

**TOO LATE TO DEBATE ENTERING THE PHOTO PUBLISHING BUSINESS? ▼**

**Why is photo publishing a big deal for photo businesses?**

It started with photo calendars – a great gift for the holiday season, useful and creative, yet very affordable. Then the industry struck a home run with custom photo holiday cards, a more personal way for expressing holiday wishes, yet cheaper than traditional cards.

By 2007, photo books had broken \$250 million in sales to become the next major category in what was becoming a portfolio of custom photo products.

Until that point, it seemed like a constant race to identify the next popular product among dozens – photo playing cards, key chains, mouse pads, and more – in the so-called custom photo products category. It was not until recently, with the addition of more card products – such as photo wedding cards, invitation cards, and announcement cards – that the industry seemed to find a direction for applying its custom printing capabilities, and the category was renamed “photo publishing.”

If you are still debating if photo publishing is a business worth investing in, here are the PMA report bits you need to know:

1. Photo publishing – primarily holiday cards and photo books – now represents 35 percent of the total digital photo printing revenue, up from 24 percent in 2005.
2. While revenues from standard digital photo printing declined 3 percent in 2009, photo publishing revenue grew and is expected to continue growing in 2010 at the rate of 9 percent; hence, its weight on total digital photo printing revenue will grow further.
3. Most important – a point often overlooked when evaluating the potential of the photo publishing market – photo publishing gives photo businesses the opportunity to grab market share in the multi-billion dollar stationery and gifting businesses.

Photo publishing products do, in fact, compete with traditional stationery and gifting products. In Australia, consumers purchasing photo cards reduced their purchasing of traditional greeting and holiday cards by 12 percent, on average. As long as photo publishing can continue penetrating other industries by personalizing traditional products at competitive or lower prices, it will continue to grow and provide reliable cash flows to participating businesses.

If photo enthusiasts are a retailer’s core customers, they can also become the best photo publishing customers. According to the 2009 U.S. Camera/Camcorder and Digital Imaging survey, photo enthusiasts are about twice as likely as typical consumers to purchase photo publishing products.

As for what’s next in photo publishing, how about business stationery?

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