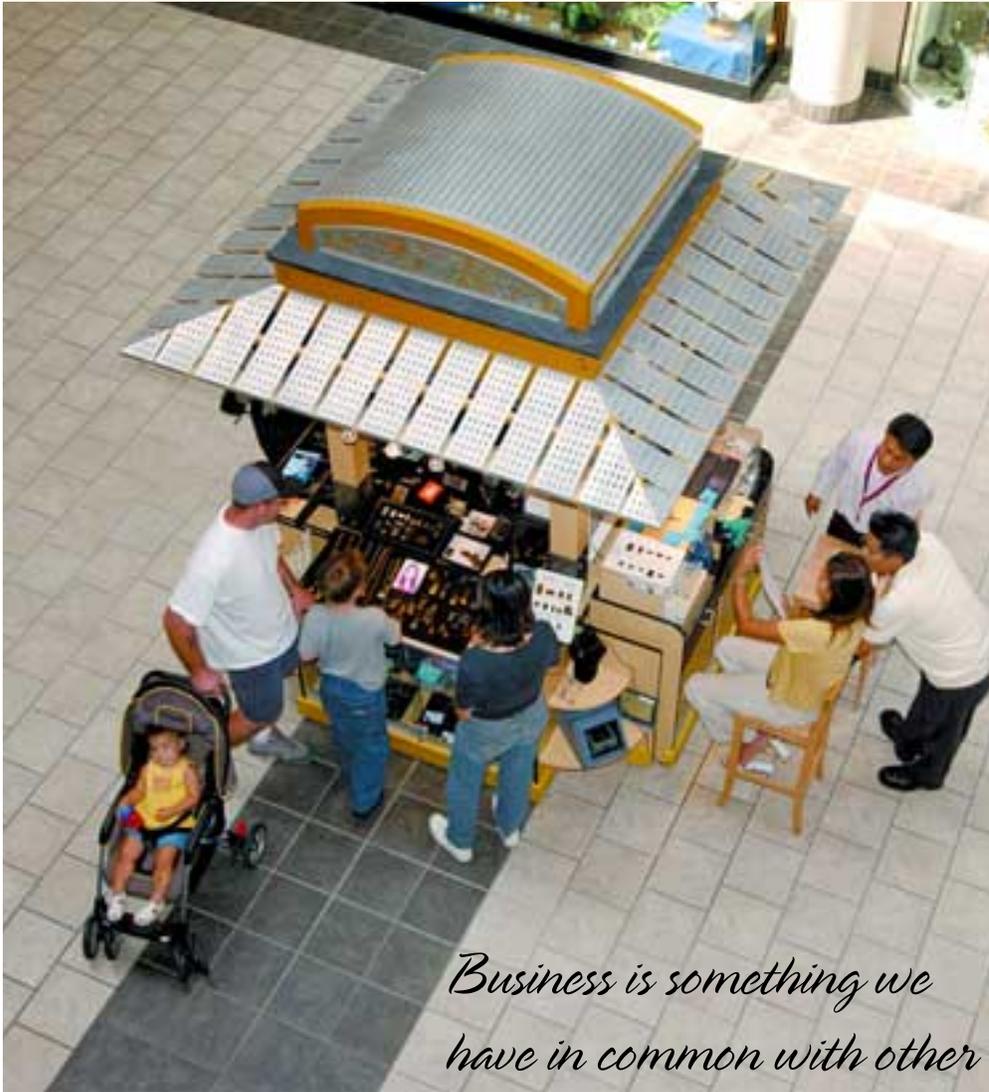


MPX-60,  
Second Generation  
METAZA, Now Available

# New Metal Foto

## *An American Story*



*Business is something we  
have in common with other  
countries and cultures all  
around the world.*

There are ties that bind us *all* together, whether we are next-door neighbors, bordering countries or across an ocean from one another. It's a global economy, and while we may be very different in some ways from other cultures, we are very alike in other ways. Business is something we have in common with other countries and cultures all around the world. But it goes deeper than that. We have families and intertwined histories. Sometimes it's good to see how similar we are to those we're supposed to be so different from.

An immigrant from South Korea, Brian Kim is in the personalization business. His three kiosks, called New Metal Foto, sell gifts personalized with the MPX-50, a machine manufactured in Japan by Roland DGA Corporation. Together, this man made in South Korea works with his machine made in Japan in the suburbs of Los Angeles, in the United States of America, and so you could say, in a way, New Metal Foto is a hybrid of three countries brought together by business.

### **AN AMERICAN STORY**

"My parents, my little brother and I all came to this country together in 1984," says Kim, whose hometown is Incheon, a suburb of Seoul.

They left right after Brian graduated from high school, and though he had just achieved that milestone in the transition of boyhood to manhood, that didn't stop Kim from feeling out of place as an adult in a new country, a new culture and in many ways, a new world.

"That was almost twenty years ago, but I still remember it well. I remember being at the airport and then getting onto the freeway with my uncle. It was all very beautiful to see on one hand, but it was also frightening and nerve racking. My brother was going to go to high school, and I was

*By Kris Wieber*

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going to attend college. We both wondered, 'I don't speak English, how am I going to make a friend? How am I going to communicate?' I felt like I was a little kid again," says Kim.

Haven't we all felt that way at some point or another? Maybe our changes weren't as drastic as moving from one country to another, but starting your own business in a new industry is, in a way, like entering into a new world.

However, Kim says those nervous feelings didn't last very long. Soon, he and his brother were able to make friends and settle into their new country. "People were not what I expected. First of all, my uncle's neighborhood was a very nice neighborhood. The people living all around his house were very friendly. They came to introduce themselves to us. I won't forget the moment when a nice old lady talked to me very slowly and asked me questions. Her first impression was great. She made me feel better about coming to this country. After that, I wasn't afraid to see anybody."

That was good, because as he said earlier, when Brian first came here, he didn't speak English very well. Language was a struggle for him and the rest of his family all day long. Everywhere they went—the grocery store, the gas station, McDonald's, Burger King—they couldn't communicate.

"I felt very nervous and embarrassed," says Kim, adding that his father was the only one who could speak even a little bit of English when his family first arrived in the United States. He had fought alongside American soldiers in the Korean War (he was wounded five times, shot in his arms and legs), and he had worked as a taxicab driver in Korea, and so had learned some English from a diverse range of visitors.

Kim says that once he was here, he and his brother learned to speak English pretty quickly, getting help from school and friends they met there. They also became American citizens.

After attending Los Angeles City College, Brian worked for the U. S. Postal Service. He was a mail carrier for just under 12 years. With all that walking, carrying a heavy bag, being a mail carrier is, of course,

not an easy job. But it wasn't the hard work that led Kim to a different career. It was the dangerous work hazards. He was bitten by a dog on five different occasions.

"Mailmen are always running away from dogs. I was bitten five times, but can you imagine how many times I had to climb into a tree or onto the roof of a big car? Saturdays were especially dangerous. Families are all at home, and kids are out playing in the yard. They don't always pay attention and sometimes leave a door or gate open. Animals react so quickly, most people can't stop them. Also, most mailmen have a lot of keys, and so dogs hear the jangling of the keys and know it's the mailman," says Kim.

Ready to stop running away from dogs on a frequent basis, Brian then began working as a truck driver.

"I am just a small guy, but I have a lot of ambition. Working for the Post Office gave me a lot of confidence; it made me believe I could do a lot. I liked the idea of becoming a truck driver, being my own boss. So I bought a used semi truck, and I drove that for a couple of years," says Kim.

However, working as a truck driver was hard on Kim's family life, and so he decided to sell his truck. Despite his dream to own his own business and be his own boss, Brian nearly went back to work for the Post Office and its day-to-day game of canine chase. But around that time, this South Korean immigrant discovered another immigrant, the MPX-50. It was an acquaintance that would change the direction of his life.

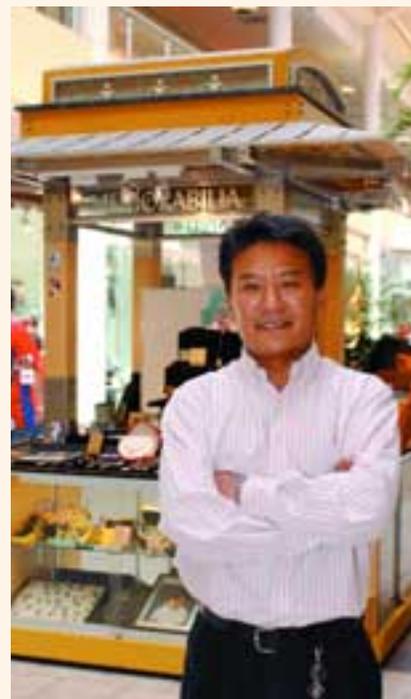
## THE MPX-50 AND NEW METAL FOTO

Kim first saw the work of the MPX-50 a little less than two years ago and was very impressed. Within the confines of business, it was love at first sight. "I saw a keychain with a photo on it that a guy had and thought it looked amazing, so we bought the machine from Roland."

The MPX-50 is a unique machine, offering photo-impact *printing*. It doesn't remove material, but instead indents metal to imprint a photo, logo or text on small items such as pendants and ID bracelets. Brian saw its potential right away.

"This is an amazing machine," says Kim.

From that initial love affair, New Metal Foto has grown to have three locations in the LA area: the Montebello Town Center, the Irvine Spectrum and the Long Beach Town Center. Kim now operates kiosks at all of the locations, but he took some time to train himself at first.



**Brian Kim,**  
owner of New Metal Foto.

"After I bought the MPX-50, I spent four months working with this machine and learning to use it well. The actual processing is very simple, but learning to use the software takes some time," says Kim.

Just how much time depends on the person—Kim spent four months developing his skills—but he says that you can use it for simple applications after just a couple of hours. "It's very simple software, but it has a lot of choices and applications that can be used. It takes time to learn what all of them are and how they are best used. I can produce products with photos and any kind of logo or letters." He adds that the name of the software that comes with the MPX-50 is called Dr. METAZA.

## DOWN TO BUSINESS

We know who he is and where he comes from. We know what his machine is and where it comes from. So, what's the daily business of a personalization kiosk like?

To start with, each of Kim's locations is set up with two MPX-50s, one computer, scanner and digital camera, and two employees to run them.

"Most people just come to my cart and look around at my displays, and I or one of my employees explains how we can personalize gifts for them. When they decide to buy a gift, most of them have wallet-size pictures—a lot of people carry pictures around in their wallet or purse—or logos with them that we can use. If they

don't have a photo we can use, we just take a picture of them with our digital camera and use that. To put that image on a key chain or necklace, jewelry box, Zippo lighter or something like that, is usually less than half an hour," says Brian.

Does Kim personalize gifts while his customers watch and wait? "Not always, the processing time is just under half an hour. But, especially during Valentine's Day, Mother's Day, Father's Day and the Christmas holidays, we take their order and then process it later for them to come back and pick up."

Kim says that the quality of the image he's given to work with will often determine how long it takes the process to be completed. If the image is bad, it's going to require extra time. But, to give you an idea of the output, he says that once the photo is sent to the MPX-50, a 30mm-wide and 40mm-long ID tag takes ten to twelve minutes to personalize.

Kim says that his customers are the people walking around in the mall, and he gets business from all demographics. They are drawn to it by the displays Kim puts out and the signs he puts up on his kiosk.

For people who may be considering adding the MPX-50 to their own business, Kim says that the promotion of your new service is an important aspect to keep in mind. "If people don't know about the abilities of this machine, how are they going to buy its products? You have to let people know about it. The more people know about it, the more interest they will generate, and the more customers you will have."

Kim sells most of the items he personalizes, but when he first set up his kiosk, he went to all the businesses in the mall that sold gift items he could personalize and told them about his business. Many of Kim's first clients brought gifts they had already purchased and got him to personalize them.

According to Brian, mall kiosks are a great way to showcase personalization. People at a mall are already out shopping, oftentimes for a gift, and everyone's looking for something new and unique. Gifts don't get any more unique than when personalized.

He also says that for anyone thinking of opening a kiosk, a mall's hours of operation is something important to consider. Most malls don't have a problem with people coming in early or staying late to work, but some do. That can become critical during a busy holiday when the volume of orders to be done, and the



time it takes to complete them, exceeds the mall's hours of operation.

The size of the signs you can hang is also something to look at, and of course, being in malls, Kim's business is as seasonal as that of his neighbors. The aforementioned holidays are his busiest times of year, with Christmas, Valentine's and Mother's Day taking the top three spots.

"This last Mother's Day, I couldn't go home for a week. People were telling me, 'Hey man, you need to take a shower,'" says Kim, laughing. He adds that at these times of year he hires additional help to handle the volume.

Of course, Kim's business does not survive on holidays alone. In addition to daily customers making impulse buys, Kim has done gifts for weddings, high school proms and graduations.

With three different thriving locations, business and life are good for Brian Kim.

## CONCLUSION

"One day a friend of mine from South Korea asked me, 'Are you going to die in this country, or when you are older are you going to move back to Korea for the rest of your life?' I said, 'You know what, this is my country. I'm not going to leave.' I visit Korea, but this is my country, the United States. I am a U.S. citizen."

"Also, I cannot forget what my father used to say. He told me, 'Brian, you're lucky. You had a lucky father, and you are lucky to have me as a father so I could bring you here. Now, you have to be thankful all your life. I have a lot of American soldiers who are my brothers.

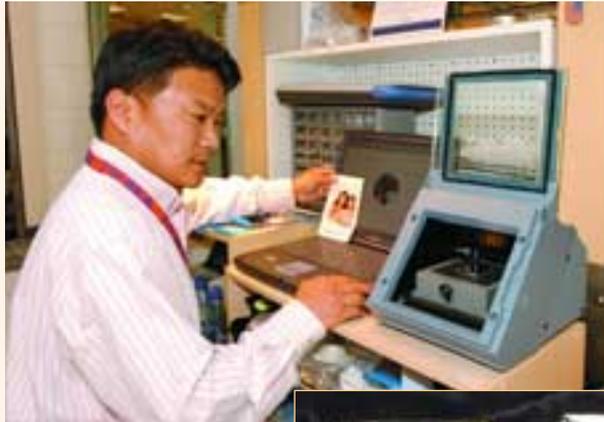


(Above) The staff of New Metal Foto, at one of the company's three mall kiosk locations.

How many of them died for you and me, our family? You're not going to forget. That's why we have come here. The rest of your life, you're going to serve this country. This is your country also.' He always used to say that. I miss my father," says Kim.

It's good that Brian remembers. It's important that we all remember what this country was built on: immigrants with dreams, American dreams. **A&E**

# New Metal Foto *An American Story*



(left) Brian Kim personalizing a gift with the MPX-50, from Roland DGA Corporation.

A few of the many products that can be created with the MPX-50.



## The Amazing MPX-60 Photo Impact Printer

The second generation MPX-60 uses an entirely new method of imprinting photos, illustrations, logos and text on metals and acrylics. The MPX-60's diamond-tipped stylus strikes the marking surface with hi-speed and precision to accurately reproduce the delicate gradations of halftone, line art and/or text on flat surfaces. Easy to use: simply connect the MPX-60 to the parallel port on your PC. With the included Dr. Metaza2 software, you can begin using the MPX-60 immediately.



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