

Here's How to Get a Leg Up on Your Firm's Headshots

If you have worked on a [website overhaul](#), or even a refresh, you know that you face many challenges, including hiring vendors, getting the firm's key players on board, and obtaining approval of the overall design and agreement on functionality. We know that, from looking at a firm's website statistics, the most-visited pages are the [professional profiles](#). Just like the home page of your website, each profile page has to reflect not only the brand of the firm, but also the personality of the individual. A bio page that hosts the important information about the professional while also presenting them visually are key elements of the profile page.

This visual representation can be tricky for professional services firms. While business headshots used to be conducted in a fairly standard manner, today's corporate world accepts a wide variety of options, from the suit-and-tie look to a more-casual, relaxed pose. There are also choices of location, color versus black and white, and expression, among other options. Here is some guidance about how you can approach your firm's professional business headshots.

First Impressions Go a Long Way

Gone are the days of a small headshot the size of a postage stamp. Today, professional portraits are much more ambitious and follow a full-width "hero image" style. These images often have the person positioned to the left or right of the image area so there is room to display their contact information front and center. These larger portraits, though, can create some technical challenges for both the web team and the photographer.

The size of your firm will also have an impact on how far you can take your ambitious ideas. For example, national and international firms, given their geographical reach, may have logistical challenges that require the team of photographers to all take the same creative direction to ensure a consistent style. On the other side of the spectrum, small or boutique firms can be more flexible and unique, often using only one photographer, which makes consistency much less complex.

What Type of Headshot Pose Represents Your Brand?

Is your [firm's brand](#) more conservatively traditional, business casual, or quirky and fun? Understanding how your firm projects itself is a factor in how you stage your photo subjects for a photo session. Some options you can play around with include having people stand, lean against a table, or sit on a stool or a chair. Knowing how much visual space you want the individual to take up on the page layout before making photography decisions has some impact on how to direct and take the photo. Full-length images will show more body language, while a top-third photo will show you more of the individual's



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personality.

If you plan on staying with a traditional headshot, adjust how much space on the webpage the image takes up while allowing it to be integrated as a design element. No one wants to see a huge headshot overpowering the page.

What Type of Background Should You Use for Professional Headshots?

Simplicity can still have a powerful impact. A solid neutral background, or even a color option, can be dramatic through the use of unique lighting techniques and variations in how the photo subject is positioned. Neutral backgrounds will not clash with clothing, while a brighter color may require setting clothing guidelines for what will or won't work. Using a solid background also allows for adjustments, such as expanding the color to reposition the individual after the photo shoot is complete.

Onsite environmental backgrounds allow for some brand personality, especially if you have an office environment you want to capture and enough space for the photographer to work within that space without disrupting movement through your office. Firms with multiple office locations would be able to capture the personality of each office. You can also go outside the office and capture its urban or suburban environment to reflect the firm's locale. Benefits of this approach are that outdoor photos allow for a more-natural look and can have a welcoming effect.

If you are looking for background consistency, using green screens and [chroma key technology](#) allows for endless background options, whether they be related to your firm's office or purchased stock images. Movie and television studios have been using this technology for decades, and, over the years, it has made huge leaps forward, so it is hard to determine whether an image has an organic background or one that has been dropped behind a portrait shot on a green screen. Green screens offer great flexibility, but require specific lighting techniques to ensure the background does not bleed onto the subject matter. When the green screen option is done poorly, you end up with a green haze that can potentially color the hair, clothing or skin of the individual, which defeats the purpose of the technology and requires more retouching to fix the problem.

The use of transparent backgrounds on profile photos is another way to have consistency throughout all profile pages. This option provides a similar look to using a green screen, but is handled through the website when the page loads in a user's browser window. Each individual photo will still have to be converted and masked/cut out from a blank background, but this option allows for a quicker visual update down the road by simply replacing the background of the webpage. For firms with multiple offices, this technique easily allows for the use of different backgrounds per location by attributing a different background photo to each office.

Adding Personality or Branding to Your Bio Photos

Step out of the box some, and allow individuals to show who they are by including an item in their photograph that represents something they do, like or collect. This brings in a

personal point of connection with the viewer, which is good because we all like to feel a connection to people in our personal lives as well as our professional lives.

Consider incorporating **your brand** into the photo by having each person wear an article of clothing that brings in your primary brand color palette, such as a tie, scarf, shirt, blouse, etc. It might be subtle for some and more prominent on others, but overall, this will bring unity to all your profile photos when people view your site or see your professionals' pictures on social media channels.

Lastly, develop a photography style guide that includes lighting, placement of the individual, environment/background specifications, and size and resolution of the final image that will be uploaded to the website content management system. In larger firms, where there will be multiple photographers across many locations, this should be done first. Smaller/boutique firms can develop theirs when the photoshoot is complete by including actual firm profile photos to ensure that future profile shoots will look like they occurred at the same time as the others.

Shooting new corporate headshots at your firm? Share your challenges, successes and insights by leaving a comment below or emailing [Alan E. Singles](mailto:asingles@jaffepr.com) at asingles@jaffepr.com.