



Case Study

Retail Imaging Makes Memories With Planar

Some describe photography as a hobby; others refer to it as art. Planar customer Retail Imaging Management Group (RIMG), LLC calls it gold.

The mainstream movement toward digital photography has spurred retailers to provide an array of choices for the consumer to convert images from memory card to paper. Retail Imaging is leading this charge by offering best of breed photo developing services for retailers with locations around the world. The company offers kiosk software/hardware solutions, in-store technical support, as well as 800 number technical support and repair services. It has operations throughout the western United States that service customers from around the world.

Retail Imaging manufactures and sells custom digital photo kiosks that help consumers select and print billions of photos every year. An exploding market, consumers are expected to make 18.3 billion digital photo prints this year, with that number nearly doubling to 36.3 billion by 2008, according to International Data Corp. Retailers are battling for these consumers by offering multiple options at affordable prices through their in-store kiosks to drive more revenue.

The foundation of Retail Imaging's kiosk solution is Planar's durable touchscreen monitor. Planar's touchscreen offerings are designed to withstand at least 35 million finger prods, pokes and pushes from consumers, ensuring quality and reliability for the retailer, consumer and Retail Imaging.

Retail Imaging, based in the Pacific Northwest, wanted a partner that would meet and exceed its rigid specifications. To ensure specification compliance, Retail Imaging looked at the top touchscreen vendors from around the world before selecting Planar. Planar gives Retail Imaging a competitive advantage with leading touchscreen products that meet the needs of retailers and consumers.



"The Planar PT1500M was the most durable touchscreen flat-panel LCD display we could find," said Gerard Bottomley, Chief Operations Manager. "Besides offering an outstanding product, the Planar team worked with us throughout our R&D process to fine-tune the monitor. Their support, product fulfillment and cost structures are phenomenal, and we've built a great level of trust in Planar."

Considering 25 percent of Retail Imaging's revenue depends on the success, durability and overall longevity of Planar's LCD monitors, that is high praise.

The Retail Imaging kiosk services came to fruition because executives at the company astutely recognized the telltale signs of a classic business condition: unmet demand. Retail Imaging knew retailers needed benefits they weren't receiving from pre-packaged, big-box services offered by competitors.

When Retail Imaging made the decision to build kiosks, the company started searching for technology partners that would enable it to compete with other kiosk vendors and win the business of leading retailers nationwide. This hands-on approach and acute knowledge of the industry pointed them to Planar for next-generation kiosks. These kiosks were designed to give retailers even more options at cost-effective prices, while increasing consumer satisfaction with the kiosk experience. Planar's touchscreen technology plays a central role in helping Retail Imaging meet the numerous demands of the retail environment because of its unique versatility and durability.

Retail Imaging has led its photo kiosk charge with Planar's touchscreen monitors. Planar offers a variety of touch solutions that can be installed in a wide-range of locations, unlike traditional bulky CRTs. Planar monitors feature a bright panel combined with a solid, durable stand and offer a touchscreen interface by 3M for a superior product life versus typical touchscreens making it a perfect fit for retail environments.

Costco, One of RIMG's customers, needed a selection of different kiosk solutions that would take up the least amount of floor or counter space, yet provide unprecedented ease of use. The company created kiosks that can sit on a counter, be recessed into the counter or be mounted to a pole.

"One of the great benefits of the Planar's touchscreen is the fact that the monitor is often mounted to a pole so that it can face the consumer or be swung around to face the technician who can then assist the consumer in completing his or her transaction," added Bottomley. "We designed our kiosks to help retailers interact with their customers, not to impede communication. We knew that when a technician is stuck behind a counter and together with a huge, immovable kiosk, customers often leave frustrated and don't return."

The versatility of the PT1500M allows Retail Imaging to place its kiosks in a variety of retail situations. The device has also been installed at Fred Meyer, a Northwest superstore chain. RIMG has ambitious growth plans for the future. In the next year, the company hopes to more than double the almost 1,000 kiosks currently in use today.



Kiosk Use Grows

The volume of digital snapshots will grow at a sustained average of 24 percent from 2004 to 2009, boosting the worldwide growth of total prints volume to an average of 14 percent over the same forecast period, according to IDC's January 2006 "Image Bible" studies.

With the boom in digital photography in full swing, kiosk printing increased 374 percent in 2004, according to Summit Research Associates report entitled, "Kiosk Industry Sector Report - Digital Photography."

The average household is still taking the same number of pictures as it did on film, but digital camera owners are only printing about 25 percent of their photos, according to recent surveys by InfoTrends.

Due to increases in technology, ease of use and its low costs, a majority of digital printing will continue to take place at kiosks. As the adoption of kiosk picture printing grows and the technology becomes more user friendly, snap shot artists will start finding kiosks just about anywhere their heart desires. Already, consumers are able to snap a picture and have it printed in seconds at Fred Meyer stores. Just around the corner this convenience could allow tourists who take a photo of the lady liberty, take a few steps to a nearby Retail Imaging kiosk; slide in a memory chip in and just moments later have their picture.

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