

INDUSTRIAL PHOTOGRAPHY FOR MARKETEERS

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In this day and age if you sell products *you will need photos* and there is no excuse for not taking every opportunity to collect them anywhere and everywhere. If you carry a camera when you visit customers or site locations or manufacturing plants etc. and use it for in-situ shots of completed applications, or processes such as installation commissioning or maintenance. If you can do so then take video as well as stills – modern cameras can give you excellent results at very reasonable cost and this way you can build up a library resource which you can draw on for many years.

However if you don't shoot the photos yourself then do *be aware of the rules of copyright - and ensure that you own the copyright* – this is usually best dealt with when booking a photographer by simply asking “does that price include the copyright?” Otherwise ask whoever provides the image to ensure you get the copyright owners permission to use it. In the industrial marketplace this is rarely a big deal but if you aren't clear then it could be. If you source images from photo libraries then *abide by the terms of the license* – often images can be found quite cheap and specifically licensed for marketing purposes.

We have already recognized that you will probably use a professional photographer at some point and the choice may be a difficult one, however I think that it pays in the long term to *source the best photos you can afford*. To this end find a local photographer that suits your needs. Even if you use them infrequently such a relationship will ease issues of copyright, enable the photographer to learn about your products so that he/she shoots them the right way up and speed up the process so reducing costs.

It can be really important to ensure any photographer is “art-directed” at the studio or elsewhere so that they show the important features of your product clearly. Left to their own devices many photographers – even those used to industrial subjects – will simply create what they consider to be the most attractive image they can. This may be upside down, or the most colourful aspect, or may completely obscure the essential feature of your product. Also by being present you can maintain a measure of control over the time taken and therefore the cost.

Given all this *if you really can't afford a professional then set up a studio area yourself and use your own camera*.

If you do then *take pictures on a white background* unless you have a special studio effect – then add a background in afterwards. Many effects are available at reasonable cost and you can get the work done quickly online. Do not worry as *even the simplest photos can be enhanced and have an attractive background added* – again you may need to use a professional to do this as the cutting out and lighting effects benefit from use of professional software and expertise.

However unless there is no alternative then *do not use the camera on your mobile phone* - unless it is very good – but a reasonable quality 1 megabyte jpeg at 300dpi can be OK from a good super compact - likewise for short video clips – as the internet is amazingly forgiving in these cases.

Now as an engineer or sales focused person you may be fascinated by your product – but *if your product is visually boring – then be honest and add an attractive background*, but not too flashy so the product is overlooked. On the other hand an informative shot in a working environment is very useful and may only need cropping to work well.

What format should you use - Portrait or Landscape? Well in PR for printed magazines *it always pays to use a landscape format if possible* because this encourages the editor to run it across 2 columns which is much bigger than the single column width normally allocated to a portrait image. Even the layouts of internet magazines still maintain the same sort of format as the traditional printed page – because columns are easier to read – so the same logic applies – although column widths seem to vary more and some square images can look very good.

Landscape format is also a more natural way of looking at the world – and fits more comfortably with current screen aspect ratios – so the image looks better and so does your product.

One last thing – *do not use pictures from other websites without permission* – they are almost certainly copyright and you could incur hefty charges – if not lawsuits.