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The Right Kind of Photography: An Integral Part of Your Marketing *by Carol Arnold*

Humans by nature are visual creatures. Think about the many times you have gone into a store and a specific item has such a visual impact on you that you like it and immediately buy it. The idea of "tell me and I will forget but show me and I will remember" is an important concept when it comes to all forms of marketing.

Whatever your product or service may be, photography is an important visual medium that should be an integral part of your marketing communications whether for advertising or publicity purposes. Of importance, however, is ensuring that the image is appropriate for the purpose you are using it for and for your specific product or service as well as the file format. What's more, you can accomplish your objectives either with the use of a professional photographer or guerrilla means.

Types of Photography

There are two types of photography -- product-oriented and stock photography. Product-oriented photography is images of your actual product. For example, say that you own or manage a company that produces bottled food condiments. Your imagery should include photos of your actual product the way the prospective buyer would see it: in its final product stage bottled with its respective label on it. The more you can get your prospects to get to know what your product looks like, the better for immediate sales and the development of your brand name.

Stock photography is images available through third party image providers that you can purchase for use in your marketing, mostly available through online means, but others through CD-Rom format. For example, if you have a company that is a service-oriented business such as providing tax services as opposed to a physical product, stock photography can be your most cost-effective option. The exact cost will depend upon the provider, the image and its characteristics and how you plan to use it. The predominant stock photography providers include Photodisc, Comstock and Corbis, to name a few. A word of caution: most images are copyrighted and taking them without getting permission from the owner and/or paying for them is considered copyright infringement. Nonetheless, depending upon what form of marketing and purpose you plan to use the photography for, it is appropriate to use either type or even both.

When & How to Use It

Photography should most often be used in the following types of marketing – advertising, collateral (brochures, catalogs, etc.), direct mail, email campaigns, media and web sites. However, the specific image characteristics to use for each of those purposes vary greatly. As a general rule, photos that

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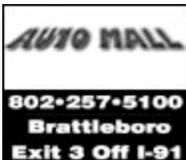
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are meant for professional printing such as in a newspaper, brochure, direct mail piece, etc., should be high-resolution and images that are meant for online use should be low-resolution. High-resolution images are highly detailed images and low-resolution images have less detail. You may have heard the term "dpi". Dpi, or dots per inch, refers to the number of pixels or tiny dots that make up an image. The highest possible dpi for an image is 300. Because the professional printing process is able to pick up on fine details of an image, in order for the image to have a crisp, detailed appearance, 300 dpi images are critical when sending a photo with a press release for publication in a newspaper or having catalogs or brochures produced. This also ensures that if the photo has to be re-sized, the detail in the image will be preserved. One of the most common problems in marketing today is trying to use low-resolution images for purposes meant for high-resolution only images.

File format is also of importance. The major image file formats include JPG, GIF, TIF, and EPS. The two most popular image formats for use online are JPG and GIF. These formats represent very different approaches to the problem of delivering an image with minimum file size and download time. While GIF is great for computer-generated images with limited color palettes, JPG is far better for photographs. It gives better quality images for the same file size. TIF and EPS files are usually larger files that are used for use in professional printing.

Hiring a Professional vs. Doing It Yourself

If you have a physical product where the photography is critical and the budget to hire a professional photographer, hiring one is worth its weight in gold. Pricing for local photographers runs in the range of \$1,000 – 2,000 a day. However, you can minimize your costs greatly by getting competitive bids, communicating the message and feel you want to convey to the photographer, and providing a list of the specific pictures (i.e. shot list) you want the photographer to take. The more information you give and the more thorough your plan, the better. Nick Thomas, Owner of Nick Thomas Photography in Hampton Falls, has found that many businesses these days are doing their marketing and thus photography without general thought and planning. He recounted the days when every photography shoot was preceded by a meeting to discuss what the client's needs were.

Says Thomas, "The biggest mistake for almost everyone I work with these days is a lack of proper planning ahead of a shoot. I would like to see some comps or sketches of what they want ahead of time. From those sketches a schedule can be estimated of how much time each photograph will take to make and how many resources could possibly be tied up in making them." If your budget is limited, Thomas offers this advice, "Buy the best camera you can afford and bring the finished images to an expert for retouching. If your expectations are high, think about building a library of images with a professional photographer one or two shots at a time. Plan those images well. You can get several years out of a good image if you plan well ahead of time. You need to have firmly in mind what you are going for before lifting the camera!"

The show, don't tell concept that applies to writing can best be applied to marketing. The more visual the experience your prospects have with your marketing and thus your product or

service, the greater your return on investment. By using the right type of photography and one that is the correct resolution and file format for the purpose you are using it for, you can achieve optimal results. Small business owners should also closely evaluate their options before choosing a professional or doing their own photography.

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