

From left to right:  
Brei' Silvia, Lou George



CLIENT:  
BWC Photo Imaging

BANKER:  
Brei' Silvia

CHALLENGES:

- ▶ Riding the wave of the “digital evolution”
- ▶ Reinventing the company
- ▶ Making change work in BWC's favor

# Jumping the Digital Divide

From betting on throwback technology to thriving during complete industry upheaval, BWC continues to ride the imaging wave

It's not easy to pin down Lou George, the Harley-riding president of BWC Photo Imaging, for a chat. Although she gets into the office as early as 4 a.m., she's just as likely to be found overseeing the installation of trade show exhibits for one of the company's many clients or exercising her considerable authority as general contractor at the new building the company has purchased in Richardson for its Museumsclapes and BWC Creative subsidiaries.

When you do finally get ahold of her, however, you're in for a treat. George's personality is a combination of no-nonsense, get-the-job-done executive leadership and genuine Southern charm and hospitality. It's a combination that served her well as she led BWC from 2001 through 2006, a stretch she describes as “the most difficult years of my life, as it relates to business.”

## A CHANGE IN BLACK AND WHITE

Now into its third decade, BWC Photo Imaging started out as a black-and-white film lab. “Back in 1975, there was a huge demand for black and white, as many of the existing photo labs at that time had abandoned the market to focus on color,” George recalls. “We took complete advantage of that demand with our original company, then known as The Black & White Lab, Inc. Today we do business as BWC Photo Imaging, and we still provide true black-and-white photographs, as well as black-and-white film processing on a national basis.”

By 1999, what George describes as “the digital evolution” had begun creeping up on the company's traditional business, especially film processing, for which it had developed an international reputation. BWC made the decision to purchase an existing business in nearby Richardson, one that focused on creative services such as Web site development and all forms of business-to-business branding

and marketing. The following year it launched Museumsclapes, building on its history of providing services to museums in Dallas and Fort Worth.

“We provide services to other businesses from concept to completion,” George explains. “A large part of our business today is trade show exhibits. Like other enterprises, 9/11 dealt a devastating blow to the trade show business, but we managed to survive it. Today, we are a full-service creative company, capable of providing large-format output and full design services as well as fabrication of trade show and museum exhibits.”

The digital evolution, a sea change which George says has virtually eliminated the use of conventional film, is another major challenge BWC has met under her leadership. “We still process film, and we will process film as long as it is made,” she avers. “It is a service to our long-time clients who prefer film as the medium for image capture. It is still superior for some capture and it should be used when that is the case.”

Force of personality—even one as compelling as George's—can only take you so far in business, and she is quick to share credit for BWC's success with those around her. “I am most proud of our team members and their ability to make such dramatic changes to meet the challenges we faced during that difficult five-year period,” she says. “Not only did we survive, we thrived on each and every change. As a company, we reinvented ourselves.”

## TAKING HOLD OF A HELPING HAND

Learning to make change work in her company's favor may have been forced upon George by circumstances outside her control, but she embraced the lesson and has applied it in other areas with gratifying results. When Brei' Silvia, vice president of business banking at Compass Bank, approached

her with some new ideas about a year and a half ago, she listened with an open mind.

“We were fortunate that Lou allowed us to tour her facilities and get to better understand her clients, industry and business goals long before a banking relationship was established,” Silvia says. “She was impressed with our personal service and how responsive we could be to accommodate her needs.”

Compass got an opportunity to demonstrate that responsiveness during BWC's acquisition of its new 29,000-square-foot facility in Richardson, which the bank financed. “It was important to Lou that she close on the building quickly,” Silvia recalls. “We were able to fulfill her request by expediting the appraisal within five business days.”

Silvia shares mutual interests with George, including scuba diving and travel, and believes the still-developing relationship holds good things to come on both a personal and professional level.

“We have other interests in common, such as finding meaningful ways to benefit the community, and we look forward to pursuing that in the future,” Silvia says. “On the business side, we are both excited about the launch of Compass Bank's new online Business Class Banking Service. We think it will benefit BWC immensely. In the meantime, we are working with trusted financial advisors to ensure that all of BWC's needs continue to be met.”

George comes across as a person not easily swayed but who, once convinced, is in all the way. “Brei' is brilliant and brought me to Compass Bank through my confidence in her,” she says. “She is keenly interested in our industry, has a great memory for detail and is very energetic.”

“The only other thing you could ask for from a bank is a good rate,” George adds. “Compass gave me a great rate on my building and then further backed me with a loan to remodel it. Compass Bank made my real estate purchase a pleasure, and I hope they will work with us to enjoy some significant growth in the future. This is the best of times for us as far as business growth is concerned.” ■