

GREAT 8 OUTPUT

05/06, 2007

A LexJet Publication for the Professional Digital Photographer

May/June-2007 — 0203

Digital Photography 2.0

- Turning Your Images into Photo Merchandise
- Creating New Products on Your Wide-Format Inkjet
- Using Your Website to Bring in More Business

What's New at LexJet

ON THE COVER



In the Digital Photography 2.0 era, the focus has shifted from simply replicating film to the many ways digital images can be used. How many products can be created with your images? Shown here is an encaustic painting created by Leah MacDonald of Waxworks (www.waxworksphoto.com) from an image captured by Elizabeth Messina. Encaustic painting is an ancient technique that uses beeswax, paint pigment, and liquid resin.

Cover design: Frank Bernard

LET US HEAR FROM YOU!

Great Output is LexJet's bi-monthly publication for digital photographers who want to learn how to profit from printing and selling their images.

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A Brand Awakening

At conferences and trade shows this spring, I noticed two distinct themes. The first is that a great image is produced at the point of capture. You can't take a good picture and make it great in a computer. (The "I'll fix-it-in-Photoshop" notion is a trap.) Educational sessions reinforced the fact that if you know how to light your photos properly during shooting you can spend less time behind the computer and more time making money.

The second topic, and one closer to my heart, is that successful photographers don't necessarily take better pictures than the rest of us; they just know how to market themselves. No matter how technically proficient you are, if you can't sell your work then photography will be more of a hobby than a career.

Great Output consistently emphasizes the value of marketing. For instance, the article on page 14 gives you some great tips on selling more of your photos online, while building or reinforcing your brand.

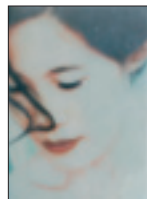
In the July issue, we'll cover the growing brand awakening amongst photographers in more detail. We'll talk about the basics of defining and building your brand, and give you dozens of practical and creative ideas for marketing yourself so you can continue to grow your company.

If you have any brand-building success stories or tips you'd like to share, now is the time to send them our way.

Chris Cudzilo
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The Paradise of Choice

in the Digital Photography 2.0 Era

How the Long Tail theory of selling less of more applies to professional photography markets

By Eileen Fritsch

In an ongoing quest to keep abreast of the photography market, I went to Las Vegas twice in March for two very different, but related photography trade shows. From March 8-11, the Photo Marketing Association (PMA) conference addressed the major changes sweeping through the photography market as a whole. The conference highlighted research into what types of cameras consumers are buying and how consumers are printing or displaying their images.

The WPPI show later that month attracted thousands of wedding and portrait photographers who work at the front lines of marketing photos to consumers. Many trends discussed at the PMA show came to life at the WPPI show.

Image by Tommy Colbert
embellished with encaustic
painting by Waxworks



Image by Elizabeth Messina embellished with encaustic painting by Waxworks

The Long Tail of Photo Products

The most thought-provoking speaker I saw at the PMA Show was Chris Anderson, the editor of *Wired* magazine. He talked about how some of the theories in his best-selling book, *The Long Tail: Why the Future of Business is Selling Less of More*, apply to the photo market.

Anderson's book observes that the Internet is helping us evolve from a culture dominated by a relatively small number of mass-market hits into a de-synchronized culture in which individuals can easily choose from millions of songs, books, videos, and other products to satisfy their own tastes and preferences. As Anderson puts it, "We're now celebrating differences in our tastes, instead of settling for similarities."

The book's title, *The Long Tail*, comes from the graphs that show certain markets tailing off from a narrow peak of a few best-selling products into a long, shallow collection of diversified products, each with much smaller sales.

As this tail of different product offerings continues to grow longer across the base of the graph, it cumulatively represents a greater volume of total sales within the product category (see **Figure 1**). Thus, the subhead: *Why the Future of Business is Selling Less of More*.

The Radical New Shape of Culture & Commerce:

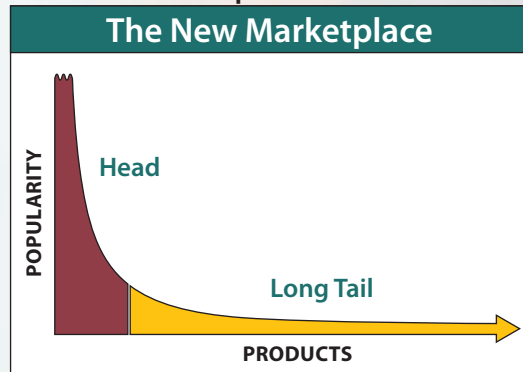


Figure 1

Anderson discussed PMA research showing that photo retailers who once derived most of their revenues from 4x6 prints now get most of the revenues from a growing assortment of products other than 4x6 prints, including photo books, enlargements, canvas prints, photo greeting cards, calendars, and collage prints. In fact, customers who once used photo kiosks to order photo prints in a few standard formats can now use kiosks to order up to 200 different products.

An InfoTrends study has substantiated this boom in photo merchandise. InfoTrends estimates that the market for photo products will grow more than 24% a year and surpass \$800 million by 2010.

To capitalize on the demand for photo products, exhibitors at the PMA and WPPI shows featured equipment, products and services that photo retailers, photo labs, and pro photo studios can use to create and sell photo merchandise (see some examples on page 9).

If you think about it, Anderson's Long Tail theory not only applies to photo retailing, but also to the markets served by professional photographers. In the wedding and portrait sectors, customers can now choose from dozens of different combinations of photography styles, albums, print sizes and types, and accessory photo products. And art lovers no longer must rely on gallery owners, curators, and interior designers to decide which photos qualify as sellable art. Art buyers can choose what they like for themselves from the tens of thousands of new works posted online each year.

The Paradise of Choice

This rapid proliferation of choices could easily overwhelm us, Anderson notes, without a corresponding rise in tools and services to guide us in making more informed choices. This is where search engines, peer reviews, online forums, books, training programs, and experienced vendors like LexJet can help.

Think about how many choices you make every day. You not only have to consider what cameras, lenses, and settings to use, but you also must choose from dozens of options for organizing, editing, laying out, and printing your images.

Then, what types of products do you want to offer? There are so many possibilities. And would you prefer to outsource all your print work, or print all or some of it yourself? You can now choose from dozens of models of printers, hundreds of types of inkjet papers, and a fast-growing selection of album styles, photo books, and frames.

Your customers may also be feeling a bit overwhelmed as they try to decide whether to hire you or a competitor. That's why you need to educate customers in a manner that clarifies why you deserve to be paid more than an inexperienced, part-time semi-pro. The manner in which you brand yourself can be part of this customer-education process.



Image by Elizabeth Messina embellished with encaustic painting by Waxworks

Digital Photography 2.0

Another compelling speaker at PMA was Ed Lee of InfoTrends. He likened the state of digital photography to today's Web 2.0 economy by coining the phrase Digital Photography 2.0. According to Lee, what separates the Digital Photography 2.0 era from 1.0 is a shift in focus.

Many photographers are no longer asking how well digital photography replicates film photography. Instead, they are actively exploring the many things that can be done with digital images that couldn't be done with film. Lee predicts that it won't be long before we stop using the term digital photography altogether and simply call it photography, referencing film photography as a method of the past.

Lee cautioned that the current surge in demand for photo merchandise won't last forever. The novelty will wear off and the demand for prints and printed products will drop as today's *screenagers* mature and gain greater clout in the marketplace. Screenagers are those teens who have grown up with digital photography and can't remember when printing was an integral part of the photography process.

Meet Ms. Digi-Pro

At PMA, the show's daily newspaper featured a fascinating article entitled *What's Happening in the U.S. Professional Market*, by Don Franz of Photofinishing News International Consulting Group and Frank Baillargeon of f/22 Consulting.

According to their research, the demand for 8x10 prints captured by professional photographers has fallen by at least one-third since 2001. They attribute some of this decline to the emergence of a new group of part-time digital professionals they call Ms. Digi-Pro.

As Franz and Baillargeon explain in their article, "The new part-timer is primarily female—more interested in the emotional connection to the subjects and her sense of creative expression than in the technical details of her camera."

They point out that these part-timers have little overhead, quote prices substantially lower than studios, and will often sell the original, copyrighted images because they aren't interested in repeat sales. These part-timers simply want their customers to have the digital images on their own PCs, where they can be printed, shared, or converted into photo merchandise as they see fit.

According to a recent article by Hannah Fairfield in the *New York Times*, some of these "mom-with-a-camera-businesses" are very effective at using word-of-mouth marketing and social networks. Some sell 8x10s for \$10 apiece, compared to the studio photographers who may charge \$50 or more per image.

Individually, these part-time pros don't represent a huge threat to traditional professional photography studios. But according to Franz and Baillargeon, an estimated 30,000 to 50,000 part-timers have entered the field over the past five years. So it's easy to see how these part-time pros might be influencing the expectations of photo buyers, particularly with regards to pricing, image delivery, and copyrights.

Back to the Basics

The market researchers at the PMA Show help major corporations determine what types of new products to develop and how to market them. The market for "professional" photography equipment is currently being influenced by three groups who collectively represent more potential buyers than full-time professional photographers:

Advanced amateurs. These enthusiasts are striving to learn how to shoot images that look like those shot by top-tier professional photographers. They typically have lots of money to spend and aren't concerned about using the equipment to make a living.

Emerging pros. These individuals are career-changers, who are trying to establish a new full-time career following a layoff or retirement. Enthralled by the more glamorous aspects of photography, they often underestimate how much time, money, equipment, and expertise may be required to generate a steady income in the fast-changing photo market.

Part-time pros. Weekend shooters like Ms. Digi-Pro may not have equipment more elaborate than a digital SLR, Photoshop, and a CD burner. They simply want to make a little extra money on the side by taking pictures.

When corporations market their pro-level products to these groups, they aren't considering how their efforts will impact the traditional pricing

continued on page 10

How Many Products Can You Create from Your Images?

If you're interested in capitalizing on the booming demand for photo merchandise, you'd be surprised at how many products you can create from your images. You can create many products on your in-studio inkjet printers, but you'll also want to partner with photo labs, artists, and printing companies who have access to other types of digital-printing technologies. Once you've developed your own online storefront (see page 14), you can sell dozens of new products without much extra effort on your part.

Shown here are just a few companies and photo labs that offer unique photo products. We'll mention more in LexJet's *InFocus* newsletter, the *Great Output* blog, and future issues of *Great Output*. On page 12, you'll see examples of LexJet customers who are using wide-format inkjet printers to create their own new products and services.



displays in which the image has been sublimated to 1/4-in. and 5/8-in. thick MDF boards with attractive beveled edges. Large-format products in the ChromaLuxe line include ready-to-hang portrait panels on MDF board or aluminum. (www.chromaluxe.com)

McKenna Pro can imprint your images on wooden keyholder racks, a child-size director's chair, or aluminum license plates. (www.mckennapro.com)



Burrell Photo showcased its Metallic Canvas PrintWrap products at WPPI. They use a large-format photo imager to output your image onto a metallic photo paper, then transfer the image onto the canvas. The look is entirely different from an inkjet printed canvas. (www.BurrellProLabs.com)

Digital Plus Images uses large-format printers, dye-sublimation inks, and heat presses to create photo products such as fleece blankets, tote bags, pillows, and mouse pads. (www.digitalplusimages.com)



White Glove First Edition Books create one-of-a-kind hard-copy and softcover photo books for all types of occasions and promotions. Other book publishers include Blurb.com, AsukaBook USA, Walter's Publishing, Shared-ink, Cypress Fine Albums, Graphistudio USA, and Marathon Press. (www.wgbooks.com)



Photo Book Press will come to your home or office to scan photos, art, and documents, then develop legacy books that record family histories and vacations, preserve paintings and drawings, or pay tribute to key corporate employees. (www.photobookpress.com)

Waxworks embellishes portraits with encaustic painting, a technique that dates back to 800 B.C. The images are output on a photo imager at a professional lab, mounted on wood panels, and then lovingly converted into paintings by artist Leah MacDonald, who has worked as a wedding and portrait photographer for Susan Beard Design in Philadelphia. Leah uses a proprietary combination of beeswax, paint pigment, and liquid resin to create paintings with a semi-gloss surface and smooth and sexy feel. Waxworks will frame them for you, or deliver them to you ready to frame. (www.waxworksphoto.com)

Picturemug.com provides 16 oz. stainless steel travel mugs that can hold either 4x6 or 8x10 photos output on your own inkjet printer. (www.picturemug.com)



Sportspose.com will convert sports portraits into life-size, die-cut stickers for display on walls or vehicles. The materials used to print the stickers have a repositionable adhesive that leaves no sticky residue on walls or cars.

Emotion Prints will convert three of your best wedding images into a single, framed lenticular piece in which the image appears to change as you walk past and view the frame print from a different angle. This finished piece may be too costly or extravagant to sell as an add-on item, but it can serve as a real attention-getter in your booth at bridal shows. (www.emotionprints.com)



Photo by Image V
Gallery embellished
with encaustic painting
by Waxworks

models and business practices of established professional photographers. Their goal is simply to figure out how to get the greatest amount of “pro-model” equipment into the hands of the greatest numbers of people.

Many courses at the 2007 WPPI conference emphasized basic techniques in lighting, posing, and capture. That’s probably because so many advanced amateurs and emerging and part-time pros are discovering there’s a lot more involved in shooting great pictures than knowing which buttons to push on the camera.

Although the rising number of amateur photographers with pro-model equipment is wreaking havoc with pricing in many markets, it doesn’t necessarily mean doom and gloom for established pros.

It just means you may have to readjust your thinking and your business models. You’ll probably need to find ways to work smarter while also adding new skills and expanding your product range to maintain your current income, while selling less of more. And, you’ll definitely want to upgrade your branding and marketing efforts to ensure that your photography studio continues to be perceived at the upper end of the quality scale.

The good news is that the use of visuals in all types of communications is rising. So, what we’re probably witnessing is the emergence of a Long Tail, multi-tiered market, in which the most business-savvy, technically skilled photographers will still be able to carve comfortable niches for themselves.

A Few Final Observations

A Long Tail is emerging for all types of photography services. Thanks to advances in all types of digital-printing technologies and online storefronts, you can now create and sell an astonishing range of distinctive image products and services. You just need to figure out the best way to connect with those buyers who prefer the types of products you create.

You need to provide some sort of customer education. Whether or not you choose to develop and market photography education as a separate service, you need to help buyers understand how to evaluate image and print quality and appreciate the value of your services.

Photo courtesy of
White Glove



Master one skill, then move on to the next. The need to learn will never stop, and the more skills you acquire, the more control you’ll continue to have on your products, services, and economic future. In the HP booth at WPPI, celebrity wedding photographer Joe Buissink showcased his mastery of multiple photography styles, including celebrity portraiture, landscape/environmental, fashion, and photojournalism. This versatility has clearly contributed to his success in attracting clients willing to pay top dollar to shoot weddings and other events. Photographer Helen Yancy has grown her business by acquiring skills in Corel Painter. Other photographers are developing specialized skills in bookmaking, photo restoration, scanning, or large-format printing.

Think carefully before relinquishing too much control of your studio’s operations. Many products and services are being marketed to photographers who say they just want to spend more time shooting. That’s an appealing pitch, because we’d all prefer to spend our time pursuing the activities we’re most passionate about.

Some outsourced services may be better suited to start-up photography pros who really need to hone their camera skills. A single-minded focus on skills you’ve already mastered isn’t likely to provide a secure financial future. Why continue to fill up multiple hard drives with new images unless you’re also keeping pace with the best way to sell them at prices that enable you to earn a respectable living?

The photography pros whose businesses continue to thrive seem to be those who are continually looking for more cost-effective ways to convert images into sellable products and are passionately engaged in marketing their work. -U



Photo courtesy of ChromaLuxe