Eventbrite



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A picture is worth a thousand words... and countless ticket sales.

You already know the saying — but are you confident your photos are telling a compelling story about your event? If the photos on your event page or in your promotions aren't captivating — or worse, aren't there at all — it's not just potential attendees' curiosity that will be let down. Your ticket sales will suffer too.

Photographs are vital to marketing your event and building your brand. The popularity of visual social networks like Instagram and Snapchat is skyrocketing. But you can't differentiate your event if your photos look like the pictures of every other event out there.

No matter where you use them, finding great shots to promote your event is a key way to spark interest with potential attendees. In fact, photography can do more than spark interest — images are essential in getting potential attendees to commit to your event.

According to <u>our research</u>, Google's image search is one of the top two sites potential attendees bounce to after visiting event pages. Why? Because people rely on photos to help them understand what to expect from your event.

Potential attendees use images to validate their desire to attend your event — and past attendees use images to relive the experience and spread the word. Don't let your photos send the wrong message.

So how can you make sure your photos are saying what you want them to? Find out in this guide packed with insights from seven professional event photographers and designers.

This guide is for...

Event organizers who want to capture the best possible pictures of their event — both by working with a professional photographer and capturing shots on the fly for your Instagram account. No matter your experience level, you'll walk away with the knowledge to work with professional photographers and get your own great shots of your event.

What you'll learn:

- The fundamentals of great photography for events
- How to work most effectively with professional photographers
- How to use pictures to sell more tickets

Meet the experts



Brian Beaver
VP of Design at Eventbrite



James Braund Freelance Photographer based in Australia



Eric Canha Editorial Photographer



Joe Montana Freelance Photographer based in San Francisco



Christie Connell
Owner, Azure Photo Studio



David Silverman
Owner, David Silverman Photography



Misha Vladimirskiy Partner, Filterless.co Head of Content, butchershop.co

Crash Course: The Fundamentals of Event Photography

Don't let lackluster images dull potential attendees' enthusiasm. To make your photography stand the test of time — and, more importantly, motivate website visitors to get out their wallet — you need to transport viewers to the live experience.

But the first step to differentiating your event's brand with photography is mastering the basics. Before picking up a camera — or the phone to hire a photographer — you need to have a vision for your photographic style. To develop a style that reflects your event's brand, start by considering composition, perspective, lighting, and focus.

But you don't have to be a creative genius to articulate what you're looking for and make it a reality. "With these basics, even the most amateur photographer can create nice images," says Brian Beaver, VP of Design at Eventbrite. Beaver has more than twenty years of photography and design experience and his photos have been featured in numerous print publications. He was also a member of the Sony team responsible for launching some of their most innovative digital cameras, and is the co-author of Sony's Book, *The ImageStation Guide to Improving Your Photography*.

Here's a crash course in the fundamentals of design and composition, so you can take more compelling photos and better communicate your vision to your team or photographer.

Composition

Keep the composition of photos simple to avoid distractions. "Consider before you shoot: what is the key message you want to convey?" Beaver says. "Then be really deliberate and intentional as you frame the photo. Remove anything extraneous that might conflict or compete with your main message."

Beaver recommends you follow what's known in photography as the "rule of thirds." Divide a frame into thirds both horizontally and vertically, and align the focal point of the photo at a third of the way into the frame. "The rule of thirds is a simple, useful compositional technique to make photos that are more compelling," Beaver says. Following this rule helps you create more dynamic images. For example, by placing the "horizon" at the upper or lower third of the image, it creates a composition that is more interesting to the eye.



If you're hosting a business event or dinner where everyone is seated, you may have to get creative with composition to get a variety of images. "To keep the photos interesting, keep angles interesting," says Christie Connell, the owner of Azure Photo Studio who shoots countless events of all kinds every year. "If there are floral arrangements, you can shoot between them. If it's at a restaurant, go outside and take a picture looking in through the window. Look at the event not just as a participant, but from an outsider's perspective, to get a broader sense of the day."

Perspective

"In event photography, the objective is generally to give prospective attendees the feeling or vibe, and allow them to imagine being at your event," Beaver says. "Their minds don't have to make that leap if you show the event from the attendee's perspective. Pull the viewer into the action, so they're an active participant and not a passive observer."

In event photography, the objective is to allow prospective attendees to imagine being at your event.

-Brian Beaver

For instance, if you're hosting a cooking class, it may be more valuable to show bowls of ingredients from a top-down first-person perspective, rather than just wide shots of people enjoying class. Put yourself in the attendee's shoes, so that potential attendees can do the same.

That said, don't be afraid to mix up your shots to reveal the backstage experience.

"It's really important to shoot from the point of view of the participant, but also to bring somebody into an experience they wouldn't ordinarily see," says Misha Vladimirskiy, a partner at Filterless.co who has photographed events like Coachella and specializes in nightlife and music photography. "Try a backstage photo of an artist, or a unique aerial angle of an event."

An attendee perspective





A backstage perspective





Focus

While most events will want a variety of shots of attendees — both candid and posed (or "grip and grin" shots, as photographers call them) — challenge yourself to get more creative.

"Often event organizers just want the 'grip and grin," says Vladimirskiy. "That works with interesting or famous people, but when you're doing a dinner or a speaking engagement or a fashion show, it gets repetitive. Trust your photographer's creativity, and you'll get images that will endure and stand alone on Instagram."

Below is a more interesting version of the "grip and grin"



Another note: while it's important to get shots of attendees having fun, it's also important to get more abstract shots that aren't focused on individuals.

"As people we focus on faces," Beaver says. "That can be positive and powerful — but it can also be a distraction. So if you're trying to portray a professional networking event, it may be easier for the attendee to imagine themselves within the scene of an abstract image with a slight blur."



Lighting and editing

"If you're not a photographer, don't worry about the setting on your camera," advises Joe Montana, a freelance photographer in San Francisco. "The most important thing is to capture great moments. Focus on finding that decisive moment and capturing it."

In the process, try to take advantage of the natural lighting in your venue, and avoid using flash (especially on-camera flash). "Where possible, capture natural lighting, and avoid artificial lighting and flashes," Beaver says. "Unnatural light makes your image inherently feel like a photograph, and takes viewers out of the moment."

Unnatural effects on photos make it harder for prospective attendees to imagine themselves at your event.

-Brian Beaver

If you do need flash and are taking shots of attendees, have them turn an eighth of an inch to the side so they're not facing the camera head-on. "This will reduce red eye in your pictures, because that's caused when light enters the subject's eyes at a right angle," says David Silverman, owner of David Silverman Photography. Silverman earned his event chops photographing events like galas and Brown and Yale University athletic games, and most recently photographed the 2017 Super Bowl.

Once you've gotten a great shot, make minor improvements — but be sure not to let post-production effects disconnect viewers from the moment.

"At Eventbrite, we deliberately avoid applying filters or effects to an image," Beaver says. "Unnatural effects tend to introduce visual obstacles, making it harder for prospective attendees to imagine themselves at your event."

Ready to invest in photography gear?

It may be worth investing in professional-level photography gear, especially if you're not hiring a professional photographer.



Cameras: Our photographers recommend the Sony RX100 or the Nikon D500 — and the GoPro. "GoPros are amazing cameras in low light, and you can install them anywhere," says Vladimirskiy. "Especially for promoters or nightlife events, I recommend mounting them all over the club, mounting them on a turntable, or using them for livestreaming."

Lenses: It's more important to invest in a good lens than a good camera body. Bodies become outdated every two years, whereas a good lens can last a decade. Even the least expensive <u>DSLR</u> digital cameras these days are high quality, and should be able to handle your needs.





Off-camera flash: Flash can be a necessary evil in photography. Instead of using your camera's flash, consider investing in a hotshoe flash, which mounts to the camera and makes photos look way more professional than built-in flash.

If you're ready to make a bigger investment, "a really nice piece of gear to have is an off-camera cable for your flash, so you can hold your camera in one hand, and your flash in the other," Silverman says. "That way it's impossible to get red eye." Montana also recommends buying some sort of diffuser to spread the light out over your subject.

A wireless camera tether: If you want to get the photos you're taking out into the world as soon as possible, it's worth looking into a wireless camera tether. By plugging one of these into your camera and downloading their app, you can load the photos the photographer is taking onto your phone in real time. That way, you can post high-quality images on social media without the wait. Cam Ranger is the tether Silverman used to get his Superbowl photos out into the world in real time.





Editing software: Photoshop is the standard for editing photos on computers, but if you're on the go and need to get pictures ready to post, our photographers recommend the free mobile apps <u>Snapseed</u> and <u>Photoshop Express</u>.



Pro photographer tips for the best shot at any event

Wondering why your photographers use flash in the middle of a sunny field, but don't once the sun sets? Ready to take your photography skills to the next level? Here's advice from our pro photographers for anyone looking to take professional-grade photos.



The event: A festival on a sunny grass field

"The problem with direct sun is that it creates harsh shadows and people are very squinty. You need to use direct flash to fill in those shadows and a lower ISO [the sensitivity of your camera to light] with higher shutter speed and aperture to let in less light. Basically you need to make your lighting counteract the sun."

— Christie Connell, owner of Azure Photo Studios

"Shoot with a flash and put subjects with the sun behind them so they are backlit."

— Joe Montana, freelance photographer





The event: A cooking class or intimate dinner

"You don't want to use a lot of flash, because it may detract from the event itself. If the lighting there is minimal — like a candlelit dinner — use a higher ISO or a wider aperture. This will create a more shallow depth of field, meaning not everything will be in focus, but that's the best way to convey the feeling and mood of the event without being too intrusive."

— Christie Connell, owner of Azure Photo Studios

"Jack up your ISO and use as little flash as possible. Match the color balance of the lights in the space with a gel on your flash."

— Joe Montana, freelance photographer

"Show the beautiful finished product — the beautiful tarts they couldn't have dreamt of making on their own."

— Brian Beaver, VP of Design at Eventbrite





The event: A conference or business event with fluorescent lighting

"Fluorescent lighting makes for a color balance challenge. The main thing you have to pay attention to is the color — use a custom white balance to even out the fluorescent tone you get. By correcting for that while you're shooting, you avoid that jaundice skin tone color that can be created from that lighting situation. If you're inside, you can bounce light off the walls or ceiling to make for a more natural feel."

Christie Connell, owner of Azure Photo Studios

"If you need group photos, do it quickly with a clean background, and reassure people it won't take very long."

— James Braund, freelance photographer

"Utilize interesting angles and perspectives so the shot isn't so utilitarian."

— Brian Beaver, VP of Design at Eventbrite





The event: A concert

"The number one confusion people have is that they need flash in the dark — but people lose their detail flooded in light. If you're shooting the actual band, just use the stage lights — you don't need flash. Work with the lights that are already there, keeping your shutter speed high for the motion and aperture smaller based on the amount of light on stage. If you're shooting people dancing, try to work with the lights from the stage to illuminate them."

Christie Connell, owner of Azure Photo Studios

"If you're shooting an event that has a lot of environmental lighting (like at a club that has spot lights, lasers, strobes, etc.) then employ the method of "dragging the shutter". Your flash unit is going to get your foreground subjects to stay sharp and in focus, so keep your shutter open for longer than you typically would — it will allow some of that environmental light to enter the frame, color the image, and add cool-looking streaks and effects to the image."

— Joe Montana, freelance photographer





The event: A fundraiser or gala

"Typically, the most important thing is who's in the picture. If attendees drop a lot of money to be there, they want visual proof next to the celebrity guest. If a brand is hosting, you want a shot of somebody with a local hook (like the town mayor) with the celebrity guest and a corporate logo in the background."

— Eric Canha, editorial photographer

"Get the interaction between guests and artists. Shoot the fun. Turn around and capture the reaction on peoples' faces. Be in front of the crowd or looking back at the crowd. If it's a quieter event with an orchestra, noise can be a big issue, so choose a quieter camera and keep out of the way of people enjoying the night. Be very respectful and find out where you can't go."

— Dave Silverman, owner of Dave Silverman Photography



How to Work Most Effectively With Professional Photographers

For most events, trusting your photography — and by extension, your ticket sales — to an amateur is too big a risk to take. If you work with a professional photographer, you're drastically increasing your chances of telling the story of your event in a compelling way. But if you don't clearly explain your expectations beforehand, a simple miscommunication could leave both parties disappointed.

Follow these steps to make sure you're getting the most out of your investment in photography.



1. Finding an event photographer

Trying to find a photographer to partner with? Across the board, our photographers named word of mouth as their main driver of business. Talk to fellow organizers for recommendations, or look at the photo credits on other event websites.

If you're stuck, a simple Google search, or perusal of the app Thumbtack, could get you some promising leads — just be sure to vet that they are a professional photographer, and not just someone with a camera and free time! All professional and freelance photographers will have some type of portfolio or website, so check out their past work to see if they've shot similar events and to make sure their style fits the look you're going for.



2. Negotiating a fair rate

Photographers' rates vary greatly based on location, experience, and the difficulty of shooting the event. Expect a rate somewhere between \$200 and \$500 per hour.

"You're paying for the professional to come out with equipment, lighting, backup equipment, and more," Connell says. "Keep in mind, the photographer is usually putting in time before and after the event too, so the associated cost encompasses all of that."

In addition, photographers will often request an assistant. Silverman says to think of it as hiring a sous chef for your chef. "There's a crazy list of requirements to hit as a photographer, and assistants can be the glue it takes to keep everything running," Silverman says. This is especially true if you want photos to be uploaded to Instagram or other platforms during the event, and don't have a dedicated team member for that work.

To start off on the best foot, give your photographer detailed information about your expectations so they can factor that into their quote.

"It's helpful to know exactly how many images you expect to get from the photographer, how fast the turnaround time you'll need is, and the amount of retouching and color grading you'll want from the photographer," Montana says. "These three factors add the most amount of time to a photographer's workload."

In addition, establish up front if you're paying for the memory card full of photos, or per image. "More junior photographers will give you the all the files on the card, whereas more experienced ones may charge you by the image that you license," Beaver says. You also should be sure to specify whether you're getting raw (unedited) images from the photographer, or if you expect them to retouch them before delivery, as that will affect costs as well.

Not in your budget? "There are ways to subsidize the photographer," Vladimirskiy says. "Put the photos on a gallery on your website that gets a lot of views, and get a brand to sponsor that page. Or, if your Instagram has amazing photographers and followers, brands may give

"Keep in mind, the photographer is usually putting in time before and after the event too, so the associated cost encompasses all of that."

- Christie Connell

you money to be featured."



You could also ask your venue if they have an in-house photographer. They may be willing to shoot the event in exchange for tagging the venue and photographer in your social promotion. Even if you have to pay them, venue photographers will know the space best.

3. Preparing photographers before the event

To get the shots you want, you need to be as clear as possible with your photographer. The best way to do that is with a photographer brief. Be sure to include:

What you hope to accomplish and where the photos will be used

To get the most value possible, let the photographer know where exactly you plan on using these images: on your event page? In a Flickr gallery? In social media posts? A banner ad or physical posters?

"It's tempting to say you'll use them anywhere, so consider where you get the most value out of photos now," says James Braund, a freelance photographer in Australia. "If it's Instagram first and foremost, I'll know to shoot wider so they can crop in. If it's for long narrow posters or web banners, that's more restrictive so I'll compose accordingly."

Examples of photos you like

"Photographers are visual creatures, so the more you can provide example images you like, the better," Beaver says. "They illustrate the right tone, or focus, or subject matter. Images are a powerful shortcut to get photographers to deliver what you're asking for."

To find photos to share with your photographer, scour the websites or

social media accounts of similar events and see if any shots stand out to you. You can also find inspiration by browsing Instagram (try the #event hashtag) or Flickr.

A timeline of the day and layout of the venue

Make sure photographers know what will be happening when — and where. Silverman requests a list of all the access points of the event, including any restricted areas the photographer shouldn't go, and doors people will be using to enter and exit the event.

"The photographer will want to know what the room layout is, and it's a great idea for them to go and check out the venue two or three days before," Silverman says. "Call the venue manager to ask if the photographer can go in, and maybe even put their lighting in in advance so they don't have to worry about it later."

Touring the venue beforehand will also give the photographer the ability to point out any issues with the decor — for example, a flower stem that looks like it's coming out of the speaker's head in photos.

Any key people at the event

"Are there key people at the event that I need to follow?" Silverman says. "If so, the event organizer should point them out or have a staff member help me."

If people are speaking, note where in the venue people will be coming from and walking to. If there are key stakeholders who must be photographed, ask a staff member to point them out and get their names. And if there's anyone who would prefer not to be photographed, make sure the photographer is aware of that as well.

A shot list

Last but far from least, "Shot lists are essential," Montana says. "Usually people planning the party don't think about the important shots they need until the night of. I push for this ahead of time so I can be prepped and have the proper kind of gear."

A shot list is a list of the pictures you want at the end of the night — a picture of the stage empty, a picture of people coming in with tickets, a picture of people dancing, a picture of each beer vendor, and so on.

"You may make different choices depending on if your event is a onetime event or repeating" Beaver says. "If your event repeats, you want to make your photos as evergreen as possible, avoiding anything in them that might feel dated or like a uniquely identifiable time or location. If you have repeating classes, and only pictures of people bundled up in January, that may hurt your marketing in the summer."

Depending on your payment arrangement, "a very tightly prescribed shot list really helps you only pay for what you need," Beaver says.



Strategic photo storage tips for after the event

"Put specific keywords and sentences in the file metadata [the title and text description of the file]," Braund says. "It takes longer in the beginning, but is a massive time saver later when searching." Put in a simple caption as well: three keywords that are relevant to the photo, that are either emotive or descriptive. Include the date of the event as well. Not only will this help you find photos quickly later, it will also help optimize your images for search on Google Images and other platforms once you upload them to your site. If you're not sure how to do this, ask your photographer — most are willing to do so if you pay them for their time.

How to Use Photography to Sell More Tickets

As you've learned, potential attendees use photos to decide if your event is worth their time and money. As you've also learned, Google Images is one of the top sites potential attendees bounce to after visiting event pages.

Consumers rely on photos to show them what to expect from your event, wherever they are. But you can make your marketing more effective by targeting which images you show them — whether they're already on your event website, have just seen an advertisement, or are on social media.

No matter what your copy is, "you need a great image to really entice somebody," Vladimirskiy says. Here's how to choose the best photos to entice people where they are.

On your event website

By the time potential attendees are on your event website or ticketing page, they're already interested in your event. Now is the time to use photography to convince them to make the purchase.

Display photos that answer the questions about the event before they ask them — or leave your page to find the answer. They want to get a sense of your event's vibe: does the venue have an upscale atmosphere, or more of a hipster feel? What are people wearing in the pictures? Keep people on the page — not going to Google — by embedding photos that show people what to expect.

After all, the more confident potential attendees feel about the experience they're considering, the more likely they will be to complete the purchase.

First-time event? You can still find compelling photography.

"It's a quintessential problem: How do you get photos of an event that hasn't happened yet?" Beaver says. Luckily, there are some good sources for authentic, believable stock photography. If you absolutely need stock photos, check out Unsplash,

<u>Death to the Stock Photo</u>, <u>Pexels</u>, or <u>Twenty20</u> for compelling photos at reasonable prices.

However, you may be able to get the pictures you need without resorting to stock photos. "You might not have to get new photos, because you can get photos from the artists and the space," Vladimirskiy says. "If it's a speaking engagement, get some new headshots. Request original content from the performers.

Rely on performers and speakers for headshots and pictures of them at previous events. Ask the venue for pictures of the space, to illustrate the vibe. And if your event features food, drink, or consumer goods, take pictures highlighting meals prepared by the chefs or jewelry from a vendor.

In advertisements

In advertisements — whether online or posters on the street — your goal is to attract people's attention. Use the most shocking or compelling photo you have to catch their eye, and avoid using images of attendees' faces unless you have a legal release. Use the design around the photo to reflect your brand, and lean into the "perspective of the attendee" to give them a sense of FOMO (fear of missing out) if they close the window instead of learning more.



Using photos in marketing? You may need a release form.

When it comes to event photography with individuals in it, there are legal restrictions about how you can use it. You need to be especially cautious if:

- The photos feature children
- There are trademarks in the background of photos
- You're using the photos for advertisements

If you're doing any of the above, you need to be sure to get a release. Many events put a notice in the entryway that says that by walking into the event you acknowledge and consent to your image being used on camera. Take into account if attendees would have a reasonable expectation of privacy, and if they're identifiable or just a member of a crowd, before deciding on your approach.

However, even in the above circumstances there still many instances — especially if you're a big brand or company — when it is helpful to get an explicit release to protect yourself against legal challenges. It's always better to be safe than sorry, so check with your legal expert to see what the right approach is for your business.

Note, these guidelines are provided as a service to highlight issues you may want to consider, and not as legal guidance. It is your responsibility to review your state and local regulations.

On social media

All those "grip and grin" photos you got at your last event? Social media is the place to use them. "You can honor people's vanity in the right way," Vladimirskiy says. "People see they were having fun, they tag themselves or comment, and then their friends see."

Not only will they spread the word about your event, but great photos will motivate past attendees to come back next time.

Photos are an incredibly important way for people to remember that memory, to want to go again,

Misha Vladimirskiy

Add your more artistic shots to any social media posts year-round. Including images in your posts is an easy way to <u>increase their reach</u> on any social network. On Twitter, posts with images are 35% more likely to get retweeted than posts without.¹ Similarly, BuzzSumo discovered that Facebook posts with images see 2.3x more engagement than those without images.²

Of course, if you really want to focus on photography, you'll also want to start using Instagram, the photo-based social network. Post to Instagram on a weekly or daily basis to get the most out of your photos year-round. (Even better, use Instagram to post directly to Facebook as well. The same BuzzSumo study found that images posted to Facebook from Instagram receive 23% more engagement than images published via Facebook itself.)

Instagram users love interacting with photos and videos by commenting, liking, and sharing them with their friends. This is great news for your event — and for your ticket sales. Post the right photo and you could be reaching some of your most vocal and engaged attendees! Instagram users search the app for specific hashtags to find content that aligns with their interests. To capture the attention of event-goers, add relevant hashtags in the captions of your photos.

Do you host a recurring event? On Thursdays, use the "Throwback Thursday" hashtag or #tbt on images from previous years to establish your brand, generate hype, and get attendees excited for this year's event. Hosting an event for the first time? You can still get creative on Thursdays and post #tbt pictures of speakers or performers from childhood as a fun way to promote your upcoming event. Every other day of the week, use Instagram to post photos of your event planning and prep to give attendees a backstage look at your process.



Encourage attendees to share photos at the event

With everything else going on, it's likely you'll get the most use out of your photos after the event. But there are easy investments you can make to encourage attendees to share their own pictures from the event with their friends.

Your number one priority should be to have very visible and fun signage around the event that includes your branded hashtag, and ideally your social media handles too. It's a reminder for attendees to post, and to include your brand if they were already planning on using social media.

Encourage attendees to spread photos by installing a social media wall at your event, where pictures using your event hashtag on Instagram and Twitter are displayed in real time. Attendees love to see themselves on the big screen, and this encouragement to post the photos in real-time will give your event a better shot at going viral.

Even if you don't have a Snapchat account for your event, you can still encourage attendees to use it to share photos with friends. By designing a geofilter (an illustration or "filter" for Snapchat photos that can only be used within your event grounds), you can get attendees excited about sharing photos with your design.

Snapchat users can send images and videos directly to friends, or post to their own Stories for all their followers to see. Either way, a branded geofilter is a great way to encourage attendees to post as well as get your brand in front of new audiences. Plus, Snapchatters can download their own images or screenshot others, so it's not unusual to see photos with Snapchat filters pop up on other platforms like Twitter or Instagram. That means bonus views for you! Find out how to get started here.

The Takeaway

To capture the most attendees possible, you have to capture pictures that bring the experience to life. But if the photos in your ads or on your event page are lackluster (or, worse, not present), it's not just potential attendees who will suffer — your bottom line will too.

But prioritizing photography will pay off. By understanding the fundamentals of design and communicating effectively with your photographer, you're setting yourself up to sell more tickets.

Of course, great photography is just one step to convincing a prospective attendee to buy tickets. Find out what else it takes to sell more tickets in this guide to turning more website visitors into attendees.

¹ https://blog.twitter.com/2015/tweettip-use-photos-to-drive-engagement

² http://buzzsumo.com/blog/how-to-massively-boost-your-blog-traffic-with-these-5-awesome-image-stats/

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Powering more than two million events each year.

Eventbrite is the world's leading event technology platform. Hundreds of thousands of organizers use Eventbrite to boost ticket sales, promote and manage events, handle on-site operations, and analyze results across multiple sales channels.

