



Who is Responsible for New Product Development?

In what direction is your studio headed? Is your current market plan indicative of your chosen direction? From the supply side (labs and album companies, and paper and camera manufactures) looking at the professional market, a fog seems to have covered the "pro-market" resulting in confusion. Digital technology is redefining the market for the professional verses the other way around. Far too many established studio owners have or are adopting products that were exclusively developed for the amateur retail market. An example of this is the use of amateur press products as a substitute for those printed on photographic paper. If amateur picture takers can easily order these products on line, why would a professional photographer wish to offer the same thing at a significant markup? Such activity tends only to lower a studio's standards and long term reputation.

Professional photographers need to experiment with digital technology, both cameras and software, to re-design existing products and create new products that amateurs cannot easily duplicate with their cheap software and \$300 cameras. The professional photographer has more direct contact with the general public than its suppliers which includes labs. So why aren't new products being developed by studios so that even those entering the profession cannot easily duplicate? It seems that far to many professional photographers have gotten away from the basic skill of lighting that once defined the professional. Knowledge of shutter speeds and lighting were essential to profitable portraiture with film and still are with digital.

Simply stated the digital camera defines the boundary of each product. Software then is used to extend that boundary. Proper use of ISO can be used to photograph when proper lighting can't be achieved to avoid dark background areas or outdoors when mother nature is not cooperating. Note: most consumer cameras have an ISO rating of 100, whereas, some high end professional cameras offer electronic enhancement of the sensor's sensitivity up to 1200 or 1600 ISO. These professional cameras permit image capture as compared to 400 & 800 speed film. Most weddings were taken using 400 speed film. Quality image capture is the goal of the professional not the amateur. So why not use

this advantage in marketing your photography ,i.e. my camera equipment can do so much more.

ISO can be used to create products. Controlled use of noise caused by a high ISO can produce an artistic effect without the use of Photoshop software. Experimentation is essential to see how ISO pushes your camera's image sensors, thus creating noise that could produce a pleasing artistic effect in your portraits when you want a different look. Try it, who knows what products you can produce by simply changing a camera setting.

What is the point of all this? Cheap 100 ISO consumer cameras do not offer versatility. If you have a wide range of usable ISO setting: use them. Keep in mind those days of film: Kodak and Fuji did not create 400 and 800 speed film to serve no utility function. Move beyond the 100 ISO setting and see what you can create, or what images you can easily capture without having to setup \$1k to \$2k worth of lighting.

<http://digital-photography-school.com/blog/iso-settings/>

Infra Red photography has always held a unique sense of awe with most creative photographers. Use of digital has made infra red image capture very easy if one is willing to incur a small investment. Infra red seems to be spectacular to most consumers perhaps because they can not easily do it for themselves which is important when devising new studio products. Take a look at these sites:

<http://dpfwiw.com/ir.htm>

<http://www.wrotniak.net/photo/infrared/>

<http://www.adobe.com/designcenter/photoshop/articles/phs8kbinfrared.html>

Would your studio customers want infra red images in their wedding albums or hanging in large print form on their walls at home? If done well, infra red photography is very artistic and unique. Create an art form with infra red.

Professional photographers must always assess their competition and compare products offered. Striving to establish new or unique niches will be necessary to survive in an environment that is constantly changing where the primary concern for "big business" is to address the needs of the amateur photographer, not studio owners. Digital innovation will continue to make the task

of producing quality images much easier for the amateur. Such simplicity only reduces the distance between the amateur and professional market, while simultaneously making entry in the "pro" market that much easier for "Donnie and Debbie Digital." Yet, far too many professionals seem too eager to move into the realm of simplicity, which is where most of the competition is at. Move beyond the "look alike" studio mentality.

To put it bluntly, the future of professional portraiture will depend on the ability of the "pro" to carve out a business based on knowledge, skills and value. Expecting suppliers to build the market for you using the principle of "build-it-they-will-come" as a new product development process without their receiving direct feedback from the consumer can only work some of the time. Professionals have face to face contact with consumers: that is where new product development must begin. Tell your suppliers what you need based on consumer feedback: we will build it.

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