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October 2016 bigpicture.net

IT'S WISE TO SPECIALIZE



Finding a niche application may be the answer your shop is looking for. You just need the right materials.

BY KIERSTEN WONES

The cat's out of the bag: Printers have gotten faster, become easier to use, and grown more affordable. But technological advancements in digital printing haven't always meant good news for top-notch PSPs: If anyone can push a few buttons and make money off the outcome, how can you differentiate yourself from your competition?

One area of progress that gives you, the five-star print shop, a window of opportunity is the increasing specialization of media. Your

faster, more user-friendly printer is probably also more versatile in its material compatibility – it just so happens that print buyers are demanding more unique methods of branding. They want flexibility, versatility, and impact. And they want it on the walls, windows, elevators, ceilings, columns, doors, and floors.

So, here enters your shop, armed with years of experience, a dedication to quality imaging, and a readiness to say “yes.” All you need to do now is push the button.

Explore these seven projects for a little inspiration and some advice along the way.

SAY CHEESE

“Think outside of the box” is the motto that motivates all Ich&Kar projects,” says Helena Ichbiah of the French design duo Ich&Kar (ichetkar.fr). So, when the company was asked to travel to New York for their first interior design project, they were ready for a challenge that was out of their ordinary. The client, the French Dairy Interbranch Organization, was in the process of launching the French Cheese Board, an experiential shop designed “as a beacon for chefs, artists, designers, foodies, and cheese makers to explore dairy products and foods as a medium for development and innovation,” Ichbiah says. The space is modular, and the design had to be flexible in order to conform to its different functions, from cheese resale to tableware exhibition to master classes.

Ich&Kar decided to use magnetic media for the first time in order to allow the Cheese Board’s curators the necessary flexibility. Roughly 500 square feet of graphics were printed on black VM-Luna and off-white VM-Canvas from Visual Magnetics, using an HP Latex 360 printer.

“The challenge was to keep all the functions very fluid while offering a user-friendly toolbox,” Ichbiah says. “We designed situations of usage, more than a space. ... The look and feel of the space can change from day to day.”



TRICK OR FEET

Innomark Communications (innomarkcom.com), based outside of Cincinnati, has been fabricating graphics and signage for the retail sector for 25 years. Offering digital, offset, and screen printing – as well as specialty packaging and display capabilities – it’s truly a one-stop shop. When Party City, via a third-party agency, commissioned Halloween-themed floor graphics for more than 1000 locations, Innomark turned to both analog and digital imaging, using their Durst 512R inkjet printer to produce a short run of graphics for the 75 stores that were carpeted.

The shop used 3.4-mil General Formulations Concept 212 Vinyl with a 5-mil scratch-resistant and textured GF 54-150 laminate. Steve Zick, senior VP and general manager, says lamination is the most important step when producing floor graphics, unlike ordinary vertical applications. “The ink film has to be thin enough that bubbles aren’t created by the surface height differences – without sacrificing image density,” he adds. Innomark used a Seal laminator and a Zünd G3 3XL-3200 iCut table for the finishing steps.

Zick says floor graphics have become a more viable option in recent years as “the adhesive quality and variety of legitimate material options have increased” – particularly in regard to two major concerns: the risk of falling and the possibility of damaging the floor. Today, more and more suppliers are able to offer warranties and installation instructions, and as a result, Zick expects PSPs to begin turning to digital materials for this application in greater numbers.

