

Selling software

Hard facts about software

Gavin Stoker discovers how you can make hard cash from going 'soft'

Image editing and management software, along with colour calibration devices, are the hub of any photographer's digital darkroom and typically offer better margins than the DSLRs they're sold alongside, as well as only taking limited shelf space.

Incentive to purchase

One of the biggest distributors in the UK for Adobe, Apple and Corel software is Computers Unlimited, which also markets the colour calibration tools Datacolor Spyder and Pantone Huey, and poses itself as a 'one stop solution' for photo channel retailers.

"We're home to many of the major software titles used by the photo guys, and we probably have the most comprehensive range," confirms CU's business group manager, Ian Appleby, noting that average sales margins for the retailer run to double figures.

Yet some retailers are still reluctant to stock it. "It's understandable as people have traditionally bought their camera, memory card, a case and tripod from a photo retailer but they've never bought software or a computer," he notes. "But Apple and Adobe now run training courses in both how to use the software and how to sell it effectively."

Products selling well for CU's retailers include Apple's Aperture 2 image management and processing software and its direct competitor, Adobe Lightroom. Unlike the former Mac-oriented package, the latter is available cross platform (PCs & Macs), so, reasons Ian, "it's always going



ABOVE: Keith McAleer second from right and his shop floor team with their successful software range at Korgs Photography

to be a bigger seller". No surprise that Adobe's Photodisc is also a big seller to the photo trade.

CU began selling Apple hardware, too, last year, so can offer a unique demonstration package, including a Mac, Wacom tablet and software, for a quarter of the regular price.

The demo kit includes protected inventory so, if it doesn't sell, CU will take it back, or should the stock go down in price, dealers will be credited the difference. "But there's been a lot

of misunderstanding about this scheme, in that the above doesn't apply to everything – we can only do it where we get support from the manufacturers," Ian clarifies.

Colour Confidence also distributes the big name software brands and Datacolor Spyder, as well as the more

encompassing ColorMunki (allowing both monitor and printer to be correctly calibrated, for £375 RRP), and it has recently won the right to supply OnOne Software's extensive range of Photoshop plug-ins.

The company has a couple of different schemes for retailers. "One is a Colour Store programme, which asks retailers to commit to a standard level of stock and in return they receive a bit more support from us in terms of different POS material, Colour Store branding and a link on our website. We'll send them customers, because we know they've got a certain product in stock," says sales manager for distribution, Peter Lockock.

"One of the main aims of our distribution is that we get these products to as wide an audience of photographers as possible, so they can go into a store and find them. We'll also try and educate one specialist in each store to a very good level, so they can talk to their colleagues and customers authoritatively."

Colour Confidence is all about building just that – confidence. "We know retailers see new software and are scared about a customer coming back to them with 100 questions. We're trying to break down that

