



Professional Photos Say Cheese, Not Cheesy

By Dana Kader Robb

After being interviewed for an article on business photos in *Business Start-Ups* magazine, I started thinking about how a person could tell if a photo was appropriate to use as a publicity shot. I compiled this list with the help of some associates who deal with marketing photography every day — and who shall remain nameless to protect the guilty. Follow their suggestions and you'll be more likely to look great the next time your picture appears in print.

A professional photo:

- ❑ is not a 1-inch square cut from a proof sheet. *Pay for 3x5 or 4x6 prints, please.*
 - ❑ was not taken in a booth at 4 for \$2.
 - ❑ did not pop out of a camera and “develop in less than a minute.”
 - ❑ is not a picture of you that looks like a police mug shot after a long Saturday night.
 - ❑ wasn't downloaded from a Web site. *Graphic files that are appropriate for computer screens often don't work in print.*
 - ❑ doesn't include your living room or kitchen visible in the background. Or trees, or your new car, or any other background except that “mottled” stuff photographers use.
 - ❑ does not make your skin look pink, sepia or yellow... unless your skin really is pink, sepia or yellow.
- ❑ does not include any visible alcoholic beverages.
 - ❑ does not have writing directly on the back. *Use a sticker or Post-it note.*
 - ❑ does not show other family members, animals, or half of someone else's body along with you.
 - ❑ does not show your hands anywhere near your face. *This may seem a little strict or uncreative, but pictures are often cropped tightly by newspapers. Being able to see just three fingers under your chin is not going to be appealing!*
 - ❑ does not include the name of the photo studio on the front, nor was it taken by a studio with the word “glamour” in its name. *I'll make exceptions to that last one if you promise to tell them ahead of time that it's a professional picture.*

There are rare exceptions, but your best bet is to have pictures taken professionally. If you're in a business that would benefit from breaking these rules (ie. showing samples of your work in the background) then have the photographer take a selection of shots. What's appropriate in your brochure may not be the same as what gets sent to the press when you win an award. Tell the photographer what the purpose of your photos will be and make sure you give her enough time at the sitting and for developing, printing proofs, etc. Three to four weeks is a good estimate. As noted in the enclosed article, don't rush this. Remember, a picture is worth a thousand words. Make sure your picture sends the right message about you.