

Truck-side Advertising Takes Off

SOME OPTIONS AND HANDS-ON ADVICE TO GIVE YOU AN EDGE IN THE EMERGING TRUCK-SIDE ADVERTISING GAME.

BY NORM GOBERT

While touring the floor at the ISA show several years ago, I was fascinated with what I thought at the time was a unique idea. It was called *advertising in motion*, a new entrant in the out-of-home advertising arena.

After returning home from the show I told the wife about this mobile advertising vehicle and... Well, my wife wasn't impressed. Of course she knows me, and she just assumed this was just another one of my *wild hairs*.

Unfortunately for her, I convinced a few friends that the idea was worth spending a few bucks on and here I am today still pitching the idea around. The only difference is that I now have a financial obligation attached to the advertising in motion idea.

After two years of selling ad space to banks, casinos and telecommunications businesses, while overcoming the fact that the manufacturer of the truck has gone out

of business, the truck has become a great self-promotion vehicle for our company.

Meanwhile, I continue to land a few pricey jobs for special events like high-profile conventions, trade shows, political campaigns and dot-com companies, and they're all looking for a non-traditional advertising media.

HOW IT WORKS

My particular truck features three sides of advertising space. Every six-to-eight seconds, one of the seven ads on each side scrolls down, creating a continuously moving display.

It really garners a lot of attention when it hits the road and the ads scroll up and down. We have found that the audience enjoys the movement and will watch until they see the ads scroll completely around.

The graphics are printed on front-lit and back-lit banner materials with super-wide

printers like those manufactured by VUTEk, Salsa Digital, NUR and Scitex. Just recently we have begun printing our graphics in-house with our 54" Raster Graphics Arizona™ digital press. Of course the graphic panels are wider than 54" so we simply tile the graphics and sew each panel together.

We sell ad space on the vehicle and create a mutual route or location where the truck is to be located. Just like outdoor billboards, these graphics are large and stunning, and now we can go wherever our clients' clients are. Add the fact that these graphics are at street level and they can't help but be noticed.

My long-term goal was not to enter the out-of-home media business, but I wanted to use the truck to get into the 300-dpi outdoor graphics production business. I wanted a 10' to 16' oversized banner printing machine. Throughout this learning process I became familiar with truck-side advertising and all the options that were available.

In recent years, with the growth of digital printing, truck graphics production has really taken off. Decorating a truck is not a new idea. Most trucks have some kind of graphics or lettering to indicate corporate identity. And many trucks are also painted to indicate ownership.

However, with digital printing, the options available for truck graphics have increased dramatically. With a digital printer, photographic images can be enlarged, printed on pressure-sensitive material or flexible face fabric, and attached to sides of a truck, even 53-foot-long semis.

Because of the quick turnaround, graphics can then be changed on a monthly or yearly basis. Before digital printing, painting or applying vinyl to the side of a truck was not only time-



Short advertising campaigns many times bring in the most money for the time involved. Globalstar USA needed to make an impact in the most desirable areas where conventioners were located. With a little sales savvy you can also approach multiple advertisers, and, using a rolling framing system that changes the ads out frequently, truck sides and backs can become a lucrative profit source.



consuming, its graphics potential was limited and the removal process complex.

From my position this was a great idea. The synergy between truck sides and digital printing was a win-win proposition. It has been said that a truck without graphics is like an empty canvas. Why waste this valuable space?



After printing the tiled panels on 12-oz. banner material, we trimmed each panel and sent it to a seamstress for the finishing touches.

PRESSURE SENSITIVE

Digital printing and its applications on trucks were first ushered in with pressure-sensitive vinyl graphics. 3M has perfected this process and continues to garner the lion's share of the vehicle graphics market.

Case in point, 3M has partnered with AdverTrailer Systems, a media company specializing in mobile outdoor advertising. These mobile billboards carry advertising messages printed with 3M's latest materials, adhered to a Yellow Freight vehicle and driven into the most demographically desirable areas and up close to people.

Additionally, advertisers want proof of performance; in fact, ad agencies demand it. So companies like AdverTrailer have installed electronic tracking systems that report on the AdverTrailer's daily travels.

NUR has also stepped to the plate with its NURFLEET™ program for creating digitally-printed changeable messages on the sides of trucks on flexible material with the NUR Blueboard HiQ+™ super-wide printer.

And, as you've probably already read, the Traffic Audit Bureau (TAB) has begun quantifying the advertising effectiveness of fleetside advertising. The TAB methodology has legitimized fleetside advertising within the advertising community. This is the single most important step in the growth of fleetside advertising.

Many advancements have also been made to pressure-sensitive vinyls, including 3M's Scotchcal™ Changeable Film Series 3500.



Sales-oriented sign makers can have the best of both worlds — multiple-impression digitally-printed truck sides, or more permanent corporate identification. Look around your town and note the number of bare trucks driving around. Each one represents a sale waiting to happen.



In addition to a moving billboard service, the AiM truck was used for added exposure at the hospitality tent. Here the truck was positioned near the tent's entrance, acting as a large portable display unit, further enhancing awareness of the product launch.

Printers can customize frames for different truck sizes. (Photo courtesy Epic Media, Manhattan Beach, Calif.)



Network, Vassar, Mich., offers a mounting system called the Kwik Zip which is manufactured by the Epic Media Group. This appears to be the quickest, easiest-to-use framing system.

These vinyls are easy to apply and remove. The series used by our Arizona is designed for screen-printed or digitally-imaged short-term and seasonal graphics. As such, the product is guaranteed by 3M's Matched Component System (MCS™) warranty.

FLEXIBLE FACE

Although pressure-sensitive vinyl certainly has its claws firmly latched onto the fleet-graphics market, flexible face vinyl is giving it some competition.

One of the drawbacks of pressure-sensitive

materials is that the adhesives are designed to stick, making removal a sometimes lengthy and difficult process.

The idea behind flexible face truck graphics is that rather than sticking the graphic on a truck, a separate tensioning frame holds the billboard-sized graphic in place, making the graphic easier and quicker to install and remove.

The basic idea is that some kind of aluminum framing system is attached to the sides of the truck. For example, MOTR (Messages on the Road) Advertising

Using flexible face rather than pressure-sensitive graphics affords several advantages, the most basic being that the graphic can be installed in about 30 minutes (per each side of the truck) and once removed it can be reused either on another truck or as a stationary billboard. A trucking company desiring short-term promotions — even as short as a week — could *move* the message around town, and then change the promotion quickly.

Having shared a brief background on truck-side advertising, here's how I recently tackled a truck-side advertising project in my hometown.



Wilcox Family Farms uses its 53-foot trailers to introduce its seasonal products. The images are changed out using a frame system. This image was printed on a NUR Blueboard using a frame system by Driving Impressions. (Photo courtesy Driving Impressions)



These images were printed on frameless NURFLEET™ tarpaulins by European digital printing companies using Blueboard printers. European trucks are mostly soft-sided, but in the U.S. most are hard-sided, so a framing system is needed. (Photos courtesy NUR America, Newton, Mass.)

THE REAL WORLD

Last March, the Personal Communications International Association (PCIA) came to town and practically bought out all of the outdoor advertising venues in the downtown area. So, without any billboards available, trade show exhibitors looked to taxi top ads and bus shelters.

Opportunity came knocking at our door in the form of a company promoting a new mobile satellite communication system. This firm wanted to gain additional exposure on the streets of New Orleans, so they contracted us to drive their message around town for three days. Our task was to make an impact wherever the conventioners were located. Whether it was airport arrival, hotels, restaurants or the convention center boulevard, our truck and the customer's message was hitting the streets.

Once the details regarding rates, routes and schedules were finalized, we received the client's artwork and began printing two 8' x 5.5' banners for both sides and a single 5' x 5.5' rear panel for our vehicle.

Utilizing our Arizona we tiled the images and outsourced the sewing to a local seamstress. After the seamstress attached a Velcro strip to the panel top and a pole pocket to the bottom, we installed the panels in our truck and began making an impression on the streets of New Orleans.

TYPES OF OPTIONS

Fleet advertising can be broken down into three categories: cooperative, leased-fleet and dedicated fleet advertising. My vehicle typically falls into the dedicated category.

That entails good news and bad news...

First, the good news. I'm not carrying cargo or passengers so I can target any geographic area. In fact, my truck is French Quarter Friendly!

My vehicle's size does not limit it from traveling in areas where larger vehicles have been prohibited. On the other hand, dedicated trucks like mine have come under attack by certain segments of the human population.

Recently, several dedicated trucks appeared in convoy near the entrance to the convention center and all were asked to choose an alternate route. In more drastic cases, some cities have restricted mobile advertising in general. Is this good government at work?

Other forms of fleet advertising include cooperative advertising, which involves a company putting graphics on its own fleet to advertise its products. Because there is no advertising space rental cost, the only cost involved is for the graphics. This form of fleet advertising is commonly found on furniture store fleets.

Lastly, leased-fleet advertising involves media companies, like AdverTrailer, that align themselves with independent trucking companies (Yellow Freight) leasing the space on the truck and selling ad space to advertisers.

In this case, Krogers grocery chain might sell space on the side of its truck to Kellogg's or General Mills, allowing these advertisers to promote their consumer products. The cost covers the fleet graphics production and installation, and a little extra profit for



the space rental.

So the next time you see fleet graphics rolling down the interstate, start thinking how you could make some tracks of your own with truck-side advertising.

For more information on truck-side framing systems and media placement firms:

- Epic Media Group (framing system company). Contact Marvan Smith, (310) 546-2723
- Metro Media (framing system company). Contact Don Avjean, (312) 467-4668
- MOTR Advertising Network (media placement firm). Contact Eric Peterson, (517) 823-6687



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