

# Power your brand with photography

## Taking the right approach to corporate imagery



**Commercial photographer Jeff Russell highlights why getting corporate photography right is so important to local companies, also how to source the best and avoid the pitfalls of commissioning your company's imagery**

When promoting your products and services to the outside world the camera lens can be more powerful than a catchy slogan. Illustrating corporate media brings products and services to life and puts a corporate face to a name. It gives customers a chance to familiarise themselves with your business before doing business with you and creates an identity for your brand and image that is instantly recognisable.



But commissioning a professional for the job is often perceived as a costly and unnecessary expense. As a result, many businesses attempt to create images in-house – and that is a risky option.

### Creating the right impression

Without an understanding of lighting, composition and knowing some of the tricks of the trade, do-it-yourself photography invariably results in poor quality images that give out the wrong signals to customers. You're left with an underwhelming brand image, making your company look second-best to a competitor. Very often it is the lack of attention to detail in amateur photography that prompts your audience to question the quality and integrity of the products, services and personnel you are presenting. While local companies may provide quality services and products, poor photography will simply project the opposite.

Imagine you need a shot of the Managing Director for a press release. Someone in the office takes it with their phone with no consideration for lighting or the professional and authoritative qualities that it should convey. Unless you're blessed with a skilled photographer in-house, the end result will invariably smack of amateurishness.



Getting corporate photography right relies on good preparation, background research and a developed sense of what you want to achieve. The best starting point for any business is to determine how the images will be used – whether online, as part of a brochure or displayed on a billboard. By considering how the photograph will fit into its final destination, factors such as proportion and page design can be built into the planning process from the outset.

When it comes to planning the look and feel of the photograph, researching stylistic effects will help you to enhance the way your subject is presented. Simple tweaks, such as tilting the camera lens at a different angle or taking a photo from height, are easy to experiment with and can be used to accentuate the best features of a subject. Lighting is also important for projecting a professional look - for example, hard

lighting shows up more imperfections than soft and a black & white shot can appear more sophisticated than colour in some situations while in others, merely outdated. In the same way, exaggerating lines and perspective highlights a particular object or feature by bringing it to the forefront of the photo.

Setting out these criteria in a detailed plan enables businesses to follow a strict design path, incorporating factors such as weather (if an outdoor photo-shoot), the right background or setting and props. Crucially, when judging the end result, companies must make absolutely sure the image invokes the right first impression and stands up as a mark of professionalism - anything less will just undo the hard work and effort invested in the project.



### **Commissioning advice**

Enlisting the services of a professional photographer is an alternative to the in-house approach. But choosing one photographer over another is a tricky path for companies to tread. How to select the right professional for the job can be an intimidating prospect, particularly for companies not involved in the photographic industry and where budget concerns are a factor.

The first step for any business is to view examples of work in order to gauge its quality and style, and the photographer's suitability for the project. Visiting a professional photographer's website to view their portfolio ensures your decision is based on past results and provides an opportunity to review the types of clients and industries they have worked in. Phone the photographer to discuss your ideas and ask for a quote. Also, phone their previous clients to get feedback from them.

Preparing a design brief is a vital element in the commissioning process. A good photographer will always insist on a detailed brief to protect companies from wasting valuable time, effort and money on a set of images that are not wanted and effectively worthless. The brief acts as a platform for all parties to refer to, and ensures the project is properly structured.

Furthermore, commissioning photography is not as expensive as you might think. Compared to the average price a graphics agency will charge to design a simple business logo, hiring a professional to photograph four company executives can be around half the cost. Costs can also be kept down in various ways; for example, shooting multiple headshots in a single session avoids numerous visits from a photographer.

Turning your ideas into corporate imagery, either in-house or by commissioning a professional photographer, is meant to ensure your business is perceived in the right light by your customers, partners and competitors. With the company reputation at stake, businesses must resist the urge to cut corners with photography – instead, with careful planning and a small investment of time and funds, your imagery will create the right impression the first time, and bolster your company image every time.

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Jeff Russell has been established as a commercial photographer for over 20 years. During this time he has worked with many different clients from multi-nationals to individuals, from corporate through to fashion.

Jeff offers free consultations on companies' existing publicity material, finding ways to improve image content and how to use photography to communicate quickly & effectively.

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