



BUILD & THEY WILL COME

BUILDING WRAPS ATTRACT PASSERSBY

by Melissa Donovan

Building wraps are smart and insightful advertisements. Print service providers (PSPs) offering this service hope to create projects that immerse the viewer into the graphic, making it unquestionably memorable—enough so that they will end up buying the product or as is the case so often now, posting it on social media and expanding the reach of the message even further. To achieve graphics of this caliber, PSPs rely on trusted hardware and consumables as well as industry knowledge.

Covering Construction

In business since 1974, LSI Graphics, Inc. began offering building wraps seven years ago. The Memphis, TN-based company was originally a booklet/identification badge lamination supplier and went by Lamination Service, Inc. In addition to identification systems, it now offers grand format printing and promotional products. Once a business of one, it now employs 65 and serves customers worldwide out of a work area of over 39,000 square feet.

According to Evan Diener, VP, operations, LSI, building wraps are currently seven to ten percent of the business in terms of revenue, but he expects that to grow. "I believe building wraps are trending upwards. Metropolitan areas and building owners see vacant buildings or large, empty walls

as advertising space to add a revenue stream out of thin air for a fairly low cost," he suggests.

For building wraps LSI regularly works with mesh from NuConcept. The 196-inch product provides durability against outdoor elements like wind and precipitation. It is also ideal for building wrap applications because it is available in 16x300-foot rolls, which limits the amount of necessary seams.

Graphics are printed with the company's 16-foot wide EFI VUTEk GS5500LXr Pro. Diener cites printing an average size billboard—ten feet and six inches by 36 feet—with the device in 15 minutes. It prints using UV ink, which holds up well in outdoor environments. Thanks to the printer, production isn't a challenge. The team at LSI produces and finishes banners quickly while maintaining quality.

With the production process of a building wrap under control, Diener says the biggest challenge is logistics, as no building's or town's rules are the same. "Navigating through each cities' signage ordinances and obtaining permits is certainly the most re-occurring

Left) BPGraphics of Phoenix, AZ created a building wrap placed during ConExpo 2017 in Las Vegas, NV that promoted Volvo construction products.



challenge as each city is different," he shares. To combat this, LSI takes the time to research city ordinances prior to meetings and discussions with clients. In doing so, customer expectations are appropriately set in terms of timing, price, and turnaround.

A new client recently reached out to LSI to create a building wrap that not only hid unsightly construction but simultaneously advertised the micro-lofts being built and promoted the construction and architectural firms. "Construction sites and building remodels are an eye sore. If a building banner can advertise the contractor and/or architect for months during construction, it's an advertising investment, not an expense," explains Diener.

Located in Providence, RI, the building is surrounded by two sides of a major intersection. Covering the construction scaffolding with a graphic provides an opportunity for thousands of passerby on a daily basis to learn more about the new lofts and the companies involved in the process. The design consists of young people from all demographics exploring urban environments and enjoying city life.

The job was printed on the EFI VUTEK GS5500LXr Pro with UV ink to ensure the wrap would withstand exposure to the elements for the duration of its installation, which according to Diener is 18 to 24 months depending on construction. A total of 5,550 square feet of NuConCept mesh was printed in 11 pieces. To combine

all 11 parts into one cohesive banner, two-inch webbing was heat welded with grommets every 24 inches using a 50-foot Miller Weldmaster welder.

Diener says the biggest challenge associated with this project was ensuring the banner was folded in a way that allowed it to be unfolded and ready to be installed immediately—with no confusion on which part needed to be applied where. "Small details like this, having the customer and installers in mind through every aspect of the job, is what sets us apart from most other companies," he shares.

Busting Out

BPGraphics celebrates over 50 years in the industry. Originally known as the Billboard Printing Company, it specialized in printing paper billboard posters, but as the out of home (OOH) segment evolved, so did its product offerings. The company expanded into all different types of outdoor advertising products. It simultaneously added other large format printing services including fleet graphics, retail point of purchase, and event and

1) This LSI job was printed using an EFI VUTEK GS5500LXr Pro with UV ink on NuConCept mesh. Photo courtesy of Steven McLaughlin, Paolino Properties.

venue graphics. To mirror its offerings the PSP changed its name to BPGraphics in the early 2000s.

The shop takes up over 66,000 square feet of space in Phoenix, AZ with 18 digital presses including five-meter grand format UV-curable and solvent devices, UV flatbed, UV roll-to-roll large format, latex ink, dye-sublimation (dye-sub); and inline screenprinting equipment. It is equipped to handle all of its finishing in house as well, from laminating to routing, sewing, welding, and custom fabrication.

With building wraps a natural extension of mesh and vinyl graphics, according to Curt Carpenter, owner/president, BPGraphics, the company has produced a self-adhesive version of the application for its OOH advertising clients since 2004. "As advertisers began to look for more non-traditional spaces to showcase their products, we found that the same skills and knowledge we gained in the outdoor advertising industry easily transferred to building wraps, be they mesh, self-adhesive vinyl, or self-adhesive perforated window vinyl," shares Carpenter.

In the early 2000s the PSP installed four HP Scitex XL1500 presses from HP, Inc., which are still in use today, especially when producing large mesh building wraps. "The solvent ink works particularly well when welding panels together and welding ink-over-ink so as not to have visible weld lines," explains Carpenter.

For building wraps requiring self-adhesive vinyl or perforated window material, BPGraphics usually uses one of its HP Latex 3000 series printers—the HP Latex 3000, 3200, or 3600. "The combination of environmental friendliness, speed, and quality—particularly when it comes to sheet matches—makes the HP Latex series of presses the best choice for this type of work," he continues.

With the ability to print to different substrates, media choice is dependent upon the location and surface of where the graphic will ultimately be installed. For mesh vinyl, BPGraphics prefers product from Ultraflex Systems, Inc. If it is a self-adhesive vinyl or perforated window project, the company uses material from

either 3M Commercial Solutions, Arlon Graphics, LLC, or FLEXcon.

Both the hardware and consumables BPGraphics chooses to use play a role in ensuring its customers receive their building wraps in a timely manner. It is time that presents the biggest challenge, according to Carpenter. "Decisions are made around major events about the messaging to display with less time to produce and install the graphics. The advent of digital advertising has skewed the perspective in marketers' minds about what it takes to create and launch a program," he explains.

The PSP combats this by educating its customers on all of the steps it takes to successfully complete a building wrap. This includes discussing the permit process—if applicable—and the time it takes for production and installation.

In recent years, Carpenter has noticed growing popularity and public opinion of building wraps, explaining that the application is no longer lumped into the same category as billboards in the minds of consumers. "Increasingly, building graphics tend to help define a space and make it part of the fun of being in that venue. The combined use of celebrity or event graphics along with increased quality of production and materials that can be installed almost anywhere have helped make building wraps fun in the public eye," he adds.

BPGraphics created one such building wrap in Spring 2017, transforming the Las Vegas Marriott into a "wall busting construction" illusion for ConExpo 2017—a premier trade show for large construction equipment held every three years in Las Vegas, NV.

Client Elite Media wanted to create something amazing for its client, Volvo. To achieve this, BPGraphics worked on a design featuring construction equipment appearing to break out of the hotel. For a life-like effect, the PSP's prepress team color matched sections of the graphic to the hotel's exterior paint. The Las Vegas Marriott is in a key location, across the street from one of the many parking lots used for visitors to browse equipment samples at ConExpo.

The design was produced in three graphics, which were printed using an HP Scitex XL1500 on Ultraflex's UltraMesh due to its easy air flow to prevent capturing the wind. Two of the three graphics measured 84x100 feet and covered over 90 percent of the side of the hotel that faced the parking lot. The third graphic, which faced the street, was 57 feet and eight inches by 99 feet.

Graphics were anchored to a pre-installed cabling system that was mounted to the hotel. The design was up for the length of ConExpo.

Brokering Deals

Grand Image Inc. currently celebrates 20 years in business. The family-run company began in 1997 in a 2,500 square foot facility and still operates today out of a 20,000 square foot building in Hudson, MA with 36 employees.

Starting out, the PSP offered vinyl billboards, banners, building wraps, and fence mesh signage, all done by the parents of Tamir Luria, VP of operations, Grand

Image. For the last ten years its offered dye-sub printing, trade show fabrication, and recently began selling 3D digital sculpting services.

Grand Image doesn't work directly with the end user, but services print brokers. It started out only serving those in the greater Boston area, but now works throughout New England and the greater NY metro area. Customers coast to coast and into Canada work with the company.

Building wraps have always been a part of Grand Image's offerings. According to Luria, once the company figured out "how to finish banners to withstand the rigors of the building application, it became a significant part of the business." Today about five percent of the work completed in house is considered building wraps.

To complete these large applications, the shop uses an HP Scitex XL1500. It prints fast and reliably with inexpensive, high-gloss solvent inks. Grand Image sources its own materials, importing from China directly and cutting out the middleman.

Out of the entire building wrap process, Luria finds that the nature of paying attention to dropouts and color shifting along 50 to 100 feet of material is what causes the biggest challenges. "Our operators have to be really aware to notice these shifts. We tack on a color proof by the machine so we are always mindful of the color targets as well the presence of other elements in the layout."

Staying on top of the latest trends is essential to success and Luria says some of the recent trends involving building wraps include the actual graphic getting larger and the deadlines to finish the projects getting tighter.

Building Masters

Equipped with the correct tools, PSPs can easily handle the production part of a building wrap. Being knowledgeable on signage ordinances, upfront about timing, and considering how to make the installers' job easier are all strengths that experienced companies leverage to their advantage. This combination of knowledge and technology makes for a well-balanced print provider. **D**

companies mentioned **DIRECT** See page 17 for more info.

INFO#	COMPANY	WEBSITE
160	3M Commercial Solutions	3mgraphics.com
161	Arlon Graphics, LLC	arlon.com
162	EFI	efi.com
163	FLEXcon	flexcon.com
164	HP, Inc.	hp.com
165	Miller Weldmaster	weldmaster.com
166	NuConCept	nuconceptsupply.com
167	Ultraflex Systems, Inc.	ultraflexx.com