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# Picture perfect

**Thanks to the evolution of smartphones, everyone can shoot a great photo. For global content provider Getty Images that doesn't pose a threat, rather it presents ample opportunity and scope for the business.**

IMAGES CAMERON SPENCER | GETTY IMAGES

**S**tuart Hannagan still remembers the pride he felt when, for the first time in his career, a photo he had taken was published in his local daily newspaper. Aged 19 and still fairly new to the photography business, he was given an assignment to shoot at the Kangaroo Island Cup, an annual horse racing event held on the small island just off of the South Australian coast.

"I had never covered anything like that before and if I'm honest, I didn't even know what the camera was doing in my hands," he laughs. "I recall walking out the door and the Picture Editor at the time said to me: 'Take something different'. After taking some shots of the horses and the racing I noticed a bunch of a kids fishing at a dam to the left of the race course. I captured that image and thought to myself, 'that's pretty unique, that's a little bit different', and that became one of my first paid-for pictures, published in Adelaide's *The Advertiser*. I was pretty proud of that."

From this early start as a budding young staff photographer with the News Limited publication, Stuart's career has continued to blossom. Thanks to his keen eye and passion for getting the perfect shot, he has worked across various newspapers in both Adelaide and Melbourne, and has won several prestigious awards including the 'World Sports Photo of the Year' from World Press Photo in 1985. In 1999, he joined Getty Images as the Director of Photography for the Asia-Pacific region, and in 2007 he was promoted to become the Vice President of Editorial Imagery. >>

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**Position** Vice President of Editorial Imagery  
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**Getty Images is one of the world's leading creators and distributors of award-winning content, including creative and editorial imagery, microstock, footage and music.**

Getty Images is one of the world's leading creators and distributors of award-winning content, including creative and editorial imagery, microstock, footage and music. It was founded in 1995 by Mark Getty and Jonathon Klein, with a business concept to turn the fragmented stock photography sector into something more contemporary that could meet the ever-changing needs of visual communicators. Since then, it has been a driving force in the industry; constantly evolving alongside the online environment.

Stuart says he is lucky enough to be inspired by an overwhelming number of beautiful photos every single day he comes into the office. "My favourites change all the time," he says. "Every week there is a new one that I love. One that has stood out quite recently is the picture of a smiling Usain Bolt at the Rio Olympic Games by Cameron Spencer. The popularity of this image has highlighted to me the changes that have been happening in the photography space. Years ago, that picture would have been used around the world and people would have gone, 'That's a lovely picture'. However, thanks to the social platforms nowadays, that has transcended in such a way that the picture is being talked about and discussed globally. It just blows me away. It is a magnificent picture and I love the technical side of it, the quality of it and also the way that it has been blown up all around the world. Everyone has been talking about it. I think the photographer did



something like twelve or thirteen interviews the next day for numerous publications around the world. When I think of my career I have never really had the opportunity to talk about a picture that I have taken in the way that Cameron has been able to."

According to Stuart, new technologies and social platforms present many amazing opportunities for companies like Getty Images. "They are what allow us to interact with people," he notes. "Everyone can have their say and this is what, I believe, has changed the photography game forever."

Stuart has seen Getty Images grow from the ground up. When he initially joined it was a fairly small business, based in Sydney, with about eight people on its books. It then acquired some companies with operations focused on the sports photography sector in the lead up to 2000 Sydney Olympic Games to create a local presence to cover that event. "We have now grown Getty Images to the point where I can look back and see how far we have actually come. We have a staff of about 60

people based in Sydney and we have an office in New Zealand as well as several around Asia. It has been a fantastic evolution.

"Working with the people at Getty Images is such a highlight: our internal staff and then the photographers and the artists. Everyone does stunning work and produces amazing content time and time again. It is clear they all love what they do."

It is often said that a powerful image can say a thousand words and that is becoming all the more true in today's modern world where technology has advanced and social media has become the norm. When you think about some of the major historical photographs which have made waves over time, one can only imagine the impact those pictures would have had if communication was as easy as it is in the twenty-first century.

"Think of the Hindenburg picture," Stuart says, "the Marilyn Monroe dress photo or the image of John F Kennedy being shot — could you imagine those



today on social media platforms? The next generation of photographers have this incredible power to connect with people and to let people interact with their pictures. That's why pictures have become the communication tool of the world.

"When I first began my career we were still shooting for black and white print newspapers. For example, when I covered the AFL Brownlow Medal as a photographer it was never part of my assignment to shoot the red carpet and the people arriving. My aim was to get a good picture of the winner with the medal close to his face. One picture would appear on the front page and

one picture would appear on the back page. Nowadays I get up at 5am after the evening event and look through all the websites and there's thousands of pictures in galleries of the best dresses, handbags and hairstyles as well as all of the players sitting at the tables, the presentations and so on. I think what's changed the most is that, in this world today, there are 2 billion mobile devices which all have cameras. Everyone can be a photographer."

Rather than seeing this evolution as a threat to its business, Getty Images recognises the massive (and exciting) scope it presents. "There are so many more people out there now taking

pictures on their smartphones or tablet devices. Images have become a new way of talking and communicating; they are the new voice," he explains. "Everything we do at Getty Images is about bringing that together. When I was a kid I can't ever remember running around taking pictures all day on my camera but that's what is happening now. I have four boys and I constantly watch them running around taking pictures with their friends and interacting via those pictures."

This influx of amateur and wannabe photographers has prompted Getty Images to launch a consumer side to its business, which complements the commercial division supplying content to organisations. Getty Images wants to encourage people to interact with each other using its content, and with its motto 'Getty Images everywhere' it is making its mark on the social media landscape. "We want to build that consumer side based on engagement by making sure that we are in view of everybody associated with imagery," Stuart shares.

"There is no doubt that more people are talking and looking at pictures than ever before. People are using pictures to do myriad things, whether it's personal use or commercial use or whatever it might be. I think it's brilliant. We have built a model around consumers to capitalise on that. We have typically been B2B, but we are 'B2everywhere' now. We are building this consumer side to bring in the views. Almost all of the people that visit Getty Images come to our sites to have a look and see what's going on. Thus, we know we have this amazing opportunity to capture people and to hold people on our website longer, and we will do that through the consumer side.

"From our point of view, it's a brilliant opportunity. The more people taking >>





pictures, the better. It doesn't mean that everyone is a professional photographer or that everyone wants to sell their pictures because, as our great Chairman and former CEO Jonathon Klein once said to a journalist: 'I have a pen in my hand but it doesn't make me a journalist'. What we will see with more people taking pictures and the improvement in cameras is opportunity. I think if we can get Getty Images to be

at the forefront of any technology — whether it's virtual reality (VR) or 360-degree shooting — that's the sweet spot. That's where we need to be. People are using our images and interacting, and whether it's an editorial client or a commercial client we are helping people sell their products as well as communicate. I absolutely love what our pictures do for the businesses and industries globally. To see the

reaction of people when they see a picture like the one of Usain Bolt, and the power it has, is just fantastic."

With this ambition to lead the way with technology, Stuart says that Getty Images has some bold plans for its future when it comes to content. "We have been shooting 360s now for a few years and we armed all of our photographers at the Rio Olympic

Games with little Ricoh 360 cameras; we basically had 40 photographers shooting 360s. We have launched an internal VR team at Getty Images focused solely on producing virtual reality content and we are now right on the cusp of becoming mainstream with that. We have struck a deal with Oculus Rift to provide a 360 experience for our clients and that is exactly the place we want to be in going forward. That's our



**"People are using our images and interacting, and whether it's an editorial client or a commercial client we are helping people sell their products as well as communicate."** – Stuart Hannagan

future. There is no doubt at all that as the technology improves, and the headsets get cheaper with VR, that it will become more popular too. It's an immersive experience and anyone that's used it has had a great experience. It's still in its infancy but I think we are going to get to the point where it's going to become mainstream. We want to play a big part in that."

Getty Images also employs advanced search and image recognition technology to ensure the best possible experience for visitors to its sites. Considering the huge volume of content that is uploaded regularly, being able to find images quickly and easily is critical. There are circa 200-million assets currently on Getty Images, and more than 5 million of those were added in the fourth quarter

of last year alone. The business has a huge community of 200,000 photographers around the world sending in work, some of them staff, some freelancers and some contributors. "We work with these photographers to ensure that what we are shooting is what the clients need. We have research teams that look at trends and we are always making sure that we are a little bit ahead of the game. It's all about communication and interaction with our photographers. They know the way we work, they interact with us on a daily basis and ultimately they are shooting images that matter to people. There is no use running around shooting a load of things without a bit of pre-thought and planning, because it's an expensive job being a photographer. We make sure we are getting the information through our intellectual property, so we understand what our clients are looking for and we can do that through search, our website and our sales teams. We have 650 sales people talking to our clients every single day, they know what we need and we pass that on to the photographers. Hopefully we can continue to consistently produce the content that our clients are looking for." ■