

CORPORATE (INDUSTRIAL & COMMERCIAL) PHOTOGRAPHER

Skillset careers fact sheet

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.

The work of the Corporate Photographer is dynamic and challenging, encompassing a wide range of disciplines and subject matter. It is his or her job to shoot images that make the client's products, services and facilities look visually exciting and commercially appealing, and thus present the company and its brands in the best possible light.

Some Corporate Photographers specialise in specific areas of photography, such as still-life, architecture or events; however, most are likely to be involved in a combination of on-site industrial photography, advertising, catalogue and brochure photography, public relations (PR) and executive portraiture. This type of work can be highly lucrative and is usually conducted on a freelance basis, though some larger corporations employ their own "in-house" staff photographers, for increased control over the management of the photography.

The work

Corporate Photographers are commissioned to shoot photographs for company advertising, promotion and documentation purposes. The subject matter varies widely from industrial premises and equipment, through products and processes, to personnel and corporate events. As a result, Corporate Photographers need to have a strong command of a number of different areas of photography, including still life, portraiture, photojournalism and editorial photography. They also need to take the time to understand their client's business, their corporate values and the underlying marketing messages the client wishes to convey.

Corporate Photographers are sometimes given a strict creative brief, but in other instances will be asked to suggest the production of images that will accentuate the positive values of the brand and defend against any negative images and associations.

Much of this photography is carried out at the client's premises, or at locations where the client's products are in use. Studio facilities may be required, though Corporate Photographers often rent studios on an hourly or daily basis to keep their overheads down. In the past, large organisations such as electricity companies, aircraft and car manufacturers, supported their own photographic units. However, the need to economise has led to most corporate photography being contracted out to self-employed photographers.

Essential knowledge and skills

Corporate Photographers need to understand the opportunities and challenges associated with the different photographic disciplines and the latest digital imaging applications. They must not only master the creative and technical aspects of photography, but also understand the corporate image the company wants to project and the various end uses of photographs, including brochures, annual reports, internal newsletters, websites, publicity and PR.

They should either command a variety of photographic skills across a range of different subject matter, or a very high level of skill in one area of specialism. They need to be discreet, resourceful and capable of adapting to often less than ideal working conditions and lighting levels.

Corporate Photographers need to work within strict budgets to produce images that will fulfil the client's specific requirements, while minimising disruption to operations and workflow. When setting up equipment in a shop, factory or workplace, photographers must be aware of the limited time available to produce images. They must also be aware of the health and safety, and risk assessment implications of working in an unfamiliar industrial or commercial environment.



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It is also important to understand and recognise the hierarchy within the management of the organisation, and to consult and communicate effectively before setting up or taking photographs. Good interpersonal skills are essential in order to deal with people who are not professional models and to gain the co-operation of those whose working day is being disrupted.

Training and qualifications

No set academic qualifications are required to work as a Corporate Photographer, though there are many excellent college courses around the country which provide a sound technical foundation and insights into the history of photography. The best courses also operate work placement schemes, which offer students the opportunity to gain valuable work experience and make industry contacts before they graduate. The Professional Qualifying Examination (PQE) offered by the British Institute of Professional Photography (BIPP) 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 Corporate Photographer and learn on the job (see the Fact Sheet for Assistant Photographer). This is an invaluable way to learn the relevant photographic skills, and understand the conventions, practices and rules (written and unwritten) of industry and commerce, which may prove vital to a photographer's continued success. Prospective employers normally expect to see a portfolio of photographs – this should be well presented and consist of 10 to 15 photographs, that reveal a broad range of skills and competencies.

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 a professional association such as the British Institute of Professional Photography (BIPP), the Association of Photographers (AOP) and the Master Photographers Association (MPA) may also be beneficial. The BIPP and the MPA offer a range of qualifications, usually awarded after portfolio submission, enabling a candidate to benchmark their skills against other successful practitioners working in the industry.

Health and Safety

Photographers may 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, photographers 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 there is a current Public Liability insurance policy in place 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