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Business

Retail Markets

Scrapbook Markets

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The Daily News Update From PMA



Wednesday, December 14,
2005

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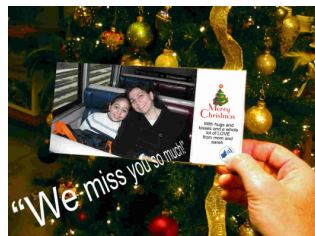
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(published every Wednesday)

Printer Friendly

Business

dotPhoto and Voice-Express team up for military family greetings



dotPhoto multimedia greeting

dotPhoto, West Trenton, N.J., USA, is working with military service organizations to bringing photographic and multimedia greetings to personnel deployed worldwide. U.S. troops can receive and share more personal and memorable season's greetings with their families with dotPhoto's charitable Wishes From Home program. Offered in partnership with www.MarineParents.com, a nonprofit corporation funded by private donations, mostly marine parents and family members, dotPhoto's Wishes From Home makes it easy for everyone to create and send customized 'talking holiday cards' to their loved ones at home or overseas.

Each talking holiday card features a photograph and Voice-Express Corp.'s high-tech and patented voice chip recorder that plays a personalized audio message. And with each card sent, dotPhoto will donate 50 cents to **The United States Wounded Soldiers Foundation (USWSF)**.

"The holidays are a time for reaching out to friends and family," says **Glenn Paul**, founder and CTO of dotPhoto. "And there's nothing more touching than a holiday greeting that speaks in your own voice, with your own picture, professionally printed and framed in holiday graphics. It's a great way to send the message, 'I love you' during the holidays."

Anyone with a camera phone or digital camera can create talking holiday cards by uploading their favorite digital photo to www.dotPhoto.com, choosing a card design from among hundreds of colorful templates offered on dotPhoto's site, and placing a call to record a 10-second personal message. And once their card is created, it can be sent via the U.S. Postal Service to any AFO, FPO, or other address around the world, directly from www.dotPhoto.com.

Each beautifully printed and professionally bound card includes a seamlessly integrated, battery-operated voice chip from **Voice-Express Corp.**, Westport, Conn., USA, which designs, produces, and markets a variety of innovative, sound-enhanced products and services.

For every talking holiday card purchased, dotPhoto will donate 50 cents to The United States Wounded Soldiers Foundation, a non-profit organization providing clothes, hygienic items, and other personal items to U.S. soldiers wounded in Iraq. dotPhoto is also giving \$1.00 off the usual price of \$7.99 to all individuals that purchase through www.USWoundedSoldiers.com, www.StripesClub.com, or www.MarineParents.com.

Both the Marine Parents and the USWSF site are bringing dotPhoto's Wishes From Home program directly to armed service personnel through links that send them to www.dotPhoto.com, where they and their families can create talking holiday cards.

AgfaPhoto North America sales to cease by Dec. 31; service group will continue to operate into 2006



Management of **AgfaPhoto GmbH**, Leverkusen, Germany, recently determined their stakeholders' interests would be best served by the company's prompt and orderly cessation of operations. Therefore all sales functions in North America will cease by year's end, according to **Dan Unger**, director of Marketing Communications for **AgfaPhoto USA Corp.**, Ridgefield

Park, N.J., USA.

AgfaPhoto North America continues to provide service and spare parts for its minilab customers as they have in the past, Unger told *Newsline International*. A new company, **a&o imaging solutions GmbH**, Neuss, Germany, has expressed interest in acquiring both the service and spare parts business for minilabs in the United States and Canada. Until that acquisition is complete, which should be in January, the service group will stay intact and operate under the AgfaPhoto name.

Bing Liem, president and CEO of AgfaPhoto North America stated, "It is AgfaPhoto's intention to make the transition to a new supplier as seamless as possible for the company's valued customers."

Promoting prints

Video teaches consumers picture-taking techniques, drives digital processing into specialty stores

What's circular, 5 inches in diameter, and helps boost a photo retailer's bottom line?

*The answer? A new DVD from **Stellhorn One Hour Photo** in Fort Wayne, Ind.*

In "Better Pictures from your Digital Camera," **Paul Saalfield**, owner of the Stellhorn chain of stores, teaches step-by-step, professional tips on taking better family photos. Although aimed primarily at the average family photographer, the DVD also helps boost printing at retail by encouraging photographers to have images immediately processed into prints at their local photo specialty store.

"Nowadays, there are few products available specifically for the photo specialty dealer that provide something unique," Saalfield says. His DVD, he says, provides good markup -- and, most important, provides "bounce back" for further photo processing business.

Saalfield himself is well experienced in teaching entry-level camera classes, and has been taking thousands of people through the ins and outs of photography for 25 years. Until 4 years ago, the series of classes concentrated on film technology. Since shifting gears to digital camera techniques, interest has skyrocketed, with people driving in from other states to attend.

One aim was to show potential photofinishing customers the difference in quality when processing is performed by a photo specialty store. Saalfield was thrilled to see a surge in his processing business.

When students started asking for a "class review video," Saalfield decided to go in front of the camera, hooking up with the local **PBS** television station, which professionally produced and duplicated the video. Saalfield test marketed the DVD in the Fort Wayne area. The video was made available June 15, and sold more than 325 copies in its first 6 weeks, and 613 by the end of September.

Saalfield figured, with this much demand among families in his local tri-state market area, the DVD would be a hit nationwide.

"Rarely is there a situation where there is such widespread interest and yet very limited products to serve that demand," he says. "We've discovered the majority of families owning a digital camera would purchase and view this video if they knew it was available."

Saalfield takes a hands-on, entertaining approach -- unlike camera manuals written by design engineers that instruct how to reach a particular mode, but fail to provide actual applications of the modes, he says.

"This leads the family picture taker into not returning to the manual and simply using the camera as a basic aim and shoot. The more the family picture taker is proud he or she has mastered the mode controls, and isn't intimidated with them, the more pictures they take," he says. "That's why golf courses provide lessons from golf pros."

Saalfield's objective in creating the video was to encourage families to shift more of their time, interest, and disposable income back into photo, he says.

"It's really great to do something big for my fellow photo specialty dealers," he says. "We operate in a viable industry channel; and with unique products like this DVD, we gain an edge above alternative photo channels."



Mandy Saalfield, Paul Saalfield's daughter, shares the large demand for a digital camera class with her sister Andrea.

The DVD package

Stellhorn One Hour Photo packages the \$24.95 "Better Pictures from your Digital Camera" DVDs in a 20-piece counter display, along with a 12-by-18 color POP poster, and a suggested radio script, and news release. Dealers may purchase the 20-piece display for \$12.50 per video, plus shipping. Visit www.stellhornphoto.com for more information.

For more, see the December issue of *Photo Marketing* magazine, now [online](#).

Retail Markets

Britain's dreaming of a digital Christmas, as new report reveals digital gadgets and media are choice gifts

Britain should prepare for an avalanche of digital gadgets and data this Christmas, according to an independent report published by **Crucial Technology Europe**, Glasgow, United Kingdom, one of the leading online memory upgrade providers. The report suggests that Britons will buy a total of 50 million digital gadgets this season -- nearly equivalent to one device for each adult in the country.

It also indicates that the British public will take more than 1.2 billion photos during the Christmas period using a digital camera or cameraphone. The report identifies the 10 most popular digital gifts for Christmas 2005, with estimated sales numbers as follows:

1. Compact Discs
2. DVDs
3. Video games
4. MP3 players
5. MP3 downloads
6. Portable media players
7. Digital cameras
8. Camera phones
9. Sony Playstation Portables (PSPs)
10. Digital storage devices



"The amount of digital data expected to be captured in Britain over the season could fill over one billion 512MB Secure Digital flash memory cards. That's enough flash memory stacked top-to-bottom to stretch around the earth," commented **Stefanie Summerfield**, general manager of Crucial Technology Europe.

The research also produced some interesting regional variations on Britain's digital Christmas:

- Scotland and Wales are least keen on exchanging DVDs as gifts, with half the survey respondents not intending to purchase one over the holiday period.
- In contrast, three out of four people in East Anglia and South East England have DVDs on their Christmas list.
- Adults in the North East are the least likely to be plugging in their consoles this year, with only one in five intending to purchase a video game compared with almost half in Wales. Furthermore only 2 percent will purchase a Sony PSP compared with 19 percent of their North West neighbors.

Crucial Technology Europe is a division of **Micron Europe Limited**, which is a wholly owned subsidiary of **Micron Technology Inc.** Crucial Technology Europe provides high-quality memory upgrades, graphics cards, flash memory and a host of products to enhance the entire computing experience.

WebRaiser's VendiPix targets booming photo kiosk market

WebRaiser Technologies Inc., Sacramento, Calif., USA, a software provider for the self-service economy, announced **VendiPix**, as its entry into the fast growing photo kiosk market. VendiPix combines WebRaiser's VendiSoft self-service software with the Image2Print photo processing software from **Beaufort Solutions Inc.**, St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada.

VendiPix is a PC-based digital kiosk application that enables people to create an array of quality photo products simply by touching the screen. Images are quickly loaded from any one of a variety of input devices, including CDs, USB drives, compact flash, xD cards and also supports the new Apple iPod. Customers' photos can be printed in multiple formats from 4-by-6 to 8-by-10. VendiPix makes it simple for the novice consumer to create professional-quality prints, including other products like greeting cards, product picture collages, enlargements, and DVD viewable disks, says the company. The order can then be printed to the store's digital minilab, uploaded to the retailer's website, archived on CD, or printed on a built-in kiosk printer.

Beaufort Solutions' Image2Print imaging software engine makes it possible to customize the look and feel with the ability to easily adapt branding, splash screens, colors, languages, and product output offerings. With Image2Print, VendiPix can be tailored to fit any reseller's market niche, says the company.

WebRaiser's VendiSoft software includes an advanced kiosk operating system, infrastructure for remote device management, and a rapid development platform for creation, aggregation, and presentation of self-service interfaces. VendiPix kiosks are networked together so that a regional or national retailer can have a centralized control and monitoring of their digital photo processing business. WebRaiser's unique remote management capabilities, assures that retail locations are always up, running, and generating revenue, says the company. Remote management also tracks on-board supplies -- such as paper and toner -- and automatically triggers restocking alerts.

Wal-Mart buys Sonae's Brazilian unit for \$757 million

Wal-Mart Stores Inc., Bentonville, Ark., USA, bought the Brazilian operations of Portuguese group **Sonae SGPS SA** for \$757 million (?635 million) as it expands in Latin America's biggest market. With the acquisition, which had been rumored to be in the works for months, Wal-Mart gains 140 hypermarkets, supermarkets and wholesale outlets scattered across southern Brazil, a prosperous region where its presence has so far been limited, reports *Reuters*.

That gives Wal-Mart a total of 295 outlets in 17 of Brazil's 26 states, solidifying its position as the third-largest retail chain in the country behind France's **Carrefour** and **Companhia Brasileira de Distribuicao**, which is backed by the French group **Casino**.

The deal also marks Wal-Mart's second acquisition in the last two years in Brazil, where it set up shop in

1995. Last year Wal-Mart bought a 118-store supermarket chain called **Bompreco** in northeastern Brazil for \$300 million from the **Dutch Retailer Ahold**, lifting it from sixth place to third in the country's retail rankings, says *Reuters*.

Prior to that, Wal-Mart had stepped cautiously in Brazil, opening just 25 stores in four states in its first 10 years in the country. It also struggled to adapt to local tastes, after initially stocking its stores with products that are standard in the United States -- like golf clubs and lawn mowers -- but of little interest to most Brazilians.

For Sonae, whose **Modelo Continente** is Portugal's largest retailer, the deal is the second time this year that it has sold assets in Brazil. In June Carrefour paid about \$129 million for 10 of Sonae's hypermarkets in the Sao Paulo area.

In a statement, Sonae said the sale was "influenced by the difficulty of the operation in presenting profitability levels above the high cost of capital" in Brazil, where interest rates are among the highest in the world.

Grocery stores step up as holiday gift destination



The weeks between Thanksgiving and Christmas are known as the key sales season for department stores and toy stores, and now grocers are getting in on the action as they try to keep shoppers happy, reports *Reuters*. Selling everything from leather jackets to televisions can help traditional grocers remain competitive and perhaps keep shoppers from making more visits to supercenters such as **Wal-Mart Stores Inc.**, industry watchers said.

With the rising popularity of supercenters and online shopping, many shoppers are taking less trips to traditional grocery stores. Grocers now realize that their food-focused model is not as attractive and are responding by improving shopper reward programs, offering in-store classes and

expanding their product lineups.

U.S. grocers and convenience stores are also building loyalty by selling gift cards for book stores, electronics stores and other specialty shops, said **Todd Hale**, **ACNielsen's** senior vice president of consumer and shopper insights.

"While they're not going to get households to do all of their Christmas shopping within their stores, it does give them the means to drive an additional purchase at their stores and help drive more profit in their overall business model," Hale said of grocers selling gifts and gift cards.

Grocers typically don't sell higher-end items such as plasma televisions or a broad selection of the hottest games, but stock items for last minute, impulse purchases.

"The grocery channel is the one channel that doesn't reap the benefits of the holiday shopping as much as other retail channels do, but clearly it's a great opportunity for them because it's a retail channel that's shopped more frequently than any other retail channel," said Hale.

Kroger Co., the country's top grocer, has a unique way of ensuring sales of gift items -- it owns the **Fred Meyer Jewelers**, **Littman Jewelers**, and **Barclay Jewelers** stores, and has Fred Meyer jewelry shops in some of its supermarkets.

Publix, the privately held grocer with stores in Florida and other southeastern states, sells items like DVDs all year long. Gifts such as watches and perfume priced just under \$20 sell very well during all holidays -- not just in December, but around Mother's Day and Father's Day as well, said **Maria Brous**, Publix's director of media and community relations.

"Often times, it's reconditioning our customers to understand that we offer them more than just the grocery shopping experience," said Brous.

Meanwhile, stores such as **Circuit City** and **Blockbuster** now sell soft drinks and candy, perhaps taking away sales from grocers, reports *Reuters*.

"It's only fair that the grocery industry kind of turns the table on them and goes after some of the seasonal holiday buying," said Hale, who is based in Kroger's hometown of Cincinnati, Ohio.

Kroger declined to discuss revenue for the gift cards it sells for companies such as stores, restaurants and airlines.

Albertsons Inc., the nation's No. 2 grocer, said **Starbucks** and **Sears** gift cards "are very well received by customers," but declined to comment on terms of its agreements with retailers or the exact revenue generated from sales of the cards.

Retailers record revenue from gift cards after they are exchanged for merchandise, not when they are sold, reports *Reuters*.

Scrapbook Markets

Scrapbook retailer contributes to art therapy kits for victims of Hurricane Katrina

Mississippi Paper Arts, a 5,000-square-foot scrapbook and rubberstamp creative arts and supply store in Florence, Miss., recently teamed up with **USArtQuest Inc.** in Grass Lake, Mich., USA, in a "We Care" project to help victims of Hurricane Katrina. The goal was to provide 14,400 stamped cards, to provide art therapy for the thousands of individuals from Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana who are rebuilding their lives in shelters. The project was a way for rubber stamping and paper art enthusiasts to share their passion for the craft and provide a creative outlet for those now rebuilding from Hurricane Katrina.

USArtQuest President **Susan Pickering Rothamel** put out a nationwide call for rubber stampers to stamp and emboss holiday images to the fronts of cards that individuals in shelters could then color in and decorate for their personal use during the holidays. USArtQuest supplied brushes, watercolors, stickers, markers and

other donated creative materials to complete 200 kits. When members of the rubber stamp club that meets at Mississippi Paper Arts heard about the card drive, they encouraged the store's owner to take up the challenge.

"We have a pretty active group of rubber stampers and they felt we could make 14,400 cards to create 200 kits that will go to the shelters in Mississippi," said **Carrie Ross**, owner of Mississippi Paper Arts.

The store held a 24-hour Hurricane Katrina Card Art Challenge, inviting people to stop by the store and stamp their cards with members of the rubber stamp club. Mississippi Paper Arts and its rubber stamp club then worked with churches and other organizations to distribute the art kits to shelters across the state.

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