

Go ahead. Finish it. How many times have you heard that cliché? You hear it because it is true and nowhere is it more true than in the art of promotion. Over the years I have been engaged in promotion of the concrete paving industry's arsenal of solutions, the most effective tool I have had is my camera.

In fact, the day I first went to work in the promotion business, one of the first instructions I was given was go buy a good camera. That trusty 25-year old Pentax K1000 is still with me today serving as a backup. Until my recent migration to the age of digital photography, it was probably more responsible for any success that I have had in this business than any other single factor. Why is that?

Pictures give me/us the ability to communicate instantly the possibilities. In the concrete industry, selling ideas and concepts requires that you be able to show first, what you are talking about and second, how you got there. For example, in selling UTW or conventional concrete parking lots we have to demonstrate that we can solve a problem, say using a thin overlay on a deteriorated asphalt parking lot. Then you have to demonstrate to the unbelievers how you did it. Much of the time, particularly with new ideas or methods, your photos contain only these steps. The "deal closer" is that unique shot that you can get that shows

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PROMOTION PRINCIPLES

A Practitioner's View Lesson 5 – “A picture is worth...”

that same project in service five, ten or 20 years later. If you have these, the job gets a lot easier.

Let me give you another tip. For some of you wondering why some of your competitors are so successful at promoting projects, your competition may be maintaining “promotion scrapbooks” of some of their projects. They use these as tools to help them sell their new idea or project to a potential client. They are showing the “what,” “how” and “finished result” of a solution - a solution that meets the buyer's needs. I do not pretend to be an expert on photography, but over the next few paragraphs I will share with you some simple tips to help you take better pictures and to help you better organize your collection.

Let's face it. With the exception of some very interesting colored concrete and some amazing structures, the color of our product is a somewhat uninspiring grey. Bringing visual interest into your photos is important. A plain parking lot or street is pretty dull. Add some workers actually doing something on it or a vehicle using it and interest is generated.

There will be times when it is necessary to explain construction details when a dull shot is a necessity, but even these can be livened up with some type of visual reference. I have more than my share of pictures of cracks and joints in pavements. If I am presenting some aspect that requires that I show that particular design feature or detail, I will frequently add something to the picture to give it both scale and visual interest.

Cameras today are amazingly forgiving, but there are a few things to consider in your selection. Today you can buy a reasonable quality five mega pixel (5MP - or 5 million +/- dots in the picture) camera at one of the “big box” stores for just under \$150. You can get by with less money and less camera if you never intend to print anything larger than a 5 x 7 inch print. That is adequate if you choose a scrapbook approach, but given the small incremental cost

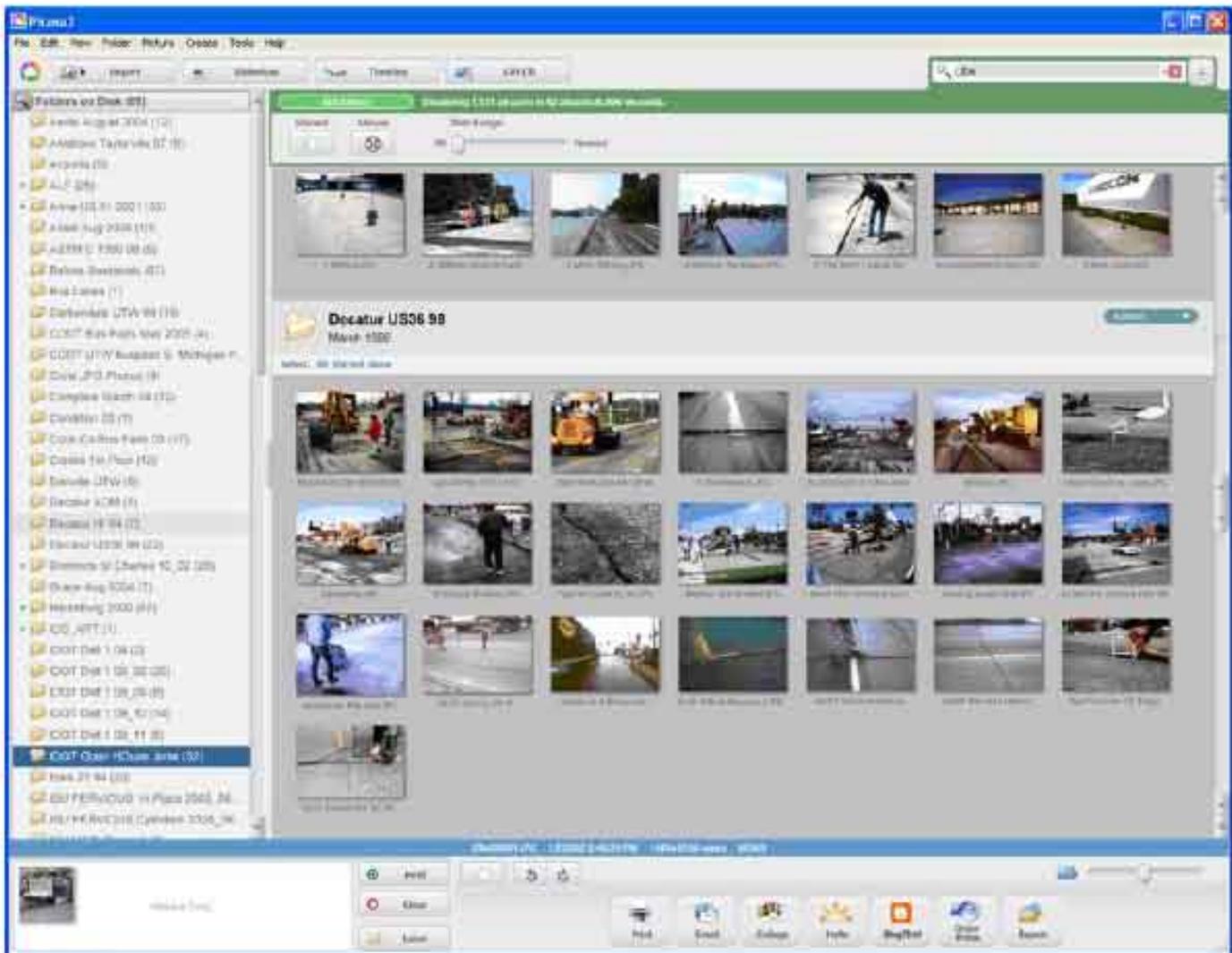
differential today, I would buy at least this quality. The higher the number of mega pixels, the more you can enlarge your photos without degradation in quality assuming your settings on the camera are set to the highest quality. It is also important for those critical fine detail shots that show those cracks that we wanted to avoid when doing failure analysis.

Organizing your photos is also a lot easier today if your photos are in a digital format. I still have close to 15,000 slides from the “old days” of promotion. Trying to find the perfect slide to digitize and import into my presentations is sometimes an exercise in futility and frustration. The new tools for organizing digital photography are amazing and your camera may come with a software program for doing this.

If you do not have such a tool, I recommend Picasa, Version 2 (see Figure 1). The company bought by the internet search engine company Google offers one of the best indexing and previewing systems available. The price is right - free! Download it at <http://picasa.google.com/> Picasa includes some very basic editing functions for those photos that are too dark, too bright, slightly off color or need to have something cropped from them. It also offers some basic print and caption functions that may be useful for building your project scrapbooks and can even create multimedia slide shows for you. An on-line tour at the Picasa website shows you some of what it can do. Mostly, it will help you find those hard to find shots that you will take.

One final thought. If I were “in charge” of the entire industry today, every person in sales would be issued, along with his cell phone, a digital camera with instructions to use it at least three times a week during the construction season and forward the three photos with information to IRMCA. If everyone would do that, then soon somewhere out there we would always have that “one picture worth...” to meet all of your promotion needs.

Figure 1: Picasa - A free tool from Google that helps you organize your promotion shots.



Randell Riley is the Executive Director for Illinois Chapter - ACPA, and a consultant to Illinois Ready Mixed Concrete Association. He can be reached at 217-793-4933 or on the internet at pccman@InsightBB.com.