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For Immediate Release

The Sign Center: Fujifilm's UV Flatbed Printer Helps Sign Company Boost Productivity, Decrease Costs

VALHALLA, N.Y. (November 28, 2007) – The Sign Center in Brentwood, Tenn., has been producing custom signs and banners for exactly 20 years now, yet today's workflow is much more efficient, thanks to a new Fujifilm Acuity HD 2504 UV flatbed printer. With UV cured inks that provide fast turnaround times, the company has boosted productivity while saving hundreds of dollars a month on materials. "The flatbed allows us to print direct to substrate, which saves us enormous amounts of time and money," enthuses owner Dave Gruenke.

The Sign Center, an eight-employee company with under \$1 million dollars in annual sales, caters primarily to real estate clients such as builders and developers, and other clients such as churches and furniture companies. In 1987, when the company started, it cut vinyl, which was very labor intensive. Then it took a big leap in productivity four years ago when it purchased a wide-format solvent printer. However, as technology continues to advance, customers' expectations increase as well and Gruenke recognized the need for another change.

"We had reached a point where we were so busy just mounting prints that we'd printed," he explains. "That printer uses solvent inks, which take a day to dry. You can't just print it and then be done. You have to let it set for a day for the inks to cure up before you can laminate it and do anything else with it. So we'd have rolls of vinyl just curing all over the shop and then from there we'd have to trim it, mount it and laminate it. There were a lot of steps to get to the finished sign."

Staying abreast of the latest technology, Gruenke researched UV flatbed printers with UV inks that cure instantly. "The UV curability is a big deal: when it's printed, it's done," he says. "When I saw samples from the Fujifilm Acuity HD 2504, I was just blown away. We sent our own files to the Hanover Park demo center to have Fujifilm print them, and we were so impressed. We even flew to Chicago to watch the machine print. Once I saw the machine, I thought 'that's what I have to have.' I've never seen the UV inks with the vibrancy of those inks. I never

dreamed I'd be paying that kind of money for a printer when I started the business 20 years ago, but for the quality of the print and the speed, and how much more productive we are, I'm just so excited about it."

In September, The Sign Center installed the Acuity HD 2504, which provides photographic-quality printing at speeds to 174 sq. ft. per hour on flexible or rigid media up to 1.9 inches thick. A zoned vacuum table—that holds media including materials that are irregularly shaped or have uneven surfaces—ensures accurate registration on one or more passes.

"With the flatbed, there's just a huge gain in productivity," states Gruenke. "We have one job that we do periodically for a customer. It involves about ten double-sided 4x4 signs. It normally takes two guys two days to do that job. With the new printer, it took one guy 3 ½ hours—and he spent some of that time working on other jobs. By being able to lay two 4x4 panels on the bed, turn it on and have it printed in just 12 minutes is absolutely incredible."

Another benefit of printing directly to substrate is that the company doesn't have to print on to vinyl first and then transfer the image onto a substrate. As a result of not having to buy as much vinyl, The Sign Center saves \$600 to \$800 a month.

Producing sharp images

The Sign Center has also improved its print quality with the Acuity. By taking advantage of variable dot technology, the printer produces sharp four-color images to resolutions of 1,200 dpi. The printer achieves smooth skin tones, fine line definition and spans of dense solid colors.

"It's great to have the ability to print the smooth skin tones—the very delicate colors—and get those just right. At the same time on another part of the sign, we can print just a solid black or a solid red. It's normally very difficult to do that," states Gruenke.

"Transluents are also difficult," he continues, "because the color has to be so intense and deep so that when you put the light behind the image, the colors don't get washed out. We just did a menu board with a lot of photographs of food onto translucent material and it looks outstanding. This is such a precise printer that you print the image once, and it looks fine, but if it's going to be backlit, you have to print it again. It prints every drop in the same drop it did before. It puts that much color down. So it looks dark when you're looking at it without any light. But when you put light behind it, it just pops."

After only a short period of time, The Sign Center is keeping the Acuity busy most of the day and still uses their previous machine for jobs such as banners and decals. Gruenke intends to begin marketing the new printer and increase the printing of point-of-purchase signs and trade show displays. "We're now gearing up to go out and build new customers in new markets that we couldn't be competitive in before," concludes Gruenke. "I'm very optimistic that it will be a very quick return on our investment."

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