

Finesse in Finishing Helps A Small-Town Sign Company Win A Big-Time Job

When Acme Markets grocery stores in Tazwell, VA, decided to revamp the in-store signage in all of its 30 stores in Virginia and the Carolinas, the job was initially farmed out to an out-of-state graphics firm. But when the vinyl graphics started to peel away from the cut Sintra used in the signage, Acme brought their business to Identity America in Bluefield, VA. Less than two years old, the signage design and contracting company takes pride in its ability to coordinate all aspects of a signage program, including initial R&D, presite target tests, project analysis, manufacturing, installation, and maintenance. The company was founded by forward-thinking professionals with more than 15 years of signmaking experience.

Identity America CEO Tom French explains that when Acme first approached them, the sign-fabrication pros on their eight-employee team quickly diagnosed why the vinyl was lifting away from the sign. It appeared that the printed vinyl graphics had been applied to the Sintra board before the board was contour-cut, leaving rough edges which led to the problem. Identity America's staff remedied the problem by trimming the graphics slightly smaller than the black Sintra to which they were applied. When the Sintra was cut, the black edging provided the black outline already called for in the design and minimized the risk of the vinyl being pulled away from the surface during cutting.

Acme was not only impressed by the ingenuity of the remedy, but also by the fact that Identity America was a neighbor. One of the reasons Acme was revamping its interior was to attract shoppers who appreciated the fact that Acme wasn't part of a big, corporate mega-chain of grocery stores. To compete with the megastores, Acme

wanted to create a neighborly, hometown ambience, with graphics emphasizing their ability to deliver fresh-from-the-farm produce, meats, and dairy goods.

Company officials at Acme were also impressed by the exceptionally vibrant colors Identity America was able to output on their six-color 1440-dpi Roland Hi-Fi JET piezo inkjet printer. Based on solid performance doing graphics for the first couple of stores, Identity America won the contract to do all the signage for the 30 stores in the chain. Each package includes aisle and department markers, plus a 42 x 12-ft photo mural behind the produce carts.

French admits that it takes awhile to output the 1440-dpi, six-color graphics for each store, but says throughput speed hasn't been that big of an issue because if the media is correctly positioned to feed straight, the Roland Hi-Fi Jet can routinely run all night unattended.

Although the Roland Hi-Fi Jet has come to be associated with photographic and fine art reproduction, French says the colors really pop on the line-art used in the in-store signs.

Identity America: 540-322-2616; www.identityamerica.com.















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