

(TransCanada)

IDP Wraps It Up!

Driving to work with the radio on, you hear a voice that sounds a lot like the late Rodney Dangerfield's: "Hey'd ya see the guy who exposed himself on the 401 today? Said it was the best thing he ever did for his business." Then the announcer says, "Expose your business to millions of potential customers — with a vehicle wrap from VehicleWraps dot ca. You've seem 'em: super creative vehicle transformations that expose your company image 24-7! They're durable, washable, removable and won't hurt your vehicle's paint. For wraps, digital printing and banners, go to VehicleWraps dot ca or call 1-triple-8-290-77-76. Then the Rodney voice comes on again, "Hey, it's never a bad thing to expose yourself."

Funny, to the point — *and* an effective advertisement for a company that has seen remarkable growth in less than a year.

For business partners Paul Valdstyn and Rob Tenwesteneind of Image Digital Printing and Vehicle Wraps.ca, the past year has been quite a journey down the "digital graphics" highway. They have also strategically grown their commercial printing sales side. It's a balance that they strive hard to maintain, considering that 65% of the Oshawa, Ontario-based company's sales are derived from the vehicle wrap business (with about three-quarters going to the US).

It's All About the Customer

The company's constantly evolving web site explains the partner's market approach. "When you look us up on the web using common buzz words, we're number one," explains Valdstyn. But the buck doesn't stop here. The partners make a point of talking live every single business day to potential customers who complete the web forms found on the site. It's this 24-hour response time and the care that they take to address design and production questions that have spelled success for Image Digital Printing.

The customer service-driven approach permeates every corner of the business. IDP's business philosophy and mission statement both underline the importance of serving the customer well. Check out the conclusion in the customer service policy: "Call on us. We'll show you real customer service." Or the last sentence in the mission statement: "It's about enjoying what we do and ensuring that our customers are happy with how we do it."

Armed with a highly motivated staff of customer service-driven designers (including an on-staff web designer), the IDP team turns around design and production requirements quickly and efficiently. The services offered are considered consultative, and staff make every effort to recommend the correct material for a specific application. In the vehicle wrap market, for example, putting a wrap on for a month usually means more than that at IDP, which

adheres strictly to 3M's comply technology for film and overlaminating media — a fact that has saved their professional installers hours of application and removal time alone.

Selecting the right technology for the job is a key factor in the company's growth. As Valdstyn says, "We are ahead of the game with our capacity to output with our machines." In this case, the repertoire of technology includes a Mimaki JV-3 printer, Gandi Jeti 3.3 grand format printer, Océ Arizona 180 printer, Gerber Edge2, Summa plotter and Seal film and liquid laminators. The owners also anticipate making additional equipment purchases in the next year.

But having the best there is technologically means you need the best staff as well. Valdstyn and Tenwesteneind regularly assess workflow in an attempt to correct any inequities in sales and customer service, design, production and installation. Between the two of them, they gauge what is best for each department and make necessary adjustments in a timely fashion.

"We have a great staff and believe in treating them well. It's important for them to learn and grow in the industry as well. " stresses Valdstyn. To that end, the entire team is travelling to the next International trade show this coming spring.

The partners' ongoing drive to help their staff improve and to upgrade their business systems keeps them on the leading edge of vehicle graphics.

The Drive to Succeed

The partners are motivated to see just how large they can grow their business. Valdstyn describes it as instant gratification. "When you see your work out there, it's very satisfying. It's not just selling something. People get a kick out of what we do. We put stickers on things for a living. It is just a business, but how big can we make it? How efficient can we make it?"

Most businesses were unaware of what wraps were five years ago. In the next five years, Tenwesteneind believes that vehicle wraps will be a household word. With installation being the most difficult component of the job, the real challenge for the industry will be to train enough experienced certified installers throughout North America. "As wraps become more of an affordable form of advertising, the demand for installers will increase," says Tenwesteneid, and they will need hundreds of hours of practical experience to produce proficiently, quickly and expertly.

Aiding in the drive for efficiency is the ability to improve from within. Customizing vehicle graphics libraries and creating their own templates for specific vehicles has helped. Something as simple as a change in the location of a window on a van can play havoc in an installation.

While constant innovation has driven growth, the partners are aware that becoming too big can also be a danger. Valdstyn says, “We need to make sure the needs of our small account groups are taken care of as much as our larger accounts.”

The diversity of the customer base plays an important part in IDP’s commercial printing side. Whether producing work for a movie set, posters or banners, every job is managed the same way and assessed in the same fashion once delivered to a customer. The partners believe in their systems and are comfortable partnering within the industry. “We are making it more convenient for our customers to offer digital printing services to their customers. We aren’t afraid to throw our pricing out there. There are no games,” says Valdstyn.

With a diverse customer base, strategic marketing plans that are both innovative and focused, and a highly motivated staff, the partners believe that their market is all *wrapped up*. As Valdstyn notes: “The structures and foundations we have set are the things that will carry us now.”

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