A hot prospect is deciding whether to call you or your competitor for personal training services. He hasn't met either of you, so to help make the decision, he logs on to your respective websites. Your services and credentials are similar, but, alas, the prospect calls your competitor.

The deal breaker? It was that grainy, underexposed photo of yourself. The amateurish snapshot couldn't compete with the other trainer's sharp, bright and beautifully composed image, taken by a professional photographer. That subtle first impression swayed the prospect.

Your picture is a reflection of your professional image. Here's how to create an image that says what you want it to say about you in the fitness industry.

Why You Need a Professional Photo

Whether you're preparing for your first photo shoot or trying to determine whether or not you should refresh the promotional photo(s) you already use, Cory Sorensen--a professional fitness photographer and owner of Sorensen Photography in Los Angeles--advises asking yourself, "What does my headshot say about me?"

"Your potential clients make assumptions and judgments about you based on your headshot," says Sorensen, who regularly shoots covers and layouts for health and fitness magazines, including Oxygen, Muscle & Fitness, Bicycling and Men's Fitness. "They will do this without ever meeting you. Projecting the wrong image can cause you to lose clients without you ever knowing it!"

Think of your professional photo as an important element of your overall marketing package, says Sharon Donaldson, Toronto-based owner of Fitness Resume, a service that helps fitness pros accelerate their careers on the international fitness convention circuit. As a former convention and special events director and a former member of IDEA's presenter steering committee, Donaldson has seen hundreds of headshots and says that a photo's quality has a definite impact on a fitness pro's potential success.

"When I see a well-done headshot, it tells me that the presenter is a true professional who knows how to market him--or herself properly," she says. "That fitness pro has taken time with the application, so I will take the time to give it a fair review. On the other hand, poor-quality headshots that have as much charm as a bad passport photo say that the presenter isn't taking the application process seriously, so why should I give him or her as much time in the review process?"

Making a Memorable Headshot

Producing a professional-looking photo is...
How to Take Better Photographs. Some people think that great photography requires an expensive camera, but don't worry—good technique is much more important than costly equipment. Brushing up on your basic photography skills is beneficial... Before you take a photo, take a moment to look around you and determine which direction the light is coming from, then adjust your shot if you need to.[2]

Consider what angle might be the most flattering or interesting for photographing your subject. Get up close and personal to zoom in on your subject. Sometimes photos do not look as good as they could because you are too far away from your subject.

7. How to Take Good Headshots. Whenever you're being photographed for your headshot, there are quite a few things to keep in mind to make them stand out but also not make it look "unreal." Remember, you're trying to show your real self and how you look in real life; this is not for your modeling portfolio, which means you don't have to look the best you possibly can, but rather look natural.

A few key points to keep in mind when getting your acting headshots: Make-up is recommended for both men and women (just enough to cover imperfections, but not too much). Absolutely no piercing in the ears. Today I'll show you how to take a good headshot — even if you know nothing about photography and even if you don't think you're photogenic. First, let's make sure we're all on the same page … What Is A Headshot Exactly?

Best colors to wear for a professional headshot. Just like with your choice of clothing, it largely depends on the image and feeling you want to project. If you're a doctor, people are expecting to see you in a white lab coat and not looking like Harry and Lloyd from Dumb & Dumber. However, while doing research for this post I discovered that makeup properly applied can increase the glam factor — if that's the look you want. For more info, check out these great makeup tips (with before and after pics) from award-winning photographer, Megan DePiero. Get tips for taking great headshots today. Unlike passports, driver's licences or ID photos that simply show you what someone looks like, headshots need to convey more, like a subject's attitude, character and personality. To get a good headshot, a photographer needs to know whose headshot they're taking and how it's going to be used. A headshot for a professional that will be used on LinkedIn is going to be different from an actor's or model's headshot. To master this field, you'll also need to know how to photograph the human face and practice people skills that put your subjects at ease and draw out their personality. What is a head...