

Top Ten Tips for Successfully Deploying Photo Kiosks

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The Digital Photography (DP) kiosk sector is the fastest-growing in the kiosk industry today. There's no mystery to this fact: Sales of digital cameras are exploding—it was the most popular gift of the 2004 Holiday season—and people want a quick and cost-effective way to print the millions of pictures they are taking. For retailers and others looking to deploy these units, there are many choices available today; more than 20 companies manufacture photo kiosks. Many of these are traditional camera manufacturers, such as Kodak and Fuji. Others, traditional kiosk hardware and software developers—notably KIS and software partners such as TouchPoint Solutions and St. Clair Interactive Systems—are making successful installations both in the US and Canada. Using first-rate hardware and software is advice that goes without saying. The units must be robust and must incorporate user-friendly software. However, just putting a unit into your store is no guarantee of success. There are several factors—from a hardware and software standpoint—that have to be considered before taking the plunge.



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1. **The photo kiosk has to be easy to use.** While this might seem self-evident, there are several examples of photo kiosk software that demand too much of the average customer. He/she has to spend too much time trying to figure out how to use the kiosk application. That flies against the conventional wisdom in self-service: *Don't Make Me Think!* The screens have to be intuitive, open (not cramped) with an easily understandable interface. The buttons should be large and should provide visual feedback when touched.
2. **The kiosk should be able to load a customer's pictures very quickly.** No one likes to wait. Memory cards for digital cameras are rapidly growing in capacity. It is common to have a memory card that holds upwards of 1,000 medium-resolution pictures. People should be able to start viewing their pictures almost from the moment they insert their card into the appropriate slot in the kiosk's memory card reader. Several DP software manufacturers have devised ways to mask the load time; one method is having the customer fill out his name and phone number in advance of any picture selection. When he has entered this information, the images have started to populate the screen



KIS 780-Digital Media Station

3. **The kiosk should display at least eight images per screen.** There is a fine line between having too few and too many images on the screen so that the customer can select the ones he wants to print. If too many are displayed, it is hard to really see each image clearly. Time is then wasted by having to enlarge them to see if they are to be included in the print order. We have seen photo kiosks that display as many as 36 images per screen. This is at the opposite extreme; the individual images are too small to make an educated decision. Showing fewer than eight is also counter productive; it takes too long to go through all of the images on the storage media.
4. **Charge for Extras.** Digital Photography kiosks are there to provide a service and to generate revenue for the establishment. If customers are allowed to “fool around” with various borders and text options, they will—but no additional revenue is usually produced. This frequently results in a very long user session with customers waiting their turn becoming increasingly frustrated. (When this happened the customers waiting their turn end up leaving in disgust. That customer is often lost forever.) There is no real need to add text to a picture before it is printed. And there certainly is no justification for allowing customers to try different fonts, colors, sizes and placements. We generally advise DP kiosk deployers to turn off these features or charge a minimum of \$.50 per image if there is to be a border or text added to a picture. The KIS and TouchPoint QuickPIX™ is the first DP kiosk to charge for these extras, handling this problem in a sensible (and revenue-producing) manner.
5. **Borders are a nice add-on, but populate the desired picture inside EACH available border.** Failure to do so will mean that most customers will try all (or most) borders “on for size” seeing how the picture looks inside each border before making his or her decision. Sometimes the customer makes his choice of border, but still goes back and tries others to “make sure” he has made the right decision. This is extremely time-consuming and does nothing to add to the user experience in a positive way. On the contrary, it’s a huge time-waster. If the customer can see what his pictures looks like encases in ALL the borders at one time, it will greatly speed up the entire process.
6. **Provide a *Select All* default print option.** Photo kiosks are there to provide a means for customers to get high-quality prints of their digital pictures. Many customers have already winnowed their pictures down to the ones they want to obtain in print form. Having a *Select All* option makes this a fast and easy transaction. Always give the customer an *out*; they can opt to hand-pick the images they want printed.
7. **Eliminate editing.** There are many options customers would like to access to fine-tune their photographs, including red-eye removal, RGB color balance, crop and zoom, rotation, auto-enhancement and brightness. Each of these options is a time sink. In addition, most customers will ruin a picture by adding too much yellow, or taking out too much red, for example. Then they will blame the kiosk when their pictures come out less than satisfactory. Don’t even give them the choice: employ auto correction and red-eye removal as standards and do not offer the other bells and whistles. High-end photo shops are intended for those people who really want the finest quality print from their images and are willing to pay ore per print to obtain it. For the average customer, it is simply unnecessary and can be *dangerous*.
8. **Provide Explanatory Signage.** Customers have to know where the DP kiosk is located. Sometimes the units are hidden in out-of-the-way places. It is naïve to assume your customers will hike all over a store looking for the kiosks. If they can’t see it and if there is nothing to tell them where the kiosks are to be found,

they will give up and take their business elsewhere. Best Buy recently started to deploy Kodak Picturemaker™ countertop units. In several stores, the units are placed on an inner counter, away from the main store aisles and not visible from a distance. There is no overhead signage to alert the customer that the kiosks are even there. Not surprisingly, usage is less-than-impressive. TouchPoint Solutions, on the other hand, has been installing the QuickPIX units at many of the large Dominion grocery stores in Canada. Before the customer even enters the premises, he sees a large sign on the window telling him about the new DP kiosk located inside and its many features. More importantly, the sign tells him exactly what the pictures and other options will cost.

9. **Get Employee Buy-In.** For DP kiosks to succeed, the employees must understand that these kiosks will not take their jobs away. They can drive a great deal of business to the store's photo department. Successful deployments, such as in Costco stores, have followed this advice very well. The employees can help customers if they run into trouble, but generally the software interface has been so well designed that the customer needs little or no help. This allows the employee to spend his time doing the job functions for which he was hired in the first place.
10. **Insist on First-Class Maintenance.** DP kiosks, especially those like QuickPIX that provide instant prints, must have a steady supply of consumables; photo paper and inks. The software must alert store personnel when these consumables are *running low* so they can be replenished. It is too late to inform store personnel that the paper or ink has run out. Ink colors are not used at an even rate; the color red usually runs out well in advance of yellow. Make sure that each color is in excellent supply. Remote monitoring software is required to ensure that the kiosk works flawlessly every time and delivers prints of high quality. Even if the store has a maintenance contract in place with a third party, it makes good business sense to train store personnel in the replenishment of these consumables.

There are other suggestions that could be added to this list, but these are the items that must be followed if one wants to have a successful digital photography kiosk rollout. This industry sector is still in its infancy, with many exhilarating days ahead. Following these tips can help make sure that your entry into this exciting sector will be a happy and fruitful one.

About Kiosk Information Systems

Founded in 1993, KIS is the leader in self-service solutions. In 2004 KIS received the Frost and Sullivan award for Vertical Market Leader. Recognized as one of the fastest growing companies in the United States, KIS' growth over the last nine years has earned the company a place on the Inc. 500 list and on both the Colorado Fast 50 and the nation's Technology Fast 500 by Deloitte & Touche. KIS has provided innovative kiosks for a who's who of corporate clients including FedEx, Sony, McDonalds, Citibank, IBM, Borders, Mercedes Benz and Conoco, as well as numerous government agencies and universities. Having produced thousands of kiosks for over 900 different applications, including human resources, interactive and transactional retail, and security applications, KIS has the most in-depth experience and expertise in the self-service kiosk industry. Contact sales@kis-kiosk.com for more information or visit our website.

