



Points of view: Retailers share experiences with the HP Photosmart Studio

In January, Digital Imaging Digest interviewed three retailers who have the HP Photosmart Studio in their stores: **Michelle Bogosian**, co-owner of **The Camera Shop** in Bryn Mawr, Pa.; **Sid Davidowitz**, owner of two **MotoPhoto** stores and the new, "Jennifer"-centered digital kiosk space **The Picture Spa**, in Paramus, N.J.; and **Mike Woodland**, CEO of **Dan's Camera City** in Allentown, Pa. Both Bogosian and Davidowitz acquired their Photosmart Studios in late November 2006. Woodland acquired his store's first unit, a pilot kiosk, in May 2006, and two more in September. Here, they share their experiences and opinions about the machines.

So far, is the HP Photosmart Studio doing as well as you expected, not as well, or better?

What have been the most successful products from this unit so far?

Woodland: We really didn't know what to expect. With our DigiPrint Lounge, we had a very good base of digital customers coming already, so we were fairly optimistic this would be an appealing solution for them. Now that we have had the unit and come through the holiday season, it certainly exceeded our expectations in volume, reliability -- really, in all aspects. We have just been ecstatic with it.

Bogosian: For us, it has been the calendars and the collage posters, then probably the fold over cards, and then the photo books. I think it has turned out that way because we got the kiosk just before Hanukkah and Christmas, and people are really focused on gift-giving at that time. I have approached both our pro level customers and the consumers with the books, and they are thrilled. They think the book is absolutely fantastic.

Davidowitz: Calendars were the No. 1 item during the holidays for us, but books were the No. 2 item for December, followed by posters and the small, soft albums. The least popular product was the folded card, perhaps because we do an in-house folded card people are already used to seeing.



Michelle Bogosian



Sid Davidowitz

How have you promoted the machine and its services? What promotions do you have planned for the coming months?

Bogosian: We had every staff member make a collage poster, book, or calendar with their own pictures of families and friends to show customers. That had a tremendous response, because it really brought in a personal aspect.

We've also had door prizes on our busiest days. That allowed us to develop a good e-mail list to send flyers and information to our existing customers. The door prizes were very successful. A couple of people we gave a free poster to came back and ordered five or six more. We did door prizes every Saturday; and we gave away a book, a calendar, a poster, and 50 free fold over cards.

Additionally, I have a 14-year-old stepdaughter who is quite popular in her school. I took photos of her and her friends and made a collage poster. She has it in her locker at school. Now, all the girls are coming in to get a poster made. They thought it was the coolest thing in the world.

Last, I'm going to the local TV and radio stations and having them do a feature piece on this. I have had success getting them to do features on us in the past. We've covered different subject matters at different times, like how to archive, how to print your images, and how to burn your images to a CD.

Is there anything you would change about this machine if you could?

Davidowitz: This software is rock-solid, very robustly built, very intuitive. My personal feeling about most of the software in our industry is, even though we pay top dollar for it, most of it is in beta format and we usually find the problems in the field. That has not been the case with the HP product. It really was ready to roll.

As far as things I'd love to see, some customers want to create books with photos in a specific order, or have a particular group of photos fall on a certain page. You can do that, but it requires a lot of trial and error. I'd like to see an optional level people could go to if they wanted to make a product that is a little more creative and customized.

Another issue is control over color and density. Again, you don't want people fooling with that on every photo, but some do need correction other than auticolor or red-eye removal. I would not be surprised if these features show up on the system as an upgrade in the future.

As far as the books, I'd be interested in having better covers and some covers with die cuts, so the first photo could show through. It would also be great to have other materials we could print on and bind in.

But again, I think it's a very well thought-out, robust, and reliable product.

Overall, do you think this machine is good for your store? Would you recommend it to other retailers, regardless of their size?

Woodland: It is truly a first-class system. Who should own it may not depend so much on volume or the size of the store, but more on the attitude of the store owners and managers. This is a whole new product. Just putting it in and setting it on the sales floor will not make it successful. It takes the drive to make sure you build an enthusiasm in the store. You have to get your staff reaching out to people using the system. You have to be prepared mentally to make a commitment to it. You have to be proactive and try different approaches. With a store that just likes to stay with the status quo, I would caution against it.

There is much more to this interview than is covered here. To hear the entire discussion, please download the podcast, which is available now. This topic was suggested by Phil Gresham of Fotofast digifoto in Brisbane, Queensland, Australia. If you would like to suggest a topic for an article and/or podcast, please contact Digital Imaging Digest editor Jennifer Kruger at jkruger@pmi.org.

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