value".

The best price in the marketplace isn't necessarily the cheapest. We'd suggest the "best value" method of selection after considering the following:

- What does the usage include?
- Will the images be "average" or will they speak volumes to the approachability of your employees and teams?
- Is the photographer so good that they can get a great expression in 10 to 20 minutes or will they take too long, irritate your executives and be a "persona non grata" for the next shoot... when consequently you will be back at square one with different styles and different backdrops.
- What will they charge you for a one-off photo of a new hire? Understand the price differentiation between sending the new employee to their studio and having the photographer come to your location. Time is money. How valuable is the new-hire's time?
- Is the photographer insured?

The cost may seem high at first glance, but if you want potential customers coming to your website, viewing your various social media profiles, and being impressed with your printed collateral pieces, then consider the cost per visitor, rather than the cost per photo. Keep in mind that if the images are really good, you will get more interest than if they are sloppy or unprofessional. There will also be a higher probability of strong conversions, because most people do consider professional images to be an indication of the level of



professionalism of the organization.

# 5

## Ask about liability insurance.



Accidents happen.

If you don't know whether you need insurance coverage from a photographer, just ask HR or any legal representative at your company. They will most likely respond with a resounding "Yes!" In addition, if shooting at any location other than your office/floor/conference room, the building manager will need a certificate of insurance (with the building listed as an additional loss payee) before the photographer arrives.

# 6

## Decide WHAT kind of photos you need.

- **Black & White or Color:** It's easy to mull over the decision between Black & White or Color photographs, but can you pinpoint why you're leaning one way or another? Black & White can look very clean and modern, or quite traditional. It can also look disastrous if the black & white conversion is done improperly. Alternatively, color images can also look clean and high-tech, but if the wrong colors are chosen for the background, it can make everyone look green, off color, or sickly. Not exactly the impression you want to make, is it?



- **Backdrop or Location:** If you need portraits for more than just the website and press releases, consider creative ideas that best represent the company... shots (instead of or in addition to) where the subject is surrounded by a great environment. It could be a conference room, a lobby or outside on a rooftop. Imagine how great these would look within the pages of a magazine with your CEO as the main attraction. However, if your needs are more basic, have a conversation with the photographer about how color affects complexion and how black & white conversions will look on bright or dark backgrounds.



- **Full-length, 3/4 or Head & Shoulders:** The tighter the shot (yes, even cropping into the head), the more intimate the portrait will feel. In other words, photos, depending on how they're cropped, can give a false sense of intimacy to a viewer... a feeling that they know the person much better than they actually do... a feeling of "friendliness". And that translates rather well into the viewer picking up the phone; simply because your people appear to be so open, friendly and approachable... even if the viewer can't quite put their finger on why they feel that way.



## 7 **Make-up artist and/or retouching.**

Make-up artists are great at what they do. They generally charge between \$350 and \$500 a day, depending on the project. They can clean up both men and women in record time, giving skin a matte finish, covering dark circles and cutting unruly hairs. The alternative is to retouch shiny skin, dark circles and unruly hairs. If you have to pay for retouching final images, it will probably be less expensive to hire a make-up artist in the first place, because retouching is minimal when the skin has been polished prior to the shoot.

Always ask if retouching is included with the final image(s). If the answer is yes, then follow up by asking what constitutes retouching.

The best retouching is not about making a subject look ten years younger, (after all, your people get hired because of their experience... and if that doesn't jive with their age, you'll get a disconnect), it is about looking ten years fresher.

## 8 **Personality matters.**

If you hire a photographer who is not only technically proficient, but who can also direct you (so you're not standing there with your hands at your side feeling uncomfortable), then you'll end up with great photos - Especially if the photographer has a sense of humor to boot!

Hire someone who understands the sheer panic induced by the word, "Smile" and who understands that many people would prefer a visit to the dentist over standing in front of a camera with a strained expression, wondering what to do with their arms and hands.

It is typical for a photographer to say, "Smile" or "Don't cross your arms." Most photographers follow the status quo on posing. However, a truly creative and personable photographer knows that:

- Not all people smile with big, flashy, teeth-revealing grins. Some are introverted or just dislike their smile in a photograph. That is okay. It IS possible to get a great expression from someone without a grimacing or contrived facial expression.
- The idea of crossed arms in a photo is thought to be stand-offish. We agree. Sorta. But, whereas, nine times out of ten, a man cannot get away with it because, yes, it does make him look stand-offish (unless he's casually dressed), when women do it, they look confident. Sometimes, whether the subject is male or female, it just doesn't work, but the right photographer can pull off a confident pose without the subject feeling awkward.
- Having a hand in a pocket does NOT look lazy, it looks human. Everyone has a default stance when they're conversing with someone, so it's a comfortable place to start when in front of the camera.
- If you need 20 team members photographed and you've decided on 3/4 length shots, the body language must be varied; otherwise, the final images will look

really boring and staged. Does the photographer have more than one or two poses in their repertoire?



- Cracking a great joke or enticing someone to laugh is not so much about catching them in "that" moment, as it is about the free flow of endorphins. Considered a natural pain reliever, endorphins go straight to the brain and make you feel good... and hence relaxed. Nerves disappear and you're able to follow the photographer's direction without feeling self-conscious.
- Getting shots where the subject is not looking at the camera are great to have! They are the equivalent of "behind the scenes" shots and nine times out of ten, they look VERY natural... and VERY human.



# 9

## Timing.

Overall, the better the scheduling ahead of time, the smoother things will run on the day of the shoot.

If you simply need representative headshots, expect to spend about five to ten minutes with each person and do upwards of 40 people in one day. If, however, you are concerned with body language and great expressions, those need more direction and will take a little longer. Expect a maximum of 20 per day.

If you need editorial shots at different locations around the building, set-up is critical. A comfortable pace would be four to six shots in a day, dependent upon technical challenges and the availability of your people.



In addition, if you want a make-up artist on location, she will need at least ten minutes with each person for basic powder and touchup.

## Studio or "Office As Studio" Location.

Time is money in the world of business. How expensive is your CEO's (CFO, VP, etc.) time? Going to a studio involves travel time and your people's time is better spent doing business. Consider having the studio come to you instead. That way, there's minimal downtime for your teams.

How much space is needed for a temporary studio? Good question. The Board Room is very tempting because of the square footage, but in reality, there's probably a better space – unless you're willing to move that two-ton table in the center.

Some offices or buildings have education, training or, yes, yoga rooms. All are great. Sometimes a quick elevator ride to a comfortable studio beats a short walk to a cramped one. But, if pressed, a studio can be set up in a room with a minimum of 300 square feet (15' by 20', or slightly larger if doing full-length), 8-foot ceilings and a couple of outlets. The windows should have blinds or shades.

That's it. If in doubt, ask. In fact, if you have needs that are outside the scope of business portraiture, always ask your current photographer if they can do the new project. If it's outside their skill set, they should be happy to recommend a colleague. (Beware of photographers who say they do everything! They might, but they won't do it equally well.)

If you'd like more information, give us a call at (303) 778 2340 or email Susan at [sgodphoto@aol.com](mailto:sgodphoto@aol.com) :)

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