SchoolPhoto **plus**

The magazine of **GotPhoto**

Image Variety Online

How to increase image selection in nursery photography by using the right techniques

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by Gina Beach and Julius Nadolny

Having been in the sales and photography industry for many years, our experience has shown the importance of an image variety in nursery and school photography for achieving a high revenue per head. Our internal analysis of 1440 nursery jobs shown in Figure 1 demonstrates that photographers offering more variety in nurseries see a significantly higher net revenue than those who offer a limited selection. The positive correlation we see is clear. However, in nursery and especially school photography, the obvious time constraints make increasing image variety often seem impossible. This article will explain how to overcome these limitations and allow your company to reap the benefits of an increased variety in an efficient way.

Figure 1: Variety and revenue
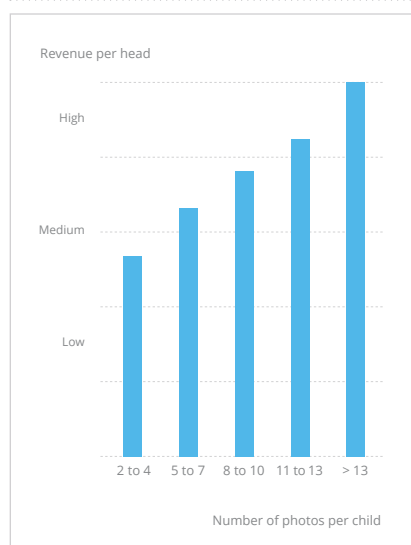
Data based on internal job analysis of 1440 nursery jobs in Germany.

In nursery photography, variety means to increase the number of photos per child. However, time limitations often seem insurmountable. Therefore, achieving variety requires examining both its challenges and the techniques used to overcome them.

How to address variety and its challenges

In volume photography, time is valuable. This makes it essential to optimise every available second, both **on location and during image processing.** It may be difficult to see where increasing variety can fit into this valued time. However, there are several methods available that have proven to heighten variety, with very little time spent doing so.

Best uses of time during shoot

① 10 images, not 10 poses

First we must remind ourselves that a good variety does not necessarily mean multiple poses, but rather images. Remember that even the slightest change in facial expression, eye movement or posture is creating variety. This can be as straight forward as clicking the shutter button 10 times. This allows your photographer to capture several expressions and a high number of photos with minimal effort. A skilled photographer can easily achieve 8 to 10 images in 1.5 minutes.

② Portrait and landscape

Creating a variety can be as simple as rotating the camera. Portrait and also landscape should be used within the shoot to capture several variants that can add to the diversity of the photos.

③ Multiple poses made simple

Reposing is often the most time-intensive portion of the entire shooting process. However, it does not need to be elaborate and can be done in a time efficient way. Begin with asking the children who would like to go first. The loudest most eager child will volunteer and you'll be able to use them as an example for the others. Have the child

do a few quick repositions during their time in front of the camera. It can be as simple as turning their shoulders from right to left, changing posture or placing a hand under their chin. Since most children will be onlookers during the first shoot, they will understand from the example which poses to use.

Additional posing tips

- ✔ Bring a chair or block for the children to sit on. Doing so will already increase posing options
- ✔ Take full body portraits in addition to the torso-up shots
- ✔ Capture both sitting and standing portraits

Effort during image processing

④ Upload ready images

The best way to shorten the time spent on image editing is to limit the need for it. By maximising the number of upload ready images taken during the shoot, you are reducing the time required for editing and colour corrections. To increase this number, you should invest in training for your photographers and push them towards taking photos with the correct cropping and exposure during the shoot. With the right camera settings and lighting, a skilled photographer can dramatically reduce the time spent on image processing.

Tip: Even if it sounds impossible, instruct the photographers to do the cropping and pre-selection themselves. After only one week they will shoot with the right cropping in order to decrease their own effort.

⑤ Minimise time spent on pre-selection

In the past, the decision of which photos are 'best' was always left with the image editors. However, parents themselves are the only ones that know which photos they like best. Their child may be smiling is some, but

that does not mean that they will not purchase the other photos as well. The big advantage: Reducing pre-selection saves you a lot of time. It will then only become necessary for quality assurance and removing images with closed eyes. You don't believe us? Test with one job and upload the photos you normally would have deleted in addition to the pre-selected versions to your online shop. Afterwards, examine which images were actually purchased.

6 Tools for bulk image editing

Aside from changes in technique, there are many tools designed specifically to assist with bulk image editing and colour correction. We recommend using Lightroom, tools of the PhotoLynx suite, Perfectly Clear or Portraitpro, as these are the tools proven most useful by our customers. Additionally, our online system has a built in feature to automatically create multiple variants of the same image. With our image filters (black and white, sepia, oldboot, warm and many others), you can, for example, turn the original 10 images of a child into 20, 30 or 40 images.

Our recommendation for nursery photography

Time is limited, but can be reprioritised. If fully implemented, the previous on-location tips can enable any skilled photographer to achieve between **8-10 upload ready images** of a child within **1.5 minutes** in nurseries. Have this as a goal for your photographers and make use of time-saving image processing techniques.

Motivating photographers to increase variety

Implementing a change in your company's workflow, no matter how small, may seem like a challenging task, especially when it's your photographers responsible for it taking effect. Fortunately, there are several ways to motivate your photographers to efficiently adopt these recommended techniques that will increase variety.

Understanding the whys:

Why do you need motivated photographers and why is it your responsibility to motivate them? It is essential to understand that a photographer's role is not only to take photos. Organisation during the photo shoot is equally as important when it comes to maximising your revenue potential. The only way to achieve this is by having good communication at the nursery or school, which requires a motivated and educated photographer to carry out. This is why it is crucial to inform, educate and train all photographers on your company standards and any changes that occur during their employment. This information will provide a fresh perspective and allow them to see the advantages of the task. Taking more photos, for example, is not only a new requirement, but an opportunity for creative freedom.

Compensation and goals:

The best way to emphasise a new task's priority is to implement it into your compensation structure. As seen in our last issue (2 / 2016), we highly recommend using a commission structure, which is especially relevant when incentivising photographers to make an adjustment to their workflow. Set a goal, such as the number of photos per child that a photographer should reach. Depending on your preference, achieving the goal can lead to either a bonus, or be treated as a requirement to reach the base salary. High achieving photographers will go above and beyond to outperform, while others will aim to hit the minimum target. To communicate the new conditions with your photographers, we recommend providing them with a checklist of requirements that need to be met (see example: Figure 2). In our experience, when photography companies provide a checklist to their photographers, they achieve a higher rate of standardisation. Using a checklist as a tool to standardise your business will allow for a higher grade of quality assurance, less time spent on image processing and an opportunity to scale your business successfully. With photographers more aware of their work before, during and after the shoot, the list will act as a motive to monitor small details. Additionally, we recommend including a section covering camera settings on the list. This will ensure that photographers are taking the best possible 'upload ready' images, as mentioned before, which will drastically save time during image processing. Standardisation is therefore, the best way to monitor key aspects of your photographer's work. **//**

School photography

Time is usually even more limited during school shoots, resulting in less time spent on each child. We recommend aiming for 5 shots with 2 different poses. If not possible, focus your time towards gaining variety through image editing (e.g. cropping or black & white).

Figure 2: Example of a photo shoot checklist

Photographer checklist for nursery photography

Please complete the checklist by marking each box upon completion of the listed task. For quality assurance purposes, it is essential to complete each task. Please return the form to [company name] once completed.

- ☑ Optimised and consistent lighting and camera settings
- ☑ Reached between 8-10 photos per child
- ☑ Distributed login details correctly
- ☑ Cropped and pre-selected images

_____   _____   _____
Photographer signature   Name of nursery   Date

To be adjusted to fit your company's photo shoot standards and photographer expectations.

SchoolPhoto plus

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