

How to Get the Best Photo for Your Web Site

By Wendy J. Cook

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Let's face it: faces are important.

Research indicates that we recognize our [mother's face](#) within days of birth, and we begin differentiating [facial expressions](#) at around three months old. Remembering faces is apparently so critical that, as we mature, we keep improving the ability for about [a decade longer](#) than most of our other mental abilities.

People don't excel at hearing you or reading about you. They excel at *seeing* you.

If your photo is missing or misused on your website, social media profiles, brochures, and other introductory materials, then consider this your call to action. A few simple suggestions can help you literally put your best face forward in your corporate communications

Photographs are so important because vision is by far our strongest sense. According to [Now You See It](#) author Stephen Few, approximately 70 percent of all of our sense receptors are located in our eyes. It's significant, he notes, that we say "I see" to indicate that we understand.



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The science is interesting, but what's it got to do with you as an investment advisor? Proper use of your photo is among the easiest, most cost-effective and powerful client relation tools available. Consider the value of your smiling mug in the context of a prospective client comparing your services against others, or an existing client weighing other options as he or she revisits your materials. A decent photo cements relationships, strengthens personal connections, and adds instant personality and approachability in a way that 1,000 words can't achieve.

Make it meaningful

Just as choosing the right words matters for your corporate communications, so does choosing the right images. As an advisor who advocates a passive investment style, you wouldn't publish tips on how to succeed at timing the market, even if they were spectacularly well-written. Similarly, don't use photos – even really nice ones – that don't reflect the right message for you. Here are some considerations:



What does it say? Photos can communicate formality, friendliness or a myriad of shades in between. What sort of experience can a client expect when he or she meets with you in person? Your photo should answer that question by letting your [professional personality](#) shine through. (Click on the names to view the individual pictures after selecting this link.)

How well does it say it? Even if your images are going to be informal, they should be of good quality, with pleasant lighting. Think the opposite of the camera-phone, deer-in-the-headlight look. Seek a professional photographer who will keep his or her fees modest and will give you unlimited use of the artwork as part of the initial cost (so you're not left paying extra each time you use the image in a new setting). Or consider [a clever variation](#) on the theme of photography.

Who does it include? If you're a multi-person firm, you may use group shots, individual shots or a combination. Does your firm emphasize a one-on-one approach to client service? Then you may lean toward individual shots of each key player. If your firm has a strong team approach to client service, [a group shot](#) may work well, in addition to or instead of individual images.

What will you wear? Let your intended message determine the level of formality. But either way, avoid clothing with a lot of pattern in it (which can create a dizzying moiré effect). Are there going to be multiple individual shots of your team? You don't have to look like you're in school uniform, but establish [some consistency](#) so you don't end up with one of you in a suit and the other dressed for happy hour.

Inside or out? Sometimes, advisors ask me whether their photo should be on the front page or inside bio page of their website. More often than not, I see photos placed on the inside bio page. But what if team service is among your most important attributes? Then it can work nicely to place your team [front and center](#). I also sometimes see front page photos for advisors who are relatively well known as [public figures](#). While I can see the brand-identity logic in that, I also wonder whether it might backfire, implying that the relationship may be more about the advisor than the client.

Where is it going? Prime targets for photos include your website, your introductory brochure and, definitely, your social media profiles – LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter. For goodness' sake, if you are going to go social, don't debut as the dreaded, "no photo" faceless gray blob! What kind of message does that send about your approachability?

In addition, you may end up using your photo in miscellaneous communications, such as a speaking engagement flyers, etc. Because each of these settings may call for anything from a tight close-up to a full body shot, have your photographer take a range of shots, making them all high-resolution, so they can be adeptly edited as needed for particular settings.



Don't underestimate the importance of presenting the right picture, especially for prospective clients. They will likely spend as much time studying it as they do reading the text alongside it. It's what prospects will remember, so make sure it presents the image you want.

Some of the website links in this article belong to firms with whom I've done business and others do not. The opinions herein are my own and don't imply any sort of endorsement, approval or agreement from any of these sites' owners. They are merely a few illustrative sites to help you brainstorm about your own, so please don't read any more into it than that.

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