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**Memphis Small Business Spotlight
 Photography Business An Early Passion For Mangiante**



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Some teenagers spend years trying to figure out what they want to do with their lives once they graduate from high school. For Gene Mangiante, it seems his path was determined long before he earned a diploma.

While he was a student at Christian Brothers High School, he began taking photos for the yearbook and newspaper. Shortly after that he launched his own business of sorts.

"It's kind of funny actually," Mangiante said. "When I got into my senior year, I was doing a lot of sports and ended up doing some team and individual pictures, and I was actually selling pictures to my classmates' parents before I even graduated from high school."



POINT AND SHOOT: Gene Mangiante's passion for photography that developed while in high school has grown into a successful business, Mangiante Photography LLC. -- PHOTO BY ROSALIND GUY

Mangiante is the president and owner of Mangiante Photography LLC, which has an office at 4646 Poplar Ave., Suite 220.

Early start

The next step toward owning his photography business came immediately after he graduated from CBHS in 1998 when he enrolled at the University of Memphis to study business management. While attending the university, Mangiante never stopped taking photos. In fact, he extended into other forms of photography.

"I went on to the U of M and was doing the sports (photography) and started doing some weddings and things like that, and some school pictures and things along that nature," he said. "Also, I found a niche for party pictures for fraternities and sororities because it was an underserved market here in Memphis at that time."

All this took place at a time when Mangiante was learning about his competition: a photographer who would travel from Oxford, Miss., to Memphis to take the same type of party pictures on college campuses.

Mangiante Photography LLC

Address: 4646 Poplar Ave., Suite 220
Owner: Gene Mangiante
Founded: September 2001
Phone: 767-6555
Web site: www.mangiantephoto.com

But that didn't faze Mangiante, he said, because he believed in the quality of his work.

Ultimately, Mangiante Photography in 2004 bought that company for an undisclosed amount. It exists today and is known as Oxford Party Pics.

Buying the company allowed Mangiante to expand his business and client base even further.

"That was a huge thing for us to buy another company," Mangiante said. "And really, it allowed us the opportunity to expand our business here. So we were using a lot of the capital that came from this market to reinvest into the company. That also allowed us to bring our first full-time employee, and allowed us to expand into other markets like taking school pictures and a little bit

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Search 5 million public records.
 Research your competition.
 Protect your business.
 Check your suppliers.
 Explore opportunities.

more into graduations and the proms and sports team individual pictures and things like that."

Learning on the grow

Shortly after buying the Oxford business, Mangiante had the opportunity to acquire another photography business, Central Florida-based Flash Foto, even further expanding his reach.

The purchase of those two companies has solidified Mangiante Photography's market hold, leading the company to an increase in profits in recent years.

The company's profits increased 100 percent in 2004, another 20 percent in 2005 and an additional 15 percent in 2006, Mangiante said.

It wasn't the acquisitions alone that led to an increase in the bottom line for the company. Mangiante also contributed the successful nature of his business to his innovative approach to taking photographs and delivering the completed product to his customers.

"There are a lot of things that set us apart from others in the marketplace," he said. "We post our photos online within 24 hours. With the digital revolution, I guess you could say, there's a very large need for consumers to be able to see before they buy. And in the past with photography you'd wait a week and see that somebody blinked; now we can see that kind of thing right off the bat."

The company also has a unique delivery method, where the finished product is delivered straight to the customer from the processing lab.

"So rather than the lab shipping the prints to us and us having to ship the prints onward to the client, it goes direct and it saves that step here in the office," Mangiante said.

Though it was a passion for photography that drew Mangiante into the business, he doesn't take photos as much as he used to. He now takes about 5 to 10 percent of the photos, but he is visible and very available for his customers.

"I'm still involved during our busy seasons, I still drop in on shoots," he said. "The customers still know me. I mean, we're very personal with our customers."

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