When the temps got hot, a JCDecaux panel offered up cups of McDonald’s McFlurrys.

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Where Have All the Good Men (and Women) Gone?

The industry needs to take steps to end the personnel drain

By Denise M. Gustavson

When Bonnie Tyler sang about “Where have all the good men gone?” in her song “Holding Out for a Hero” back in 1984, she was not thinking about staffing issues in the visual communications industry. But, I have to say, her question is very valid—especially at this juncture.

Back in 2012, the Graphic Arts Education and Research Foundation (GAERF) developed a survey titled, “Skilled Worker Shortage: Myth or Reality?” which yielded illuminating results. According to the survey, a large majority, 73.9 percent concurred with the statement, “While the national unemployment rate hovers above eight percent, hundreds of thousands of jobs go unfilled because employers cannot identify candidates with the required knowledge and skill set.”

The survey concluded with an invitation to provide additional comments. A sampling of the respondents’ insights and perspectives revealed:

- The challenge we have faced is finding managers and sales professionals who can understand and apply the capabilities of the new, more digital and faster technologies. It requires more creative problem solving and management of an accelerated workflow.
- Machine operator positions require already-trained personnel, who are fewer in number due to aging of the industry and a lack of new talent coming in.
- Finding print-experienced personnel is tough. We can find designers, but no designers with printing experience.

While this survey was from three years ago, the results are probably even more applicable today, especially considering these facts:

- According to the Social Security Administration, in 2015 almost 33 percent of the workforce—and 48 percent of supervisors—are at retirement age.
- Nearly 10,000 Baby Boomers turn 65 each day—and will continue to do so until 2029.

There has to be a way to promote and encourage the next generation of printers, otherwise the industry faces a much bigger threat as the years progress and skilled workers become even more scarce. ISA’s Lori Anderson discusses more about this industry challenge on page 22 of this issue.

The Graphic Communications Scholarship Foundation (GCSF):

in3.org/ga/scholarshipinfo/index.htm

The Graphic Arts Education and Research Foundation (GAERF):

www.gaerf.org

Electronic Document Scholarship Foundation: www.edsf.org

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EFI Expands with Acquisition of Matan and Reggiani Macchine

EFI has acquired Matan Digital Printers and Reggiani Macchine.

According to EFI CEO Guy Gecht, the acquisition of Matan “gives EFI an even broader range of products to help our customers capture important opportunities in super-wide-format display graphics printing.”

“Our technology and our customers have a great future ahead with EFI in terms of ongoing support and innovation,” said former Matan President and CEO Hanan Yosef.

EFI’s acquisition was an all-cash transaction in which EFI paid the shareholders of Matan approximately $29 million to acquire all of Matan’s outstanding shares. Under the purchase agreement, EFI also assumed approximately $5 million of Matan’s debt, and deposited $14 million into escrow to serve as security for EFI’s benefit for the indemnification obligations of the Matan shareholders. Subject to EFI’s claims against the escrow, portions of the escrow may be released to the sellers in 2017 and 2022.

Matan’s work force of approximately 70 employees has joined EFI, giving EFI a significant presence in Israel, a center for innovation in the printing industry. Yosef has joined EFI as vice president and general manager, EFI Inkjet Israel.

Additionally, with the acquisition of Reggiani Macchine, EFI has established an industry-leading presence in high-growth inkjet textile printing.

“This acquisition gives EFI an immediate leadership position in one of the world’s largest industries undergoing the transformation from analog printing to digital. The textile printing market is just beginning that transition, which will enable manufacturers to shift from long-run to on-demand manufacturing, responding to the increasing demands of short runs and customizations,” said Gecht.

To acquire all of Reggiani’s outstanding shares, EFI will repay Reggiani debt of about €20.1 million ($22.6M USD*), pay the former Reggiani shareholders up to about €27.4 million ($30.8M USD) of cash, and issue the former Reggiani shareholders up to about €27.4 million ($30.8M USD) of EFI stock, and will pay up to €50 million ($56.2M USD) over as long as the next 30 months based on the achievement of revenue and profitability targets by the EFI Reggiani business. Under certain circumstances, EFI is required to pay in cash some or all of the amount described above that is payable in EFI stock. Reggiani’s work force of approximately 190 employees will join EFI.

Watchfire Announces Winners of LED Sign Awards

Orange Park Medical Center in Orange Park, FL, incorporates a live RSS feed on its LED signage that provides current wait times for its emergency room, enabling the health center to increase visibility while enhancing its brand. This creative use of LED signage earned Spectrum Signs and Graphics, Inc. of Jacksonville, FL, designer of the sign, the Grand Prize in the 2015 Watchfire LED Sign Awards.

Watchfire Signs established the awards program in 2014 to recognize Watchfire dealer partners who best showcase the capabilities of outdoor digital advertising. The award recognizes on-premise signs designed and built in 2014 that display excellence in design, legibility of digital messages and advertising effectiveness.

Avery Dennison 2015 “Wrap Like a King” Challenge Opens

Avery Dennison Graphics Solutions has announced that the 2015 “Wrap Like a King” Challenge is open through September 30, 2015. Vehicle wrap installers from 42 countries around the globe can now submit wrap projects to be judged.

Seven geographic regions in the US, Canada, and Europe have been established for the 2015 Wrap Like a King Challenge. Submissions to the Challenge will be evaluated against their regional peers by the judges and winners announced in October. The overall winner will be chosen by the judges as the best in show and crowned the “King of the Wrap World” at the 2015 SEMA Show, November 3-6, 2015 in Las Vegas, NV.

The regional winners will receive a trip to the 2015 SEMA Show in Las Vegas, where the “King of the Wrap World” will be crowned. The prize packs also include a 2016 Avery Dennison wrap class, personalized Wrap Like a King swag, and a variety of promotional and marketing tools for the winner’s wrap shop.

Installers and fans can enter to win the fan prize package by using #WrapLikeAKing on Instagram. It includes an Avery Dennison Wrap Like a King swag bag that contains Avery Dennison t-shirts, retail and restaurant gift cards, and signed merchandise from West Coast Customs.

Wrap installers are encouraged to enter a vehicle wrap project using Avery Dennison Supreme Wrapping Film or digital Supercast films via www.wraplikeaking.com or graphics.averydennison.com/wlak, where official rules, judges, and prize information are also posted.
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Mutoh America
Donates Dye Sublimation Printer to SGIA
Mutoh America Inc. has temporarily donated its ValueJet 1624W 64-inch textile/sublimation printer to SGIA for use in training workshops and within the Association’s Technical Services Department for testing materials, inks and papers.

After supporting SGIA’s Operation Sublimation, Mission: Wide-Format Graphics workshop at the beginning of June, the ValueJet 1624W will assist in the upcoming Color Management Boot Camp (August 25–27) and Operation Sublimation, Mission: Garment (September 23–24) workshops at SGIA’s state-of-the-art laboratory in Fairfax, VA. Thanks to Mutoh America, attendees of both workshops will learn new digital printing technologies using advanced equipment.

FASTSIGNS Becomes an ACCGC Sustaining Corporate Affiliate
FASTSIGNS International, Inc. has become a Sustaining Corporate Affiliate of the Accrediting Council for Collegiate Graphic Communications, Inc. Catherine Monson, CEO and president of the company stated that, “Graphic communications is an exciting field that continues to evolve and grow. We want to ensure that the future generations are provided with the best possible knowledge and resources to be competitive and innovative. The FASTSIGNS network and many others will benefit from investing in these potential pools of talent that will someday lead our companies.”

Corel Donates CorelDRAW Licenses for Use in SGIA Workshops
Corel has donated licenses of the CorelDRAW Graphics Suite X7 to be used in upcoming SGIA educational workshops.

“This donation will help SGIA elevate its workshop programming to bring more value to our students. Many in the specialty imaging community use Corel products, especially CorelDRAW Graphics Suite X7, and this donation enables us to utilize this powerful software suite to further educate SGIA workshop attendees,” said Johnny Shell, SGIA’s vice president of technical services.

Roland DGA Announces North American Regional Winners of the Company’s Global SE Awards Competition
Roland DGA has announced the two winners in the North American regional finals of Roland’s Global SE Awards competition, held June 9-10 at the company’s headquarters in Irvine, CA. The winning Roland Service Engineers—Greg Hulbert with Florida Graphics Supply in Clearwater, FL and Terry Carpenter with Far From Normal in Fargo, ND, outperformed 10 other finalists in a series of intense written exams and hands-on troubleshooting tests conducted over the two-day period.

Hulbert and Carpenter will move on to compete against the world’s best Roland Service Engineers in the Global SE Awards, which will take place in October 2015 at the headquarters of parent company, Roland DG, in Hamamatsu, Japan.

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Durst Rhotex HS Presented with EDP Award at the FESPA 2015
Durst was one of the highlights at FESPA 2015 with its presentation of the “Durst Water Technology,” a long-term strategy to develop aqueous inks as an alternative to UV- and solvent-based printer systems. A new machine category, the Rho WT 250 was developed to print with Functional Aqueous Inks on a large variety of rigid and flexible media. With its Durst Water Technology, Durst has already conducted pioneering work for the soft signage sector and has promoted “green” solutions with the Rhotex Textile Printer Systems and the application of textiles as an advertising- and informational media. For its innovative drive, Durst received an award in the category “Best Wide Format Textile Printer High Production,” from the European Digital Press Association.

“We are very proud of the award for the Rhotex HS, and regard it as a confirmation of our Durst Water Technology strategy,” said Christoph Camper, CEO Durst Phototechnik AG. “We are recognized as the technology leaders in large format printing, but the response at the FESPA was nonetheless overwhelming. We are proud and very pleased, that the market appreciates our continuous development of the ink-jet-technology, its applications, the print quality and the environmental compatibility.”
SiHL Digital Imaging
SiHL Inc. has announced the appointment of Steven Schnoll as CEO and President of its United States operations.

“Steven Schnoll has had an immediate positive influence on many of our customers by creating a marketing and sales dialogue associated with innovative ideas. His well-rounded background in digital media makes him an ideal choice for heading up our US SiHL operations,” said Diego Mosna, CEO of Diatec Holdings, the parent corporation of SiHL Group. “We are glad to have such a capable leader accept this role at one of SiHL’s most important global facilities.”

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Steven Schnoll to Lead SiHL Inc USA

Social Media
The WFI LinkedIn group, with more than 6,842 members, continues to grow. Have you joined the conversation yet? linkd.in/a7W6p8

Top Tweets
Twitter: 6,304 people follow Wide-Format Imaging; 18,400 people follow Printing News; 5,519 follow Quick Printing; and 6,430 follow MyPRINTResource

• RT @BigInkVisual Thank you @wfi for the post in @MyPrintResource about BIG INK! For more information: inkbig.com/news/ #Banners
• RT @Drytac Check out @wfi’s article on #wayfinding signs. Just another way #wallgraphics can work for you. Read it on page 24: ow.ly/Olcub
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• RT @MagicInkjet Our PROTECT Laminates are featured in @wfi July issue on page 9! bit.ly/1JtprRr
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• Article: How to be a Digital Textile Printing Expert MyPRINTResource.com/10941940
• Article: A Banner Day for Sewing MyPRINTResource.com/10941940
• Video: JCDecaux UK: #JurassicWaterloo Domination with Universal Pictures MyPRINTResource.com/12081724

Aurora Announces New US Manufacturing Operation

Aurora Specialty Textiles Group, Inc. (ASTG) has officially opened the doors to a new North America textile factory that offers ultra wide width coating and finishing capabilities. The 124,000 square foot manufacturing operation is located in Yorkville, IL. A highlight of the plant is the company’s new fully automated EHWHA ultra wide width coating and finishing line, which works easily with a broad range of woven and non-woven substrates up to 134 inches wide.

The equipment and plant represent a significant, multi-million dollar investment by ASTG.

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Presto Tape Partners with DaVinci Technologies for Distribution

Presto Tape has partnered with DaVinci Technologies for distribution.

“We are extremely excited to work with Presto Tape; we believe their products are great for our customer base. With the addition of the metallic fabrics, we believe we can offer our customers something different that most suppliers can’t,” said Dan Oreffe, president of DaVinci Technologies.

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For years, pundits have been sounding the death knell for the trade show. With travel budgets being cut, as well as the Internet, Skype, GoToMeeting, and social media, who needs to travel hundreds of miles and spend thousands of dollars to network and press the flesh?

As it turns out, a lot of people. There may be fewer shows than there used to be, many have been scaled back, and the Great Recession took a toll, but the physical trade show is on the rebound.

One of the big challenges of trade show exhibitors has been the cost of shipping booth and other display materials. The products specifically being exhibited are one thing, but when the materials that comprise a booth itself can weigh hundreds of pounds, it adds a lot not only to shipping but also the drayage costs imposed by many convention centers. As a result, the biggest trend in trade show graphics today is away from heavy rigid materials.

The Fabric of Our Lives

“More and more trade show graphics are being done on fabric,” said John Rhodes, founder and president of Colorchrome Atlanta. Rhodes founded Colorchrome in 1983 as a custom photo printing company. In the 1990s, the company added wide-format digital printing and now has clients in an array of markets and industries. “We have stuff hanging in fast-food restaurants and we have stuff hanging in the best museums in the world—and everywhere in between,” said Rhodes.

“From the trade show company’s perspective, [printing on fabric] makes sense,” he said. We can do a 10- by 40-foot wall in fabric that will weigh 10 pounds. If we did that in rigid panels, it may be 200 pounds.”

The combination of printed fabrics and lightweight aluminum frames makes trade show booths and displays less expensive to ship, cheaper and easier to install, and a bit more eco-friendly than other materials. “And they look really good,” added Rhodes.

Fabrics also have other advantages in a trade show floor environment. “There’s a lot of harsh lighting, and fabric tends to absorb light rather than reflect it,” said Tom Trutna, president of Big Ink. Based in Eagan, MN, Big Ink specializes in trade show and event graphics.

New types of fabrics are also enabling all sorts of new, creative effects. “There is definitely a hot demand for backlit,” said Natalie Whited, vice president of marketing at Orbus Exhibit & Display Group, a division of Nimlok.

Nimlok was founded in the UK in 1970 by Neil Nimmo, who had invented and patented a lock-and-grip panel system for displaying photographs. Nimlok, and later a US offshoot called Orbus, expanded into other types of display hardware as well as graphic production itself. Nimlok and Orbus merged in 2010, and the unified company sells its trade show graphics printing services largely through an extensive dealer network.

“Last fall, we introduced a new backlit fabric called Intensity,” said Whited. “It’s almost like a plastic material. It lets light illuminate it well, and the graphics pop.” The new material was launched based on demand the company had been receiving for light boxes and other illuminated display elements. There are also trends in framing materials used to display the printed graphics.

“We’re definitely seeing a strong demand for tubular structures and

Conventional Imaging:
New Directions for Trade Show Graphics

By Richard Romano
lightweight fabric structures that cannot only be used for exhibit and display purposes, but event purposes as well,” said Whited. “Everything from hanging structures, to columns, backwall exhibits that are made out of tubular materials covered with dye-sub-printed fabrics.”

**Puzzling It Out**

It’s not just fabrics. The capabilities of today’s wide-format printers have enabled many other new and creative ideas.

“A lot of natural and non-traditional materials are being used,” said Trutna. “Piping, reclaimed barn wood or lumber, pallets, non-conventional, almost ‘in-the-raw’ materials, just like those that are being used in retail and home décor.”

“One of the newest trends is building something out of Falconboard,” said Eric Berger, president of Color Reflections. With facilities in Orlando, Ft. Lauderdale, Atlanta, Philadelphia, and Las Vegas, Color Reflections also began as a photo printing company before turning to wide-format digital printing.

However, added Berger, these kinds of Falconboard displays can present some design challenges. “It’s very difficult to design because it goes together like a jigsaw puzzle. You need certain cutting devices to do V cuts to allow the graphics to be folded, and you have to dado it out so it goes together like a panel system. They can become very, very intricate.”

But then working with fabric displays takes some design considerations into account. “The aluminum extrusions that are necessary have to be engineered, and the fabrics need to be dead on,” said Berger. “They need to be measured properly. You almost have to pre-construct them so you know how they go together.”

**Grand Designs**

Companies that produce trade show graphics typically don’t work directly with the exhibitors or end users, but rather go through a trade show company that handles the design work and hands off print-ready files. This is not to say that printers are not involved in the design process.

“[A trade show company client] will sometimes want our advice on the best way to print something or how to do it cost-effectively,” said Rhodes. “They do all the design, but we just guide them so they don’t design something that can’t be printed.”

Others, like Big Ink, have started to offer some in-house graphic design for customers who may not have the resources to work through a trade show company. “Last year, we brought an in-house designer on board we can use for some smaller clients,” said Trutna. Or even, he added, “for our large trade show customers. There’s a lot of seasonality to trade shows and when they get swamped, they get really...
One new trend in trade show graphics is to construct displays out of a material like Falconboard, a 100-percent recyclable substrate. Color Reflections created this display for Adorama’s booth at a recent photo show.

Nimlok specializes in providing display systems for trade show and event graphics, as well as the output services.

DDS: Watching and Waiting

Another hot topic in display graphics today is dynamic digital signage (DDS). While more and more exhibitors and trade show booths feature some kind of electronic and/or digital display, thus far trade show graphics printers have yet to do more than watch and wait, although are tantalized by some possibilities.

“I wish we had the resources [to get into DDS], but as a small company we don’t,” said Trutna. “When you see the digital dynamic displays there also tends to be a fair amount of static print graphics around it. I think there’s an opportunity for print providers because the two go hand in hand.” But, he added, it has to be for a good purpose. “If it’s not supporting your brand message, what’s the value of it?”

Trutna and others are proponents of other types of interactive displays whose interactivity is not electronic or digital at all. Big Ink recently worked on an event display for the SuperValu grocery franchise that featured event participants’ answers to questions hand-written on boxes and strung up on tension wires to form a “wall of goals.” Another project had event participants make yarn art on a display that would then be unfolded and used as the backdrop of the event stage. “It’s cool things like that,” said Trutna. “People are bringing old-fashioned touch and feel. It isn’t just all about high-tech and digital.”

Back in Business

At present, graphics producers are seeing events like trade shows on the rebound, for the very real reason that they still fill a need. “We’re seeing the trade show market come back,” said Trutna. “It’s better today than it has been in years. People still like to do business face-to-face, and trade shows are the perfect avenue for that.”

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swamped. We can offer additional design resources.”

Installing for Time

Another service that trade show graphics providers offer is installation, and the approach to working with installers varies greatly. Some have their own in-house install team, some hire third-party installers, but most use some combination of the two approaches, particularly when job volume spikes.

“It runs in big surges where we have three or four different installers working on different projects one week, and the next week we won’t have any installers for a few days,” said Rhodes. “For most installs we hire subcontractors, and most of them have been working with me for years. We have really great relationships with our outside installers.”

Sometimes, there may not be a choice.

“Oftentimes in a trade show environment, you’re required to use the labor available in whatever city you’re installing in,” said Trutna. “We work with whoever our client indicates is going to do the install to make as easy and efficient as possible.” Outside labor can be very expensive, so Big Ink takes pains to organize all the pieces of a display, label them, and add assembly instructions to make it absolutely clear so the install goes as quickly as possible.

Nimock’s dealer network has the option of working with whatever installation team they’d like, or even to do installations themselves. Orbus’ central facility is partially involved in installation, said Whited. “We have a set-up team of about a dozen people who construct our exhibits and displays, and sometimes they go out and supervise the installation.” Orbus works with an installation partner called Sho-Link, an I&D (installation and dismantle) services provider.
Suppliers are responding to the present economy with more cost-effective materials or specialty films to add a bit more depth to printed graphics.

By Jeffrey Steele

Suppliers are reacting to a lukewarm economy by unveiling laminate films that are increasingly cost effective. These products include thinner films and liners that offer just the right amount of protection for the application. They also include specialty films that invest printed graphics with a degree of added depth.

Films are essential in protecting both indoor and outdoor graphics, reported Jason Yard, marketing manager for Stow, OH-based MACtac, a provider of pressure-sensitive adhesive products. If indoor and outdoor signs don’t offer vibrant color and easily communicated lettering and visuals, as well as durability, the ability of signage to catch customers’ attention, attract business and convey crucial promotional messaging is seriously impaired, he observed.

Indeed, poor products can bring the opposite of the intended effect. That reality underscores the need for durability and maintainable aesthetics, Yard added.

But in the interest of economy and cost effectiveness, it is imperative to understand the lifespan of overlaminates when specifying appropriate products for different applications. Recommending overlaminates that outlast specific applications can result in needlessly inflated expenditures, he observed.

According to Nicole Shokralla, associate product manager for Arlon in Santa Ana, CA, some of the benefits to using overlaminates on graphics aren’t widely recog-
The common understanding of overlaminates is that the product will provide an added protection to the film and printed image and preserve the vibrancy of the graphic. “This is very true, but there are several other benefits to using an overlaminate on your graphic,” Shokralla said. “In addition to protecting the ink and film from UV rays and other contaminants, applying an overlaminate helps installers apply a graphic with greater ease.”

The extra layer of the overlaminate on top of the graphic allows installers to gain a better grip on the film, due to the extra body created, she explained.

That lets them reposition the product with greater ease, while at the same time avoiding image distortion resulting from overstretching the graphic. That extra body also helps when removing the graphic once it is time for the film to be removed. The added layer will accept more heat, likely allowing a cleaner and easier removal with less adhesive left behind. One final benefit is that adding an overlaminate allows for the graphic’s finish to be tweaked to provide customers with precisely the look and feel they want. Industry professionals should understand that using overlaminates is worth the extra cost and labor, due to these benefits and the end results provided the customer, Shokralla said.

As for the increasing cost-effectiveness of overlaminates, the move to trim prices of films may be part of a broader trend in which manufacturers work to deliver more affordable materials, no matter the ups and downs of the economic climate. Or it may be that given the economy has improved, makers of films now have the resources needed to try to better match materials to applications.

Whatever the factors underpinning the greater cost-effectiveness, both PSPs and end users benefit when costs are whittled from overlaminate films.

**Easy to Clean**

At Richmond, VA-based Drytac Corporation, spokeswoman Victoria Doucet reported two specialty over laminating films are offered. They are Interlam Pro Anti-Graffiti and WipeOut. Both are designed for graphic applications that require characteristics allowing ease of cleaning, Doucet explained.

Interlam Pro Anti-Graffiti is a 2-mil., high-performance barrier overlaminate with a gloss finish and high degree of resistance to ultraviolet light, dirt and pollutants. “It offers superb clarity, detail and color contrast,” she noted.

“Additionally, both the film and adhesive contain UV stabilizers, which prevent film degradation and provide UV protection to the underlying image. This film also wipes clean of spray paint and can be cleaned with most solvents or detergents without adverse effect. It bonds well to UV latex and other inks.”

The other, WipeOut, is a 3 mil. premium, dry erase clear overlaminate that is easy to write upon and erase. Offering a UV hard coat with a clear gloss finish, it safeguards against ghosting or staining from dry-erase markers.

The product is also resistant to scratches and abrasion, moisture and water, heat, solvents and chemicals, according to Doucet.

“When combined with graphics printed on ReTac Wall, it can be used to create distinct, customized dry erase wall decals that stick to virtually any smooth surface,” she observed. “These removable decals are great for use in offices, schools, dorm rooms, hospitals or grocery stores.”

Given its outdoor durability of up to seven years, Interlam Pro Anti-Graffiti is ideal for retail advertising graphics, event graphics or displays where graffiti is possible, such as bus shelters, train stations, kiosks and construction barricades.

WipeOut is best for a variety of environments where messages, meeting notes or ideas need to be quickly captured. Common applications include dry erase or planning boards, menu boards, conference room walls, courtroom graphic displays, maps, calendars, notepads or signage, Doucet related.

**Three New Laminates**

Avery Dennison Graphics Solutions offers a broad range of cast, cal-
The Santander group is the fourth largest financial brand in the world and the largest in Spain. The decision to unify all of the commercially used brands within the group under the primary Santander brand in Spain meant integrating 1,400 retail branches from the newly acquired Banesto brand to the Santander brand. By using the new 3M Envision Translucent Film 3730—which provides increased light transmission and is optimized for use with LEDs—the Santander group has been able to achieve some key objectives relating to controlling its environmental footprint and reducing consumption of electricity in its operations.

DOL 6460 is a 1.5-mil. clear gloss urethane film featuring permanent adhesive and 3.0-mil. PET liner. It provides up to two years durability for printed graphics in horizontal applications, such as the hoods of vehicles and rooftops, and five years durability in vertical applications. What’s more, it delivers abrasion resistance to protect images from scratches.

It offers maximum conformability with corrugations, complex curves, deep recesses and rivets. And it features a super smooth high gloss for a paint-like finish of printed graphics.

DOL 6560 is optically clear, allowing for maximum clarity, enhancing color and depth of the printed graphic. The product has a high-gloss finish and improved scratch resistance to protect the image from scratches while offering excellent optimal durability. It is an exceptional value laminate that provides protection of perforated window film. It meets CPSIA standards for limitations on lead and phthalates, and one-year durability in flat surface applications.

DOL 6960 is a clear rigid gloss polyester film with a high-gloss finish. It provides more robust protection in harsh environments, where it protects the integrity of the graphics. Its exceptional value is as a laminate in applications requiring additional scratch- and chemical-resistance. It meets CPSIA standards for limitations on lead and phthalates, and offers one-year flat surface durability.

Print providers should know these additional details, Timmerman reported:

Non-PVC over laminate films reduce the amount of PVC added to landfills, translating to making a positive environmental impact.

PET shows great clarity, toughness and chemical resistance, and adds rigidity that makes it easier to handle and install small decals.

Overlaminates used over screen- and digitally printed products display good UV, humidity, temperature and salt-spray resistance, and protect images from scratches and chemical abrasion.

Finally, and most pertinent to this report, DOL 6560 and DOL 6960 are exceptional values that fit within the budgetary constraints of sign shops.

“Overlaminates are an affordable way to extend the life of a graphic, reducing overall advertising costs,” Timmerman reported.

Greater Light Transmission

According to Tony Fulco, marketing manager for St. Paul, MN-based 3M Commercial Solutions, the company offers 3M Envision Translucent Film IJ3730-50 and IJ3730-60 for solvent, UV and latex inkjet printing and cut graphics.

For best results, 3M typically recommends these 2-mil., white vinyl translucent films for LED applications, Fulco reported. “They provide more light transmission—optimizing LED light—which means brighter, richly colored signs that use less energy and require less maintenance,” he added. “The clear, synthetic liner used on Envision Translucent Films IJ3730-50 and IJ3730-60 makes immediate proofing possible. These energy-saving premium products are backed by the industry-leading 3M MCS Warranty. So customers won’t just look good, they will feel good too. You win. They win. The environment wins.”

Arlon’s Initiative

In addition to its existing portfolio of overlaminates, Arlon Graphics is...
in the process of launching a new polyurethane overlaminate in the third quarter.

Its mission: to provide approximately a 10-year vertical durability and a four-year horizontal durability on graphics, Shokralla said.

Currently, Arlon offers a broad assortment of products designed to meet the expectations and requirements of customers in an array of applications. Arlon’s product portfolio features cast and calendared digital films that include overlaminates, cut graphics and automotive color change films.

Arlon offers a number of PVC and non-PVC overlaminates in multiple sizes, thicknesses and finishes that let customers tailor the look and feel of their graphics, Shokralla reported. “As a rule of thumb, cast overlaminates can be applied to either cast or calendared media, whereas a calendared overlaminate is limited to being used on a calendared film due to the nature and limitations of calendared properties,” she said. “Even though cast overlaminates tend to be more expensive than calendared overlaminates, we recommend distributors stock these overlaminates as they can be used with almost any PVC graphics, cast or calendared. By stocking cast overlaminates, distributors can help reduce their inventory levels and allow for a quicker turn on their inventory.”

Within its cast overlaminate portfolio, Arlon offers Series 3210, a 1.3-mil overlaminate available for customers seeking a thinner cast overlaminate. Series 3220 is the company’s standard 2-mil cast overlaminate, used for day-to-day signage. “This is a multi-purpose overlaminate that is available in different finishes—gloss, matte, satin, or luster—to enable customers to alter the final appearance of the finished graphic,” Shokralla said.

In addition, Arlon also markets a multipurpose calendared overlaminate, Series 3420, offered in multiple finishes like gloss, matte and satin. This 3-mil calendared overlaminate is for customers seeking more affordable alternatives, she added.

As well, Arlon also offers several specialty overlaminates for customers who need unique applications. Series 3200 is a 2-mil cast optically clear overlaminate that provides transparency without distorting the image. “This is a great overlaminate to be used for window applications,” Shokralla said.

Yet another Arlon offering is Series 3590, a 12-mil heavy-duty overlaminate designed for SETTINGS calling for considerable abrasion resistance. Series 3350 is geared to those who need to safeguard their graphics from graffiti. This Anti-Graffiti Overlaminate carries up to a 10-year durability.

“Arlon’s overlaminates, regardless of the thickness or finish, are all available with a clear permanent pressure-sensitive adhesive and are intended to prolong the life of the printed image while allowing for excellent conformability upon installation,” Shokralla concluded.

Put to the Test

Laminate films obviously are marketed in an array of formats and must perform well in a widely varied range of different environments.

For this reason, MACtac employs a battery of tests it calls “weatherometer testing” (WOM testing) to determine how well its products, including its laminating films, will hold up over the course of several years.

MACtac recently placed its PERMACOLOR PromoGard laminate solution in a test against a comparable alternative film it called “Subject A.” The effort was initiated to see how each would perform in conditions of accelerated weathering.

In this instance, the WOM test examined seven-year white vinyl with standard printed CMYK swatches, laminated with available finish varieties such as matte, luster and gloss samples from PromoGard and Subject A.
Wide-Format Color Management:
So Many Variables, So Little Time

By Joann Whitcher

In the world of commercial print, device-to-device color matching is fairly straightforward. Inks and substrates are standardized, target densities and Lab values, as well as paper white tolerances, are defined (GRACoL, SWOP, FOGRA, etc.). Even with UV offset, where media such as plastics can present some challenges, it is still pretty much standardized.

But in the world of wide-format output, it’s a different story. Device-to-device color matching a struggle with some unique issues. To begin with, in the attempt to color match from one device to another, there are many more variables to be controlled.

There are more than 20 different printer brands, as well a host of media types and ink systems, Bart Fret, GMG’s Director of Sales - Large Format, explained.

Each ink also presents its own unique imaging characteristics. “The different inks may also image at different resolutions and may not target a common output condition, like offset print processes,” said Ray Cheydleur, X-Rite’s Printing and Imaging product portfolio manager.

There is also no standard on ink colors. Depending on the manufacturer, inks might be strong or weak in specific primary colors.

“That’s not all,” added Fret. “There are different lighting conditions to be taken into account, and front and backlit prints to consider, for example.”

The most difficult challenge of matching across the wide-format production process has to do with substrates, stated Ron Ellis, principal, Ron Ellis Consulting. “The issue is both the consistency of substrates, stated Ron Ellis, principal, Ron Ellis Consulting.

“The different inks may also image at different resolutions and may not target a common output condition, like offset print processes,” said Ray Cheydleur, X-Rite’s Printing and Imaging product portfolio manager. “The different inks may also image at different resolutions and may not target a common output condition, like offset print processes,” said Ray Cheydleur, X-Rite’s Printing and Imaging product portfolio manager.

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“That’s not all,” added Fret. “There are different lighting conditions to be taken into account, and front and backlit prints to consider, for example.”

The most difficult challenge of matching across the wide-format production process has to do with substrates, stated Ron Ellis, principal, Ron Ellis Consulting. “The issue is both the consistency of substrates themselves, as well as difference in color between many substrates. Designers are often designing using common print specifications such as GRACoL or SWOP. These print specs are what they are seeing on the screen as they design—and each of these print specifications contains a paper color as well. Most wide-format devices can easily achieve G7, but often do not have the full gamut to exactly match these specs, and when the paper color is different than the print spec the designer has in mind it can cause color issues.”

According to Ellis, basically all of the color moves with the color of the substrate. “There are ways to manage this but it requires knowledge and the right tool set,” he said. “I train my customers on substrate correction methods that help mitigate these issues. Often multiple pieces for the same customer may run across multiple substrates, such as an SBS board and a styrene. While these substrates have very different colors, using color management we can usually make both of these match by making one of the substrates be the substrate relative target, and having the other substrate use a matching paper tint.”

Also, while the print quality of a 15-year old offset press is not too different from one manufactured today, a wide-format digital press from 15 years ago is dramatically different from more recent devices. “Older printers generate much larger dots; a digital press built today outputs smaller—and often variable—dots,” said Fret. There has been an evolution in print quality, and many companies operate presses that run the range from one year old to 10 years old, with vastly different gamuts and a wide range of quality.

“The scope is much wider and as such the difficulty in matching printers is much higher,” Fret explained.

Adding monitors to the equation heightens the level of complication; the inherent nature of a monitor compared to print is already a challenge. The basic dilemma is the comparison of an additive color system (monitors) versus a subtractive color system (printer).

How to show the additional variables in wide-format imaging is also a challenge. With high-quality offset at 200 lpi, you rarely see dots, said Fret. “However, imagine print on a structured material from a 15-year old printer. There is a grainy effect, and adding additional variables are hard to simulate on a monitor—visible dots or graininess and specific defects, materials and structure of the material. Even more challenging: Many people think that they can match colors with different RIPS driving different printers on the same print floor—each with different color management systems.”

To make it work, communication, calibration and quality control are in order. “Best practices start with setting the proper expectations,” X-Rite’s Cheydleur noted. “This means good communication is critical.”

The customer and printer need to communicate regarding the targeted print condition. “Without knowing the target print condition it is impossible for a print supplier to match the desired output,” Ellis reported. “The print provider can help the customer understand the print conditions that can be achieved on specific equipment and substrates. Once a print condition has been agreed upon, calibration becomes important.”

Monitor-to-output matching issues require that both
monitors and output devices are properly profiled and calibrated. “All stakeholders should be working with calibrated devices, monitors, local proofers, and, of course, final contract proofs and output devices,” said Cheydleur. “This requires ICC color management software and a spectrophotometer for print profiling. This provides for proper expectation setting right from the initial creation stage.”

If the desire is to match a specific target or brand color, use a well-qualified color references like the Pantone Matching System, which has both physical guides and digital references to help both designers and printers, Cheydleur added. “If you need to match with offset and offset is using a standard reference profile, then making sure that all devices are targeting this final output space right from the start is also critical. Training and qualification, of Ellis’ customers have a routine where they read a control strip prior to printing a job. If the control strip passes they print. If it fails they recalibrate. “Knowing your print specification, a quick calibration method, and quality control procedures are keys to productive high quality print,” said Ellis.

Without the software to make the processes match each other, you are in trouble, said Fret. “Quality control includes assuring that printers are calibrated often to verify whether they are drifting or not,” he said. “The first step to good color management is to use the software correctly and compensate for the machine differences. Then you can train customers to submit files a certain way. Unfortunately, most software designed for RIPping, even including color management, cannot get two of the same printers on the same material to completely match.”

“To achieve the end goal of color matching, I train customers on involve methods of rapidly calibrating substrates and devices to achieve print conditions. Rapid is important, because if it takes too long to calibrate a device, then operators will ignore it because it is too disruptive.”

such as the Pantone Certified Printer program, is a simple way to make sure that all parts of the workflow are aligned.”

Added Ellis, “To achieve the end goal of color matching, I train customers on involve methods of rapidly calibrating substrates and devices to achieve print conditions. Rapid is important, because if it takes too long to calibrate a device then operators will ignore it because it is too disruptive. Ideally an operator should be able to calibrate a device within 10 to 15 minutes, and should be able to quickly handle new substrates. There are specific methods and standard operating procedures for achieving quick results. Once calibrated, it is important to be able to maintain the calibration.”

Quality control tells an operator if he or she is okay to print, or if they will need to recalibrate. Many Tools and technology need to be customized for wide-format printers. “For example, while many designers design to GRACoL, a large number of wide-format devices when operating in high-speed mode cannot achieve the gamut of GRACoL,” Ellis said. “They can however achieve G7 Gray, which provides the gray balance, tonality, and visual appearance of GRACoL. So these tools need to be able to be customized so that they are less offset-centric, and more tuned in to the capabilities and needs of wide format devices.”

The PANTONE family of products offers designers and printers a common language for special colors and brand colors, Cheydleur explained. These are available within design applications, as various physical samples in the Pantone guides, and digitally through products like Pantone Color Manager, which can soft proof colors directly within the application and create project palettes.

“X-Rite’s i1Pro2 combined with the i1iO scanning table is a measurement solution that provides flexibility and automation that can handle a wide variety of substrate thicknesses and finishes in a simple automated fashion,” said Cheydleur.

“i1Publish software provides a full solution for all parts of the ICC color management workflow,” he continued. “This product not only builds standard RGB and CMYK output ICC profiles but also includes device-link profiles and CMYK + N color profiling.”

“GMG ColorServer provides a consistent, color-matched file, to any device,” Fret remarked. “Each output system can be calibrated to the same, known reference standard. With a common reference point, all remote systems can use the same color transformation profiles (GMG’s mx4 profile technology) that define the color match between the target data and output proof. Several printers can be aligned and matched, even if they are using different substrates. With this GMG MX technology, even spot colors can be matched to the printer’s color gamut and remains consistent even if the printer shifts. The base calibration is more elaborate and consistent than ICC linearization. This is what makes the difference.”

GMG's controls in its color management profiles are designed to result in greater accuracy and assure that printers will match visually to one another, even when considering different variables, like UV or solvent inks, or different substrates. “With the control we have on our profile and gamut compression technology, we can even provide a color match between wide-format digital devices and offset presses,” Fret said. “In addition, GMG can offer the creation of a correct color reference file right from the designer's desk with GMG ColorMaster. This provides a master image file that matches the color gamut of any output device—digital press, traditional press, or monitor.”

Find this article at MyPRINTResource.com/12081511
Marketing your shop should get the same multichannel campaigns you build for clients.

By Toni McQuilken

Social media is the catch-all phrase of the decade, encompassing a wide range of platforms that allow people from all walks of life to communicate with each other. And while personal connections are a big part of what drives these platforms, businesses are increasingly turning to them as well to engage with customers, connect with potential clients and build their reputations.

Most successful print firms have started looking into ways to incorporate social media services into their product mixes, looking to offer customers a “one-stop marketing” solution that allows them to move beyond commodity pricing and into trusted partner status—which carries a more premium price.

But while the shop might be an expert at creating and producing multichannel campaigns for clients, how much marketing are you doing for yourself? And how much social media are you incorporating into that mix?

“Social media platforms cannot be ignored when it comes to marketing any kind of service,” said social media expert Dana Schomp, owner of Premier VEBA Inc. “Printers rightly are very focused on the physical aspects of marketing—banners, signage, etc. But in today’s interconnected world, not even they can afford to ignore the electronic mediums if they want to remain competitive. Customers of all types of goods and services are increasingly wanting the kind of connections with their vendors and partners that only social networks can provide.”

Like most small businesses, print shops are facing an increasingly connected world, and they are struggling to find ways to connect with current and future clients. According to a Manta survey released in May of this year, 59 percent of small business owners—printers included—aren’t seeing a return on the investment they are making into social media platforms. Only 34 percent of the respondents said they were planning to increase the time and money spent on social media activities in the coming months, which is down from 49 percent in 2013.

When Social Media Examiner released its annual Social Media Marketing Industry Report for 2015, it found similar attitudes: Only 42 percent of its respondents noted that they are able to measure their ROI on social marketing platforms, but 72 percent regularly try to analyze and measure those activities.

But that doesn’t mean that printers can’t or won’t see a return on their social investment, noted Tawnya Starr, executive vice president of sales for Firespring. “Although it may not come quickly, printers will gain traffic to their website from social media and see an increased ROI,” she said. “According to socialmediatoday.com, 79 percent of B2B marketers who use Twitter generate twice as many leads as those who do not. This is because you are engaging with customers, and social media provides yet another place where your information and URL are provided. Ninety-one percent of local searches say they use Facebook to find local businesses online. In addition to searching Google for businesses, they’re also searching on Facebook,” Starr shared. “Ad-
ditionally, 63 percent of local searchers on social media are more likely to use a business with info on a social media site. The more convenient it is for customers to find information, the greater the opportunity to connect with great prospects.”

Making Social Media Work

That being said, social media is still a powerful tool that every printer should be using to help grow the business. But it can be overwhelming trying to determine which services to use, and how to best allocate resources to ensure the best results.

First of all, narrow down the list to just a few social media services. By far the two most popular networks for small businesses are Facebook and LinkedIn. Social Media Examiner found that if pressed to choose a single platform, 52 percent of marketers cited Facebook as their top choice, with LinkedIn following the closest at 21 percent. Twitter and YouTube were also cited as platforms that are strong contenders for the marketing dollars.

“Printers only need to focus on three platforms: Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn,” said Starr. “Each of those platforms has more than one billion users on it and plenty of business opportunity. A new account is created on LinkedIn every two seconds. There is no question that being engaged in social media is a way to connect to leads.”

“For businesses, LinkedIn is a powerful platform,” noted Premier VBEA’s Schomp. “You can connect and network with a wide range of potential customers, and you can position yourself as an expert in your field. The ability to publish and share thought-provoking content, and know that it is being seen by key decision makers with great prospects.”

Secondly, do not use the exact same message across every single platform. Each social network has its own demographic and is best suited to different types of approaches. While you can certainly use the same promotion, know what audience you are trying to reach, and target them specifically. You wouldn’t advise your customers to put a banner aimed at small children in the middle of a busy business district. Social media marketing is no different.

Third, while it is tempting to craft messages for social media with purely marketing content, sadly, that approach doesn’t work on these platforms. One of the reasons so many printers struggle with marketing their own services on social media is that they focus completely on the business. It might sound counter-intuitive, but that approach will actually turn customers away. Rather, use what many call the “80/20 Rule.” Talk about your business 20 percent of the time, and talk about something else the other 80 percent of the time.

“Printers are using social media to connect with clients and potential clients alike by being present,” noted Starr. “It’s much less about promotion of services, rather a channel to self-promote and build upon relationships with clients.”

This doesn’t mean you have to flood your Facebook wall or Twitter feed with adorable cat videos, however.

TIPS FOR PSPS TO BUILD A SOLID SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE

Tawnya Starr, EVP of sales for Firespring, and the company’s social media strategist Lauren Bejot, put together three tips that every PSP should keep in mind when building and maintaining a winning social media strategy:

▪ Create a conversation

For example, create conversation by asking customers on social media, “What’s your best marketing tip? We like to recommend our clients to make sure they have updated brochures before presenting at conferences.” Questions are a great way to spark engagement. “Question posts receive 100 percent more engagement than statement posts,” reported by KISSmetrics. Social media allows companies to create dynamic, one-on-one relationships with their audience. Because of this, print shops can more efficiently and successfully target and create relationships with their audience.

▪ Post engaging content

To create that conversation, post content that truly connects with the audience. Printers need to put themselves in their customer’s shoes: what would they like to see? Engage and retain customers on social media with the universal 80/20 rule: 80 percent of the content needs to be what the audience would like to see, and 20 percent needs to be self-promotional. For example, 80 percent of the content could include a quote or an educational article about marketing. Moreover, 20 percent could include information about an upcoming promotion, or a new, exciting product or service that the print shop provides. With any post, “Photos receive 53 percent more likes, 104 percent more comments and 84 percent more link click-throughs than text-based posts,” reported KISSmetrics. Print shops are more likely to connect with and maintain loyal customers by following the 80/20 rule and posting engaging, fresh content on social media.

▪ Post consistently

Creating a cohesive online brand identity and staying top-of-mind for customers requires consistent posting. If a potential customer searches for a print shop and sees there hasn’t been a post in over a month, they could assume your company went out of business. For example, HarrisPlus, a print shop in Maryland, posts three times a day, everyday, to stay top-of-mind with current and potential customers. Social media users have a necessity for news updates and posting fresh, consistent content is the key to capturing potential customers for a printing company.
Rather, talk about the latest trends in print technologies and why you are watching them; talk about trade shows and other events you or your staff attend, and highlight some of the exciting—or disappointing—things you saw; talk about current events, and how you see them impacting your community and business. In other words, create content that educates and informs. Customers will be far more receptive to those marketing messages when they are just one part of a content strategy, rather than the entire strategy.

“It’s all about variety, and becoming known as an industry expert,” Schomp said. “You want them to want to pick up the phone when you call, to want to open your emails, because they know you are going to be providing them with information they actually want to hear. And if you include a message about a great new printer you’ve purchased that opens up new capabilities you’d love to talk to them about as well, it’s not going to be tossed aside as irrelevant, because they will know you’re only going to share something that you genuinely think will help them improve their business. It’s about establishing yourself as someone they want to partner with, rather than someone they just buy print from—and social media allows you to create and nurture those relationships.”

Finally, social media isn’t a one-time thing. To get the biggest ROI on social media activities, printers will have to dedicate the time and staff to creating the content and managing the accounts.

“Our resident social media expert, [Lauren Bejot, social media strategist], feels dedicating at least three hours a week on brainstorming, content, creating content and posting it is the minimum in order to see a return on social media,” said Starr. “Then dedicate at least 5 minutes everyday to respond to all interactions on social media. If time is not dedicated, social media won’t work.”

“Printers are using social media to connect with clients and potential clients alike by being present,” noted Starr. “It’s much less about promotion of services, rather a channel to self-promote and build upon relationships with clients.”
Investing in Your Staff and Your Future

When we look at the issues facing sign and visual communications companies, finding and retaining workers remains an area of tremendous concern.

By Lori Anderson

Summer vacations are nearly over and students are preparing to head back to school. That may be a good thing for your business, since summer vacations can stretch staffs thin.

But what if that level of staffing became the new reality? When we look at the issues facing sign and visual communications companies, finding and retaining workers remains an area of tremendous concern. It’s most pressing with skilled workers: those we rely on to install and fabricate our concepts.

It is an issue that only is going to increase. The Social Security Administration tells us that this year, almost 33 percent of the workforce—and 48 percent of supervisors—are at retirement age.

Consider that 10,000 baby boomers turn 65 each day—and will continue to do so until 2029.

It’s no wonder then, that the Manufacturing Institute reports two million manufacturing jobs will go unfilled over the course of the next decade.

With numbers like that, it would be easy to be overwhelmed, to think that this is an insurmountable problem.

But what if 25 here and 50 there could make a dent in those tens of thousands? That’s the concept behind Sign Manufacturing Day, which opens up sign company facilities for tours of high school and vocational-technical students for one day. These small groups are just the beginning steps of solving this challenge for our industry.

The ISA State of the Industry 2015 survey showed how the need for more employees comes at a time when the industry is poised to grow even more. More companies intend to hire in the coming year; 65 percent of company CEOs surveyed at ISA Sign Expo said they’d be adding workers. Most of those jobs are in production/installation, with 62 percent saying they’d add these skilled workers.

And yet, finding qualified workers remains the greatest threat to the industry, with nearly 20 percent of those surveyed citing this over regulations, the economy and competition.

Participants in Sign Manufacturing Day, held the first Friday each October, are confronting this issue head on. Along the way, they’re building long-term relationships with students, teachers and career counselors.

David Adams, a welding and construction technology teacher at Hays Consolidated Independent School District in Kyle, TX, took his students to tour Lewis Sign in nearby Buda. For students getting ready to graduate high school, the visit connected the classroom to a career. “We talk to kids about why it’s important to be on time and to have a good work ethic,” Adams said. “To hear an employer tell them that carries weight.”

While Adams said he knew the sign industry was around, “It was eye-opening for the amount of business. I just never thought about it how much goes into it.”

That same experience held true for students, teachers and career counselors around the country. A survey taken in South Bend, IN, shows just how much: Before participating in Sign Manufacturing Day, only 54 percent said they had considered a career in manufacturing. Afterwards, that number was up to 69 percent. And 87 percent said the tour had helped them see how their Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses could connect to a manufacturing career.

Companies that participated in 2014 found that students and counselors were interested in pursuing internships and job shadowing. It’s an important bridge that is being built.

For last year’s Sign Manufacturing Day, we had more than 1,000 students of all ages visit a sign company. This year, we believe we’ll see even more. The number of companies committed to participate already surpasses last year. With what we learned in 2014, we believe this event will be even (Continued Page 24)
The Sign Connection

The Mechanics of RFP Review

By Lee Manevitch

Request for Proposal (RFP)—it’s a scary term, and it keeps some people from even trying to go after the work. For larger projects such as construction or a remodel, every minute detail of the project is broken down into a series of documents for review and, eventually, bidding. Construction companies or general contractors will usually be the “master” bidder on the project, tendering a bid to complete 100 percent of the work as specified. But general contractors don’t make signs, and that’s where we come in.

The construction company or general contractor will, in turn, bid out the signage portion of an RFP to various sign companies in your area. They’re only looking for the signage portion of the bid, which makes the job we have much easier; we just have to learn what documents we can safely ignore and which we have to pore through to find our signage opportunities. It’s not a simple task, and because of that, there are often only one or two sign companies willing to bid on the work. That alone is a great reason to enter the arena because we’re talking about work worth tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars.

So where do we begin?

If a company has solicited a bid from you, there will be either a huge number of attachments or, more often, instructions for how to download those attachments for yourself. Resist the temptation to pick and choose; download everything so you’ll have it on your own computer to sort out later.

Start with the bid specification. The first few pages might describe the scope of the entire project, and it’s there that you can get a feel for the overall magnitude and gauge your comfort level with the work that might be involved. After you have a feel for the project and feel confident enough to dive deeper, turn your attention to Division 10 of the bid documentation. Division 10 contains all the “specialty” parts, and that includes signage. Any signage should be specified there, including materials used. Sometimes the dimensions will be listed; other times that will be in the blueprints. Sometimes there will be a static list of suppliers for the products, but more often than not, there will be a “or comparable” in there. So, you can make the products in house if you have the capability.

Once you have a general idea of the scope of the signage opportunities and are still interested in moving forward, it’s time to start looking at blueprints. Sometimes we get really lucky and one of the blueprints is an overview of all signage or at least a detail of some of the signage.

There’s no easy way to do this, but the next step is to start plowing through all the architectural prints looking for any that might contain signage opportunities. Generally, the floor plans contain signage, but elevations can also contain some huge opportunities like channel letters and dimensionals. The search can be done on screen, but take careful note of what prints and/or pages are the ones containing signage.

Once the prints you need have been identified, it’s time to print them full scale. It’s a step worth taking, especially on large or tightly-packed projects. Blueprints are typically 30 by 40 inches or so, and working with that much information on a monitor just isn’t practical. Print any drawings you think may be relevant on the cheapest material you have. For people with latex printers, that means satin paper. Solvent printer owners will most likely find that cheap vinyl is the best bet, but find something with a matte finish, if possible, so you can work with the prints right away.

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Industry Insights

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The Mechanics of RFP Review continued’

Grab yourself some Sharpie markers, as many colors as you can find, but at the very least you’ll need one color for each sign type you’ll be counting. Then, lay out the prints and start ticking off the signs. Keep a count going while you do this; it’s easier to just speak the number aloud than it is to highlight the signs then go back and count accurately. On a separate piece of paper (or on the detail drawing if possible), we kept a tally of each sign type.

When we were done, we had a comprehensive list of all signs in the project. In this case, 42 room markers, eight fire extinguisher signs, two fire exits and four wheelchair accessible signs. At that point, it becomes a bit of a math problem. Figure your costs, determine a markup that’s a good balance between profit for you and price for your client, fill out the bid documentation and wait.

Keep in mind that not all solicitations to bid are worth your time. Recently, we encouraged a franchise member to pass on a bid for a bank remodel when the products listed were all from one supplier with no substitutions allowed, meaning price would be the only deciding factor. Our decision was bolstered when we saw the bid form, which specified that all signage would be purchased and installed by the client. This was a case of “signage” coming up in a keyword search by the general contractor, and as a result, the solicitation to bid was automatically generated without anyone double checking to ensure there really was a need.

This is meant to give you a basic overview of the mechanics behind picking apart bid documentation, and we hope we laid out a good foundation for you to start. At the very least, it’s worth finding a bid package just to practice on, without actually bidding on the job. That way when a project comes your way that you really do want, you’ll have enough confidence to move forward and win that bid.

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New Products

AlumiGraphics Foil Media
GPA has announced the addition of AlumiGraphics pressure sensitive aluminum foil media to their product offering for wide-format presses. AlumiGraphics goes where other materials would not dare, including asphalt, concrete and brick to transform overlooked spaces into cost-effective mass marketing platforms.

GPA offers this rugged material in two different finishes:
- AlumiGraphics SMOOTH has a non-glare, satin finish ideal for rigid wall surfaces such as concrete, tile and asphalt. It is popular for building wraps, column signage, parking garage wall graphics and exterior wall and façade graphics.
- AlumiGraphics GRIP has a slip-resistant, reflective finish for rigid walkway surfaces such as brick, stucco and concrete block. It is commonly used for sidewalk and walkway graphics; entrance and vestibule graphics; stairway graphics; signage for patios, courtyards and pools; parking space and curb markings; and for sports venue marketing. It is safe to walk on in both wet and dry conditions, and meets ASTM, CSIRO and British standards for slip resistance.

GPA offers AlumiGraphics in a variety of roll sizes, including 26.5 inches by 10 feet, 53 inches by 30 feet, 53 inches by 75 feet, and 53 inches by 150 feet in both the SMOOTH and GRIP finishes. AlumiGraphics SMOOTH is also compatible with offset presses; contact GPA for custom sheeting options.

For more information, visit MyPRINTResource.com/10005603

FineArt Baryta Satin
FineArt Baryta Satin is a baryta paper that provides exceptional results with a large color space and intensely deep blacks. High color density and brilliance ensure an outstanding sharpness of details to achieve high-resolution and vivid images for photography and reproductions. Features include:
- 300 gsm, alpha-cellulose paper with a barium-sulfate coated surface
- Warm tone, white satin gloss surface
- Large color space provides sharp details
- Acid-free and age resistant

It is available in the following sizes: 17-, 24-, 36-, and 44-inch by 39 foot rolls.

For more information, visit MyPRINTResource.com/10005756

Synaps OM Polyester Film
RTape Corp. has introduced Synaps OM to its growing portfolio of quality print media products. Synaps OM is a high-grade polyester film engineered for UV inkjet and latex printing platforms.

Synaps OM features exceptional durability, fast drying times and a UV resistant base stock. It is compatible with most UV and Latex printers. Synaps OM is available in 5, 8 and 10 mil wide-format rolls 36 inches by 100 feet and 54 inches by 100 feet. Custom rolls, including 14 mil are available upon request.

For more information, visit MyPRINTResource.com/10007581

RM-S
With the new Zünd router module RM-S, the S3 line of high-performance cutting systems becomes even more versatile and cost-effective. The RM-S is capable of processing materials such as aluminum, rigid plastics, composites or wood and delivering outstanding quality.

The new RM-S router module further underscores the Swiss cutting system manufacturer’s ability to offer its customers tool options that provide maximum flexibility in processing methods and material choices. The RM-S is an innovative, high-powered alternative to the proven Universal Routing Tool (URT). The outstanding performance characteristics of the RM-S stem from the use of a 1kW high-performance spindle, active air cooling, and an efficient dust-extraction system. With intelligent surface compensation, this routing option delivers exceptional precision in applications such as engraving acrylics, Dibond, and other challenging materials. The tool easily and effectively compensates for any variances in material thickness and produces top-quality results at precisely set cutting depths.

The RM-S processes a wide range of materials, including wood, plastic, composites, or aluminum at the highest quality levels and at thicknesses up to 25 mm / one inch. The tool operating at high RPM in conjunction with the robust build of the S3 line of cutters allows for exceptionally high processing speeds, which results in significantly greater throughput.

For more information, visit MyPRINTResource.com/10008759
VinylEfx Air

RTape Corp. has introduced VinylEfx Air specifically for the growing printable specialty media market. VinylEfx Air is a metallized vinyl with air-egress, bubble free technology suitable for a variety of wide format graphic applications. RTape’s air-egress technology allows novice installers to easily remove air bubbles from applications such as window graphics, point-of-purchase displays, posters and counter mats, and eliminates the need for wet applications. Its low tack acrylic adhesive removes cleanly from surfaces without the use of chemicals.

VinylEfx Air is printable using solvent, ecosolvent, latex, UV curable and screen-printing platforms. VinylEfx Air is available in 54-inch by 10 yard and 54-inch by 50 yard wide-format rolls in fine brush silver, matte silver, smooth silver and smooth gold decorative finishes. Custom roll sizes are available upon request.

For more information, visit MyPRINTResource.com/10007581

Kodak UV-Curable Clear Display Film

Kodak Alaris has introduced a new output media for the commercial display market. Kodak Professional UV-Curable Clear Display Film is a transparent material designed to create high-performance, photo-quality backlit displays on wide-format UV-curable inkjet printers.

The new product reinforces Kodak Alaris’ commitment to providing the highest quality media to the professional market and adds to a premium portfolio of UV-Curable display materials that includes Kodak Professional UV-Curable Display Paper and UV-Curable Display Film - Plus.

Kodak Professional UV-Curable Clear Display Film provides exceptional clarity, consistency and quality, offering a great value to retailers and brand marketers. Targeted for use on illuminators with built-in diffusers, it’s an affordable alternative to traditional display materials. It also creates a high-impact look that is ideal for point-of-sale and advertising, especially in high-traffic applications.

Kodak Professional UV-Curable Clear Display Film increases productivity of first-run print yields and eliminates the need for costly remakes. Its superior ink adhesion creates durable finished images that can withstand the rigors of transportation and installation.

Kodak Professional UV-Curable Clear Display Film is available in the US, Europe and Asia/Pacific region and in sizes up to 184.2 cm (72.5 inches) wide.

For more information, visit MyPRINTResource.com/10005105

SID Apollo UV 1312 Printer

Paradigm Imaging Group has announced the newest UV printer from SID Signs, the SID Apollo UV 1312 Printer.

The new SID Apollo UV 1312 printer was designed for printing the most commonly requested UV jobs. Prints on PS, PVC, MDF, Foam Board, Acrylics, Aluminum, Glass, etc. Its 51x49 inches (1,300 x 1,260 mm) print area and maximum media height of 1.6 inches (40 mm) makes the Apollo UV 1312 the perfect solution for print shops with limited floor space and want to expand their revenue opportunities by offering a broader range of printing applications. Starting at $34,900, the new SID Apollo 1312 UV printer lets you bring the latest UV technology to your business.

The flatbed printing accuracy is ensured by nine individual vacuum zones. Lower operating costs are built into the printer by the US manufactured LED UV lamp with a life span of 20,000 hours. The EPSON print head technology and UV curable inks provide optimal quality and outdoor durability for graphics.

The white ink option (spot, background or overprint layers) allows printing on a broad range of substrates. Easy to operate with PhotoPRINT RIP software included, the SID Apollo UV will become a new profit center for your business.

For more information, visit MyPRINTResource.com/10007112
**3mm INFINITY**

The Gilman Brothers Company has introduced a 3mm thickness for its INFINITY product. INFINITY 3mm offers all of the core advantages of the foam being 2.5x more dense compared to other foams; 3D forming; ready-to-print surface for use with solvent and UV inks. INFINITY 3mm is the only green, 100 percent recyclable product—making it the logical choice over any non eco friendly materials such as expanded PVC. It is also 100 percent manufactured in the USA using 100 percent USA produced raw materials, the American dream.

The ultra smooth INFINITY surface eliminates pre-production cleaning and preparation which increases printing speed and efficiency when screen or digital printing, and is a featured member of Gilman Brothers ColorOne White Point Management System. ColorOne’s patent pending for both the paper and styrene faced foamboards centers around the white point not changing under light sources such as UV, fluorescent and incandescent, truly making the printed colors pop and accurate when exact match of logos is vital.

INFINITY 3mm is available in the full range of widths, lengths and colors as other thicknesses of the INFINITY line.

For more information, visit MyPRINTResource.com/10005537

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**Metalnox PTS 8000-Single**

Metalnox has launched their latest heat press specifically for the EPSON F6070, Mutoh RJ-900X and other 44-inch dye sub printers.

The new Metalnox PTS 8000-Single is a 33x43-inch air operated pneumatic press which is larger than standard-sized 30x40-inches heat presses currently available from others. A user can have a complete dye sub system with printers and the new PTS 8000-Single for less than $20,000.

The Metalnox PTS 8000-Single is manufactured in the Americas and is available immediately at a list price of $11,995.

For more information, visit MyPRINTResource.com/10005683

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**Economy PVC-Free Window Cling Film**

Plastiprint’s new Economy PVC-Free window cling film is designed as an easily installable window cling film. The copolymer cling formula (micro adhesion suction technology) makes installation quick and easy without damaging the surface. The result is a durable film with a soft peel that mimics static cling vinyl with increased outdoor and cold-weather performance. It can be applied, removed, and re-applied multiple times. The Clear provides Optical Clarity making it an ideal film for high resolution graphics.

For more information, visit MyPRINTResource.com/10007248

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**HP Latex 110 Printer**

HP has introduced the new HP Latex 110 Printer, ideal for “print-preneur” customers seeking easy, affordable entry into large-format printing to jump-start a new printing business—whether from their home or a small, rented facility. Now available in the US and Canada, the 54-inch printer is ideal for low-volume production of indoor and outdoor large-format applications without a large upfront investment.

The HP Latex 110 Printer features:

- Sharp image quality on prints that come out completely dry for same-day delivery
- Professional, high-resolution prints up to 1200 x 1200 dpi with user-replaceable, six color ink cartridges for vivid colors
- Easy and intuitive operation with no specialist knowledge required
- Automatic maintenance and front-loading features, as well as online learning tools and software assistance
- A healthier work environment – unlike solvent inks, water-based HP Latex inks are odorless with no special ventilation required, features especially vital to print-preneurs operating from their home
- Access to free professional solutions like HP WallArt Software, Media Certification Program and the HP Latex Mobile app—now available in 12 languages

For more information, visit MyPRINTResource.com/10005824

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For more information, visit MyPRINTResource.com/10005824
HJ Trophies Expands Business with New VJ-426UF

“HJ is a high-production trophy shop known for our ability to get the job done. Always looking for ways to expand our business, we wanted a printer that was versatile and reliable for added application possibilities. After researching our options, we decided on the Valuejet 426UF. Now we print on acrylic, wood and metal plus a variety of specialty items both in and out of the trophy realm. We continue to find new applications and products to offer our current customers and are learning ways to build revenue and increase profit with new customers. It’s been a valuable addition to our shop. I’d recommend the VJ426UF to anyone who is looking for ways to grow their business.”

Eric DeWolf – Owner  HJ Trophies & Awards  Phoenix, Arizona

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