

All Star Signs enjoys faster production and more vibrant prints with HP Latex printers compared to its solvent equipment



At a glance

Industry: Sign & Display

Business name: All Star Signs, Inc

Headquarters: Escondido, CA USA

Website: allstarsignsinc.com



Challenge

- All Star Signs wanted to replace its existing solvent printer with a more up-to-date device that could produce better quality prints more quickly.

Solution

- After visiting the Signworld convention, All Star Signs decided to take on the HP Latex 360 Printer on a pre-launch trial basis.

Results

- The new HP Latex 360 Printer produces prints at three times the speed, and removes the need for outgassing, meaning they can be handled straight off the printer, saving more time.
- Prints are sharper, colours are more vibrant.
- Lower ink usage helps reduce running costs.
- The HP Latex 300 Series Printer can print to a vast range of media for the ultimate in versatility.

"The HP Latex 360 Printer is an absolute joy! It produces superior print quality three times faster than our old device across a huge variety of media. It has transformed how we work and increased our productivity."

— George Beitner, owner and founder, All Star Signs, Inc

Established in San Diego in 1997, All Star Signs, Inc. is an independent sign and graphics company with its own team of designers, installers, and production staff capable of transferring customer concepts into a superior finished product. It is also a member of Signworld Organisation, a national organisation of independent sign companies with over 260 locations throughout the United States. This provides customers with a nationally recognised group of owners that can handle any corporate need.

Exploring new HP Latex Printing technologies

For many years, the company has used a solvent printer to produce digital prints on plain white vinyl, creating a range of exterior, interior and vehicle signage principally for the construction industry. However, as technology has evolved in the intervening years, All Star Signs, Inc. became eager to explore new, more advanced printing solutions.

"Our existing digital platform was showing its age. So while we were visiting the Signworld Convention in Las Vegas, I asked my fellow owners what we should be looking at. It was clear that HP was making waves with its latex technology, but we were reluctant to take the plunge," explains George Beitner, owner and founder of All Star Signs, Inc. "Paul Wagner is the VP of technical services at Signworld and a real guru in the industry. He convinced us to install the latest generation of HP Latex printers as part of the pre-launch trial."

"All Star Signs was an ideal candidate to trial the HP Latex printer, as its existing printing technology is becoming outdated and because it has a wide range of customers and applications, allowing it to push the new machine's versatility to the limit," explains Wagner.

Easy to operate, quick to print

HP helped All Star Signs install the new printer in under five hours: "It was an incredibly simple and well-thought-out process to get it up and running. We also found out right away that the machine was really easy to use."

The next benefit Beitner and his team noticed was the huge increase in speed provided by HP Latex Printing Technologies, compared to the previous solvent printer. Not only does it print at three times the speed but prints dry instantly and can be handled directly after printing without the usual 24 hour delay. There is no need to degass output. You can handle and finish prints immediately as they come off the printer.

"We used to run many jobs overnight on the old machine, simply because it was so slow. And then we would have to wait a full day before we could laminate the output," continues Beitner. "Since installing the HP Latex 360 Printer in December, we haven't worked nights at all because there is simply no need. At two foot per minute production speeds, it is churning through our jobs well within regular hours."



Colour quality and versatility

All Star Signs is also impressed with the print quality provided by the HP Latex printer, particularly the vibrancy of the colours and the vast range of media which can be used. The company has used vinyl gloss, reflective, clear, ultra-flex banner, and clearview window perforated media, across numerous indoor and outdoor projects.

"The quality delivered by the HP Latex 360 Printer is far superior to that of a solvent printer. The colours are more solid, whereas they often appeared pixelated on the old machine. It's easier to colour match, while the fidelity and consistency are outstanding," says Beitner. "It also uses less ink. In two and a half months we have only used three 750ml ink cartridges so far. The old printer would, in contrast, get through a litre of ink per month."

Grace under pressure

One recent project that gave the HP Latex 360 Printer an opportunity to shine was a recent project wrapping six jeeps in promotional material before they took part in a photo shoot and a desert rally. All Star Signs used 3M™ Controltac v3 media on the new printer to create the necessary material but this wasn't a simple project due to the very tight turnaround times expected.

"The artwork arrived in our inbox on Tuesday and the photo shoot was on Friday so we had to print, laminate and wrap the media in a matter of days. The solvent printer would not have been able to cope, but the HP Latex 360 ensured we were ready for the close up!" comments Beitner. "The customer was delighted with the quality of the finished product and our ability to meet the deadline."

With the HP Latex 360 Printer due to be returned to HP in the coming weeks following this successful trial, Beitner has a decision to make. "We're going to have to invest in the HP Latex printer because it has spoiled my team and we've enjoyed working regular hours for a change! The speed, flexibility and quality also speak for themselves," concludes Beitner. "Plus, it opens up a whole host of new market possibilities. I've seen some of the applications created by other printers on this machine for museum and galleries – that is definitely something we could exploit locally. There is a world of opportunity."

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At press time (April 2014), All Star Signs, Inc served as a beta test site for the HP Latex 360 Printer.

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4AA5-1479EEW, April 2014

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