

Aloha from Jeff Nicholson,

After almost 20 years of photographing actors and models I have noticed a few consistent things that always seem to make a difference and make certain clients shots – extra special.

You are with a great agency that will work very hard for you *if* they are given the right materials to market you with. That is where I come in. I have been shooting for TU for a long time and I have seen over and over how much more work a client with great materials gets over someone with poor or very dated images.

My goal is to collaborate with you to create a very contemporary and exciting visual presentation that gets you working. Here is what I need from you.

1. Honesty – wow - this can be tough because we all wish we could change certain aspects of ourselves – but the camera does not lie (much) and in some cases can even accentuate our physical flaws. I know all the bells and whistles and angles and lighting to make you look taller/thinner/tanner (is that even a word?) but the fact is that at some point you have to walk in a room and book a job in person.
2. Be realistic about the “type” of work you are really right for. Don’t assume that being a model is all about being stick thin and super tall – sure, there certainly is work for that “type” – but not as much as you think and certainly not as much in this market. Look at the television and print ad’s that are shot locally – what do you see? More “real” people types than you might think. Even national commercials now feature non perfect Mom’s, chubby/balding Dad’s, the Wholesome Girl and Boy Next Door, Professional White Collar Business and Casual Business, Goofy Characters, Athletic and sure – the occasional super Hunk and hot Babe.

I shoot in LA for LA Models who handle many of the most physically beautiful people on the planet. On their walls are rows and rows of zed cards of instantly recognizable faces from the biggest magazine covers. When I inquired who was the top earning talent with them – they walked me back to a headshot of a very average looking guy with black glasses who they informed me had generated more income than all of their hunky types – combined. Perhaps you’ve seen him in a cellular phone ad every 3 minutes. CAN YOU HEAR ME NOW!!

3. An exercise that might help you determine where your “packaging” might get you work is to do the following. Go to a newsstand or imagine being in front of a newsstand and ask yourself – If I had a famous face – what magazine would I most likely be on the cover of? The demographic or readership of that particular magazine will tell you a lot about what type of jobs you should be booking based only on your looks. For example – a

talent who belongs on the cover of MUSCLE and FITNESS should not be vying for a spot on GOLF DIGEST. A blue collar outdoorsy type might be very comfortable on FIELD AND STREAM but probably has no business on WINE CONNISEUR MONTHLY. A COSMO cover is consistently different from a SELF cover which is consistently different from a PLAYBOY which is a very different cover from LADIES HOME JOURNAL. Are you closer to a TEEN cover or LONGEVITY magazine?

Just when you thought high school was behind you – I'm asking you to decide once again what you are – because that is how advertisers use you to reach their audience. So...are you a Jock or a Jerk – a Freak or a Geek?

4. Once you have figured out your 'type' – don't think that I am suggesting that you do not have range –but what is your strength and make sure that is exploited and immediately obvious in your pictures. If you are doing a zed card to market yourself for print work – we are going to need to create 3-4 completely different looks for you. The more range you have – the more jobs you can be submitted for. The challenge is – I don't want these shots to look like they were all done at the same shoot and hopefully not all look like the same photographer shot them.

I'm pretty good at this – but I need your help. Here's how. I need you to help me 'art direct' your own session by bringing props and wardrobe that help create the illusion that your shots are actual jobs. When you book a job – you just get to show up and someone else worries about your clothes and props. I need you to do both. For example – if you are an avid golfer – I need you to bring the whole deal. If you don't have a hobby – invent one or borrow a friends. If necessary, this also means bringing a dog/kid/mistress to help give us a situation to photograph. Trust me – no one really needs to see a picture of you standing in a pair of khacky pants staring at my camera. It's just not that interesting anymore. We are an image driven society and advertisers are bombarded with talent wanting their job – make your images special.

HERE'S WHAT YOU SHOULD HAVE WITH YOU – BASED ON TYPE.

MOMS – I need a comfortable texture around your face that looks like "Saturday". This is what you wear to meet the best friend at Starbucks. This is our gap ad – it must be huggable and a color that brings out your eyes. It should not be sleeveless unless you have super skinny arms – but it should also not hang on you. I'm not a huge fan of white if you are pale. I love soft earthy tones that will not upstage your eyes.

APPROPRIATE PROPS – A kid(s), A hubby, A dog, gardening stuff or a hunky gardner, hats, sunglasses, a great book, cup of coffee.

PROFESSIONAL WOMAN - I need at least a crisp collar shirt or shirt sweater combo. The right blazer can also be great but the work place has become more casual and so lean more toward a BANANA REPUBLIC business casual ensemble. A skirt if you have great legs/ankles.

APPROPRIATE PROPS - I love glasses, a nice car, brief case, lap-top, blackberry etc.

DAD'S – I need to start with the “Saturday” dad. The one that mows the lawn, changes his own oil in the family truckster, coaches the kids teams and grills the best burger you have ever had. Many times I like to shoot this first look unshaven – totally up to you – but it seems to work very well to be a bit scruffy.

APPROPRIATE PROPS – Fishing pole, tackle box, barbeque bib and utensils, a restored car, coaches whistle, hats, son/daughter, dog, coffee, get creative – bring one of those worlds greatest dad shirts.

PROFESSIONAL MAN – I need a home office kind of a guy all the way up to the super republican (if you're the right age) to do the full on suit guy.

PROPS – Architect plans, Cell phone, mobil car office, Hard Hat Construction site, laptop, coffee mug, glasses etc.

HOT CHICK/SEXY MAMA/BEER BABE – Obviously – wardrobe – or the lack thereof is critical here. My wife always tells me that “less is more” but I still think I believe that more...is ahh...well...more. Check with your agent to see if they want a swimsuit or lingerie shot? It's a new world – there are bra ad's next to the sports section in every Sunday paper and I'm not sure if it is just my house – but I get like four Victoria's Secrets a week! If you've got a killer bod – go for it. If nothing else - you can prove to your grandkids someday that grammy was a full blown hottie. However – if this aint yo thang – let someone else have it and celebrate what else you bring to the table. Don't force it or be uncomfortable – that's what nightclubs are for.

JOCK/ATHLETIC – You've worked hard for that tone so let's shoot it. Obviously, bring clothes that really compliment your physique. If you excel in a certain sport and it's possible to shoot it – bring it. Sometimes just the right stretch – with the right towel or bottle water and no one will know that it's 30 degrees and you are freezing your @%! off. Guys – feel free to bring a dumbbell to get your pump going – or at least knock off some push ups to get the blood flowing. I love action shots as well so if you run –jump and dance – be prepared to ahh...well..run – jump and dance.

