

John Lacy Offers Real Smart Marketing



PHOTOS BY JOHN LACY PHOTOGRAPHY

Much of John Lacy Photography's client base is in the construction industry, ranging from mechanical contractors and materials suppliers to developers and general contractors. He now offers complete promotional services with his new venture, Real Smart Marketing.

by Michael Lawson, Associate Editor

Early in life, CAM Member John Lacy hoped to become an architect. His grandfather, who was a partner with famed architect Eero Saarinen, encouraged his aspirations by giving him a set of drafting equipment from the 1920s. However, John quickly found that drafting, and consequently architecture, was not for him. "I discovered a passion for photography," he recalled. "While I was in elementary school I received a camera and I photographed anything and

everything I saw." He attended the University of Michigan's School of Art, which is located in the university's Art & Architecture building. That exposure to architecture altered the future for Lacy, who has become one of the state's leading construction and design photographers.

Recently, he expanded his photographic company by creating a branch that offers complete marketing programs for his clients. The new venture is called Real Smart Marketing.



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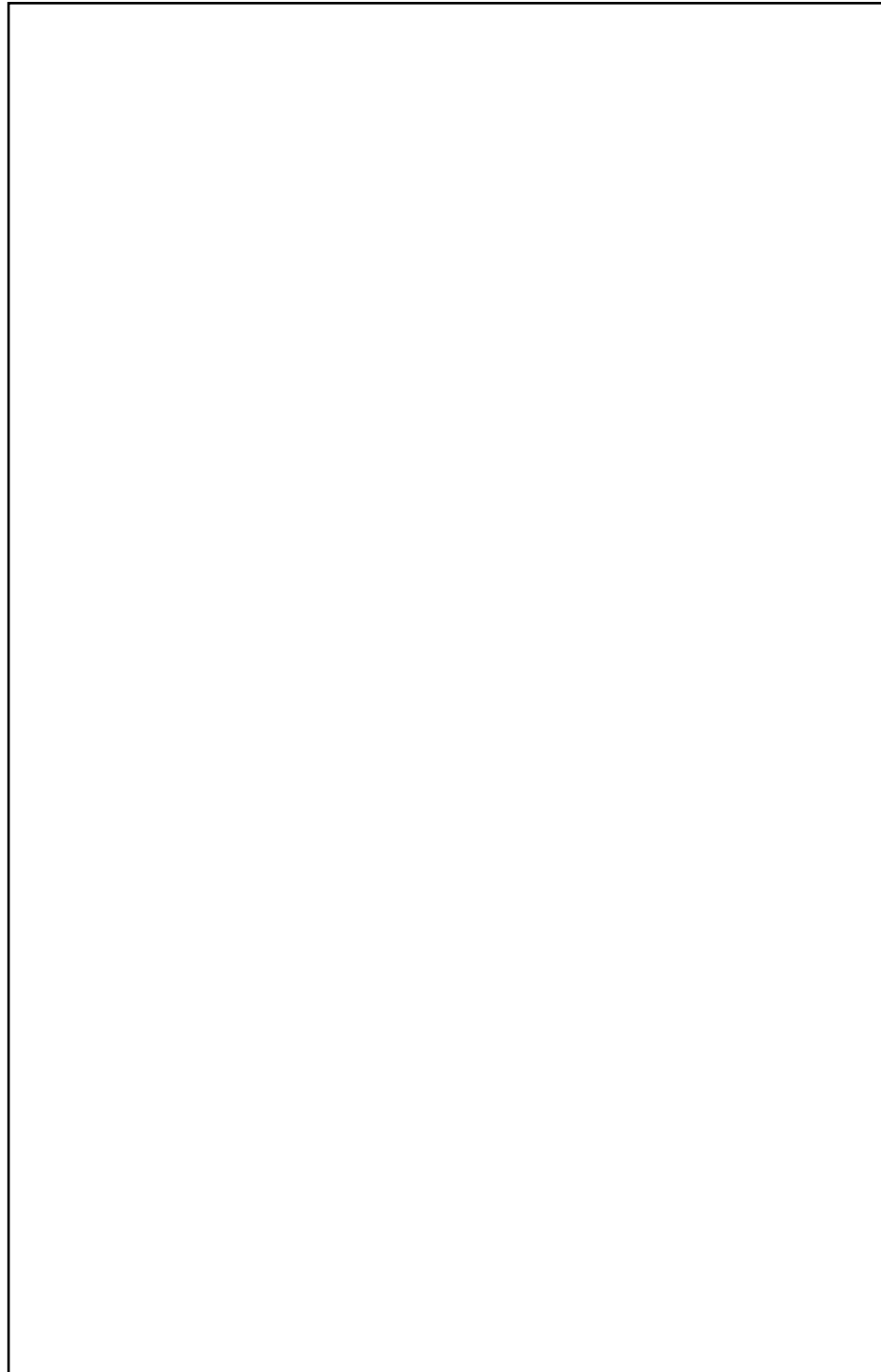
Lacy's first years working as a photographer did not involve capturing images of buildings, but instead doing product shoots for the auto industry. He first worked for the Ford Motor Company before striking out on his own. "I found that the most receptive market for my services was the automotive supplier base, which included

thousands of companies ranging from small job shops up the biggest of Tier 1 suppliers," he recalled. "They needed good photography, but couldn't afford to keep a full-time staff photographer on hand. Furthermore, they had found that a large percentage of photographers didn't know how to effectively and creatively photograph auto supplies and parts plants."

In the early '90s, Lacy joined the Construction Association of Michigan, and that rekindled his interest in architecture. "While I was making a good living in the automotive industry, I yearned to honor my grandfather, who was nearly 90 at the time, and went back to shooting architecture," he said. "Then, through my connection with CAM, I found that contractors and subcontractors were in serious need of good photography to showcase their work." He convinced many in the design and construction industry that as the market became more competitive, the successful companies would be the ones who presented an image of confidence and achievement in their promotional brochures.

Lacy also learned that while freelance photography is a very rewarding form of work, it is also very risky from a financial standpoint. "From my first job as a freelance photographer's assistant, I began to gain an appreciation for the art of marketing my skills," he said. "During my first working years, as I worked for several seasoned photographers, I witnessed the diversity of their subjects and how they lit and photographed them. But as I studied how they marketed their services, I realized their methods were expensive and largely ineffective." Lacy explored several forms of marketing, held brainstorming sessions with clients and researched the work of advertising and marketing experts. He looked closely at the prospect of managing and directing a number of overlapping marketing efforts and the importance of creating a program in which the elements supported each other to make the total package effective.

As his photography business grew, Lacy honed his marketing skills by using his own business to test his marketing ideas. He realized that he was doing something right as John Lacy Photography began gaining clients rapidly. "I found that many of my customers, while needing photography of their construction and design work, were also in need of marketing materials to complement the pictures," he said. "Following a shoot of their buildings or products, they would ask me



about brochures, murals and other marketing options." This sparked the idea for Real Smart Marketing.

GIVE IT A GO

Lacy began to search for ways to apply the design skills he had learned in college and started creating brochures, ads and other marketing tools for his clients. He first tested the possibility of offering marketing services with the creation of a promotional flyer for an equipment manufacturer. After taking photos of the products in the field, he scanned the shots into his computer system. He then removed the job site background with a graphics software and replaced it with a neutral background. Next he added the company's logo and a title. "The client was very happy and that led us to producing a series of flyer sheets, a pocket presentation folder, redesigning their logo, as well as designing and printing the company's business cards and letterhead," recalled Lacy. "So happy, in fact, that we were commissioned to produce a video brochure they could take to trade shows, large murals of their product flyer sheets, and a website that includes a 360° virtual tour and downloadable versions of the video brochure."

According to Lacy, the Real Smart Marketing program he creates for a client is designed to expand as the client's customer base grows. "That one client serves as a good example of how expanding the services we offer has helped both our



Although many photographers find the field difficult, John Lacy has demonstrated a high degree of visual grasp which allows him to photograph construction job sites in a way that captures the eyes.

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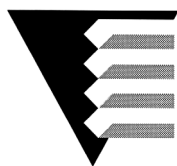
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For five consecutive years, Lacy has photographed the winners of the INTEX awards. The honor is presented by the Architectural Contractors Association, a group of skilled contractors specializing in drywall, ceiling, flooring and EIFS applications.



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customer and our marketing services advance," he said. "Even more important was that through each step we kept the overall goals of the client as our target."

Recently, Real Smart Marketing was commissioned by Denn-Co Construction to develop a new marketing program. Part of the plan Lacy developed was the very effective series of ads currently running in CAM Magazine. "Yes, it is ironic that the CAM Magazine ads contain no photographs," he said. "However, we believe that this was the best method to present the client to the magazine's readers." Denn-Co Construction has also contracted Real Smart Marketing to develop a promotional brochure and the company's website.

MARKETING THE PLAN

As his marketing and design skills have developed, Lacy has delved deeply into computer technology and digital photography to discover more creative ways to join text and image. This digital convergence continues today. These investments in technology have allowed the company to offer more options to its clients, because it now can do more work in-house.

The Michigan design and construction industry has reacted quickly to the services offered by Real Smart Marketing. "Over 100 companies have given us the challenge of finding and implementing programs to meet their marketing goals," said Lacy. "Many began by visiting our website, www.Proshooter.com." ♦♦