

## Professional Women Need A Professional Portrait



by Lisa Quast  
Source: [Forbes Woman](#)

I was once coaching a woman who was having a difficult time at work because she felt like upper management just wasn't taking her seriously. She hadn't been promoted in the last five years and was feeling incredibly frustrated. We evaluated every aspect of her career and began making changes, including updating her hairstyle and make-up, improving her wardrobe, and improving her public speaking and presentation skills.

One day during a coaching session I asked her to show me the picture she was using on her internal company directory. That's when we realized something was very, very wrong!

The picture on her company directory was actually the same picture that had been taken for her security badge – back when she joined the company 11 years ago! Needless to say, it looked like a bad police mug shot. Her hairstyle was incredibly outdated (and her hair was stuck to her head since she'd been caught in the pouring down Seattle rain without an umbrella that morning) and the picture was overexposed, making her look like a ghost.

As my "coachee" expressed, "Oh my gosh, I look horrible! It's even worse than the picture on my passport! What must people think of me when they see this picture? I never bothered to think about my picture on the company directory. And every time someone looks me up on our directory, they're seeing this picture! Eek!!"

She also hadn't bothered to think about the pictures she was using for her profile on other social networking sites outside of her work environment, such as LinkedIn and FaceBook. Big mistake! Unfortunately, perception is often reality, as the old saying goes. How you look in a picture with your professional business profile and contact information is sometimes the first time a person will actually see you. And when they look at your picture, what will their perception be about you?

Laura Hunter, professional photographer, states, "If you don't have a professional photo, people will often come to the conclusion that you don't take your career seriously and you may not be very professional yourself." And Laura should know. She earned a Master's Degree in Photography and is a nationally recognized photographer whose work has won numerous national competitions and been featured in many magazines. Laura specializes in headshots and works with many corporations to ensure their management teams have the best possible professional photos for use on websites and in company marketing materials.

I asked Laura to share with us her best tips for headshots. Here are Laura's "Six Do's and Don'ts for Professional Photos that get Noticed – for the right reasons":

**Do dress conservatively for the picture and wear clothes that would be appropriate for your work place.** Do not wear sexy, form fitting, or revealing clothing for your business portrait.

**Do dress in solid colors.** Don't wear patterns as they can be distracting and become dated quickly. Red and yellow can cast an unflattering light on your face so don't wear them near the face. If you are light skinned do not wear white near your face as it will make you look pale.





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**Do use a professional photographer with an established reputation.** Avoid having a family member or friend take your photos, no matter how "well meaning" they might be.

**Do make sure your photographer does at least basic re-touching.** It's important to project a polished image by removing things like stray hairs and blemishes. Don't go overboard with the re-touching and end up making your photo look like a plastic Barbie doll.

**Do have the photo taken in a place you'll feel comfortable.** You do not have to take a studio portrait. You can have your picture taken in your work environment, home, or outdoors, if you prefer. Just make sure it's taken by an experienced location photographer so it won't end up looking like a snapshot. Regardless of where the picture is taken, don't use elaborate sets or props - keep it simple.

**Do smile!** It's very important to smile in your professional portrait. A smiling image has been proven time and time again to make people feel more at ease. It's also a widely held belief that a person who smiles is more trustworthy. Do not try to look stern in your photo - people will not take you more seriously if you look mean.

Once you've had your professional portrait pictures taken, obtain the photographs electronically and switch out all the previous pictures of yourself for the new ones as quickly as possible! If it's true that perception is reality, then you can immediately start changing (for the better) the perception people have of you...starting with your picture.

