

ptn  
Dealer 2005  
of the Year

## Lakeside Camera & Imaging



Each year, *PTN* chooses one retailer to honor as our Dealer of the Year—someone known for out-of-the-box thinking, innovation, business savvy, and tenacity.

This year the honor is bestowed upon David Guidry of Lakeside Camera and Imaging, with two locations: Metairie and Mandeville, Louisiana.

We take a look at what sets Lakeside apart from its competition.

See full story inside...



David Guidry welcomes visitors to the Metairie location prior to Hurricane Katrina.

## LAKESIDE CAMERA & IMAGING METAIRIE AND MANDEVILLE, LOUISIANA

Each year *PTN* chooses one retailer to honor as our Dealer of the Year—someone known for his or her out-of-the-box thinking, innovation, business savvy, and tenacity. This year the honor has been bestowed upon David Guidry and Lakeside Camera and Imaging. For a guy who never wanted any part of his family's business, David Guidry has done all right in photo specialty. He's president of the Louisiana-based company, with two locations: one in Metairie and the other in Mandeville.

As a somewhat rebellious youth, David had no interest in photography—he even admits to having spent a summer in Yellowstone without taking a single photo! Unhappy with his career path after graduating college in 1992, however, David was offered a job by his father, Rodney, and he accepted. Starting in the business as a salesman, David went on to manage the lab.

From the very beginning, David says, both his parents spent an equal time running the business, but when Rodney was diagnosed with cancer in the spring of 1995 and passed away the following summer, David became president, while his mother, Susan, took on the CFO role. David's

wife, Sherry, has worked in the business since 2000, and brother Todd re-joined Lakeside this past fall.

What sets Lakeside apart from the pack is their dedication to a set of "Core Values" (shown this page, below), which they came up with a few years ago. Says David, "What we do is governed by our Core Values."

### The Lakeside Brand

Branding is an important part of the Lakeside Camera and Imaging business: The company's goal is to be the dominant caretaker of memories in Southeastern Louisiana. What is the Lakeside Camera and Imaging brand? "How lucky do you feel to have a great picture of your grandparents?"

According to the Guidrys and Lakeside, branding is *all* about emotion and experience—but a great brand always has a great product at its core. In a world where people are looking for substance, the staff at Lakeside make it an integral part of their job to be remarkable and meaningful in how they dress, how they communicate, and how they perform.

An important part of the Lakeside brand is how the staff looks—professional, on a consistent,



daily basis. To that end, Lakeside utilizes a system of different shirt styles to differentiate between retail sales staff, lab personnel, and support personnel: Salespeople wear light-blue Lakeside button-down shirts; lab personnel wear dark-blue polo shirts; and support personnel are in black polo shirts. This identifies the various staff members who might be working behind a counter or assisting other customers.

Another aspect of the Lakeside brand is that how the staff communicates matters—this means *never* failing to consider the details during client communication. The Lakeside brand is about consistency and keeping promises. Consistency leads to loyalty!

Lakeside is a full-service photo specialty business, with color and B&W processing and printing; contact sheets, enlargements and wide-format printing; canvas, Giclée, and Piezography printing; audio-to-CD/movie- and video-to-DVD conversion services; archiving to CD/DVD; printing from digital files; package printing from 35mm, APS, and 120mm originals; a comfortable kiosk printing area complete with a kids' play area and free drinks; and much more. These services are all performed in-house to conform to Lakeside's high standards of quality.

Other services include offering classes, on topics such as digital photography and hand-coloring, part of Lakeside's strategy for bringing customers back into the store and customizing their Lakeside experience; an in-house portrait studio, an asset for capturing new customers and retaining business; and providing custom framing services for a complete one-stop shop.

### **From Mom & Pop to Corporate Business**

The Metairie location, opened in 1972 by David's parents, eventually built up from its original 900-square-foot storefront, moved around the block, and grew to its present-day size of 10,000 square feet. The Mandeville location, purchased in 1996, is 3,500 square feet. The Metairie location is currently under reconstruction after sustaining heavy damage from Hurricane Katrina (read "Lingering Effects of Katrina," page 18, for more).

From 1972 until the opening of the second location in 1996, Lakeside Camera was a successful mom-and-pop business. "Until then, the business was very much a family business," with just 26 employees in the Metairie location, according to David. "The business worked really well," David explains, adding that his parents had earned a good living from it.

The turning point came around the time the second store opened. With the opening of the Mandeville location, the business swelled to over



## **Lakeside's Core Values**

- No matter what the circumstance, comfort thy customer.
- Provide instant access to fantastic service.
- Produce the most beautiful picture possible from any given source.
- Never let them down—stick to promises and always deliver on time.
- 1=3: Never let temporary demands cause us to waver from hiring the best people.
  - 1 good=3 average; 1 great=3 good.
- Your worth to Lakeside Camera and Imaging is dependent upon how much you help the people around you get better.

50 employees. "It became impossible to run the business the same as before," says David. It had just become too big to continue operating as a closed-type mom-and-pop business. "The problem with a mom-and-pop operation is that the owner just has an inordinate amount of work to handle," explains David. "It's too big really, for one person to control it all."

So, just as Lakeside has changed its name throughout the years to change with the times (from Lakeside Camera, to Lakeside Camera and Video, to its present name of Lakeside Camera and Imaging), so, too, did the business change as it expanded.

Implementing many of the suggestions of a consultant the Guidrys brought in at the time, they soon began to run the business as more of a corporation, with an open-book structure. The Guidrys put a variety of systems in place to help them run the business; in doing so, David found he could free up the amount of time that was spent running the business.

By putting "actionable intelligence" in the hands of his employees, David found his staff working harder to meet their goals. Utilizing reward-based systems



for employee performance, David says that the less he sought to control his staff—and the more support he offered them—the better they did their jobs. They haven't let him down. "I've never, ever, ever had to tell someone to get off the clock," he adds. "Systems are the key to freedom and performance." By giving each employee certain responsibilities and holding them accountable—and providing the procedures and systems to base their actions on—the staff, not just the owner, have a vested interest in how well the business runs.

The systems that have been put in place at Lakeside allow everyone to strive to be the best. The structured weekly meetings (see "Striving for the Best," page 20) incorporate mutual respect, positive feedback and recognition, an open forum where anyone can express their opinions, and brainstorming as a group to solve problems. Lakeside's meetings are an important part of how they maintain the company's high level of quality, and operations at Lakeside run smoothly because

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everyone on the team respects each other, offers support, and strives for greatness for the company. Hence, another Core Value: Your worth to Lakeside Camera and Imaging is dependent upon how much you help the people around you get better.

David credits his involvement with PMAI and the other groups that he's a member of, including IPI and PRO, with having a great deal to do with where he is today by exposing him to ideas he may not have discovered on his own. He's been a PMA TVP and Trustee At Large; he's on the board of PRO; and he's a member of the Young Entrepreneurs Organization. David's mom, Susan, is a member of the Buck Rogers National Photofinishers Group.

"I'm president of the company, and I have a job to do," David says. "If I participate at PMA and network, I'm better equipped to be president and run my business. Change is too rapid and comprehensive to be complacent."

This participation doesn't just involve being on the receiving end, either. "It's very important to give

back," David says. "Without some of the mentoring, without the help of some people in this industry, I wouldn't be where I am now." And, according to David, where he is now is being competent and qualified in a solid business, and comfortable with its direction.

### Lingering Effects of Katrina

For those who live or lived in the Louisiana, Alabama, and Mississippi areas affected by Hurricane Katrina, the effects of the storm will be felt for a long time. The Guidrys didn't escape the hurricane's wrath: The Metairie store was substantially damaged, and the Mandeville location is open with just enough staff in place for day-to-day operations. Many of the services that were offered by Lakeside Camera and Imaging have been suspended (according to David, they'll most likely be reinstated in the future).

However, much of the interaction with customers (for classes, photos taken by Lakeside's portrait studio, and the like) is not only dependent

upon Lakeside having enough staff on hand to perform these services—it's also dependent on customers being there to require such services. The population of the Mandeville area has swelled by about 30% from what it was before Hurricane Katrina, says David. The homeowners and business owners who were in areas that were spared total destruction, he explains, are either already back home or are waiting until the schools open (scheduled for January 2006).

Louisiana, Alabama, and Mississippi residents who lived in rented housing that was completely destroyed are gone. These people had nothing keeping them in their decimated neighborhoods and have most likely started over wherever they landed. That means that right now there are few customers for businesses in the hardest-hit areas.

The Guidrys themselves were stranded for a time in Houston, Texas, right after the hurricane. They couldn't get any information about home, but David says they talked over what it would take to get back. There were two decisions he

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Congratulate one  
**David Guidry**  
and everyone at  
**Lakeside**  
Camera & Imaging  
on being named  
"Dealer of the Year"  
all three years.

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### Is it an achievement if it goes unrecognized?

At Nikon, we believe achievement deserves recognition. That's why Nikon is proud to honor and congratulate the 2005 Photo Trade News Dealer of the Year, **Lakeside Camera and Imaging**, for all it has accomplished.

In 1972, with a vision of high-quality service and a commitment to excellence, Rodney and Susan Guidry opened Lakeside Camera and Imaging in Louisiana. For the past 33 years—within the ever-changing retail environment—their son, David, has not only upheld that commitment but has made the store an outstanding demonstration of entrepreneurial success. His contributions to the photo industry continue even in the wake of Hurricane Katrina's devastation, as he redesigns Lakeside's Metairie location, continuing the dream of creating the ultimate camera store with the most comfortable interactive photo experience imaginable.

To succeed in business is to defy the odds. And at Nikon, we are committed to recognizing those who do.



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(Above left) One of Lakeside's Kiosk stations. (Above right) This is where folks can wait for their prints when they have opted for Lakeside's 15 minute express service.



(Above) Artist rendering of the new interior of the Metairie location, set to reopen Jan. 06.

and his family had to make. The first: Where would they live? If their homes were destroyed, where would they move to? The second: What

and part of their business, the Guidrys have found they are able to take their vision for the future (what they had envisioned Lakeside to be five years from now) and make it into a reality today.

be seen, Lakeside has a solid foundation and the strength, determination, and vision for the future. *ptn*



(Above) Some of the Point of Purchase marketing materials that Lakeside has created.

would they do now? Did they still want to run a photo specialty business? There was a lot to think about, and plenty of possibilities to consider.

The final conclusion: "I realized I didn't want to live anywhere but New Orleans," says David. "The storm made us sit back and rethink what we wanted to do." In his youth, David hadn't wanted to join the family business, but now, given the choice to reinvent himself, David realized the career path he'd followed at Lakeside was the right path for him. The Guidrys realized they wanted to stay in the photo specialty retail business after all: "It's what has made us happy."

### Realizing Visions

The hurricane allowed the Guidrys to reinvent themselves. "It's kind of scary, but it also got me reinvigorated," David admits. With the need to rebuild their Metairie location

"So much of retail today is about the customer experience," says David. "You need to take control of the experience that the customer has and make it the best. The customer experience is the only thing you can control."

Taking a broad view of the Metairie location, David and his staff realized that the customers never really knew about Lakeside's digital imaging space unless they had a reason to wander into that part of the store. They realized this was a design flaw—all of the sexiness of digital was lost behind closed doors. "You've got to put the magic in front of them," he says. "Make a show of it." This can plant the idea in your customers' heads that the business can do so much more than they'd previously thought. David recalls that customers have responded, "Oh, you can do this too? I thought you only sold cameras" upon finding out about Lakeside's extensive digital services.

Current plans have Lakeside Camera and Imaging's Metairie location reopening in January 2006. "Maybe we're being optimistic, but we think we can get it done," says David. The Metairie location is to become a "Photography and Digital Imaging Pavilion," providing the sharpest, most comfortable interactive consumer photo experience the world has ever seen, according to David.

Disaster can strike anyone, at any time. Lakeside was fortunate. The company was fiscally sound, had business interruption insurance, and owns the buildings the stores reside in. While much in New Orleans remains to

### Striving for the Best

David Guidry didn't want to live by the cliché "If I don't do it, it won't get done right," so he decided to involve his staff in the running of the business. "If we had failures, I wanted people to feel the failure; if we had victories, I wanted them to see the victory coming, run with it, and celebrate it," he says.

So he learned to delegate. By giving his staff the responsibility and the drive to work to the best of their abilities, Lakeside's entire staff consistently produces outstanding results. "People want to do the things necessary to be successful, to win," he says. "Everybody likes a winner. But if we aren't providing them with a picture of what winning looks like, then how can they possibly shoot for it? That's why concrete, thought-out, achievable, attainable goals that are easy to understand are critical in driving performance."

At Lakeside, everyone strives for the best, and that begins with hiring the right people, constant training, and weekly meetings. One of Lakeside's Core Values ("1=3: Never let temporary demands cause us to waver from hiring the best people. 1 good=3 average; 1 great=3 good") illustrates this. "If we can put an A player in each position, then we can operate more efficiently and attain our goals," David explains. Living by Lakeside's Core Values allows the entire staff to be conscious of what it takes to offer their customers the very best.

Each meeting follows the same schedule:

- **Good News (10 min.):** one good item of news relating to a core value, and a personal item of good news
- **Numbers (5 min.):** a review of sales against goals
- **Customer & Employee Data (5–10 min.)** reports on any situation that affects the entire group, often focused on positive employee actions. This part of the meeting alerts everyone to a concern they might have to deal with so no one is blindsided, especially the boss
- **The Rock (Collective Intelligence) (10–30 min.)** a topic (e.g., procedural issue, marketing concern, etc.) brought to a successful conclusion by the end of the given time
- **Collective Close & Logging of Results (2 min. each):** reiterating what was learned.

Every staff member knows he or she has a voice that can be heard, and that all opinions are valued. "It has to be safe for people to really share what's on their minds," David adds.

### Photographs Don't Do It Justice

Talking with David Guidry about the lasting effects of Hurricane Katrina, you realize that no matter how many magazines or newspapers you've read, no matter how much you've watched the coverage on television, the rest of us in America, living in parts of the country that weren't in Hurricane Katrina's path, have no idea what New Orleans and its residents are going through—unless you've seen it for yourself. "Photographs, in this case, don't do it justice," David says.

At the time we spoke with David, it was two-and-a-half months after the hurricane hit the Gulf Coast. At the time, most of the area's basic service and infrastructure problems remained unaddressed. Unless you're there, he explains, you can't get a feeling for the devastation and destruction of homes, businesses, and the basic infrastructure.

His present home survived the storm with no damage, but recently, David decided to take a bike ride to his old neighborhood, to see the house he lived in with his wife when they were first married. The water line was near the roof. In certain areas, he says, "it looked as if a bomb had exploded."

No matter what anyone says, it's going to take years before New Orleans is back to where it was before August 29, 2005, the day that Hurricane Katrina swept through.