

Why You Should Use Professional Photos for Your Business

First, a true story.

I took a photo for a PR agency a few months ago. Source Marketing Communications were looking for images to accompany a story they were writing about an employee of the month at one of their clients. The employee was awarded for giving up Christmas morning and going for a sponsored swim in the sea, to raise money for charity. On the day of the presentation, I photographed him in his swimming trunks and goggles.

Source had a call from one of the journalists who received the press release, saying that he read the story, and thought that it was worth a couple of lines in the newspaper. However, when he opened the photographs, he thought they were “absolutely brilliant” and decided to publish the full story and a few extra bits. A great result for Source and for their client! And a testimony to the power of a good photo.

High quality images stand out

The essential point is that high quality images can profoundly enhance written content, making what you have written accessible and memorable. This applies whether your written content is a carefully crafted press release, an advertisement, or the pages of your website. Beautifully created imagery will promote your business in ways that words on their own cannot do.

So, if that’s true, where can your business get these sorts of images from? There are choices. Typically, businesses use stock images, snap the photos themselves or hire a professional photographer. However, for authenticity, quality and to give your business a competitive edge, there is nothing to beat professional photos. They are in fact a long-term asset for the success of your business and need to be sourced and treated as such.

How will professional photos benefit my business?

Here are a few reasons that any business will benefit from using a professional photographer:

1. Great images grab your customers attention

What’s the first impression potential customers will get of your business when they search you out online, see a press story about you, see an advertisement or view your social media presence? I guarantee it will be the images. People are visual and will look at images before they read content. In fact, what an image says about you and your business, its products and services, may well determine whether they read your written content at all.

2. Professional photos give authenticity

Imagery can bring a style which becomes identifiable with your business. When customers see the images, they make a mental association of those images to your company. It’s subliminal, but powerful. Images that show you, your team, your actual product, service or business will feel authentic in a way that stock images never can. People buy from people they trust. The right imagery can help build that trust.

3. Quality sells

No matter how amazing your smartphone camera is, the results will not compare to the quality that a professional photographer can give you. They will often have years of experience and have invested heavily in their equipment. They know about composition, lighting, and how to make you and what you do look and feel great. They will know how to provide images to your web designer or PR agency and can talk knowledgeably to them about your requirements. High quality photos are not snapped, or even taken – they are made, and a lot goes into the making.

But what about the cost?

The key point to consider here is that your photos represent your business. They are a genuine strategic long-term investment, not a cost.

Low quality, unprofessional photos will communicate the same about your business, and the products and services you provide. The photos that your business use to identify itself are key to making a great first impression. It's not worth skimping on them.

So, how best do I invest in professional photos for my business?

Professional photos are vital to successfully marketing and promoting your business, so invest with care.

They are a long-term asset to be used strategically and not just forgotten about after their first use. So, it's worth your time thinking about what you want out of them and planning accordingly.

1. Develop a brief

It's important for you and the photographer that you know what you want (and what you don't want) from your photos. Make a list of what you want photographed – don't just try to wing it on the day – and make sure you have identified the purpose(s) for which you want to use the photos. Write it down – it will help the photographer enormously if you do this part first and it will save you time and possibly money.

2. Get quotes/proposals

As with any significant expenditure on a long-term asset, do your research. Based on your brief, you should ask at least two or three commercial photographers to give you a quote or proposal - or go by the recommendation of someone you trust. The proposal may need to be refined later but at this stage you should be getting an idea of what the photographer recommends, how they charge and how much it is likely to cost.

3. Choose a photographer

Don't choose a photographer based purely on cost. Check that photographer's portfolio of work and ask them what other clients they have worked for – this confirms their experience. Make sure they are fully equipped, and insured (they should have public liability, professional indemnity and equipment insurance). And, how do they come across as a person? Make sure that you will be comfortable working with them and that you feel they will take care not to disrupt your business or your team more than is necessary to achieve the brief you have given them. You will also want to ensure that you will be receiving the appropriate usage license for the photos – this is a key area to discuss with your potential photographer.

4. Talk to your photographer and finalise the brief

Once you've chosen your photographer, don't just jump to having them come in and do the job. First, have a meeting with them to finalise the brief and if necessary refine the quote or proposal. Ask your photographer what you need to have ready and prepared for them on the day of the shoot. From what you tell them you want, and from visiting your premises and meeting you and seeing what you do, they should be able to be very clear about this.

5. Be prepared for the shoot

It's important that on the day of the shoot, you are prepared. Have ready what you have agreed with your photographer will be ready. If you're having staff photos done, do your staff need to be wearing branded work clothes? Make sure everyone is there who needs to be there. Make sure all the products/services that are going to be photographed are available. If signage is being photographed, is it looking its best? Thinking about all this will ensure the shoot goes as smoothly as possible and disrupts your operations as little as possible on the day.

6. Keep your final photos safe

Finally, when your photographer provides the final photos to you, keep them safe. Typically, you'll receive them digitally, so store them and back them up: they are a hugely valuable asset to your business.

About me

I hope that you will by now have decided that professional photos are a must-have for your business. I also hope that I may be one of the photographers you approach to provide you with a proposal.

I have ten years commercial photography experience and am a member of the Royal Photographic Society. I have worked successfully for many commercial clients including Abacus Hotels Ltd, Berendsen UK, BundleBean Ltd, Diocese of Norwich, Norfolk Brewhouse, Stephenson Smart, and the Yale Center for British Art.

I look forward to hearing from you.

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