

# THE LONDON EVENT PHOTOGRAPHY COMPANY

## THE EVENT PHOTOGRAPHER BRIEFING GUIDE

### BEFORE THE EVENT

1) Venue, date and expected time of arrival for photographer.

The basic details required for a quotation might also include an expected finish time. If you really want to be efficient while briefing it's an idea to also advise on whether the venue is easiest reached by public transport or if your supplier is definitely intending to attend using their own transport what parking facilities are available either onsite or nearby.

It's worth noting at this point if you are passing this information for quotation purposes you need to know if travel or parking costs are being charged extra or included in their pricing.

2) Inform photographer on the dress code

At many events the client likes to have a distinct difference between serving staff and guests. This is very standard for catering staff to be uniformed or at least in similar coloured clothing, most often black trousers or skirt with either black top or white shirt or blouse.

With photographers or video crews there is not this tradition. Although many will attend a function or conference respectably dressed in suit and tie it is by no means a definite. Only the other day I attended a conference where a second photographer considered jeans acceptable attire.

The reason for this casual dress is often more related to the photographer's normal workload than bad manners. One might be arriving straight from a press job or even an industrial location shoot where a suit might not have been appropriate attire.

In the case of Video crews the general state of dress can often be even more shambolic as often they regard themselves outside of the event and therefore not regulated by it's rules. This is particularly true of television crews.

So if you want to be sure of the dress code of your visual artists be sure to specify, for example either request formal black tie, (which in the UK means bow tie not a black tie as worn at a funeral) lounge suit or a minimum of trousers and shirt of a specified colour stating that those not suitably dressed will not be allowed in.

3) Supply photographer with attending VIP names and pictures where possible.

Everyone knows the major people in your industry right? Wrong, many clients spend so long in one industry they expect others to not only know all their major players but also their abbreviations and industry shorthand.

Government ministers, celebrities and leaders of your clients trade or industry that maybe the centre of your world maybe completely off the radar of a photographer who might be of either an older or younger generation than your own or your clients.

If you can provide a sheet of images of the main players at an event it means you can safely leave your photographer to get on with shooting the VIPs and making sure they have a good balance of important shots for your client without having to be continually on their elbow pointing out who's who. If this list can also include some of your preferred shots, e.g. CEO of client talking to guest speaker Minister x then all the better. Although these might be the preferred shots for reportage photography style shooting without telling your photographer how can you expect him to be on the lookout for this possibility?

Bear in mind this is not the list of posed shots you might be requiring but a list of possible lucky relaxed group shots that can make an excellent informal record of an event.

#### 4) Explained Requirement and Time Schedule

Clients underestimate the time photographers spend in post-production after an event. Quite often I will spend as long in front of my computer improving images as I spent at the whole event. There is so much that can be done in post production from simply cropping an image to remove an unsightly background feature not noticed while concentrating on the main subject or correcting minor camera rotations so that lines of vertical features are vertical to major rehashing of the contrast, shading and colour balance of an image.

Your client is going to have some schedule of image requirement after an event, it might be a basic need to get images on the company web site by the PR department or it could be particular images required to accompany a press release that is scheduled to appear in the national papers the next day.

Make sure you as event organiser are aware of these requirements way before the event and that you have not only briefed your photographer on those requirements but also are aware of any extra charges that might be incurred to cover these requirements.

There is nothing worse than having to go back to a client after an event and request or invoice costs that they had not expected, it makes your professionalism and that of your suppliers look less. If you want your supplier to provide something extra in either a service or product then not only expect to pay for it but be certain of what those extras maybe so you can include them in your primary costings to your client.

#### 5) Agree Finish Time and Confirm Price

I've covered the basics of total time required and some of the details needed to be included in a confirmed price but there is also the thorny issue of what you are actually buying. Many clients request purchase of the copyright of images. What most actually mean is they want to be able to use the images for any business or social requirements without incurring extra charges.

It's important to understand the photographer is the first copyright owner of any work he produces. If he sells his copyright to any images he no longer has the right to use those images to promote his own skills – not something any photographer will ever want to do.

Luckily there is a sensible middle ground that is suitable to all. If you request an unlimited full licence to use the images as standard then you can let your client use the images as you wish as well as using them yourself to promote your own business. But at the same time the photographer still has the copyright to use the images, as he requires for his own promotion.

## **THE DETAILED BRIEFING**

### **1) Are Room Shots Required Pre Event?**

Getting down to the detailed requirements if particular areas or features of the event space need to be recorded before guests arrive either for your folio or future advertising then the photographer needs to know prior to the event, not when he arrives.

Some of this sort of work can require time not only to capture the best angle but also to get the event space clear of event staff setting up their own jobs for example room layouts of a dining area can normally only be photographed when guests are already at a reception as final table preparation like candle lighting or laying out starters is done at the very last minute.

If you are requesting a photographer to be in one room doing table layouts be aware that he can't also be in a reception doing reportage or group shots at the same time.

### **2) Are Clients Branding Images Required Pre Event?**

The normal answer to this is yes, but it's still worth discussing with the photographer how important this aspect is, do you require branding in as much of the reportage work as possible? Do you require separate branding element shots? Do you require branding in the back of posed group shots?

### **3) Supply Detailed Timing of the Event**

The schedule of events is the most important document you can supply your photographer with once you have got them to the right venue at the right time! If a VIP is being greeted on arrival or the CEO is making a presentation to MD pre dinner at the drinks reception the last thing you want is your photographer in the other room photographing the branding and missing the action.

This sort of detailed schedule becomes even more important at conferences where the delegates go into breakout meetings.

I had a conference recently that mentioned that one group session of a breakout meeting had an Internet linked interview with an important guest speaker. The only problem was it wasn't known when during the 45 minute session this would take place and trying to cover three other break out sessions going on at the same time resulted in a missed presentation.

So be aware that if this sort of thing is a priority you need to make sure the photographer is aware of what his priorities are. Just generalising with “cover all breakout sessions isn’t always enough.

#### 4) Discuss Or Supply Details Of Images Required At Each Point.

For example, “3 guest speakers after main course to be shot with company branding, head and shoulders and preferably landscape format to fit our web site.”

Or “Entertainment after coffee is served will enter from door left and perform around tables before processing to stage for main act.”

These two examples not only tell your photographer who, but also where, when and how. It is important to give this amount of detail on only the most important shots of the night, I would suggest 5 maximum. If you tried to give this much detail on every shot you are at risk of the photographer having a briefing sheet too long to read, digest and understand. Too long a brief can be as problematical as too short. Hopefully a photographer either familiar with the venue or your client will require less detailed briefing on one element or another depending on their skills and experience.

## GENERAL NOTES ON STYLE

### 1) A Photographer Will Always Want To Know the Style Requirements of Their Client

This could be reportage – or fly on the wall or organised group shots required or a combination of both. Again as above a photographer you already know you will be using because you either know or like his style of images requires less direction in this area and a photographer recommended by the venue should have illustrated his style in samples prior to being booked.

### 2) If Group Shots Are Required Supply List of Names

If possible list names or portraits of those required for group shots so the photographer can gather the groups himself if need be, and list at what time or part of the event you would like these attempted.

Sometimes the best laid plans of event organisers do go astray, CEO’s Ministers and VIP’s often turn up late or don’t want to stick to the plan previously agreed. If this is the case and you have supplied the photographer with full details of what he needs to get he can attempt the shot at a more suitable time.

A good photographer can charm and encourage important people in a company far easier than in house staff sometimes; this is because they aren’t talking to their boss with all the baggage that can sometimes entail.

### 3) If You Have Any Pet Hates, Let The Photographer Know! Slanting images, images with people’s back to camera, shallow depth of field images. If these are your pet hates or anything else for that matter let the photographer know! Your pet hate might be someone else’s preferred image style!