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The Resolution Resolution mix-up

res•ol•ution [noun]

1. the degree of sharpness of a computer-generated image as measured by the number of dots per linear inch in a hard-copy printout or the number of pixels across and down on a display screen.
2. a formal expression of opinion or intention made

Let's make this easier...

You've hired a print company to build your company's new look. In the process of building the pieces you've been asked to supply some images. Perhaps your designer needs some pictures of your facility. Maybe they need some pictures of your projects to put in a brochure layout. So, you collect all the necessary images and send them off to your designer only to have them tell you, "well, actually we were hoping to get high-res images."

If you're not a graphic designer or professional photographer, then telling the difference can be a very tricky task. The most obvious way to determine the quality of an image is to use some sort of image manipulation software, such as Photoshop. That's what I would do, but how many people really have Photoshop just lying around in their computer software collection? Using Photoshop simply isn't a realistic solution for most people. So here's some Q&A to help you sort it out.

WHAT ABOUT A PICTURE I TOOK MYSELF?

More often than not people take the picture themselves. More often than not the camera was not set on fine or highest quality. This usually is the case because people can get more pictures on their memory card. The sacrifice is the picture can't be printed very large at all before it get pixilated or low-res.

IS IT COOL IF I JUST TAKE A PHOTO WITH MY IPHONE?

No. You or your web designers/printers will not be satisfied with smartphone photos used on your new professional piece. This can be confusing, since many smartphones claim to have high-quality cameras that are comparable to standalone digital cameras. This isn't completely true. Smartphones generally have low-quality lenses and light detectors that produce unprofessional images.

That being said, smartphone cameras are great for taking photos to upload to places like Facebook, your blog, Flickr, etc., because visitors to these channels are not necessarily expecting high-res photos.

WHAT ABOUT IMAGES I'VE TAKEN FROM THE WEB?

Typically this isn't going to work either. There are exceptions, but as a Best Practice, I would avoid using images you have saved directly from the web. Once an image goes up on the web it has usually been optimized to the smallest file size possible for that particular usage, which makes it difficult to reuse the image in a different application.

What's the Resolution?

Set your camera to "fine"/High-Res.

Shoot your picture in a well lit area.

Take the time to review them before you send them along.

-Not everything can be fixed but most things can be adjusted to a satisfactory level.

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