



Create the right impression with your profile picture

Even if you are consistently posting the most prescient, insightful information on your social media profiles, people will likely notice your picture before they start paying attention to what you have to say. First impressions matter, and they are almost always visual.

Like it or not, you need a good profile picture – a picture of you, not your dog or your child or your favorite beach. And you need a quality picture – one that does not look like it was taken in a cave with a camera phone. If the first thing people see on your profiles is a turn-off, then they may never recognize the value that you have to offer through your professional activity and services. Why put time into your profile picture?

You want to portray an accurate professional image. A good profile picture should achieve a balance between being eye-catching and appropriate for your industry and position. In the world of first impressions, there is such a thing as negative attention. Pictures that are poor quality or too casual can cast you in a negative light.

People may be looking for you. While it has become much less common on professional networks, some people still use pictures of things or animals instead of themselves. People you have met at networking events may be looking for you. If they do a search for John Smith that produces multiple results, some of which are trees and dogs, they will have to guess which profile belongs to you. Do not miss out on connections because of an inappropriate photo.

Humans are visual creatures. Most people think and remember primarily through visual cues. And most people also have very short attention spans. Giving people the right visual cues immediately is critical to getting their attention and gaining their trust.

How do you create a good profile picture?

Pick an appropriate background. If you are able, pick a background that pops. The amount of leeway you have will depend on the culture of your firm, your area of practice and your target audience. You may need to stick with neutrals, but if you can, try exploring a brighter color (within reason) if it is available. You might be surprised with the results. If you are working with a designer, you may also want to have a photo with a white background available so that they can easily use the picture in a variety of applications.

Be consistent. All of your social profiles should have the same picture. Putting a different picture on every network is confusing to visitors and bad for your marketing. Once you have chosen a picture, stick with it. Do not change it every week or month. Consistency is key to gaining traction online.





Pay attention to lighting. Too much or too little light will prevent your camera from capturing information. Too much light and you will appear washed out, too little and the photo will appear dark and maybe even a little grainy. Different types of light also affect the colors in a picture. Try to use natural or diffuse light and run far away from the green hue of fluorescent bulbs.

Consider hiring a professional. Hiring a photographer for a single sitting is not a large expense, and the results are more than worthwhile. Your photographer will have lighting equipment, backgrounds, quality cameras, creative ideas and experience framing pictures for the best results.

Be aware of dimensions and proportions. Most social networks require a picture that is square, but they do not all require pictures that are the same dimension. Resize your picture with a photo editing tool before you upload it. If you do not have editing software available in the office, online services like pixlr will let you do all the editing you need on their site. Failure to edit before uploading could result in strange and unflattering distortions of your picture.

Try to avoid clichés. People have a basic understanding of what lawyers do. You do not have to stand in front of a bookcase – they are likely already convinced that you can read. Attorney clichés do nothing to set you apart and may actually work against you, making you blend in with others who are doing the same thing. If you would like to use a location shot, pick a spot in or around your office that is characteristic of your firm. Or, pick an area that is reflective of the audience you serve. Even a small profile picture can benefit from a little personality.

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