

Thinking out of the box

From small beginnings two years ago Photographic Synergy has now hugely built up the event photography side of its business, being partnered all the way by Mitsubishi printers

Although having a track record as a specialist in photographing children in their homes, Photographic Synergy has recently become a clandestine event photography company, to the extent where this activity now forms a core part of its business.

It all started just two-and-a-half years ago when the company took on a job to photograph children having fun meeting Father Christmas in Santa's Grotto, and since then things have escalated to the point where Photographic Synergy is now covering events all across the country, and not only visiting activities that have been organised by others but setting up their own opportunities and thinking very much out of the box in terms of things that will prove irresistible to the widest possible range of people.

The beginnings might have been small, but Photographic Synergy knew from the outset that they needed to be backed up by the best and most reliable event equipment around, and so it was little surprise that they should have gone to Mitsubishi to source the high speed dye sub printers and front end systems that could keep pace with the level of print orders that were expected.

"One rule we always stick to is buy the best," says Photographic Synergy's MD Mark Booth. "It can cost you more money at times but if you buy the best you only cry once, whereas if you buy a lesser product you'll cry many times! We've found that in this business you need speed, reliability and quality and the Mitsubishi product range has

always provided this, along with a first class support service."

For the Santa's Grotto project the team used a Mitsubishi Click IT5000 front end, which features a 17in touch screen control to ensure that it is both straightforward and intuitive to use, and this was partnered with a pair of CP9800DW printers which are 300dpi models featuring a 600-sheet 6x4in print capacity, longer head life, shorter job times and superb print quality, allied with the ability to produce 100 prints within 15 minutes with no cooling, purpose design front and back carry handles integrated into the printer and a two-year warranty as standard. Print times of 8.7 seconds for borderless 6x4in photos, rising to just 19 seconds for a 6x9in print - the largest size available - made this the perfect partner for what was a very full-on assignment.

"The printers gave us lightening fast print speeds," says Mark, "and allowed us to get through 120 customers per day per machine - ultimately we managed to serve approximately 480 people a day with this set-up. The ability of the Click IT5000 to work with the two printers meant that we could dramatically cut the delivery time, being able to output two 9x6in prints in 20 seconds before moving on to the next customer. This grotto would not have been as profitable if we hadn't have had printers that could output an image in that kind of time scale, since clients would simply have chosen not to queue. We give people the option to view and because of the functionality of the IT5000 and the

engagement of the sales staff you can select your image in a matter of seconds and your entire sale can be done in minutes."

After completing this initial job, Photographic Synergy was left wondering how to make the best use of the new event photography equipment they had just invested heavily in, since it seemed that it might not make best use of its full potential if its use was restricted simply to the usual event scenarios. "After some quick research we could see that the size of the market was substantial," says Mark, "and we realised that wherever you can create a photo opportunity and an operational workflow to use the equipment you've probably got a way to make some substantial money. The profits can be substantial in this business if you get the right pitches and utilise the equipment available to you in the best way possible, and that's what we decided to do."

On the back of this realisation Photographic Synergy decided to create their own photo opportunities to utilise the equipment all year round, with the aim of replicating the workflow of a grotto or creating a workflow out of an event that would not normally have had photography as one of its elements. "We've found that even though digital cameras are so prevalent these days, creating an opportunity for the photograph and providing something for the customer to take away still holds a lot of value," says Mark, "and you can certainly build a business out of it."

Mitsubishi printers have helped Photographic Synergy to tackle their new challenge. "Last Christmas we operated our hugely successful Snow Globes for 45 days at a stretch," says Mark, "and even though the business was so intense we never had any issues with the Mitsubishi equipment printing all day long. It justified our initial investment and proved we had picked the right partner for our business." ❧

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Some of the scenarios created since that time include:

- A giant egg set up in a farmyard village over Easter, where customers are shown their image on the screen of the IT5000 and the sale is encouraged, concluded and output on the spot.
- Swimming photography at the local pool, where Photographic Synergy works with a swimming club to present images poolside and to output them for people to take away. Due to the nature of the images clubs were not keen for them to be put online to order and so a scenario where images are printed and then deleted immediately afterwards worked well, and packs similar to the ones offered to the nursery

audience, and including key rings and an assortment of print sizes, could be output in a matter of minutes.

- A sensational Giant Snow Globe, a concept that was launched in 2008 and which will be more prevalent in a selection of major shopping centres this year. By setting this amazing contraption up in a high traffic area the passing audience is entertained by the people already being photographed and encouraged to take part. Once signed up, the customers go in, play around and leave with a fantastic photo of them having fun, which is unlike anything anyone else can provide.

