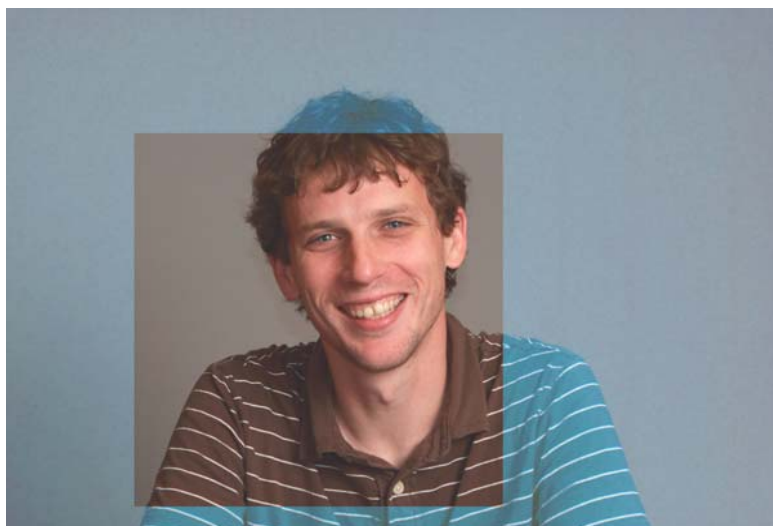


The Profile Photo: A Technique For Linked-In



Figure 1 - Brendan's best image after a traditional portrait crop.

Figure 2 – Close-cropping will yield a more intimate image.



OVERVIEW

This technique yields a stylized “thumbnail” photo designed for Linked-In use. It provides a greyscale portrait that is close-cropped so the image will be useful at an extremely small size, and focuses on the subjects eyes and smile. Converting to greyscale allows facial blemishes and discordant colors in clothing or backgrounds to be fixed or subjugated with simple digital processing. Further, this format provides a consistent “managed” appearance when different images are displayed together in a large roster.

SHOOTING

The best portraits are of natural smiles, so if you don't hire a pro, at least organize the shoot with a helper who can help you relax and have fun with it. Use the best camera/lens you have or can borrow. A DSLR rig rents for less than \$30/day at your local pro shop. Find a blank background where you can shoot without flash (unless you know how to use an off-camera light-modifier). Do not use an integral or pop-up flash. The backdrop can be any smooth or lightly textured off-white surface. Don't use a black or white background. If outdoors, make sure you are in shade, not sun. The subject should not have to squint to face the camera. Camera settings should be at the “best” resolution settings, yielding a JPG in the 3-10MB range (ignore this if you shoot RAW files). Shoot about five images and select your favorite to edit. Figure 1 was shot indoors with a single external Canon 580EX speedlite in an umbrella softbox at upper right. A collapsible grey background was set 5' behind. Camera: Canon 7D with 2.8L 24-70 lens.

PREPARE FOR PROCESSING

The better version of these files will be saved for other uses before being dumbed-down for web display. If you are not comfortable processing images, send the digital file to the MetaPower Marketing Group for processing (gregg@metapower.com), or give this guide and the file to someone who can do it for you.

STEP 1 – PROCESS HI-RES PARENTS

Open the file with editing software and adjust anything that you think improves the image such as exposure, contrast, or color balance. In this step an experienced PhotoShopper would edit the image for correcting blemishes, etc. Do not apply “sharpening” at this stage, which will be done later. Then crop the image for a “formal portrait” layout (Figure 1), setting the size/resolution to

9" x 12" landscape at 300dpi. Then "Save As" to a JPG file at the highest quality setting and name the file Color-9x12-P. This is your best full color portrait (P is for Parent) which can be printed at any size, or down-sampled for sending around the web. Size it to 8"x10" at 200dpi if the file size is unwieldy. Crop it to 1920w x 1080h (pixels) if the image is destined for an HD video segment.

STEP 2 – PROCESS FOR GREYSCALE

Save the above image to a new file: Grey-9x12-P, and then convert it from RGB (color) to Greyscale. In PhotoShop this is Image/Mode/Greyscale. Next, adjust the image again "to taste" using Image/Adjust/Brightness & Contrast and/or Levels. You want some intense blacks in the image, and some whites should be pristine, without image blowouts in lighter areas. Simply increasing Contrast will usually do the trick. When happy with the adjustments, sharpen the photo from the Filter/Sharpen menu. Then to warm the image, pick Image/Mode and select RGB again. Go to Image/Adjust/Photo Filter and select "Warming Filter (85)" at 25% Density. Save the file for a new parent greyscale version.

STEP 3 – CROP FOR AN INTIMATE STYLE

Save image to new file: LinkedIn-6x6-P. Refer to Figure 2 and determine how to fit the subject in a similar eccentric layout. This is typically with subject facing or leaning towards the open-space. You want to cut off some traditional image, such as the subject's hair, blouse, or forehead and get in very close. Crop the image to 6"x6" at 300dpi. Figure 3 shows how "intimate" it will feel. Now Save the file as the printable parent of this close-cropped version.

STEP 4 – PROCESS FOR LINKED-IN UPLOAD

Next compress the image for the web. In PhotoShop go to File/Save For Web & Devices. Select a JPG compression with a Very High or Maximum quality setting, and Save to new file: LinkedIn-6x6-W (for web). Adjust compression settings if needed so the image is less than 3MB. These settings yield large "flyouts" from the Linked In Profile which we think is an advantage. Upload file to your Profile page. The image has been reduced to 72dpi. Further editing will likely cause it to pixelate and look blurred. For changes, retrieve and edit one of the parent images from an earlier step.



Figure 3 – The final Profile picture. Compare it to Figure 1 which is the same width. (Brendan Mortimer, Software Developer, MetaPower, photo: Greg Gibson)