

This is one of a series of Fact Sheets on the photo imaging sector developed by industry experts to help people new to the sector understand the different job roles and the skills required in order to succeed. Fact Sheets are based on Job Profiles developed by Skillset. For the full list of *Job Profiles for the Audio Visual Industries*, visit www.skillset.org. We aim to keep this information as current as possible - a fully updated version will be available in the Winter of 2006. All Fact Sheets can be downloaded and printed from our website www.skillset.org/careers. To give us feedback, e-mail careers@skillset.org.

For photographers who enjoy travel, meeting creative people and solving visual challenges, a career in Advertising and Editorial Photography is a highly attractive prospect. Advertising photographs are used to help promote and sell a product or idea, and are usually accompanied by a short phrase or strap-line, while Editorial photographs illustrate and enhance the impact of a story or report and are used widely in newspapers, magazines, newsletters, books and websites.

The work is varied, exciting and highly stimulating – it is also extremely competitive. However, photographers who can demonstrate an ability to interpret ideas and stories through original and emotive images enjoy strong career prospects.

The work

Advertising Photographers produce photographic images for use in both local and national advertising. This can involve any subject matter, but is often categorised into the following specialist areas: Still Life, Food, Cars, Portraiture and Landscape. Some work is carried out on location, but much is done in studios, using studio flash lighting and, increasingly, digital cameras or digital backs on conventional cameras. Some Advertising Photographers specialise in producing well-lit product shots for use on packaging, point-of-sale advertising and in catalogues. These so-called 'Pack' Photographers are often salaried studio employees, working standard hours, five-days a week, with all the benefits that regular employment offers.

Other Advertising Photographers choose to be self-employed and often operate their own studios. They are commissioned, either directly by a manufacturer, or by an advertising agency, to produce high-quality, imaginative photographs that sell the benefits of a product or brand. They are generally high-profile photographers, based in the larger cities, who secure new work on the strength of past campaigns. They often specialise in a specific area, such as food, furniture, engineering, cars or financial services, in which they have built up a reputation for excellence. They may employ one or more Assistants (see the Fact Sheet for Assistant Photographer), and are often well paid, on a day-rate plus expenses basis. Advertising Photographers continually market themselves, through agents (who take a percentage commission), personal contacts and other forms of networking.

Editorial Photographers produce images to accompany feature articles in newspapers, magazines and websites, as well as chapters in books and text in company brochures. Since these publications cover almost every area of interest, photographers with a background in many different disciplines may be involved in this field, working both in studios and on location. Photographers are usually briefed by the publication's editor or picture editor regarding the substance of the story, the public image of the publication, the target readership and possible images that would attract attention to the article and help interpret the subject matter. It is then the photographer's job to shoot images that will answer the brief and satisfy or exceed editorial expectations.

Essential knowledge and skills

Producing high-quality photographs to a tight deadline and exacting client specifications can prove stressful. Advertising and Editorial Photographers should therefore be organised, practical and creative, with a calm, friendly attitude. They must be highly motivated and self-confident in order to promote themselves, and should continually update their presentation portfolio. They need to be visually literate and understand the principles of lighting and composition, and have an appreciation of form, colour and tone.

- **Advertising Photographers** are commissioned to take photographs that are 'original' and set the product apart from the competition. They should therefore have a good knowledge of the history of, and current trends in, advertising photography, the visual and graphic arts, and the many techniques of image manipulation. They will also be expected to have an expert knowledge of lighting, set-construction and the innovative use of the new digital technologies.



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Scotland Helpline
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- **Editorial Photographers** need to take photographs that illustrate the stories and reinforce the publication's editorial values. Sometimes photographers are given the freedom to interpret a subject in the way they see fit; however, more often they need to work to a strict creative brief. Editorial Photographers therefore need to be highly flexible in the way they work. They also need good communication skills in order to make appointments and photograph people who are often not professional models.
- **Location Photographers** must be prepared to work in a variety of weather conditions. They must be physically capable of completing commissions, which may involve many hours of work in remote and uncomfortable locations. Since they will often be asked to submit photographs via e-mail or mobile phone, they will also need to keep up to date with the latest digital communications technology.
- **Studio Photographers** need a thorough knowledge of all the creative and technical aspects of studio photography, including equipment, set construction and appropriate lighting techniques. Now that digital photography is widespread, many clients expect to review photographs on the spot. Photographers need to stay on top of the new technology and learn how to operate computer-based, image-manipulation software. Excellent communication skills are essential in order to control a studio populated with photographic assistants, models, designers, art directors, stylists and subject specialists.

All photographers need to have a sound understanding of website design and management.

Training and qualifications

No set academic qualifications are required to work as an Advertising or Editorial Photographer, with career advancement based largely on portfolio, track record and reputation. There are many excellent college courses around the country which provide a sound technical grounding, as well as access to work placement schemes. The Professional Qualifying Examination (PQE) offered by the BIPP (British Institute of Professional Photography) has a good reputation with employers. It is usually linked to an HND course, leading to a degree as well as the PQE.

Many practitioners start out by assisting an established photographer and learn on the job. Employers may support work-based qualifications, such as Apprenticeships and NVQ/SVQs. Apprenticeships are available in Photo Imaging, incorporating Key Skills, a Technical Certificate (C&G 6924), and an NVQ at level 2 or 3. NVQ/SVQs are available at levels 2, 3 and 4 in Photography, levels 2, 3 and 4 in Digital Imaging, and levels 3 and 4 in Digital Photography & Imaging. Membership of the British Institute of Professional Photography (BIPP), the Association of Photographers (AOP) and the Master Photographers Association (MPA) may also be beneficial.

Health and Safety

Photographers are likely to be subject to physical stresses from carrying heavy camera equipment and lighting indoors and out, in all seasons, come rain or shine. They should therefore seek advice about appropriate techniques for lifting and moving equipment. In addition, they need to understand Health and Safety legislation, and should be capable of assessing and managing the risks and potential dangers associated with the use of electrical lighting, equipment and props. They should also ensure that they have a current Public Liability insurance policy to cover their working practices.

Where to go for more information

Skillset is the Sector Skills Council for the Audio Visual Industries. For information about training and professional qualifications, links to the Skillset network of training partners, and access to the comprehensive Skillset course database, visit www.skillset.org
Skillset Careers is the UK's only specialist media careers advice service delivering individual career solutions when and how you need them. For detailed media careers information and advice, contact one of the free careers helplines. Call **08080 300 900** in England (also available to callers from Wales and Northern Ireland) or **0808 100 8094** in Scotland, or visit the website www.skillset.org/careers

The British Institute of Professional Photography (BIPP) is a not for profit association of professional image makers that aims to improve standards, develop skills and encourage continuing professional development. The BIPP recognise over thirty colleges across the UK who have proved that they have the resources, facilities and expert lecturers necessary to run an effective professional photographic course. For details of BIPP Qualifications for practising professionals, visit the Membership pages on the BIPP website www.bipp.com. For a list of approved colleges, including those offering the PQE, e-mail mberry@bipp.com. Student membership is available to students attending a vocational course in photography at an educational establishment in the UK. The Institute's journal *The Photographer* is supplied free to all members. **T: 01920 464011**

The Association of Photographers (AOP) is a trade association of professional photographers, who campaign vigorously for photographers' rights and have had a key influence on the development of professional photography in the UK. Their publication *Beyond the Lens* is widely recognised as the definitive industry guide to copyright and licensing law, ethics and business practice. The AOP has a number of affiliated colleges and promotes, maintains and develops relationships between education and the professional industry. It also publishes *IMAGE* magazine, which reports on current trends in professional photography and image making. **www.the-aop.org T: 020 7739 6669**

The Royal Photographic Society (RPS) is the industry's 'learned body'. Established over 150 years ago, it aims to promote the art and science of Photography. It awards distinctions that are recognised throughout the world and has established specialist interest groups, and meetings for its members, who are drawn from both amateur and professional photographers. It publishes a monthly journal. **www.rps.org**