

## Your Best Shot

### How investing in a professional portrait can help you succeed in business

One of the first things you need to do when you start your business is schedule an appointment to get a professional-quality business portrait taken. When you're an entrepreneur, a large part of what you're promoting is you — the qualities you bring that set your business apart.

A business headshot will help you connect with potential customers by giving people a sense of who you are as soon as they visit your Web site or see your brochure. When people feel comfortable with you, they'll be more likely to do business with you.

### Why a professional photograph?

You might already have a headshot socked away in a drawer somewhere from years ago, or you might have a decent candid shot that a friend or family member took. Though it might seem easier and less expensive to just use an existing photo, remember that the photograph will be a major part of your foot in the door with potential clients — and it should reflect the quality that you insist upon in your business. The drawbacks of an out-of-date or amateur photo include:

- Old is obvious. An old photo will look old — people can immediately pick up on old clothing and jewelry styles and out-of-date haircuts.
- An old photo is a poor reflection of who you are today. There will be a disconnect between the person in the picture and who you are today. If you look 20 years younger in your photo, your potential clients will expect someone younger — and may feel less trustful of you when they meet you in person.
- You may not have rights to an old photo. If you still believe using an old photograph is the way to go, check with the photographer you used when you had the picture taken. Sometimes photographers retain the copyrights to pictures and simply grant you a license to use the image for a specific purpose. Make sure that you have the rights to use the photograph for this new purpose.
- Amateur photography looks unpolished and unprofessional. Unless your friend or family member is a professional photographer or extremely experienced and talented amateur photographer, the photograph he or she takes will be an obvious candid snapshot. Lighting may be subpar, the composition may not be well thought-out, and the background may be distracting. People who want to do business with you expect to see a professional portrait, and will feel comfortable and trusting of you the more polished the picture is.

On the other hand, a professional photograph is an important way to establish yourself as a business leader. A business headshot or portrait:

- Makes you legitimate. A high-quality, professional portrait makes you look like someone — an important part of the business community.
- Expresses your commitment to quality and professionalism. Looking at a well-crafted, high-quality, engaging portrait, potential clients immediately get a sense that you care about quality — an important thing to convey about your business.
- Conveys that you're on the leading edge of your business. A modern photograph, using fresh, contemporary angles, lighting and technology, connects with your target audience and signals to them that you're ahead of the curve.
- Softens the ground for meeting new clients and partners. A good portrait that connects

with viewers makes your potential business partners and customers feel like they already know you. When they finally meet you in person, they'll already feel more at ease — so you can start doing business more quickly.

A picture really can be worth 1,000 words: a professional portrait can tell your target audience so many things about you even in a three-second glance. So be sure to make your professional headshot session a priority on your startup to-do list — it will pay for itself many times over!

#### 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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