

8 Insider Tips

# INSIDER'S GUIDE TO FINDING A QUALIFIED ARCHITECTURAL PHOTOGRAPHER

By Chad Chenier Photography



## Overview

### STRATEGY COMES FIRST!

- Lack of strategy is a cost
- Tips to avoid mistakes
- How to find the best option

In a recent survey 47% of marketers stated that their biggest obstacle to online marketing was a lack of strategy. Unfortunately, that statement is also true with nearly every decision that is made for a company. I want to help you avoid those common pitfalls when it comes to finding your commercial architectural photographer.

In order to be successful, I will provide you with insider tips, sound advice, and lessons learned to develop a strategy to find the perfect visual service provider.

The information provided will allow you to have an internal directive to avoid mistakes and focus on how to find the best option. If you don't then your lack of strategy will cost your companies business image for many years to come. You only get one shot to make a lasting first impression! Knowing what to look for and questions to ask will help you to avoid making a mistake.

## Insider Tip 1:

### FIND A REGIONAL VISUAL REPRESENTATIVE

- Find a Regional Option
- No Jack-Of-All-Trades
- Great Architectural photographers Travel
- Consistency is best

Finding your visual representative should be about more than finding a “good” photographer. An architectural photographer should work with you to help achieve the highest levels of promotional potential through consistency of project imagery and be able to find solutions to any challenging exteriors/interiors presented.

Only an experienced commercial architectural photographer will be able to handle all the lighting conditions inside of a structure. A wedding and portrait photographer is just not going to be able to photograph a commercial space correctly because the lighting requirements are too challenging and uniquely different from photographing people. As an architect or general contractor, you have spent a couple of years going over every detail of a multi-million dollar project so why would you find a jack-of-all-trades photographer as your final decision? That makes no sense!

All of the best architectural photographers travel for work. Some provide greater reach and coverage options than others do. If they don't travel then you are more likely to be disappointed with the results of the project.

As a marketing director told me once, “I’m sick of constantly searching for a new photographer who lives near each project. I would rather find someone who is willing to travel regionally so that I have the image consistency that my projects deserve.”

## Insider Tip 2:

### WINNING AWARDS IS BIG!

- What awards have they helped win?
- Can you see those awards listed on their website?

One of the biggest reason to hire a professional architectural photographer is to help put your project in the top position to win a design or construction award. Everyone wants to be recognized for a job well done! The question to ask is, has your current or future photographer won significant awards for other clients in the past. When you begin looking at your potential candidates websites, do they spell out their award achievements? If they don't have any big wins to share then chances are that you won't be the first.

A list of good signs will include the following:

AIA Design Awards, Engineering News Record Awards, or ABC Associated Builder National and Regional Awards

These awards are crucial to promoting your firm and are impressive for landing future projects. Everyone wants to work with a winner. Work with a photographer who will help you do that!

## Insider Tip 3: TESTIMONIALS

- Look for industry testimonials about past work
- Professional & Easy to work with are keys
- Timely & Quality work is a must
- Significant project exposure
- Example Testimonial to look for

Does your list of candidates have testimonials from your specific industry available on their website? You would want to hear from marketing managers that specifically address their experience on a similar project. How smoothly did the photographer handle the process? Did issues come up and if so more how they were dealt with on-site? How easy was it to work with the photographer? How detailed is the quality of the service that was provided throughout the process? Did the images arrive in a timely manner and what was the quality of the imagery provided? And finally, any significant exposure created by the work that lead to national and/or regional awards.

We have testimonials from Architects, General Contractors, Product Manufacturers, and Interior Designers on our website. You will want to see examples like this one.

"BE&K Building Group turned to Chad because we needed an experienced, top quality commercial photographer to serve our regional needs in Texas and Louisiana. Identifying a photographer that possesses the innate attention to detail required by our business can be challenging. Chad's first assignment for us was on the Bell Helicopter - Aircraft Assembly Facility in Lafayette, Louisiana. We quickly identified that we would want to continue to resource. Chad is extremely easy to work with and has a customer service first mindset that makes collaboration easy."

## Insider Tip 4:

### WHAT GROUP ORGANIZATIONS SHOULD MY PHOTOGRAPHER PARTNER WITH?

- SMPS
- PSMJ
- ENR
- ASMP - Photo Checklist

Does your architectural photographer involve themselves with educational opportunities with industry organizations built to help the marketing of the construction industry. Organizations that your photographer should partner with will include the following:

SMPS - Society for Marketing Professional Services

PSMJ - Professional Service Management Journal

ENR - Engineering News Record

ASMP - American Society of Media Photographers

We are heavily involved with all of these organizations that could help promote your projects and your work. Make sure your photography service provider isn't a stranger to them. If they are working with other partners in your industry then that is a great sign.

We recently promoted the PSMJ "Thrive" Conference and SMPS Southern Conference which showcases industry development and fosters marketing skills needed for the construction industry.

ASMP Provides and excellent Checklist!

You will want to review this link as your project is coming to a close.

<https://www.asmp.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/>

## Insider Tip 5:

### MAKING YOUR JOB EASY

- Providing a contact sheet
- Removing distractions
- Exporting with color profiles
- Checking back

Your architectural photographer should provide you with a contact sheet of images for you to review. Imagery should capture scenes needed and should be refined so that the best angle of the space is represented appropriately and with visual impact.

Does your photographer remove unwanted distractions from the images? Distracting signs, outlets, various punch list items, smooth worn parking lots, or anything that distracts from the visual impact of image should be removed.

Your architectural photographer should know how to match a custom profile for each lighting condition at each jobsite. Does your photographer know how to do that? If they do then the colors of the walls and fabrics should match perfectly.

When you receive the images are they sent to you in the color profiles that you need. You should receive tiff files and sized options in srgb color space so that you can directly import those images into your website or other social media outlets quickly.

Does your photographer check back to make sure that all images are the way you want and make sure that you have received them? Do they care about making your job easy? They should!

## Insider Tip 6: EQUIPMENT CHECK

- Camera file sizes
- Tilt shift lenses
- Lighting gear
- Certificates of Insurance

Architectural photographers should have top level gear that include a camera body that can return 8K images. This will leave every option available when it comes to outlets for your imagery. Size matters!

Tilt shift lenses provide the ability to capture images with very little distortion and help include more of the scene. Does your architectural photographer have these lenses available? Ask what lenses they shoot with.

Lighting gear should include a power strobe pack to fill spaces and require a working knowledge of how to composite multiple images. Does your photographer have a battery pack operated strobe kit? Lighting exteriors without having to find a power source is a big key. A battery pack will also eliminating cords on the ground so you can maintain safety within the scene if people are occupying the space. Safety should be a concern to you and your photographer!

Does your photographer have a Certificate's of Insurance as a service provider? A professional photographer must have insurance and if they don't then they shouldn't be considered as an option. Definitely check to see if they do!

## Insider Tip 7:

### WHEN TO SHOOT A SPACE

- Before employee's move in
- On the weekend if possible
- Less foot traffic is helpful
- Multiple projects on Sunday

The best time to shoot a commercial space is before employee's begin to bring in personal items. Personal items clutter the space and remove the simplicity of your architectural design. Your photographer should be able to photograph the space in this goldilocks zone of time. It will make all the difference in the images you receive. Your photographer will have to be able to remove some punch list items that might be unfinished but it shouldn't be an issue for your provider.

Sometimes a commercial space will be closed on the weekends and you can highlight it without being a distraction to your client and their workforce. Is this option available? If so then your photographer should accommodate that request.

Other options will be on a date when foot traffic is more minimal. This will be different for every business job type. You should examine those dates of interest and plan accordingly.

If you are shooting multiple commercial projects, it can be very helpful to shoot them in a major city on a Sunday because traffic will be reduced on the roadways and make it easier to hit multiple locations.

## **Insider Tip 8:**

### **OTHER OPTIONS TO CONSIDER**

- **Other promotional possibilities**
- **Magazine photography experience is a big advantage**
- **Video footage and aerials are nice options to have when needed**

Other service offerings that should be considered would be a photographers history with magazines and other promotional outlets. Do they know how to get your projects in front of organizations that can help you to achieve additional exposure? Have they worked with magazines in the past? Can they shoot your project to maximize the ability to showcase it prominently within a magazine layout.

I personally started off as a chief photographer for a state wide architectural and interior design magazine for 7 years before launching my commercial freelance career. That experience has helped me and my clients. That skillset should be looked for with your next architectural candidate.

Video capture is also another great service that an experienced architectural photographer can provide. More video will be used in the future to accentuate your work in the future. Your architectural photographer should have experience with aerial images and drone video capture. Can your provider showcase examples of this type of work? Can they find a helicopter pilot for flyovers when confronted with no-fly zones?

We hope that the information provided will help you with a strategy to find the best architectural candidate to promote your firm.