

7 Qualities

of a Winning Headshot:
Attract the Client or
Job of Your Dreams



HEROIC
HEADSHOTS

Do you ever worry about making a great first impression? These days in the world of digital communication, it's more important than ever. A picture says a thousand words, and of course we want our own professional headshot to say a lot of very good things about us so that we don't have to. Your headshot is often your first impression to the world, and you want to get it right to attract the right before placing it on your social media, website, business card, advertisements, and even your dating profile!

Humans are conditioned to make snap judgements about others, deciding whether this person can help them survive and thrive. The last thing we want is to make a first impression that we're not as great as we really are. But how do you know if your headshot is sending out the right message?

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Have you ever found yourself confused or frustrated when making your headshot or deciding which photo to use? That's okay. When people feel this way, it typically comes down to one simple reason: They don't have clarity on what makes a great headshot. This lack of clarity leads to confusion, and confusion leads to stress.

As someone who's worked with thousands of people to create their dream headshot, I've heard countless stories of old embarrassing headshots that

Melt away confusion and fear by gaining clarity around the outcome you're looking for.

stay online way too long simply because of the stress and confusion around creating something better. This tension can even be emotional, bringing up old feelings of fear and rejection by others. By understanding your own specific needs and gaining clarity around the outcome you're looking for, confusion and fear melts away.

Many people have a headshot that they look at and think, "eh, it's good enough." We want better than "good enough" if we're going to attract the people and opportunities that align with our highest selves —

We want outstanding.

Luckily, you're in the right place. The following is a list of seven qualities that your professional headshot should have to attract the job or client of your dreams. By having clarity and focus on on your best qualities and the audience you want to connect with, you can have headshot working for you 24/7 to create authentic first impressions that attract more positive and like-minded people, ignite more conversations, make longer lasting connections, and leads to more success in your personal and professional life.

1 Relatability To Your Audience

Who is your target audience that you want to connect with? It's often best to start with your audience in mind. Knowing who you want to see this headshot and why will create clarity that prevents frustration and confusion when deciding what to wear, what

background to use, how to smile, and a number of other decisions that need to be made in creating your headshot.

Who is your target audience that you want to connect with?



Are you a freelancer looking to work with high-end clients? Is there a specific company of your teams that you would love to work for? It often helps to focus on one specific person who you really want to make a great first impression with through this headshot.

Next, ask yourself: Why do you want to connect with this person? Are you looking to work for their company, or are you looking to simply make connections with people in your industry?

Questions

Who is your target audience?

What is your reason for connecting with this person?



If you're having trouble with relating to your target audience, Heroic Headshots has a flushed-out guide that will walk you through the process of defining your target audience.

2 Values

Do you embody your core values in your current headshot? If not, that's okay. Identifying your core headshot values, the personality characteristics that you want the world to see, will influence everything else when creating a headshot, and lead to better first impressions. Examples of these values might be diligence, creativity, integrity, passion, and patience.

Since you've already identified your target audience for your headshot, ask yourself the question: What qualities do I have that would best serve this person? In other words, what do they really need to survive and thrive that you can offer? For example, if you're a

graphic artist looking to work with

a leading edge motion effects company, creativity and an ability to meet tight deadlines might be two qualities that they are looking for that you have.



When you're ready to create your headshot, keep your core headshot values in mind. They'll impact what you wear, what backdrop you use, and even how you smile and pose. This subtle awareness of how you can best serve those who you want to work with will make a tremendous impact.

**Do you
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Questions

What are 10 values that best describe you (in a work context)?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

What 5 qualities that you think your target audience is looking for to help them survive and thrive?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Name three of your values that match with the qualities that your target audience is looking for? (These are the qualities that you want your headshot to embody)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

If you're feeling stuck on this, don't worry. When you sign up for Heroic Headshots you have the option to walk through a process to define your core headshot values, setting the stage for your success.

3

Self-Confidence



When you visit a doctor, do you want her to be confident in her abilities? The same goes for your future clients or employer. The more you trust yourself, the more that others will trust you. The way that this is signaled to them is through your body language.

Confidence is the sort of thing that “you know it when you see it,” but it can also be described as “inner strength.” This is a quality anyone would value in a colleague. Your breathing pattern, your posture, and the position of your head make a major impact on how confident you come across.

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When you had your existing headshot made, were you breathing deep or did you hold your breath to smile for the camera? If you’re holding your breath, we may want to try again! Awareness and commitment to continuously breathing long, deep breaths into the belly is a grounding exercise that signals to your nervous system that it’s okay to relax. Confidence is signaled when your body is relaxed and grounded.

How's your posture in your existing headshot? Many people collapse their chest and slouch their shoulders because of the time spent at a desk every day. Countering this posture by opening the chest and drawing the shoulders

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back in a relaxed way, paired with deep belly breathing, will make a radical shift in your body language and the confidence that you convey.

Are you looking directly into the camera with your eyes and face straight forward? It's common and often advised to turn your body (not your face) slightly away from the camera, because it creates a slimmer profile. However, you

want your face and eyes pointed straight toward the camera lens. This signals to your audience your directness and willingness to engage with them or anything that you're faced with. Skewing your face away from the camera signals shyness or even mischievousness, since you're looking at the camera out of the corner of your eyes.



Questions

Do you look grounded and relaxed in your existing headshot (were you breathing)?

How does your posture look? Are you slouching or sitting/standing tall?

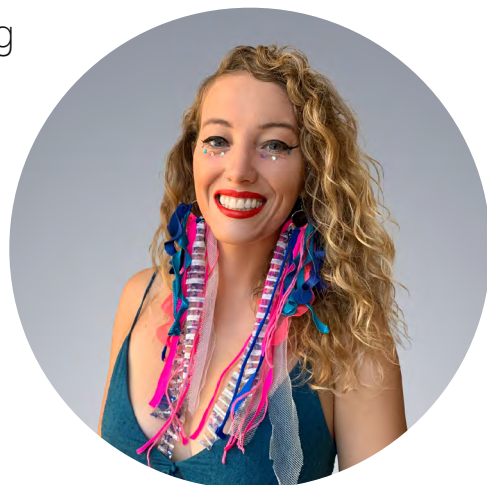
Do you feel “directness” and “assertiveness” from your gaze and position of your face in your existing headshot?

This may seem like a lot to remember. Heroic Headshots’ tutorial directs you through this entire process, guiding you to create a headshot that exhibits confidence in your body language.

4

Approachability


Do you look friendly and approachable in your existing headshot? Would people want to talk to you at a party? Approachability is a necessary complement to the inner strength conveyed by your embodied confidence. Approachability is about your genuine openness and warmth toward others. Confidence without approachability can come off as arrogance or hostility. We want others to feel the part of us that really enjoys other people. Three areas to focus on to convey approachability are your smile, your eyes, and your arms.



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Are you smiling in your headshot? Your smile is the first and most direct thing to signal approachability. Many people hesitate to smile because they want to “be taken seriously” or come off as “strong.” As described in the previous section, confidence can be conveyed with body language. You don’t need a stern or serious expression to be taken seriously.

Smiling is a good thing! People like happy people, even if they’re in high-stakes industries.



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Cover the bottom section of your face on your headshot: Do the eyes look happy to see you? Your eyes are a powerful signal to others about how ready you are to receive them. Forcing a smile often creates tension and squinting that signals that you don't actually want to interact with this person. One approach to counter this is to lead with the eyes:

Start by signaling to the camera with your eyes a greeting such as "hello old friend". When you feel like you've made this connection, then relax into your smile.

Where are your arms and hands? Your arms signal to others if you're ready to be approached. Keep your arms down by your side or have your hands down low lightly touching with your elbows bent. Crossing your arms signals defensiveness or being closed off, though many think of it as a power pose.





Questions

Do you have a warm smile in your headshot? What person or place would make you smile like this?

Can you see the smile in your eyes? Standing in the mirror thinking of your happy person/place can help you calibrate this.

Are your arms crossed or uncrossed?

Relaxing into a state in which you feeling approachable can be a challenge when standing in front of a camera. That's why Heroic Headshots offers breath work and visualization techniques to open up and radiate your best self to the world.

5 High Image Quality

Have you ever seen someone use a recycled photo from a wedding or a group photo as their headshot? Take a moment to think about it, what does it make you feel about this person? Do you trust them more or less? Do you think they have high-quality standards of professionalism?

Having a high-quality image signals to others that you care about making a great first impression.

Having a high-quality headshot is similar to wearing

nice clothes to a job interview. Using low-resolution or recycled photo signals

to the world that you don't care much about making a first

impression. As the saying goes, "How you do anything


is how you do everything," and people will feel

this. Two ways to ensure image quality are image

sharpness and quality lighting.

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There's no easier way to ruin a beautiful headshot than to use a version that is pixelated or blurry.

Image sharpness usually comes down to making sure images are uploaded at the appropriate resolution. For example, LinkedIn profiles require a minimum of 400px x 400px, anything less will start to make your headshot look pixelated. Different rules apply to websites and print materials. There's no easier way to ruin a beautiful headshot than to use a version that is pixelated or blurry.

Quality of light is another major factor. Make sure that the light is flattering and natural, creating soft (rather than strong) shadows on the face. If your photo looks like it was taken with the camera flash on (hard shadows, shiny skin) then you may want to create a new headshot. Using soft window light, avoiding direct sunlight, works great if you're doing it yourself. Alternatively, a skilled professional photographer will know how to create the right look with camera strobes.



Questions

Does your existing headshot look sharp or pixelated/blurry on LinkedIn or other digital platforms?

Are the shadows soft and natural, or hard and artificial?

Are your arms crossed or uncrossed?

If you're feeling unsure about the image quality of your headshot, you don't have to. Heroic Headshots walks you through the process of photographing your headshot to ensure that you create an image that has quality light and meets the specifications of a high-quality image. Our team of professional photo editors ensure that quality standards are met and will flag any problems. If we do find problems with your image, we'll guide you on how to correct them to get the most quality out of your headshot.



6 Professionalism

Have you ever shown up to a work function or a party under dressed for the occasion? If you have, you'll remember that it can feel awkward or uncomfortable.

Coming across as professional in your headshot, while important, isn't always what you think it is. What's most important is that you present yourself in a way that resonates with your intended audience (your dream client or future employer), while being authentically you. Your industry plays a big factor in this. If you're a graphic designer, you're going to have a different audience than if you're a hedge fund manager. Three factors play a big role on whether your headshot meets the standard of professionalism: Wardrobe, grooming, and backdrop.

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Do you remember your "target audience" and "core headshot values" defined earlier? A great starting point is to imagine meeting with your target audience in person and that you're dressed in a way that reflects your core headshot values. Would you feel confident and approachable wearing that outfit with the client or employer of your dreams? As the old adage goes, "Dress for the job you want." If unsure, err on the side of being more dressed up.



Similar rules apply for grooming things like facial hair, makeup, and hair style. Do you look clean shaven? Has your hair been styled? Details like this, while seemingly small, signal to your audience the type of achiever that you are.

You should choose a backdrop for your headshot that reflects your values.

Are you the current focus of your current headshot, or is something interesting happening in the background that might steal the show? Backdrops are one of the most important ways to set the tone for your headshot. Many professional headshots are created on a solid backdrop of some type. While many people go for a shade of grey, lots of people pick vibrant colors to

help them pop out from the crowd. You should choose a backdrop for your headshot that reflects your values. Creatives might go for bright colors while people in more structured industries like finance may go for white, grey, or even black. If you decide to choose an environmental backdrop like a park, your office, or a brick wall, be sure that it does not distract from the most important element of your headshot: You.





Questions

Are there any distracting objects in the background of your current headshot like bright lights, cars, people, or animals?

Would your target audience connect more with a solid color or an environmental backdrop?

Heroic Headshots gives you a variety of backdrop options to choose from, both solid and natural. You can even see sample images that give you an idea of how you might look on the backdrop that you chose.

7 Authenticity

Who is your most important audience with this headshot? The answer is you. When you look at headshot, you should feel that it represents who you truly are. Nobody has to live with this headshot more than you do, so you should love it! People want to feel who you are, and if you feel a connection to your headshot, others are more likely to as well. For this reason, authenticity is the most important quality of a headshot. Your headshot will resonate most with people, and it will attract more of what you want, when it captures you being authentically yourself.

One tip to maintain authenticity is to avoid over-photoshopping. Wrinkles, eye bags, gray hairs, and excess weight are all a part of life. No one thinks less of you for having them, and neither should you. Our philosophy at Heroic Headshots is to ensure that all editing keeps you looking natural, only removing things that distract from the bigger picture of who you are (for example removing frizzy stray hairs caused by humidity or shine from the lighting).

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How old is your existing headshot? If the answer is more than a year or two, it's time to consider an update. Many people feel tempted to keep a headshot from 5 years or more ago. Everyone changes with time, and having a headshot

Your headshot should look like (the current) you to build authenticity and trust.

that looks different than your current reality can lead to awkward interactions when someone meets you and has to take a double take to recognize you. Your headshot should look like (the current) you to build authenticity and trust.

The longer you delay on updating your headshot, the more resistance you may feel to updating it. Updating

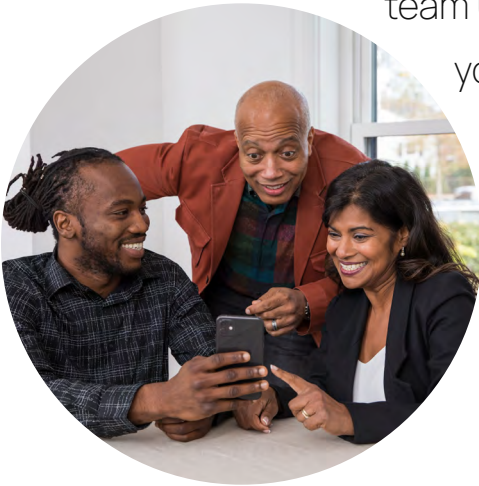
regularly not only keeps the headshot authentic to who you are, but it also keeps people feeling connected to you as they see your image updates over time. On social media such as LinkedIn, updating your headshot is a great conversation starter and way to stay engaged with others!



Next Steps...

We hope that this list helps you to navigate the world of headshots to attract those people, clients, employers, and career opportunities that are in alignment with your aspirations. Heroic Headshots is here as a resource for you and your team.

If this guide helped you realize ways that you can strengthen your existing headshot, Heroic Headshots can help. Our clear, concise, and easy to follow guide walks you through the process of updating headshots for you and your team using only your cell phone. The process only takes



you a few minutes and we will guide you through every step to create an outstanding image. Within three business days, our world class editors turn your cell phone image into an outstanding headshot that you'll be proud to share on your website, social media, and print materials.

If you're looking for even more guidance reach out to us through www.heroicheadshots.com to request a consultation.