



Your email address..

Subscribe

Inside Imaging

TECHNOLOGY, TRENDS & BUSINESS NEWS

August 11, 2021



Epson SureLab Printer
Sales, Support & Connectivity



Is photo in 'retail recession'?

AUGUST 23, 2019

Early this month upmarket department store chain David Jones slashed over \$400 million from its own value, claiming Australia was in the grip of something it called a **'retail recession'**. The next week JB Hi Fi came out with a belter of a result, increasing profit by over 7 percent to \$250 million. The CEO took the opportunity to have a passing shot at the likes of DJs and Myer for losing relevance with consumers and then blaming it on recession.

The boss of Amazon Australia and good ol' Uncle Gerry Harvey also laid the boot in to DJ's South African management.

So what is it? A 'retail recession' or just another big business blaming everyone but its own management for its failures. Has the photography sector lost relevance too? We asked a few of our industry contacts from the supply side, retailing and professional photography to tell us how recessionary they were feeling.

...But our four contributors don't even represent a microcosm of the industry. It would be a great favour to *Inside Imaging* and our photo community readership if other small business people chipped in with their own observations in our Comments section at the end of the page. Here's a few to get the ball rolling...

Alan Logue, Hutt Street Photos, Adelaide

I don't know or care if we are the 'last man standing', but whatever we are, it is working for us.

We are also lucky that our business is not an internet business – by that I mean customers have to come to us, or post stuff to us for it to be done. Sure we do a few online print orders and photo books,

but you can't send slides or photos or videos to us 'on the internet' – they have to be brought in. That makes us far less susceptible to the whims of the 'net. We are a bricks-and-mortar business where goods have to come to us for us to do the work, so we need to make sure we tell everyone what we do and how we can 'save their memories'.

We are lucky enough to have great staff who love what they do, and the comments from customers helps me know they are doing their job well.



We are about to do more advertising on another radio station which will effectively increase our advertising by 50 percent. (Just between you and me, it's currently \$40K/annum)

Film processing is going stupid – just as an example, this week has been 88, 57, and 73 rolls for the 3 days of this week. And this is in-store processing, not work for other labs.

Our biggest issue at present is what we do with films that are not collected after we Dropbox the files to the Millennial customers! I have trouble throwing negs away, but I am going to have to change my way of looking at negs – they are disposable!

We are looking forward to having NBN soon as our current upload speeds are woeful with ADSL2+.

We are buying ANOTHER printer in the next week or 2 to do our large mural prints.

With the new lab and extra film scanner, we effectively doubled our scanning capacity, and as I sit here typing this, we have an after-hours printer downstairs scanning slides. He comes in around 6pm and works through for about 3 hours, and he does that 2 or 3 nights a week. With no distractions like customers, he can easily knock out 1000 slides a session (at \$1 a slide, you do the numbers!)

Shoebox photo scanning is going bunta at the moment, and we are quoting 4 weeks service time – and we have 3 Kodak shoebox scanners. Generally there is one going all the time downstairs, and 1 going all the time upstairs.

We have more video tapes to transfer to DVD/USB than I can count.

The business is out there, you just have to go and find it. And the staff are working longer hours. They are happy, and I'm happy.

Hilary Wardhaugh, Hilary Wardhaugh Photography, ACT

I live in Queanbeyan near Canberra and as far as trading in this recession, I do feel it's changed enormously.

I do very little domestic work wedding/portrait these days so I can't really talk about that.

I reckon there'll always be the top end and the bottom end but the players in the middle really need to define themselves to make money... you really need to rely on astute business acumen to differentiate. I feel lucky that as I've been in business before social media and I'm known in the community I always get work. I do feel a lot of newbies rely on 'Likes' too much! You need to get out there in person.

I know that in 2011 I read that 70 percent of photographers had a second form of income (whether that be a partner with a job or a second job) I'm sure that most photographers have these days! I do! I've

managed to get a short contract as a photographer at the National Library of Australia and it's been a godsend for my financial situation at my time of life and as a single mum to a teen, but it's also a godsend to my mental health, as the social interaction with work mates is wonderful, something I've missed for 20 years!

I reckon we need to embrace diversity on our roles as photographers... Be innovative... Seek other ways to make money... As always look at where you are in life, set goals and don't be afraid to fail...



Stuart Holmes, iPhoto

In the retail market today it seems that 'Perception is Reality', and that the difference between the David Jones brand image and the JB Hi-Fi brand image is that one is a perceived 'expensive retail experience at a high end establishment retailer', compared to 'perceived lower prices offered at a more consumer friendly full-range polished concrete floor outlet store.'

Much the same can be said of the retail/ professional photo specialty market in Australia now. The astute marketeers of service, quality and value-added products (not necessarily price) in the photo industry are marketing their business on previously non-traditional social media platforms and trading well even in a so-called 'soft' environment.

Current conditions for investment in new higher quality and more efficient Capex photo equipment are present with the Federal Government's immediate tax depreciation write off scheme extended (up to \$30K), and record low interest rates (in 100 years) with prime rate at 1 percent interest are encouraging the astute retail and professional photo labs to invest in future-proofing their business, in both cost of production and quality of print output thereby staying ahead of their competition.



Stephen Perris, Byron Photo Magic, Byron Bay

When it comes to business this year I'm not sure if anyone is really breaking any records. As you would know many of us that are left in the industry still need to try different services etc... for us the 'resurgent' or 'slight rise' in the use of film back in photography has been a profitable trend against the general tracking for a traditional photo lab, but rolls are now counted in the 100s, not 1000s....

As with any small business the seemingly endless increases to operating costs in a limited margin product has been a challenge in my experience of 30 years... saying that, it is always encouraging when you visit a fellow business being still able to share ideas and experiences to the benefit of all.

So, for us we continue to offer as many services and products as we can support both physically and financially. That may take the form of second hand film cameras, b&w film processing or a Father's Day photo mug! (Yes – what is old is new again!)