Operating Your Own Novelty Photo Business For Fun And Profit

By Novelty Photo Software, LLC
http://noveltyphotosoftware.com

Novelty Photo Studio ®
Event Photo Business Guide

Table of Contents

Introduction

If you've ever visited an amusement park, county fair, attraction or landmark, you've probably encountered some type of novelty or souvenir photo vendor. People are often lined up to take home a fun, personalized keepsake of their visit. Only a photo can capture the moment, and novelty photos are a big hit at all types of events. They also present an incredible business opportunity.

Novelty photos, as referred to in the context of this guide, are photos which are manipulated or customized with Novelty Photo Studio (NPS) to create a keepsake or souvenir.

This is accomplished by applying a variety of tools and effects, or combining two or more images.

Here's an example:

Custom backgrounds can be created easily with image editing programs such as Photoshop, or NPS. Additionally, there are many ready-to-use backgrounds available commercially that you can purchase to use with your business. Novelty Photo Studio includes many background images and templates. In this example, we'll use a custom background created for a regional music festival.

For this event, photos are taken of guests using a green screen. We'll explain how to do this later.

Next, the guest photo is superimposed onto the background.

The resulting photo is a merging of the two images to create a new virtual environment. As you can imagine, the possibilities to superimpose subjects into backgrounds are limitless!

Unrestricted by reality, you can place your subject in any environment, real or imagined, photo-based or digitally rendered.

You can create many different types of novelty photos with Novelty Photo Studio, including:

- **Event Photos** to commemorate a birthday, retirement party, corporate event, bar and bat mitzvahs, graduation, etc.
- **Souvenir Photos** specific to an event or location. Use at an event (as in our example above), a geographical landmark (such as the Hoover Dam, Empire State Building), or a location (beach resort, county fair).
- **Scenario Photos.** Utilizing the green screen function, you can place your subjects in a variety of scenarios. Examples may include bull riding, surfing, being chased by a mummy, in front of a killer whale leaping out of the water, etc.
- **Photography Background Photos** are more traditional photos featuring professionally created background images. For instance, a couple in front of a sunset or a snowy Christmas scene.
- **Parody Magazines.** Novelty Photo Studio includes a function to create your own fake magazine covers as well as templates.
- **Novelty Templates.** Using the Head-On-Body or Face Swap tools and included templates to create funny novelty photos.

No matter what type of photos you decide to vend, you can look forward to a fun and rewarding experience.

Why Run a Novelty Photo Business?

We all have different reasons for wanting to run our own business. Some are in it purely for profit. Some of us are looking for a side business to supplement our regular income and have a little fun. No matter what motivates you, a novelty photo business can be a rewarding and fun venture. Let's look at some of the benefits.

- **It's fun!** Typically, you're in a place where people are there for entertainment or recreation. It's a casual, fun atmosphere and the product makes people happy.
- **You're offering something unique.** Novelty photos are keepsakes. You're helping event guests capture the moment in a way that only a photo can provide. It's not like a T-shirt that will undoubtedly end up in a drawer somewhere, worn a few times and forgotten. Your product will probably end up on a mantle or a wall, perhaps a reminder of a great family trip.
- **Modest start-up costs.** The costs involved with starting a novelty photo business are comparatively much lower than other types of businesses. The equipment pays for itself quickly.
- **Low operational costs.** The costs associated with the business beyond startup are minimal. Print supplies and the event space rental comprise most of your expenditures.
- **Family-oriented.** Your entire family can participate.
- **Short learning curve.** You can learn everything you need know to operate successfully in just a few days.
- **Impressive ROI (return on investment).** Here's where it gets interesting! *Consider this:*

  - Cost per media to produce a 5x7 is under 50 cents.
  - Souvenir photos retail for an average of $10.00 or more
  - An average concession can easily produce 30 photos an hour

    Let's look at a typical county fair scenario with hours of operation from Noon to 10pm.

    30 photos per hour @ $10 = $300 X 10 hours = $3000 <u>per day</u> gross profit.

    A typical fair can run 3 days. This is a hypothetical scenario with a modest cost-per-unit and no extras. There are many ways to maximize your profit by offering enhancement products. For example:

- Frames can be purchased in bulk for less than $1.00 per unit. The novelty photo can be packaged with a frame and offered at $14.00, netting an additional $4.00 profit per unit. *For discount frame source, see the Appendix.*

- Offer additional copies of the photo at a discounted rate. Most of your customers will be comprised of multiple subjects such as families, groups of friends, co-workers, etc. More often than not, customers in multiple-subject photos will want their own individual copy as a keepsake. Offer the first photo at the fixed rate, and additional copies for a discount. Remember that your media cost is around .50 per print, and you've already staged the photo. The only effort required is to simply print the image again. Additional prints at $5.00, as an example, provide an additional revenue stream as well as real value to your customers.

- Consider popular print sizes such as 4x6 and 5x7. The cost-per-piece is much lower than an 8x10 and the prints can be generated much faster.

When in the checkout line at your local grocer, the presence of gum, candy, magazines and various small items is a very calculated effort to appeal to the impulsive nature of shoppers. In event situations, your customers will be very impulsive buyers. People attend events with the expectation that prices will be inflated for goods and services. Capitalize on this by offering many attractive "up sell" options for your novelty photos.

Remember that this is a fun business. Experienced entrepreneurs will tell you that an important element of success is doing something you enjoy. If you start a business based solely on a desire to make money, make sure your core business is something you actually enjoy. Running a business takes a lot of perseverance and sacrifice. You need to possess some emotional investment in the product or service you are offering. If you don't believe that what you are offering has true value, your customers won't, either. Luckily, a novelty photo business encompasses a rare combination of attributes that make it a very attractive option for starting your own business. It's easy and inexpensive to operate, fun and profitable.

Green Screen Principles

Green screen compositing is most often used in film and television production to create motion picture special effects. **Chromakey**, as it is called when referring to film, combines two images by keying out color (or a small color range) from one image to create transparency, and superimposing it onto another image. This technique is also referred to as *color keying, color-separation overlay, greenscreen,* and *bluescreen.*

Green screen is often used with television weather forecasts. The weatherman appears to be standing in front of a large map, but in the studio he's actually standing in front of a large blue or green background. The blue or green color is then "keyed" out with computer software, and replaced with a background image such as a satellite photo of the earth. Blue was the predominant color used for many years, however green is now a very popular choice. Green and blue are used because they are the furthest in the color spectrum from skin tones. Remember that the green or blue is made transparent, so using these colors helps prevent accidentally removing anything in the foreground image. Earth tones and pastels would not work well because they are too similar to colors found in skin, clothes and hair. The goal is to remove the background color while not affecting the foreground image. It can be challenging to get good results. In Novelty Photo Studio, intelligent keying handles variation very well with no manual adjustments. This helps compensate for slight variations due to shadows and lighting inconsistencies.

The benefit of the green screen technique is that a person can be placed in virtually any environment, whether real or imagined, and in the case of real environments (for instance in space, a jungle), without the costs or danger associated with actually being there.

Novelty Photo Studio includes a variety of novelty templates, but due to universal compatibility with all popular graphic file formats, you can also utilize backgrounds and overlays from other vendors.

Because you can offer your customers a wide variety of photo products from an expanding library of templates, your product line will never become outdated or stagnant.

Photo Principles

The key to producing great results is starting with great photos. This is the most important element in creating results you will be pleased with. Since you likely won't know your subject personally, your job is to capture the essence of your subject through a facial expression and body language. Photos are two-dimensional and don't fully capture personality traits, so make sure you start with a good foundation. You don't have to be a professional photographer to produce novelty images, but you should develop a sense of what works well, and what doesn't.

Good Novelty Photo Attributes

- Frame your subjects correctly
- Faces are clearly visible and well lit
- Subject is looking straight into the camera and smiling

Bad Photo Attributes

- Face is to small
- Subject not smiling
- Face is shadowed or blurry
- Head is turned away from camera

See the example below. The first photo is framed properly to capture the head and torso above the waist. The second photo captures the entire body. The face comprises just a small portion of the photo. It will work, but doesn't capture the personality of the subjects like the first photo.

The face should be clear and large enough to apply any desired effects and still be recognizable. Face and torso photos work best. Avoid full-body photos unless you're inserting the entire body into a novelty background.

Resolution

To understand how to get quality results, you should have some basic understanding of how digital images are produced. To the naked eye, digital photos appear to be solid images. A digital camera, on the other hand, sees a little differently. When a digital camera captures an image, it must translate it into digital data. This data is compiled into tiny squares called *pixels*. Think of pixels like tiny building blocks. If you zoom in enough on any image, you'll begin to see pixilation *(example below)*.

The industry standard for photo resolution is generally accepted at 300 ppi, or *pixels per inch*. Note that *dpi (dots per inch)* refers only to printing. By contrast, your computer monitor displays pixels at 72 ppi. It can be confusing, but remember that what you're looking at on the computer display does not necessarily relate to the actual output or print size of the image. What appears to be a very large image on the computer will be much smaller when printed. There are many variables that affect the final output size, but for the scope of this guide we'll discuss optimal output only as it pertains to Novelty Photo Studio and printing novelty photos.

Camera resolution is measured in Megapixels. A Megapixel equals 1 million pixels, therefore a 4 Megapixel camera can capture up to 4 million pixels overall.

Myth: *More Megapixels equals a better photo.*

This mantra has been engrained into our psyche by marketing efforts, but it has little to do with reality. A camera's lens, processor and sensor, plus the photographer's skill have a greater impact on the final output than the number of pixels. But more importantly, you simply don't need 18 megapixels to produce a 5x7 print.

Anyone can purchase a consumer-grade 15 megapixel camera for under $200. Yet a 15 megapixel digital SLR can range from $500 to $5000. Why the difference? Don't both cameras shoot at the same quality? No. Again, number of megapixels does not equal quality of output. A $5000 SLR camera has many precision components that produce significantly better photos than a consumer-grade camera. Just a good quality lens alone can cost several hundred to several thousand dollars.

When choosing a camera to use with your photo vending business, shop for quality, not megapixels. Despite the availability of 18+ megapixels cameras, an entry-level 10 megapixel DSLR provides plenty of resolution to produce your prints. Templates included with Novelty Photo Studio are designed at 300 ppi to print 5x7, or, 1500 x 2100 pixels. Unless you're printing or saving larger images, capturing at a higher resolution is not necessary, and in fact slows down your processing speed. The algorithms used to render some of the effects are very resource intensive. When you pull the corner of the mouth with the Putty function, for example, you are actually manipulating a much larger area in order for the neighboring pixels to adjust and conform to the displacement filter. The maximum size of the circle tool is 1000 pixels, which is sufficient for most photos since the distortion effects area applied to areas of the image, and not the entire image. If we open a photo at full 300 ppi 8x10 resolution, or 2400 x 3000 pixels, it takes more time to render a combination of effects.

Novelty Photo Studio uses software interpolation, a technique used to resample images when enlarged in order to optimize for print output. This is why you can use the "fit to media" function for images smaller than 1200 x 1500 and still get fair quality prints.

.

Camera Types

To get the best results, it is recommended to use a good quality professional or semi-professional digital SLR camera. Digital SLR's (Single Lens Reflex) employ different technologies than non-SLR cameras. They are more expensive, but also more accurate than non-SLR cameras, and include more professional features.

Novelty Photo Studio natively supports several models from the Canon EOS series of DSLR cameras including the 400D, 450D, T1i, T2i, T3i and others.

You can, however, utilize almost any camera. NPS supports the use of a "hot" folder which can be used with your camera software, 3rd party capture applications, or a wireless Eye-fi card. Images dropped into this folder will automatically open within the NPS capture function, giving you many of the benefits of tethering. This provides non-Canon users a method to quickly open captured images in NPS, a big time saver for event shooting.

Software Requirements

1. Novelty Photo Studio 6

Includes everything needed to snap, edit and print great novelty images.

Where to obtain:

http://noveltyphotosoftware.com

2. Live Capture Software For Non-Canon Users

If you don't plan to use a supported Canon with NPS, you may opt to use live capture software in conjunction with your digital camera. This allows you to preview images on your computer display and save directly to your hard drive, as opposed to saving to camera memory. It also allows you to snap photos remotely by using a remote control device.

This is the setup most often used by event photographers. The type of software you'll need depends on the camera make and model. There is no universal application that works with all cameras, since the functionality must be programmed to match the features of the particular camera. Many manufacturers bundle capture software with their camera packages. If you are not using a supported Canon model, NPS includes a "hot import" function which allows you to instantly open captured images. Additionally, there are many 3rd party solutions.

Breeze Systems markets live capture software that works with Canon SLR, Canon Powershot, and Nikon SLR cameras. It has been tested and works quite well with Novelty Photo Studio.

http://breezesys.com
Breeze offers the following versions as of May, 2009:

DSLR Remote Pro

Works with: Canon EOS 5D Mark II, 1D Mark III, 1Ds Mark III, 1D Mark II, 1Ds Mark II, 1D, 1DS, 50D, 40D, 30D, 20D, 10D, 1000D/Digital Rebel XS, 450D/Digital Rebel XSi, 400D/Digital Rebel XTi, 350D/Digital Rebel XT or 300D/Digital Rebel digital SLR.

PSRemote

Works with: Canon PowerShot A640, SX100 IS, SX110 IS, S5 IS, G7, G9 or G10 cameras

NKRemote

Works with: Nikon D3, Nikon D700, D300, Nikon D200 or Nikon D90 digital SLR

Note: Images can be opened directly from Novelty Photo Studio by configuring the output path in your live capture software to point to the "hot import" folder. See the Help guide within NPS for instructions.

Camera Requirements

While you may use virtually any camera to shoot photos, for the best quality and for faster workflow it is recommended to select a quality digital SLR camera that works with live capture software. The following cameras are recommended. Please note that Canon PowerShot models are not SLR, but can be used as an entry-level camera. The Rebel series is Canon's popular "prosumer" DSLR line that offers outstanding value and performance.

Canon:

EOS 5D Mark II, 1D Mark III, 1Ds Mark III, 1D Mark II, 1Ds Mark II, 1D, 1DS, 50D, 40D, 30D, 20D, 10D, 1000D/Digital Rebel XS, 450D/Digital Rebel XSi, 400D/Digital Rebel XTi, 350D/Digital Rebel XT or 300D/Digital Rebel digital SLR. PowerShot A640, SX100 IS, SX110 IS, S5 IS, G7, G9 or G10.

Nikon:

D3, Nikon D700, D300, Nikon D200, Nikon D90

An additional note about cameras: SLR cameras are capable of producing professional quality photos. However your results will largely depend on the quality of the lens you select. For consumer-grade cameras, most people don't pay much attention to lenses since often they are built into the camera and not interchangeable. However, when moving up to a higher grade of camera such as an SLR, the camera body and the camera lens are separate components.

The subject of lens selection is worthy of an entire book on it's own, and much of the terminology would only be understood by students of photography. So for this purpose, we'll focus what works best in a novelty photo booth scenario.

Choose a lens between 35 and 65mm in focal range. Because you are shooting images at fairly close range (6 to 10 feet), a zoom or wide-angle lens is not necessary. Remember that we're not shooting portrait quality, so you don't need to spend $2000 on a lens to get good results. Don't ask a camera salesman who works on commission, do your own research and look for the best value to performance ratio. Many cameras are available in kit form. For instance, the Canon Rebel kit is packaged with the Canon EF-S 18-55mm f/3.5-5.6 lens.

Then lens alone retails between $130 to $200. Sigma offers a variety of value lenses for Canon and Nikon as well.

Tip: Many people buy camera kits and immediately upgrade lenses. You can find a new or nearly-new lens at a substantial discount if you spend a little time looking. There are always great bargains on Ebay, Amazon and local resources such as Craigslist. If you buy local, inspect the glass surface for excessive dust (indicating a cap was not used) or scratches.

Camera Accessories:

There are a few pieces of additional camera equipment you'll want to consider investing in.

- An external flash. Don't rely on the built-in flash! An external flash will greatly improve the quality and consistency of your photos and can be purchased for around $100 on the low-end.
- Battery grips can double the capacity of your shooting time.
- An AC adapter is advisable if your camera is fairly stationary.
- A good, sturdy tripod. The size will depend on the configuration of your booth and whether you shoot from a standing position or on some type of counter top or desk, but choose a dense, sturdy unit that can withstand the occasional bump without knocking over your expensive camera.

- Remote switch. Ideally, you'll set up your booth where your equipment and customers are as stationary as possible. A remote switch will allow you to snap the photo without having to touch the camera or look through the viewfinder. Wireless and wired models are available for most DSLR's

- Flight case. That soft camera bag may work great for a family day trip and your consumer-grade camera, but when you're transporting an expensive DSLR camera along with lots of other equipment, it's worthwhile to spend a little extra and invest in a hard case. Small flight cases lined with foam are ideal for transporting your camera and accessories.

Lighting Requirements

The biggest challenge you will encounter with your booth setup is proper lighting. Remember from the *Green Screen Principles* section that the background color must be as consistent as possible. It's impossible to rely on any form of natural light to provide this consistency because you cannot control external conditions. So, we must artificially create ideal lighting conditions using studio lighting techniques and equipment. To summarize, here's what you need for the best results:

- No shadows on background
- No "hot spots" (spotlight effect) on background
- Subject is adequately lit

Essentially, we want one even, seamless color behind our subject so that the software can effectively separate the foreground (your subject) from the background (the green screen). The goal is to provide diffused light, which is indirect to avoid variances.There are many ways to accomplish this, but here we'll detail the simplest method utilizing 3 lights.
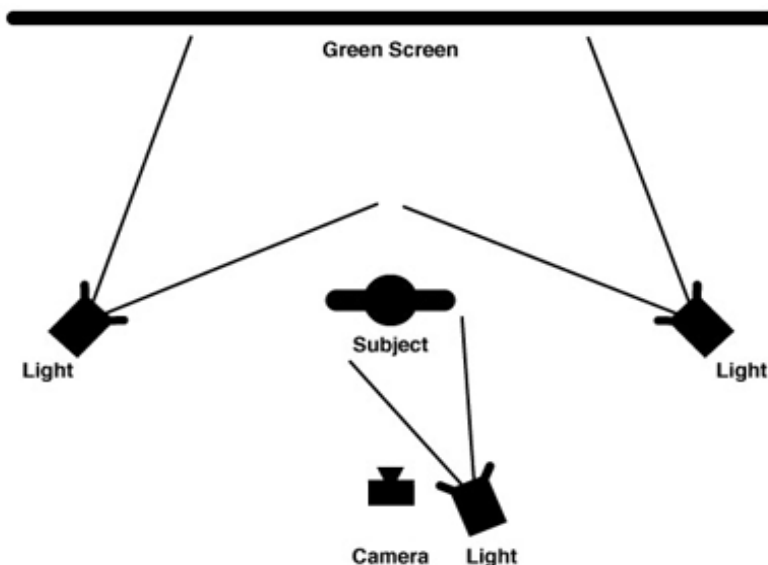
1. Light one is positioned facing the green screen at a 30 degree angle on the far left of the screen, about 4 feet out.
2. Light two is positioned facing the green screen at a 30 degree angle on the far right of the screen, about 4 feet out.
3. Light three is positioned near the camera, facing the subject, above the line of site angled downward. This illuminates the subject. Without this light, the subject may be dark against the background.

This is only a guideline. Position the subject far enough away from the green screen that their shadow is not cast on the background. The distance needed to eliminate shadows will depend on your lighting and booth setup, so you'll need to experiment until you find the best positioning. Use a friend as a test subject while you position your lights. Adjust the 2 side fill lights to provide the most evenly distilled light on the background. If they are too close or overlap too much you will have hot spots of washed out light. Like shadows, hot spots are harder to key out. To the camera and to the software, light only exists as gradients of color.

Similarly, with your subject lighting, only use enough to illuminate. If you use too much light, you'll wash out the subject when the photo is taken.

What kinds of lights can I use?

You'll need the same types of lights that are used in studio environments to provide evenly diffused lighting. The two most common types are softbox and umbrella, mounted on stands or booms. Either type will work well if set up correctly. Fluorescent systems are popular due to lower power consumption than incandescent bulbs, and no heat output.

How much wattage do I need?

You'll want a system with at least 1500 combined watts. If you can afford more wattage, you'll have a little more flexibility in stubborn lighting situations.

Where can I buy lights?

There are several companies that offer lighting kits specifically designed for green screen shooting, which is much better than trying to piece one together without the benefit of experience. Kits are fairly reasonable and start at around $300 for a small system.

We recommend http://imagewest.tv for their friendly service, expert knowledge and a large inventory of economically priced lighting kits.

Other lighting considerations:

- If using an on-camera flash, use a diffuser to reduce the harsh light tones that a flash may produce.
- Consider the power requirements for your lighting system. Running lights, a computer and a printer takes a lot of power. Some events do not provide commercial power, so you might consider a generator for these situations. We'll discuss generators in more detail in the *Additional Requirements* section.
- Don't try to use cheap halogen work lamps. They're inexpensive, but they also run extremely hot, thus not ideal for use under a canopy. They also don't provide the kind of even lighting you need for photography. They're great for working on your car, but not for lighting a green screen.

Computer Requirements

Novelty Photo Studio will function well on computers that meet these system requirements:

Processor: Pentium 4 2 GHz (*recommend dual-core 3GHz)*

Memory: 2GB RAM *(recommend 4 GB)*

Hard Drive: 100 GB (*recommend 500+ GB)*

Video: Minimum recommended resolution 1024 x 768, 64 MB dedicated video memory. *(recommend 512 MB non-integrated video)*

Display: 17" wide format LCD *(Recommend 21")*

Operating System: Windows XP, Windows Vista, Windows 7 x86 or x64.

Please note, it is advisable to get the fastest system possible for best performance in vending situations. While it does not take a fast system to operate the software, a faster system will render effects and apply templates much more efficiently. If you've got a line of customers, faster is always better.

Laptops:

A laptop may be a good alternative to a full-sized desktop machine as long as it meets the general hardware requirements. First, consider if you'll be comfortable working on a smaller keyboard and a stationary screen position. If you decide to use a laptop, a low-end unit designed for basic web-surfing and word processing is not the best choice because the on-board chipset will be optimized for minimal power usage. The hard drive will be a slower 5400 RPM, the video will be slow and the processor will fall under the economy class. Choose a unit designed for gaming which will be equipped with much better, and faster hardware.

Special notes for Attraction Mode

Novelty Photo Studio includes a demonstration feature which allows you to showcase a scrolling slideshow of images. This is used to attract and entice customers by placing a monitor facing away from your booth, either elevated or on a counter top. To use this function, you'll need additional LCD displays and a VGA splitter. It is recommended to use a

large (21" to 24") wide format display in portrait mode. See the *Attraction Mode* section for more details.

Printer Requirements

To produce professional photo prints, a dye-sublimation printer is the best choice and most often used for event photography due to a combination of speed, durability and quality. Dye sub, as it is commonly called, produces lab-quality photos using heat transfer technology to fuse the image onto the print media. The prints are completely dry out of the printer, won't smudge, are very durable and fade resistant. However, inkjet technology has greatly improved over the last several years. May inkjet printers offer archival-quality output and are used by event vendors.

Besides photos, you may also choose to produce heat transfers for T-shirts and other products, providing you with flexibility to offer more choices to your customers and additional revenue streams for your business.

When choosing your printer, there are 3 variables to consider; speed, cost-per-print and unit cost. Below are some popular choices for event photography. Note that a few of these models have been discontinued but are still widely used and readily available.

Ultimately, the less expensive units will have longer print times and higher media costs. However, if you're willing to forego speed to minimize your upfront investment, there are some excellent bargains available that produce great prints such as the Kodak 6850. Originally around $3,000, you can now find refurbished units for around $600. You may wish to gauge your productivity need before spending several thousand dollars on a printer. Besides, you can always upgrade to a faster printer if your business grows. The below chart details what you might expect for 5x7 prints.

Printer	Low Retail	Speed	Cost Per Print
Kodak 6800	$600 (refurb)	20 Seconds	.60
DNP DS-40	$1200	10 Seconds	.20
Sony UP-CR10L	$1200	20 Seconds	.40
Mitsubishi CP9800DW	$1,500	15 Seconds	.45

Additional printer considerations:

Technology is always evolving, so research your choices before making the decision to purchase a printer. The cost-per-print can change dramatically in the course of a year. For example, Sony began phasing out their popular SnapLab line of dye-sub printers in 2010 and collaborated with DNP (Dai Nippon Printing) to take over the print division. The good news is that the DNP printers are excellent units offering the best speed and cost-per-print in the industry. The bad news is that SnapLab users now pay a much higher media cost as production is reduced. Here are some good questions to ask when assessing the best unit for your budget and operational goals.

- How fast can the unit produce prints?
- What is the cost per print?
- What is the duty cycle of the unit? *(can it handle volume?)*
- How heavy is the unit? *(is it portable enough to transport?)*
- Are supplies readily available?
- Will the interface work with my computer system? *(Firewire, USB, SCSI connections)*
- Are drivers available for my version of Windows?

Creating Printer Pools

Many event photographers travel with more than one printer. The reasons are twofold. First, it provides redundancy should one printer malfunction. If you can't print, your business is paralyzed. Secondly, it allows you to speed up production by setting up a printer pool. A printer pool is a Windows feature which allows you to assign multiple printers to a single queue. Since dye sub printers are comparatively slow compared to other printers (such as laser), having a second printer and creating a pool will speed up your processing time considerably.

Setting up the pool is very easy. *Note that both printers must be the same make and model and must use the same driver.*

1. Install printer # 1
2. Install printer # 2
3. Right-click on the Properties tab for printer # 1 and select the Ports tab *(see graphic below).*
4. Check the box to *Enable Printer Pooling.*
5. In the Ports list, select the ports corresponding to both printers.

Windows Printer dialog box to configure print pooling
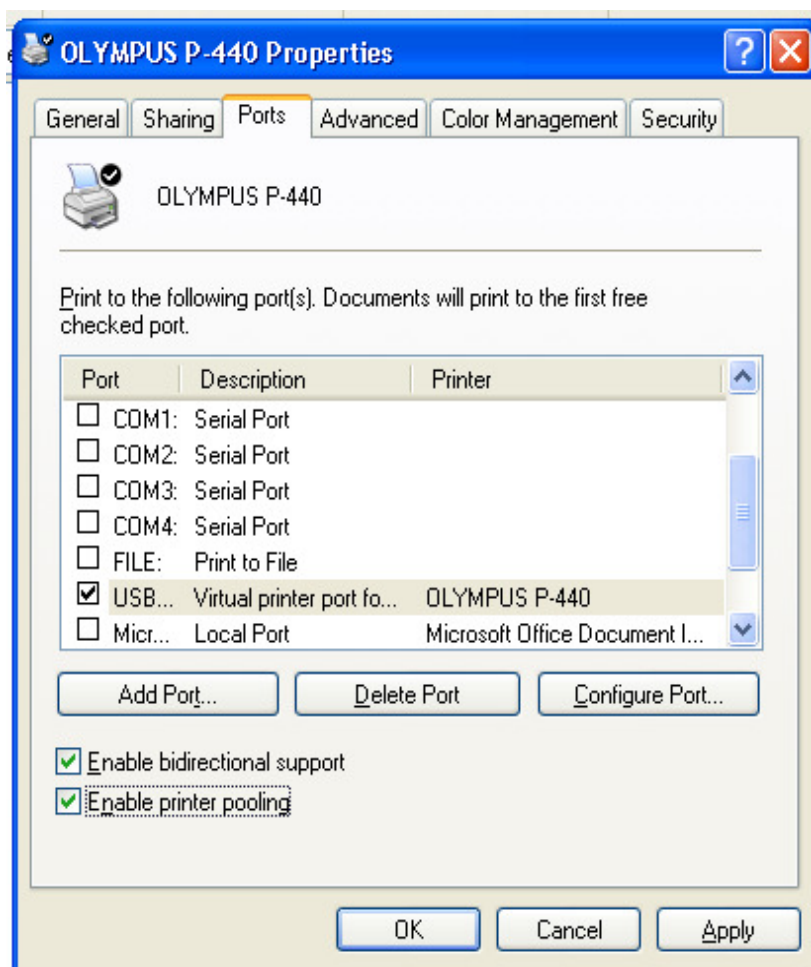
Additional Requirements

Green Screen

You'll need a good screen to use for your chromakey backdrop. You can make your own but it's not recommended. While you might be able to find an appropriate shade of green, the density of regular fabric commonly used for clothing, blankets, pillows, etc. is not well-suited for a photo backdrop. Too much light will bleed through, and it cannot be stored without wrinkling. It also does not have the proper weight to utilize gravity enough to create a flat vertical surface. All in all it makes an inconsistent lighting surface that will be difficult to work with.

If you plan to use a cloth backdrop, choose muslin. Muslin is a heavier, more tightly-woven fabric that is often used for photo backdrops and theater sets because of it's durability. Muslin green screens are widely available in many sizes.

A good size for your booth is around 10' x 10' and you can use it with or without a stand. You can adapt the top frame of your booth to accommodate the screen if don't wish to use a stand. For details, see the *Designing Your Booth* section..

For a list of green screen retailers, see the *Appendix*.

Power Generator

Many events do not provide commercial power to the vendor spaces. Consider investing in a gas generator to power your equipment in these situations. A generator will ensure that you can set up shop virtually anywhere. You will be completely self-contained, without the need for outside resources. Here are a few things to keep in mind when shopping for generators.

- **Output**. Generator output is rated in wattage. Determine the amount of wattage required to run all of your equipment to decide how much power you'll need. Allocate 500 watts for your computer and printer. Although it will likely use less power, it's best to have a little headroom rather than not enough power. Your lighting system will draw the most energy. Power consumption will greatly vary depending on the types of lights you use. Fluorescent bulbs put out as much as 4 times what they draw. For instance, a bulb rated at 350 watts will draw only around 80 watts. Some lighting systems use multiple fluorescent bulbs within the same fixture. A 2000 to 3000 watt generator should provide enough power for your booth and enough power for extra equipment.
- **Noise level**. Generators are gas engines, so they do produce noise. Noise is measured in decibels, or dB. Generally, the cheaper generators are the loudest. While this may not matter on a construction site, it will matter at an event. In fact, some events such as music festivals will have very strict rules about noise levels. A normal conversation is around 60dB. You want the quietest generator you can afford. A Robin Subaru RG3200iS produces 3000 watts of output at only 49-58dB. Honda is also well known for quiet, reliable generators. The EU3000i produces 3000 watts of output and is rated at 49-58dB.
- **Power type**. Computer equipment is sensitive and requires consistent, regulated power. Make sure your generator is rated to run computer equipment and employs "pure sine wave" technology.
- **Costs**. Generators are a big investment. A Honda EU3000i has an MSRP *(Manufacturers Suggested Retail Price)* of $1999.95. You can find a generator with the same power rating for less than half the price, but it will be much louder. Shop around though, as the MSRP is rarely what you actually pay.
- **Weight**. Generators are gas engines, so they're heavy. Make sure you get something you can manage. The Honda EU3000i Handi is 77 lbs.

Additional Generator Tips

- Use the appropriate extension cord. The typical extension cord that runs your weed eater is not sufficient to use with your generator. Look for an outdoor-rated, all-weather heavy gauge cord with molded connectors. Also look for LED status indicators. A minimum 10-gauge cord is recommended. The lower the gauge, the heavier the cable. Heavier cable can more effectively carry amperage without attenuation, which is important to deliver constant, reliable power to your equipment. Get at least 50 feet in length. This will allow you to run your generator as far as possible from your booth. A distance of 40 feet can reduce your noise level by 6 dB. If you are able to place the generator behind a car, or a tree, you'll get a significant reduction in noise.
- Secure your cord. Create a small loop on the generator end and secure the cord to the handle or frame of the generator using a wire tie. This will prevent sudden power loss from someone or something snagging or pulling your cord accidentally.
- Sound dampening. As mentioned above, placing your generator behind a large, solid object can reduce the noise level considerably.

Where To Sell

People love souvenirs and keepsakes. Photos encompass many qualities that make them an excellent product to vend at all types of events. Consider:

- Nothing captures the memory of a place or person like a photo.
- Personalized photos touch people on a personal and emotional level.
- Novelty photos invoke fantasy and humor.

Don't just look for obvious places to vend There are many opportunities to explore if you're creative and resourceful. Events you might consider for photo vending include:

- County Fairs
- Festivals
- School events
- Corporate events
- Birthdays and Bar Mitzvahs
- Amusement parks
- Sports events
- Car shows
- Open air markets
- Outdoor music events
- Community events
- Landmarks
- Conventions
- Celebrity events
- Carnivals
- Food festivals
- Haunted houses
- Holiday events

There are many reasons that photos make for a great business. While a hat or a t-shirt souvenir will soon find its way to the bottom of a drawer, a photo will be cherished and displayed. You are in a prime position to capitalize on this by tailoring your photo options for all types of events. For instance, there are countless local and regional festivals on any given weekend celebrating everything from old cars to onions, kites to bluegrass music.

How To Sell

Tailor your product to the customer!

For instance, if you've arranged to vend at an antique car show, consider the demographic. Your customers will include lots of older folks who probably won't be much interested in fake magazine covers. Instead, create custom background images that capture the event to create a unique souvenir. Shoot an old car against a vintage brick building and create text at the top of the image to signify the event. Examples:

"10th Annual Baker County Antique Roadster Show, 2009."

"Gilroy Garlic Festival 2009"

Create templates specific to the event. For instance, showcase a fake magazine cover that follows the theme of an antique car show such as "Vintage Hot Rods."

Offer a variety of 5 or more backgrounds specific to the event.

Create the illusion of exclusivity. You want to convey to your customers that you are offering something special, something they can only get from you, and something that is available only here and now.

Use the Attraction Mode function in Novelty Photo Studio to showcase sample images. Create a few example photos ahead of time so that your customers have an immediate visual of what you are offering.

Engage your customers. If business is slow, find the first large group passing by your booth and offer a free photo. This accomplishes a few things. It creates excitement around your booth. Watch people at events and notice how they tend to herd together. If you have a group gathered around your booth, passers by will want to know what all the fuss is about. Something exciting must be going on there. If you create something fun and memorable for someone and 10 friends or family members are gathered around enjoying the moment, maybe they'll want a copy. Or maybe they'll want their own photo. Seize these opportunities!

Network with other vendors. Grab the lady selling tie-dyed sarongs and hemp jewelry a few booths down and create a funny "High Times" fake magazine cover with her photo. She'll get a good laugh out of it, and maybe display it in her booth. When her customers notice it, perhaps she'll send them your way.

Much of what is detailed in this section revolves around basic marketing and sales strategies, and basic human psychology. To be successful, you don't necessarily have to be outgoing by nature, but it sure helps. Offer a smile, a greeting, a welcoming demeanor. People come to events to escape from the monotony of work, school, and routine. They are in a different mindset, more susceptible to be impulsive and be frivolous. If you sit in your booth staring at a magazine or texting on your cell phone, people will not be inclined to stop at your booth. You should appear available and friendly, ready to answer questions. Don't give off the vibe that you might be inconvenienced by getting out of your chair. If you don't appear approachable, someone who may have been interested in your product may simply keep walking, because they don't want to bother you. People are instinctive. The old cliché "treat others as you wish to be treated" is very true. When you're looking for something at a department store and the salesperson looks glum and continues stocking the shelves and ignoring you despite being just 6 feet away, your instinct will probably be to move on. A smile and the simple act of acknowledgement goes a long way.

Casual conversation can often lead to prospective customers. If someone is checking out your Attraction Mode display, you might offer:

"Hi, are you having a good time at the festival? If you like that magazine cover I'd be happy to take your photo and create one for you."

Idle time is not constructive time. It doesn't cost anything to take a picture. It only costs to print the picture. So why not snap a photo? Even if it doesn't result in a sale, you'll create interest as passers by watch you create fun images on a live display. And, you'll connect with someone. Maybe they'll tell a friend or family member, "Hey, come check out this booth. They took my picture and made a really funny movie poster."

On the other side of the spectrum, don't be too forceful. When attending a carnival, watch how people will walk a wide radius around the game section to avoid annoying attendants who shout and browbeat visitors in an effort to gain attention. You can approach people without being overly aggressive. Making people uncomfortable is not a good sales tactic.

Be friendly. Be approachable. Don't push too hard. Engage your visitors. Sell more photos!

What To Sell

Photos are your core product, but paper and ink are just the medium. What you're really selling is a product that is fun, unique, humorous, entertaining, engaging and interesting. It is worthy of keeping and sharing. The act of creating it provides your customer with a moment of entertainment, fantasy and escapism. It's something you can't buy at Wal-mart. It's personalized and exclusive. The combination of all of these elements makes for a fantastic opportunity to sell product.

Photos offer an ROI (*return on investment)* that is hard to match with any other product, with a fulfillment cost under $2.00 per unit. The professional photography industry has done a really good job of attaching perceived value to photos. A very basic package from a franchise-type studio like those found in shopping malls can cost as much as $50 for an 8x10, a few 5x7's and some wallet-size photos. You may feel that an average $15 to $20 per photo is exorbitant but remember the context in which you're selling. People will readily spend $20 for a photo with Santa, or for an old-west style photo at the fair. People expect to pay a premium for event products and services.

Added Value

There are lots of ways to broaden your product line or to offer add-ons that are attractive and profitable, including:

- **Frames** are the most obvious up-sell. They are attracted, protect the photo and really add to its perceived value. You should display all of your sample photos in frames and ask your customers if they'd like to add a frame when they purchase a novelty photo. Price them accordingly so that your customer doesn't offer too much resistance. They are very inexpensive in bulk. 8x10 black plastic frames can be purchased for around $1 US per unit. See the *Appendix* for information regarding where to purchase bulk frames.

- **Printable products**. T-shirts, mugs, mouse pads, BBQ aprons and more can be customized with your customer's novelty photos, using special heat transfer media and heat presses. It's a fairly quick process and not too difficult to manage if you have an extra set of hands in the booth. It does require an additional investment for equipment. You'll want to purchase a second printer that is better suited to heat transfer. While not the best choice for fast photo printing, inkjet printers work well for heat transfer.

There are several large format inkjet printers that accept a special type of ink specifically formulated for heat transfers. This special ink does not degrade when subjected to the high temperatures generated by a heat press. You'll also need a heat press designed to apply transfers to fabrics and flat services.
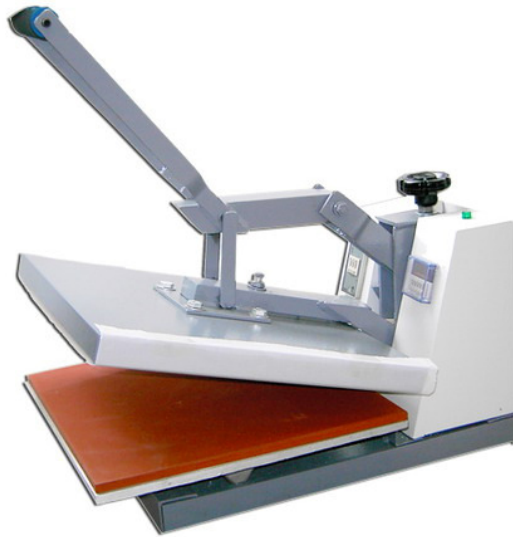
Additionally, there are other types of presses for odd-shaped products such as coffee mugs and baseball caps.

Heat transfer is a subject worthy of an entire guide on it's own.
If interested in adding printed products to your arsenal,
http://www.transferbusiness.com is an excellent resource with lots of
detailed information about the process. They also offer an outstanding
comparison guide for printers, inks and presses. They offer start-up kits
with matched components that will have you up and running in no time.

Let's look at how printed products can increase sales dramatically.

Scenario: Customer purchases novelty magazine cover photo for $12.
You offer a printed barbeque apron for an additional $12.

Fulfillment cost for the apron is around $4. Production time is about 2 to
3 minutes. It's very easy. Print, press and peel. Bulk aprons can be
ordered from online suppliers for under $3 per piece. Heat transfer media
and ink will cost around $1.00 per print. Plain white coffee mugs in bulk
are similarly very inexpensive, and offer an excellent ROI.

To market additional products, display them prominently around your
booth.

Sell CDROMs. The cost of fulfillment is mostly related to the cost of the media used to produce the product. You may consider offering your customer additional images on a CDROM. This tactic is often used by event photographers as an added value incentive that increases profit with little expenditure. CDROM's are less than 30 cents in bulk and can be rendered in seconds. You can print your own labels as well. Offer 5 images for $5 in addition to your core product, such as an 8x10 photo.

Use a web-based photo fulfillment service. NPS automatically segregates your customer images into numbered folders. This makes it very easy to upload images to web-based fulfillment services where your customers can purchase products after the event.

See the appendix for a list of companies that specialize in bulk printable products.

Designing Your Booth

The amount of space available for your vending booth will vary depending on the event. For instance, if space is at a premium at an event such as a popular county fair, with vendors who return year after year, expect to pay more for less space. So, for consistency purposes design your layout so that it works under all circumstances. One of the smaller but common vendor spaces will accommodate a 10' x 10' canopy. This is not a lot of space to work with, and is the minimal amount of space you should use to set up your photo vending booth.

Canopy

The foundation of your booth will be a durable vendor-grade canopy. They are easy to put up, easy to take down, and easy to transport. When shopping for a canopy, beware that not all are created equal. Units can vary in price from $200 to $1500. The difference is in the quality. Most units manufactured now employ a folding frame design which is what allows quick assembly and removal. The cheaper units are constructed from thin-wall aluminum tubing and the frames are easily susceptible to damage. Tension or force on the frame as it's folded or unfolded can result in pinched tubing and broken joints, rendering the canopy inoperable. Vendor-grade canopies are of a more durable construction. The joints are poly or metal, as opposed to the plastic joints on the cheaper units which can split. The actual frame is also thicker tubing and will not pinch or crease easily. This is the best choice for longevity. Realize that you'll be setting it up and breaking it down repeatedly. Canopies made for barbeques in the park are not made to withstand the rigors of event vending, so it's best to invest in a good, durable unit.

If your canopy does not come with wall panels, purchase them as an accessory. They will help neutralize the surrounding light sources which may cause interference with your lighting, provide privacy, and provide protection from wind which can cause movement problems with your green screen.

The most recognizable brand of canopies is probably EZ-Up. Beware that EZ-Up does make a recreational line that is meant for the consumer market. They are not as durable as the commercial line.

Another great option that EZ-Up offers is a banner accessory kit. The banner is attached to framework and displayed above your canopy. The banner is customized with your company name or graphics.

Another important element of your booth is a ground matte. These vary in size and are most commonly made of synthetic straw-like material. You've invested a lot of money in your camera, printer and computer. A ground matte will help minimize dust, which is not good for your equipment.

See the *Appendix* for more information about where to purchase canopies and accessories.

Workspace

Next, you'll need to choose your work surface. How much table top space you require depends on the amount of equipment you will operate. For instance, if you plan on using heat press equipment, the space requirement is doubled. While 10'x10' may seem like a lot of space, realize that a lot of the space is not usable. You need room to set up your camera equipment and lights plus enough space to position your photo subjects far enough from the green screen that shadows are not produced. You'll quickly find that what appears to be a large space becomes a very small space as you add equipment.

If you can afford to invest in a second canopy, purchase a larger unit that you can use at events that provide bigger vendor spaces. But it's still a good idea to plan your operation around the 10'x10' footprint first, to ensure you are ready to do business at any event.

There are a few options for providing a suitable work surface. If the budget is tight you can simply use a 6' or 8' folding table and a table skirt. Or, you can purchase a portable counter for the front of your booth and use a smaller folding table as a work surface.

There are some nice portable counters that are very easy to set up, break down and transport. These are a better choice because you can stand and interact with your customers at eye level. Plus, they provide for storage and an area to place a display monitor to showcase your photos using Attraction Mode.

Portable counters use a cloth-colored wrap-around held in place by velcro, as seen in the example pictures. You can economize and make the most of your space by embellishing your wrap-around with sample photos, pricing information, etc.

Below is an example of how you might set up your booth. Utilize the wall panels of the canopy where. This graphic represents a 10' x 10' area which will be challenging to work with, but possible. The necessity for lighting your backdrop requires a little more planning and economy with space.

A 12' x 12' canopy will give you a lot more flexibility in terms of layout. If you have enough depth in your booth, position the backdrop against the back wall so that your subjects are facing the front of the booth.
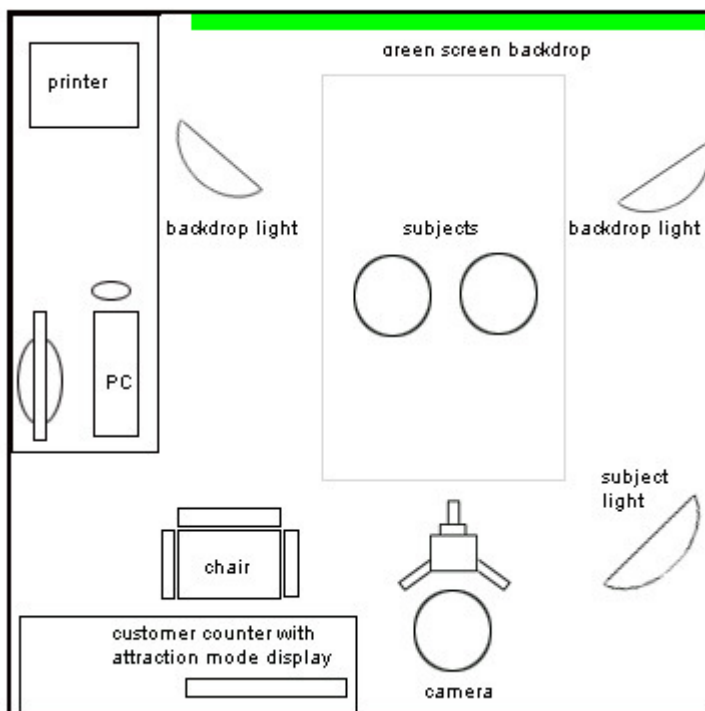
Example Two: Booth Layout
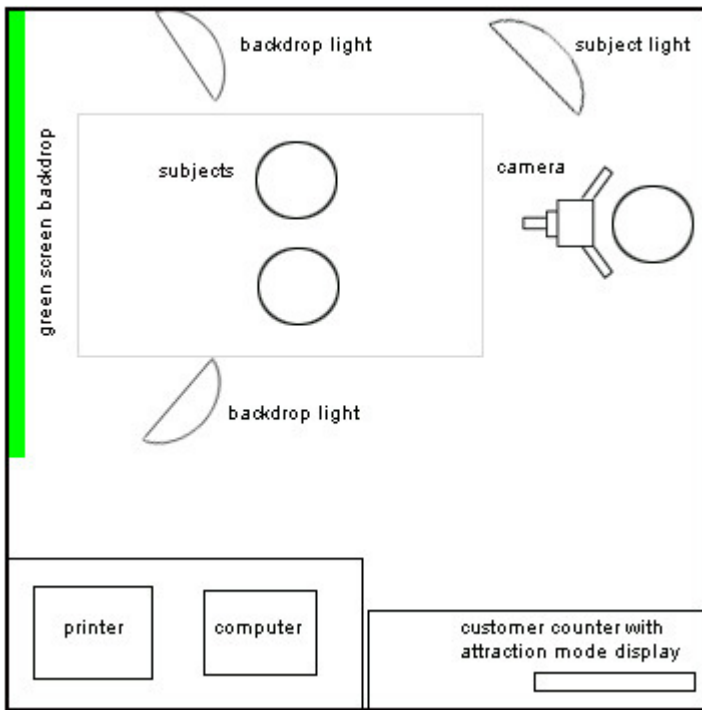
Leave the customer counter side and the customer entrance side open.
Utilize the canopy wall panels on the other sides. This helps filter out
interference with your lighting.

Signage

Proper identification of your business using signage will help customers find you. It should be apparent from 100 feet away what you're selling. In an event scenario, you will be competing with lots of vendors for the attention of visitors.

Often there are crowds of people, so actually navigating to your booth won't always be easy. The first consideration for signage is a banner for the top of your booth that stands well above the crowd. Your product is fun and quirky and unique, so your banner design should convey a sense of fun. It should be a magnet that attracts eyes and makes people want to see what's going on at your booth. Make sure the primary lettering is large enough to be seen from a far distance. Choose a phrase that is instantly definable, rather than a non-descript business name.

Good Banners:

- Novelty Photos!
- Funny Fotos
- Goofy Pics
- Your Face On A Magazine

Bad Banners:

- Jones Enterprises (generic, means nothing to your customers)
- Unique Gifts (too general, not representative of your business)

Use bright colors and showcase your best products. Banners are made from heavy woven nylon or vinyl material and can be made to your specifications in virtually any size. You can design your banner in any photo editing application and save as a high resolution image file which your banner maker can print. Most banner makers also offer design services for a fee. See the Appendix for more information about where to order banners.

A-frame sidewalk signs, or "sandwich boards", are also a useful eye-catching method to advertise your products. If not too intrusive to the flow of pedestrians, they can be placed in the walking path in front of your booth. Eye will naturally divert to them. They fold up, are light-weight and easy to transport.

Business Considerations

The business of novelty photos is fun, but it's still a business. While this is not a comprehensive guide in terms of the business aspect, we will discuss the basic framework. It is prudent that you research licensing and taxation requirements for your locality. You may wish to consult an accountant who is qualified and knowledgeable regarding small business finances and how to manage them.

Getting Started Checklist:

- **Apply for an EIN** (Employer Identification Number, or Federal Tax Identification Number). This number is similar to a social security number, except for a business entity. You will use this number to report income and file taxes with the IRS. It's free to apply online and receive your EIN immediately. Visit: http://www.irs.gov/businesses/small/index.html
- **Structure your business**. As a legal business entity, there are different structures you can adopt that determine how you pay and file taxes. For an individually owned business, the most common structures are Sole Proprietor and LLC (Limited Liability Company). For more information about which business structure is right for you, visit the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) website here: http://www.sba.gov/smallbusinessplanner/start/chooseastructure/START_FORMS_OWNERSHIP.html
- **Determine accounting method**. It is important to understand the tax collection process when you run your own business. When you work for an employer, tax deduction is automatic. When you run your own business, you are responsible for deducting and paying all tax liabilities. It takes discipline and a deeper understanding of the taxation process. Not everyone is well-suited to the accounting aspect of running a business, so consult a professional if you don't fully grasp and understand the tax implications.
- **Procure any local licensing requirements**. Besides the federal requirements, your state also has rules about taxation and reporting of income. Because novelty photos are a physical product, your business is technically a retail *and* service business. Your state may require a Seller's Permit to vend goods. Check with your state's franchise tax board to find out the requirements in your locality.
- Beyond the state level, the county in which you operate your business may have licensing requirements as well. Many events will require that you have a temporary permit to sell at an event within the county. A permit is usually obtained by filling out a short application for the temporary allowance to sell goods or services.

- **File a DBA if necessary**. If you plan to operate under a fictitious name as a Sole Proprietor, you may need to file a DBA (Doing Business As) statement with your county recorder. You've probably seen DBA notices in the back section of your local newspaper.
- **Open a bank account**. You'll want a separate bank account for your business entity to keep it segregated from your personal finances. You'll need to provide your LLC or DBA information if you wish to receive funds in the name of your business, such as personal check.
- **Save all receipts**. Any time you purchase goods or services required to operate your business, there is a good chance you can claim a deduction from your tax liability. Examples might include advertising, space rental fees, even gas. While the benefits of claiming deductions are many, realize that you will need to be meticulous with your record keeping and save all receipts. Consult a tax professional for more information.

Processing Sales

Every event vendor needs a POS (Point Of Sale) system of some sort. Your system can be as simple as a steel locking cash box and a paper log. Or, you can use special POS software to keep track of your sales.

Cash may be king, but you should make it as easy and convenient as possible for your customers to pay for your products. The ability to accept alternative methods of payment will increase your sales considerably. Plastic is the predominant payment method for brick and mortar retailers, so it stands to reason that your customers will buy more product if you accept credit and debit cards. The challenge of course is that your operation is mobile. But in the age of powerful cellular networks this is no longer a problem. As long as you are in an area with fair cellular coverage, you can accept credit cards using a small terminal specifically designed to work with your existing cellular service. The terminal and optional thermal receipt printer connect to your cell phone to dial in to the merchant account provider and process the payment. It's really not much different than a credit card processing machine that uses a regular phone line. *It is highly advisable to accept credit cards.*

Important! Prominently display the Visa and MasterCard logos at your customer counter so customers are aware that they can pay by credit and debit card.

There is a well-documented psychological difference in how we perceive cash verses plastic. We are emotionally more attached to cash. It "hurts" when we hand over cash. Plastic is easier to hand over because most of us don't associate the same pain when the impact is not immediate. Consumers are pretty good at justifying an impulsive purchase by using credit.

For information about cellular credit card terminals, visit:
http://www.merchant-accounts.com/cell-phone-processing.html

Personal checks are another option for accepting payment, but proceed with caution. Bounced checks are not easy to collect on, and usually not worth the time expenditure to pursue.

On a final note regarding payment collection, always keep an ample supply of petty cash to make change for your customers. You'll want a good deal of smaller bills in particular.

Novelty Photo Studio Attraction Mode

Attraction Mode is a special function of Novelty Photo Studio designed to showcase novelty photos on a second display monitor to "attract" customers. You can use this function during slow periods if using a computer system with a single video source, or use it full time by running a second instance of Novelty Photo Studio on systems capable of running two video sources. Here's the difference:

Single video source systems use a VGA splitter to *send the same video output to 2 or more monitors*. In other words, the output seen on your display is the same output seen on the customer display(s). In this mode, you can choose to enable the customer display only when launching the Attraction Mode function, or leave it on full-time if you'd like to give your visitors the ability to watch you work as you create the photos. If using a laptop, a single splitter will actually provide 3 outputs, because by design laptops already support an external video source.
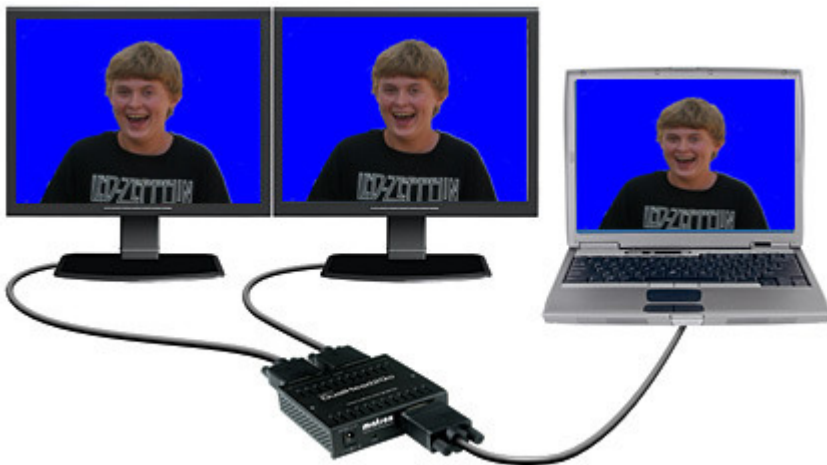
Example of single VGA splitter

Dual video source systems have the ability to split output between 2 or more monitors by employing additional video channels and configuring multiple displays within the Windows operating system. This is accomplished by using a second video card or a special video card with multiple outputs. The benefit of dual mode is that you can perform your editing work on one display while running Attraction Mode on a secondary display full-time.

Example of a multi-port VGA splitter

Example of single video source splitter used with 2 displays and a laptop

To use Novelty Photo Studio Attraction Mode, you first must save a number of images to a special folder accessible from the top menu. When the function is launched, images within the folder will be rotated in a slideshow format. For example, if you create something for a customer that came out particularly well and you want to showcase it, simply save a copy to the Attraction Mode folder.

There are a few parameters you can specify to configure your slideshow. You can choose the transition effect that controls how images scroll from one to the next, such as a fade in. Or you can choose to randomize the

effects for variety. You can also specify the frame time in seconds for each photo to control how long it displays.

Tip: If the majority of your images are portrait mode, configure your displays vertically! This allows your portrait-oriented images to show in larger proportion. Since the image automatically adjusts to the size of the view, turning the display vertically makes much better use of available screen real estate. Landscape-oriented photos would show larger on a regularly positioned display. The below graphic illustrates the difference.

22" wide-format display, vertical and horizontal comparison

Using a wide-format 22" or larger LCD display positioned vertically is a great way to use Attraction Mode for maximum visibility.

Change the orientation of your display within Windows by holding down the Ctrl + Alt keys simultaneously and selecting an arrow key. The arrow key selected will be the position of the top of the display. For instance, when selecting the right arrow key, the entire display will rotate 90 degrees clock-wise. Likewise, the down arrow would actually rotate the display 180 degrees to flip the display upside down.

The Attraction Mode folder works like any other folder. Simply save items to the folder to add them in the slideshow, and delete them from the folder to remove them from the slideshow.

Placing Your Displays

The customer display monitor that you use with Attraction Mode should face outward, away from your booth. Place it on your customer counter so that it is viewable as people approach the booth.

As an alternative, you can purchase a display stand that is designed to elevate an LCD display. This is an excellent way to get high visibility for your slideshow as the display is above head level, thus unobstructed and visible from a distance.

Print Auditing

You may wish to keep track of the number of print jobs being sent to the printer so that you can balance it against your sales records to make sure they match. This can be accomplished by enabling a built-in function of the Windows operating system.

To enable Print Auditing:

- Go to Start > Printers and Faxes *(or Start > Settings > Printers in Windows 2000.)*

- Right-click on the desired printer and select Properties

- Click on the Security tab

- Select Auditing and click the Add button. You will be prompted with an Add Users and Groups dialog box. If your system is set up with just the default administrator account, you can add an additional user account before performing this step for print auditing purposes. Set up a new user by going to *Start > Programs > Administrative Tools > Computer Management > Users and Groups.*

- Select the Users/Groups who you want to audit and click Add.

- Once finished click the OK button. In the Printer Auditing main dialog select the events to Audit, i.e. Print, Delete.

- Print events will now be sent to the Security log. To view the log, open Event Viewer from *Start > Programs > Administrative Tools* and select the Security tab.

Requirements Summary

Here's a checklist of things you'll need to start your novelty photo business. For details on each item, see the appropriate section of this guide for review. This is a basic checklist and does not include consumables such as printer supplies, and extras such as photo frames, etc.

- Digital SLR camera with remote and tripod
- External flash
- Computer system or laptop
- Extra display(s) and VGA splitter for Attraction Mode
- Dye-sublimation photo printer
- Lighting system
- Green screen backdrop and stand
- Power generator and extension cord
- Novelty Photo Studio software
- Live capture camera software (if necessary)
- Canopy shelter
- Ground matte
- Banner and signage
- Point Of Sale (POS) system
- Power generator
- Any required business-related considerations such as licensing, bank account, formation of a legal business entity, obtaining an EIN, consulting a tax professional.

Appendix

Resources for various components of your novelty photo business.

Software

http://noveltyphotosoftware.com
Novelty Photo Studio

http://breezesys.com
Remote capture software for Canon and Nikon cameras. For other brands, consult the manufacturer.

Cameras and accessories

For general information, Steve's Digicams is probably the largest photography site on the web. It is an excellent site with product reviews and user forums. It is frequented by professional photographers that have event photography experience, so it really is an invaluable resource to research cameras and printers and to find tips and tricks for getting the best results from real-world experience.

http://steves-digicams.com

To purchase cameras and accessories, shop locally or compare prices at large retail sites like Samys, Adorama, Amazon, Bizrate, Nextag.

Green Screen Supplies

Tubetape specializes in green screen equipment and accessories. You can purchase muslin backdrops, stands, light kits and more. The site also has a wealth of information about green screen in general. Visit them at:

http://tubetape.com

Lighting Kits

Image West has the best deals around for economy lighting kits. They are experts in studio and location lighting, so their kits are assembled with the right components to get the best results.

http://imagewest.tv

Canopies

To save shipping charges, you can usually find good deals locally on commercial-grade canopies. Check large warehouse retailers such as Costco and Sam's Club. Here are a few online resources that will help you decide what type of canopy is best for you.

http://ezup.com
Well-known canopy manufacturer

http://www.kdkanopy.com
Canopies and accessories

http://www.displays2go.com
Excellent site with a large variety of canopies and accessories

Ground Mats

Using a ground mat under your booth will help protect your computer and camera equipment from any unnecessary dust.

http://www.rvawningmats.com/

Banners and Signage

There are several online sign shops that allow you to upload your designs or create designs on the website. Turnaround time is very fast and shipping is inexpensive. Online vinyl banner shops can save you as much as 50% over a local shop because they deal in extremely high volume. They can also provide sandwich boards, door magnets and more.

http://www.bannersforhalfprice.com/

http://www.alwayssign.com

http://www.speedysigns.com

Portable Counters

Lightweight, reasonably priced and easy-to-assemble portable counters, as seen in this guide, can be found here:

http://www.displays2go.com/product.asp?ID=4889

Display Stands

Elevate your Attraction Mode display above the crowd for maximum visibility by using a display stand.

http://www.flexidisplay.com/LCD-Stands-Mounts-s/100.htm

Heat Transfer Printers and Supplies

For all you've ever wanted to know about the heat transfer process, as well as printers, ink, presses and accessories, visit Alpha Supply. They are experts in heat transfer and the site is packed with information.

http://www.transferbusiness.com/

Novelty Photo Gift Supplies

Casi/QLT has been around for over 30 years and carries a large line of products and accessories for personalized photo products.

http://qlt.com

Cellular Credit Card Processing

http://www.merchant-accounts.com/cell-phone-processing.html

Point Of Sale Software

POS software prices can range from very inexpensive to several thousands of dollars, such as QuickBooks. Consult your credit card processor for recommended POS systems. If you're looking for a basic standalone system suitable for a small business, for under $75, check out Easy Invoice:

http://www.pos-gold.com

If you plan to print receipts, POS Guys carries economical thermal receipt printers as well as a host of other POS equipment.

http://www.posguys.com/receipt-printer_12

Photo Frames

Dollar Days is a wholesale bulk retailer that sells to regular consumers. They carry a variety of economical frames, as low as $1 per piece in quantity. Requires free account signup.

http://www.dollardays.com

Business Links

The following links will help you establish your business as a legal business entity.

Obtain your federal EIN number online:

https://sa2.www4.irs.gov/modiein/individual/index.jsp

Types of Business Organizations (*sole proprietor, LLC, etc.*)

http://taxes.about.com/od/taxplanning/a/incorporating_2.htm

Form an LLC (*Limited Liability Corporation*)

Note that an LLC can be formed in any state regardless of where you conduct business. Each state has a different fee structure and filing requirements. Many businesses form LLC's out of Delaware or Nevada because it's significantly cheaper than their home state.

http://llc.com

http://legalzoom.com

Business License

Each state has it's own requirements for obtaining any required business licensing. The Small Business Administration (SBA) is governmental organization that provides information and resources to small business owners. This list, from the SBA site, contains links for each state regarding business licensing:

http://www.sba.gov/hotlist/license.html

Seller's Permits and Event Permits

Consult your state board of equalization, or the department that handles matters of taxation for information about required permits and licenses in your state.

Similarly, for county requirements contact your local tax collector's office.

Events List

Where to sell? For a list of all types of events in all states, visit:

http://www.festivals.com/

http://festivalnet.com

http://www.fairsandfestivals.net/

Additional Links

General business resource site. Lots of great information:

http://www.allbusiness.com/

Small business information, excellent site:

http://www.smallbusinessresources.com/

IRS small business and tax information:

http://www.irs.gov/businesses/small/

Green screen tutorial. Geared towards video production, but the same principles apply to still photography.

http://www.mediacollege.com/video/special-effects/green-screen/

Here is an excellent site that explains how to assemble a do-it-yourself green screen setup. Also shows you how to build an economical stand out of PVC.

http://web.me.com/geerlingguy/articles/photography/diy-greenscreen.html