

# THE INSIDER

*Choosing a headshot photographer*



*Have questions  
about this article?*

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EMAIL ME AT  
[HELLO@JOELOPER.COM](mailto:HELLO@JOELOPER.COM)

## Where to start?

WRITTEN BY JOE LOPER

You know you need a professional headshot but you're not sure where to start looking. The easiest way to find one is Google but that can be overwhelming to start your search. The best place to start is where you probably found your favorite restaurant and coffee - place, your friends and coworkers. Asking someone who's already taken the plunge will almost always yield great advice.

If they love their headshot and working with the photographer, you're on the right track. If they had a bad experience, that's worth its weight in gold. Knowing who not to work with can be more helpful than anything else. After you get a referral or two it's time to take to Google and do your research. But what should you be looking for?

## The Three P's

You have the names of some photographers and you're checking out their websites but it all sort of looks the same. They have some photos, maybe a little blurb about themselves, and a list of prices. How do you know which is best for you? Fear not, I've done the heavy lifting for you and created a 3-step process to give you a much better chance of success. The three steps are **Portfolio**, **Price** and **Personality**. Right now, you're probably saying, "But Joe! Shouldn't **Price** be first since it's clearly the most important?!" First, stop talking to yourself. And second, in my experience these three are equal in importance and are therefore not in a hierarchical order.

(hi-er-ar-chi-cal:  
adjective-  
of the nature of a hierarchy; arranged in order of rank)

The **Portfolio** is a preview of exactly the kind of images you're going to have delivered so make sure that's how you want to be presented. Look for consistency in their work. And by that, I mean are all the images of the same style and quality. Do they have similar lighting or are some very bright while others are sort of flat looking? Do the people look good in the photos? It may seem like an obvious question, but you'd be surprised at how many people don't think about it. Do the photos make the subject look confident and relaxed or are they a little fearful? Have they been posed in oddly or does the camera seem to be looking down on them? For headshots the camera should be at eye level and the person should look relaxed with a confident expression. The lighting should be flattering and not overly bright or "blown out". This is going to represent you to the world. You don't want anything negative distracting the viewer from connecting with you.

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## The Three P's

Now we come to **Price**, which for most is going to be the ultimate deciding factor, and there's nothing wrong with that. Bear in mind though that photography is like most services, you get what you pay for. There are exceptions to this of course but cheapest is usually not the best for your headshot. On the flip side you don't have to pay the most expensive rate you find either. After you make sure you love their photos, go back to Google and check out some of the other photographers' prices and compare. Even if each photographer has a very different style of headshots the price they charge shouldn't be that far apart.

For example, if the one you love is \$450 and everyone else you find charges between \$300-\$500 then you're golden. But if they're charging \$1,000, you might be able to get a similar headshot closer to the going rate. If you still love the photos and want to take the next step and contact the photographer, ask why they charge a higher rate. The answer should either give you clarity, and then you can decide if you want to pursue the session, or it doesn't justify the higher cost and you can move on. I mentioned earlier that a significantly cheaper price is not a great way to go either. Usually this is a photographer that's in the early stages of their career and may not be able to deliver a consistent result every time they work with a client. It's important to point out that for professional quality photos, you need to pay professional rates. Remember, you're not paying for the camera or a fancy computer. You're paying to have amazing photos, every time.

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*The Price should be fair  
market value for your  
local area*



## The Three P's

Lastly, we come to **Personality** and this one may be a bit more challenging than the first two. Essentially you want to work with a photographer that responds to you in a way that gives you confidence you're going to have some amazing headshots soon. There are a few ways you can figure this out before you book with them. Obviously, you'll have to contact them to start the ball rolling and this is usually via email. Because the one thing we don't use phones for any more is phone calls.

The photographer should respond within 24 hours at a minimum and the email should have a conversational tone to it. In other words, it's not an automatic response or at least it doesn't *sound* like an automatic response. Having your headshots taken is a vulnerable time for most people because the camera is a scary beast. As a result, you need someone on the other side that talks to you like a real human being and doesn't treat you like a box to be checked on their to-do list that day. A great sign is if they want to schedule a phone call to talk about what you want to accomplish and how they can help you do that. This isn't a must have but it's a **big** plus if they do it.

This isn't meant to serve as a hard list of rules but, like *Pirates of the Caribbean*, serve as guidelines and help you narrow your choices down to a final 2-3 names. At a minimum you should be set with at least two out of the three steps met. As always you can't communicate with your photographer too much so always be certain you've made your needs clear and they understand them. This is a collaborative effort and it requires you both to work as a team to nail your new look.

Did you know: research shows it takes a tenth of a second to form an impression of a stranger from their face!



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Do you have questions about this article? Or do you need headshots to establish your new image identity? What are you waiting for?! Email me at [hello@joeloper.com](mailto:hello@joeloper.com) and check out my website for tons more info about amazing headshots. [www.joeloper.com](http://www.joeloper.com)

Thanks for reading this month's newsletter and keep an eye out for February. Remember to fall in love with something new every day.

Joe  
*carpe diem*