Printed on Saturday, April 26, 2008

Digital or Sign Vinyl?

Digital:

CR Signs uses Encad printers, with Dicojet pigment inks for 3-5 year outdoor production. We also use Eco Solvent inks in a Roland printer. Dye based GX (graphic Extended) inks are currently being used for indoor printing. A wide variety of print media materials are available. For transit advertising benches, we print on a digital vinyl, apply it to a 2ft X 7.5 ft board, and then use a clear coat called Frog Juice, which is let cure, then 4 coats of automotive clear coat is applied, with some flattening agent. This method allows for maximum impact of colours and reduces the chance of vandalism dramatically. We do *not* use lexan covers which reduces the impact of the sign.
Digitally printed vinyl also has a shorter life than digital images.

Colour Gamut:

The outdoor digital production, as the reader may know, does not have the same wide colour gamut as indoor inks. This is true of most types of outdoor printing whether or not it is pigment based, UV curable, solvent or one of the new hybrid inks.

Artistic Benefits:

Digital does allow for shading, tones and 3D effects, which is not possible with the older method of sign production, which incorporates the use of outdoor sign vinyl, so some startling effects can be accomplished. The creator of files for production printing does not have to concern themselves with the use of entirely vector images of course. Images can be used straight from a 2.1 mega pixel digital camera with great results.

Image Use Responsibilities:

The images that you send us are your responsibility to have permission to use, and we accept no responsibility for images that you have acquired improperly.

Sign Vinyl:

Colours:

As the reader may be aware, some great vibrant colours and products are available in sign vinyl which include shade shifter colours, metallics and reflectives. Only a limited number of Pantone colours are available, so if you specify something outside of what is available, we will match it as closely as possible. *Sign vinyl also has a longer life than digital images*.

Vector File Types:

Images and fonts used in this type of production *must* be in vector format so the images and or letters can be *cut*. Digital images are bit-mapped (bmp, tif, jpg and so on) and cannot be cut due entirely to the fact that a blade on a vinyl cutter cannot cut from pixel to pixel. Vector images consist of a series of lines with intersecting nodes, which a vinyl cutter blade can follow. Common vector images that we can use are Corel 8 or lower, AI, WMF, EPS, PLT, SCV, FS, ENR, and HPG. Remember that if you have a digital bit-mapped image, and save it as an eps, this does not make it vector. If you can't select each line of the drawing, either can we, and if we can't select, it our cutter can't cut it.

Converting bit-mapped to vector:

If you like, we can convert a good quality bit-mapped image to vector, remember, all shading will be lost. There is a $49.00 per hour charge for this service. Corel Draw has a tracing feature that will do this. If you use this feature remember that our cutter has to go to each node, so if there are too many,

you will need to eliminate them, for example, a good curve should only have a node at each end. A curve should not consist of many nodes, because once we expand this and try to cut it, the curve will only consist of short straight joined lines, that appear as a curve from a great distance. If you are a free hand artist, using a scanner and selecting "black and white scaleable image" on an HP scanner will do a reasonable job of converting your drawn image into vector lines quite quickly.