



## **Serving Your Customers Better**

A huge influx of “new talent” has recently deluged the professional photography market. While some photographers have taken a different marketing path using new ideas and strategies, others have opted to follow in the footsteps of their traditional competitors. Significant is that digital software is paving the way to seriously modify established and sacred, traditional photographic philosophies for both the studio and lab.

In the past, photographers had only to ‘repackage’ the wants, needs and desires of consumers from one generation to the next. Until recently, one had to only look back in time over the past 40 years to observe that very little has changed in regards to wedding albums, wall frames and even most poses. The new photographer, by communicating effectively with the modern consumer, has encouraged serious questioning of traditional values maintained by studios locked into the past. Most young consumers, whether high school seniors or brides, want change: they want the benefits of modern, digital technology. Success in the future will depend on how well photographers address elements of change in consumer wants, needs and desires in their market place.

Many will argue that a portrait or a candid is still a portrait or candid, being relatively unchanged by time. But the new techie photographer will argue that by merging software technology with digital photography, the definition of what a portrait or candid can be has changed. As an analogy, the horse and carriage evolved into a simple ‘horseless’ carriage before evolving into an enclosed chassis on wheels. And, the automobile is still evolving. Will digital photography evolve in a similar manner as new technologies emerge? And, to the detriment of the professional, will technology continue to reduce professional photography to a consumer ‘do-it-yourself-project?’ The amateur sees

photographic technology in a simplified manner: “I have an 8.6 mega pixel camera and so do most of the pros, I can make ink prints like some of the pros do and I have Photoshop like the pros do”---”so why do I need the services of a pro?” Sadly, photography is on this slippery slope and far too many professionals are not fighting back or do not know how.

Just perhaps techie photographers, both old and new, will create products and styles of photography that will widen the gap between the pro and the amateur. Let’s hope so. What the professional industry needs are products that only they can successfully provide that satisfies consumers’ wants, needs and desires.

So what are new photographers actually doing to meet the needs of the modern, younger consumer. As previously stated, communication is a key strategy. Younger consumers eagerly seek out niches because the Internet simplifies this task for both them and the niche business. Value and newness of product are keys to niche creation. Strikingly, the automobile industry has taken this strategy to heart as evidenced by over 30 new models being introduced in a span of a few years. Simply stated, today consumers of professional photography are expecting something different. They will search until they find it, most probably by using the Internet.

1. The innovative, new photographer is constantly developing and implementing their positioning strategy as to how they are being perceived by consumers. Their studio’s image becomes the focal point based on
  - a. products offered,
  - b. pricing strategy and
  - c. promotional strategy.

What is key is the willingness to experiment and quickly refine or change products, pricing and promotional strategy based on consumer feedback. Differences in brides’ and seniors’ expectations from one year to the next are immediately capitalized upon. Most new photographers are very enthusiastic and are willing to niche market.

2. New photographers have studied their traditional competitors with the

conclusion that the 'traditional style' will continue to be in less demand by portrait active consumers. As a result the traditional market will continue to shrink. They see the traditional photographer having the following problems:

- a. slowness in adopting the best merits of new technology,
- b. eschewing the full spectrum of software in general and
- c. being too eager to tell the consumer what they need rather than ask.

As an illustrative example: Porsche beat out No.1 Lexus in the annual J. D. Power ranking by going directly to the consumer to determine what matters most. Results were style and quality.

3. The new photographer is not bashful in showcasing their digital artistic talents and abilities to customize any product to please the consumer. Album designs are totally unique with no two brides receiving the same layout. Similarly, senior proof books for purchase are also unique. Quality products are offered at all price levels. Selling up is easy given that consumers eagerly recognize the merits of digital artistry and the photographer's willingness to customize the product just for them.

The new photographer is not intimidated by traditional photography. They are eager to create niche products and use the power of the Internet to attract consumers and grow market share by using their digital talents both with camera and software. There is recognition that the portrait market is calling for 'bolder choices' with variety that adds spice to the consumer's photographic experience. Traditionalist need to take notice!

Note: past ezines are available on the web: [www.PechmanImaging.com](http://www.PechmanImaging.com). We encourage visiting our web site every month to view the 'Studio Web Site of the Month' to study products & services offered by studios perhaps a 1,000 miles away from yours and analyze the vast differences in web site designs. We feel this approach offers any photographer the means by which they can quickly learn about new ideas and concepts.

Note: our hats are off to those thousands of photographers throughout the

country who are experiencing great anxiety because of the economy while having the added daily stress of learning new technology. If you want to talk about it give us a call at 800-777-0221. Our technical reps can easily help you cut through all that 'techno-jargon', give marketing advice or direct you to where you can get expert help. No obligation of course.

If you think a friend or studio would benefit from our newsletter, have them contact Pechman Imaging to sign up.

800-777-0221 or <http://www.pechmanimaging.com>

*Let us know your thoughts.* Email us at: [marketing@pechmanimaging.com](mailto:marketing@pechmanimaging.com)

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