

FASTSIGNS 637

A Foster Case Study by Dennis Mason

Hot rod fanatic. Snowmobile nut. Speed junkie. Videographer and video producer. Sign maker. Entrepreneur. Finding the one proper adjective to describe Greg Painter is difficult. No, impossible! Currently the owner of FASTSIGNS 637 in Helena, Montana, Painter's interests and career path defy description.

Painter's entry into the business world began when he was in high school, selling engine parts from his parents' spare bedroom to friends interested in getting more speed and performance from their cars. At only 20, he opened Hobby Engine, a small speed shop selling engine kits to car buffs. Business thrived and grew, and in 1988 he purchased a large auto parts store. Seven years later, he built Dr. Zoom Auto Parts—a superstore that fulfilled his business dream for ten years before he sold to a large auto parts chain in 2002.

Although the auto parts business had consumed Painter's days, his nights and weekends were devoted to snowmobiles in winter and motorcycles and ATVs in summer. He was able to turn these avocations into an occupation after selling Dr. Zoom by filming and marketing extreme motorsports movies full time. His many credits include Mountain Mod Mania, one of the all-time top ranking snowmobile movies worldwide, V-Twin Mania for the Harley Davidson crowd, and an ATV movie called SideXSide Mania.



Greg Painter, owner of FASTSIGNS 637 in Helena, Montana.



Owner, Greg Painter readying a cut on the Foster SteelTraK.

In addition to shooting the video for his movies, Painter does his own artwork stills for his movie business, GraphicLabsTV. His success and interest in graphics—together with his obligations to a wife and two sons—led him to stay closer to home and produce motorsports graphics. Painter began producing vehicle wraps and other graphics on a latex printer, a cutter, and a laminator, and in 2013 became a FASTSIGNS franchisee.

Today, FASTSIGNS 637 is a family business, with Greg Painter at the helm, his wife Janelle keeping the books, son Quay doing graphic design on the computer, and son Jentry managing production. The Painter family business talent has meshed well with the FASTSIGNS business concept, and Painter says his current staff of four does the sales volume that took 12 workers in the auto parts business. Greg and Janelle recently won a trip to Cancun for becoming one of the top ten fastest growing FASTSIGNS franchises and doubling sales in 2015. And when BlueCross BlueShield opened a new headquarters in Helena, Painter landed a six-figure contract to furnish all the

interior graphics for the new building. He says: “FASTSIGNS provided us good training and readily available resources—just what someone new to the sign business needs.”

True to form, Greg Painter is now looking to expand his business into new areas. Printing on fabric has piqued his interest, and he is expanding the geographic footprint of the business as customers beyond Helena learn of his capabilities. His FASTSIGNS franchise is one of only two in Montana, so opportunities abound.

As he expands, Painter continues to bring the latest technology into his shop. One of his recent acquisitions was a Foster Keencut SteelTraK vertical cutter with a vertical height of 98 inches, enabling his production personnel to cut a full 4 x 8-foot sheet of sign substrate in continuous one blade movement. Talking about the purchase, Painter said: “Our old cutter was too small to let us cut the length of a full material sheet, so we inevitably wasted board and our ability to lay out signage



Jentry (L) and Greg Painter — Two generations of sign makers.

depended on our cutter capacity. Keencut offers smaller cutters, but the 98-inch version is clearly the most versatile.”

The 98-inch SteelTraK has other advantages, too. Production manager Jentry Painter commented: “Before we got our new vertical cutter, we were cutting Dibond® with a table saw, and we had ragged edges on almost every cut. Now we get flawless cuts every time. We estimate that our new SteelTraK has upped our productivity by five to ten times.”

If history is any indicator of the future, Greg Painter probably will eventually move on to bigger and better things — maybe an entire chain of FASTSIGN franchises across the great Northwest he loves. But he feels that his SteelTraK cutter will serve him well into the foreseeable future. “Our SteelTraK is an extremely versatile piece of equipment and is very easy to use. It is rugged enough that we should not need to replace it for many years.”



Morgan, the FASTSIGNS 637 pet and burglar alarm, dressed for work!