

bb&b

# A DIFFERENT VIEW ON PHOTOGRAPHY IN B2B







## SEEING IS BELIEVING

B2B is an ugly world. So why take photos of it?

That's what our B2C counterparts might think. But we know they're wrong – and here's why.

B2C may use photography to showcase its cars, holiday destinations and luxury goods. Of course they do. But in B2B, those responsible for buying business goods and services are – believe it or not – equally human and respond to visual and textual information in the same way.

All contents, concepts and ideas developed in this document are the exclusive intellectual property of bb&b Communication et Marketing Industriel SARL, Paris.

© 2018





## THE POWER OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Whether it is a website, a brochure, an email, or a social media post, an image brings it to life. Evolution has trained us to swiftly decode and react to visual information. Images are processed by the brain 60,000 times faster than words. And unlike words they directly trigger the lower levels of the brain, where emotions sit. It's no accident that the most popular social media channels are visual.

People respond quickly, emotionally, urgently to visual information in a way that they cannot do with words. Images are suggestive and easily memorized. They form a universal language, way beyond words. If you need proof of this, note that one in four Google searches takes place in Google Images. Pictures, not words. Clearly, if you want to engage with people, they want to see what you mean as well as read it.



A man with glasses and a goatee, wearing a green t-shirt and green overalls, stands next to a woman wearing a dark blue baseball cap with a 'VARA' logo and a dark polo shirt. They are both looking at a tablet held by the woman. In the background, a large herd of brown and white cows is grazing in a green field under a clear blue sky.

## TELLING THE STORY

One of the problems with the written word is that we are limited to the known vocabulary. There are only so many words to go around. In the world of business writing, this means that it is very hard to differentiate. Is there a copywriter in the world who has not been asked to find another word for “solution”?

Every vendor talks about quality, innovation, reliability. These have become wallpaper words – they are expected but they do very little to set you apart. Try as you might, you will end up using many of the same terms as your competitors. And they have been repeated (and abused) so many times that they have lost all credibility.



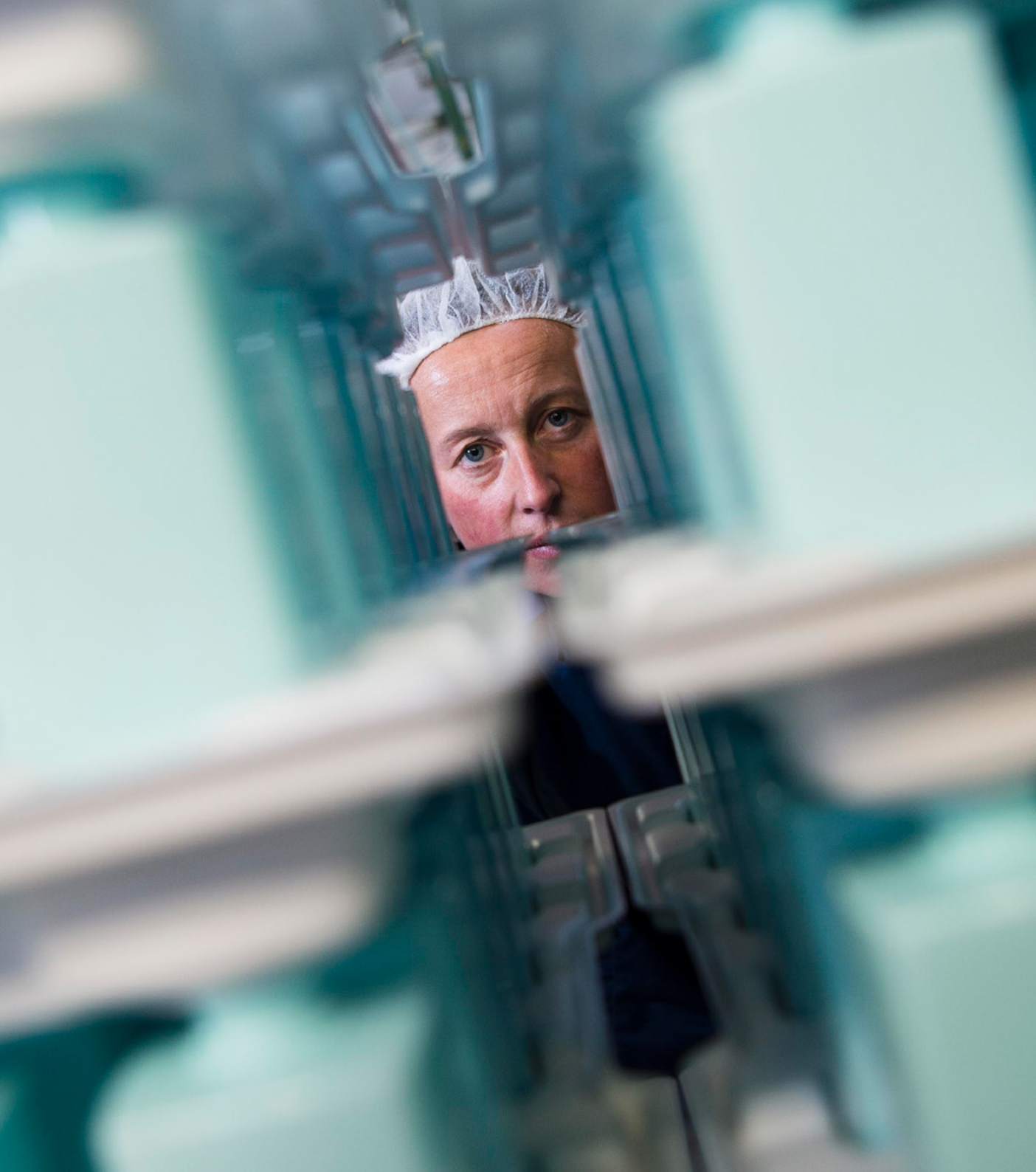
A well-chosen image, by contrast, can immediately underpin your message – or negate it. A precise, detailed, well-framed, well-lit picture is a proof of quality itself. But the opposite is true as well: talking about quality with lousy pictures won't work. Innovation is expressed by the unusual and unseen. Different colours, viewing angles, framings – whatever.

An image is also open to interpretation in the viewer's mind – and there are millions of interpretations. In fact, each image carries multiple messages, both explicit and subliminal. It can tell a whole story at a glance, and can do so in a way that is instantly absorbed and pleasing to the eye. This is exactly what brands need.

Photography is therefore an opportunity to differentiate and to give your brand a unique angle. Brands spend millions on designing packaging. Photography is the visual packaging for content – without it you are selling a brown-box commodity.







## THE QUEST FOR AUTHENTICITY

Another reason that customers need photography, even in B2B – particularly in B2B – is that we operate in a marketing landscape that is craving for authenticity. A world where everyone is shouting to be heard, where ‘fake news’ cannot be separated from the real thing.

Business photography – in all its industrial glory – is a visual statement of fact. You can see it for yourself. Behold the production line, the manufacturing equipment, the hard hats, the concentrated face and the finely engineered tools. If you are looking to buy, and want an authentic idea of what is on offer, this is it. Quality and engagement, not wordy hyperbole. A thing of beauty. And trust.

However, authenticity is not about perfection. The fine-tuned studio shot, enhanced by extensive photoshopping, may express care for detail and quality. But in a world so much used to brilliant fake and deceitful distortion, the rough, the immediate, the genuine can create trust and credibility. Real-world human interactions shot ad hoc by a professional photographer in reportage mode with walk-ins on the spot are often more credible and striking than the sleek conformity of stock images.



## KEEP IT SIMPLE

A good photo tells a whole story. The time when designers were happy exploring Photoshop and blending several pictures into one is definitely over. The train, the car, the ship and the airplane all deserve decent individual pictures to convey your commitment for the transportation business. No need to merge them into a single compound that loses all its power and credibility. Keep it simple, keep it real.







## HOW TO ACHIEVE GREAT PHOTOGRAPHY

There are three ways to do it, each with its own pros and cons:

1. Hire a photographer
2. Use stock photo libraries
3. DIY





### **1. Hire a photographer**

Today, everybody has become a photographer. It therefore might seem unnecessarily costly to hire one if the local sales rep can do the same with his latest iPhone. And if you only need to record the state of progress at a remote construction site, you might be right.

But if you are set to create an image bank for your brand, with classy pictures telling the story of engaged employees, care for quality and specific production capacities, the iPhone won't cut it. Then you need the trained eye of a professional, who immediately seizes how to best capture the scene, makes people feel at ease and behave naturally, simplifies the composition, avoids the ugly and adds some dramatic lighting. It certainly comes at a cost, but in terms of outcome there is no alternative. And if you divide the budget by the number of unique and authentic pictures you'll get, it is always worth it. And it's the only solution that gives you and your company an individual and consistent brand image.





## 2. Use stock photo libraries

Seeking to illustrate a specific subject with a picture you don't have in your own image bank? There are millions of high-quality images online, which can and perhaps should be leveraged to tell your story. Professional photo libraries (such as Shutterstock, iStock or GettyImages) are very well indexed, helping you to find the right image for your needs.

Platforms such as Flickr offer a wealth of pictures, some of which are shared free of charge under the Creative Commons copyright license. Browsing these platforms, however, is time consuming. And making sure you own the rights to use these pictures is not always evident.

Also, most of these commercial libraries are selling conventional photos that, by nature, cannot precisely express the specific character of your brand. Worse, many of these photos are serving stereotypes that are counterproductive for your communication. The better photos are rights managed and come at a hefty price tag, which often makes it less expensive to do your own shot by a professional photographer.

And of course, there is nothing to stop your competitors using the very same stock photos – completely undermining any attempt at differentiation.





### 3. DIY?

And of course, you can do it yourself. Why not? It doesn't get more authentic than that. The issue is quality, although the resolution of phone cameras has improved enormously. Apple have even built an entire ad campaign around it. The weak point is the photographer, not the device. Everybody can get a good shot. But making a coherent, stylish series of quality pictures, involving people, is a different story.



A group of four oil rig workers are walking on a metal platform over a vast blue ocean under a clear sky. They are wearing bright orange jumpsuits with reflective silver stripes and white hard hats. The worker in the foreground is looking slightly to his left, wearing a black walkie-talkie around his neck and white work gloves. The other workers are following him, also in similar attire. The background shows the horizon and some industrial structures of the rig.

## TIPS FOR A GOOD SHOOT

- › What is the story you want to tell about your brand? Make this clear right from start.
- › Which style? Style is a powerful subliminal communication vector. Prepare a moodboard to brief the photographer.
- › What are competitors doing in terms of photography? Is it classy? How have they done it? Do something better!
- › Take the photographer through the session. Walk him through the set, show him which scenes tell a good story.





---

› What is the story behind each picture? Don't waste your and the photographer's time; discard situations that won't tell a story.

---

› Hire a "fast" photographer who is used to the speed and agility required by reportage photography. A wedding or studio photographer probably won't be swift enough.

---

› Most industrial sites offer poor light conditions. Make sure you discuss the need for artificial lighting with the photographer beforehand. Remember that a little flashlight can add a dramatic touch to a human face.

---

› Think about human presence. It catches attention more easily but is harder to manage. At bb&b, we always prefer the authenticity and natural gesture of real workers rather than models.

---

› It's easy to portray a man from the back. But showing faces of people at work is an art. And a story in itself.

---

› If you plan to do 'walk-in' photography, make sure people have been informed beforehand. Especially women may dislike to be pictured by surprise.

---

› Depending on the subject and the type of human presence required, check out whether there is a need for make-up.

---

› People's rights on their image need to be respected. Prepare a consent form and ensure all participants sign it.

---



---

› A photoshoot is hard work. Plan for pauses, catering and transportation.

---

› Planning and directing a photoshoot is more efficient if done by experienced staff. Consider hiring your agency or an art director.

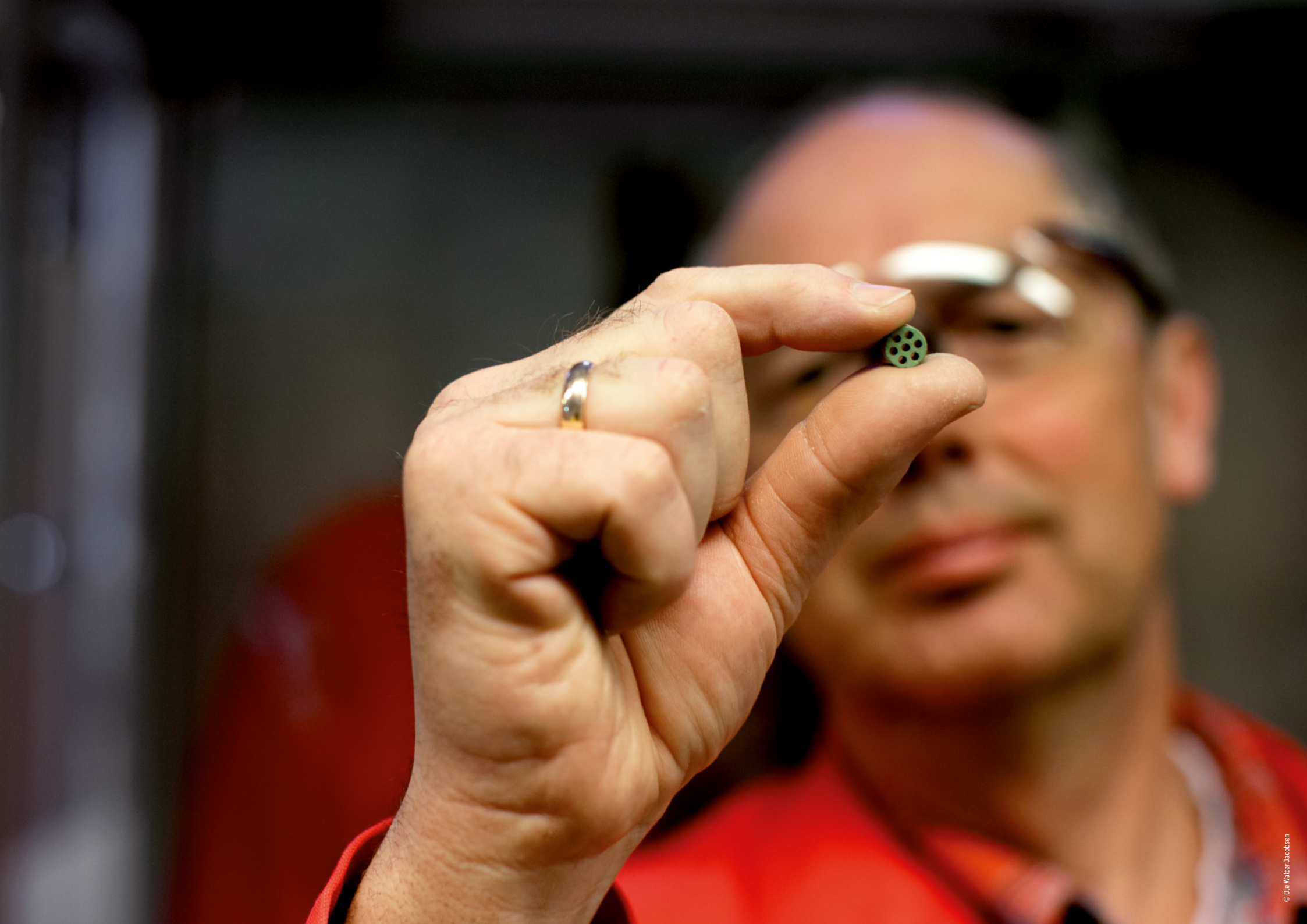
---

› The photographer will take many photos of each scene to make sure he's got the one shot that fits. He'll then make a selection of the best shots for you and edit each photo to bring out colours, contrast and so on. However, retouching nasty details that have been overlooked during the shoot will come at a price.

---























## BOOK YOUR PHOTO REPORTAGE

Mark Diran Boehm  
+33 6 80 36 38 65  
[diran.boehm@bb-b.fr](mailto:diran.boehm@bb-b.fr)

**bb&b**

Communication and Industriel Marketing

22 rue Soleillet  
75020 Paris

T +33 1 40 33 79 41  
[contact@bb-b.fr](mailto:contact@bb-b.fr)  
[www.bb-b.net](http://www.bb-b.net)



MEMBER OF E3  
THE INTERNATIONAL AGENCY NETWORK