Photography by Depuhl

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A GUIDE TO

PRODUCT PHOTOGRAPHY

Introduction

First of all I'm looking forward to be working with you and I'm thankful and excited to collaborate in creating images, that make your products look as great as they are (or even better). Understanding that these photographs, we'll be creating together, will play a big part in the first impression your brand is going to make on your customers – and knowing what they say about first impressions – I don't take the job of capturing those images lightly.

Pascal Depuhl

In today's online world, goods and services are often exclusively seen on a website. If there's no brick and mortar store, there isn't a place, where potential customers can experience your product, before purchasing it. Often the photograph becomes the first, sometimes the only, chance you have to let a customer experience your product before they decide whether to order it or not.

Over the last 20 years of creating product photography for my clients, I've found that spending a little time planning before our shoot, goes a long way in saving you time (and money) in the long run. That's why I've written this short guide to show you the options we have in creating photographs, that will make great first impressions for your brand.

I look forward to creating stunning photography with you, that enables your brand to let your customers experience your product.

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How to choose the correct kind of product photograph

There are different reasons to photograph your product in a specific way. They can be as simple as reassuring your customer that he did place the correct, i.E. the blue (and not the green) sneakers in their shopping cart or as complicated as a photo shoot with models, hair and make-up artists and stylists in a rented location to create images, that evoke emotions, designed to influence your customer to order your product or use your service.

Product photographs on white

These photographs are often used in shopping carts and online stores, where multiple options are listed. The image focuses exclusively on the product. They are called silhouettes (or silos for short), since they are basically cut out of the background, have a shadow or a reflection.

Silhouetted images can be on a white background, a black one or any color that matches your website. (I can even give them to you on a transparent background.)

TIP *TIP: Remember, if I am photographing a transparent object for you, like a clear bottle or a pair of reading glasses the background we actually photograph the product on will show through the object, even if we're removing the background around it. (My retouchers are good, but they can't change the laws of physics.)*

Product photographs in an environment

The right context can tell a story about your product and stories are powerful. It may show a customer why they need the product, what it does for them or how it works to make their lives better. These type of photographs are great for those pages on your websites, that strive to explain your product. Can you see how soft these sweaters are?

Environments can be as complex as a set, specifically build for your product photography or a rented location, scouted with the specific needs of our photo shoot in mind or a simple as some carefully chosen props and surfaces to enhance the product.

In the end the goal here is always to tell the story of your product, to make your product stand out or to enhance the features of your products.

TIP *TIP: A good stylist is worth their weight in gold - especially when photographing garments, jewelry or anything on a model. Stylists ensure that your products fit perfectly and look pristine.*

Product photographs on models

Showing your product being used by a person, is one of the most effective ways to explain what it does or why your customer gotta have it. Photographs on models are not limited to fashion or wearable tech. Jewelry, eyeglasses, temporary tattoos and many other products can benefit from an image that shows the product in use.

If you're going for an aspirational image, photographing your product to reflect the age group of your target audience, in a setting they would like to see themselves, makes a big impact.

TIP

TIP: Remember hiring professional models lets us photograph the greatest number of variations in the shortest amount of time. Great talent does cost money, but sometimes a photo of a real people, who actually uses your product can have great benefits too, can you say testimonials?

I can cast models through talent agencies or I can find real people for your shoots as well. That's one of the benefits of working with a company that's been producing photography for over 20 years.

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Silhouetted images

Silhouetted images become part of your design. Text can flow around them and it's easier to create a pleasing layout, since all of the images have no background competing with each other. On the other hand these images are very matter-of-fact, devoid of any emotion you may want to create. They are perfect for your shopping cart, technical spec sheets and pages that call out details of the product.

Even though a silo is a pretty simple image, there are still some details that need to be dialed in before I can create these for you. Think (or talk to your designer) about details, angles and the background for the silhouetted images we should be creating for you.

Details

As our photographs often are the only interaction a customer has with your products before purchasing them, it is sometimes important to show the details of that product. Some times one image is enough. Other times an item needs to be photographed multiple times: in use, unfolded, turned on, in different colors or simply just to have a detail featured, that makes the product unique or interesting.

Angles

Often you can't see all of what's important on a two dimensional photograph of a three dimensional item. The solution is to photograph a variety of angles. There are may times where one angle is absolutely adequate.

TIP *TIP: Remember that even though I'm photographing one item, every angle is a different shot on our shot list. In this example of the ring there is one hero shot, one overhead shot and one side view. The shot list would show all three angles as different images, so we don't forget to photograph each necessary angle.*

Background

A silhouetted image can be photographed ...

... with no background

The simplest silhouette is one, where the background is completely removed from the image. The product appears to be floating on the page and has nothing to anchor it to the design.

... with a drop shadow

Drop shadows are the tried and true way of placing your product on your page. Your item seems to be resting on the webpage and gives a feeling of a calm to our photos.

... with a reflection

Reflections make your products look like they are photographed on a pristine surface. They look modern, clean and sleek. This is the most modern way to anchor a silhouette.

PRODUCT PHOTOGRAPHY

Did you know …

… silos can also be shot on dark or black, but a drop shadow doesn't make a lot of sense on these, however reflections on black look super high tech especially on dark products!

Environmental images

An environment can explain what your product does or how it's best used. It can also create an aspirational message and emotion. Photographing your product in the correct surroundings can be as simple as the correct surfaces on a table top, a set specifically build for it or renting a location that brings out the qualities yo u want to communicate.

Tabletop
Are the simplest way of telling a story around your product. This can be as simple as a color or surface along with a prop or two, to a mini set build. Usually a table top shot is a little more abstract and hints at an idea.

On set
Sets can be as extravagant (or simple) as you can imagine, usually they reflect a room or place that's easier to copy in a studio, than in would be to travel to in real life.

On location
Location are real places, that lend themselves to enhancing your product. They range from someone's home to a far flung place on the other side of the world. Usually location shoots are significantly more expensive, but when you just can't substitute the real thing, they are the way to go.

Conclusion

A little bit of planning goes a long way to ensure a smooth and efficient photo shoot.

• The more detailed your shot list is, the more accurate I can estimate the time and cost of the shoot. (I've included a sample shot list on the next page.)

• Little things, like having all products checked for damage and printing errors and making sure that all products are at the studio, when we begin the production eliminates the need to reset a set or lighting scenario to match what we shot a few hours or days ago. Not having to waste time on these type of changes, saves you money in the long run.

• You can even stay in your office, when I am photographing the simpler silo shots. I email you screen-shots of my progress, so you can make changes to the set up, no matter if you're across town or across the ocean.

I look forward to creating images for you, that help your website visitors get to know (and feel the need for) your products or services, before they ever click the order button.

... catching light in motion!

Pascal Depuhl
photographer
www.depuhl.com

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Sample Shot list

Product Name	SKU	background	angels	details	versions
sample product name	*12345AB*	*white*	*front, 45º*	*none*	*red, yellow, blue*

Client:_____   Job number: _____

Photography by Depuhl
Pascal Depuhl
786-554-6253
photography@depuhl.com

www.depuhl.com