

## **Why a professional Image is so important to your LinkedIn profile or personal branding.**

Many people invest hours into creating the perfect LinkedIn profile. They tediously list every award they've won and scour the thesaurus looking to find the right verb to describe their work experience.

Yet, many of those same people spend little time thinking about their profile picture. Maybe it's a cool candid photo someone took with a smartphone. Or maybe, it's a professional head shot that was taken in a studio for another job. But either way, people often use what they have on-hand without labouring too much over the impact that photo might have.

But, there's some evidence that says your profile picture might play the biggest role in determining whether you land a job or people will want to connect with you.

### **What The Research Reveals**

A new study published in Social Psychological and Personality Science found that someone's first impressions of you from a photograph are likely to stick, even after you meet in-person.

### **Why First Impressions Remain Consistent**

The authors of the study offer two reasons why first impressions from a photo remain unchanged after an in-person meeting:

1. The halo effect – When you have a positive first impression of someone, you are more likely to attribute other positive characteristics to that individual as well. For example, if you think someone looks like a nice person, you are more likely to assume that person is also socially competent, has a healthy marriage, and is a good parent.
2. Self-fulfilling prophecy – If you think someone is likable, you're more likely to behave friendly, which increases the chances that you'll have a positive interaction. Similarly, if you deem someone to be unlikable, you may be more standoffish, which can lead to a negative interaction.

### **What This Means for Your LinkedIn Photo**

A hiring manager who sees your photo on LinkedIn will develop a specific impression of you. And that impression will likely remain constant during an interview--and beyond.

So it's important to think about how you look in your photo. What are people likely to conclude about your personality and your competence by looking at you?

You certainly can't control how everyone will perceive you. Perhaps you resemble a cousin someone never liked. Or maybe a grumpy hiring manager assumes anyone with a smile as big as yours must be hiding something.

But, you can take steps to ensure your picture will portray you in a positive manner most of the time. Your wardrobe, makeup, hairstyle, body language, and facial expression will give someone a lasting first impression.

It's worth it to take some time examining what vibe your picture might be sending. You can even try different photos over a series of time to see which one seems to get you noticed the most on LinkedIn.

*"Of the 7.2 billion people on earth, 3 billion have Internet access; 2.1 billion are active on social media; and 1.7 billion use social networks from a mobile device."*

### **Why Profile Head Shot Photos Are Necessary**

#### **1. Credibility**

To be successful today, most professional jobs require knowledge and skill with social media. Profiles without photos are usually either not very active or just plain out-of-date. And, very few employers want to hire someone who is so demonstrably clueless.

In addition, many "spam" social profiles exist to sell products or services or to collect information. Those fake profiles usually either have no photo or the photo is obviously a model or someone extremely attractive in a very professional-looking photo. Recruiters, in particular, don't want to waste their time with fictional people.

#### **2. Recognition**

Someone who already knows you from your past, other social media, or a recent networking meeting will, hopefully, recognize that photo and know who you are. Also, that friend from your last job (or the job before that) who is looking for you will find you in the long list of people who have the same — or a very similar — name.

#### **3. Consistency**

Someone who follows you in other social networks will find, and probably follow, you in new social networks. So, the reach of your social media visibility will be expanded and connected, and your "social proof" will be strengthened.

#### **4. Personal Appeal**

Any profile is more appealing when a person's face is associated with it. LinkedIn has said that entries in LinkedIn search results with photos beside them are seven times more likely to be clicked than entries without photos. So, that recruiter looking for someone with your job title will probably not click on your name unless there is a photo beside it in the search results listings.

#### **5. Personal Branding**

When used with your professional activities in social media, your photo represents your brand — your personal logo — particularly when you use the same photo for all of your professional social visibility.