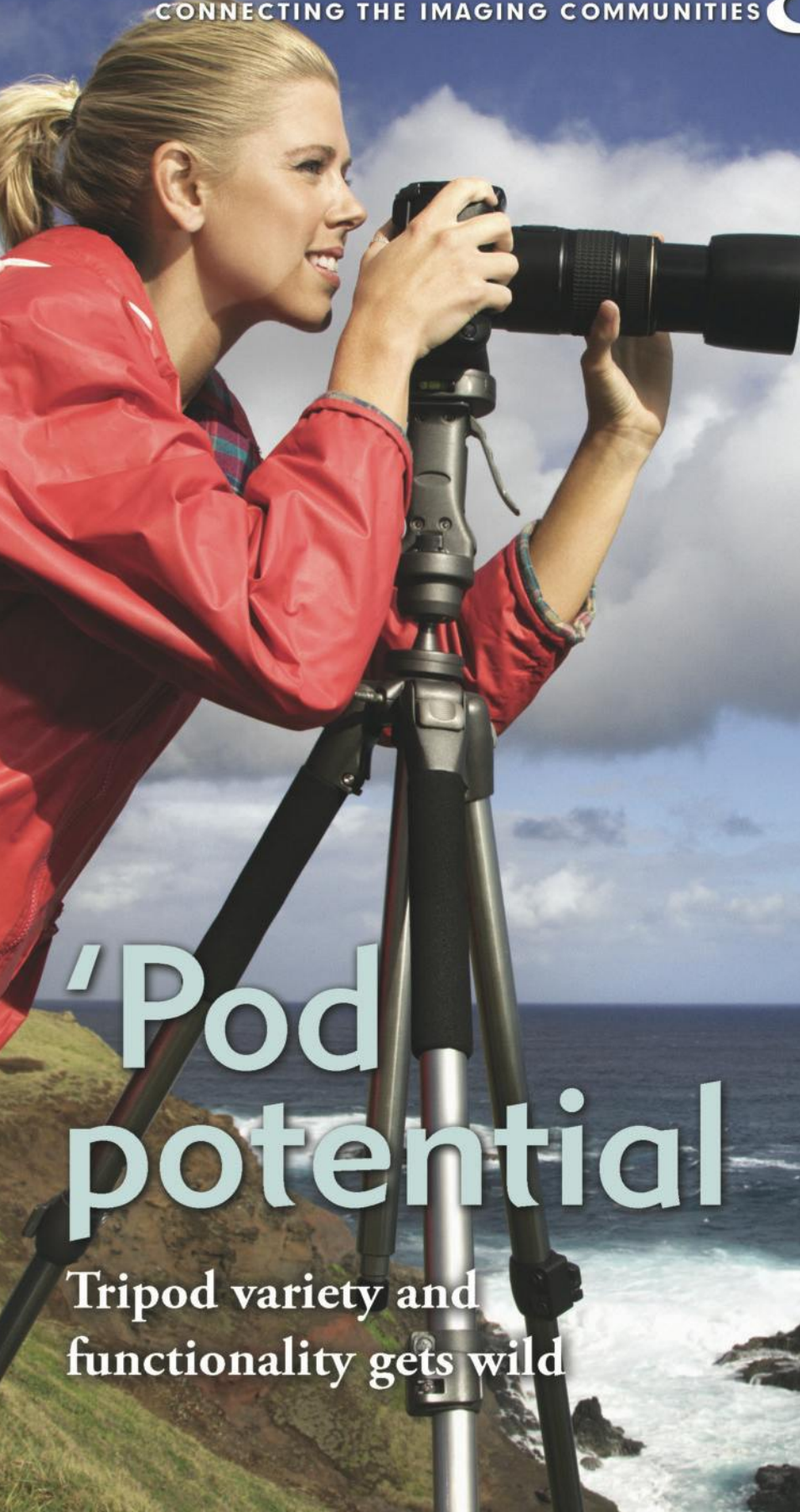


# PMA Magazine

June 2009

CONNECTING THE IMAGING COMMUNITIES

www.pmai.org



## **Storytelling matters**

Build new business by helping customers tell their stories

## **Duplex opportunities**

Read about trends in duplex printing from Noritsu and MOO

## **Wide reach**

Find out how retailers are targeting customers in their communities

# 'Pod potential

Tripod variety and functionality gets wild

# Tell me a story

By Jennifer Barr Kruger

## Build new business by helping customers tell their stories

“You can’t separate storytelling from photography; storytelling is the reason for photography,” says **Wade Lagrone**, vice president of marketing for **ScanCafe Inc. (www.scancafe.com)**, Burlingame, Calif.

“Storytelling isn’t always easy. It often doesn’t come naturally,” Lagrone explains. “In any given family, there is typically one person at the Thanksgiving dinner table known for telling great stories.”

### Storytelling is important

**Glenn Omura**, Ph.D., associate professor of marketing at **Michigan State University**, says family storytellers play a critical role.

“This is embedded in our culture. People want to tell stories. When you’re at a family gathering, the storyteller is the hero,” Omura says. “For the imaging industry, marketing a storytelling platform allows us to make our customers heroes by helping them tell better stories.”

That stories are behind images is pretty obvious; but as an industry, Omura says, we have never really focused on telling stories.

“Part of the reason is a mindset of defining ourselves by an image, a 4-by-6 print. That has created a box we’re trapped in,” he says.

While photo books have led the imaging industry partially from



Finding a compelling photo among your customers’ images can help retailers market the idea of storytelling.

that box, Omura says marketing them as a type of album misses the point.

“The focus has been on the convenience and simplicity of reproducing digitally what you have been doing all along with albums. It’s just a mechanical approach,” he explains. “The real magic of photo books – or any multi-image photo product – is the story. What really captures the emotions of people is the meaning behind the images.”

### Storytelling 101

The ideal scenario in the storytelling platform is getting consumers to think about the story they will want tell before snapping the picture. Here are eight tips to share with customers about how to tell a story with their images:

1. Take pictures that chronicle an event from beginning to end.
2. Plan the content of the pictures to progress the story.
3. Capture candid shots that help tell the story of an event, rather than just posed groups.
4. Pass the camera to others, getting different perspectives on the story of that event.
5. Let kids tell part of the story by taking some pictures themselves.
6. Make a “day in the life” story of your child, taking pictures from morning until bedtime.
7. Do not lose your story to time or busyness. When the pictures are captured, get the story told in a photo book or other product right away.
8. Use text or recorded audio to enhance the story, if needed.

### Constructing the story

There are two great things about storytelling as a business platform:

1. Consumers already think in terms of the stories behind their pictures.
2. The products to help them do it already exist.

The only difference between a regular photo book and a photo book that tells a story, Omura says, is a story needs to have a theme, as well as a beginning, a middle, and an end. The pictures progress to tell the story as it happened. Text or recorded messages can also help. “The easiest place to start



Consumers already think of their pictures in terms of the stories behind them, according to Glenn Omura.

marketing this to consumers is the stories they know best: things like holidays, vacations, hobbies, or sporting tournaments,” he explains. “Beyond that, there are emotional events, such as relationship stories, courtship stories, and baby stories, starting from the ultrasound pictures through the birth pictures.”

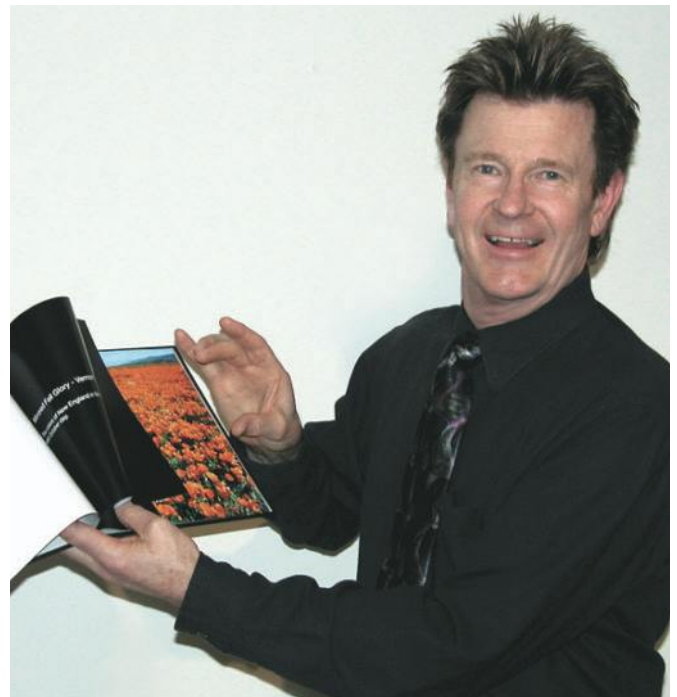
People’s lives are also filled with little, everyday stories lending themselves to retelling through photo products, such as collages.

“A photo of Uncle Bob eating ice cream may not tell a story in itself,” says consumer imaging consultant **Jim Everett** ([www.itookthat.com](http://www.itookthat.com)), Los Angeles, Calif.

“Imagine using photos to tell the story of the day we went out with Uncle Bob, and he was determined to get an ice cream. He was just like a kid. He bumped his head getting back in the car. The top of the ice cream fell off and landed in his lap, and here’s the last picture of Uncle Bob looking quite disappointed.”

“This comes back to why people take pictures in the first place,” Everett adds. “When someone shows you their vacation pictures, you often feel tempted to ask, ‘Why are you showing me this?’ If the collection of pictures tells the story properly, that’s self-evident. That question doesn’t need to be asked.”

*Continued on page 16*



When pictures tell a good story, it will resonate down through the generations, says consumer imaging consultant Jim Everett.

# Drive More Customers to Your Store!

Save yourself time and money with PMA® Digital AdMaker, a web-based resource offering professionally produced print, radio, TV and web ads.



<http://admaker.pmai.org>

### Who can use this?

"I see applications in a storytelling platform for practically every retailer, as well as others in the imaging industry," Omura states.

"This is a particularly great platform for the independent retailer, whose primary differentiating feature is customer service. The average consumer has a difficult time imagining how to create the story and know which products they can use to do it."

Many consumers will benefit from more in-depth help as well.

"Consumers know what their stories are, but not the technical methods of making that story work better," says Lagrone. "That's something the industry can do to help them."

"Let's say you're trying to tell the story of a graduation day when the principle accidentally handed your son the wrong diploma. They both realized it and laughed when they figured it out. It was a warm moment; but you didn't have a telephoto lens, so you can't see the expression on your son's face that well. The retailer has the chance to tell that customer, 'If we enlarge and crop that photo, we can see more of your son's face.' That's a real opportunity to add value for the customer."

The challenge is greater for mass retailers, who rely on high-traffic volume more than customer service.

"If they can figure out how to create merchandising displays that bring to life the idea of stories, and use the kiosk in that way, chain retailers can also benefit from a storytelling platform," Omura says.

There is ample benefit in the storytelling concept for photographers. "A sports photographer, for example, could build a story around a kid's **Little League** season or trip to the playoffs," Omura notes.

The storytelling foundation provides not only a marketing opportunity, but also a way to connect with a customer on a deeper level.

"One simple way of encouraging customers to think about telling their stories is just to say, 'Wow, I love this picture. It really draws me in and makes me want to know more about what happened,'" Everett says. "That makes customers feel good, and it



To keep family stories of the past alive, ScanCafe recommends digitizing and restoring old family photos.

predisposes them to the idea of telling their stories."

### Preserving family histories

A compelling argument for telling stories with photo products is preserving them for future generations.

"I think people are forgetting our next generation wants to be able to tell stories and have pictures of family members, just as we have always done," says **Lori Rupp**, owner of

**Kohne Camera & Photo** ([www.kohnes.com](http://www.kohnes.com)), Perrysburg, Ohio.

"They don't think about saving their images properly or making products their kids will want in the future," Rupp explains. "They're going to want pictures of the day you were all out flying a kite. They're going to want to tell their own kids stories about their grandparents and great-grandparents. We need to help our customers think about that, because they won't do it on their own."

What about the family history that exists as old prints? There is a big danger of those being lost in the digital world, along with the stories behind them – which is the message ScanCafe is trying to spread.

"Our whole business is about saving, preserving, and remembering this terrific legacy of consumer photography. All those photographs people have taken are going away," Lagrone says. "They are fading, or changing color, or getting scratched beyond recognition. They are being lost to fire, water, kids, and pets. These are family stories that need to be recorded before they're gone forever."

Although ScanCafe and other companies are making it easy for consumers to digitize all those old prints, many consumers still find the prospect daunting.

To them, Rupp advises: "Just begin with the pictures you take now. I encourage my customers to keep no more than two or three events on a media card, and then get their prints or photo books made," she says. "Then they can tell the stories of those events before they have so many images on their cards they don't even know what they have."

Storytelling is a phenomenon reaching across every culture and every age – and with a little help from the industry, the concept could hold tremendous appeal for photo consumers.

"When pictures tell a story that is valid and good, that will resonate down through the generations," Everett says.

"Sometimes, pictures will even tell stories you never expected." ■



Lori Rupp says many consumers don't think about making the photo products their children will want in the future when telling family stories to their own kids.