

Digital Vehicle

Graphics

PART 2

BY DAVID KING

After the sale: wrapping things up.



but you can also make a profit. So now that you have sold the vehicle graphics, let's make it happen...

CREATE A LAYOUT

I like to use Photoshop to do my vehicle graphics designs. I load the converted template into a layer in Photoshop. I then create a mask of the layer so I can place the graphics into the vehicle and still see where the wheels and body parts are on the vehicle. Now I start bringing in the background images or colors. Then I bring in the main focus graphics (companies products), and then I bring in the company logo and text.

I create all the text in Illustrator because if I decide to do the *reflective cut vinyl* trick, I need to have a vector file to cut the vinyl. Be careful to keep the size of the text in Illustrator the same scale as the

Photoshop file. If you need to shrink the text in Photoshop, do it in Illustrator first and then import it again.

Keep in mind that when the wrap is printed you must give the print house a full rectangle of graphics and you want to build in 2" of bleed on all sides of the vehicle (e.g., if you have a van that is 138" x 66", you will print 142" x 70"). The reason for this is that all vehicles are flat on the screen but in real life they are not flat at all. And, in real life installers are not all perfect. Text that ends up against a door handle, for example, and other similar minor details can be nicely accommodated with a couple extra inches of material. There is nothing worse than having a full wrap all printed, the vehicle all cleaned and you ready to go—and it does not fit!

Oh yeah, I've done this one too... Again OUCH!

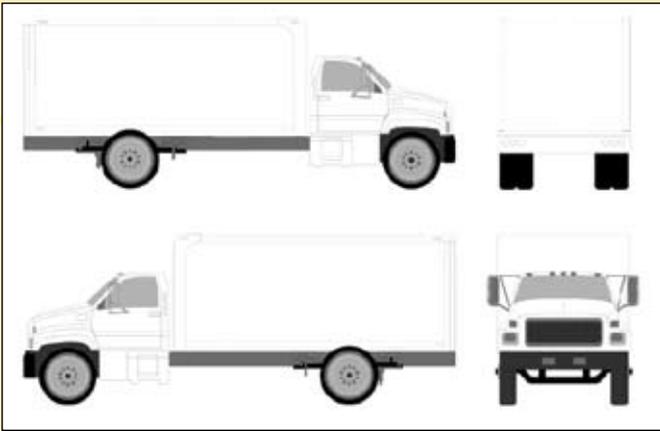


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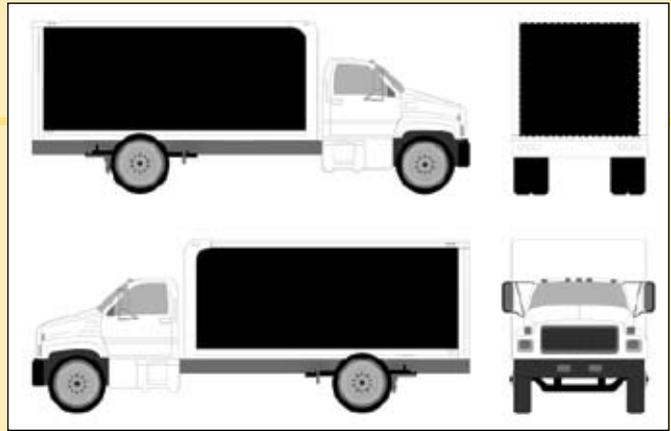
since 1983 and has worked with a number of major manufacturers to help develop new and better technologies. In addition to writing articles for Sign Business, Dave will conduct courses on vehicle graphics and how to profit from a digital printing business at The Sign Business & Digital Graphics Show in Baltimore August 24-26 and in Charlotte, October 26-28.

Last month we talked about some of the particulars of pricing vehicle graphics so that you can not only make the sale,

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Import the vehicle template from a program such as Digital Auto Library's Pro Vehicle Outlines or MR Clipart's Vehicle-Templates.



Color the vehicle to the background color you want for the wrap.



Start adding the images and moving them to the place you want them. Each image needs to be on its own layer.



Finally, add in the Vector images and logos that came from Illustrator, that you will cut on your vinyl cutter.



With a 2" bleed on all sides, begin laying out the panels on the vehicle to make sure the film was printed at the correct size. Tape the panels onto the vehicle with masking tape. When you are satisfied that the panels will fit correctly, begin applying, starting from the back and working toward the front.

STAY AWAY FROM THE BARS

There are a number of areas on the vehicle that you must keep text away from, like door handles, front windows, name plates (I take all the vehicle and dealer name plates off), license plate areas, key holes, bumpers, deep compound curves and items that could block the message. On large trucks the back doors can have one to three vertical bars that hold the door closed. These kill messages too.

Once you have laid out the vehicle you must produce a nice color comp, with all the necessary marketing information on it, so your sales people can present the layout(s) to the client. And later the clients will keep these layouts to show their clients and you'll want your name and phone number in front of them too—or any other prospective clients for that matter.

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The final part of the wrap is the window perf. You must cut out all the vinyl on the glass and remove it. Line up the window perf with the graphics, and apply.



The final step is to add the reflective cut vinyl.



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CLEAN IT UP

Okay, so your client has signed off on the design. Now get the \$1,500 for the design. Do not throw this in as this is a profit center for your company!

Now you need to decide what film you are going to use. I take this part of the wrap very seriously. I only use Avery MPI 1005ez and 3M 180-10C vinyl because I like their warranty and they have been making vehicle wrapping films for a long time. However, Oracal, Arlon and other companies also make great products. I recommend using only cast vinyl films for long-term wraps of five years, but a good cast film wrap will last much longer.

If you have not installed digitally printed vinyl before, then you should have the vinyl premasked, I use R Tape's DigiMask as it is designed for digital vinyl. This costs a little more but makes the installation easier. If you cannot print your own wrap, call one of the large companies in the country that does wraps and sells to the trade, and get a price for the film. 3M manufacturers are Scotchprint Certified; Avery manufacturers are ICS Certified. This certification will assure you that you are getting a full warranty vehicle wrap.

Okay, you have the film, and you now have the vehicle in a heated/air-conditioned bay. You should install the film between 60 and 80 degrees (F). Colder than 60 makes the film too stiff and could rip, and hotter than 80 will cause the film to stretch.

All wraps must be installed dry. Do not use any liquids to install the film.

You must clean the vehicle so well that you could eat off of it! I recommend using

a 70 percent isopropyl alcohol to clean the whole vehicle. This will remove all dirt and grease and will not leave any moisture behind. Wipe down every part of the vehicle and all parts that are within a half inch of the body panels—inside the door jams, along the side of the hood, the rim of the wheel wells, the edges of the hood, indents around the glass, and the bottom of the rocker panels.

This vehicle should be as clean as it was the day it left the showroom! Take the time to clean it, because if you rush this part, you will be rewrapping the vehicle later for *free!* Not Avery or 3M will warranty any wrap that is not properly cleaned. Trust me, I have learned this the hard way too, and it hurts!

LAY OUT THE PANELS

Now you should lay out the panels on the vehicle to make sure the film was printed at the correct size. Tape the panels onto the vehicle with masking tape. Use your hand to feel the areas of the vehicle that might cause problems with the wrap. If all is fine then take off all the panels but the back one. The back panel is always the first panel installed on a vehicle so that the overlaps will come out back to front. This is so that when the vehicle is driving, if the wind or a branch or something catches the leading edge, it will not grab the film and start ripping it off the vehicle.

I had a Hummer for four years and put seven different wraps on it. I would take it through just about anything, including full size trees; I know the vinyl is very strong!

I use the “hinge method” for installing panels, I start on one side and my part-

ner starts on the other. I tape the panel through the center, install the top first, and then the bottom. Cut away all extra vinyl and keep it just in case. The windows do not matter too much if you have wrinkles, since we will be cutting them out for the window perf later.

Once the first panel is done, match up the second to the first. The matching is very important to the success of the wrap. No customer will accept misregistered panels—they will make you re-do the wrap. If you are working on a vehicle with skip corrugation, then lining up the panels is difficult. To do this successfully, always start in the center of the panel. Always fold the vinyl over the corrugations; never stretch the vinyl into the grooves. If you are consistent, the panels will line up just fine. (Try not to start off with a skip corrugation vehicle—these are the most difficult next to a VW Bug!)

Keep going with all the panels; do not worry about the small bubbles yet. They will be worked out, or you can use your air release tool (a pin on a stick) to get the bubbles out. The final part of the wrap is the window perf. You must cut out all the vinyl on the glass and remove it. Now line up the window perf with the graphics, and again you can hinge it or use your partner to hold one side while you start on the other. Window perf is great and easy to install.

ADD THE REFLECTIVE

The final step is to add the reflective cut vinyl (if your layout calls for it). We try to use cut vinyl for a lot of the Web and phone information, because the customers are always trying to stuff this information

into some location on the vehicle where it is very tight. So with cut vinyl you can size it at the last minute and not worry that a hood lock is cutting off the letter “A” in the customer’s name.

Put back all the body parts you removed and pull your new masterpiece out into a nice area and take a few pictures of your work. These pictures will be used for your Web site and future sales slicks.

Now call your customer and tell them to bring their cash.

AND, FOUR WRAPS LATER...

It sounds easy, and for some it is, but for most of us, the first three wraps are difficult. Most of the time the first one you do is a disaster, the second is a small mess, and the third one is just okay. By the fourth, you are making money and the customers are happy.

We have a blast designing new and wild vehicle wraps (as you can see here) and our employees just love to see them driving around town. We go to major events and we do most of the vehicles graphics for them. This makes me feel really good!

For a good primer on vehicle graphics and solvent printing in general, check our Video Classroom Tape #2. For the videos or more information on wraps call or write to david@themarketing.com and I will be happy to help you with your questions.

Good luck, be smart with your money, and I will see you on the show floor!