Why Photograph Your Projects?

We've all heard that "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder." But for our purposes, the operative word is **eye**. If you want to market or display your products, they have to be ***seen by somebody.***

So unless you plan to go door-to-door and personally show your project to everyone, your only real option is taking photographs.

And the quality of those photographs will have a huge impact on how successful you are.

The Wrong Way to Photograph Your Creation:

Dust it off, turn on some lights, hold your camera up, and take a snapshot. It's quick, easy, and is almost guaranteed to produce sub-par results.

The Recommended Way to Photograph Your Creation:

There are 2 parts to this --

1. What equipment to use
2. How to best use it

Camera Equipment

As mentioned earlier in this series, you can get by with as little as a point-and-shoot digital camera and an inexpensive tripod.

As you get more seriously into marketing your products, you may want to consider purchasing a better camera, such as a digital SLR. As far as getting the best price -save some money with these tips.

The only possible additional item to consider would be a simple solid-colored backdrop. If you go this route, all white or all black are the safest choices.

Which items should you use a backdrop with? The general rule of thumb is: The smaller the object, the more likely a backdrop should be used.

Using Your Equipment For Maximum Effect

- Have your **Camera Manual** handy for the basic issues of inserting memory cards and batteries, charging your camera, knowing what are the acceptable operating conditions (such as temperature), and how to locate the controls and settings.
- If you need pictures to post online (a.k.a. The Internet), you can get by with a lower resolution because the highest resolution that can be displayed on the Internet is only 72 dpi.
- On the other hand, taking digital pictures intended to be printed should use the highest quality settings on your camera (sometimes stated as small-medium-large-so big it won't fit on this camera [okay, I made that one up], or good-fine-superfine).
- Before doing anything, clean your lens (that's the thing underneath the lens cap). Check your owner's manual as far as what to use for cleaning, so you don't damage anything (avoid spitting on your lens and then wiping it on your jeans).
- Choose a location where you have soft light that is ***evenly spread across the entire image*** (you don't want highly underexposed and overexposed areas in the same photograph). **Do not use** your on-camera flash (if at all possible) because it is likely to create what is known as *hotspots* on your product.

manual). If done correctly, this will prevent a color cast (for indoor pictures).

- Go get your tripod (thought I forgot, didn't you?)
- Position your product (with or without backdrop) to highlight the most important features, as described in previous articles.
- After determining the best angle and perspective to take your photograph from, set up your tripod so that the camera will be at the right height, when placed on top.
- Set the aperture to F8 (check your owner's manual to see how to select the "Aperture Priority" mode). To make the background **more blurred**, use a **lower number F-stop** (F2.8, for example).

To have a **sharper** background, use a **higher number F-stop** (F16, for example). Regardless of which F-stop was used, your product should be sharply in focus.

- With your camera on the tripod, depress the shutter halfway to determine the shutter speed your camera calculates is necessary.
- The shutter speed should be less than 2 seconds. If not, try these options, in order, observing what the resulting shutter speed will be after each setting change:
    - Increase the ISO. This gets a little tricky for some cameras with a small ISO range (such as 100 - 400). Increasing the ISO makes your camera more sensitive to light, but it also makes your pictures more susceptible to digital noise (resulting in grainy, less sharp images).
    - Increase the ***size*** of your aperture (that equates to ***decreasing*** the F-stop number). An example would be to change your F-stop from F8 to F5.6.
    - If neither of the above 2 options results in the shutter speed under 2 seconds, you need to move to a better lit environment.

- Take your picture! Note: the longer the shutter remains open, the greater is the chance for vibrations to negatively impact the photograph. Any vibrations or movement tend to blur the final image.

Therefore the safest thing to do is to set your camera on "Timer" (or Delayed Shutter) so that when you push the shutter button and start the timer going, the picture will be taken when nobody is touching the camera (of course, you need to let go of the camera after activating the shutter; which is another really good reason to have a tripod).

If you are close to your computer, download the images immediately and check them out *before moving your tripod or product*. If there are significant problems with the final image, you can always go back and re-shoot them with different settings.

With the current selection of photo-editing software available, you will be pleasantly surprised as to how simple it is to make minor (and also major) changes to an image.

The main point is - **You don't have to worry about creating a PERFECT PHOTOGRAPH, when you initially take the pictures.** Frequently, that can be accomplished ***after*** the picture is taken by using free photo editing software.

Photographically yours,

Robert Bezman

Robert Bezman,

Professional Photographer and Webmaster

Simple Ways to Turn Snapshots into Masterpieces