

Click to Grow

Adopting technology at the right time is crucial to a business's productivity. Offering an EFTPOS payment solution is one such example. We talk to a successful business owner about fostering this technology at a crucial time in his business's growth

THREE YEARS AGO STUART HOLMES took a big risk. He started a business supplying photographic materials to retailers, and professional and commercial photographers. The catch was Independent Photographic Supplies (trading as iPHOTO) would be the only independent supplier in a market already monopolised by four major multinationals.

Despite the risk Holmes embraced the challenge. He aimed to offer a point of difference in terms of quality, service and price. "We thought what we'd like to provide is higher levels of service and technical support than what big companies traditionally do," Holmes says. And while his competitors target the mass merchants for business, iPHOTO primarily supplies the independent trade. That achieved, iPHOTO can now boast a multi-million dollar turnover.

Based in Sydney, iPHOTO supplies nationally and now has an additional warehouse in Perth. They've also begun a small amount of exporting, and the opportunities are only growing—as is the business.

Smooth Transition

Holmes has always been conscious of controlling the business's growth and ensuring a constant cash flow. He made a conscious business decision when he started iPHOTO to enforce a policy of 'payment with order' and their preferred payment method is by credit card. "So we don't actually operate a 30-day credit account for anybody. It might not have been the norm to do that but working with our customers and explaining the benefits, most people appreciate it," he says.

Initially iPHOTO simply did Express Cap card authorisations over the phone. But as Holmes explains it, his business "exploded" overnight when one of its four major competitors collapsed late

last year. "So that was a big free kick for us," he explains. "Suddenly 25 percent of the market became available for a new supplier." As a result iPHOTO picked up around 100 new accounts.

Another of the Big Four also withdrew from the market in March this year, by which time Holmes says it became crucial for him to update some systems. The business's phone traffic had increased four-fold and on recommendation from a client, Holmes began looking into using EFTPOS to process payments. "We got to such a point where we just needed to have EFTPOS because of the speed and convenience of putting through multiple transactions quickly, reducing the amount of paperwork and increasing our productivity," he says.

On a client's recommendation, Holmes also joined Gift and Homewares Australia (GHA) to boost his marketing, as well as to take advantage of some benefits offered to members such as competitive rates on EFTPOS services offered by the Commonwealth Bank. And having already banked with the Commonwealth from the business's outset, Holmes also thought it a natural extension to use their EFTPOS product. "Talking to this client of ours, he

highly suggested EFTPOS. He was using it through the Commonwealth as well and explained what we needed to do. We had a very close look at it and it was attractive, and because of the nature of the system and the buying power of GHA, it made it more attractive for us."

iPHOTO now use the Commonwealth Bank's EFTPOS PLUS terminal. The solution accepts all major credit, debit and charge cards, can process mail and telephone orders and businesses will receive funds the next business day into their Commonwealth Bank settlement account.

EFTPOS PLUS is suitable for merchants who process more than \$100,000 per year in card transactions, require a multi-functional terminal or require one or more terminals per site. While iPHOTO currently only use the one terminal, Holmes is happy the solution has a range of features the business can use, as it grows.

Members of GHA can take advantage of ultra-low rates on the Commonwealth Bank's EFTPOS services. EFTPOS PLUS is available at \$27.50 per month and a credit card rate of 0.77 percent. For more information phone 1800 730 554. ✚



Say "cheese": Stuart Holmes and iPHOTO's state of the art, fully temperature controlled logistics warehouse at Mascot, NSW.