



The DropShots Story

It was summer 2002 and Ryan Sit (soon-to-be-inventor of [DropShots](#)) was visiting home on a break from [UCSD](#). Excited about her new digital camera, Ryan's mom Jane asked him to teach her how to send digital pictures from her new camera to her family. After tediously and painfully trying to teach her the many steps involved, she finally thought she had it... that was until Ryan left. Many more frustrating phone counseling sessions followed.

It was this process that made it clear to Ryan how difficult it really is for a computer novice to share photos online. Ryan became inspired to find a way to make staying in touch and sharing important memories with family and friends easy for any level of computer user through his knowledge of leveraging and adapting advanced technologies. Ryan became so passionate about solving this problem that it became the focus of his Master's thesis.

Back at UCSD, Ryan gathered all the best resources the University had. He enlisted Professor [Stefan Savage](#) and Professor [William G. Griswold](#) (UCSD Department of Computer Science and Engineering) to assist with the challenge of creating a platform where a user would only have to perform one simple step to have any media file automatically sized, transcoded, uploaded, organized, published and ready for viewing.

While working on the development of this platform, Ryan performed several user studies and made an important discovery. The ability to easily receive and read "feedback" from photos and videos shared with family and friends was just as important to people as the act of sending out the pictures and videos in the first place. In fact, the more responses they got from people they sent to, the more they wanted to share, motivating them to continue the cycle. This was the grand discovery! Instead of just building a platform centering around the posting of photos and video, as many of the current services have, the real value in sharing images is the "feedback," the comments and interaction between the photographer and the viewers that creates the emotional connection and motivation to continue to share.

With this new stroke of genius Ryan enrolled Professor [James D. Hollan](#) (UCSD Department of Cognitive Science, a world-renowned expert in Human-Computer Interaction) to perfect his hypothesis. The prototype platform was refined to not only make commenting the centerpiece, but also to format it in a way that enabled comments from viewers to become "coherent conversations," not only between photographer and viewer, but also between the different viewers invited to share in the memories of the photographer. The platform then became a meeting place of one's friends and family to share the images of their life experiences, communicate with each other and more easily stay in touch.

The prototype was launched as JussPress.com so that further user studies could be performed and to test the hypotheses of Ryan's thesis. After two years of intensive design, development, research and study, the Master's thesis was complete in the summer of 2004, resulting in an acclaimed paper published on January 3, 2005 (he got an A on his thesis, by the way!).

Ryan had initially invited 10 people he knew to use the JussPress.com prototype so he could study user behavior. At the conclusion of his Master's thesis, this had grown to over 5,000 users – all by word of mouth!

After graduating, Ryan set out to commercialize his project. He submitted his executive summary to the San Diego [Tech Coast Angels](#) where he was assigned a mentor, Darren Hardy, to help develop the business plan further. Together they spent several months further developing the business model and strategic direction of the company. At that point, Darren decided to personally invest in the company and lead the company as the Chief Executive Officer. To fill out the management team, Darren brought in Brian Pond, who invested equally and became the Chief Operating Officer for the company.

Additional investment funds were raised and JussPress.com was re-incorporated as DropShots, Inc. Additional talent was hired, new features were added, IT architecture was improved and on November 23, 2005 the new and exciting DropShots brand was launched.

Since then DropShots has grown at a rate of 20-30% month to month virtually on word-of-mouth alone – one user introducing DropShots through their new photos and videos to all their friends and family who also create accounts to keep in-touch and share life's joys. In 2006 DropShots became the number-one family photo and video sharing service online. DropShots continues to grow at an exceptional rate as more and more families connect and share life memories together through the service.