HANDLING BIG ROLLS AT VINCENT PRINTING

A Foster Case Study *by Dennis Mason*

VPi - Vincent Printing Inc. Co.

Greg Bates, plant manager

In 1989, when Greg Bates began working at Vincent Printing in Chattanooga, Tennessee, his main job responsibility was helping the men running the screen press with laying stencils and keeping the paper straight as it was sent through the dryers. Today, Bates is the plant manager, captaining a fleet of 5-meter wide-format HP printers as well as several other printers, cutters, and related equipment. In the process, he has seen the company grow to more than 100 employees. This growth has brought complexity, with Bates managing production in a plant serving customers across North America.

Vincent Printing today is a major supplier of industrial printing, specializing in billboards, building wraps, transit advertising, point-of- purchase displays, banners, and stadium graphics for major events, as well as temporary displays and signs. The major campaigns Vincent Printing has conducted include a nationwide project involving more than 1700 billboards for Cracker Barrel restaurants. Displays from Vincent Printing have appeared in Times Square, the NBA All Star Game, and several stadium wraps including the New York Jets.

Keeping the Vincent Printing fleet of super wide printers running smoothly to produce such major graphic projects has prompted the company to develop a number of proprietary techniques and equipment. Among these is a media frame used to hold large substrate rolls, thus minimizing the necessary number of roll changes. Says Bates: “When the company first developed the frame technique, rolls no larger than 330 feet could be handled. Even those rolls, however, were awkward for operators to move, and involved taking the frame structure into the warehouse for loading. Also, putting the frame into position at the printer infeed involved the operator walking on a narrow catwalk—a potentially dangerous necessity.”

At SGIA 2016 in Las Vegas, Bates noticed Foster On-a- Roll® lifters on several stands. And while the lifters were obviously being used by most of the major printer manufacturers, none seemed to quite address the rather unique Vincent Printing problem of large rolls in a frame.

Vincent Printing pressroom

Upon his return to Chattanooga, Bates, along with Derrill Pitts discussed his lifter needs with a representative of AGFA Graphics, which handles the Foster line. When the two of them could not find a production Foster lifter to handle the job, Bates was referred to Foster headquarters, where he found the company willing to modify a standard machine to fit Vincent Printing's needs.

The resulting product—a Foster lifter with a special roll tray and loading mechanism—has dramatically changed how Vincent Printing manages media rolls. Today, instead of loading 330-foot rolls on the frame in the warehouse, 1000-foot rolls of 7-ounce PVC, weighing some 800 pounds, are taken on the Foster lifter from the warehouse. As a result, roll change times have fallen from 30 minutes to 10, plus using the much larger rolls means that actual roll changes have been reduced to one-third the previous number. Talking about his experience with the Foster lifter, Bates says: "The Foster lifter has dramatically simplified our production. Roll changes are fewer and faster, and employees no longer need to climb on the frame to put everything in position. We are looking at additional Foster lifters to use on other machines."

Bates using a Foster On-a- Roll® lifter

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