

Digital Futures Presentation.

Standing here today reminds me of my school life where as Head boy I addressed speech day, then I stood six feet seven inches tall and weighed very lean 18 stones, swimming 2 miles every day and captained the rugby team.

These were truly halcyon days. Days, when for relaxation I climbed mountains travelling there on my motorbike.

I have been immersed in photography since the age of seven, my father, a property surveyor and a keen amateur 16mm moviemaker died when I was only three.

I inherited a Bell and Howell Projector and a Bolex Camera along with the instructions. These instruction books were amongst my earliest bedtime reading.

In secondary school, I became the projectionist and in turn in charge of the School darkroom, a career in photography was then predestined.

After my apprenticeship and a City and Guilds tertiary education in photography, I founded Studio Tristan 30 years ago, in February 1973.

For the first ten years, I practiced as a Portrait and Wedding photographer; our lab was Leach's of Brighthouse.

This Professional Lab association created a quality of products that brought Studio Tristan many accolades from their clients and the Institute of Professional Photography.

It was the perfect Photographer / Lab relationship, I promoted, created the pictures and sold the products, Leaches produced the work.

Studio Creativity.

The studio operated a front projection system; using these backgrounds, I was twice a finalist in the BIPP portrait photographer of the year awards.

These were days when high street chemists and camera shops would never dream of copying a professional photographers work.

Giving out 5" portrait and wedding proofs was never an issue.

Throughout this time, we sold enlargements from the 5" proofs using an episcopes; its simplicity and ability to project and zoom images into frames created many a profitable portrait reorder.

This was the forerunner of trans proofs.

TristaVision

In the early eighties, we created the TristaVision video business for weddings using Betamax and eventually Umatic Video recorders.

We also created a Negaposi film studio to enable images from the wedding negatives to be added to the end of the wedding videos, the photograph numbers were added to the video pictures using a video mixer and a Sinclair spectrum computer.

Industrial and commercial

The next decade saw the Teesside industry blossom. ICI, Lenig, Phillips Petroleum, Echofisc, Rohan and Hass, Shell, BP, Redpath Offshore, Caverner, Leyland Daff Trucks, Nissan, Taylor Woodrow, Tarmac, British Steel, Tioxied, Monsanto and Boulby Potash to name but a few.

The business from these companies saw Studio Tristan open an industrial and commercial wing; this demanded a rapid access-processing Laboratory of its own.

We invested in Durst C41 and E6 film processors, Durst and Buick Miniprinters, DeVere Enlargers Kreonite paper processors, a Gretag Master 12 Lab and a Konica Minilab.

In one year, we turned over half a million pounds of industrial and commercial progress photography.

From being a one-photographer studio, within in 2 years, I found myself running a business with 14 staff; the operation included a camera shop with a one-hour film printing and a bespoke picture framing service, along with the studio portrait and wedding business and the industrial and commercial wing.

In addition, in the evenings, the mini lab was used by our Flash Harry photographers. These photographers attended evening functions and returned with the prints for sale processed on the hour.

The big change.

In 1995, I attended night school for a programme called Photoshop 2 using a very early Mac. The prerequisite to this was that the oil industry were demanding that the progress photography prints, had text added to them.

I could see then, that the colour photocopier was going to replace our profitable reprint photo orders. Soon, no longer did the Oil companies order 12 off everything; it was one copy off each, which eventually became just a digital file please.

By very early 1996, I decided, I'd had enough of empire building; the business was split into integral parts and sold to the staff and partners.

New Beginnings.

Therefore, I became a gentleman-wedding photographer. Working three days a week from home, I now create as much personal income as I did at the height of the business.

It is interesting to note that the Industrial and commercial progress photography has now virtually disappeared completely, it being replaced by the site engineer and the digital camera.

New Success

The success of my present day wedding business is reliant upon two dynamic Labs: Visualeyes of London and Loxley's of Scotland.

After becoming very much immersed in digital photography and the capital investment required, I now have gone back to using 120 Agfa film and my Hasselblad camera.

Creating a New Work Pattern and Time management.

A pattern emerged that saw me sitting increasingly ever more in front of the computer monitors rather than getting out there and selling and creating images in camera.

Because of this, I have rededicated myself to creating as much of my photography as I can on film. Ref: (Ali Haute Couture Expo)

The use of a softer filter and camera vignette takes no time, doing this on the Mac can take ten minute multiply this creativity by 200 wedding pictures and you can see why as Labs you need to get your photographers out from in front of their Macs and back behind their cameras.

What then, is available for building this new working relationship between Lab's and their photographers and why the need for change?

In the past photographers did their thing and the Labs responded to it.

A lab was then totally controlled by the enterprise or the ability to sell of their photographer. Creating a business model and planning becomes a nightmare, as print and product sales are reliant upon third party businesses.

Scanning

Today, within the social reprint market, bride and grooms have been using computers and scanners since childhood. It is then without any conscience, that a photographers hard work and previews, end up being emailed around the country to every family member and friend. I will not bore you with examples of how many times in the past I have had my work stolen. Suffice to say, the net looser in this is our industry as a whole.

How have I surmounted this?

Our wedding proofs are displayed to the client in three ways. Not in hard Copy!

1. On the Internet.
2. With a wedding multiplexed DVD slide show.
3. A Preview sitting where we project the proofs.

This new procedure has resulted in a 28.6% increase in wedding reorders as a result of on line for 2002 and a 41% increase in parent Albums and wall Enlargements sales.

Giving out a business website card to every wedding guest has resulted in a 228% increase in wedding enquiries.

In addition, because the Bride only has access to low-resolution displays, they come back with their wedding album order within the month, rather than within the year.

Event Photography and selling on line.

For those Labs that provide an online event photographer service, they are investing in a new dynamic business, which will return extra profits year in year out.

Prior to online proofing, the ability for a photographer to attend an event was a none starter as reaching potential clients was prohibitive because of proofing costs.

Publishing the event photographs on the Internet, the photographer can display vast numbers of speculative images in the market place.

Annual Business

In our industry, we realise that a school picture photographer attends their pre-booked schools year in year out. The only time this business usually changes hands is when the photographer or the head of school retires. Equally, with the new Event business, which is also finite, once all the national recurring events are signed up the ability to capture this new emerging market will become difficult. In fact a closed shop.

Each photographer will covert their diaries with rich commissions to the event organisers and together along with their lab, they will all profit. 'Don't be left out in the cold.'

What is an event?

- The first Communion.
- The point-to-point horse race.
- A football final or anything sport. 'Leicester Last Day at Filbert Street.'
- A brass band contest etc. 'Albert Hall'

Visualeyes On line services. Using "PhotoOrder V2"

PhotoOrder allows a photographer to upload images taken by a digital camera to his own display website for an event. Or the images are uploaded by the lab from processed film scanned on a machine such as the Agfa DLab.

The Visualeyes Online imaging software is a DAS creation. DAS is to be found in Teesside University.

DAS created the first digital press office for the Visualeyes client, 'Virgin Records,' in 1996.

PhotoOrder was launched in 2000.

NewsPrints a programme, which is used nationally by the Newspaper Industry, was launched in September of 2001.

The NewsPrint site is presently handling upwards of 10,000 images a day.

Each day the News Photographer drops his images into a transmission folder on the picture desk. These images are transmitted automatically to a server besides an Agfa DLab in Central London. This automation server creates the thumbnail images and transmits them to the Newspapers websites on a server in docklands; this server is on a 200meg pipe as the bandwidth demand is phenomenal, each newspaper having many thousands of readers.

The high-resolution pictures are filed on a Lacie server in the Lab.

As customers order the pictures, the virtual software sends a message to the automation server, which collects the high-resolution image from the Lacie and deposit the file on the Aims folder of the DLab. The DLab then processes and back franks the print with customer information. The NewsPrints online software displays the order in both picture and customer information, it then creates the postal label. The order is complete.

DAS have now created **PhotoOrder Enterprise**.

This new product, created for all Laboratories is to be used exclusively by professional photographers and image owners.

The creative thinking behind the system architecture is the brainchild Brian Cooke and his team at DAS Middlesbrough. This has provided the UK Lab industry with a product to drive new online business through their professional digital printing machines and not through the inkjet printers of the photographers.

How does “PhotoOrder V3” Enterprise Version work?

The software lives on the Internet; there is no need to load preparatory software on a computer it therefore can be used by any platform Mac or PC. Recently I uploaded images from my Laptop while in Sweden covering a storey on their Regimental Band. Before I had caught my flight back home I had sold £427 worth of pictures, this was on top of my fees from the Newspapers. A Swedish credit card works the same as a UK one.

The concept is designed to make the photographer do the work in administering his own web portal provided by the Enterprise Lab.

If the photographers requires a process and scan service, the Lab uploads these images into a photographer pre created category. Once there, the photographer then edits the pictures into sub categories. e.g.

The Bride at home.

The Church.

The Reception.

Skinning.

It is important that the photographers clients, cannot see the Lab address on the website.

If a customer can see what a Lab is charging their photographer, then a conflict of interest is imminent.

Enterprise dismisses this problem by allowing the photographer to skin the website sales portal and make it uniquely there own. The Lab URL, which hosts the Photographers sites are registered as a numbers without name.

Labs input.

The Laboratory creates a master price list for their photographers; they can also create deals for individual photographers. This may not necessarily be a discount, rather a premium price for on line services.

Either the photographer in turn, creates a global retail price structure, or he can price per event or category.

In the case of a retail price including an event organiser commission, this will require a greater profit margin. A photographer may then price prints per event accordingly to account for this. With photographers images displayed in a Portfolio category, a retail print price can be entered. Each picture product can be priced individually.

The whole concept of PhotoOrder Enterprise is not to create pretty on line web albums, rather to provide a Lab with the opportunity to sell and make profits. To counter the ink jet printer and bring your photographers back in house through building new online interactive relationships. As I stressed before, it is vitally important that Labs create the environment in which, the photographer spends time behind the camera and selling his art, not in front of a computer.

This is a renaissance in our industry.

As the amateur image market proliferates with digital cameras becoming ever better, the professional photographer needs the working relationship of a Pro Lab to enhance his product base.

The Pro Lab or High Street Mini Lab in turn needs to sign up as many event photographers as possible, along with any Image owners, picture libraries and business images. Enterprise brings these businesses together on line in a database that fulfils both Lab and client needs to communicate and distribute.

PhotoOrder Enterprise, handles credit card accounts and billable clients, it also offers job tracking.

The future of our industry is in your hands; we have never had a greater opportunity than now to search and find new markets and greater horizons.