

A new business model

Red Wing Digital uses a modern sales technique for a contemporary product

By Sarah Gorvin

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The details

What: Red Wing Digital
Where: www.redwingdigital.com
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For photographers of all skill levels, it's a new way of showcasing their work. And for John Becker of Red Wing Framing and Fine Art Printing, it's a new business model.

Red Wing Digital, an online storefront specializing in selling panel-prints, launched at the end of last month.

"This is the first time we're offering services over web in a strictly web store fashion," Becker said.

Becker and Red Wing Framing began developing the first panel prints about two and a half years ago, when they were asked to make promotional products for a radio station. Those products got so much feedback and appreciation from customers that Becker decided to continue tweaking the design.

"We fine-tuned it to get a little more solid and es-

tablished," Becker said.

Panel prints are what Becker calls "a real contemporary look." The finished product is a large image (from 16 by 24 inches up to 40 by 60 inches) printed on stiff artist's board. It's then mounted to a back frame that is smaller than the overall print. When hung, the back frame makes the image appear as if it's floating against the wall and creates a drop shadow.

And, while Becker said there are variants of this product out there, his is a "higher-end" product.

"We're the only ones doing it the way we're doing it," he said.

To make the current panel prints, customers upload their photos onto Red Wing Digital's website (www.redwingdigital.com). Becker said the

size of the uploaded photo isn't necessarily important, adding that they've worked with photos taken with cameras from the most basic up to the highest quality.

"When a customer sends an order, we'll get back to them," he said, and work with customers to iron out any problems that may come up with the image.

"We can grow an image remarkably large with no visual compromise," he added. "If it's too small, we'll work with a customer to make it large enough."

Once the image is uploaded to the site, customers also choose what size they'd like the panel print to be and other details, such as the edge color of the back frame.

The panel print then is produced in Becker's shop and shipped to the customer.

The website had a quiet launch in April, before its full launch in August. Since then, Becker said he's been pleased

with the customer response.

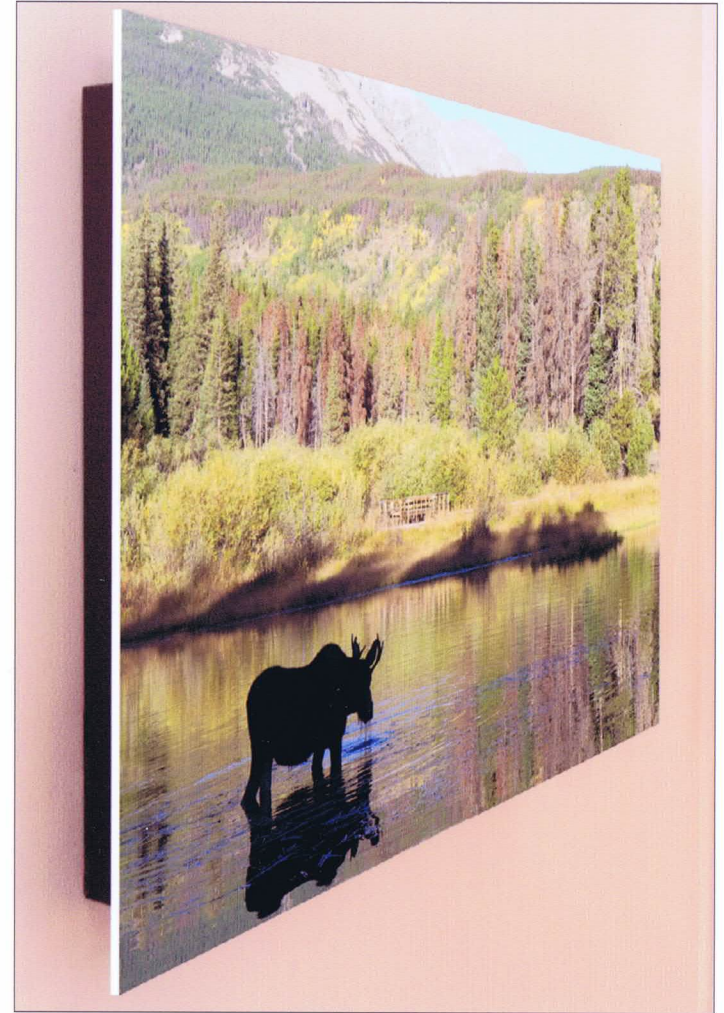
"It's a manageable load," he said. "We're always nervous about putting things on the web because it's like drinking from a fire hose sometimes."

Photographers seem pleased as well.

"The Panel-Print is a very clean and contemporary design with an effective drop-shadow effect," said Jeff Marcus, co-founder of the Red Wing Photography Club. "I especially appreciate how the presentation is all about the image."

Becker stressed that while the prints are mostly for people passionate about photography, anyone can have an image mounted.

"Anybody that can take a digital photo and anybody that can upload to the website can be a customer," he said.



Red Wing Digital's new panel print is a "contemporary" way to showcase photographs, said John Becker of Red Wing Framing and Fine Art Printing. The panel prints don't use glass, but instead the images are printed on an artist's panel and mounted to a back frame, creating a drop shadow effect. This panel print showcases Jeff Marcus' "Moose in Silhouette."