

Setting Expectations

How to Prepare a Brief for Industrial Photography

A Practical Walkthrough for First-Time Clients

A practical walkthrough for companies commissioning photography for the first time Industrial photography is very different from corporate portraits or marketing shoots. It happens inside live, safety-critical environments where production, people, and processes come first.

Most companies start by asking for deliverables, timelines, and cost. Those questions only make sense once a few fundamentals are clear.

This document exists to help you understand what information is absolutely required, what is optional but improves results, and how to avoid delays, misalignment, and generic outcomes.

You do not need to be an expert. You do need to be clear about a few basics. Each section is marked as either **MUST** — required to responsibly discuss scope, timeline, and cost — or **OPTIONAL** — helpful, but can be skipped if unavailable. If you complete only the **MUST** sections, the project can still move forward.

What Is Absolutely Required

Why You Are Commissioning This Photography - MUST

In one or two short paragraphs, explain why this photography is being commissioned now. Is it for a website refresh, annual report, investor communication, employer branding, or internal use? If this is unclear, any discussion of deliverables, timeline, or cost will be speculative.

Who the Images Are For - MUST

Be specific about the primary audience. Engineers, investors, customers, and potential employees all respond to imagery differently. Clarify who this is for and what you want them to understand or feel after seeing the images.

What You Actually Want to Show - MUST

Identify priorities rather than listing shots. Think about processes you are proud of, capabilities that differentiate you, scale or complexity worth showing, and roles that matter most. If everything feels equally important, the photography will lack focus.

Operational Reality and Access - MUST

Clarify whether production will be live or paused, safety and PPE requirements, restricted areas, escort requirements, and processes that cannot be interrupted. Without this, realistic timelines and costs cannot be estimated.

Scope (Without Counting Photos) - MUST

Instead of specifying image counts, indicate the number of sites, number of operational areas per site, desired depth of coverage, and amount of movement between locations. Scope determines effort; output is a result of scope.

What Improves the Outcome -Optional but Powerful

Visual Direction and Style

Describe how you want the images to feel. For example: observational or directed, polished or raw, calm or energetic, people-led or system-led. If skipped, the photographer will rely on experience and judgment.

Reference Images

You may share existing photos from your site, past photography you like, or images that resemble the tone you are aiming for. References communicate intent — they are not instructions to copy.

Time Expectations

If there is a hard deadline, share it. Factories are not studios; safety briefings, PPE changes, and access delays affect timing. Tighter schedules reduce flexibility and visual quality.

Usage of the Images (MUST be included even if approximate)

Although this section appears later in the document, it is required. Usage determines how the photography is approached, licensed, and priced. Without clarity on usage, timelines and costs cannot be confirmed responsibly.

You do not need final answers. You do need to indicate intent.

Please clarify, even approximately:

- Where the images will be used (website, reports, presentations, marketing, internal)
- Geographic reach (local, national, global)
- Expected duration of use and whether exclusivity is required

If usage is still evolving, state that clearly. Proceeding without any usage context is not workable.

Authority, Reality, and What Happens Next

Authority, Trade-offs, and What Happens Next

Someone must have authority during the shoot to approve access, resolve conflicts, and make real-time decisions. If authority is unclear, time is lost and opportunities disappear.

If You Only Complete the MUST Sections

The project can still proceed. The photographer will use experience to fill gaps, adapt on the ground, and build the story as access allows. What you trade off is precision and predictability, not professionalism.

Final Reality Check

Industrial photography does not fail because clients are inexperienced. It fails when expectations are unclear and assumptions go unspoken. This walkthrough exists to make the process workable, even if this is your first time commissioning photography.

What Happens Next

Once this information is aligned, scope can be confirmed, timelines discussed realistically, deliverables defined, and costs estimated responsibly. This document ensures those conversations are grounded in reality.