



Photo Shoot Exercise: 10 Ways to Make Your Pictures More Compelling

Getting Started

Why are images so important? Because they help you tell more powerful, compelling stories. Images have the ability to elicit a stronger emotional response from your audience than just words typically do. And when people are more emotionally invested in your stories about a particular issue or cause, they're more likely to get involved to support them.

That said, today's media consumer is constantly bombarded with both words and images. Competition for our attention is intense. Why limit your ability to move people by using mediocre photos to accompany otherwise inspiring stories?

Below are 10 creative exercises to help you take photos that make an impression. Gather up your colleagues, give yourselves about an hour and try to meet all 10 challenges. In the process, you'll employ methods professional photographers use to make their photos more interesting. Everybody has to start somewhere, so dive in!



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Take a photo:

1. **...looking straight up at the subject in your photograph.** Perhaps you're trying to capture the expression on a guest speaker's face to elicit an empowering feeling. Or you're focused on showing the longevity of an inanimate object you're trying to protect, such a giant redwood tree. This exercise will give your issue or cause a power boost!
2. **...looking straight down on something.** Why do people pay to go to the top of the Empire State Building? Because it's a view we don't get every day. Photos shot from an unusual vantage will catch people's eyes. And a downward vantage, particularly, will coax viewers to study the scene.
3. **...lying or sitting on the ground.** This exercise can help you see a cause or issue from the grassroots perspective, literally. How will it affect Planet Earth and our world's smallest creatures?
4. **...standing atop something.** Maybe your audience will benefit from a rare "birds-eye view" of how a worldwide issue or problem impacts a particular geographic area. If so, this exercise is for you.
5. **...of someone, WITHOUT THEM KNOWING.** Capturing a subject's candid reaction is typically the most raw, honest, emotion-evoking action you can take. Photos that embody those

qualities generally resonate well with an audience *and* get them to take actions to support your cause. Practice this exercise often until you nail “the” shot.

6. **...to illustrate the word “ALIVE.”** Issues can be abstract – easy to talk about but hard to *show*. How do you illustrate hunger? Ecosystem? Energy efficiency? Practice this photography exercise to bring your issue or cause “to life” in the eyes of your audience.
7. **...to illustrate the word “ACTION.”** Capturing finite moments at live events (perhaps a rally or a volunteer event) can inspire your audience to follow suit and take the steps needed to move public policy along.
8. **...of three things (three separate photos) that together form a photo story.** Effective storytelling is the key to educating your audience about a cause and getting them to act. To hone your visual storytelling ability, shoot three photos: a wide shot that sets the scene, a medium shot that shows the main action or idea, and a tight detail shot that adds more subtle interest.
9. **...with the subject off-center in your frame.** Just because your subject is the main focus, doesn’t mean it has to take center stage. Place your subject on the fringe of the photo’s frame to give your audience a big-picture perspective on your issue or cause. Show how the environment around your subject has an impact on the story by testing out this exercise.
10. **...up super-close to your subject, but zoomed all the way OUT (wide angle).** Famed photographer Robert Capa once said: “If your photos aren’t good enough, you’re not close enough.” Getting close gives your viewers the intimate view they need to connect.

Putting It All Together

Now that you’re done, it’s time to share your photos with each other. Seeing how others met the challenges will open your mind to approaches you hadn’t thought of yourself. To practice, consider uploading all photos to a shared site, like Flickr, just as you might do after a real event. (Refer to Resource Media’s “Flickr Guide: 10 Ways to Make Your Photos More Visible.”)

Now that you’ve gotten your feet wet, next time you’re shooting a media event, a fundraiser or any other experience tied to your organization’s mission, remember to employ some of the techniques you used in this exercise and your photos will turn out swimmingly successful!



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