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## Q&A WITH SARA KAUSS

Offering truly personalized products is a breeze

**Q:** Sara, can you tell us a little bit about yourself and the services you use?

**A:** Everyone is trying to keep up with the pace of social media. It's my challenge as a photography business owner to offer clients immediate gratification.

Understanding this need for fast, unique printed products and an outlet for gallery proofing is where my absolute favorite photography vendor, Zenfolio, comes in. My favorite new feature is this super-cool custom template design option that lets my clients view their images on a press-printed card, photo collage, magnet, or even calendar. We've created templates for wedding announcements as well as thank-you, save-the-date, and holiday cards and offer them to clients as purchase options. The client can drop any photo they love into the little template and edit the text on their computer screen. They can see exactly how the item will look, add it to their shopping cart, and select the quantity they want. In just a few days (MpixPro has incredibly fast turnaround times) they have a super-awesome piece to send to their friends and family.

**Q:** What's so special about these Zenfolio custom templates?

**A:** They put my photography business in a whole new custom design world. My clients have the ability to take a photo they love and create custom text describing details of their child's birth or the name of their high-school graduate.

Some of my clients are realtors, so I've created a template that says "We've moved." The realtor goes on my gallery and creates client gifts that include the homeowner's new address, then adds boutique packaging, giving their clients

a thoughtful gift. The realtor also gives the homeowners a gift certificate for family photography that they've purchased from me. It's a great way to find new clients who have just moved to the area.

It's so easy to get creative with this great new feature. And I've been a Miller's customer for years, so the fact that all these products are printed by MpixPro puts my mind at ease.

**Q:** Isn't all that confusing for clients—so many options, fields to fill in?

**A:** It's super simple even for clients who aren't tech savvy. The entire process includes easy point-and-click directions about how to order and edit custom items. There are placeholders that show where the photo goes and where to type text. You can zoom, pan, and crop, creating exactly the look you want. If clients can upload photos to Facebook, they can order these custom products.

Should the client have any questions, they can contact Zenfolio customer support to help them through the ordering process.

**Q:** You've listed many different situations where custom templates could be useful. Does that mean you have to create many different products and designs?

**A:** The design interface allows you to upload your design once and then give clients customizable options to suit their needs. Once you upload your design, there is automatic placeholder detection, a set of alignment tools, and the ability to adjust the layer order like you would in Photoshop. There are many neat font

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options—block lettering, scripts, and brush strokes—that you can customize to match the color of your project precisely.

And if you're not graphically crafty but still want to use these custom offerings, Zenfolio has templates you can easily pop into your shopping cart. And there are many outlets to purchase professionally designed templates as well.

**Q:** What about other products?

**A:** One of the tools Zenfolio offers is the ability to set different price lists for various galleries. For example, if you are photographing a high school senior, you may want to offer all sorts of gadgets, like stickers, magnets, calendars, and pins, in addition to traditional prints and wallets. If you are photographing a wedding, you may want to stick to prints, canvases, and thank-you cards to keep the offerings uncluttered.

Another great way to help clients make decisions is with custom packages—for example, two 11x14-inch prints, one 8x10, four 5x7s, and 24 wallets. It's easy to do. You can add incentives for clients to purchase packages, like 25 free press-printed 5x7-inch announcements with the purchase of a certain package. And all of these products are also fulfilled by the Miller's brands directly from the orders on my website.

If the client really has a hard time deciding what to purchase, gift certificates are always a safe bet. I use these with my wedding and family portrait clients often.

**Q:** I'm sure you hear some photographers claim they don't get any online sales. What would you recommend to them?

**A:** Everybody just wants the digital files. How many times do you hear that? By giving your clients the files, you are losing sales from printed products, and more important, the client is potentially showing off your artwork on a horribly printed 24x30-inch canvas they bought at a discount store. My clients receive the files only after reaching a certain dollar amount in print sales. I explain to them that I want to be sure they have the best representation of my work for those huge prints on their walls and the photo gifts they are giving friends and family. Let me print products that showcase these beautiful images best, then they can use the digital files to make a bunch of 4x6-inch prints to use in their scrapbook.

The only remaining step to creating print sales is to have a pleasant, seamless buying experience. If you are a new photographer just setting up your website, know that the best thing you can do is look professional. With a Zenfolio website and gallery, your clients assume you've created a personal gallery of their images for them, and it's branded with your logo and colors. That client's gallery is simply an extension of your website.

Building a photography business is all about branding, marketing, and being unique. In a world full of point-and-shoot cameras, cell phone cameras, and semi-professional photographers, you need a way to stand out. Zenfolio wraps all those elements into one and is constantly coming out with innovative products to create that custom feel that will make your business stand out above all the rest!