

You Should Be in Pictures

When to invest in a professional headshot

Professional headshots and portraits are a smart investment when the product you're promoting is you — the particular services, skills and talents, and experience you provide that makes the offering special. That includes a wide range of people who need headshots. The most obvious ones are entertainers and artists, including:

- Actors and dancers, for auditions and promotions
- Models, for auditions and promotions
- Musicians and singers, for promotional materials and CD covers
- Authors and writers, for promotional materials, book covers, magazine articles

But in the business world, headshots are a must as well. Businesspeople who need headshots include:

- Corporate executives, board members, senior managers, or anyone in a position of leadership at a company. Many times customer decisions are based on the people running the business, so headshots help introduce those leaders.
- Small business owners promoting their companies and services
- Thought leaders or industry experts who publish articles or speak at conferences
- Professionals such as doctors, dentists and lawyers
- Realtors

Even if you don't meet the criteria above, given the prevalence of online networking sites such as LinkedIn and Facebook, it's more important than ever to have a photograph that represents you professionally. If you're a job seeker or just trying to network with others in your industry, a professional headshot is a must.

You might even consider a professional photo if you're using online dating sites to find that special someone — to set you apart from the fuzzy candid shots other members often use.

What kind of photograph do I need?

When planning the style of your headshot and looking for the right photographer, consider the following criteria based on how you plan to use the image:

- The image should be a natural reflection of you — not a glamour shot — so people recognize you when they meet you. It should be high-quality. A quality image speaks volumes about your quality and reputation. It will also allow you to use the image in print materials such as press kits and brochures.
- It should make you look your best and be flattering, bringing out your natural beauty.
- The image can be formal or casual depending on how you want to present yourself — but decide ahead of time so you can talk with your photographer about the image you want to portray.
- It should be warm and inviting, so potential customers or partners feel comfortable reaching out to you.
- Be more creative if you are an entertainer using the photo for promotional pieces. Different poses, angles, lighting and other unique takes can show off your artistic side.
- The image should reflect your personality and tell your viewers who you are.

A professional headshot positions you as a true professional and helps your audience get comfortable with you before they even meet you in person. Making the investment in a business portrait is an essential part of your self-marketing strategy.

About the author

Cheryl Savan is a San Francisco Bay Area business photographer who helps professionals make a strong first impression through distinctive business portraits. Learn more at <http://www.savanphoto.com/article908>

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