

Sponsor Profile



"Independent Photographic Supplies
Celebrating 10 Years in the Photographic Industry"

Independent Photographic Supplies

You started up IPS with business partner Rob Voysey, what was your initial vision for the company?

Independent Photographic Supplies (IPS) was started almost 12 years ago in August, 2003 by Stuart Holmes and Rob Voysey, with the aim of providing a holistic range of quality photographic consumables and allied equipment and services for Photolab owners with an unbeatable combination of Superior Quality Products, Better levels of Service than previously experienced, and Significant Cost Reductions, therefore creating a better value proposition.

Our vision was to provide the Industry with an 'end to end' alternative with the "Best Brands in Imaging" along with a high level of professional services and technical support. This was something that we perceived was sadly lacking since the Industry 'hey days' Pre the Digital Revolution. In other words, good old fashioned service!

We knew we could apply our global knowledge of products, processes and services In Australia and New Zealand to effect a better service package for the photographic printing industry.

Can you tell us a bit about your backgrounds?



Stuart - One thing we always reflect on is that both Rob and I would appear to be 'two sides of the same coin' in our working Photographic Industry experiences. Both with long working histories with the major manufacturing wholesalers as they were, being Agfa Gevaert, Fujifilm, Kodak, and Konica Minolta along with Minilab, Professional Lab and Professional Photography backgrounds. Although we never actually crossed paths till we met at the Photokina International Trade Show in Germany in the early 1990's when Rob was with Fuji Hunt - UK and Stuart was with the Fujifilm Distributer in Australia, called Hanimex.

In fact Stuart started his Photo Industry Career with Kodak Australia, at a time when Kodak really did 'rule the roost', with over 2,500 employees with offices, warehouses and central wholesale labs in practically every State and Country of the world, spending several years as a Professional Photography Representative in NSW and QLD only leaving Kodak to take over operations management of a Multinational Commercial Prolab in North Sydney.

However, missing the 'cut and thrust' of direct customer interaction later joining Agfa Gevaert in the 1990's, again with Professional Lab and Photographer role, then moving on to owning and operating a Full Service Minilab in Chatswood NSW.

From Minilab, to behind the camera with another career change as a Commercial Architectural Photographer with a home based Studio and Darkroom relying on many of the skills learnt at Sydney Technical College School of Photography 4 Year Course, and years on the road with Company's Kodak and Agfa Gevaert.

Then joining Hanimex, the then Fujifilm Distributer in Australia in a variety of Technical Sales and Marketing Roles, ultimately leading to Senior Category



“...together, we could build a business bigger than the both of us with the aim of being the market leader in the Southern Hemisphere!”

Marketing Manager launching the first Digital Minilabs in the World known as Fuji Frontiers.

At that stage, then meeting the inimitable Rob Voysey at Photokina in Germany thinking that together, we could build a business bigger than the both of us with the aim of being the market leader in the Southern Hemisphere!

Rob - " Having worked as a press photographer in Sydney and WA in the early 80's, I was captivated by the minilab and 1 hour lab solutions that were filtering into the market at the time. America's cup Fremantle in the summer of '86-'87 was a watershed moment for me, running the first Kodak Systems 40 labs in WA and catering for the lab processing of 1,000s of tourists' films from the race day events. I remember enjoying some pretty hectic night life as well! After a time as the Service Manager for Rabbit photo and then Hanimex in WA, itchy feet, and a UK partner took me to London. After some solid travelling, we settled down and using my technical background in photo processing, quickly landed a TSR role with the independent photo chemical manufacture Champion. I enjoyed supporting many of the London Pro labs with an excellent range of technical products and very quickly learnt that personal service could very quickly trump "big name brands".

My success in this market, saw my promotion to European Sales Manger looking after (and growing) territories from Iceland to Moscow, the baltic states and the middle east - Turkey, Syria Jordan etc. Hectic but rewarding years evolved into being head hunted by Fuji Hunt (the then chemical division of Fuji Film) and I became the Southern UK Manager for Photo, Medical and Graphic Arts products. With a family now in tow and 9 years since we left AUS, it was time to head home! So it was while quietly researching the 'home scene' for work opportunities I met Stuart at Photokina 2000.

After a year at Camera House as their Business Development Manger and a few more years learning the local market through the promotion of a 'home grown' online photo-serving solution called Onpix, it was time to look at bringing our the global experiences together and form IPS.

This partnership was perfectly poised for success as Rob Voysey was certainly no stranger to the photo industry, and brought to this partnership a wealth of technical expertise.

Specifically, Rob Voysey brought over 30 years of experience in International Photo Industry Skills in Lab Engineering & Professional Sales. Formerly the WA Service Manager for Hanimex (Fuji) in the late 80's, servicing, installing and training on Fuji minilabs, Rob also had 10 years in Technical support and Photo Chemical Sales UK and Europe with Export Sales Management covering a territory from Iceland to Moscow. All this culminated in an extensive knowledge base of chemical and digital photographic processes, specifically those related to the Fuji Frontier systems and all Kodak/ Noritsu QSS Minilab Systems and Professional and Wholesale Lab Operations

Where is IPS based? Do you have a big team behind you keeping IPS on track?

From a 'Green Fields' start-up company of just two people in 2003, Rob and

I have built Independent Photo (IPS) to become one of the photographic industry market leaders in the Southern Hemisphere, with the head office based in a leafy suburban suburb of Sydney called Thornleigh, and Warehouse Distribution Centres in Western Sydney, Perth WA, Auckland and Christchurch in New Zealand.

IPS has State based Technical Sales Representatives in all States of Australia, and an office in Auckland with 3 full time Business Managers, for details please see: <https://www.iphoto.net.au/contact.aspx>

In fact, IPS has attracted a very talented and experienced group of frontline technical representatives and support staff due to the evolving nature of the Photographic Industry (an evolution that we somewhat rail against), as the digital era has produced many casualties in both small business and large Company's like Agfa Gevaert, Konica Minolta and Eastman Kodak. With the ultimate irony that, Independent Photo (IPS) now represent Kodak as the Consumer and Professional Markets distributor in Australia and New Zealand, a Company that Stuart first started his career with in the late 1970's!

Your promise is the 'Best Brands in Imaging', how do you keep this promise?

Our Company Brand promise of the "Best Brands in Imaging" comes from our belief that traditional company's all have a basket of products and services ranging from very good, to good, to reasonable, and then some not so good! Our belief is to research and range the "Best of the Best" in every area of photo endeavour for our customers and provide them with a fully researched, costed and technically supported product range for the production of the best quality photographic images possible, whether produced online, or with in-store kiosks, by Professional Labs, Minilabs or School Photolab, Government Departments or Professional Photographers.

By never resting on our laurels, and always striving to 'change but remain the same', we believe that IPS keeps this promise.

What are your best selling products?

IPS has many great products and services that we have researched and brought to market, but the current particular leading light would have to be the Inkjet Photographic Minilab and Professional Drylab offering that IPS supports and sells. We at IPS realised several years ago that there was a potential 'change in the winds' of the production of Superb Quality Photographic Prints with the debut of Inkjet Minilabs, and when we measured and plotted the colour reproduction gamut and found that they actually reproduced a wider range of colours than the then Market Leader of Silver Halide (Ag-x) Media, we thought we need to develop, support and champion these products well before our contemporaries did.

Since that time, we have actively sought out manufacturers of Quality Photolab Equipment like Noritsu Koki and Epson Seiko of Japan, and global media manufacturers to develop specific complimentary media's for these superb dry labs, such as gloss, full professional 'E' surface lustre, pro matte and even glossy metallic surfaces.

IPS provides colour management, profiling and network support to make all these pieces of the puzzle come together and work seamlessly for our customers.

How has the industry changed over the past few years?

IPS was born in the early 2000's in the midst of the so called "Digital Revolution" and as such has been well placed to grow and flourish in this ever changing environment. At that stage Film was on the wane, and new capture methods were streaming onto the market creating difficulties for the incumbent Big 4 Market Leaders (Agfa, Fuji, Kodak and Konica) to react and move with the times. For a small & nimble company like IPS, this was more achievable as we were in a growth phase, whilst these contemporaries were in-fact in decline!

We saw Agfa photo collapse in a messy operation that meant stock was frozen world wide and others had to support the surviving labs. Like Qantas flying home stranded Ansett customers, IPS fortunately had a range of alternative Agfa Lab products and we worked night and day to ensure that no one ran out of paper and chemistry.

There was also concern when Konica withdrew from the photo channel and the supply of unique chemical consumables had to be managed effectively.

The evolution of different print technologies has been central to our technical focus. While doing everything we can to make silver halide the most efficient and enduring photo print medium; finding a true professional print alternative to Silver Halide has been a decade long process. We now believe that the new dry lab technologies have come of age and are producing real professional quality photographic printing.

IPS is the exclusive Southern Hemisphere partner to the IPI Marketing Group. Can you tell us a bit about the Managed Marketing Services Program?

The Managed Marketing Services Program is an extension of IPI's widely renown, world class Marketing Support Program (MSP). Put simply, the MSP provides photo centric marketing collateral to photo printing retailers e.g. artwork for in-store posters, banners, flyers, e-mails, newsletters, web banners and even photo gifting templates for online and kiosk photogifting sales. All files are high resolution Photoshop files and are easy to further customise to the individual retailers needs. The Managed Marketing Services (MMS) Program takes marketing to the next level by providing automated: Social Media (Facebook Twitter and Instagram) Email, and in store Electronic POS marketing updated and deployed by the IPI team on a regular basis. The retailer simply joins the program, chooses from a vast menu and calendar of; social media updates, e-mail promotions, and Electronic POS – and the IPI team do the rest. They make it all happen. It really is that awesome.

How important is social media for you in marketing your products? What other key promotional tools do you use to make sure you're at the forefront of peoples minds?

Social media, or inbound marketing, is critical to B2C companies, but is less important for our B2B business. Relative to other markets, ours is very small. The number of retail, professional school, wholesale and government labs is quantifiable and known. Moreover, we actually, have them all on databases – so Electronic Direct Mail (EDM) is way more powerful for us.

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That, and actually touching our customers with real live reps. People like doing business with people – especially people they like. Social media, and all the cute posts, and tweets in the world can't replace a good company rep, who knows your business and is keen to assist

We actually take the human presence to the next step, too. We attend and support the important industry bodies and events. We support and display at the AIPP NZIPP and PMA/IDEA shows.

We even ran our own national road show (throughout Australia and New Zealand) last year, when there wasn't a PMA/IDEA Photo show.

How do you define success? To what do you most attribute your success?

There are a few focuses that we can attribute our success to. First of all it has been the drive to totally understand all of the technical attributes of the products we promote but also understand the nuances of quality and less tangible features that go towards making beautiful photographic prints! Following closely there are a number of focusses - building trusting relationships in our industry with win-win outcomes with our lab and photographer partners; always looking ahead at print technologies to embrace and be ahead of the pack, and look out for those that could also make you redundant if not addressed effectively! Overall it's the passion of seeing our customers being successful in offering the best quality photo printing. I still get a buzz from visiting a lab and looking at the great images being produced and knowing that we have had a hand in getting this product to fruition.

Has anyone given you memorable advice for running a business?

Yes - but it was about watching out for a specific coloured gorilla (or was it an elephant?) that was" in the room" (metaphorically speaking of course) - and I hadn't been drinking! Having avoided the threatening 'wild life' in our industry, we have done OK!

Seriously though - having grown from nothing to where we are in 12 years - there are some very important lessons in cash flow management that we could have welcomed as memorable advice(!) So if anyone is looking for advice - watch your cash flow! In general - work hard - long hours - the digital evolution has meant no breaks - no easing off! - for any of us!

You're a member of the AIPP. What do you like about being part of an industry association?

Stuart has been a Member of the AIPP since the late 1980's, an association he has cherished and enjoyed being a part of. Now jointly owning a Major Aust. and NZ Photographic Business I feel it is incumbent on us to offer support back to the Industry in the form of Gold Sponsorship for both the AIPP and the NZIPP to encourage and support the Professional Photographers of today, and the future.

Like everything in life and this Industry things have changed and will continue to change, and in order to have a 'seat at the table' as it were, Rob and I felt the need to be financial stakeholders and supporters of these prime industry associations.

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I like the fact that the AIPP in Australia has regrouped and morphed itself from a bit of an 'old boys club' to now being a vibrant, growing association which now accurately reflects the aspirations and genre of contemporary professional photography today. I also see similar reinvention and regrowth taking place with the NZIPP, interestingly enough being one of the oldest professional photographic associations in the World, older in-fact than the AIPP!

As a professional photographer yourself you obviously have a passion for the industry, where do you see IPS sitting in this industry in 20 years time?

Again, I would like to see IPS never sitting still and resting on its laurels and always changing, but remaining the same (true to its current aims). I would like to see IPS as the prime resource, supporter and supplier to the Photographic Industry in this part of the world. And, to be learning and growing with other likeminded individuals and organisations around the world.

We all have similar problems, opportunities and more in common that we have differences such as has been our experience with the Independent Photo Imagers Group in North America and Canada. I see our company as more than just a box mover, as our contemporaries have become, I see IPS as a 100% engaged true partner in all senses of the word to the Photographic Industry.

