

Photography Tips

Photos are an important part of any publicity program. They help build a brand for a company, increase awareness for that brand and can make a news release really stand out from the crowd. To ensure that print media can use a photograph, you need to supply a high-resolution photo that looks great when printed in a newspaper or magazine. Preferred formats include electronic TIF or JPEG files (300 DPI resolution). Below are some other useful tips like this one to make photo usage in your public relations efforts successful.

1. Time of day matters.

When photographing the exterior of your shop, the time of day can make a difference. For many photographers, the best light of the day comes two hours after sunrise and two hours before sunset, when the sun is at an angle and not directly overhead. This produces nice, golden light (also referred to as "warm light") and dramatic shadows.

If the front of your shop faces mostly east or west, then you'll want to shoot in the morning or evening respectively. If the shop faces more of a northern or southern direction, then either time of day will work. The important thing is to keep the sun behind you.

2. Take it outside.

If you're looking to avoid shooting group or individual photos under the fluorescent lights or cramped quarters of the office, shooting outdoors is a great choice. Lots of light and plenty of room make it an ideal location. It's important, though, to avoid the pitfall of harsh shadows that come with shooting in natural light.

One way to avoid this is to find a place that has plenty of shade from the sun, maybe the side of a building or under an awning. If this isn't an option, then try using a solution that's probably already built into your camera: fill flash.

Among the abundance of features on today's cameras, one of these is your on-camera flash. The "fill flash" option does exactly that – it fills in the harsh shadows caused by sunlight, giving you a nice, even light. With some cameras, it's as easy as selecting this in the menu. If you have any questions, your camera's instruction manual should explain how to get there.

3. Watch your environment.

Naturally, you want to show off the service bays where your customers will be having their vehicles repaired; you might want to avoid, however, showing that large oil spot on the floor in the middle of the shop. Not paying attention to the overall environment (especially backgrounds) is a mistake that even professional photographers make.

The solution is to keep it simple. Make sure your background is as uncluttered as possible and pay close attention that anything that might be deemed offensive or inappropriate is out of



the photo. Come in close to your subjects to minimize the amount of empty space in the photo. If you're shooting group or individual shots, try using a blank wall that has a solid color.

A note on shooting people or groups in front of a wall: to avoid casting harsh shadows from the flash behind the subject, simply have them take one to two steps away from the background.

Important! *Something you might want to include in your background is your shop sign or possibly a sign denoting any affiliations you might have, such as your ASA sign. This helps brand your shop for motorists who are looking for a quality repair business.*

4. Don't just stand there.

A technique that many professionals use that makes everyday photos stand out is shooting from unique angles. For example, if you're shooting an overall photo of your service area, try (VERY CAREFULLY) climbing a ladder for a slightly higher angle. Or if you're shooting your techs working on a vehicle, don't be afraid to kneel down (or even lie on the ground) for a different view. Moving a few feet up or down can really make a difference.

5. Don't rule out "going pro!"

While there are some repairs that your customers could do themselves, they come to your shop because you and your staff are professionals. The same could be said for photography.

The first step in finding a photographer is seeing who is available in your area. Looking in the Yellow Pages (or an online version, such as switchboard.com) or entering the name of your town and "photographer" or "photography" into a search engine is a good way to start. Most photographers have Web sites that showcase their work and might even have prices available. Also, try checking with other area businesses for recommendations.

Once you've chosen a photographer, make sure that you've agreed on fees and how the photos can be used. By law, the photographer will own the copyright to the photographs and will grant you permission to use them. It might be a good idea to have a contract so that both sides can agree on the fee, how the photos will be used (Web site, print advertising, etc.) and how long the images can be used for.



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