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*White Paper From: **Your Catalog Partner***



# Four Tips: Take Better Photos For Your Catalog and Website





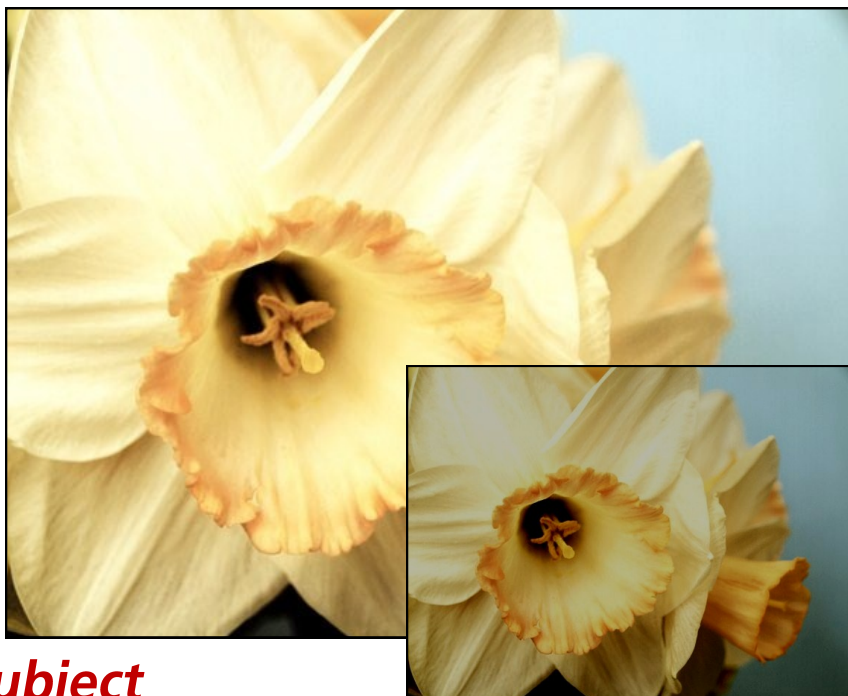
*" Embrace light. Admire it. Love it. But above all, know light. Know it for all you are worth, and you will know the key to photography."*

– George Eastman

*Not too long ago I had a friend ask me how he could photograph his artwork so he could sell it. This topic is important because we all know that photos sell. Think, catalogs are usually about 80% images, right? So if your photos are not as good as they should be, then "Houston, we have a problem." Here are five ways to detect if your photos need work followed by a solution that will transform an "eh, okay," photo into an attractive photo. After all, nice photos will attract a viewer rather than they're in search of your product or not. Case in point, people look at everything and we love attractive things. Isn't that why we put art on the walls?*

## **Problem 1: Lighting**

Okay, as if you didn't know *that* was going to be first on the list. Lighting lighting lighting. Photography is all about lighting. Did I stress it enough? If your photo is too dark or too light or both (you can have both in the same photo!) you are already selling your product short. It happens all the time and especially with an amateur on an automatic camera.



## **Solution: Know Your Subject**

In order to control the lighting in a photograph, you must first be aware of your subject. What is it that you are photographing? An object? A person? A person and object? Sweets? A landscape? Whatever it is that you are photographing is what you should expose for. An auto camera is not always going to know what your subject is and exposes for the majority. If you are using an automatic camera, new tech-

nology (such as the facial recognition software) can help you pinpoint your subject. The important thing with lighting is that you should go into the shoot knowing that your exposure *will* need to be adjusted, especially if you are using an automatic camera. So take the time that is needed to make sure your subject is lighted properly.



*"There is nothing worse than a brilliant image of a fuzzy concept."*

-Ansel Adams

## **Problem 2: Focus**

Yep and there it is. This seems kind of obvious. But if you are trying to sell an object, wouldn't you rather show your customers an "in focus" image of your product? This happens more than you might realize.

## **Solution: Know What Needs To Be Clear**

So you're selling a book. You are probably going to want the title to be in focus rather than the entire bookshelf. For one, it's too busy and distracting. Your viewer will be looking at all the books and not just the one title. On the other hand, if you are selling a bookshelf with multiple titles, you are going to probably focus more on the overall bookshelf than you are on that one book title.







*"Photography is a kind of virtual reality, and it helps if you can create the illusion of being in an interesting world."*

-Steven Pinker

## Problem 3: Your Background

You setup should depend on what you are selling.. Be careful with photoshop. What doesn't work is a photo taken in bad lighting and low quality and simply photoshopped on to a white background. This type of work is simply not attractive visually. Remember, when photographing your product, your main goal is to enhance the product's worth to the customer not the background the photograph is on. The background should package your item. It should draw the eye to the product rather than away from the product. And most importantly, the background should not come across as better

quality than the image. This makes for a fake looking reality.



*Note the difference between backgrounds. In the first image the background is busy and distracting from the subject, while in the second it is clean concise and interesting because we are able to focus more on the subject.*

## Solution: Control Your Environment

Photo studios come in all shapes and sizes. If you are photographing food, toys, action figures, or anything else small, consider putting together a mini studio. You do not have to spend a ton of money. A piece of poster board works great with a soft box flash. Try bouncing the flash off the ceiling. If you do not have a flash, you can set up some lighting using clamp lamps. Just remember that you want to use natural color light bulbs and a softener of some type. Even better, if weather permits, you can take your studio outside and use all natural light. If you decide to do this and the sun is bright and creating hard shadows, simply

put a roof on your studio to create a balanced atmosphere for your product. You can also use a window. This works fantastic. If you do decide to use a window, place your studio to the side rather than directly in front. This creates a more even light for your product. If you do not have enough light to cover your product, or one side is darker than the other, try using a reflector.

**Tip:** Use a green screen to create fantastical backgrounds (tune in later for more on this topic)



*"To look at a thing is very different from seeing it."*  
- Oscar Wilde

## Problem 4: Quality

This is a mistake almost all beginners face. The more you crop your image, the smaller your file, the less quality, the worse the image looks the bigger it gets. This is especially true in print. Consider this, the larger your file, the more data the image holds. This includes colors, pixels, sharpness, etc. Also, another problem (and this one is more common) that many people are not aware that every time they save their image file, quality is lost.



*In the two photos above, notice the difference in quality. The second image is much more visually appealing than the first and as a result the viewer is able to connect emotionally with the subject.*

## Solution: Be Mindful With Camera Settings Edits

Set your camera to the highest quality and be mindful of your crops. If you have the option of taking your photo in RAW, do it! Try saving your completed image as TIF. A TIF file can be saved multiple times without losing quality whereas a JPEG will continue to deteriorate over time.

You will be amazed at how much better your photos are simply by being mindful of these four problems. Most importantly, is to put in the time and effort that your product deserves. Remember, images are powerful. They can take away an audience as fast as they can capture one. Make sure you're pushing your audience in the right direction!

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