

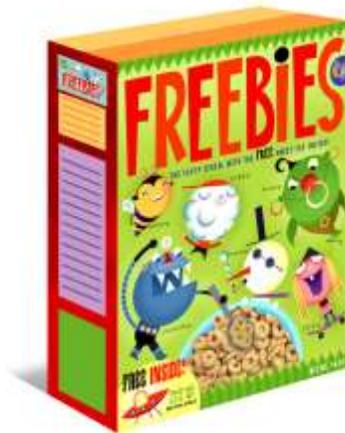
## CRITERIA FOR GETTING THE BEST POSSIBLE LINKEDIN HEAD-SHOTS AND PERSONAL WEBSITE PHOTOS

By Terry Pope – Foremost Authority on LinkedIn SEO and Name-Sake Domain Personal Branding Mini-Sites

In trying to explain that LinkedIn Profile Head-Shots are totally different than your typical “Portrait 101” shot, it suffices to say that there is a totally different objective. There is a hidden psychology that needs to be addressed in taking the type of photo that doesn’t just show who you are, but makes someone WANT to click on your profile listing after doing a word search for your skill sets. I try to bring out some of that psychology and move it from a standard portrait to a marketing piece, which is what this really is.

Think of yourself as a product as well as a potential employee, lateral partner, channel partner, venture capital seeker, sales person, etc. We’ve been groomed by the media; TV, Motion Picture, Advertising and Marketing industries for so long that subconsciously we tend to look at each other in the same manner as products, stars, celebrities or just the opposite – a nobody. So approaching your business side as a product is more about advertising, marketing, and branding yourself more than all the opposite reasons we would put pix of our personal lives on FaceBook.

Take a look at these two products on a grocery store shelf and ask yourself “Which one is going to be chosen more than the other strictly from the packaging”?:



Of course, part of the psychology starts with the target market, in this case, children – which box do you think will be chosen by children the most? It’s almost rhetorical.

Now, look at these two guys in their profile shots and ask yourself that same question – which one is going to be chosen over the other more times?



The answer is: they BOTH could be CEOs. A better question is: which one LOOKS more like a CEO?

You can play the game with everyone else that thinks their personal image is not that important, (or even worse – those who have NO photo which screams, “I’m hiding something” or, “I’m in a “witness protection” program so I can’t really show you who I am”, or “I have no confidence in me – why should you?”).

Or, you can step up your game and be seen as someone who is serious about their image, their self-esteem, their experience, and their career. The quality of that photo speaks volumes about all those elements of your personality not to mention the subconscious fact that you went the extra mile. It shows your attention to detail, your judgment, how much you value the quality of your personal work, and how you see your level of professionalism. It would be the same thing as if you had sent in a resume without **speel-chekcing** it (and yes, I did that on purpose) – THAT shows the least amount of effort – THIS is your “Box-Front” – **SELL IT!**

Of course, it all depends on your motivation at the time. If you HAVE a job, the motivation will be to learn to use LinkedIn to enhance and expedite all those things you do in your current job – it is now THE major conduit for doing business and making business connections – don’t take MY word – look at the majority of the Fortune 1000 companies – they ALL use it daily.

If you're LOOKING for a job (and really – isn't everybody, even if they **are** employed?), your motivation is to be found and chosen. The SEO maximization and Keyword Density is only 40% of that battle – the “**Hidden Points**” and **Activity** inside and outside of LinkedIn are 60%. But those only address LinkedIn's internal search-engine side of the equation.

Once a HUMAN running that search sees YOUR profile listing with your head-shot – the psychology portion takes over – whose profile will THEY choose to click on? Your job is to **MAKE** them click on **YOUR** profile – your profile shot is the #1 most valuable element to that initial psychology – and it better be a great one – it's got to beat out 330+ million others (OK – less than that per your niche or industry, but still typically hundreds of thousands of others).

So, whether in a current position or looking for a new one, in both cases you want to appear to be the best choice amongst all the other choices available (and don't forget about those over 330+ million other choices) – your photo, for either the head-shot or a website, is one of the most critical factors in being chosen – and if you DON'T get chosen – you actually lose some of those coveted “**Hidden Points**”.

## Profile Shots

- **DON'T** use a photo of yourself that include others and/or has to be cropped to see just you – notice the example of the two guys above).
- **DON'T** rely on a friend or relative who is not a professional photographer by trade, even if they just purchased a really super expensive camera. Just like handing you the keys to a Boeing 777 doesn't suddenly make you a pilot, nor does owning a bunch of expensive equipment suddenly give you the knowledge and years of experience making it work correctly on 1000 different photo shoots – you'll be wasting your time, any money you may have agreed to pay them – worst yet, you're gambling your relationship – **DON'T DO IT!**
- Find a professional photographer who typically has invested in having a professional studio – in most cases, it shows they have a vested interest in doing professional photography to have invested that much – too, if they have been in business for a long while, it proves they must know what they're doing to keep customers coming back and those expenses paid. Also, look at their work – are they creative or “Portrait 101”?
- And, as a “**Duh!**”, don't even think of using a causal shot taken with an iPhone or Android Smartphone (especially a Selfie) even though you think “it takes great pictures”. Those photos are reserved for FaceBook, MySpace, and Google+ - **NEVER** LinkedIn.

- The photographer should be shooting with a high-quality, high-resolution digital camera (12 Megapixels minimum, 18 or higher preferably, from ISO 1600 to ISO 3600 or higher based on f-stop settings & shutter speed - ISO is the sensitivity setting of a camera – [your professional photographer will or should know more about this], shooting RAW and/or JPG format at a minimum of 300 ppi).
- Natural lighting is a plus, but is usually augmented with additional lights, reflectors, and refractors. and other professional lighting equipment – again – this has to do with the expertise of the pro photographer and not so much about the amount of money used to purchase the equipment, although, the really high-end pro gear costs a whole lot more money.
- Soft lighting but clear focus with no shadows on face or behind on background.
- Make sure your apparel is appropriate for the industry you're in - wear something that matches your current position or better yet, the position you'd rather have. (*"Don't dress for the job you have, but rather the job you'd like to have"*). If you see yourself transitioning into a different industry from where you are currently, research that industry (if drastically different than your past experience) to see how the managers, directors, and other leaders in that industry dress.
- If you typically work in a "hard-core" corporate environment, then try to look as if you just came out of a Board of Director's meeting, no matter what your position. However, if you come from more of a Liberal Arts industry, or are headed that direction, wearing a suit may make you look like your trying to be something you're not (in many cases, in the Liberal Arts arena, the feeling is, "those wearing suits should not be trusted – they're the corporate type"). Wear something you would if you were going to talk to investors for your media-arts interests – dress a little better than you do on a daily basis. In all cases, make sure the color of your apparel is not the same color as the background in your photos.
  - **Corporate - Men** should be wearing suit coats with tight tie-knots which trail up under the collar and are evenly positioned and straight – no button-down collars – must fit appropriately (shirts should not be so tight they show to be tight or seem to be cutting off circulation) – dark jacket with light color shirt and a "not so wild" tie, but one with a complimentary color – think corporate. Best to stay away from coats, shirts, and ties with tiny patterns – it causes a strobe-effect based on cropping.

- **Corporate - Women** should wear suit coats or jackets, shirts or blouses appropriate for the Boardroom, and subtle make-up. Brightly colored lip-stick, heavy mascara, and thick eyeliner are no-no's. Again, look as corporate and conservative as you can.
- **Liberal Arts – Men** should look business-like without looking like a “banker” – it's the opposite of the corporate business world – a banker coming to a Board meeting in Hawaiian shirts and cut-offs typically says, “he's a wild card – he has no respect for the position – he's a loose cannon”. Those from a Liberal Arts industry dressing like a banker says, “Don't trust me – I'm a clown” (although highly radical appearances may actually help you land that new position in a liberal arts industry – but be careful and at least err on the side of “casual conservative”).
- **Liberal Arts – Women** should do the same, and err on the side of conservative – again, you're wanting to look the part of a position higher than you currently have, unless you just can't see yourself making any more money than you already receive – usually with higher paid positions come higher responsibilities and higher expectations to “dress the part”. I do recommend for those in the Liberal Arts to be yourself – just try being as professional looking as you can.
- **In either case** – whether a liberal arts profession in a corporate environment or working for yourself on a contract basis – try to research MANY others who have positions equal to ones you'd like, and examine how they appear in their head-shots. If they seem to be successful in their career/position – try mimicking their head-shot & apparel choices - alert your photographer.
- **Backgrounds can be either:**
  - Medium to light gray – no patterns, or...
  - Green-screen (preferred) or blue-screen – must be lit evenly (no wrinkles or “hot-spots”). Have your photographer look at this [YouTube Video](#) for lighting tips on how to shoot against green-screen/blue-screen just to make sure they're lighting it and using it properly – the distance between the subject and the screen and the lighting of the screen and the subject are different than normal portrait lighting. Many photographers think they can pull it off without testing – that approach is DANGEROUS. If they've never used green-screen – they need to experiment before they shoot your pix.

- If they have nothing other than a patterned background, at the very least, have them shoot against a blank white wall with even lighting – a pattern screams, “Department Store Photo”.
- For LinkedIn Head-Shots, poses should be straight into the camera with a slight smile – look professional yet approachable. A very slight turn of body or head, but not your typical “Portrait 101 Puppy Dog” look – YIKES! That screams amateur or run-of-the-mill portrait photographer, fresh out of photo school, or from a department store photo studio where they are usually taught to “stick to the script”.
- Try different angles – from beneath – from above – with blurred image behind (done with lens settings and depth-of-field techniques). A well seasoned and creative photographer can get a very natural look from you – just work with them. And, keep your eyes open – great shots are sometime destroyed by just not having the eyes open. Also, think about your posture – stand or sit up straight – don’t slouch - look like you’re in command of the situation – be confident (or at least act confident). And, by all means, be conscious of your clothing, and all facial hair. Practice in front of a mirror before the shoot.
- Shots should be from waist up with enough background on each side of your head to do different croppings. Your face should have no shadows on it or being cast from your nose onto one side of you face or shadows behind you from poor lighting technique.
- Grooming is another big deal here – your head-shot doesn't just show WHO you are, but WHAT you are – are you conscious of your appearance? Are you conscious of your hygiene? Are you conscious of you grooming? Are you conscious of DETAILS?

Hair (from every part of your head, including ears, nose, eyebrows, eyelashes, moles, etc.) should be well groomed where it could pose a question from the person viewing the photo to ask, “Do they ever clip their nose hairs”? or “Did she even wash her hair before the shoot”?

Grooming is paramount because everyone is going to get to see you up-close-and-personal. That initial little profile picture on LinkedIn, if done properly, can be zoomed-in on to see the 500 x 500 pixel image version – and, to a small degree, this can show even the pores on your face. So be conscious of the fact that every “little” hair should be in place or non-existent.

A good photographer will be looking for all those little things as well to make sure you get the best photo of yourself possible. But, it's always good to have some else there to act as what the movie industry calls a Continuity Director – they look for the details so when cutting from

one shot or scene to another, everything in the shot looks like it's in place. Your professional photographer will also be looking for these little anomalies, but four eyes are always better than two - they've got enough on their plate with all the "photo" stuff – assistants can help. And, don't worry about blemishes and moles – they can be digitally taken out with software – so can wrinkles, age-spots, scars, and other things you'd rather not show in your photo.

But to do that effectively, the original photo must be high-res, sharp, and very clear.

However, don't get so "Hollywood" that you end up looking totally like another person or so young you don't match your experience.

Wrinkles show maturity and experience – don't be so quick to hide that part of yourself – it's more of a plus than you'd expect.

A Hollywood trick to get hair to not be so "static" or wild is to take a can of "Static Guard" to the shoot – don't spray it on your hair, but just before a shot, spray a little on a comb or brush and lightly comb or brush through the hair – it really does work and you can always wash it out when you get home.

You may opt for having a make-up artist and/or a hair stylist there to assist you and keep an eye on those things so the photographer doesn't have to try to catches them all.

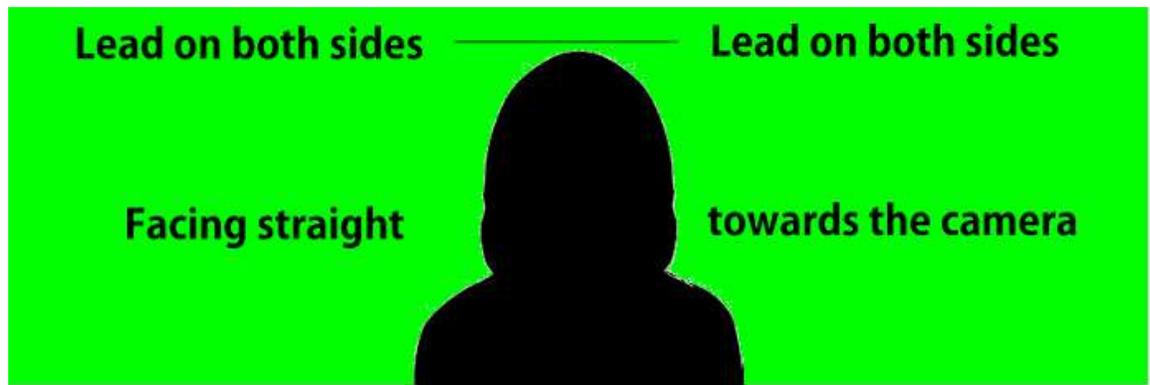
I know this will sound like over-kill to most, but think about it this way – your mug is going to be published in the largest business network in the world. But, since your profile is also handed over to all the search engines, it's not just the 330+ Million members of LinkedIn who get to see it – it's the entire "Internet connected" world who gets to see it. Make the best impression you can – you never know when Spielberg is looking (that's a joke – Spielberg has "peeps" for that type of thing).

## Mini-Site / Website Photos

- Apparel needs to be more casual yet still professional (like business casual). For men, this means sports jacket and slacks instead of a suit – no tie. For women – no suit or just jacket or maybe even no coat at all – just shirt or blouse.
- Some shots waist high and some full-body or at least from knees up.

- Some with arms crossed – some arms down.
- The dimensions of the website banner will be somewhere in the neighborhood of 900 pxls wide and 300 to 400 pxls tall (so, 3 times as long as it is high) – and the shots need to be with that perspective in mind even though the actual photo should be much larger than that (like 2400 x 800 ppi or larger). The larger the better. (See framing examples below).
- Same quality measures as stated above (RAW / JPG).
- Several wide-shots with subject to one side of center-frame facing the opposite side and also the reverse – some facing left and some facing right.
- There needs to be what is called a “long lead” to the side the subject is facing. If the pose is to have you look to the right there should be a lot of “lead” to the right of your image and vice versa (see examples).





Using “green screen” can actually be done with a small solid green screen just behind the subject that covers enough from each side, top and bottom to be consistent – the lead and trail can be PhotoShopped in to fill the area for a superimposed image to go behind the subject.

Lighting is critical on green-screens and should be studied and experimented with prior to trying to do one – the YouTube link above is great for just that. The subject is further away from the screen than a normal background – this is so the lighting of the screen can be done evenly (top, bottom, right, and left side all the same temperature of light – not hot or cold spots on the green screen), and so that lighting of the subject does not cast a shadow on the screen.

And, for websites you need to have several shots of you from different angles and poses, such as a business casual shot like this:



The pose is casual yet business – folded arms, smile, straight facing into the camera. From a well framed shot like this additional image enhancements can be added and cropping can work for the LinkedIn Profile shot as well.

Different crops, color gradients, image effects, and background images can be superimposed to give a whole different look.

(see the next few examples cropped from the large original photo).

Even though the following examples were done with a “green-screen” background, and different superimposed backgrounds have been added, this will give you an idea of what can be done if the background is done this way, lending itself to limitless possibilities to add later. Also notice slight differences in cropping.

Following those, notice the head-shots that are nothing more than the same photos cropped to meet the LinkedIn Profile “square format” criteria (note: the examples are NOT utilizing the maximum dimensions of 500 x 500 pxls, as is the current maximum that LinkedIn allows – they have been reduced to fit this eBook:



A tighter cropping of the same photo used for a web banner could work for the LinkedIn Profile:



I hope this has been helpful – make sure you talk with your photographer a lot before the shoot to make sure he or she really understands the criteria – if need be, allow me to speak with them prior to the shoot.

Remember — they're the pros – have confidence in their expertise.

And, above all **Have Fun** – be yourself, and have a great photo session!



***Terry Pope** is an author, keynote speaker, and owner of Social Profile Masters, LinkedIn SEO Max, and Biz Ed Central. He creates, re-makes, and updates LinkedIn Profiles with maximized SEO, performs SEO for other social network profiles, and websites, develops both corporate and personal websites (called Name-Sake Domain Personal Branding Mini-Sites, used as an SEO element to a LinkedIn Profile), and lives in the Dallas/Ft. Worth metroplex.*

Download a free copy of Terry's [LinkedIn Basics – A Tips & Tricks Tutorial](#). You can contact Terry for additional info, speaking engagements, and profile Make-Overs through his LinkedIn Profile: [LinkedIn Profile](#)