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# Your Bottom Line

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By Dr. Henry J. Oles, Cr.Photog.

## Overcoming Fear

It is only human to be afraid of what you don't understand. Although fear of the unknown can be a protective reaction, it can also prevent photographers from adapting to innovation.

The key factor in conquering the unknown is acquiring knowledge. Once photographers understand the elements that make them uncomfortable, fear disappears.

There are numerous photographic procedures that make uninformed photographers uneasy. Color processing and printing technology are classic examples. Many studio owners are apprehensive about processing and printing their own work; terms such as "CC units," "subtractive vs. additive filtration," and "chemistry plots" make some photographers shudder. Fortunately, professional photographers have the option of employing specialists to process and print exposed film. But in some cases, photographers can't afford this "luxury."

Video production is another current industry example of technology which many photographers view with apprehension. Although it is standard industry thinking that video technology is a growing force in the future of professional photography, there is great ignorance and fear associated with this technology.

Still video first emerged into the portrait market via electronic videotape proofing. Photographers who know little about this technology may panic if they can't operate a video proofing unit the moment it is plugged in.

Reading instructional manuals provided with equipment is the obvious way to learn about a device. However, many photographers fail to take this important step. Video has its own lingo. Terms such as "pixels," "lines of resolution," "ccd sensors," and "chips" are foreign to uninformed photographers. Learning what these words mean in practical terms can help photographers gain knowledge.

But acquiring a new vocabulary is not enough. Often, newcomers to a field such as video learn the lingo without understanding the concepts. For instance, image

makers may learn a definition for "lines of resolution" and associate the term with image quality. When purchasing a television monitor, they may judge a unit's quality solely on lines of resolution, without considering other pertinent features.

When comparing video cameras, ccd cells and lines of resolution are discussed, but there are other features photographers should learn. For instance, still video cameras generally produce better quality results than freeze-frame units; images recorded on two tracks rather than one are superior; units constructed with "high-band" technology yield a better image, and a camera with more than one chip has greater image quality. Here, a little knowledge can be equally dangerous as having no knowledge. Learning about only one feature may lead consumers to think they can make competent purchasing decisions.

In order to make intelligent decisions, a sufficient amount of knowledge must be gained. On the other hand, it is not necessary for photographers to develop an in-depth aptitude of the fundamentals involved in technology. For instance, photographers can be excellent color printers without knowing specific mechanics involved in manufacturing film or exactly what happens during the developing process. Image makers can become quite knowledgeable about video, without understanding specifics regarding the physics involved in video imaging.

The world has become far too complex for everyone to understand everything. For this reason, we have specialists. For example, companies which create video proofing systems require specialized engineers to design the system. Photographers only need to understand the system functions—they do not need detailed knowledge of how the system was designed.

A number of years ago, I began to predict extensive changes that are now evolving in the photographic industry. Photographers who attended trade shows the past year have noticed the beginning

of this revolution. The IBM television commercial marking the 10th anniversary of the IBM personal computer advises the viewer to "hold on to your hat" as more changes sweep onto the scene. Change is inevitable, but fear associated with change must be avoided. Fear and ignorance are closely related. If ignorance is erased with education, then education can also erase fear.

Stop and think for a moment how primitive human beings would feel if they were suddenly inserted into the modern world—the technology of automobiles, television, electronics, computers, and even cameras. These items taken for granted today were fear-producing yesterday.

It is important for photographers to increase their efforts to keep current with the industry. Read professional magazines thoroughly, especially articles pertaining to new technology; attend conventions and methodically work the trade show—don't just walk around and admire the toys! Manufacturers add to the education process with the information they provide in publications and presentations—however, be on guard, because a sales representative may emphasize a product's strength while ignoring its weaknesses. A knowledgeable photographer won't be fooled.

Your bottom line is threatened if ignorance is allowed to persist. Be on alert and make every effort to attack ignorance to ensure a profitable bottom line. ■