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HOW TO:  
***PLAN A PHOTOSHOOT***



# HOW TO PLAN A PHOTO SHOOT

It's no news that visual marketing campaigns are more likely to be shared and get clicks when compared to those containing only text. Now, more than ever, it's important that your imagery be eye-catching and scroll-stopping. So how do you build your asset library?

- You can browse the **VTC image library** for assets to begin implementing immediately.
- You can license photography. **Learn how here.**
- You can also produce your own photography.

Producing your own photo shoot can be a lot of work, but below, we break down our planning process while giving recommendations and tips on how to maximize your budget, stay organized, consider the unconsidered, and answer some frequently asked questions.

**STEP 1: WHAT ARE YOUR CREATIVE NEEDS?**

- Review your marketing plan and consider:
  - » What locations, events, or subject matters are your priority?
  - » What type of assets would you need to capture?  
**Photos? Video? Sound?**
  - » Where will you use these assets?  
**Website? Social media? Print publications? All of the above?**
  - » Consider aspect ratio and cropping:
    - Different social media channels have different aspect ratios.
    - Vertical web banners have a very different crop from horizontal banners.
    - Do you need a vertical photo for the cover of a magazine or a horizontal photo for a two page magazine spread?
  - » Do you have a specific project in mind or are your needs more generic?  
**Example:** Do you have a general need for wine and food images for your locality or are you producing a video series where you will need to interview winemakers?
- Find images and/or videos that serve as inspiration for the type of imagery you would like to capture.



**STEP 2: DETERMINE YOUR BUDGET**

- Considering needs determined in step one, how much can you dedicate towards producing a photo shoot? This can sometimes be a struggle (even for us). Here are some ways you can leverage costs:
  - » Collaborate and share costs with another locality, business, or event. This could also mean sharing creative control (and the resulting assets, of course).
  - » Apply for a **VTC Marketing Leverage Program (MLP) grant**. VTC accepts applications twice a year, and awards can be applied toward the production of photo and video assets.
- Keep in mind that you may want to allocate a portion of your budget for marketing the creative assets produced by this photo shoot.
- Here are some additional ways you can keep costs low:
  - » Bring your own talent/models.
    - Rather than hiring from a talent or modeling agency, which can get expensive, use people you know. They may still ask for a fee, but it will be significantly less.
    - Ask talent/models to bring several wardrobe options from home.
    - Ask talent/models to do their own make-up (a natural look is ideal) and hair.
  - » Rather than hiring a stylist, have someone from your staff on hand to assist with wardrobe selection and to help with hair before and during the shoot.
  - » Rather than asking the photographer to cater lunch for the crew and models, make plans to provide lunch yourself.

**MAXIMIZING YOUR BUDGET CHEAT SHEET**

We mentioned a few ways to maximize your budget above, but we break them down here for your convenience:

- Collaborate and share costs with another partner.
- Apply for a VTC Marketing Leverage Program (MLP) grant.
- Use language in your terms and conditions that gives you:
  - » Unlimited usage rights in perpetuity.
  - » The ability to transfer usage rights to partners (like VTC).
  - » See section 3 in VTC's **Terms & Conditions** for an example of such language.

### STEP 3: DEVELOP A CREATIVE BRIEF

A creative brief is the document you give a photographer when asking him/her to estimate a photo shoot for you. You can see an example of the creative brief we use [here](#). Feel free to adapt our document for your own use, including the terms & conditions.

If you would like to create your own Creative Brief, that document should comprise:

- **A SHOT LIST, TO INCLUDE:**

- » **Time of day**

- Do you need to shoot at golden hour? Golden hour is the first and last hour of daylight and often offers the nicest lighting.
- Do you need to capture a starscape at night?
- If you are shooting indoors, consider conducting your photo shoot during a less trafficked day of the week or time of day to avoid crowds.

- » **Types of assets needed**

- Do you need photos, video, audio, or all three?

- » **Perspective**

- Do you need drone photography?
- Would you like things to be captured from a POV (point of view) perspective?
- Do you need a wide shot or close-up of something specific?
- Ask for verticals and horizontals of the same scene.

- » **Specify placement needs.**

- Example: If you need an extreme crop for a vertical or horizontal web banner, communicate this. It helps to give the photographer specific information like this so he/she can capture something that can be appropriately applied.

- » **Create a mood board.**

- Pull example images you like that help to communicate the style and subject matter to the photographer. Include these examples at the end of the creative brief.

- **LOCATION INFORMATION**

- » Reach out to the location beforehand and get permission for your photo shoot. Share the creative brief once it's finalized, so they are in the loop and know what to expect.
- » Include a point of contact on the brief so the photographer can reach out with any questions as he/she creates an estimate for the shoot.

- **MODEL INFORMATION (IF ANY ARE NEEDED)**

- » Consider age, gender, ethnicity
- » When creating LGBT marketing assets, use models that identify as LGBT.
- » Do you need a group of friends? A couple? A family?
- » Do you need any animal models?

- **WARDROBE INFORMATION (IF NEEDED)**

- » Think about seasonal clothing. Do you want your scene to look like, spring, summer, fall, or winter? Or do you need options for more than one?
- » Remember to request that you'd like models to bring their own wardrobe options here if that's what you want. Include all necessary information the models might need when making selections to bring to the shoot.
- » Stay away from dated styles so your creative has a longer shelf life.
- » Stay away from large logos on clothing.
- » Stick to solids or simple patterns. Big patterns can be distracting. Patterns that are too small or tight (like checkered clothing) can "buzz" on camera.
- » If you are producing an outdoor shoot, think about safety equipment. Things like helmets, life vests, etc.
- » Don't forget to think about shoes or footwear.
- » Pull example images of wardrobe you like to include at the end of the Creative Brief.

- **PROP INFORMATION (IF ANY ARE NEEDED)**

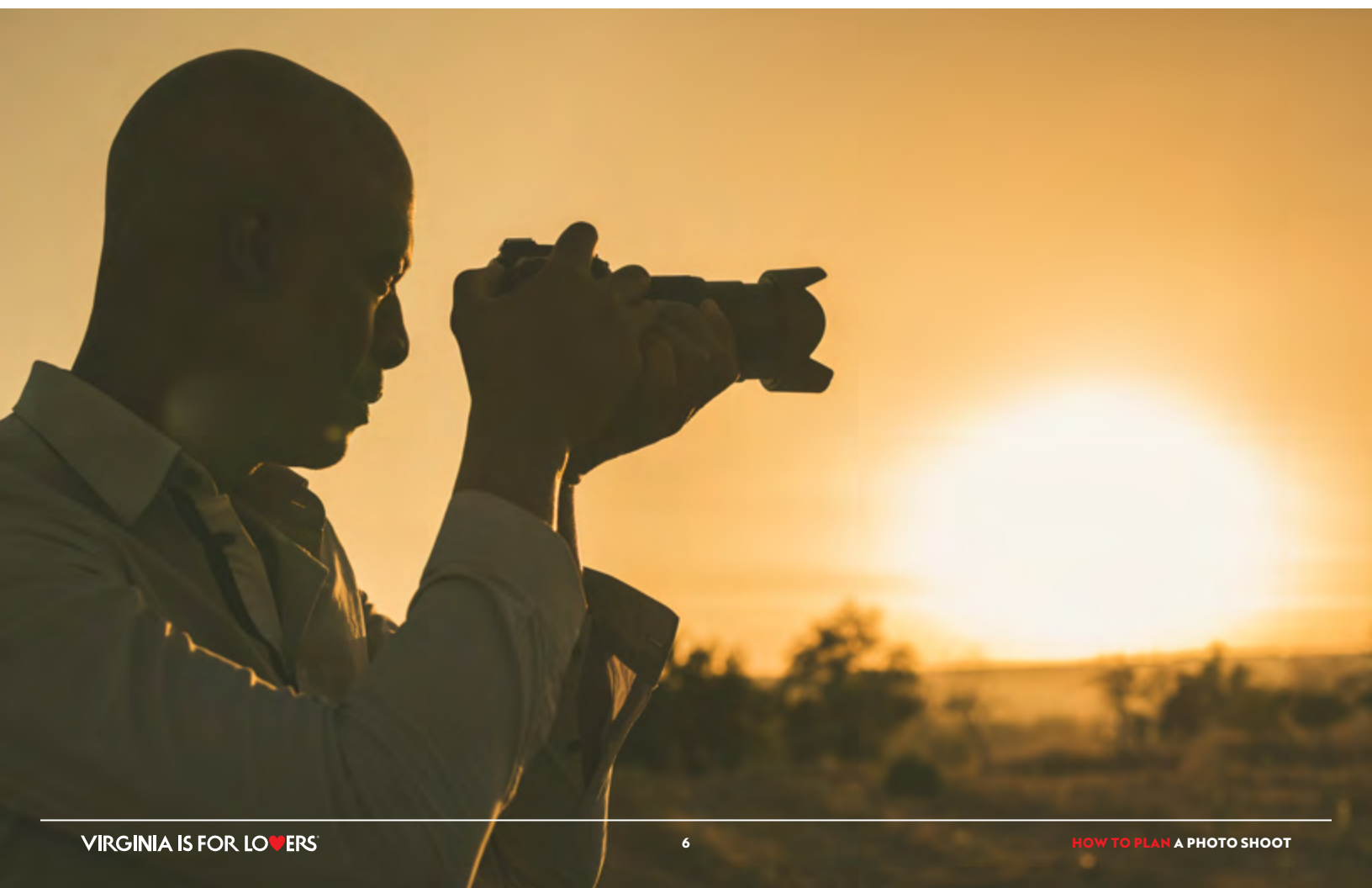
- » Think: food, wine, bicycles, kayaks, a vehicle, etc.
- » Pull example images of prop styles you like to include at the end of the Creative Brief.

**STEP 3: DEVELOP A CREATIVE BRIEF** (cont'd)**• FILE SIZE & QUALITY REQUIREMENTS**

- » Images should be about 8" x 12" at 300 ppi (or larger), JPG or TIFF format.
- » Video clips should be at least 1920 x 1080 (16:9) or larger (4K).

**• DELIVERY DUE DATE AND METHOD OF DELIVERY****• TERMS & CONDITIONS**

- » Ideally, your T's & C's should include unlimited usage rights in perpetuity. This means you are able to use the images across all mediums (print, digital, radio, video, etc.) for all time.
- » We also recommend including language that allows you to transfer usage rights to partners (like VTC).
- » The **terms & conditions** VTC utilizes can be viewed, copied, and applied to your own contracts. These terms have been reviewed and approved by the VA Attorney General's Office, so you can feel secure in adapting and using them for your own projects.
  - Take note of section 3 where VTC details the ability to transfer usage rights to partners, like yourself. This is how we are able to share images freely without worrying about copyright infringement. This is an ideal way to maximize your budget.



**STEP 4: PRODUCTION**

- Find a photographer you'd like to work with.
  - » Review and weigh portfolios from various photographers.
  - » Which would be the best fit for the type of shoot you are producing?
  - » Whose style do you like best?
- Reach out to the photographer with your completed Creative Brief and ask him/her to provide you with an estimate.
  - » If they return with an estimate that is too high for your allocated budget, work with him/her to find ways to reduce costs.
    - Hire friends, family, or locals as talent instead of professional models or actors.
    - Ask the models to bring their own wardrobe (as described above).
    - Bring the necessary props as opposed to asking the photographer to source these (food, bicycles, helmets, kayaks, etc.).
    - Cut a scene from your shot list.
    - If drone photography was included in your shot list, consider removing.
  - » If you are unable to work out an agreeable price, that's ok! Find another photographer who is willing to work within your budget range.
- Work with the location owner/point of contact and photographer to find a date that works for everyone. Always schedule a back-up date in case of inclement weather.
- If models are needed for the shoot, work with the photographer to find the best fit.
  - » Ask for potential models to share current head shots or photos.
  - » If you have multiple options, make your ideal picks, but pick back-ups as well. There could always be scheduling conflicts or life events that pop up down the line, and it's best to be prepared.
  - » If you are asking models to bring their own wardrobe options, make sure to communicate the wardrobe needs for your shoot. Get specific and over-communicate if needed. The last thing you want is to show up on the day of the shoot and find that a model wasn't appropriately prepared.
- Often, the photographer will scout the location ahead of time to familiarize himself/herself with the location and create a plan of action for the day of the shoot.
  - » Feel free to join if you'd like to talk through shot options/setup and give your input. Don't get overly pushy, however. Remember, you are hiring this photographer because you like the work he/she has produced in the past and you should trust their process and vision.
  - » Talk through the shot list, catering, wardrobe, timing, etc.
  - » Ask the photographer to share a production schedule for the day(s) of the shoot.
    - Timing for various scenes, including arrival time
    - Contact information for all parties (photographer, location manager, models, etc.)
    - **Share this schedule with all parties**

**STEP 5: THE DAY OF THE SHOOT**

- Plan to attend the photo shoot.
  - » Show up on time! (if not early)
  - » What to bring:
    - Model release forms. You can see what VTC's model releases look like [here](#).
    - The photo shoot schedule.
    - The Creative Brief (so you can reference the shot list).
    - Bring snacks and/or drinks for the crew and/or models.
  - » Help with wardrobe selection.
  - » Help with prop selection or styling if needed.
  - » Get the models to sign release forms.
    - Anyone under the age of 18 will need a parent or guardian to sign on their behalf.
  - » During the shoot, look for details that may need adjusting.
    - A tag hanging out of a model's shirt.
    - Some trash in the scene.
    - A door that needs closing (or opening).
    - The more eyes that can be on a scene, the better.
  - » Ask the photographer to show you what he/she is capturing along the way and provide feedback.
    - Don't get overly pushy. Remember, you have hired this photographer because you like his/her creative style and eye.
  - » Help keep the shoot on schedule.
- When both you and the photographer are satisfied with the images and/or video captured, you can have the satisfaction of saying, "That's a wrap!"
  - » The photographer will, ideally, be in touch before the asset delivery due date.





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