

Picture Perfect Communications

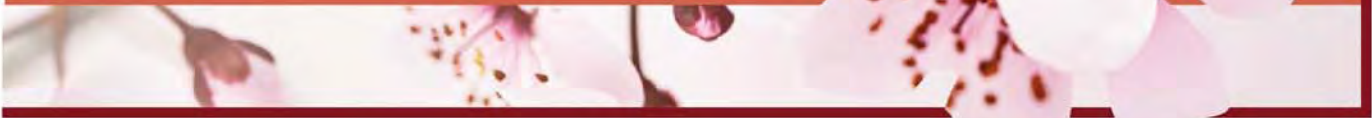


10 Tips for NPO Staff & Volunteers Who Want to Take Great Photos

Sourcing great photos can be challenging. Few NPOs have photographers on staff or budgets for hiring freelancers. So photography is an area where staff and volunteers can use their creativity and enhance an organization's communications materials. If you would like to take high-impact photos, here are some pointers to get you started.

KAREN LUTTRELL
COMMUNICATIONS

Strategic copywriting.
Words for action and results.



Picture Perfect Communications

10 Tips for NPO Staff and Volunteers Who Want to Take Great Photos

High quality photographs can help non-profit organizations (NPOs) bring their stories to life in a way that engages supporters, builds relationships and improves lives. But sourcing great photos can be challenging. Few of the NPOs I know have professional photographers on staff or dedicated budgets for hiring freelancers. So photography is one of the areas where program staff, volunteers, and interns can step up, use their creativity, and really enhance the organization's communications materials.

Here are a few tips to help you along the way if you have a digital camera and a desire to capture and share your organization's great moments through pictures.



Take great, clear photos with simple tricks like stabilizing your camera, positioning your subject under good lighting, and photographing objects at an unusual angle.

1. **Connect with your communications contact before your event or photo opportunity** to make sure you know the ground rules and policies on photography. This will also be an opportunity to gather any ideas or photography resources your communications contact can share with you.
2. **Set your digital camera to take the highest resolution photos that it can.** This will use a little more memory but it will allow you to have crisp images in print applications as well as in your digital materials. You can downsize high resolution images later, but if you start with a low resolution image that's what you're stuck with and it could look grainy in print.

3. **Pay careful attention to the light.** To avoid shadows and darkspots, don't arrange the subject of your photo with the main lighting source behind them. Instead try to have light shining directly onto and illuminating your subject. Try to arrange adequate lighting for your photo so you can avoid using a flash indoors. Using a flash inside may make your photo look unnatural. If you must use the flash, be aware that the flash on most point and shoot cameras has an effective range of about 8 feet.
4. People are drawn to people. Even if you are photographing a new building or piece of equipment or other object, **try to include people in your photograph** if you can because it will be more eye-catching
5. **When photographing people, close-up photos of their faces often create more visual interest** and a greater sense of personal connection. **Show the facial expressions and emotion** of the people you are photographing to help create the overall tone and emotion for your communications piece.
6. **When photographing people, be sure to get permission first.** Record the permission with your organization's photo release form or use my sample permission forms for photography and testimonials: <http://bit.ly/eiRVc4>
7. **When photographing objects, consider taking the photograph from an unusual angle** to emphasize a particular aspect of the object and to create greater visual interest.



8. Close-up shots are often best when photographing individual objects. However people tend to like symmetry and repetition. **Try placing several of the same or similar objects in a grouping, then focus your photo on the grouping of objects.**

For example at an information table, try fanning out multiple copies of the same publication on the table and taking a photo. You might want to try several rows with a different publication in each row. Or, at a candlelight vigil, a whole row of votive candles might capture more interest than a close-up of a single candle. Of course, if you can include a person with the objects your photograph will have even more appeal.



9. **Try not to put the subject of your photograph in the exact centre of the shot.** To add visual interest, have your subject a bit to the left or right of the centre point. And put the subject either in the foreground or background.

10. Shaky hands make blurry pictures. **Stabilize your camera while you are taking photos, especially indoors, to get clear pictures.** Balance the camera on a ledge, chair or other available furnishings.

I hope these pointers will help you and your colleagues visually capture the great work your organization is doing. I would love to hear your feedback. Please feel free to share your own photography tips. Email me at karen@luttrellcommunications.com or share your tips and resources in the comments at the *PR for NPOs* blog: <http://bit.ly/haSzpb>

**Example photographs for this article sourced through iStockphoto*



About the Author

Karen Luttrell offers marketing and communications strategy and copywriting services to help small businesses and non-profits grow and succeed. Before launching her own business, Karen worked in communications, marketing and sales for 14 years with 10 years management experience. She holds an Honours BA in linguistics and is a member of the International Association of Business Communicators. For

more information: www.luttrellcommunications.com.