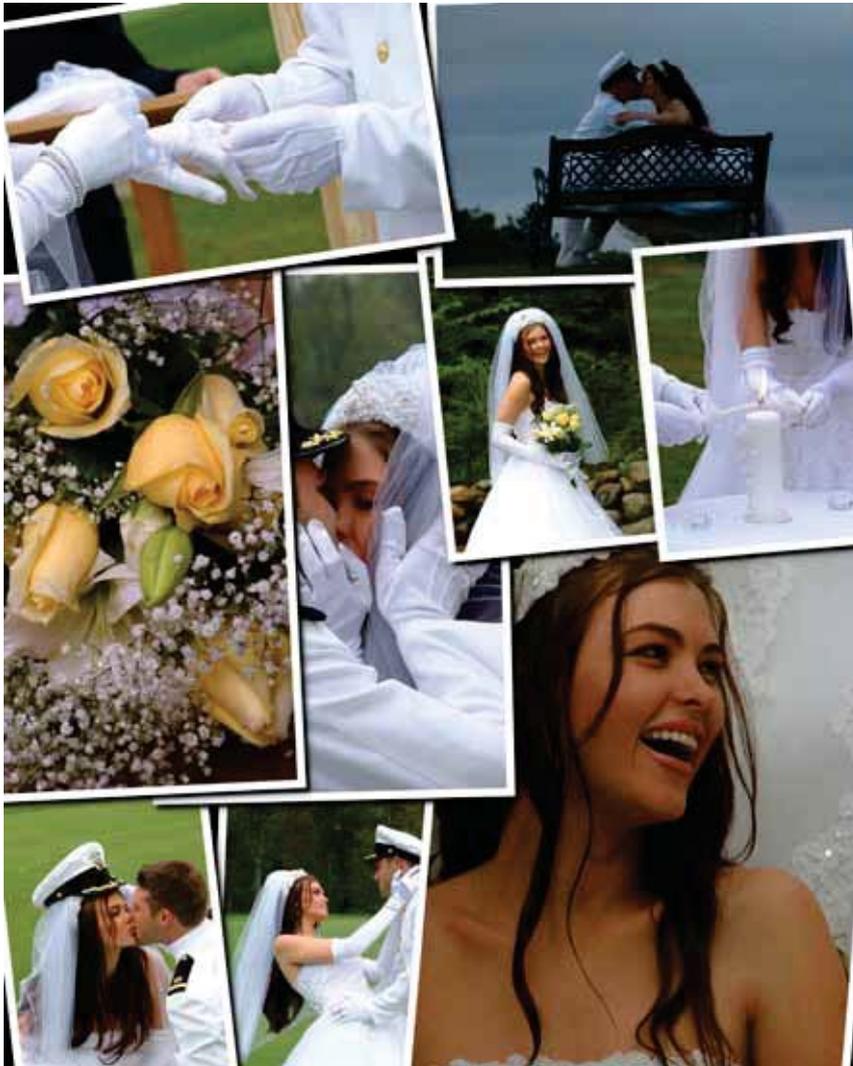


Custom Imaging & Custom Framing

- The Right Combination

by Jared Davis MCPF, GCF



Today's consumers crave uniqueness and individuality; they express this most in their buying habits. A large factor of the diminishing market for traditional frames and artwork has been the rapid growth of digital photography. It allows consumers to find new ways to surround themselves with unique, personal images. This digital artwork captures memories that reflect a consumer's style, taste, and emotions.

Consumer expectations are constantly changing, and offering custom product options is becoming a more popular home decor sales strategy. With retailers now offering more customization options than ever before, consumers are willing to pay more and even wait longer for personally tailored products. Fortunately, this trend puts custom framing in a strong position to be able to satisfy consumer demand for unique products. However, consumers require images special enough to be custom framed.

For many framers, these special images are already here— paying dividends on a daily basis—in the form of custom imaging.

This is an example of an automatically generated, custom-size photo collage created using Fotofusion software and stock photography. Concepts like this, printed on photo paper or canvas and then custom framed, are unique and personal to customers.

What Is Custom Imaging?

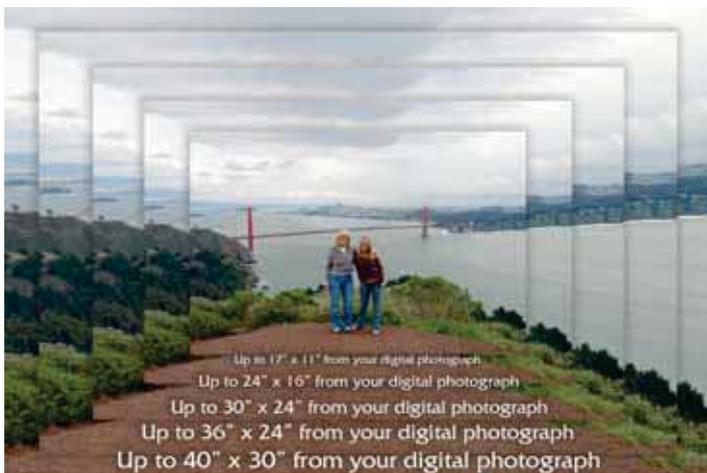
Custom imaging is more than just the concept of custom printing on canvas. Custom imaging is the concept of printing enlargements of digital artwork and photographic images on a variety of media, such as canvas, photo paper, fine art paper, and even directly onto matboard. It is customizable in that the images are custom-sizeable, limited only by the width of the printer. The images can also be printed onto any media format and are available in a variety of customized effects and finishes (black and white, polarized, brush stroke, etc). Today's wide format printers are super high resolution, versatile, and more affordable to retail businesses. If you could express this as a formula, it would be:

Custom Image + Custom Size + Custom Media + Custom Format = Custom Imaging.

Why Offer Custom Imaging?

The concept of custom imaging complements a core focus of custom products, as it creates unique opportunities to allow customers to generate new forms of wall decor. The result of this is that everything that gets printed needs a frame. Custom imaging is a complementary product that feeds your core product focus, picture framing. For this reason alone, many frame shops have embraced the concept of custom imaging.

When wide-format digital printing was first introduced to the market more than five years ago, many picture framers



The Framers Workshop in Berkeley, CA, USA displays this printed image to showcase the "any size" concept that custom imaging offers.

(including the printer resellers themselves) believed that the strongest market would be for reproduction artwork, such as limited editions for artists.

Instead, by far the largest market for custom imaging today consists retail consumers looking to print their own photographic memories, converting them into personal masterpieces.

What Do You Need to Get Started?

A basic custom imaging setup for a framing business would encompass the following components:

- **Printer** - A wide format digital printer, capable of handling 44" media, such as an Epson 9900.
- **Computer** - A graphic and imaging level PC or Mac with the power to run the photo editing software required for larger images.
- **Software** - Professional level photo software, such as Adobe Photoshop or Photoshop Elements, which offer great photo editing tools. They're easy to learn and train with and are two of the most popular options for professional photo software.



Art Land Indooroopilly, in Brisbane, has a display wall of common ideas and concepts that help promote their custom imaging options.

Some additional items to consider when looking to offer more specialized products:

- High quality scanner – such as an Epson V700, for offering professional photo restoration & reproduction.
- Professional grade photography equipment - for the reproduction of fine art.
- A professional, high level PC monitor, offering exceptional color reproduction and clarity – such as an Eizo Flexscan, an essential tool when true accurate color reproduction is critical.
- Color calibration tool, such as ColorMunki, which is a spectrophotometer preferred by many photographers for being able to control color reproduction between your monitor, and your printed output. This is important when



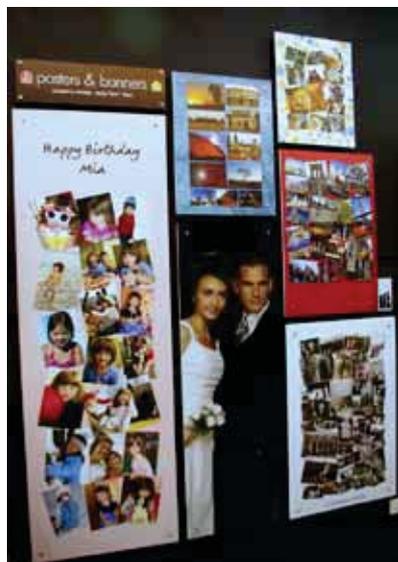
This framed jersey features custom designed artwork produced in Photoshop that has been printed directly onto the matboard backing.

producing reproduction artwork.

- For the ability to quickly create professional looking photo collage layouts a highly saleable concept to consumers) at the click of a button, then Lumapix Fotofusion (www.fotofusion.com) is by far the best photo layout software around. It is not a substitute for Adobe Photoshop, as it doesn't offer the same level of photo editing sometimes required, but it does layout work faster and easier than Photoshop.

Learning Custom Imaging

With every new business concept, there is always a learning curve. Custom Imaging is no different, and time needs to be invested to get the most out of it. For those who are already tech savvy, the learning curve can be a lot less than those who are not as familiar with digital photography – however your printer supplier should be able to point you in the direction of suitable training options should you require them.



Fotofast in Brisbane, created a display of personalized photo collage posters and banners. These are easy to produce using software like Photoshop or Fotofusion.

Nothing beats learning in the comfort of your own surrounds, at your own pace, and there is a limitless supply of "free" knowledge available on the internet from popular informal sources such as YouTube. One handy site for time saving tips for using Photoshop is www.photoshopfrenzy.com. Alternatively, there are very good online knowledge and training providers such as www.lynda.com which offer both free, and subscription based training videos, which can definitely be worthwhile too.

Basic Concepts

- **Any Image, Any Size.** This is the ultimate message you need to convey. When customers first realize that you can print their photo for them in any size, the creative options become much more appealing because they are personal. And the more personal, the less important the price is.
- **Printing on Canvas.** This is the standard and most popular custom imaging option that consumers desire.
- **Black and white.** Being able to demonstrate that you can convert a color photograph into a simple black-and-white image is still an appealing artistic concept for many



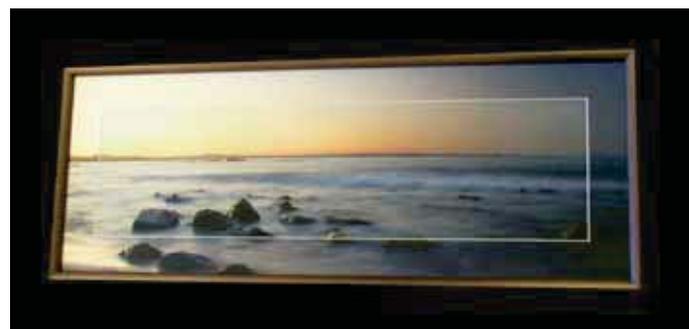
This unique frame design concept, created by photographer Wayne Pratt from Callandoon Studios, Goondiwindi QLD, along with Jared Davis, demonstrates a fusion of concepts with a black-and-white watermarked photo image of the bride printed directly onto the top matboard, which has then been custom cut using a Gunnar CMC and layered as a double mat for a wedding photo.



FrameMakers in Columbus, OH, USA created these images to help promote custom imaging and custom framing in the store.



Some popular display concepts demonstrate options for canvas printing, combined with upscale custom framing.



Here is another example of printing directly onto matboard, in this case allowing the image to artistically overflow onto the mat.



FRAME + IMAGE



Thinking about adding
something to your
business to increase
cash flow?
Custom Imaging
could be the answer.

Our Commitment to You

Megawood Larson-Juhl are committed to providing our existing and new customers excellent service and quality products. MWLJ have a range of Epson large format printers designed to meet the needs of every business at a competitive price. MWLJ stock a large range of printers, inks and medias to suit every application.

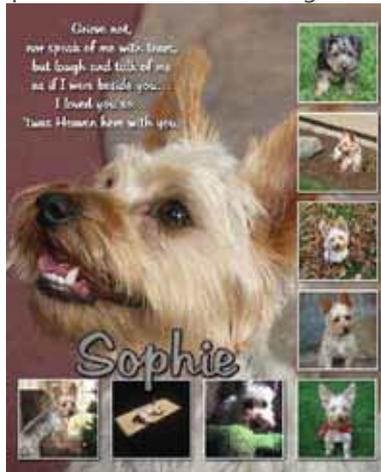


consumers.

- **Photo Restoration.** Having the technology to digitally restore and reprint old family photos is a powerful emotional platform to help consumers commit to higher value custom frame designs.

More Innovative Concepts

Consumers are always looking for new ideas. Custom imaging opens up new ways help create interest and stimulate ideas in customers. You can step beyond generic products by offering the next level in custom imaging and framing, such as:



Personalized concepts like this, created by John Barlow at Frame Shop Art Gallery & Gifts in Toledo, OH, USA can be digitally created and printed in any size, ready to be framed.

- **Canvas Floaters –** Display floaters around stretched canvases so customers can see the difference this technique can make.
- **Emulated Matting on Printed Canvas –** If you are going to print an image on canvas, why not print a simulated colored border, like a matboard, around the image, too, to give it some distance and balance from the wall? It also increases the overall size (and price) of the sale.

- **Printing on Matboard –** Yes, some printers can print directly onto matboard. Why not explore some creative options using matboard as Bainbridge UltraPrint matboard? Printing on matboard is a great way to cross promote custom framing and custom imaging.



This simple but effective display used outside a custom framing shop helps promote canvas printing.

- **Photo Collage –** Digitally creating a memorable photo collage is not hard to do, and it offers a unique, eye-catching product. Usually such a collage focuses on a personal event like a birthday, a holiday, or a wedding.

Selling Custom Imaging

- When it comes to selling, it comes down to one thing: if

they can't see it, they won't buy it! Don't expect customers to start asking you for all these different options just because you invested in a printer. The obvious is not always apparent, thus a point of sale display is vital.

- **Create a Point of Sale Display –** Dedicate an area to show off some of the different applications you can now offer with custom imaging and framing combined.
- **Choosing the Right Display Image –** When you create merchandisers, make sure you use images that trigger an emotional desire, based on your business demographic. For example, baby, family, and wedding photos always guarantee an emotional reaction.
- **Create Signage –** Signage helps to silently explain



This eye-catching store display of custom imaging concepts was created by Julia Heinzmann from Art Heads Commercial Art and Framing in Portland, OR, USA

concepts. And with a wide-format printer, you have no excuse not to be able to print your own professional signs. Rather than a generic sign that says "Canvas Printing," why not use more inspirational wording, such as "Your Memories on Canvas!", "Turn Your Photos into Art!", "Your Memories = Your Masterpiece!", and "We Print Your Memories!"

- **Create a Pricing Options Display –** Providing helpful, easy-to-understand pricing for custom imaging is a necessity. However, don't just price canvas printing alone. Offer pricing examples for completed concepts, such as a stretched gallery wrap canvas or a floater frame option as well as a traditional custom framed option. This can showcase your store's vast selection and ability to create something totally custom.

The concept of custom imaging opens new doors for a custom framing business. Armed with the right gear and a bit of creative inspiration, you can generate a new source for excitement and profit in your business!

Jared Davis MCPF, GCF, has had 20 years experience in the framing industry, and is an educator at major industry tradeshows and conventions around the world. Jared has written articles for major industry publications. His personal website is www.jared-davis.com.

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