



Going Commercial. . .

Stock Asylum Staff Report
Nov. 6, 2006

New York, NY — Alamy, which offers a huge online stock photography collection that attracts primarily editorial buyers, has started laying the groundwork for an assault on the commercial side of the business. But, the company said it would take its time about getting into the advertising and design markets in order to do it right.

At a gathering of Alamy photographers during the PhotoPlus Expo here, Alamy executives said the company is creating new information fields for commercial users, including fields to make it easier to determine which photos are properly released. The new fields, which will be filled in by image suppliers when they submit their work, should be available early next year, said Alamy CEO James West.

In the meantime, company executives encouraged photographers to start acquiring model and property releases whenever possible.

Alan Capel, Alamy's head of content, told the audience of more than 100 image suppliers they should continue to shoot photos in situations where releases are not possible, but noted that having releases could make images more valuable as the company moves into the lucrative commercial market where releases are legally required.

West noted that a push into commercial markets is not imminent. "What we are doing now is trying to get the images described in the right way, said the CEO. "We won't go live (for commercial buyers) until we have enough appropriate images."



Alamy CEO James West at a meeting with photographers in New York City. (© Ron Rovtar).



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"If it takes us some time to move into the commercial market then so be it." West added. "We still have a lot of potential to grow in our current market."



Like most stock distributor, Alamy does make a percentage of commercial sales.

Despite the fact that some Alamy photographers have reported commercial sales in the tens of thousands of dollars, the company markets mostly to editorial clients, who seem to choose Alamy because of the size and breadth of its collection, which is approaching seven million images.



In fact, West said, "There are plenty of opportunities left for us in the editorial market. Our sales are growing very nicely."

West said sales are rising in the double-digit percentage range. Though West would not say exactly how far into double digits the company is growing, a graph displayed without numbers seemed to indicate growth in the high end of the range during the last year-and-a-half.

A sales update sent to all Alamy photographers after the meeting noted that, in the United Kingdom, the company has seen 43 percent growth in "key clients" over the last year. The company said it has added 15 new U.K. travel clients already this quarter. Alamy also reported strong growth in the United States during recent periods. West said the U.S. accounts for 25 to 30 percent of Alamy's business.



In another matter, West noted that the first version of AlamyRank went live Oct. 11. AlamyRank attempts to return images from the most popular collections high in search results. The system rates collection by comparing the number of times images are seen as thumbnails to the number of times the thumbnails are clicked on and purchased by image buyers.

"We really believe that, with AlamyRank, we have a system that will improve life for buyers and photographers," West asserted. He said the company is interested in hearing feedback about the system from photographers.



West noted, however, that a low rank under the system does not mean images will go unseen. Many buyers search deeply in the Alamy collection. "For every 2,000 images seen we are seeing one purchase," he noted. "They (buyers) are looking very far down in the search results."

Alamy has said AlamyRank will benefit the most proficient photographers and those doing a good job of keywording and describing their images. West suggested that photographers using accurate and appropriate keywords and descriptions will see their images appear higher in search results under the new system.

"If you drop the Oxford Dictionary into every image you send, your images won't be chosen (clicked on or purchased by buyers) very often and they won't be seen very often," West said.



The Alamy web site is at: <http://www.alamy.com>.

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