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Red Wing Framing Opens Online Store for Photography Panel Prints

by [Eileen Fritsch](#) on 11-10-2011 02:09 PM - last edited on 11-13-2011 02:13 PM

Some photographers prefer to hire local printmakers to enlarge their best display-worthy images. That's because they enjoy working closely with printing and framing experts who can help advise them on the right options for their work. Other photographers prefer the convenience of simply uploading their images to a website, and waiting for the prints to be delivered.

One HP print-service provider who understands these different preferences is avid photographer and entrepreneur John Becker. For the past decade, John and his wife Valerie have provided expert printing and framing assistance to photographers and commercial clients who visit their custom-framing shop in the small, historic Mississippi-River town of Red Wing, Minnesota.



In September, Becker launched [Red Wing Digital](#), an online storefront through which they sell Panel Prints. The panel prints give photographers an affordable, attractive, glass-free, frame-free method of displaying large photographs in all of their glory. Becker regards Red Wing Digital as a way to add a new source of revenue while also serving photographers who aren't within easy driving distance of their brick-and-mortar facility in Red Wing.



After each photograph is printed with HP Vivera pigment inks on an HP Designjet Z6100, it is mounted to an ultra-stiff art board that is backed with a hanging system that makes the panel appear to “float” in front of the wall. The Panel Prints are sturdy, easy-to-care-for and create a pleasing drop-shadow effect on the wall.

Because Panel Prints cost far less than traditional framing and glazing, they provide a cost-effective way to display many of your favorite images throughout your home and office.

John and Valerie Becker came up with the panel-print idea more than two years ago when they got involved in the photography competition sponsored by a local radio station. Red Wing Digital was asked to come up with a way to display the winning images in the radio station’s offices. The display product they designed was a big hit—both with photographers and radio-station visitors.

For the past two years, Red Wing Digital has experimented with different combinations of materials and workflows to ensure that when they started accepting online orders for Panel Prints they would be able to efficiently produce and deliver a quality product.

Becker, who is an active member of the 100-member [Red Wing Photography Club](#), turned to fellow members of the club for feedback. He says, “They were very supportive in helping us develop the Panel Print before we launched the online storefront. It has been like having a private test audience.”



“Moose in Silhouette”, Jeff Marcus, 16”x24” Panel-Print

The co-founder of the Red Wing Photography Club Jeff Marcus says he likes the clean and contemporary design of the Panel Print and says, "I especially appreciate that the presentation is all about the image."

"Anybody who can take a digital photo can have it made into a Panel Print," Becker emphasizes. He isn't too concerned that consumers might upload images that are too small for enlargement, because he has experimented with making panel prints from many different types of consumer-grade cameras. The workflow he developed includes ways to print an image remarkably large without visual compromise. If any quality issues do arise, Becker will reach out to the customer to figure out ways to resolve them.



John and Valerie Becker have been running [Red Wing Framing and Digital](#) for ten years. While the core of their business remains custom framing, they also use their imaging expertise and HP Designjet printers to produce high-quality visuals, signage, and decorative art for retailers and other local businesses. At one time, John promoted fine-art reproduction services to artists, but quickly recognized that most of the demand for large prints was coming from passionate photography enthusiasts and local photography studios.

So far, the Beckers have owned three generations of HP Designjet printers. They currently use two 60-inch Designjet Z6100 printers and hope to acquire a [Z6200](#) before year's end.

"We still use our [HP Designjet 130](#)," says Becker. "It just won't quit. It refuses to retire."

Red Wing Digital plans to continue to develop other types of photography-display products that can be ordered either in their framing shop or through their new online store.

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