

Rolling Success



Luke Keys and Tim Phillips of Crystal Clear Imaging, New Orleans, maneuver the GBC Protech F-60 to laminate window perf printed with an Arizona solvent printer for vehicle graphics.



Mounting to a substrate is another important part of the lamination/finishing equation.



Bryan Halladay and Rich Sorensen laminate a print at Creative Color, Salt Lake City.

What to know when purchasing a laminator.

BY DAVID KING

About the author: David King is the director of operations for Massachusetts based Castle Graphics. He has been in the digital industry for over 20 years and works with a number of major manufactures to help develop new and better technologies. In addition to writing for Sign Business, David is a frequent speaker at The Sign Business & Digital Graphics Show. He has also produced a series of educational video tapes on digital printing and finishing for Video Classroom. For more information on these videos call 800-691-8047.



LAMINATORS are such an important part of the large format market, and the information that is given to the potential customers is so critical, that I see a need to set the record straight...

Laminators cost as low as \$1,500 and as high as \$25,000, so what do you get for \$25,000 and what do you *not* get with a \$1,500 laminator?

Let's start by understanding what you are going to use the laminator for and how often you are going to use the laminator. Just because it is called a *laminator* does not mean it is just *laminates*. You are best suited if the laminator also does mounting. Mounting is the process of removing the laminate from the machine and setting the rollers to the height of the substrate so that the print can be applied to the substrate with speed and even pressure. In most cases machines that laminate and also mount cost over \$5,000.

Here are major features and functions of laminators that you must consider:

SIZE

This is the width of the material and/or the width of the board that can be run through the laminator. Most boards are 48" x 96", so if you look at getting a laminator that supports over 50" you should be all set. For most companies

that do large format digital printing, a 60" laminator is the best choice for size width. At Castle Graphics, over 95 percent of all the mounting we do is on boards that are 48" x 96" or less, but with a 60" machine you can work with just about any board size.

HEATED ROLLERS

Laminate comes in only three heat types: cold laminate (no heat), low melt vinyl laminate (185°), and polyester laminate (225°).

For cold laminate just about any laminator will do, because heat on the rollers is not required (or recommended) for this material. The best applications for cold laminate are all vinyl products — both adhesive-backed and banner vinyls.

Low melt vinyl laminate is the best choice laminate for all inkjet and photo graphics (typically indoor graphics). Low-cost, high-heat polyester laminate is typically used for bond paper applications, like menus.

By having a laminator that can use heat you will save a lot of money on laminate. Cold laminate is more expensive than hot and in most cases the hot laminate will produce a much better finish.

ROLLERS: SINGLE VS. DOUBLE SETS

I see three types of laminators. The first type is designed for just laminating prints and typically has two hot rollers and costs under \$5000. The second type is a small light duty laminator and in most cases has one set of rollers and can mount prints after the rollers are cooled down. The third is a heavy duty commercial laminator that will cost over \$10,000 and have two sets of rollers, one set for laminating and the other for mounting.

I have three commercial laminators that all have two sets of rollers; the front set stay hot and the back stay cold. By having a laminator that has both types of rollers you can laminate the job, and then unthread the laminator and mount the job.

Here is something for you to think about: Let's say a single roller set laminator costs \$14,000 and a laminator with a double set of rollers costs \$22,000. The question is, can you justify the extra \$8,000?

So you decide not to spend the extra \$220 per month (based on a three-year lease at 10 percent) for the heavy duty commercial laminator with the double set of rollers.

Example of a real situation that will happen to you: You get an order for a *rush* job on Tuesday morning and you have to produce ten, 30" x 40" laminated prints by the end of the day.

You give your customer a *rush* price of \$2250 (\$750 more than the standard price) and you are told that the job will be on disk and in your office by 10 a.m.

At 10:15 FedEx brings the job and you open it, but the disk is missing an image. So you call your client and leave him a voice mail. At noon he calls you back and tells you he is sending the file via e-mail. At 1 p.m. you get it, and start printing the job on your HP 5000. The job will take 2.5 hours to print. It is now 3:30 p.m. and the prints are done. So you now run them through the laminator and put a laminate on top and an adhesive on the bottom.

You now must cool down the laminator so you can mount (you cannot mount with a hot roller); this takes 45 minutes (in best case).

Now it is 4:30 p.m. and you have cut all the boards and are ready to start mounting. You mount the prints but you make a mistake on the eighth print and get a crease through the print. It is now 5:00 and FedEx will be at your door in 15 minutes but you have to print another print, so you start printing and 15 minutes later you are done. Now you must heat up the laminator (another 20 minutes) to apply the laminate. It is now 5:35 and you have missed FedEx.

So you have applied the laminate to the print and re-cut the board and now you must again let the laminator cool

down. Now it is 6:15 and you have missed dinner with the kids and you are now packing up the 10 prints and driving to FedEx to make the 8:00 p.m. cutoff.

Now was this worth it? You made \$750 more for the rush and had you purchased the better laminator you would have made the FedEx pickup and been home for dinner on time! The point is that for an extra \$220 a month you only have to have one rush charge to pay for the better laminator. Plus the time you save during the day with a dual laminator is incredible!

FEATURES

The features *I* like are:

- A dial setting for height of the rollers for mounting.
- A dial to set the downward pressure of the mounting rollers so I can set them to 20 lbs for applying premask, and then back to 80 lbs for mounting to Sintra. This is a cool option!
- Two foot petals — one for both sides of the machine (a must!)
- A speed control, so you can run fast on jobs that need the speed.
- A slitter system to allow you to run jobs through the laminator and slit them on the fly (I love this feature on my units).
- And as little electronics as possible, all they do is get in the way!

We've put together a chart for your reference, so you can look for the features *you* would like to see on a laminator in *your* shop.

It's not by any means the complete list of features the laminators have but those I feel you must know about.

Then you can contact the companies to find out the other bells and whistles!

After you purchase your laminator you should call up Video Classroom (800 691-8047) and order Volume 1 of the *Basics of Inkjet Printing and Laminating*. This two-hour video will help you get started the first day and have you laminating and mounting without mistakes in just hours.

Good luck!

ADVANCED GRIEG LAMINATORS INC.
 Madison WI 53707
 608-223-1380
 www.aglaminators.com

MODEL	PRICE	WIDTH	COLD/HOT	SINGLE/DOUBLE ROLLERS	MOUNT CAPABLE	WARRANTY
AGL 44	\$11,500	42	Both	Double	Yes	1 year
AGL 44C	\$9,700	42	Cold	Double	Yes	1 year
AGL 44T	\$10,450	42	Both	Double	Yes	1 year
AGL 4400	\$15,650	42	Both	Double	Yes	1 year
AGL 4400C	\$11,500	42	Cold	Double	Yes	1 year
AGL 4400T	\$14,225	42	Both	Double	Yes	1 year
64C	\$14,750	64	Cold	Double	Yes	1 year
64E	\$19,950	64	Both	Double	Yes	1 year
AGL 64R	\$23,950	64	Both	Double	Yes	1 year
AGL 6400	\$31,500	64	Both	Double	Yes	1 year
AGL 6450	\$38,700	64	Both	Double	Yes	1 year
AGL 8000C	\$38,500	79	Cold	Double	Yes	1 year
AGL 8000R	\$53,950	79	Both	Double	Yes	1 year
AGL 8000S	\$46,350	79	Both	Double	Yes	1 year
AGL 8000T	\$30,900	79	Both	Double	Yes	1 year
64NH	\$11,900	64	Cold	Double	Yes	1 year
64SH	\$13,500	64	Both	Double	Yes	1 year
64DHR	\$18,500	64	Both	Double	Yes	1 year
64DHR Maxim	\$21,950	64	Both	Double	Yes	1 year
64i	\$26,700	64	Both	Double	Yes	1 year
64t	\$26,700	64	Both	Double	Yes	1 year

BANNER AMERICAN PRODUCTS
 42381 Rio Nedo
 Temecula, CA 92590
 909-296-9780
 www.banam.com

MightyLam 2700	\$2,295	27	Hot	Double	Yes	1 year
Finisher 2700	\$5,769	27	Hot	Double	Yes	1 year
Finisher 4300	\$8,880	43	Hot	Double	Yes	1 year
Finisher 6300	\$15,682	63	Hot	Double	Yes	1 year

CODA INC.
 30 Industrial Avenue
 Mahwah, NJ 07430
 201-825-7400
 www.codamount.com

Cold-Mount Hand-operated 14	\$930	14	Cold	Single	Yes	1 year
Cold-Mount Motorized 14	\$1,680	14	Cold	Single	Yes	1 year
Cold-Mount Hand-operated 26	Call	26	Cold	Single	Yes	1 year
Cold-Mount Motorized 26	Call	26	Cold	Single	Yes	1 year
Cold-Mount Hand-operated 34	\$1,285	34	Cold	Single	Yes	1 year
Cold-Mount Motorized 34	Call	34	Cold	Single	Yes	1 year
CodaPro 44	Call	44	Hot	Double	Yes	1 year
CodaPro 44-HE/HA	Call	44	Hot	Double	Yes	1 year
Cold-Mount Motorized 44	Call	44	Cold	Single	Yes	1 year
Cold-Mount Motorized 54	\$3,950	54	Cold	Single	Yes	1 year
CodaPro 64	Call	64	Hot	Double	Yes	1 year
CodaPro 64-HE/HA	Call	64	Hot	Double	Yes	1 year

DAIGE INC.
 1 Albertson Ave.
 Albertson, NY 11507
 800-645-3323
 www.daige.com

Quickmount III 25	\$1,095	25	Cold	Double	Yes	Call
Quickmount III 38	\$1,295	38	Cold	Double	Yes	Call
Quickmount III 55	\$1,795	55	Cold	Double	Yes	Call

DRYTAC CORPORATION
 5383 Glen Alden Drive
 Richmond, VA 23231
 800-280-6013
 www.drytac.com

Protac 27	\$1,495	27	Cold	Single	Yes	1 year
Protac 27	\$1,495	27	Cold	Single	Yes	1 year
Protac 32	\$2,195	32	Cold	Single	Yes	1 year

GBC Films Group
 712 W. Winthrop Ave.
 Addison, IL 60101
 800-236-8843
 www.gbcConnect.com/lamination

Catena 65	\$3,395	25	Hot	Double	Yes	90 days
Discovery 80	\$5,295	31	Hot	Double	No	90 days
Catena 105	\$7,495	41	Hot	Double	Yes	90 days
Titan 110	\$10,195	43	Hot	Double	Yes	1 year parts*
Talon 44	\$12,995	44	Hot	Double	Yes	1 year parts*
Arctic Titan	\$6,995	61	Cold	Single	Yes	1 year parts*
Falcon 60+	\$21,495	62	Hot	Double	Yes	1 year parts*
Orca 64-T.H.	\$14,995	64	Cold	Single	Yes	1 year parts*
Titan 165	\$14,995	64	Hot	Double	Yes	1 year parts*
Talon 64	\$16,995	64	Hot	Double	Yes	1 year parts*
Talon 80	\$18,995	64	Cold	Single	Yes	1 year parts*
Orca 64	\$24,995	64	Hot	Double	Yes	1 year parts* *90 days labor

	MODEL	PRICE	WIDTH	COLD/HOT	SINGLE/DOUBLE ROLLERS	MOUNT CAPABLE	WARRANTY
GRAPHIC LAMINATING INC. 6185 Cochran Rd. Solon, OH 44139 440-498-3400; 800-345-5300 www.graphiclaminating.com.	Econocraft 25	Call	25	Cold	Single	Yes	2 year
	Educator 25	Call	25	Hot	Single	Yes	2 year
	HD-25 Workhorse	Call	25	Hot	Single	Yes	2 year
	High Speed (HS) Series 25	Call	25	Hot	Single	Yes	2 year
	Premier 4	Call	25	Hot	Single	Yes	2 year
	Econocraft 30	Call	30	Cold	Single	Yes	2 year
	HS Series 30	Call	30	Hot	Single	Yes	2 year
	Heavy Duty (HD) Series 38	Call	38	Hot	Single	Yes	2 year
	Digital 42	Call	42	Hot	Single	Yes	2 year
	Econocraft 50	Call	50	Cold	Single	Yes	2 year
	HD Series 50	Call	50	Hot	Single	Yes	2 year
	Digital 60	Call	60	Hot	Single	Yes	2 year
	Econocraft 60	Call	60	Cold	Single	Yes	2 year
	HD Series 60	Call	60	Hot	Single	Yes	2 year

REPRO TECHNOLOGY INC. 1525 Airport Rd. Conroe, TX 77301 936-539-4419 www.reprotechnology.com	Star 44C	\$7,395	44		Double	Yes	1 year
	Star 62C	\$11,550	64		Double	Yes	1 year

ROYAL SOVEREIGN INTERNATIONAL INC. 100 W. Sheffield Ave. Englewood, NJ 07631 201-568-0830	RSR-685	Call	27	Hot	Double	Yes	1 year
	RSS-685	Call	27	Hot	Double	Yes	1 year
	RSH-1050	Call	41	Hot	Double	Yes	1 year
	RSR-1050	Call	41	Hot	Double	Yes	1 year
	RSS-1050	Call	41	Hot	Double	Yes	1 year
	RSH-1650	Call	65	Hot	Double	Yes	1 year

SEAL GRAPHICS AMERICAS CORP. 7091 Troy Hill Dr. Elkridge, MD 21075 410-379-5400 www.sealbrands.com	IMAGE 44 Ultra	\$5,900	43	Both	Double	Yes	1 year
	IMAGE 410	\$10,500	43	Both	Double	Yes	1 year
	62 Ultra	\$9,800	61	Both	Double	Yes	1 year
	IMAGE 600c	\$10,500	61	Cold	Single	Yes	1 year
	IMAGE 600s	\$13,000	61	Both	Single	Yes	1 year
	SEAL 62 Pro	\$17,900	61	Both	Double	Yes	1 year
	IMAGE 600 D	\$19,900	61	Both	Double	Yes	1 year
	IMAGE 600 MD	\$22,900	61	Both	Double	Yes	1 year
	IMAGE 6500	\$27,000	61	Both	Double	Yes	1 year
	IMAGE 6500 XT	\$31,000	61	Both	Double	Yes	1 year
	IMAGE 62 Plus	\$14,500	62	Both	Double	Yes	1 year
	IMAGE 80s	\$29,900	80	Both	Single	Yes	1 year

TEK WERKS CORP. N3970 County Highway V Eden, WI 53019 920-477-2600 www.tekwerks-corp.com	Spectra 420C	Call	44	Both	Double	Yes	1 year
	Spectra 420T	Call	44	Both	Double	Yes	1 year
	Spectra Pro 4200LS	Call	44	Both	Double	Yes	1 year
	Spectra 550C	Call	57	Both	Double	Yes	1 year
	Spectra 550T	Call	57	Both	Double	Yes	1 year
	Spectra Pro 5500LS	Call	57	Both	Double	Yes	1 year
	Spectra 620C	Call	64	Both	Double	Yes	1 year
	Spectra 620T	Call	64	Both	Double	Yes	1 year
	Spectra Pro 6200LS	Call	64	Both	Double	Yes	1 year
	Spectra 800C	Call	82	Both	Double	Yes	1 year
	Spectra 800T	Call	82	Both	Double	Yes	1 year
	Spectra Pro 8000LS	Call	82	Both	Double	Yes	1 year
	Spectra 1250C	Call	120	Both	Double	Yes	1 year

VENTURE COATING TECHNOLOGIES 1795 Commerce Dr. Elk Grove Village, IL 60007 800-892-0273 www.expression-vct.com	Expression 32 Heated Roll Machine	\$3,999	31	Hot	Double	Yes	1 year
	Expression 44 Twin	\$13,995	43	Both	Double	Yes	1 year
	Expression 160M	\$15,995	61	Hot	Double	Yes	1 year
	Expression 160S	\$15,995	61	Both	Double	Yes	1 year