

5 TIPS

for making the most of your professional headshot

1. UNDERSTAND ITS PURPOSE.

When a potential client visits your website or social media page, their eyes naturally go straight to the photo. You know the old adage: Don't judge a book by its cover? Yeah, riiiiight. We all do it, so throw that notion out the window. If the photo is poor quality or inappropriate, you have lost much of your audience already. Suffice it to say, you can't undo that first impression.

So, what makes a profile photo work for you and not against you? There are 3 key factors:

- It should be professionally photographed.
- It should align with your personal brand.
- It must meet the technical requirements of your website or social media channels. Also, you should update your photo every year or two and use this photo across all of your social media channels. This creates consistency in your brand and helps people remember you and more importantly, it helps people connect with you. Think of your headshot as being as important as your logo.

2. CHOOSE THE RIGHT PHOTOGRAPHER

The outcome of your headshots is largely dependent on being comfortable with the photographer you choose. They should not only be technically skilled but fun to be around and able to put you at ease. The key to a great photo session is having confidence in your photographer. When you are at ease, the images are authentic.

A few characteristics of a great photographer:

- They are interested in getting to know you as a person
- They have mastered the art of lighting
- They have been referred to you and get a lot of business through referrals.
- Their work has been featured in newspapers, magazines and online, not just on their own sites.
- They know how to direct a session, answer your questions, put you at ease, and inspire ideas.



3. DRESS THE PART.

Clothes make the man and woman.

The number one question we hear from clients is "what should I wear?" I hate to answer a question with a question (no really, I do!) but the answer is always this question: "What is your industry and what are you trying to communicate about yourself and your company in your headshots? This relates back to that pesky brand consistency.

- If you work in the financial industry, it's appropriate to wear a suit. Make sure the suit is well-tailored and fitted. The shirt should contrast with the suit color and for men, the tie should coordinate well with shirt and jacket.
- Someone who works in the creative field like design, advertising, (or photography!) you can definitely wear a more casual outfit. A button down shirt with or without a jacket would be appropriate. A blouse or sweater can also work well.
- What about colour? Wearing black or white can sometimes be too stark unless there is texture in the fabric or you have an accessory that offsets the color. It is best to stick to neutral tones like brown, grey and navy blue and use colour in your accessories like ties, scarves and jewelry. To minimize your body size chose darker tones. Keep patterns and textures to a minimum as they can become distracting from your face.
- If you wear glasses on a regular basis, then it makes sense to wear them in your headshot. However, most photographers will take images with and without them so that you have options.
- Long sleeves are better than short sleeves in a professional photo, too much skin can be distracting from your face and depending on your industry, it might not be appropriate either.
- Try to avoid trendy clothes, it can really date your images.
- No matter what you chose to wear make sure that you are comfortable, if you don't feel good - it'll show!
- Don't forget about Hair and makeup: If you don't normally wear makeup use a minimum of foundation to even out your skin tone. For women who normally wear makeup, apply it for a nice evening out so that it is a little darker than day wear, but not overly done. If you are considering cutting your hair try to do it about 4-7 days before your photo shoot so that your hair doesn't have that "I cut my hair for a photoshoot look." ;-)
- Definitely avoid making any drastic changes in style before your photo shoot.
- If you don't know how to apply make-up, consider hiring a professional. This can run from \$50 to \$150 per hour and can usually be set up by your photographer.



4. STRIKE A POSE.

Your photographer should always guide you to get your best look, so be ready to pose! Typically the photographer will ask you to turn your body away from the camera, then gently turn your shoulders and head back towards the lens. This is because this pose avoids the straight-on mug-shot look. Also, leaning forward slightly from the waist will elongate your neck and convey a welcoming look. It also makes you look thinner and we all want to look thinner right?!? Be prepared to vary your expressions. A good photographer will want to give you options. In general, look at the camera the way you would want to greet your best client or customer!

5. NOW WHAT?

Find everywhere that you've used your old headshot and replace it!

It's important that you change it everywhere. That means not only on your website or blog but on every online account you have: Twitter, Google+, Linked In, Forum profiles, account profile photographs and everywhere you have a presence online. Your professional headshot should be there creating that positive first impression.

Consistency is key in creating trust, and recognition and in today's cluttered digital world, you want people to recognize and remember you!

PS: Don't forget to send one to your mom, she'll love you for it.

