

Using a professional photographer - commercial photography

Tips and a short guide to help you choose and get the best from your photographer, by Keith Cooper of Northlight Images

I've written this short article to help people looking for a professional photographer get the best out of working with one. Hopefully this helps both clients -and- photographers understand each others' needs, which when it comes down to it, really helps get the images clients need for their business. - Keith

If you'd like to have a chat about any of the issues mentioned, please feel free to give me a call at Northlight:
Telephone +44 (0)116 291 9092
or email us at: bw@northlight-images.co.uk

Know what photos you want

It may come as a surprise to many, when I say that a fair proportion of our new clients don't know exactly what they want. Your photographer can help and should go through this in some detail with you, since it's far easier to sort things out *before* everyone turns up to take the photos.

If you are unsure, ask what might look good. Hopefully you've already seen some of the photographer's work - ask them about it and how what they do is relevant to *your* needs.

The best photographers take time to understand what message you are hoping to convey - it's their job to make this easier.

The full costs

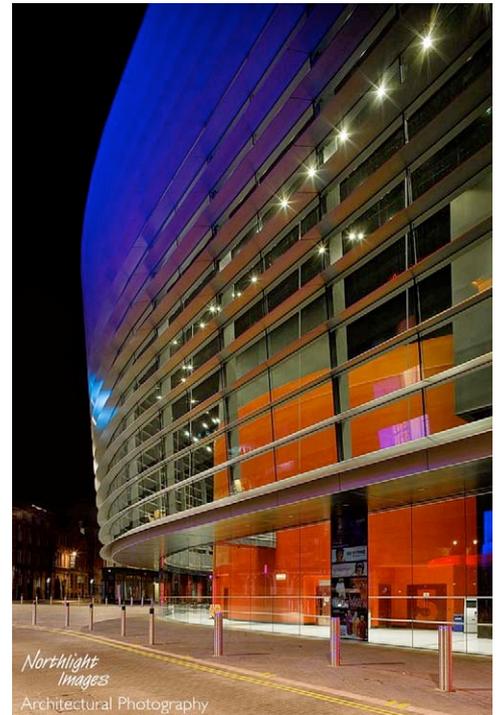
If it's not clear, ask for a full breakdown of how your photographer's charges are put together. Make sure that you check on details such as travel expenses. For example, in the UK, Northlight Images normally charges only for distance travelled. Always look out for hidden hourly rates when obtaining quotes.

Is your chosen photographer VAT registered? VAT registration and a real (limited) company are sound signs of a strictly commercial business orientation.

Just one more thing...

Are your photos going to appear anywhere else? It's not unknown for photographers to submit images to stock libraries, where they could easily be found and used by your competitors. We start from the assumption that we won't use your pictures for any other use. All the sample photos you see on the Northlight Images site are used with permission of our clients.

Your photographer is helping your business build a brand - if possible, provide some resources to help them understand what you are about.



How are you going to use the photos?

Have a good idea of what you want to use the photographs for (web and/or print for example) Most professional photographers will offer you a quote based on how you want to use the images.

Think though this and consider if you might want to re-use the images at a later date for a different campaign or web site. Be careful to find out just what usage rights you are getting for the images you receive - it's all too easy to find hidden costs further down the line.

Personally, I like to find out about all of this *before* I take photos for a client, since I've never liked hidden prices and add-ons for products for myself and don't see why others should either.

Ask how many photos you will get from the shoot. During an industrial job, for example, I may well shoot rather more pictures than strictly needed. It's normally our policy to supply samples of most of the images we shoot during a job, without additional charge. Our own rates are based on a combination of the time the work takes and number of images required.

The industrial photo below was one such 'extra' shot taken on a trip to a steel castings foundry in the UK, for a US client.



Arc furnace at a foundry – not a planned shot. I noticed the scene whilst going from one part of the foundry to another.

The 'technology' stuff...

Don't worry if you don't know why the graphics department has asked for 'images at 300dpi and CMYK'. A good photographer can help you understand what those specifications mean, in plain English, and also help with the questions you might need to ask in return, to clarify what is needed.

The best photographers work with your company to ensure that the image types and formats match exactly what you need.

Make sure your chosen photographer really understands how you want to use the images, so they can spot potential issues down the line with print reproduction and the like.

There are a number of good web guides to help with this, aimed at different users of images. There are also a lot of original (free) articles on the Northlight Images web site, intended to help people get more out of their photography.

Northlight carries out regular testing of new print and colour management software and hardware on behalf of large manufacturers. It means that we often have the latest equipment and software at our offices, ensuring the very best quality for our fine art printing, and the work our clients receive.

It's not rocket science - ask your photographer to explain things if you feel that print or web reproduction could be an issue.

Using a specialist

Find someone who understands your business and can help you convey the message you want. If you're considering a photographer, ask them what they know about your business activities.

Specialist equipment

Does your chosen photographer use specialist lenses and top end cameras for such things as interiors and architectural work?

Specialist equipment takes time and practice to get the very best from it - experience not easily gained by hiring equipment for a single job.

Keeping up to date with such items costs many thousands of pounds – a sign that you are dealing with a sound business willing to invest.

What photography doesn't your chosen photographer do?

Part of being an expert comes from knowing what you are best at, and when to suggest someone else to ask.

By all means have a further look round the web site at all the areas where we provide our photos, but notice too what *isn't* there. We don't photograph weddings, sports, family portraits, or events where photos are needed on the night.

Make use of your chosen photographer's expert knowledge. This includes creative advice before during and after any shoot. Most true professionals want to help clients get the very best from the images supplied and be proud of the work they've produced.

Can we help you?

I hope that you've found this brief guide useful in helping you see how to make more effective use of a professional photographer for your business.

If you've any questions or would like to discuss your commercial photography requirements, please feel free give me a call:

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Keith Cooper – Northlight Images