



Creve Coeur Camera: Networked for Profits

BY MICHAEL ASHE

Take more than 30 years of thriving photo retailing experience and combine it with new digital networking technology, and you've got a business ready to put growth into high gear.

On October 15th, Creve Coeur Camera opens its first digital photo lounge at its newest store. Within the lounge and its eight stores in St. Louis, all the Automated Photo Machines (APM) now are networked, creating new printing options for customers and higher profit potentials for Creve Coeur Camera.

In July, Creve Coeur Camera took a big step toward its October opening by upgrading the software on each APM photo kiosk and putting each kiosk on a wide area network. Creve Coeur Camera has about 30 Lucidiom APMs as well as kiosks from Agfa and Kodak.

With the new software upgrade and its Internet-based networking, Creve Coeur Camera can have its customers choose between printing their photos at the photo kiosk on dye-sublimation printers or redirecting them to Creve Coeur Camera's lab. At the lab, they don't get the instant turn-around for prints like they receive at the kiosk, but they get a lower cost-per-print price. Thus how fast they need their prints determines how much they might pay for their photos.

Creve Coeur Camera customers can print bordered or borderless photos, put them in templates for greeting cards, burn CDs and order multiple prints and sizes from one screen. Plus, the software helps customers fine-tune their photos with cropping, image enhancements and red-eye reduction. The kiosks support all digital media types and incorporate Bluetooth and infrared technology for camera-phone support. Verbal prompts lead customers through the ordering process with most orders completed within two minutes.

"Our digital photo business is doubling every week since we upgraded our software," said Stephen Weiss, president of Creve Coeur Camera. "It's not hitting our old analog film numbers yet, but we're pleased with how fast it's moving forward. Soon we're launching our five-minute infomercial on local cable TV to help push our digital photo sales."

Creve Coeur Camera prides itself on not just offering the best in digital photo options, but being a full-service retailer. The current flagship store in Creve Coeur, Missouri consists of 9,000 feet of selling area, plus a comprehensive lab and classroom totaling 3,000 feet. The chain offers the latest in digital equipment, quality production from its lab, wedding and event photography, Seeger People photo sculptures, video services and other products with its full line of merchandise. Additional customer services include repair service, rentals and free photography classes.

Creve Coeur Camera teaches customers how to get the most out of their digital cameras at a kiosk and through other photo-finishing services in the Creve Coeur Camera School of Imaging. Free and paid seminars are offered at the Creve Coeur location, and they cover everything from "Digital Basics," which includes information about printing digital images on a kiosk, to "The

**Stephen Weiss,
president of Creve
Coeur Camera
with one of their
APM kiosks.**

Digital Darkroom," which instructs users in software applications like Adobe Photoshop Elements.

"With our kiosks networked and upgraded, our staff has more time to focus on individual customer needs and help them preserve their memories with the finest images possible," commented Weiss. "The knowledge of our staff is really the big difference between us and our competitors. That's one of the main reasons I chose Lucidiom originally for our kiosks. Service and support after the sale is key." Lucidiom's retail support director came out personally to help upgrade Creve Coeur Camera's equipment and software and then trained the chain's technicians.

Upgrading System

In July, Russ McIver, director of systems integration and support for Lucidiom, spent three days upgrading Creve Coeur Camera's automated photo machines, upgrading their software and putting every machine online. "Basically we pulled together Creve Coeur Camera's diverse infrastructure, so that their staff can add new products and track what is being sold already," said McIver.

With all the kiosks networked together since the new July upgrade, Creve Coeur Camera can track orders and customer preferences through Lucidiom's ProfitWatcher software. And by knowing how its customers use the kiosks, Creve Coeur Camera has the opportunity to create more targeted promotional packages and customer coupons, an important feature for when it starts hyping its new digital photo lounge to the public. They can manage store workflows and fulfillment, creating premium and standard fulfillment orders for its customers. The software allows Creve Coeur Camera to set the prices for its products, especially with tiered pricing for each fulfillment type. **End**

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