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GRAPHICS|PRO CONTENT

VOLUME 38

December 2023

NUMBER 3

FEATURES

SPECIAL SECTION



8

WRAPS TRAINING & CERTIFICATIONS

SIGNAGE & PRINTING

10

WHOLESALE INTERIOR SIGNAGE AND YOU

Marking the journey from the inside out — from wayfinding to ADA-compliant signage

By JD Hamilton

APPAREL DECORATING

22

SOFTWARE TO SUBSTRATE

The making of Putterhead's 30th anniversary shirt

By Lon Winters

28

TIME TO UPDATE YOUR HEADWEAR

Exploring the trends and opportunities in the decorated headwear market

By Adam Mccauley

34

STITCH SOLUTIONS

Effective and proven sales strategies

By Jennifer Cox

AWARDS & CUSTOMIZATION

36

WORKING WITH WOOD

A primer on the best types of wood for each project and how to use them to their fullest potential

By John Morman

40

NEW TRENDS IN CORPORATE GIFTING MEAN HIGHER PROFITS

In a post-pandemic world, corporate awards and gifts are higher quality and longer-lasting

By Kristine Shreve

BUSINESS STRATEGIES

46

6 KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF AN INTENTIONAL LEADER

How to reach business goals through intentional effort

By Jim Mathis

48

ELIMINATING DISTRACTIONS

A guide for staying laser-focused in business and management

By Paul Ingle

52

THE DIGITAL EYE

New methods for duplicating and replacing content

By Stephen Romaniello

58

MAKING SHOP MOVES

Moving forward with the next in-house process

By Howard Potter



28



40



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VOLUME 38

December 2023

NUMBER 3

THE GUIDE

60

VERIFIED SUPPLIERS

The 2023 GRAPHICS PRO Guide features verified suppliers from across the industry who will help you take your business to the next level.

60

COLUMNS

6

FULL CIRCLE

An introduction to the industry

By Elizabeth Manning

DEPARTMENTS

56

PRODUCT HIGHLIGHTS

94

NEW PRODUCTS

95

AD INDEX

92

MARKETPLACE

96

WEB EXCLUSIVES



58

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SETTING NEW STANDARDS

Full Circle



Elizabeth Manning is the director of content at Cahaba Media Group. She can be reached at emanning@cahabamedia.com.

It's funny how often in life things come back around to you. I'm currently experiencing a full-circle moment myself—for most of my childhood, my father owned a small signage business called Manning Graphics. With two parents who worked full time, many of my weekends were spent following my dad around his shop, peppering him with questions about each part of the process, watching him design signs in CorelDraw, and looking on with wonder as Rick, the shop's expert neon bender, worked on the current project at hand. I can still smell vinyl coming off the wide-format printer.

Let me back up a bit and introduce myself. I'm Elizabeth, director of content for Cahaba Media Group (CMG). In August of this year, CMG completed the acquisition of GRAPHICS PRO from

National Business Media, and I moved into an interim role leading the brand. It's been a whirlwind of a few months with GP, but we're excited about the future of this brand and the team that joined our company with the acquisition — both of which exemplify some of the characteristics we value most in our company: hard work, being adaptable, and remaining dedicated to the customer. For us, that's our readers and advertisers.

And as I write this column for our December issue, I find myself thinking about my dad and the challenges he (and my mother) faced in business — how to navigate management problems, maintaining a laser focus on the shop's finances, and the best way to market to potential customers, to name a few.

We hope to continue providing answers to these common obstacles and more, just as GP has done for years. We welcome your feedback on how we can improve the content we publish — email us at gpeditorial@cahabamedia.com to share your thoughts. For those of you I've already met, thank you for the warm welcome to the industry. For those I haven't, I hope to speak with you soon — or meet you in person at GPX or another industry event in 2024!



Remembering Tony Kindlespire

It's with great sorrow that I have this additional news to share — CMG and former NBM team members are mourning the loss of Tony Kindlespire, former editor of Sign & Digital Graphics and WRAPS and managing editor of RV PRO magazine. Tony passed away unexpectedly in late October, and is survived by his two daughters, Cassidy and Shannon, whom he loved dearly and was always quick to share stories about. We will miss Tony and his wonderful personality so much and are thinking of his family and all those who knew him. If you have stories or memories you'd like to share about Tony, we'd love to hear them. A celebration of life event was held by the Left Hand Artist Group (one of Tony's long-term hobbies and an organization he was extremely fond of) on Nov. 25.



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Wraps Training & Certifications



PPF Course trainer Narayan Andrews demonstrates a key installation technique which class attendees will learn and practice with hands-on training. Image courtesy of Avery Dennison.

Keeping up in a constantly evolving industry like wraps installation can be a tough task, especially if you don't have a lot of time to fit extended training into your schedule. It can be difficult to track down the educational resources you need for things like certifications and training. The best way to find what you're looking for is to contact resources directly to determine when and where classes might be taking place.

"Installers are still looking for manufacturers and industry leaders to continue to be a source of information and training in a post COVID-19 business environment," says Destiny Rotuno, project manager for Avery Dennison Graphics Solutions. "We recommend installers take advantage of every learning opportunity possible. Look for product and installation training that also includes adapting business practices, leading a team, keeping skills sharp, and staying vigilant with federal and state guidelines. Sign up for webinars, watch the videos, and ask questions to manufacturers and fellow installers. We know this industry will overcome the current challenges, and we encourage everyone to be prepared for what lies ahead."

Find a list of resources for wraps training in 2024 at right.



Supreme Wrapping Film and CWI Exam instructors Justin Pate and Blake Madsen demonstrate the artistry and installation skills attendees will master during their course experience. Image courtesy of Avery Dennison.



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WHOLESALE INTERIOR SIGNAGE AND YOU

*Marking the journey from the inside out —
from wayfinding to ADA-compliant signage*

BY JD HAMILTON



James Dean Hamilton has more than 30 years of experience in the sign industry, with a vast knowledge of everything signage, marketing, and

workflow management. His website is www.jamesdean130.com and he can be reached at jd@jamesdeanjd.com.

For many new to the interior sign world, the mere mention of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) or wayfinding may as well be Greek. The whole checklist of requirements on the surface can appear overwhelming, let alone all the different construction types available today. For most of us, the manufacturing of these types of signs is outside our wheelhouse and beyond our abilities to create in-house.

These types of signs are not only mandatory by building codes but have a significant impact on an organization's branding and



Environmental graphic designer Lauren Stern's drawing of initial concept for an interior sign program and a "mood board" showing reference of design cues. (Drawing courtesy of Lauren Stern, Studio 618, www.studio618design.com)



Completion photo of the room sign from the concept drawing. Manufactured by Gelberg Signs, featuring a laser-cut acrylic substrate that is first surface painted. Wood laminate face with applied Romark and raster Braille. (Photo courtesy of Studio 618)



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Completion photos of various signs for the sign program involved with the project. (Photo courtesy of Studio 618)

environmental-themed graphics, so you get an idea of the size and profit potential of tapping into this market.

Your existing customers likely already have a need, and new customers will also have that same potential. Yet a lot of shops pass on the opportunity largely due to a lack of knowledge and understanding. That is where having a valuable wholesale partner for interior architectural signage enters the picture.

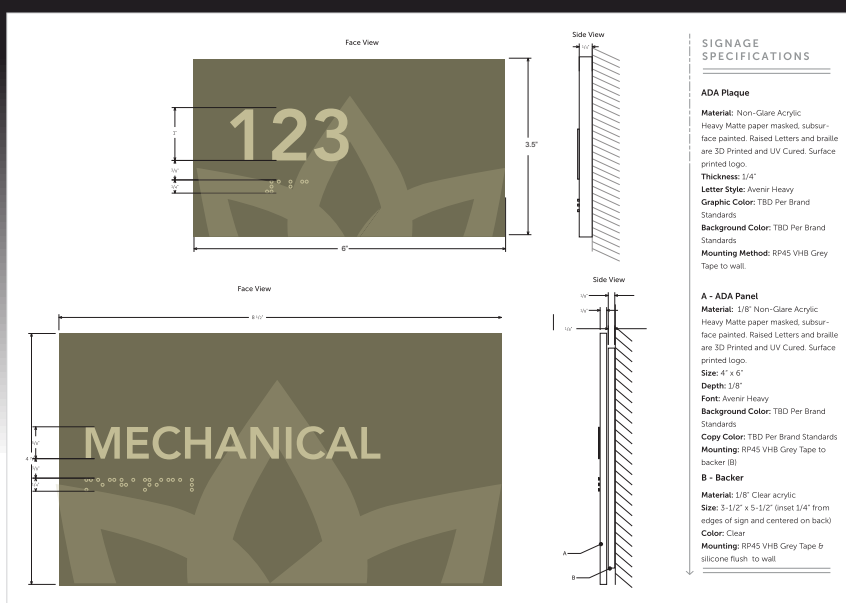
Finding your way

Don't stop at the ADA-compliant code sign when your customer comes in asking for help. If the request is for something large like a school, office building, or multifamily project, don't forget to ask about the wayfinding! Your imagination is the limit (well, your client's budget may have some constraints).

Most of this type of interior work revolves around new construction or remodeling. This is the perfect time to be talking about the impact of signage and graphics to complement that construction investment, and, when appropriate, help announce and promote your client's brand.



A wayfinding sign as part of the sign program, which features the same finishes as the code compliant signage. In this case, the client preferred the raised copy to match other signs. (Photo courtesy of Studio 618)



Typical ADA shop drawing with callouts and specifications. Your client may request a similar type of drawing for approval and your wholesaler should be able to assist with this on a large project. (Drawing provided by James Dean 130)



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Most wayfinding signage consists of direction-oriented signs. In most projects, these do not have to be fabricated with raised copy and Braille. Double-check with specific local ordinances for code-related signage to confirm. Often, your wholesale contact may have already done work in the area of your project and can advise accordingly.

This is a prime upsell to tie the ADA sign family types with branded type, colors, and background design into wayfinding graphics. This could include directories, directionals, rules, and amenities signage. Your client may already have a message schedule or list asking for these signs in addition to the ADA-compliant signage.

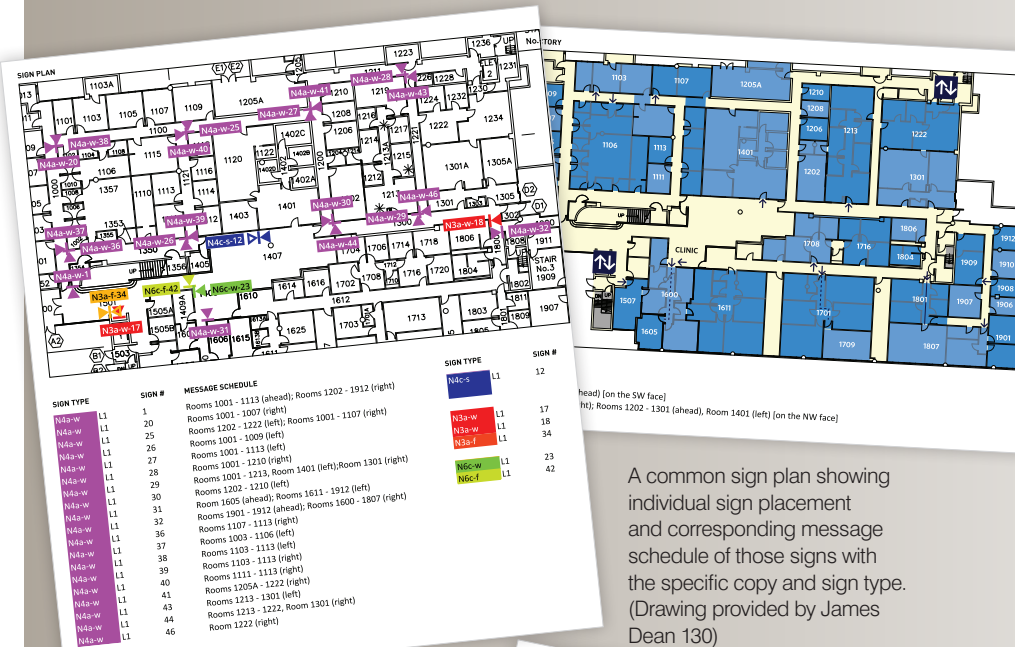
If you are in a competitive quoting situation with other companies, remember this: if you quote your wayfinding signs with raised copy and Braille, you could outbid yourself with a competitor that prices flat backgrounds and cut vinyl.

Since most wholesale companies charge using a square-inch formula for ADA signs, the price will differ. For example, on a large directory or directional sign, the increased costs can be significant. For some clients not concerned with budgets and an eye for detail, they may want to keep the signage consistent with raised copy and Braille. It's your job to point out the difference and present the best possible options.

This is a great opportunity to bring some of an overall project in-house, as most shops can handle the simpler fabrication of wayfinding signs and are confident printing and installing wall coverings and glass-partition vinyl graphics. If you are not comfortable or confident, you can bet your wholesaler can help produce these graphics or refer you to someone else that can in the case of vinyl graphics and wall coverings.

If the whole interior architectural world seems a little overwhelming from a design standpoint, don't discount reaching out to an environmental graphic designer. Contact your local chapter of The Society of Experiential Graphic Design for contacts or ask to see samples of projects you like from your wholesaler and ask if they could refer you to a designer.

When complete, all of this is work is seamlessly incorporated into creating the



A common sign plan showing individual sign placement and corresponding message schedule of those signs with the specific copy and sign type. (Drawing provided by James Dean 130)

Orientation Map: Building Floor

Definition and Intent

Orientation maps graphically display the layout of the building, showing the location of all rooms, departments, and facilities. This sign is used to provide a visual overview of the building layout and to provide a visual overview of the building layout and to provide a visual overview of the building layout.

Policy

Orientation maps are used to provide a visual overview of the building layout and to provide a visual overview of the building layout and to provide a visual overview of the building layout.

Design Specification

Materials: Black vinyl 3/16" (1/8") thick. Backing: Bright white vinyl characters.

Typelines

Letter type: Whitney Sansbold. Letter height: 25 mm (1" - 38 mm (1.5").

Mounting

Wall-mounted as per N4a sign. Identification sign: mounting, detail.

Locations

Signs to be located in the building layout and to provide a visual overview of the building layout and to provide a visual overview of the building layout.

Position

Signs to be located in the building layout and to provide a visual overview of the building layout and to provide a visual overview of the building layout.

Definition and Intent

These signs provide a visual overview of the building layout and to provide a visual overview of the building layout and to provide a visual overview of the building layout.

Policy

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Position

Signs to be located in the building layout and to provide a visual overview of the building layout and to provide a visual overview of the building layout.

Drawings and specifications of a simple wayfinding system commonly found in a medical or educational facility. Note that most wayfinding of this type does not require raised copy and Braille unless noted by a unique local ordinance stating so or if the client really wants the exact finish as ADA-required signs in the program. (Drawing provided by James Dean 130)

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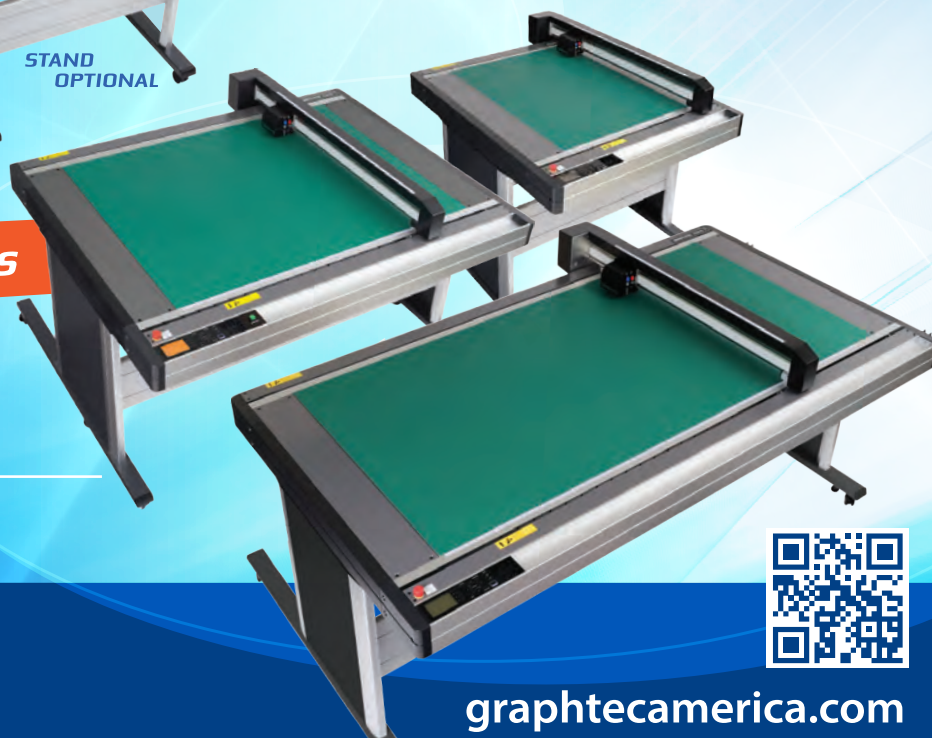
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Finished photos of a colorful interior sign system. Project consists of ADA-compliant, non-glare clear acrylic with second surface printing and applied numbers and raster beads. (Photos courtesy of Park Place Sign Systems)

overall interior environmental graphics package. If you're tech-savvy, the potential for digital displays and digital directories also exists.

On most signage programs, the scope of work for a complete interior sign project can easily rival the overall exterior sign budget. There is a lot of potential to take advantage of with as much or as little involvement as you care to get into in this arena.

The ABCs of ADA

Entire volumes of books have been devoted to ADA compliance, and many signage specific have been published for further reference. Bottom line, there is an overall benchmark of compliance for ADA signs and then there are additional requirements dictated per state and even individual municipalities.

Some of this can be clarified by zoning officials, but a good wholesaler will have a great deal of experience and can become an instrumental partner in navigating these waters.

As with working with wholesalers for exterior signage, your interior contacts



These ADA-compliant signs are painted first surface with a non-glare paint and feature a separate painted backer and logo applique, as well as applied numbers, copy, and raster beads. (Photo courtesy of Park Place Sign Systems)

are providing more than just product, so be open and willing to ask for assistance. Remember, they also want the experience of working together to be positive and profitable so that you return for your next project.

There are two primary types of ADA signage: integral and additive. Integral is the manufacturing process of creating the raised lettering and Braille by removing the material in the substrate — some refer to it as subtractive production. This is achieved by exposing a special PETG plastic product to UV light, which melts the substrate background, or CNC routing or sandblasting away the background in other substrates. In the case of thermoforming, this is done by pressing acrylic into a mold to recess the background, leaving copy and Braille raised.

There are two common additive processes. The first is traditional-cut letters and pictograms applied to a substrate with strong VHB tape and having the Braille



Industrial look with a natural feel is shown in this example of a wood laminate on 1/8" acrylic for the backer and 1/8" acrylic painted first surface and UV-printed text and Braille for the face panel. (Photo courtesy of Park Place Sign Systems)

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Interior location sign featuring dimension and multiple materials, including bushed laminate on the backer substrate; 1/4"-thick P-95 non-glare face plate with applied Romark copy and raster bead Braille. Assembles with brushed stainless steel standoffs. (Photo courtesy of Park Place Sign Systems)

beads adhered to CNC-routed half circles in the substrate to accept the bead.

The second is a relatively new process to the market and is what is sometimes referred to as 2.5D additive printing. This utilizes the technology of flatbed UV printing to print dimensional, raised copy

and Braille to an appropriate substrate.

These are all ADA-compliant, so the big question is why so many options? Cost, durability, frames, and decorative options come into play. For example, the photopolymer product is very popular in the education market. The signs are integral

in construction, making it very difficult for a bored student left in the hallway to pick the lettering and Braille off. However, since the photopolymer process uses UV light to subtract the background, these signs can literally melt in direct sunlight in exterior applications.

There are many other reasons one product is preferred over others. In new building construction, an architect's specification and drawing sheets are referred to as preferred construction and a project and may also call out the need for specific framing systems.

This is where your wholesale partner can provide years of experience in helping you navigate the choices and make educated and experienced recommendations. That may sometimes involve "substitutions" in those architect's specifications. Some of those have been copied and pasted for decades and were written well before some of the technology used today was even invented.

Your wholesaler should easily be able to provide you with shop drawings and product samples to propose your value-engineered substitutions to called-out



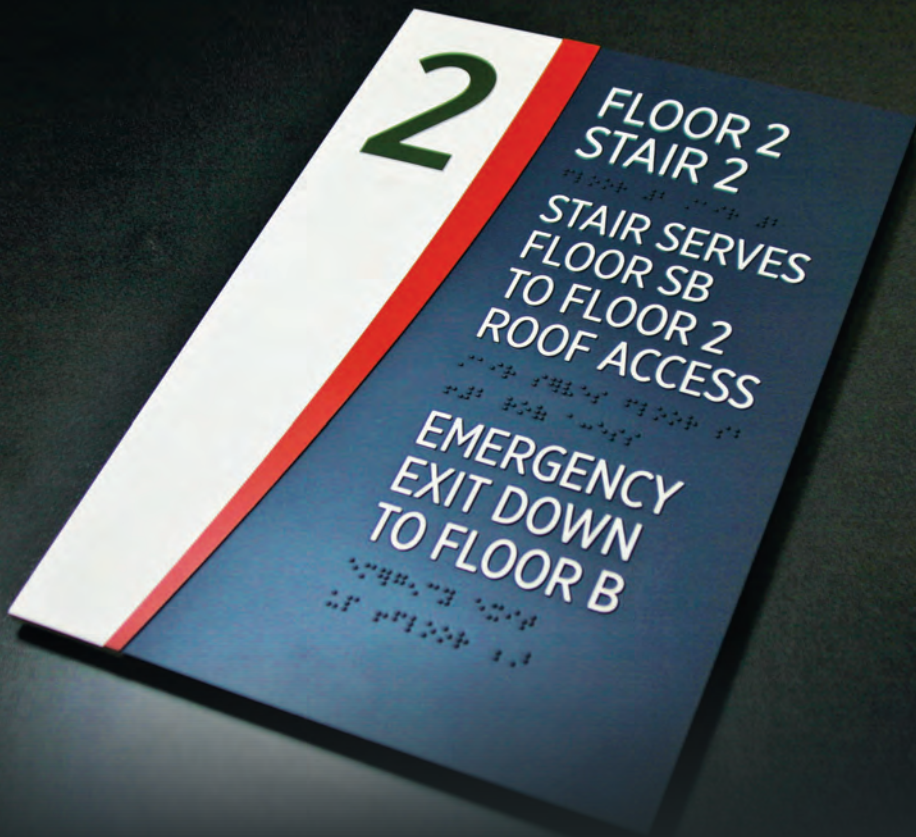
Clean, modern design for a restroom sign. It's a photopolymer sign leaving raised copy and Braille, painted first surface with non-glare paint. Copy and pictograph is "tipped," meaning white ribbon material is thermo-pressed on the raised surface. Photopolymer has been the standard for schools for decades. (Photo courtesy of Park Place Sign Systems)

specifications and drawings. For example, that same school mentioned earlier may accept thermoformed acrylic for exterior ADA signage over the specified acid etched magnesium or zinc for exterior applications. It's just as durable, cleaner for the environment, and often less expensive; it may very well be an alternative to the interior as well. Thermoformed signs were not around at the time the specifications were written. Your wholesaler has likely seen it all and is glad to pass on those learning experiences.

Show me more

To further explore both the products and services a good wholesaler can provide, I spoke with Bill Baker, president of Park Place Sign Systems Inc. in Hannibal, Missouri.

"A good deal of our most successful customers knew very little about ADA signage or of the huge potential of the interior architectural signage market initially.

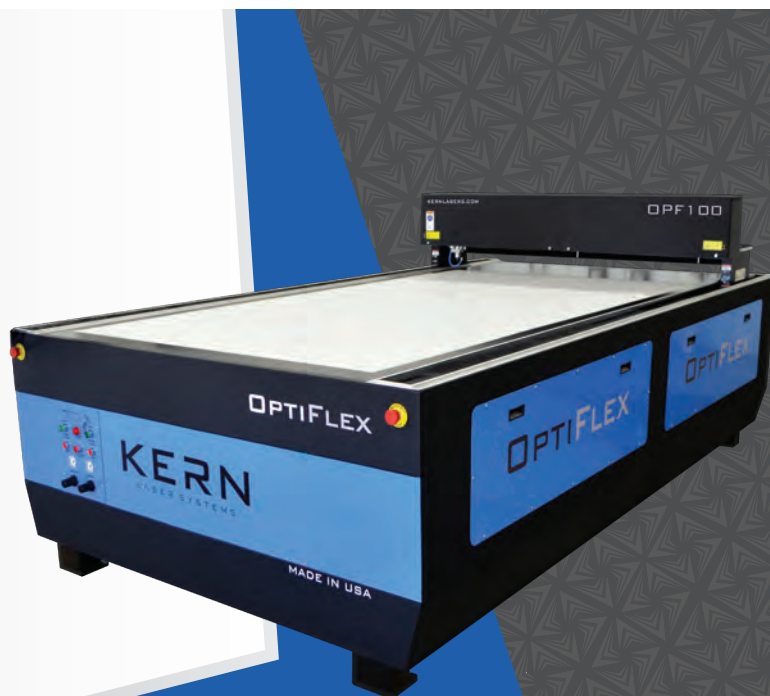


A typical stairway sign. By code these signs are large and must have raised copy and Braille. These are often costly because of this, though some of these locations are rarely in public view. (Photo courtesy of Park Place Sign Systems)



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Example of an industrial-looking backer made of gold anodized decorative-cut metal and a second-surface painted face plate with UV-printed text and Braille with applied applique. (Photo courtesy of Park Place Sign Systems)



Note that directory signs are wayfinding in nature and do not usually need to include raised copy and Braille. Trust your wholesaler to advise you, price appropriately, and carry the components and finishes throughout the interior signage program (Photo courtesy of Park Place Sign Systems)

Once they got a few projects under their belt, it became second nature to tie the interior program to the exterior of the project they were initially asked to quote," Baker says.

Baker and his team accomplish this by educating their customers on ADA basics. "Interior signage can be the first time our customers are exposed to architectural

specifications and drawings, floor plans, and sign schedules. It can be a little overwhelming, but we can help them navigate through the paperwork and show examples of similar projects that utilize many of the sign types and construction options we offer at Park Place," he says. Baker was quick to add that legitimate wholesale manufacturers do not compete

with their clients by directly bidding on projects to an end user.

There are many advantages to using the experience of vetted wholesalers for companies entering the interior market. A wholesaler should be very familiar with not only all the products they provide, but all products and trends in the industry and be confident to review project specifications and provide signage that meets the end customer's needs. And, when necessary, provide value-added suggestions that lower costs and possibly speed production without compromising the look and functionality of the sign products.

That experience can also be helpful in assisting with installation questions that involve mounting methods, heights, and locations to provide a completely code-compliant application.

"When drawings and specifications are provided for pricing, we carefully review and quickly provide a quotation that meets the project requirements at a competitive price. When a quote becomes an order, we again review the project and request any needed info to begin production. A firm delivery date is assigned at the time of final approval and sign-off from



our customer. We then work closely with our customers to provide products when needed to meet scheduled installation dates. If by any chance a problem occurs, we will do whatever is necessary to correct the situation and stand behind our products with a full five-year warranty,” Baker says.

Interior projects do not require freight for shipping. Most product ships in easy-to-handle boxes. A good wholesaler likely has installation experience, and they will have products clearly marked, packed in a logical manner, and ready to go out of the box at the jobsite.

Ask to have one packing slip per box and you can be confident to take the package direct to the project site or drop-shipped to your installation team. Confirm with the wholesaler to have the sign prepared with double-stick tape and they will take care of that as well, shaving hours of shop time to cut, apply, and repack. You don’t want to have that process done in the field by your installers.

You control as little or as much of the process as you care to be involved in. While most companies will have a little wiggle room to give a rush, don’t bank that it can be done and prepare for a backup with temp signs if building occupancy inspections are needed by your client. Good wholesalers can often help with temp solutions.

The interior architectural signage has evolved and grown. It is an integral part of the overall environmental graphics of a building. ADA is a great building block to create a consistent and themed foundation. Creating a partnership with a trusted wholesaler can eliminate much of the learning curve. Remember, the goal is to create a win-win situation on your first project and each one after that. **GP**

Here are simple wayfinding examples.

These signs are not always mandatory by code and do not require raised copy and Braille. They are significant in wayfinding and offer a great opportunity to upsell. Use the same materials, colors, and fonts and consistent-looking sign program. (Photos courtesy of Park Place Sign Systems)

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The Making of Putterhead's 30th Anniversary Shirt

Inside the process, from design to completion, for a Colorado volleyball tournament shirt



At 21 years old, Lon Winters was the production manager for Ocean Pacific and started his 30+ year career reclaiming screens. His companies have won 50+ garment decorating awards and honors, and he's served 15+ years as an honorary Golden Image Judge, published hundreds of articles and columns, led various industry seminars and workshops, and consulted on projects large and small. He's the president and founder of Colorado-based Graphic Elephants (www.graphicelephants.com), an international consulting firm and apparel decoration studio specializing in screen printing

technical advances, plant design, layout, troubleshooting, productivity, quality analysis and complete apparel decorating solutions. He was inducted into the Academy of Screen Printing Technology in 2013 and is recognized for his contribution to the graphic printing industry.

Started in 1994, Putterhead remained a small, locally-run doubles volleyball tournament in Colorado for nearly two decades. In 2003, the Breckenridge Parks and Recreation Department asked Volleyball of The Rockies (VOTR), a Denver volleyball league organizer and tournament event management group, to assist with the event. The now three-day tournament has grown from a little more than 50 teams into one of Colorado's largest volleyball events with 20 different divisions and approaching 1,000 teams in attendance.

Each year, players take over Summit County with games including Silverthorne, Frisco, and, of course, our favorite, Breckenridge. The Summit County altitude is 9,600 feet. You had better be in shape. If you have never competed in a sporting event in the mountains, you are in for a shock. Top that off with awesome player parties at sponsors' establishments on Friday and Saturday nights, and you're in for one heck of a weekend. Just under an hour and a half from Denver and with super affordable lodging options, the Putterhead Volleyball Tournament is a perfect choice to escape the city and enjoy cool mountain air for the weekend. As a little bonus, each player gets a Putterhead event T-shirt. These coveted shirts have now become collectible items. Next year will mark 30 years for the tournament and, believe it or not, there are a number of volleyball enthusiasts who own every shirt.

For nearly three decades, we have created every one of the designs for Putterhead. Many were quite simple — some not so much. Many years ago, we wrote about the cartoon caricature animals we created for the tournament. Those days are past. They're too



This year's T-shirt design for the Putterhead Volleyball Tournament.

corny; new management, don't ya know? This year the organizers were looking for something new. They always are.

Our contact provided us zero reference and direction to what they were looking for in this year's T-shirt. "You know, do something cool!" was the directive. This year, the client would be treated to a totem multidirectional resort sign look that we would use to step up the game for them. You see these signs at the beach and, of course, the snow ski resorts. That would work perfectly with the multiple cities Putterhead takes place in.

In this day of the internet, we were able to find numerous examples of different sign styles for reference. We used a few basic shapes we liked that we placed into Adobe Illustrator and traced. Additional basic objects were created using the



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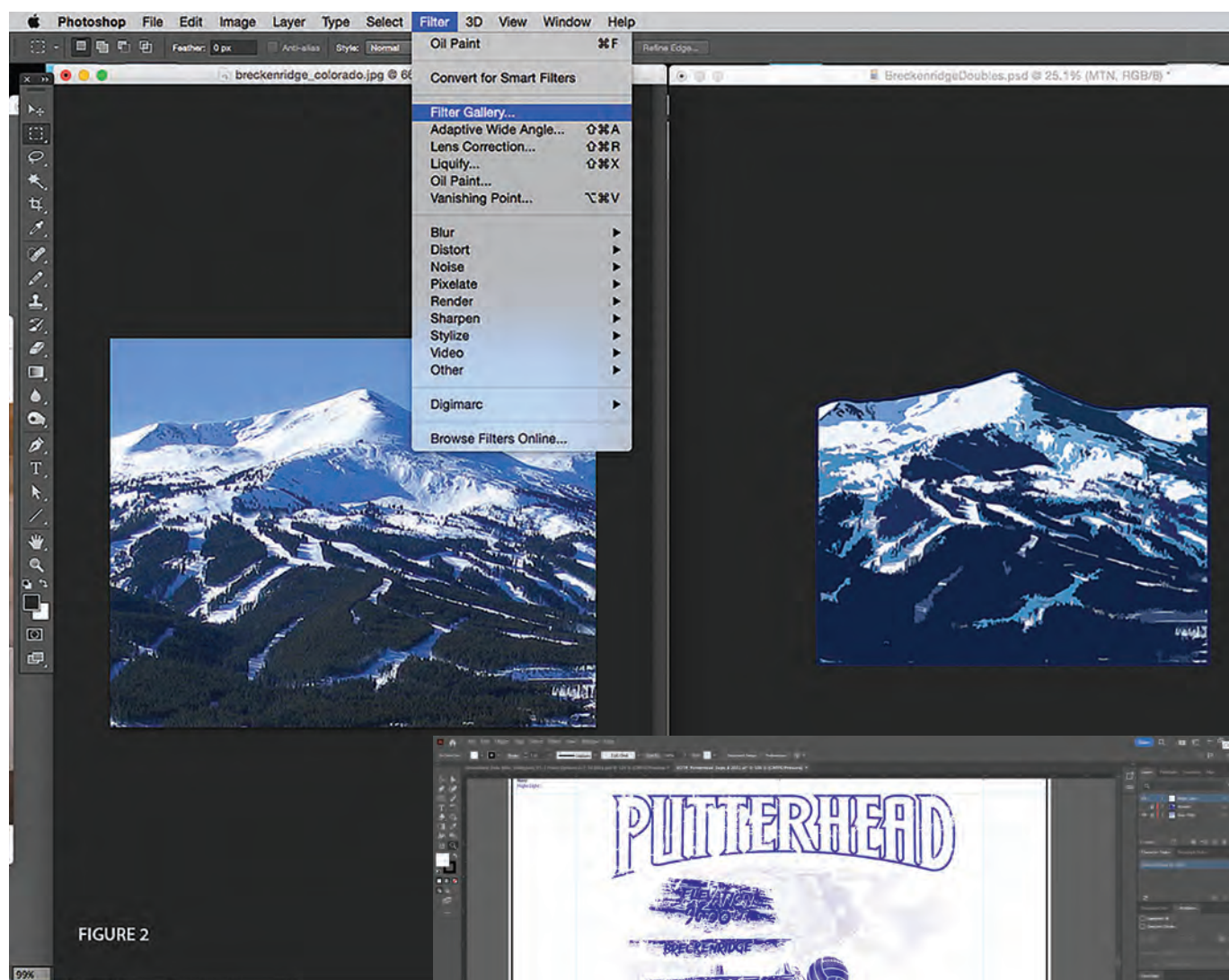
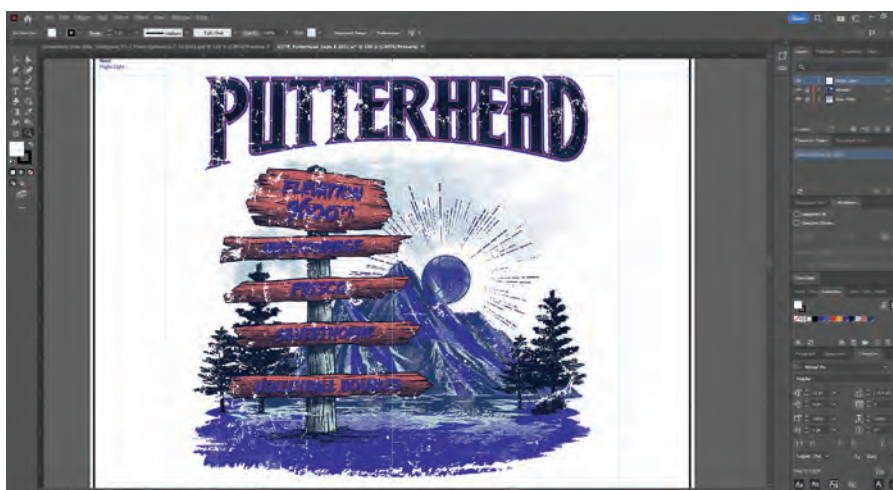
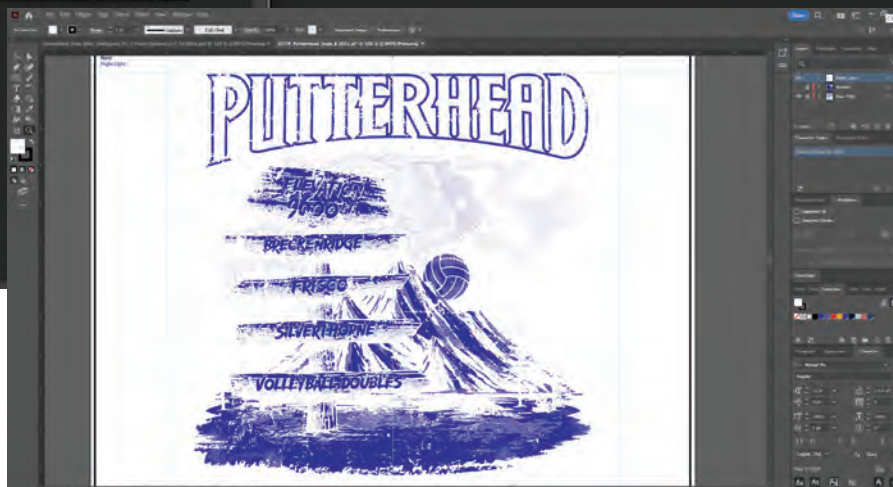


FIGURE 2

Rectangle Tool, and a stroke was applied to them to help break up the spacing for what will be the final outcome. To create a little more interest, we added wooden texture. This also was found in various versions online. Since the event is primarily held in Breckenridge, what better way to display than to add a scenic image of the area. This image was brought into Photoshop for some treatment to give it an illustrative look for the final design by selecting the Filter menu. We used the Cutout filter to simplify the image, then cropped and scaled to fit into the layout behind the signage we built in Illustrator.

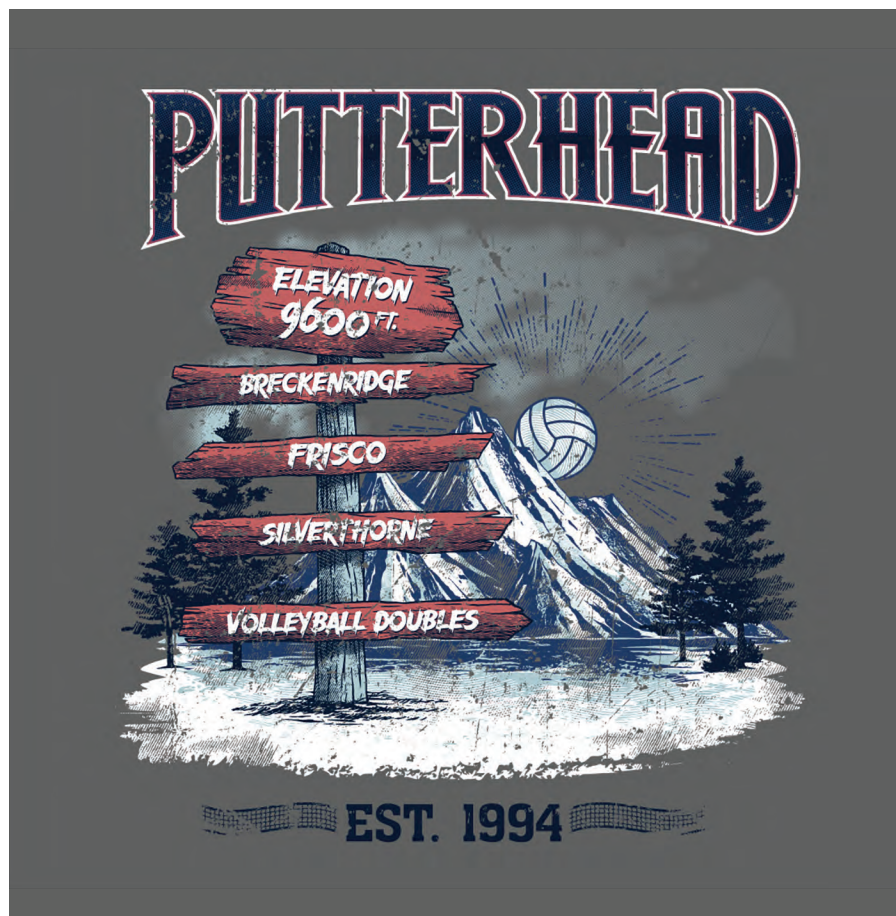
We placed vector objects to help with the design structure. The treated images from Photoshop were placed within this file for preview only so the other design elements could be added in the right places. We created some simple vector graphics to be



Imagination
is more
important than
knowledge.
- Albert Einstein

used for the background and then they were put in behind the comp.

After most of the elements had been created, we then brought all the vector images over to Photoshop as Smart Objects. We added some effects for the wood grain. Finally, we created the type and adjusted the shapes accordingly to fit where it belonged. We then moved to the separation process. We used Channels for



The new *heavyweight hoodie*

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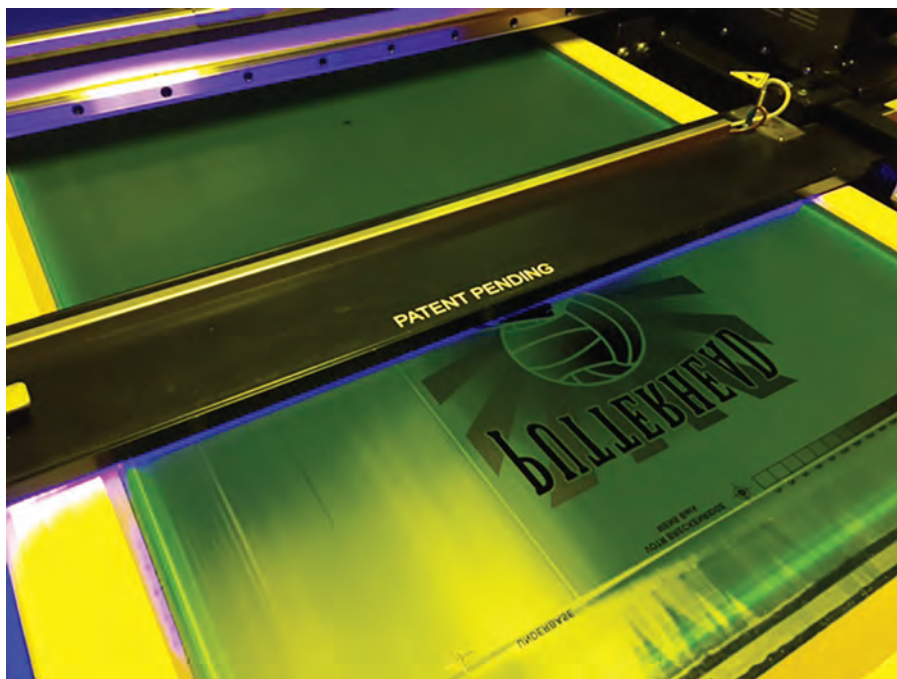
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- Jim Morrison, The Doors

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Design: Putterhead 2022

Style: Assorted

T-Shirt Color: Grays and Whites

Ink Colors: ☐ White ☒ Navy ☐ Royal ☐ Lt Blue ☐ Red ☐ Lt Gray

FRONT PLACEMENT

10.5" Wide

BACK PLACEMENT

Standard Size

PRIZES

FRONT

BACK

FRONT



our final output to screen and for direct control over halftones as they applied. We extracted each color in the design and applied it to a Channel of its own. Then we designated that color in the Swatch option of each individual channel. After all colors had been assigned their own channel, we went to output, where we applied our 55 lpi (lines per inch) half-tone frequency, twenty-two-and-a-half-degree angle, and a round shape via the Random Image Processor (RIP) for computer to screen (CTS).

The screens were imaged and exposed on N-272 tpi (threads per inch) at 45 N/cm² for a soft, smooth hand and drape. For enough opacity, the white printer would go on a N-166 with the same tension and print first in the rotation followed by a flash and cool. We printed the balance wet on wet. Because of the higher tension, our off-contact distance would only 80/1000 of an inch. The inks would be easy, for a change. We opted for ready-for-use (RFU) inks right off the shelf.

The print order was straightforward as well. We had a black key line, so we printed that last. The separations were all but registered and very little ink was deposited, so flashing was not necessary. Common print order rules were applied. Lightest to darkest and least coverage to most. We were able to use all the same squeegees and flood bars, all set with our fifteen-degree standard angle, light pressure, rapid stroke speed, and all 65/90/65 triples.

The print set up quickly and ran like the wind. We ran the job at a smoking pace — too bad the order was for only 1,000 shirts. The customer was happy and the tournament was a success. The walking billboards looked great. We wish all jobs came together this well. **GP**

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Time to Update Your Headwear

Exploring the trends and opportunities in the decorated headwear market

BY ADAM MCCAULEY

Boonie hat with flat embroidery stitched on the front for the Bay City Tall Ships Festival.



Adam McCauley is the co-owner of Sandlot Sports in Saginaw, Michigan, a custom screen printing, embroidery, and promotional company that specializes in sportswear, team uniforms, corporate workwear, and event T-shirts.

Is it time to update your headwear? Surely you aren't just offering an old, stiff, high-profile cap with some lazy clipart embroidered on the front ... are you? Hats are carving up the competition in the custom apparel categories this year. While decorating apparel has long been considered artistic expression on T-shirts and hoodies, hats have never been easier to creatively decorate.

In the realm of corporate and team sales, the right merchandise can make a world of difference. Among the options available, hats stand out as versatile, functional, and fashionable accessories that hold immense potential in marketing and branding strategies.

While we have been stitching logos on caps for years, this season has seen our clients open to and considering expanding their creative horizons. Retail has always been ahead of the curve when it comes to unique decoration applications, but with the increased availability of those decorations, shops like ours are able to affordably provide unique looks for lower quantities.

In 2023, applying custom patches has continued to be a leading trend for headwear decoration. Whether they are leather, faux leather, woven, embroidered, or PVC, patches have been an amazing way to decorate your team or corporate hats.

One of the most wonderful things about all these options is that not only can patches be added with embroidery, but these all have a heat-applied option as well. Let's look at some of the most popular styles and techniques we're using to help promote brands, events, teams, and communities through custom headwear.



On-field headwear

On-field headwear consists of a lot of six-panel caps. Usually, they are some kind of performance polyester or stretch fabric with either a snapback or a flex-fit (or whatever clever name the brand calls it) headband.

With lighter fabrics and more breathability, you'll see more and more sports teams wear these at game time. The six-panel will have a seam down the middle of the front, but this won't affect most decorations.

The nice thing about decorating the on-field caps is that they are commonly decorated with large, loud, and bright logos. This makes embroidery one of the easiest techniques. However, flat embroidery is a little boring. Often, we encourage customers to add some more depth



Custom woven tags stitched on the cuff and bottom of beanies with the customer's corporate logo.

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Woven patch with merrow edge on the bottom of a six-panel trucker cap.



PVC patch stitched onto the front of a trucker cap. You can see the sew channel around the edge to hide the stitching. This is also available to simply heat apply.



These caps are rugged outdoor waxed hats. One company elected to use the etched leather patch, while the other chose the 3D embroidered. Both were sewn on.



to their logos by offering 3D puff embroidery. We accomplish this by adding 3mm or 6mm foam under the logos. This creates a professional, on-field look that mimics Major League Baseball caps. While 3mm is more common, the right logo can look awesome with 6mm.

Using 3D puff isn't the only way to accentuate your team's logos or mascot. If you don't have an embroidery machine at your disposal, there are plenty of other decoration techniques to highlight your on-field caps, like PVC patches, 3D flex-style, or polypress patches. Each style gives a multidimensional look while allowing multiple colors and great resistance to the outside elements.

The bonus is that they can be permanently adhered using only your heat press. Making sure you have the proper hat press and accessories will benefit your applications tremendously. Using bottom

heat is a best practice, especially when those caps have performance fabrics, which may make them a little more susceptible to scorch marks if the top heat is too high.

Mesh-back headwear

In most cases, these are better known as trucker caps. They don't seem to be going away anytime soon. They are built with a lot of different fabrics. You'll see performance fabrics, twill, cotton fabrics, wool, and even foam on the front of these trucker caps.

The backs may be snapback, flex-fit, or even sized. This style is doing so well because it's a comfortable, lightweight piece that lends itself extremely well to loads of decoration styles. It's used for corporate headwear, promotional headwear, team

headwear, and retail headwear.

The most popular technique has come in the shape of patches. Using a patch to decorate a trucker cap adds far more value to the piece than just your typical embroidery. While embroidery clearly will do the trick with some customers, most clients want the added value of riding the trend of custom patches.

The woven patches can allow you to create patches with smaller type lettering, words, and details. They look great, and you can really get creative with the finished product. They also allow you to create a smaller patch, which you can apply to a more unique location, such as the lower side front, the back above the snapbacks or on the side. Leather and embroidered patches are perfect for trucker caps as well.



"FlexStyle" patch heat-applied to the trucker cap. This added dimension while maintaining all the smooth detail of the logo.

Adding a laser-engraved leather patch gives your logo an authentic, rustic look.

The nice thing about adding patches to your caps is that in most instances, you can use either heat-applied backing or stitching to apply them. While patches add a ton of value and style to the trucker hats, let's not forget that we can also screen print, use transfers, sublimation, or even use direct-to-film printing (DTF) on your hats, especially on the foam-front caps. This will keep costs lower for your clients and still give them a unique hat.

Here's a pro tip: when choosing screen-printing, DTF, sublimation or any other form of heat-applied graphics (with the exception of patches), look for a five-panel cap versus a six-panel cap. This will prevent you from having a seam running under the graphic you're trying to apply.

Beanies

Once fall hits, it's essentially beanie season. There are so many options for beanies — fleece, microfleece, performance,

recycled, cotton, wool, slouch, cuff, and no cuff — just to name a few. You can really find a lot of styles that could fit your clients' needs and wants. Just like on-field caps and truckers, beanies can be decorated using multiple techniques.

Your decoration will really depend on your client. For a lot of our customers, we're seeing more and more patches sewn on the front of the beanies, particularly if the selected beanies have a cuff. Some are larger, circle-woven patches with a merrow outline or a larger rectangle patch. Leather, embroidered, and woven patches are all great choices.

Classic embroidery is also still a top decoration style. One thing to be aware of when embroidering is the texture of the beanie itself. If you have a larger knit, it could cause issues legibly reading your stitched design. If this is the case, look to use some soluble embroidery stabilizer to help hold the stitch up or just opt for a patch instead. One of the favorites for our corporate clients is a simple woven tag



Large woven patch heat-applied only onto a trucker hat.



Smaller woven tag sewn on the center of a performance cap for a unique look.

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Etched leather patches heat-applied to different hat styles ranging from sublimated, rope across the bill, and trucker caps.

patch applied to the bottom of a beanie. This is a subtle decoration that carries a lot of style.

You'll see this tag on nearly every North Face, Patagonia, or trending boutique beanie. It's a great way to add value to your client's brand and make it appear to be retail-caliber merch.

Lifestyle and outdoor headwear

These are hats that roll in and out of trends throughout the season. Right now, two caps have set themselves apart as the trendiest style. No. 1 has got to be the five-panel trucker with a rope across the bill. Country clubs, sports teams, retail, pubs, and booster clubs have all jumped on this cap. The second is the unique, seven-panel style hat.

Both the rope trucker and the seven-panel cap are being decorated in nearly

every way possible. With the front panels leaving a perfect decoration space up front, you are seeing embroidery, printing, transfers, patches, labels, and sublimation all being used to create a distinctive look.

Other outdoor caps, such as boonie and bucket hats, have been more popular with not only the retail resort gear but also with coaching staff and team gear.

I know it's hard to believe, but one of the main purposes of hats is to block the sun from your face and eyes. Boonie and bucket hats have a wide brim to block the UV rays. These hats are being decorated primarily with embroidery and now DTF.

You'll also see some workwear-style hats, such as wax-covered caps. These are used for people out in the elements all day. They are typically waterproof, waxed cotton designed to handle wet and rugged outside elements for extended periods of time.

Embroidery and woven labels are acceptable ways to decorate this hat, but leather or embroidered patches permanently sewn to the cap really reinforce the tough and rugged style of the hat.

Hats hold a special place in the world of corporate and team sales, offering a canvas for branding and style. By understanding the diverse styles and the art of decoration, businesses can leverage these accessories to their advantage.

Furthermore, keeping a finger on the pulse of industry trends ensures that your merchandise remains relevant and appealing in a dynamic market landscape.

Why is headwear so popular?

- *Functional and practical* — Unlike some promotional items that might get stashed away or thrown out, hats serve a practical purpose. They provide protection from the sun, keep the head warm in colder weather, and can also be a fashion accessory. This means people are more likely to use and keep them, increasing the exposure of your brand.
- *Long-lasting* — A well-made hat can last for a long time, especially if it's made of durable materials. This means your branding can continue to be seen for months or even years after it's distributed. Hats are the last thing you put on before you walk out the door. They can be worn casually on weekends, at



3D-puff embroidery with 3mm foam to add depth to the simple logo.

sporting events, while running errands, and even in more formal or professional settings, depending on the style and design.

- *Customization options* — Hats can be customized in various ways to suit the specific needs and style of a brand or event. You can choose different materials, colors, styles, and even add embroidery or other design elements. They are the best canvas for unique techniques in the industry. You'll see screen printing, embroidery, sublimation, leather patches, woven patches, 3D puff, DTF, glitter, PVC, rhinestones, and more.
- *Audience appeal* — Hats are generally well-received by a wide range of demographics. They are not limited to a specific age group, gender, or occupation, making them a versatile promotional item. In the case of events or team-building activities, providing hats can create a sense of unity among participants. It helps them feel like they're part of a group, which can enhance the overall experience and memory of the event.
- *Low cost per impression* — Compared to other forms of advertising, the cost per impression for promotional hats can be relatively low. Considering the potential exposure they can provide, hats can be a cost-effective marketing tool.
- *Customizable for various occasions* — Whether it's for a specific event, a trade



Heat-applied 3D-embroidered patches used to replace 3D embroidery stitching on the machine. This technique works well when faster results are needed for a 24/7 team store fulfillment.

show, a product launch, or just general brand promotion, hats can be customized to fit the occasion and the message you want to convey.

Remember, the effectiveness of any decorated item, including hats, depends on the quality, design, and how well it aligns with your brand and target audience. It's also important to consider the context in

which they are distributed to ensure they have maximum impact.

Staying abreast of industry trends is paramount in maintaining a competitive edge. As fashion preferences evolve, so, too, should the offerings in corporate and team sales. Embracing emerging styles, materials, and decoration techniques can create new opportunities for market penetration and brand recognition. **GP**



Heat-applied felt applique makes for a great textured style on a low-profile dad cap.

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Effective and Proven Sales Strategies

How to increase your sales and customer base



Jennifer Cox is one of the founders and serves as president of the National Network of Embroidery Professionals (NNEP), an organization that supports embroidery and apparel decoration professionals with programs and services designed to increase profitability and production.

Do you recall how you felt when you landed your first decent-sized order for embroidered goods? It's a moment that many remember, often because it's a more profitable order than so many other orders you have created. It's a great feeling — you just made some decent money, and that's exciting!

However, getting more orders like that to continue to roll in can be challenging. You know businesses in your community are buying decorated apparel.

The question is, how do you get them to buy those products from you? How do you create a sales strategy to bring in these profitable orders, week after week and month after month?

The way to accomplish this is to use sales strategies that work. In this article, you'll find four strategies you can use to build your decorated apparel sales.



1. Go back

One of the easiest strategies to implement is to go back to previous, even silent, clients who have not purchased anything from you in a while and give them a good reason to start buying from you again. Review your past client list, design a specific offer, and present it to your best and past customers. Be sure to build in a method to track the effectiveness of your offer.

If your list of people to contact is small (maybe less than 50), pick up the phone and set up a time to meet with them in person. If you want to reactivate more than 50 customers, send a direct mail piece, a letter, a postcard, or an email.

Wait a day or two, then call the top 50 after reaching out to them in writing. Tailor your offer to something they ordered previously or include something that will go with their

previous apparel order. Here's the important part: keep track of what you do and how it works. If you find something that works, one specific email or a specific group of clients that responds better than the rest, build upon this success so you can repeat it, getting these better results.

Once you have an email or call script that works well, use it regularly to go back and connect with customers you haven't heard from in a while. Due to the nature of decorated apparel and how wardrobes need to change with the seasons (at least in many regions of the country), if nothing else, you can reach out and offer spring, summer, fall, and winter apparel choices with very little creative thought required!



2. Lowest hurdle

It is a rare business indeed that truly has no need for an embroidered shirt for at least the owners to wear occasionally. They may wear suits to work all week, or they may wear industrial apparel uniforms all week, but Saturday does come around every seven days. And if they own a business, they likely have an interest in wearing a casual shirt with their logo on it occasionally. This applies to men and women!

Many apparel decoration business owners let random chance dictate their first sale with a new customer. When you are connecting with a business owner for the first time, one of the first products to show them would be a mid- to high-quality sport shirt, presented in their company colors or in a color that their logo would look nice on.

Do not show them something that would clash with their branding! Once you get their logo digitized for embroidery on sports shirts, they are now primed and ready to be shown

dress shirts, sweatshirts, jackets, caps, and all the other products and apparel you offer.



3. Making up

In the rare instance where a customer complains or even cancels an order, view this as an opportunity rather than a setback. This can be a prime chance for you to make a profit and cement a long-term relationship with a solid makeup or win-back offer.

Here is what you say when you get the complaint: "(Name), thank you for telling me about how we messed up. Forgive us for our mistake. I don't blame you for wanting to cancel the order to teach us a lesson. If this happened to me, I'd have been even more upset than you are! May I make it up to you?"

When they say yes, offer them a special gift such as a discount or certificate toward their next order or add a bonus item that they weren't expecting. And obviously, you should correct the original mistake that caused the dissatisfaction in the first place.

The key is to try to close and save the current sale and give them a good enough reason to come back to you for another order. Remember, the most expensive thing that could happen is that they cancel the order and never order from you again, leaving them with a negative experience. This leaves you at risk of bad reviews and negative word of mouth.

The best thing you can do is win the customer over and bring them back as a satisfied customer. Regaining their trust and confidence with a generous win-back offer is much less expensive than the potential business lost from a poor reputation in your community.

You also need to work with your staff to determine the cause of the customer's unhappiness so it can be avoided in the future. Some of the most common causes are poor communication, the sharing of wrong information, or missed deadlines — all of which are completely preventable.



4. Referrals

We all know that we should ask for referrals, but the truth is that we rarely actually do it. You have a real opportunity to increase your sales and serve an even wider customer base simply by asking for referrals.

Start by looking at where your current referrals come from. Is there a way to streamline what is already happening? Maybe you can create a certificate or coupon that you give to existing customers with every order.

When that certificate is turned in by a new customer, you then send the original customer a coupon or special offer. The goal is to motivate your current customers to share the offer with their peers by a certain date. Any time a customer compliments your business or says how much

they love the product or working with you, respond like this: "Thank you for that great compliment, [Insert Name Here]. May I ask, who are two other business owners you know who you think would be interested in looking sharp?" And then be quiet and let them think, and ideally share some names with you as referrals.

This is a simple, direct, and professional way to ask for referrals. Try it — you have nothing to lose, and you may gain some great new customers.

Getting more profitable decorated apparel orders is well within your reach. Your successes are hard-won. It feels great to win these orders. By using strategies that are proven to work to generate more sales, your business will grow — both in terms of your customer base and your long-term profits. **GP**

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WORKING WITH WOOD

A primer on the best types of wood for each project & how to use them to their fullest potential

BY JOHN MORMAN



John Morman is the owner of Celtic Tides in Lexington, Virginia. He and his wife, Mary Jo, have been running the shop since 2005. Morman started laser engraving in 2003.

I don't know whether it is because my dad was a genius with wood or not (he once built a garage in an upstairs bedroom, as well as almost every cabinet, display case, trunk, and more in our house — all with hand tools), but I find working with wood to be my favorite process on my machines. I could never come anywhere close to his level of skill, so I take pleasure in my laser work.

Whether you're using hardwood, softwood, or specialty wood — and whether you're engraving and/or fabricating — the opportunities are virtually limitless. Although different types of wood all have different characteristics, the basic operating principles apply. Together with your graphics software, you can create a myriad of shades, textures, and shapes to make your pieces stand out.

The list of products you can produce will be as long as you want, and there

are opportunities to create added value to pieces supplied by your customers. As always, settings are going to depend on both your machine as well as your own preferences.

I almost always work with medium woods, such as alder, but I also like working with hardwoods, such as maple, cherry, and mahogany. I've also tried my hand with specialty woods, such as purpleheart. Softwoods like basswood and balsa have produced great results, too. Basswood is an example of a wood that just can't seem to make up its mind. American

basswood is considered a hardwood species, although its sapwood is very soft. And then there is wood that isn't actually wood. Technically, bamboo is a grass, but when it has been shredded and then bonded, it produces a material that behaves like hardwood.

I'll start with the more popular pieces I'm asked to produce: plaques for awards or special occasions. For cost reasons, I'll usually opt for red alder for these projects. It's a pretty consistent wood, relatively inexpensive, and good to work with overall. Once you figure out your



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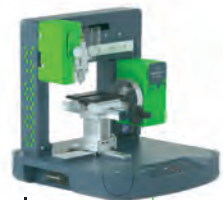
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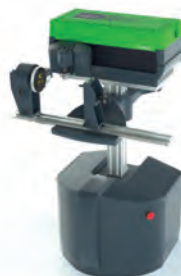
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best settings for what you want to produce, it's easy to set up and run. Due to a fairly fine and consistent grain, it's very amenable for shading and texturing. I also use alder sheet stock for things like ornaments, awards, and the like.

This article details a couple of things I've learned over the years that may help you enhance your pieces. I create the graphic, and then run a first pass at a slightly reduced power and speed. I then adjust my focus so that the piece is closer to the lens and run a second pass. This creates a slightly 3D effect enhancing the graphic. I'm also frequently asked to add things to a standard plaque, such as challenge coins. For the coin recess, use an outline thickness of 1.5 points. I've found that it doesn't pay to try and get the coin flush to the surface of the plaque. You start to get into the glued areas where the plaque has been assembled, which creates a very inconsistent base. Two passes — rarely a third — are enough to seat the coin and keep it level.

Use a cement of your choice and remember to keep the adhesive well inside the recess so that any excess doesn't overflow onto the surface of the plaques. If this does happen, clean it off as gently and quickly as possible. I put some weight on the coins to ensure the best adhesion.

I've used basswood for "novelty" items, and balsa wood to fabricate parts for model aircraft and boats. I find that softwoods present my biggest challenges. These woods burn easily, so it's crucial to get your settings just right to avoid spoiling the appearance of the finished article.

When you're manufacturing components



for model planes or boats, for example, you need to remember that tolerances are very tight to maintain the strength of the part. So, again, you need to get settings just right and not remove any more wood than is necessary. Let's say you're making spars and frames for a wing or hull. If you are out of tolerance on each piece, it's possible the wing won't assemble properly.

I use hardwoods in a variety of pieces. For example, I work with a partner to produce custom guitars and ukuleles. Using mahogany for bodies and maple for necks, there are a wide range of options available to produce custom inlays and artwork for the bodies, necks, and headstocks. I've used hickory for custom pickguards.

Our store features a Heraldic research feature where we can identify the coats of arms for family names. We reproduce these on a variety of items, my favorite being engraved shields using maple blanks. Maple generally engraves beautifully, but be careful if you get a piece with wide-grain sections. The difference between dark and light grain on maple can be extreme, and the result can be a very inconsistent finish. A graphic with very fine details can result in a very poor result if you engrave across these thicker grain divisions.

The following is a breakdown of types of wood and how they perform when engraving:

- *Bamboo* — Bamboo items are constructed using shredded bamboo, which is then bonded. This results in a material that has a very inconsistent finish. Using a standard focal length can result in widely varying engraving results, but by adjusting the focus by as much as a $\frac{1}{4}$ ", the result is much more consistent. There can still be some variations, but all in all, the finished piece will look much better.
- *Mahogany* — Mahogany can vary in

shade from light to very dark. My only advice here would be that if your customers want a dark plaque, they need to be advised that the engraving will be very difficult to see. This makes it a great candidate for color fill. When done correctly, this results in a classy finished piece.

- *Cherry* — This engraves beautifully. The only long-term challenge with cherry (incidentally, maple is the same), is that it actually darkens over time. If you have it in a place with varied shadows, you eventually get a “stripey” appearance. Just advise your customers on the topic so they can choose the best placement for the piece in their home.
- *Hickory* — Hickory engraves beautifully, but it is very hard and requires great care when cutting with lower-powered machines.
- *Oak, ash, and poplar* — I’ve worked with all three woods. The pronounced variation in the grain of these woods makes them unsuitable for most of the work I do, but in other applications, and with the right settings, great results can be obtained.
- *Purpleheart* — This is an example of a specialty wood and is very expensive. My experience has been that you’ll only be asked to engrave a finished piece supplied by the customer. Great care should be taken when working with these woods, and I always use a high-quality masking film with pieces made with specialty woods.

Woods will release oils during the engraving process. These produce a dark, sticky shadow around the graphic. Rather than apply a cleanser directly to the piece, I use a cloth dampened with the cleanser to gently remove the film. I have found that applying the cleanser directly to the surface of the piece can damage the edges of the engraving. When the cleanser has been removed and the piece allowed to dry, I gently rub in some furniture oil. (The exception to this is when I am working on an item for food use. Then, I’ll use a light coat of vegetable or olive oil.)

As always, happy engraving! **GP**



New Trends in Corporate Gifting Mean Higher Profits

In a post-pandemic world, corporate awards and gifts are higher quality and longer-lasting

BY KRISTINE SHREVE



Kristine Shreve is the founder and CEO of Kristine Shreve Consulting, which offers writing, marketing, and business development services. The company can be found at kristineshreve.com.

Shreve is also the creator and host of the Business + Women podcast and the director of marketing and outreach for Applique Getaway. Shreve was the director of marketing for Ensign Emblem and EnMart from 2006 to 2020.

During the pandemic, corporations realized that one way to reward and connect employees, dispersed to home offices and laptops, was to give them gifts and awards. Virtual events came to a similar conclusion. The way to make attendees feel valued and appreciated was to send them an event-themed gift box — a tangible way to make them feel part of something larger.

A study conducted by Coresight Research and sponsored by GiftNow estimated that the corporate gifting market would reach \$242 billion in 2021 (when the study was conducted) and forecasted it would have a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 8.1% through 2024. There was a 60/40 split in the spending, with 60% going to corporate gifting and 40% spent on employee awards and recognition.

The lesson of the pandemic seemed to be that corporate gifting needed to be more than a tub of popcorn or a wine basket at Christmas. If a corporation wanted to stay connected to and remembered by clients, they needed to think outside the box when selecting corporate gifts, and to send those gifts during more occasions than the holidays.

In some cases, useful gifts became more the norm. As Lisa Lemonick of New Jersey-based Scrappy Dappy Doo says, "Most of our corporate companies want something usable and less gifty. Hats seem

to be the go-to gift, then nicer shirts and jackets following.”

Gifts that have a utility and that clients or employees can use over and over have a higher return on investment than something that simply sits on a desk or is eaten in one evening.

When it came to rewarding employees, many of whom were now working from home, companies needed to do more than put a small faux brass nameplate on a plaque. Employees needed to be made aware that they were appreciated and valued, so the gifts needed to create an emotional connection. Whether the gift was for a corporate client or a corporate employee, it needed, and still needs to be, about relationship building.

Since giving gifts and recognition to both corporate clients and corporate staff



has increased in importance since the pandemic, where does that leave the creators of corporate gifts and those vying for a piece of the market? A few things stand out from the 2021 study:

- *Gift cards are still the No.1 gift-giving choice* — In the study, physical (51%) and digital (48%) gift cards were the two most purchased items over 12

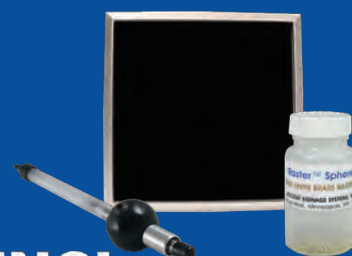
months. This makes sense. A gift card is a gift that is somewhat specific but generic enough that the receiver can't find something they like and want.

- *Events can be fertile ground for corporate gifting* — While in-person events have returned, many events have stayed digital or gone to a hybrid format. One lesson learned from the pandemic was

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that gift boxes are a great way to show appreciation and increase attendee engagement.

- *Companies are willing to spend more per gift given* — The study showed that companies were spending between \$75 and \$100 per gift. The desire seems to be for higher quality and more memorable gifts.

So, what does this all mean for companies that want a piece of the corporate gift giving or employee gifting and rewards business? There are a couple of takeaways. The first one: be creative. Corporate gift buyers, whether they're buying for a huge corporation or a small one, are looking for companies that think outside the box to supply their gifts.

Let's take gift cards for instance. The study showed many corporate gifters are looking to go that route, but a lot of decoration shops may wonder how gift cards fit into their marketing scheme. When it comes to corporate gift giving, there may be options. Perhaps this means making up three or four different gift packages at the same price point and offering cards so employees can choose which basket they want, or you could offer garments with the company logo and a gift card for additional personalization, such as a monogram.

A second takeaway is the rise of virtual and hybrid events. This can be fertile ground for decoration shops and something many of them may have ignored or not thought of in the past. This trend will continue and, as attendees get more and more used to getting gift boxes or bags from events they attend, more and more events will have to jump on this bandwagon. Keep in mind that an event doesn't have to be huge for the showrunners to want to have something to give to attendees. There may be local conferences or events in your area who are looking for gifting options.

The fact that corporate gift buyers are also willing to spend more per gift is a positive sign. For those interested in entering this market, it might be a good idea to

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have gifting ideas at several price points. When you pitch, start with your highest price point and work downwards. While it is unlikely that the days of tacky, cheap corporate or event gifts are entirely over, companies and events are waking up to the idea that sometimes more is more, and that gifts that make a statement or impression are better values in the long run. As this becomes more apparent, more companies are going to be willing to pay the price for higher quality and higher impact gifts.

Another fertile area is employee rewards and awards, and here the price point and quality markers have gone up. It's not

enough anymore to put a faux brass plate on a plaque that simply gathers dust in a hallway. Given the current labor market, employees now have more options than ever, and they want to feel that they're valued and appreciated where they are. Companies that want to preserve their workforce are serving that need with high-end corporate gifts and more meaningful awards and rewards. Whether it's an onboarding gift box or an employee of the month award, companies know the bar has never been higher.

The question for shops that want a piece of this market is how to capture that piece.

The place to start is most likely with what the shop currently offers or could offer:

- What products can you easily make?
- What things can be combined to create a gift box that is both unique and high quality?
- Is there a particular business niche or gift niche that you can best serve?

Look for the low-hanging fruit first. What can you easily do or create without a lot of rejiggering of your shop processes or products? Next, look at venues where you can sell the gifting options you've created. Are there businesses in your area





that could use what you have to offer? Do you want to devote part of your website to online sales of corporate gifts?

Are you willing to work with clients to create unique and one-of-a-kind gifting options, or would you rather create pre-set packages and only sell those? Some corporate gift buyers may like the ease of having preset packages from which they can choose, so most of the choice and stress of choosing is removed. Others might want to build their own exclusive packages from the ground up. The preset packages may have a lower price point, but they will also require less work to create. The bespoke options will, most likely, require more work on the part of the shop, but they'll also probably sell at a higher price point.

Make sure that you share the gift options you create on your social media feeds. You never know when one company will see something you've done for another and reach out. It's also a good idea to make sure you keep in contact with all the gift buyers from the companies you serve.

Lemonick says the first way her company finds corporate gift buyers is through posting on social media and getting calls from people who've seen their posts. "The second way," she says, "is usually from previous customers who have switched jobs, so we assist them in their old job and then we move to their new job with them."

Given her experience, it is evident that it pays to keep your contact list current and to stay in touch with the news about current buyers.

Corporate gift buying, whether for clients or employees, is an ever-growing

market and, as with many things, the pandemic changed the focus and the needs of the market in a variety of ways. If your shop is looking to capture a piece of this market, focus on unique gifts that have long-lasting utility.

Provide gift options at a variety of price points and decide whether you're going to offer only sets you've already created, bespoke packages, or a combination of the two. Make sure to create a contact list of gift buyers and keep it current, tracking job changes when they happen. This market is vibrant and ever-growing, so your efforts should result in a significant return on your investment. **GP**





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6 Key Characteristics of an Intentional Leader

*How to reach
business goals through
intentional effort*

BY JIM MATHIS



Jim Mathis is “The Reinvention PRO,” an International Platform Certified Speaker, Certified Speaking Professional, Certified John Maxwell Team Speaker and Trainer, and bestselling author of “Reinvention Made Easy: Change Your Strategy, Change Your Results.” For more information on how Mathis and his programs can benefit your organization or group, call 404-922-8199 or visit www.jimmathis.com.

*“The secret of our success is discovered
in our daily agenda.” — John Maxwell*

The law of intentionality: No accomplishment or goal of worth is reached by accident. It requires an intentional effort to reach our goals and have a maximum impact on our lives and add value to others’ lives, too. Intentional leaders are in the people business first, and their industry second, to add value to everyone they encounter.

Not a genius

I have a confession to make. In high school I wasn’t the smartest person in my class. I had high grades in a very competitive environment. I made the dean’s list and the honor roll frequently, but I didn’t score high enough to be at the top scholastically.

I was, however, one of the most intentional students in a structured military school. My sophomore year, I decided to run for “Funniest Man on Campus” and won by a landslide. (Is anyone surprised?) The next year, I entered the race for school

vice president, and I had to write an article about the race from an insider’s view for the school paper. Once I figured out how to get students to vote for me, I won again. I graduated as the most decorated ROTC officer in our school.

I was very active in church. I participated in choir, drama productions and community activities — all with a goal attached to them: to use my intentional creative skills to add value to others — and that continues today.

The clients and leaders who bring me in say their people seem to lack the motivation to develop a productive daily routine. They know what they should do but allow other concerns to get in the way. It speaks to priorities and self-discipline, but often indicates a lack of focus. Many people don’t live intentional lives.

Our daily routines are often interrupted by distractions. If you have been working from home during the pandemic, you are realizing what most of us who worked

from home knew for years: home offices lend themselves to distractions. It is hard to be intentional when minor disturbances constantly call your attention away from accomplishing major tasks.

If you live an intentional life, you will find yourself ignoring many distractions that will eventually take care of themselves. Intentional people know that if they focus on their purpose for business (or life), everything else will fall in line behind those priorities.

Momentum makers

Intentional people are self-motivated, and momentum has become their best friend. Motivation often makes large problems smaller. Motivation makes you excited to accomplish each task and see it through to the finish. Motivated people generate their own momentum — and momentum takes care of many distractions.

Are you a “momentum maker?” Intentional sales leaders are momentum makers. Intentional service leaders are momentum makers. I compare it to something you have in your house. Look at the thermometer in your work area. What is the temperature? The thermometer is influenced by what the thermostat is set on for that area. Many people are thermometers, allowing something else



to influence their mood or environment.

A thermostat influences the thermometer. It tells the thermometer what to do. I would rather be a thermostat instead of a thermometer, merely reacting to what happens around me. Are you a thermostat or a thermometer?

“The world is a dangerous place. Not because of those who do evil, but because of those who look on and do nothing.”

— Albert Einstein

Intentional sales leaders have a passion to be significant and contribute to the lives of others. They seek to add value to the world around them with their talents and skills. They want to make a difference. Check out these six characteristics of an intentional leader:

1 Intentional leaders are purpose-driven.

They know their purpose in life and want to take steps to accomplish that purpose every day. They know who they are and what they can do to add value to others. If they are good at their purpose, then they have found a way to contribute and get people to pay them for it. They don't wait to get “good” at something to start accomplishing their purpose.

What are you good at doing? Don't wait to start until you're good at it; start now to become not only good, but better. Know your purpose and start using what you have. Spend time each day or each week getting better at your strengths. Put aside your weaknesses and focus on getting better, just as an artist practices drawing simple objects or a hockey player practices taking the shots they are great at making.

2 Intentional leaders are never satisfied with the status quo.

They work outside of their comfort zones. Stretch yourself to gain new ground every day. Be so uncomfortable with yesterday's accomplishments that you want to

exceed them today. Never rest on your laurels. Consider how many championship teams fail to repeat the next season. They sit back, sign autographs and lose the competitive edge. Repeat champions never forget what got them to the top. They stay in shape, keep their daily routines, and set a repeat as their goal.

3 Intentional leaders see success as an ongoing journey, not a destination.

This speaks to your view of success. If it is a destination, you will almost always fail to reach it — or put off getting there. However, if you see success as a journey, each day holds a new step to take.

Prioritize the important tasks that it takes to be successful daily. Entrepreneur Jim Rohn suggests making an “I should” list. These are things you should do. It has more impact than a to-do list. Make an “I should” list and start on it today. You can look at most people's daily agenda and tell if they live intentionally or bounce from one circumstance to another like a pinball.

4 Intentional leaders arrange their daily agendas according to their purpose and never defer from it.

Show up each day ready to accomplish something, whether it is your sales goal for the day, your management goal to train others to grow in their abilities, or your service goals to help a specific number of people get better service from you. Add value to others and you will always find a sense of accomplishment and gain momentum. I guarantee that if you spend your time helping other people, you will have an improved attitude and success each day. Remember, you're in the people business.

5 Intentional leaders are self-disciplined.

They are strong in setting personal boundaries. Their goals stretch them and are attainable with effort. Where do you want to be in three years, five years, next year? What steps will it take to get there before tomorrow to start that journey? How can you be an intentional individual in your field or on your team? How can you be so

goal-oriented that even the distractions are in awe of your purposeful actions? What sacrifices need to be made to focus on what is most necessary to meet your goals?

6 Intentional leaders are passionate about being the best they can be daily.

Think about how you drive over speed bumps. You slow down, take the bump slowly, and move on. Do you ever look back at the impediment? Of course not! Intentional leaders turn roadblocks into speed bumps and move on, never looking behind.

Remember the last time you made a sale? Or the last time you achieved an award for outstanding service or recognition? Remember how great you felt with the next task? That was a choice you made based on your feelings.

Intentional people know how to make the same choice every day. They do not allow their feelings to make it for them. That is self-discipline at its best. Your passion for success sets the pace for intentionality.

“No one stumbles upon significance. You have to be intentional.”

— John Maxwell

How can you be intentional about closing more sales today? How can you be intentional about being better at leading and equipping others today? How can you be intentional about giving better customer service to the next person you encounter? How can you turn the graphics business you do into the people business?

Most importantly, how can you be intentional about your attitude toward work, the people you work with, the clients you meet, and the circumstances that arise today? What can you do to take control and live intentionally each moment going forward?

As you live intentionally, you will continually find that your passion is what carries you and that life matters more each day. **GP**

Eliminating Distractions

A guide for staying laser-focused in business and management

BY PAUL INGLE



Paul Ingle started selling signs in 1985 and has worked with regional, national, and international accounts with custom, architectural, and production manufacturing firms. He has held various

positions in sales, sales management, and marketing since 1973. From 2006 to 2017, he and his wife, Nita, owned Design Center Signs (A Comet Signs Company) in Tyler, Texas. Paul is a past president of the Texas Sign Association and its regional chapter the Greater DFW Sign Association. Contact him at paul.ingle@cometsigns.com.

“How we spend our days is, of course, how we spend our lives.” — Annie Dillard

So, what is up with this recent presentation of mummified “non-human” specimens in glass containers to Mexico’s Congress, apparently discovered in Cusco, Peru? And what about the cascading amount of data on UFOs (now called UAPs, which stands for unidentified anomalous phenomena) that started in 2021 with new videos and a whistleblower claiming our government has alien craft and bodies?

While the Pentagon and other spokespeople tell the media these are false claims, what opened this deluge of stories, attention, and press accelerating UAP sightings after a dribble of conspiracy stories since the late 1940s?

As a child of the space program in the 1960s, I believe the odds of other life in space are very high. Plus, at the age of 13, while laying on a stone fence gazing into the dark, starry skies of West Texas one summer, I saw a bright, moving object

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at a high rate of speed stop and reverse direction without a pause. I don't have a solid explanation for what I witnessed, but I have no doubt that I saw something and experienced it in clear detail. But, I digress.

Distraction reaction

What I do believe is what we've been recently exposed to (along with countless other notable events) are distractions. It doesn't matter whether they are real or imagined. I think there is a constant conditioning exposure we are now all accustomed to from smartphones, the internet, cable TV, radio, and other media.

Is it not interesting that in the last few years, each time a distressing news event on the economy, politics, education, reproductive rights, populism, inflation, armed conflict, the climate, or other controversial topic comes out, there is an immediate and increasingly bizarre event that follows it?

Sensational news stories distract us from real crises. Distractions are inevitable. Some people believe distraction, and biased news especially, is ruining our country. I wouldn't go that far, but I believe we are losing sight of what really matters.

What does this have to do with your business? Are distractions hurting you and your team more than you realize? Distractions cost money. They can have a negative impact on productivity and focus. They can make it harder to concentrate on tasks and complete them efficiently. It's critical that you minimize distractions whenever possible. What should you do to get back your original focus?

✓ *Create a dedicated workspace* — Even if you have employees who work remotely, encourage them to have a designated area to minimize distractions.

✓ *Set clear goals* — Breaking down goals into bite-sized, smaller, manageable tasks can make them less overwhelming and easier to focus on.



✓ *Use time management techniques* — Try focused bursts with short breaks in between to help improve productivity.

✓ *Minimize digital distractions* — Turn off notifications on your smartphone and use website-blocking software to reduce the temptation to check social media or surf browsers.

✓ *Practice awareness and mindfulness* — Deep breathing, meditation, and other mental calming techniques can improve focus and reduce distractions. Find strategies that work for you.

My wife, Nita, has long asserted that I have a distinct tunnel vision. Not the loss of peripheral visual field, but the kind where once I'm engaged in a time-sensitive task, the building might burn down around me without me noticing.

It can be very advantageous when concentration is important under pressure, but it can have drawbacks since it can limit my perception of the environment or make me miss certain details. I have learned to strike a balance so that I can maintain some situational awareness and evaluate alternative ideas that are not mine.

I strongly believe that many entrepreneurs have this intense form of mental concentration and visualization to some extent.

Whether you call it being in the zone or automatic attention, this laser focus attribute causes time to fly and can even be euphoric. I think it can be central to your success if you can control it.

Being hyper-focused has allowed me to be a goal-driven top salesperson, an above-average athlete, a writer, a passionate marketer, a subject matter expert, and

a collector of mindless and mundane mental trivia.

When I was younger, I had a photographic memory which helped me shortcut my natural tendencies for laziness and procrastination. Time is a cruel mistress, however. I can still see page details from my physical science textbook in the eighth grade, but I cannot tell you what I had for lunch yesterday. And I remember the date the Magna Carta was signed: June 15, 1215. (My birthday is June 14, so it's not too much of a stretch.)

Hyperfocus can be a potent tool as a business owner. It can amplify productivity and help you spark innovation to drive business growth. Plus, it can fuel creativity and help you accomplish more than your competitors.

This laser focus can create a high activity level to help you work whenever and wherever as needed. Some think hyperfocus is a superpower. Others think it might be like kryptonite if it accounts for vast periods of time spent on distractions to dodge unpleasant responsibilities. So, what do you do if you have hyperfocus? What can you do to manage your superpower?

1 *Identify and investigate* — Increase your self-awareness through learning about emotional intelligence. What does hyperfocus look like for you? Do you neglect self-care? How do you respond to interruptions and distractions? Are you focusing on an interesting task or avoiding something unappealing? With practice, you can learn to exit mindfully from an episode.

2 *Plan and prioritize* — List all your tasks for the day and the week. Put them in priority in terms of urgency or importance. Assign the urgent tasks first, followed by the important ones, and arrange them in blocks



of time in your day. Limit the tasks you can achieve so you will feel more accomplished.

3 *Improve time management* — Use every tool at your disposal: your phone, computer, banners across the screen, clocks, timers, or whatever works for you. For my wife, she still relies on Post-it notes. Keep your planned, structured breaks to stay on track.

4 *Find an accountability partner* — You don't have to be in it alone. Ask someone in your life that cares about you (a family member, friend, colleague, or mentor) to check in with you. This can help break up periods of hyperfocus. Support is critical to all phases of success, including this one.

I have found a few other tips to help you stay focused on your business and eliminate distractions.

- *Find a mentor* — Engage with an experienced mentor and ask them to help you set goals, gain perspectives, and inspire you to aim higher.
- *Be careful when multitasking ... or don't do it at all*
- *Constantly reevaluate your priorities* — Prioritizing tasks is a fine art and is crucial when you are facing new challenges.
- *Create a realistic timeline and plan for your business*
- *Just say "No."* — If you say yes too often, you may struggle to stay focused. It is important for you to learn to say no and allocate time for yourself.
- *Delegate tasks responsibly*
- *Save time with better tools and software* — Technology can be your friend when running a business. Look for tools, apps, and software that can make your life easier and automate tasks.
- *Keep a positive attitude*
- *Eat a healthy meal with protein for breakfast and lunch* — Your body needs fuel and energy, and your brain needs sugar through carbohydrates to work at peak efficiency. You don't see professional athletes go to a workout or game without eating properly!
- *Outsource services if possible*
- *Clean up your desk* — A cluttered work area can affect your focus and organization
- *Consider how you manage your team* — Micromanagement can undermine your autonomy and motivation

Once you minimize distractions, you will have a real chance

at having a work-life balance. It will help with stress, improve your overall health, and increase energy and focus. You might even reduce your health-care costs — and I painfully remember that was one of the largest monthly expenditures in our business.

Improving productivity and efficiency are critical to success. These byproducts will help you recruit and keep great talent in your organization. We all seek job satisfaction. As a boss, it is our job to help employees boost their confidence in their performance each day.

The average person will spend about 90,000 hours at work over a lifetime — or about one-third of their life. So, let's get started on eliminating distractions. We don't have time to waste. **GP**

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Content Awareness

New methods for duplicating and replacing content



Stephen Romaniello is an artist and educator who has taught computer graphics since 1990. He is a Professor Emeritus and the founder of the Digital Arts program at Pima Community College in Tucson, Arizona. Romaniello is a certified instructor in Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Illustrator, and Adobe Premier and the author of numerous books, articles, and media on the creative use of graphics software. He is the founder and CEO of GlobalEye Systems, a company that offers training and consulting in graphics software and creative imaging.

In the past, before graphics software was the mainstream method of manipulating images, photographs were considered an accurate representation of a moment in time. Photos conveyed a kind of indisputable truth.

They were usually taken at face value because credible changes to a photographic image required complex, labor-intensive camera and darkroom techniques, and a steady hand with an airbrush — skills that only a few creative professionals possessed. I remember, growing up in the 1950s, the term to describe altered photographs was trick photography.

Nowadays, of course, trick photography is much easier using sophisticated image editing software such as Adobe Photoshop or Corel PaintshopPro. The accessibility and ease of digital photo manipulation have challenged the credibility of the photographic image. What was once considered absolute visual proof is now often open to speculation and scrutiny.

As the software evolved, new techniques have appeared that can generate amazing, eye-popping effects. Over time, the techniques have become more and more automated, as if the software has a mind of its own! And, in fact, it does.

Intelligent robots?

What can I say? Artificial intelligence is on everyone's lips nowadays. Will the world soon be overrun by intelligent robots? Well, let's be realistic. The solution to content replacement to make photographic alterations undetectable is partially due to the intuitive nature of the software that makes seamless compositing possible.

But make no mistake, it isn't a matter of simply pushing a button and, voila, mission accomplished! Content replacement

continues to require a significant amount of skilled operator input and an adept knowledge of the intricacies of the software.

What I will present are a few techniques for seamlessly altering and replacing content. Some of the techniques I'm about to describe are applied manually. Some are semi-automatic and one is completely automatic. I'm using Adobe Photoshop CC2023 to demonstrate these techniques, aptly named Content Aware. Corel PaintshopPro has similar features called Magic Fill.

Basics

Before we get into the actual techniques, let's focus on basic considerations for seamless editing. The three most important points to consider when adding or replacing picture content are:

1. The edges of the new content blend perfectly with the adjacent regions where they are placed and are completely undetectable.
2. The colors of the new content perfectly match the colors of the target image.
3. The light source is consistent on both the source and destination content.

The first two considerations can be easily controlled. The light source, however, is a bit more of a challenge to manage. Light can shine from anywhere on the image: top, bottom, left, right, or center. There is also ambient light that illuminates everything.

Depending on the origin of the light, shadows need to be cast in the opposite direction of the light source. Highlights and reflections should be located on the same sides of the content of both source and destination images. If possible, choose images whose light sources are similar. A more radical approach is to flip or rotate the source content, so the light source corresponds to the destination image (see **Fig. 1**).



Layers

Composites are layer-based. Separate content resides on individual layers. Layers ensure that content remains isolated and easily selectable. The ability to target and manipulate a component of the image is a crucial part of the workflow.

Since layers are flexible units, their content can be moved, scaled, rotated, or otherwise transformed and even repositioned forward or backward within the picture plane. Furthermore, many of Photoshop's features are layer-dependent, guaranteeing flexibility throughout the workflow.

Collage

A composite is created with images from multiple sources. Another word for a



Fig. 2: When using the Clone Stamp tool, the area being copied displays a small cross to indicate the sample point. The area being painted displays a circle that indicates the brush size.

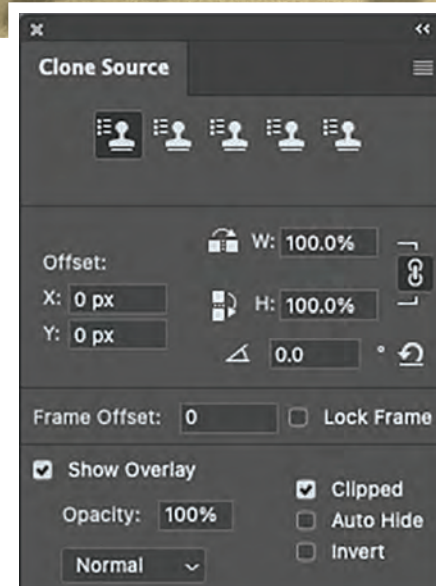


Fig. 3: The Clone Stamp can be precisely configured using the Clone Source panel.



Fig. 4: A new window shows where the new content is being sampled, indicated by a green translucent mask that can be erased or added to with the brush tool to refine the sampled area. A live preview window displays the results as the mask is manipulated.

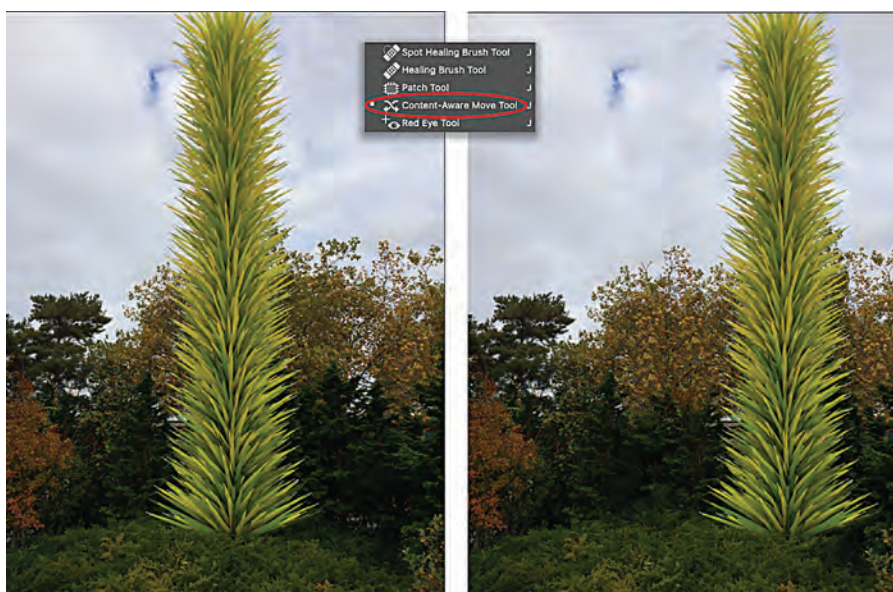


Fig. 5: The Content Aware Move tool automatically selects and replaces content when a selected area is moved.



Fig. 6: The Content Aware Scale tool adds, subtracts, or combines pixels together when the image is scaled to produce an undetectable, seamless blend.

composite is a collage. Artists have been making collages since the mid-19th century. Back in the day, collages were made from cutout pieces of paper pasted together to form an image (see **Fig. 2**). Nowadays, the digital collage workflow is faster and more versatile, providing a vast array of extraordinary features that enhance the credibility of the composite.

Cloning

The simplest and most manual method for replacing image content is to paint with one of the clone tools. The clone tools found in the Tools panel are designed to work on smaller regions of an image. They are applied with a brush; therefore, their performance is dependent on the brush's size, shape, opacity, blend mode, and dynamics.

Three tools sample and deposit pixels: the Clone Stamp, which copies the sampled area and paints it to a destination area; the Healing Brush, which copies the sampled area and blends it into the destination area; and the Patch tool, which copies larger areas and pastes them seamlessly.

When cloning with the Clone tool or Healing Brush, use a soft, round brush. The feathered edge will blend into the new area more smoothly. Drag the cursor inside the selection. Hold the mouse button down and drag to paint with the pixels.

Notice that the area being copied displays a small cross to indicate the sample point. The area that is being painted displays a circle that indicates the brush size (see **Fig. 2** on page 53). Inside the circle is a preview of the content that is applied.

As you move the brush across the image, the cross follows the circle and maintains a constant distance. You'll usually have to sample more than once if unwanted adjacent areas of the sample appear on the target region.

Clone Source

The Clone Stamp can be precisely configured using the Clone Source panel (see **Fig. 3** on page 53). This panel controls the offset of the sample point — the X and Y values determine the distance in pixels from the cursor that the sample will be taken. The height, width, and angle of the sample



Fig. 7: A new feature that automatically replaces lackluster, empty skies with dramatic, exploding sunsets and intense clouds is the Sky Replacement command.

can also be controlled so you can increase or decrease the size of the sampled area or change its shape and angle. The opacity of the clone can also be varied, which can be a real asset when trying to blend edges.

Content Aware Fill

The Content Aware Fill (CAF) command provides an elegant method for replacing selected content. It is an intuitive feature that assesses the color values of the edges of a selection and replaces the interior with pixels it finds throughout the image. It usually creates a seamless blend.

Start by selecting the area on the image that is to be replaced. Slightly overlap the selection outline on the adjacent regions around the selection by just a few pixels to better determine the new fill content.

Choose Content Aware Fill (CAF) from the Edit menu. The CAF feature assesses the color values of the pixels on the outside edge of the target area. A new window appears that shows where the new content is being sampled, indicated by a green translucent mask (see **Fig. 4** on page 54). The mask can be erased or added to with a brush tool to refine the sampled area. A live preview window displays the results as the mask is manipulated.

Most of the time, CAF works well, providing that the target area is not too large. If the results aren't perfect, you can always go back and tweak the filled areas with the Clone Stamp to manually retouch smaller areas that have unwanted content.

Content Aware Move

This is a relatively new tool that is found in the retouching tool cluster along with the Spot Healing brush, Healing brush, and Patch tool. Simply stated, it replaces content when a selected area is moved. It uses a similar algorithm as the CVA feature but doesn't have the added control of the mask.

Choose the tool. Select an area by dragging around it. Drag the selection to a new location and click the commit icon. That's it! The original selected area is filled with content selected from the image. The moved content is deposited in the new location (see **Fig. 5** on page 54).

Content Aware Scale

One more Content Aware feature that can cut work time is the Content Aware Scale (CAS) command. It resizes the exterior areas of the image and protects important details. The CAS feature examines the image area and accurately determines which areas are important and which are not. It then protects the important areas as the image is rescaled.

CAS works best with photos that contain large areas of less detail, such as vast blue skies, grassy fields, bushy landscapes, or open water. The software can add, subtract, or combine pixels together with fewer noticeable glitches (see **Fig. 6** on page 54).

Sky Replacement

A new feature that automatically replaces boring, empty skies with dramatic, exploding sunsets and intense clouds is the Sky Replacement command. It's fully automatic. You don't even have to select the sky! Open an image that has a lackluster sky and choose Sky Replacement from the Edit menu. In the control panel, choose a sky image from the menu.

There are three categories: Blue Skies, Dramatic Skies, and Sunsets. As you choose, the new sky appears in the image window in real time and is scaled to perfectly fill the area. Drag the sliders to modify the sky's characteristics.

You can even modify the foreground areas to better enhance ambient light. Sky Replacement is one of those slick new features that regularly appear as the software evolves. It cuts labor time and encourages experimentation (see **Fig. 7**).

Transform reality

Replacing and modifying image content is a big part of the magic of image editing. Seamless editing, when done correctly, has the potential to transform the reality of an image.

These intuitive techniques are most often a source of creative fun as we employ our imaginations to invent or modify new fanciful realities. The ability to make these images look so realistic and natural should motivate you to experiment with them. **GP**

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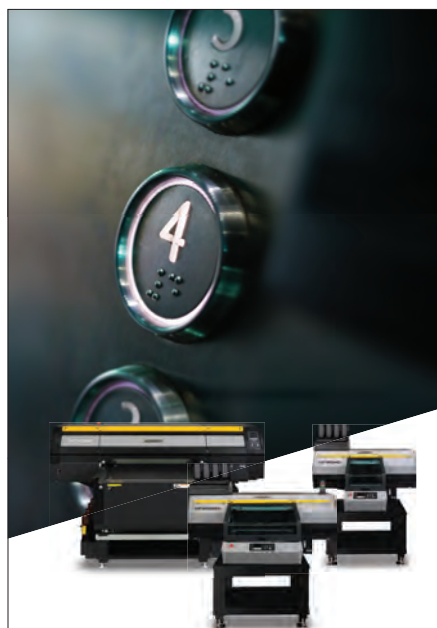
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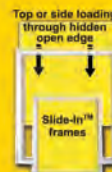


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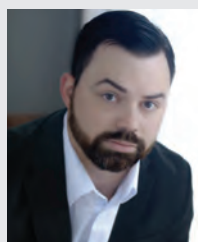
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Making Moves With the Next In-House Process

Breaking down the ROI on UV printing technology



Howard Potter has worked in the promotional industry for 20 years, from designing to building brands and a family-owned business. He is the co-owner and CEO of A&P Master Images LLC with his wife, Amanda. Their company offers graphic design, screen printing, embroidery, sublimation, vinyl graphics, and promotional items. Howard, his family, and the business reside in Utica, New York. For more, please visit masteryourimage.com.

Over the past 20 years my wife, Amanda Potter, and I have been in business, we have not only watched technology evolve in our industry, but we have also watched the promotional companies we work with grow. However, we have simultaneously watched some of these companies fail at keeping up with a quality standard or meeting in-hand dates, which in return can cost us our customers. What have we been doing about it? We have been researching and slowly bringing the processes in-house to not only give our customers options but also to handle all of their needs.

Earlier this year we got our direct-to-film (DTF) process up and running, which gives our customers a full-color printing option for the price of a two-color screen-printed item. In just eight months, we have already produced \$400,000 in production, and we did not start promoting the process until February of this year. The process has now outproduced screen printing. We are projecting that by the summer of 2024, we will need to look at ordering another 24H4 from Coldesi, since all of our customers are loving

the look, feel, and turnaround time using the DTF process.

Over the past few months, while the DTF process was exploding for us, we had some promotional orders approved by customers for custom golf balls, baseballs, etc. Each order that was placed was not only a decent sized sale of \$3,000 to \$8,000, but they were also all rush orders and we sourced promotional companies for each job and paid each one upfront. Unfortunately, after they promised they could get the job done, we found out they didn't have the capacity to do so. They called telling us after the fact that they could not complete the job in time. This happened several more times, and we are not a company that misses deadlines.

As this was happening, we were able to use our DTF process on some items like tote bags, umbrellas, can koozies, and so much more. As each promotional company failed, it forced me to start researching how these products are customized and look for the best manufacturer to work with. I reached out to a few of our blank stock suppliers, and they gave me a list of who to check out since the next process we needed to get into was UV printing. The nice part about this process is you can literally print thousands of items with it.

I spent close to a month working with LogoJET. I have had the pleasure of working with Merrie Matson from LogoJET as my sales representative. Matson has a wealth of knowledge and if there is something she does not know, she will get you the answer. From the first day I started working with her and their company on getting information on the machine, I knew this was the company we would want to work with long term. Every question mattered to them, and their response time was always quick.



An example of the detail you can get with sponsor logos on apparel.





DTF on a cooler bag.

After several phone calls and emails, we set up an online demo meeting to see how the UV printer operates. The software from the demo looked super easy to use and very similar to vinyl printer software. Additionally, the demo made it clear that setting up the machine to run different products was a smooth process. These are all things I was looking for in a vendor. I needed a process that not only could print thousands of different items but would be easy to teach our team to use.

The machine we decided to go with was their LogoJET UVx90R-SE, which has a product clearance of 6" for height and a printer bed print area of 24" X 36". This machine is 25% faster than its previous model. We could have gone with another smaller model, but we have learned as a company that we are better off buying the larger machines and growing into them, rather than taking a chance at buying them and maxing them out in a few months.

Our company subcontracts out around \$500,000 in promotional orders a year, so we knew that this one machine alone could help bring a minimum of 80% or more of that production back in-house — keeping our existing team busier. The machine's cost is about \$64,995, with approximately \$3,000 more for backup parts, supplies, and extra trays to experiment with different products that you

think you will be printing on using the machine. You should always buy extra parts like an emergency backup kit. In the case that something does happen, you are only down for a few hours and not a few days. We do this with all the machines we own.

To understand the return on investment here: shoot high and say at worst (with the model we picked) you spend around \$70,000. Take the monthly machine payment and divide it into the number of days your company operates per month. In our case, this is a minimum of 22 days, which equals your daily cost of the machine. For our business, that amounts to approximately \$1,150 divided by 22 days, which equals \$52.28 per day for the machine loan. You can make that back just by printing one 2' X 3' yard sign per day. We always break down the yearly, monthly, and daily math, in addition to figuring out how much work it will take to make the monthly payment back.

Another product we sell a lot of is Polar Camel tumblers. The machine can handle close to 96 tumblers per hour depending on the size of your artwork. When calculating return on investment, we always lowball the number to be safe. Even if you figure you are only producing 72 pieces per hour at a minimum net profit of \$4 per cup, this nets you \$288 per hour, which means you only have to run the machine for four hours at this volume to make the monthly payment.

No matter the size of your company, if you are looking for a new process to expand the product options to your customers, I suggest looking into UV printing technology. The investment will help you keep more work in-house and allow you to continue to grow and meet the demands of your customers' needs. **GP**



DTF on can koozies.



DTF on safety vests.



DTF on a tote bag.

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THAILAND
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866-743-5133 • 980-689-2684

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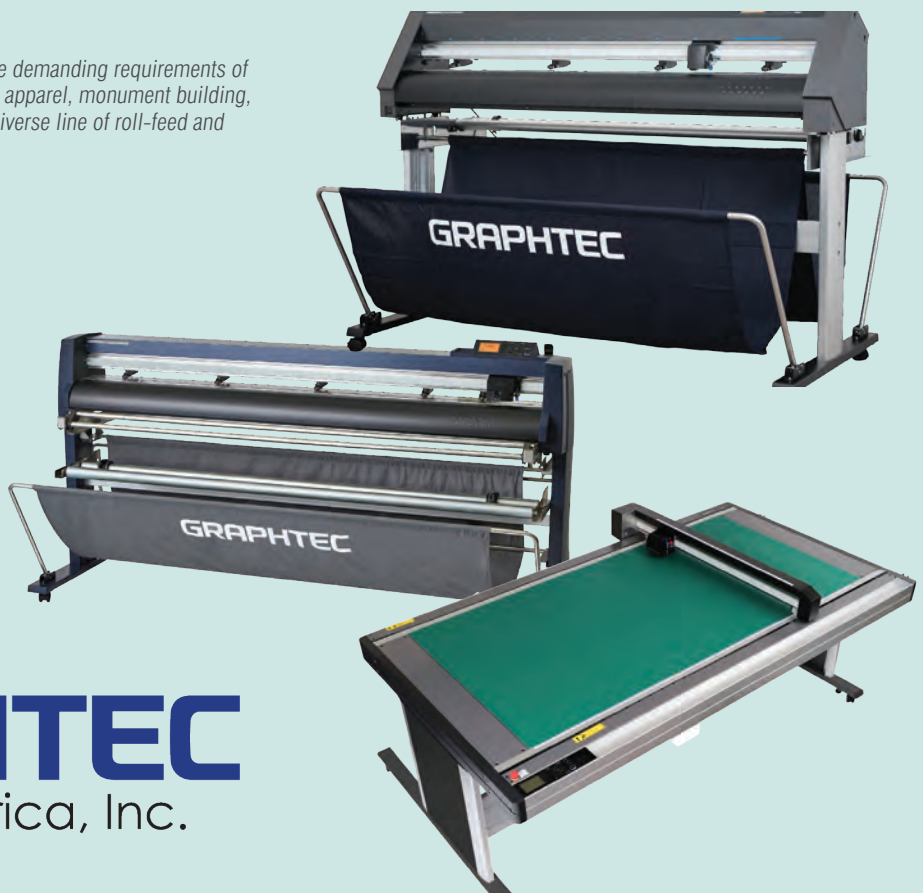
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<http://www.kala.systems>
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Manufacturer

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Houston, TX 77057-7000
<http://www.katisportcap.com>
800-392-5559 • 713-977-4929

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<https://kellyspicers.com>
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JERZEES

PAGE
78

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<http://jjmotiff.com>
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<http://www.jdsindustries.com>
800-843-8853 • 605-339-4010



JDS Industries

COMPANY PROFILE:
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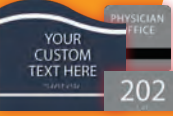
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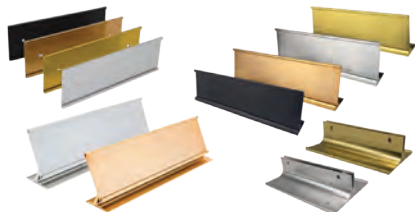
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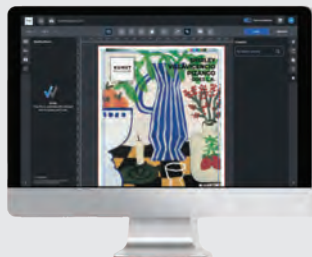
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Enfocus announces the global launch of Enfocus Review. This advanced online proofing solution streamlines and elevates customer review cycles, offering a centralized, workflow-integrated approach to proofing and feedback. Review showcases an intuitive design that ensures ease of setup and operation. Its affordability is highlighted by value-driven pricing and the elimination of hosting fees, making it a cost-effective solution for any scale of business. Review delivers ultra-fast, accurate PDF viewing in the browser, overcoming common challenges associated with browser-based reviews like viewer settings, overprint, and color spaces.

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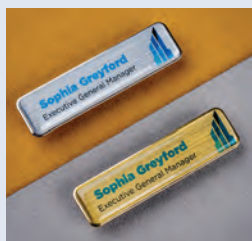


METAL NAME TAG

Name Badges International offers its Executive Name Badge, which the company says is ideal for corporate occupations such as banking, real estate, and law. The product is made of metal and comes with a silver or gold metallic border with a magnetic fastener. The company also says it has a scratch- and fade-proof polyurethane. It is available in four standard sizes.

800-766-0448

namebadgesinternational.us



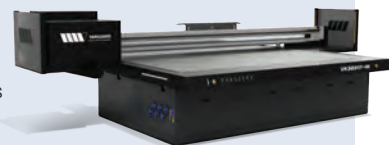
UV FLATBED PRINTER

Vanguard Digital

Printing Systems introduces the Vanguard VK3220T-HS ultra-high production UV-LED flatbed printer. It is 126" X 80" and has Kyocera KJ4A printheads equipped with variable drop technology and four picoliter drop sizes. The company says it can print at a resolution of up to 1800 dpi and speeds up to 3875 square feet per hour.

470-326-3790

vanguarddigital.com



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Wittek Decorating	93	www.wittekdecorating.com
XANTE Corp	13	www.xante.com
Xpresscreen Inc	93	www.xpresscreen.com

PRODUCT HIGHLIGHTS	PAGE	URL
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AP Lazer	57	www.aplazer.com
AWT World Trade Inc	56	www.awt-gpi.com
Chemica US Corp	56	www.chemica-us.com
CHT Germany GmbH	56	www.cht.com
Epilog Laser	56	www.epiloglaser.com
JDS Industries Inc	57	www.jdsindustries.com
JERZEES	57	www.jerzees.com
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Trotec Laser Names New North American President and CEO

The company welcomes

Brett Northcutt as new leadership in North America.

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Charles River Apparel Helps Local Students in Need

In addition to \$17,500 in donations, Charles River Apparel also hosted two volunteer events.

<https://gpro.link/crastudents>



Watchfire Announces Winners of Ninth Annual LED Sign Awards

Kansas-based Luminous Neon is the grand-prize winner.

<https://gpro.link/watchfire23>



The Power of Craving ‘No’

A sales strategy for success.

<https://gpro.link/powerofno>



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