

Build Your Professional Image with a Professional Headshot

Jon Meadows '10 outlines importance of a professional headshot

Tuesday, July 30, 2019

⋮



PROFESSIONAL HEADSHOT TAKEN BY JON MEADOWS '10

Thank you to [Jon Meadows '10](#), a graduate of the University of New Hampshire and headshot photographer and facial expression coach with [High-End Headshots](#), located in Washington, D.C., for submitting this article to [Career and Professional Success](#).

I don't mean to sound like an old codger (I'm 31, and I was in Dimond Library studying 10 years ago), but college students and recent graduates need to understand that social media and Google results will have an impact on most careers. An overwhelming majority of employers and organizations incorporate social media reviews into the reference and background check process now, so it's virtually guaranteed that you will be searched for on the internet.

That said, I'm not suggesting that you delete your Instagram accounts and stop snapping. Even with your privacy settings up to their absolute limits and if you elect not to be searchable on a majority of your accounts, your name and profile picture are likely still going to pop up in some Google results.

Let's assume you **want** to be searchable online by new friends and connections you meet, and let's assume you have a LinkedIn page. If you don't have a LinkedIn page, **you absolutely should**. [LinkedIn](#) is designed to be the professional social network and is very easy to keep professional, and in most cases, it has become expected that anyone applying for a professional job will have a LinkedIn profile. Get that rocking and up to date (the [Career and Professional Success](#) team can help you, too!).

That brings me to the importance of a headshot. Almost everyone has the option for a profile picture on every social platform. What you choose as a profile picture will have a significant impact on the potential employer's first impression when they inevitably search for you online.



Headshot taken by Jon Meadows '10.

Profile Pictures Communicate a Lot

Profile pictures build or diminish trust, and they build connection or fail to do so. In a professional context, the picture you use either increases your perceived value you can bring to the company, or it does not. It might even hurt your chances of getting the job.

Employers will get a sense of whether you're going to be serious about your career and the job with their organization. While they could be wrong to judge on the photo, you want to help them to think well of you and be right. Companies will be considering whether to trade tens of thousands of dollars a year in salary, benefits, and training for you to work for them. Make them sure it's a worthwhile investment.

In part through your profile picture, employers also get a sense of whether you will fit in with their culture. This is/should not be about how attractive you are, but it's another representation of how you present yourself, which is why you should have a professional headshot.

Investing in a Professional Headshot – 4 Characteristics of a Great Headshot

People will judge you initially by the way you present yourself, and more of that first impression is happening based on your online presence – and your headshot/profile picture. Through my experience as a professional photographer and facial expression coach, here are some characteristics of a great headshot:

1. The picture should be composed so your face is visible, even when the profile picture is viewed on a mobile device. If people can't see your face clearly or it is too small to connect with, you are missing out on an opportunity to connect. We're humans, and we connect with other people's faces.
2. The picture should show you as confident and approachable. As a facial expression coach, I believe this is where a lot of our pictures fail us. If we are taking a selfie, we are preoccupied taking the picture. We can't be truly engaged with someone, and it is incredibly difficult to make an authentic-looking face that brands us in the best way.
3. Especially for a LinkedIn headshot or one used in a professional setting, we should look like we care about our image. Wearing appropriate clothes, the lighting should be great, and the quality of the image should be high. It should look like a professionally shot image.
4. I think it's important that the camera angle be on the lower end. Many photographers put the camera above head level to help people with their jawlines, but it has the unintended and often unrecognized outcome of diminishing us. It's called "looking down on someone" for a reason. A great headshot photographer will be able to help you define your jawline while capturing images that simulate meeting you face to face, and sending subconscious signals to the viewers that you are a person who can provide great value.

I hope this is helpful in considering how to utilize your social media profiles, especially LinkedIn, to convince others to have you in for an interview and to hire you for the job you want.

Go get 'em, Wildcats!

*Current Students: UNH Alumni Relations hosts a FREE Headshot Photographer at each **Career & Internship Fair!***

*Jon Meadows is a 2010 graduate of the University of New Hampshire. He is the headshot photographer and facial expression coach in his business, **High-End Headshots**, located in Washington, D.C.*



- WRITTEN BY:
Jon Meadows '10 | Alumni Submission on behalf of Career and Professional Success

PHOTOGRAPHER:
Jon Meadows '10 | Alumni Submission on behalf of Career and Professional Success

STUDENTS



University of New Hampshire

UNH Today is produced for the UNH community and for friends of UNH.
The stories are written by the staff of [UNH Communications and Public Affairs](#).
Email us: unhtoday.editor@unh.edu.

[MANAGE YOUR SUBSCRIPTION](#) [CONTACT US](#)

Like us on Facebook

Follow us on Twitter

Follow us on YouTube

Follow us on Instagram

Find us on LinkIn

UNH Today RSS feeds

UNH Today • UNH Main Directory: 603-862-1234

Copyright © 2022 • TTY Users: 7-1-1 or 800-735-2964 (Relay NH)

[USNH Privacy Policies](#) • [USNH Terms of Use](#) • [ADA Acknowledgement](#)