

New release of the *Photo-order* on-line web album, print ordering & workflow management system for photographic laboratories and their customers.

Launch

Launch January 2003 sees the launch of ***Photo Order Enterprise***, the on-line web album, print ordering & workflow management system for photographic laboratories and their customers.

Web Albums The ***Photo Order Enterprise*** system is much more than just a web album utility. **Digital Asset Solutions**, who provide the system, believe it is primarily about building customer relationships between laboratories and Photographers, and between Photographers and their customers. By utilising the latest that digital has to offer, while retaining the best from conventional film, the system offers a whole range of new benefits designed to drive additional work through the laboratory, while generating more profit for the Photographer.

Flexible DAS have tried to make ***Photo Order Enterprise*** as open and flexible as possible. The whole system is based on the Internet, so all that any user will require is a connection to the web and a simple browser. There is no requirement to run propriety software, Macs can be used just the same as PCs and it offers just about the same benefits to Photographers still using film, as it does digital.

Tried & Tested ***Photo Order Enterprise*** is a development of DAS's ***Photo-order*** e-commerce system, which has been tried and tested for over three years by the central London laboratory Visualeyes Imaging Services. With the new release, ***Photo Order*** will be available to all professional laboratories and digital labs in the ***Enterprise*** version.

Robust The new ***Photo Order Enterprise*** system has been designed using Sequel Server 2000 as the underlying database, which makes it very robust, with no scale limitations.

Bread Crumb In order to improve navigation, especially in the administration sections, there is included a 'bread crumb trail', which will show a user where they are at any given time, and allow simple backtracking.

The *Photo Order Enterprise* system

- Modular ***Photo Order Enterprise*** is comprised of four modules.
- Internet Order The ***Internet Order Module*** gives Photographers the ability to offer their customers on-line web albums and photo sales, with secure e-commerce payment.
- Searches Customers log onto the system via the Photographer's own web site where they can search for their pictures either by typing in keywords such as the subject's name and date of photography, or by working their way down a system of categories such as: Weddings / Month / Name of Bride & Groom. Any category or job can be password protected. Once selected they can view, order and pay for prints using secure e-commerce credit card payment, or print out the order and send a cheque.
- Fulfillment The laboratory, which makes the system available to Photographers, takes the payment, produces the prints and mails them direct to the customer. This releases the Photographer from the administration of orders, while increasing their sales opportunities.
- Back Office Image Owners use the ***Back Office Module*** to make on-line credit account orders direct to their laboratory, for images that are on the system. The ***Back Office Module*** is a password protected ***Internet Order Module*** for the Image Owner's own use.
- Users While users will be predominantly Photographers, the system will be of benefit to any Image Owner that is a customer of the laboratory, be they businesses, public relations consultants, newspapers, picture libraries etc. Use of the ***Back Office Module*** will speed up the whole order process and allow the Photographer to benefit from the on-line capabilities of the system, such as Job Tracking.
- Print Reorder For that last minute rush job, the ***Print Reorder Module*** allows users to send files direct to the laboratory, with an order attached.
- Job Tracking An optional fourth module offers on-line ***Workflow Management*** for the laboratory and ***Job Tracking*** for Photographers and their customers. This will provide Image Owners and their customers with instant information about the progress of their job, without tying up laboratory admin staff.

Image Owners (Photographers)

- Access** Digital Asset Solutions feel that it is important that customers believe they are within the Image Owner's web site at all times. To maintain this belief, the system is entered from a link on the Photographer's own web site and DAS can assist laboratories in setting this up if required. Obviously a web site can be designed with any kind of look, so DAS have built in a number of ways to manipulate the way their system looks, once the customer has moved from the Photographer's own site to the system. DAS call this skinning, i.e. altering the 'skin' of the system.
- Skinning** The skin can be changed right down to the lowest level of category. To make this possible the Image Owner has control over background image or colour, banner image, colour of the text and the way thumbnails are displayed. This way the Photographer can have a common look for their whole site, different looks for different categories of work, and even, a different look for every job.
- Categories** For Photographers to organise their images, there are unlimited levels of category available, which can be arranged and labelled as required. This will allow an Image Owner to sell any kind of image and organise them in any way they want, opening up the possibility for Photographers to sell archive and special interest pictures on-line, as well as current commissions.
- Uploads** Once the top-level categories have been established, each new upload of images will be added to the relevant category at the appropriate level. The Photo Order Enterprise system uses the simple File Transfer Protocol (ftp) to upload images to the system. These should be in the .jpg format. Uploads can be achieved in one of three ways:
- a. When Image Owners set up their categories, the system will mirror the same categories in a hierarchical folder structure within their ftp upload area. On upload, they will drill down through these and place the large thumbnail in the appropriate category folder at the level required. The system will generate the small thumbnail.
 - b. There will also be a generic upload folder in the Image Owner's ftp area, into which the large thumbnails can also be placed. Once uploaded, Image Owners will be able to go into their admin area and place the pictures into the required categories from there.

- c. For Image Owners who do not have a large selection of images to upload, and normally send the high-resolution files by ftp to the laboratory, they need only send the high resolution, and the system will produce both thumbnails. Once uploaded the system will send the laboratory an e-mail to tell them there are high-resolution files awaiting collection and the laboratory will delete them from the server once downloaded.

Information While uploading files, Photographers are able to attach information to the pictures such as date of photography, job title, subject's names, etc. This information can be attached globally to all the files in a particular upload. Customers will be able to use this information to make pinpoint searches when they are buying pictures, rather than drilling down through categories and jobs.

Thumbnail Size The Image Owner is able to set the size at which they want to display the larger thumbnail, and the small thumbnails, set by the system, fit within 150 x 150 pixels. The size of the large thumbnails will be set by the size at which they are uploaded, and this can be varied, picture-by-picture. This will allow for large group shots, for example, where Image Owners may want a larger view so that individual faces can be seen. Where the system generates both thumbnails, the size will be set in the Image Owner's admin area, however, only one size of large thumbnail will be allowed, until it is changed in the admin area.

Watermarking With larger size images available for viewing, it will be even more important to watermark the pictures to make them unusable, if printed from the screen. The system will watermark the thumbnails as default, however, an Image Owner will be able to turn this function off in their administration section. This will allow them to use their own watermark, or have non at all for a particular upload, or for all uploads.

Laboratory

- Services Through the **Photo Order Enterprise** system a laboratory can offer their customers unlimited print sizes, quantities with any price break, and different service times. This will allow for a range of laboratory services that have different service times and pricing combinations. Any of these standard combinations can be overwritten by special deals, which can be applied right down to a single picture.
- Retail Sales In turn, Photographers can offer their Internet sales customers any of the print sizes, quantities and service times made available to them by the laboratory. They can sell these by secure e-commerce transactions for cash sales, or through a normal credit account, for businesses. Photographers also have full control over the retail price of their pictures, again, right down to a single image. This means they can sell individually priced 'art' images as well as commercial and social photography.
- Film Photographers still using laboratories to process and scan film can leave them to up-load the images to the **Photo Order Enterprise** system, while a Photographer using a digital camera has the opportunity to immediately upload the images themselves from, for example, a laptop computer in the field. In each case, the rapid access to images for customers using the Internet provides a dynamic print delivery system that will drive extra work through the laboratory while delivering more profit to the Photographer.
- Digital For laboratories that wish to offer digital fulfillment, such as supplying files on CD-Rom or sending them by ISDN or e-mail attachment, these are just more products over which they have control.
- Downloads A soon to be released module will enable laboratories to offer download of files direct to customers desktops, however, issues such as where the high resolution files are stored and how they are delivered will have a bearing on the cost of this enhancement.
- Workflow The laboratory has the option to use a new browser based *Workflow/Job Tracking Module*, run the system by receiving orders by e-mail, or both. The system will allow the laboratory to mark jobs at certain times through the fulfillment cycle, by clicking on buttons attached to jobs. The number of buttons and their labels will be defined in the lab admin area. This will form the basis of a simple workflow & job tracking system.

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| Service Times | When jobs are ordered they will either have a pre-determined <i>Internet Order required by date/time</i> attached to them, or in a <i>Back Office Module</i> order, they will have a selectable <i>service date/time</i> . The label for this will be definable in the lab admin area and however it is described, it will have a service time attached in hours. This will allow the system to chronologically 'order' jobs in a list according to <i>order date/time + lab service date/time</i> , which will determine the <i>required by date/time</i> after looking up the <i>Lab opening days/times</i> . |
| Order Jobs | Lab administrators will be able to 'send to top' jobs in the list to prioritise them internally. Where this is done, the system will preserve the <i>required by date/time</i> , unless a post-order change has been requested by the customer, which may trigger a different <i>price/service time</i> combination. |
| Progress | As jobs progress through the fulfillment cycle, buttons will be clicked on the on-screen list to indicate their progress. The operator's name can be attached to the job and there will be space for the administrator or operator to make notes about the job. |
| Late Jobs | When jobs have not been marked as completed, before the <i>required by date/time</i> , they will be highlighted as ' <i>late</i> '. |
| Job Tracking | The lab will have sight of the full job list and status points. |
| Check Status | If Labs allow them the privilege; Image Owners will be able to check on the status of their jobs by clicking a link on the e-mail <i>confirmation of order</i> they receive. |
| Track Jobs | If Labs give Image Owners the privilege, they will be able to offer this to their customers, so they can track the progress of their jobs, by clicking a link on their e-mail <i>confirmation of order</i> . |
| | Suggested status points for an order are: |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. <i>Received</i> – mandatory, generated automatically. b. <i>On Hold</i>, awaiting information/files/etc – triggered by production administration. c. <i>In Progress</i> – triggered by production administration, could indicate operator undertaking the work. d. <i>Completed</i>, awaiting despatch – triggered by operator. e. <i>Despatched</i> – triggered by production administration, despatch method shown. |
| Internet Only | This system will only be available for Internet delivered orders, be they through the <i>Internet Ordering</i> or <i>Back-Office Modules</i> , |

which should encourage Image Owners to use this form of ordering. The laboratory will define which of the status points the Image Owner can see and if the Image Owner decides to offer this feature, their e-commerce customers will be able to see the same status points.

Always On Workflow will only be available to Laboratories that have an 'always on' Internet connection and Job Tracking will only be available to Image Owners and e-commerce customers if the Laboratory decides to operate the *Workflow Module* and make Job Tracking available.

Accounting The Photo Order Enterprise system can transfer data into other workflow and accounting systems, including PfDF, as the need arises. However, this will depend on the capability of these systems to receive the data and will have to be assessed on an installation-by-installation basis.

System Provision

- ASP While the software is for sale, Digital Asset Solutions' preferred option is to make the ***Photo Order Enterprise*** system available to laboratories as self-contained systems, provided and maintained by DAS, on its own Internet server. Using this Application Service Provider (ASP) model, laboratories can be 'up and running' in days, without making the high capital investment necessary to design and run sophisticated systems themselves. This means they can immediately add value to their own business by benefiting from the 'pay as you go' ASP model, provided by DAS.
- Marketing In turn, the laboratory makes the system available to their customers in any way they wish. For example, they can charge for the service, or use it as a marketing tool in their customer relationship building.

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