

Helping your business look *Better!*

Maryland Photographer of the Year Tammy Thompson Talks Photography

Good quality professional photography is vital for how you want customers to see your business. Images represent your location, your products and services, and the people who embody your business. Those images are potential customers' first glimpse of your business. You don't want to give the impression you're cutting corners; and, having pictures taken by staff or with a smart phone will do just that. So don't skip here.

People searching for your services will comb through the internet and marketing materials, while comparing your business to your competitors. Good quality images that portray your business in a good light do weigh in on the decision making process. The images on your website, in your brochures, and in your marketing materials could be the deciding factor for people choosing another business over yours.

What types of images are needed to represent your business? You need to put yourself in the consumers' shoes. What do they want to see when searching for your services? I suggest starting off with a great location shot of your business. This is helpful for people finding you when they visit your location for the first time. Depending on your type of business, people will also want to see what it looks like on the inside. These inside images set the tone and atmosphere of your workplace. Take for example a restaurant. The images of the dining room tell the viewer a ton of information about what type of place it is. If it is decorated with candle light and fine linens, the potential diner will know this is a place they will want to dress up for. Whereas if it looks more like a pub, then perhaps they will choose jeans and go casual.

Next they will want to see the key people involved. If your business is a law firm, then you will need images of your lawyers. If your business is in the medical field, you will need images of your doctors and nurses. If your business is a hair salon, you will need images of your stylists. You get the point. Each business is different, but people still want to see the faces of those behind it. The people in these images need to be photographed so that they look happy and welcoming. After all, you are welcoming people to your business, so make sure your images show it.

Depending on your business, the next set of images will vary. Obviously for restaurants, people want to see images of food. You may not want to have them on the menu, but you need them on your website, social media, search engines, and business directory listings. If you don't post them, customers will. Just go to Yelp and search for restaurants. You will be amazed at all the unflattering food pictures that diners have taken. As a business owner you want people to see your professional images. These images need to make your food look appetizing or people won't want to eat it. Now if you are selling products, your business will need images of all products you are selling. This is especially critical if you are



selling online. If you are in the beauty field e.g. salons, plastic surgery, or anything that makes women look and feel better, your customers will want to see images of the "before and after". This helps them to visualize what your business can do for them. I shouldn't need to stress this part, but I will. The "after" images need to look amazing.

Once you have had your professional images taken, use them. Use them on your website, social media sites, newsletters, business directory listings, business cards, and marketing material. Show off your business images everywhere you can. I recommend updating your images at least every three years or whenever there is a change, such as new staff who need profile images, any remodeling of your location, or if your business has moved.

A new trend in commercial photography is showing your business doing business, such as a hair salon doing hair, or a doctor's office helping patients. Model releases will be needed in these cases. You have two options. The first is that you can ask some of your local customers to pose and sign a model release, giving you permission to use their images in exchange for some type of compensation. What is good about this option is that it makes these customers feel special and a part of your business. Just think about the word of mouth that will come from enthusiastic customers. You can also hire models. However, this is the more expensive route.

Each photographer is different. I, for example, charge by the hour to photograph. Then businesses purchase the final, touched up, high resolution images.

Each job is different and I offer a free consultation.

Yes, professional photography can be expensive. But when you think of how often you use your images, and all the places you should post them, then the cost is rather reasonable. In the end, think of it as investing in your business, an investment that will help your business look better.

Tammy Thompson of Passionate Portraits is an award winning photographer, most notably a two time recipient of "Maryland Photographer of the Year". She has over 15 years of digital editing experience and has been a professional photographer since 2004. She is a member of the PPA & MDPPA. Besides commercial photography, Thompson photographs portrait clients on her 15 acre studio farm located in scenic Finksburg, Maryland.

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