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Contents



Crafted with care
Step into Century Signs, a shop
that combines five decades of
craftsmanship, innovation, and customer
commitment to deliver illuminated storefronts,
large-format printing, fabric products, and more.

Access granted
Navigate the evolving world
of accessible signage,
where innovation in materials, printing,
and design enhances visibility, compliance,
and brand integration.

In-house innovation
Read about how encapsulated
acrylic channel letters
offer a cost-effective solution for sign
shops—enhancing customization, reducing
outsourcing, and delivering modern signage.

21 Safely lifting the sign industry

Cranes and boom lifts have made the sign industry safer and more efficient. Explore how these tools are essential for tackling complex projects, ensuring smooth installations, and keeping workers safe on-site.

How best can sign companies use Al?

Discover how Al is revolutionizing the sign industry. This article dives into how today's sign makers can unlock tools and strategies to stay ahead in this fast-evolving digital landscape.

Charting the course
Dive into a Multigraphics
project for Bentley Systems
which elevated its event with several signage
solutions. From wayfinding to POP displays,
discover how the team navigated tight
timelines and delivered sharp results.

Industry insights
Learn about the key challenges
sign installers face at each job
site, straight from installers and sign pros, and
discover how weather, logistics, and other key
issues impact installations across Canada.

From prep to protection
Find out how Wraptors wrapped a luxury car with a full PPF package, overcoming

seasonal challenges to achieve a smooth finish.

signmedia

APRIL 2025 VOLUME 20 • NO. 2







IN THIS ISSUE

4

Editor's Note

39

Graphics Canada Expo Preview

44

Marketplace

50

Last Impression



ON THE COVER

This cover story highlights iGotcha Media's Montreal installation for Samsung, showcasing the game-changing impact of digital signs and a glimpse into the future of tech-driven signage.

Photo courtesy iGotcha Media



Turning the page

s an immigrant still adjusting to Canada's ice-cold winters, I have to admit I'm not the biggest fan of the season. Don't get me wrong-I find the winters almost magical, the hot chocolate offerings across Toronto delightful, and the walks through parks blanketed in white snow stunning and, sometimes, surreal. But other times, it can feel a bit overwhelming. So, in the winter I reworked an old adage; instead of "hope springs eternal," I'd say, "the hope of spring is eternal!" And now, spring is finally here. Isn't it lovely?

On that note, let's dive into the goodness of this issue! We start with a visit to Century Signs (on page 6) to discover their diverse offerings. On page 13, we explore the intersection of signage and accessibility, with insights from Scott Walton of PLASKOLITE. On page 17, Clayton Letourneau of Custom Sign Lab makes a compelling case for encapsulated channel letters, explaining how they save sign makers money and provide greater customization—a true win-win.

Moving on to the essential elements that keep the sign industry running. We have Kenn Leech of Tops Lighting Sign Installation & Services, on page 21, discussing the importance of safety during installations. Later, on page 33, we hear from sign makers about the challenges they face in today's installation landscape. A big thanks to all our contributors. On page 24, we feature an insightful piece by Carl Breau of Nummax, who discusses how the sign industry can embrace artificial intelligence (AI)—and he's already testing these tools himself. Then, Miguel Cuenca and Analhi Sanchez highlight how Multigraphics' POP displays helped guide visitors seamlessly at an event with their descriptive signage and wayfinding solutions. Last, Matthew Lavery walks us through the steps, best practices, and preparation needed to create a successful vehicle wrap on page 36. Be sure to check out our Graphics Canada Expo preview on page 39-it's your go-to guide to steer through the event from April 9-11. We'll see you there!

Our talented designer, Steve Maver, crafted this issue, and our team is happy to keep bringing you exciting collections of articles. We've also rolled out a few digital initiatives on our website-have you explored them yet? Go on, do it! And if you're interested in contributing your insights to future issues, you know where to find me.

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APRIL 2025 • VOL.20 • NO. 2

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RATES

Canada 1 year: \$49.00 (incl. taxes) \$77.00 US U.S. 1 year: Foreign 1 year: \$98.00 US Publications Mail Agreement #40663030

Postmaster: Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to: Kenilworth Media Inc. 30 Leek Crescent, Suite 201, Richmond Hill, ON L4B 4N4 Tel: (905) 771-7333; Fax: (905) 771-7336

Sign Media Canada (ISSN 1718-3006) is published eight times a year, including an annual Buyers' Guide, by Kenilworth Media Inc 30 Leek Crescent, Suite 201, Richmond Hill, ON L4B 4N4

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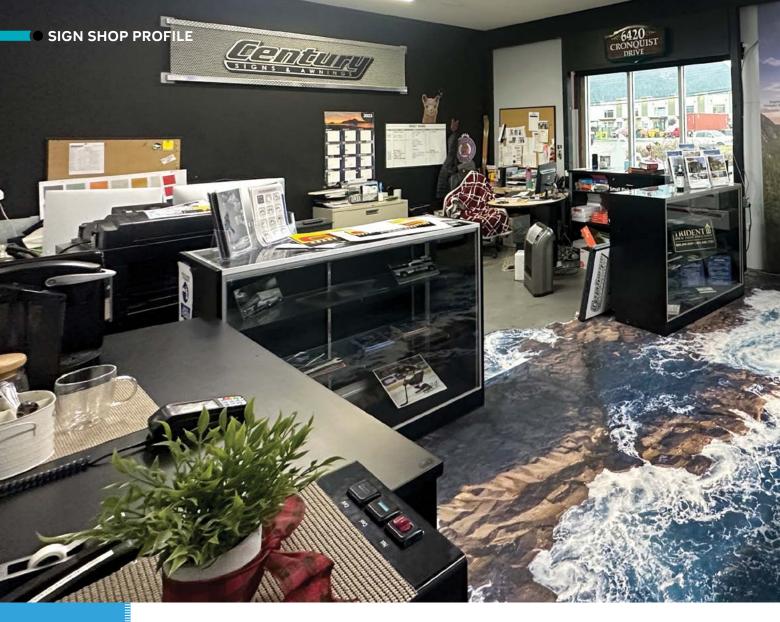


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Crafted with care

Inside the Western Canadian shop where customer relationships and quality come first

By Marika Gabriel

Photos courtesy Century Signs

entury Signs, a Vancouver, B.C.-based sign company, has a rich history dating back to 1974.

It has evolved over the decades as an awning company, embracing innovation and expanding its offerings to become a leader in the Western Canadian signage market. However, signage isn't all it does; it focuses on three major product lines.

From illuminated storefront signs to large-format printing and complex fabrication, Century Signs offers a range of in-

house products and services. Sign Media Canada spoke with Khuram Shahzad, the company's marketing specialist, who discussed the company's unique approach, recent projects, and future plans.

Sign Media Canada (SMC): What is the history of the shop?

Founded in 1974, Century Signs began as a humble awning company called Ancient Mariner Industries. Gary Taylor,







the current owner, acquired the business and operated it from a small shop outside downtown Vancouver, B.C. Initially, the company specialized solely in selling and producing high-quality awnings.

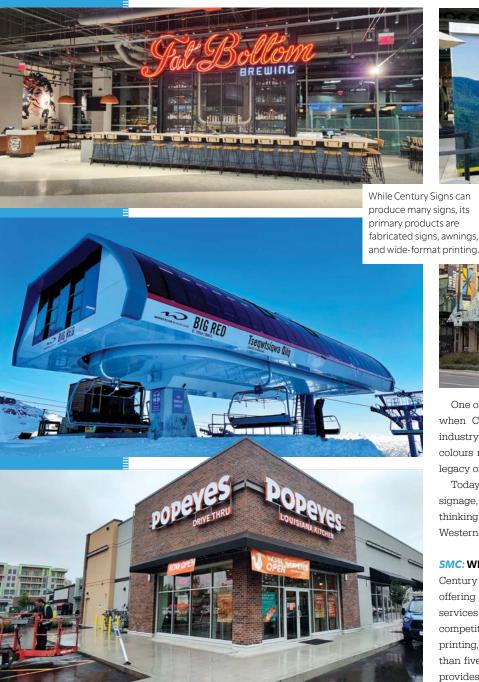
By 1979, after mastering the art of cutting and sewing awnings, the company expanded its expertise to include

industrial fabrics, producing juvenile products, life jackets, and safety gear. This diversification marked the beginning of a new chapter.

In the mid-1980s, as technology advanced, the company embraced innovation by integrating backlighting and graphics into its awning products. This shift paved the way



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for the introduction of illuminated storefront signs, solidifying its reputation as a leader in Vancouver's signage market. Recognizing the need for a name that better reflected its evolving product range, Taylor rebranded the company as Century Signs & Awnings in 1994. Inspired by the tagline "Quality Signs & Awnings for the 21st Century," the name signalled the company's commitment to staying ahead of the curve. During this period, the business relocated to Surrey, B.C.

In the latter half of the 2000s, Century Signs expanded further by opening a second location in Squamish, B.C., fuelled by the signage demand from the 2010 Winter Olympics. This move established the company as a key signage supplier in the Sea-to-Sky region of B.C.





One of the most significant transformations came in 2021 when Century Signs celebrated nearly 50 years in the industry with a complete brand overhaul. The new logo and colours reflect a modern identity while honouring its rich legacy of craftsmanship and innovation.

Today, Century Signs stands as a trusted name in signage, combining decades of experience with a forward-thinking approach to meet the needs of businesses across Western Canada.

SMC: What makes your company unique?

Century Signs is one of the few companies in Vancouver offering a comprehensive range of in-house products and services within the signage industry. While many competitors specialize in either fabrication, awnings, or printing, Century Signs excels in all three. Leveraging more than five decades of stitching expertise, the company also provides industrial fabric products.

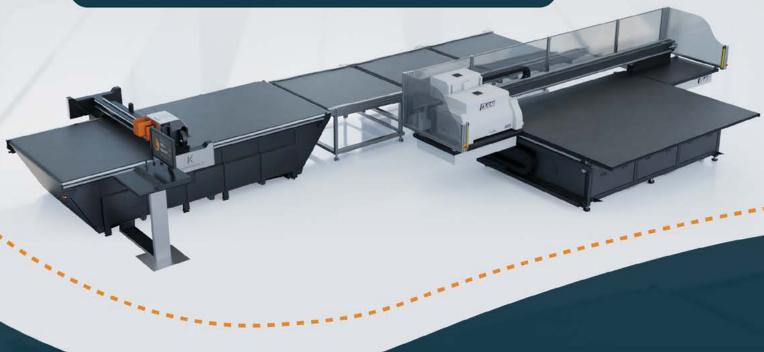
This ability to produce and supply diverse products under one roof gives Century Signs a distinct advantage. Unlike competitors who rely on outsourcing, Century Signs manages every aspect of the process in-house. From design and fabrication to installation, the company's dedicated teams ensure project execution. Their in-house designers and installers are adept at acquiring necessary permits and adhering to legal requirements, further simplifying the process for clients.

This streamlined approach keeps costs competitive and guarantees complete control over quality. As outlined in the company's mission statement, Century Signs aims to "deliver high-quality signage with unparalleled ease for customers." This commitment to simplicity and excellence truly sets the company apart.

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SMC: How large is the facility?

The company operates across two facilities with a combined workspace of more than 929 $\rm m^2$ (10,000 sf) and a team of 25-30 full-time employees. The Surrey office specializes in fabrication and stitching, while the Squamish location focuses on large-format printing and finishing. This division of labour ensures efficiency and expertise across all production stages. Additionally, goods are transported internally between the two offices, maintaining complete control over logistics and ensuring timely delivery.

SMC:What type of signage does your shop install?

While we can produce many unique signs, our primary products are fabricated signs (channel letters, lightboxes, 3D letters, pylon signs, and so on), awnings (both fixed and retractable), and wide-format printing (wall murals, window graphics, vehicle decals, banners, etc.). These are the three big pillars of the signage industry. Almost 90 per cent of our projects involve one or a combination of these products.

SMC: What type of projects have you been working on recently?

This past year, the company played a pivotal role in retail, completing comprehensive signage packages for notable clients. One standout project was the Meiga Superstore, which debuted its first location in British Columbia in 2024.

The team designed and delivered various signage solutions to enhance the store's brand visibility and customer experience. In November 2024, Fresh St. Market opened its newest location in North Vancouver, with Century Signs providing all the signage and graphic elements for the store.

Beyond the local market, Century Signs has extended its expertise across borders, contributing to retail spaces in various U.S. airports. These projects demonstrate the company's ability to adapt and deliver high-quality signage solutions tailored to international clients' unique needs.

SMC: How much of the sign installation process is handled in-house?

Although Century Signs strives to keep the entire process in-house, the diversity of its product range and occasional tight deadlines may require outsourcing minor elements. This typically includes tasks such as laser cutting substrates or powder coating signs, which trusted business partners handle. However, everything else—from initial design to final installation—is managed internally, ensuring complete control over quality and consistency.

SMC: What tools/equipment do you use to complete your projects?

Our extensive range of products and services is supported by a suite of tools and equipment across the facilities. While listing every piece of machinery would be exhaustive, the following highlights some of the broader equipment categories integral to producing the company's top three product types:

Fabrication shop: Equipped with a computer-numerical control (CNC) router, a welding station, a metal cutter, a paint booth, and an electronics station for installing LEDs and finishing signs.

Stitching shop: This facility features industrial sewing and hemming machines, a grommet puncher, and a 9.14-m (30-ft) workstation designed to handle the finishing of all fabric products.

Printing shop: This houses three Mimaki printers dedicated to vinyl printing, perfect for wall murals, window graphics, and banners.

Century Signs also maintains a fleet of vehicles for installation and delivery services. This includes two bucket trucks (one per location) for installing high-reach storefront signs and awnings, a large van and flatbed trailer for transporting oversized signs or pylon signs, and smaller vehicles such as a van and a pickup truck for delivering smaller signage or for carrying out vinyl installations.

SMC: What does your planning process involve?

When a lead comes in, it is assigned to a specialist on our sales team, who schedules a consultation over the phone or in person to discuss the project details. The project scope is logged into our customer relationship management (CRM) system, where our estimator calculates the cost and





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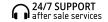
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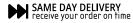
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production or detailed drawings if a sign permit is required.

After the PDF proof or permit is approved, the process moves seamlessly through production, assembly, quality control, and installation. We hold weekly meetings to keep everything on track and address potential issues. Every Tuesday, we review the status of all projects in production, and every Thursday, we finalize the schedule for installations in the upcoming week.

This streamlined process ensures we deliver high-quality products on time while keeping our clients' experience straightforward. It reflects our commitment to providing exceptional signage with simplicity and efficiency.

SMC: How is technology changing your business?

While not revolutionary, technological advancements are making signage production more efficient and products more durable and visually striking. For instance, new printers now deliver high-resolution designs with vibrant colours and weather-resistant inks, eliminating the need for additional finishing, such as lamination. Lightweight composites and environmentally friendly materials are also gaining traction, offering clients cost-efficient solutions that match or exceed the durability of traditional alternatives.

Century Signs is investing in these technologies to align with client demands for greener, more sustainable options. On the installation side, the company is adopting prefabricated, modular components to simplify on-site assembly. Additionally, innovative apps for surveying, measuring, and designing allow for precise visualization of signage in real-world environments, significantly reducing adjustments during installation.

SMC: What is the key to staying successful in this industry?

Century Signs attributes its success to two key factors: a focus on customer relationships and an unwavering commitment to craftsmanship.

Externally, building strong, long-term relationships with clients is essential. Unlike other fields where repeat business is frequent, signage projects are typically one-time investments, with replacements or updates occurring years apart. By prioritizing exceptional customer service and fostering trust, Century Signs ensures clients return when needed and also recommend its services to others.

Internally, the company's dedication to perfecting its craft has been paramount. Whether in fabrication, printing, or stitching, having the right tools, equipment, and expertise is vital. Maintaining efficiency without compromising quality is a delicate balance in an economic landscape where production costs are rising while selling prices remain competitive. Century Signs continually refines its processes to achieve this equilibrium, allowing the company to stand out while delivering exceptional value to its clients.

SMC: What are the future plans for your business?

Using its new branding and enhanced social presence, Century Signs aims to reach new audiences across Western Canada and the United States. One specific target is the construction industry, where the company sees significant potential to expand its market share. Additionally, plans are underway to explore opening a new location outside the Greater Vancouver region, catering to the fast-growing cities of Abbotsford, Chilliwack, and beyond.

Internally, the company is prioritizing employee engagement and satisfaction. A core value of Century Signs is fostering a work environment that supports a healthy work-life balance. Through team-building activities, health and wellness paid days off, and professional training opportunities, the company strives to create a workplace culture of growth, professionalism, and creativity.



RESERVED

Access granted

New materials bring new possibilities for accessible signage

By Scott Walton

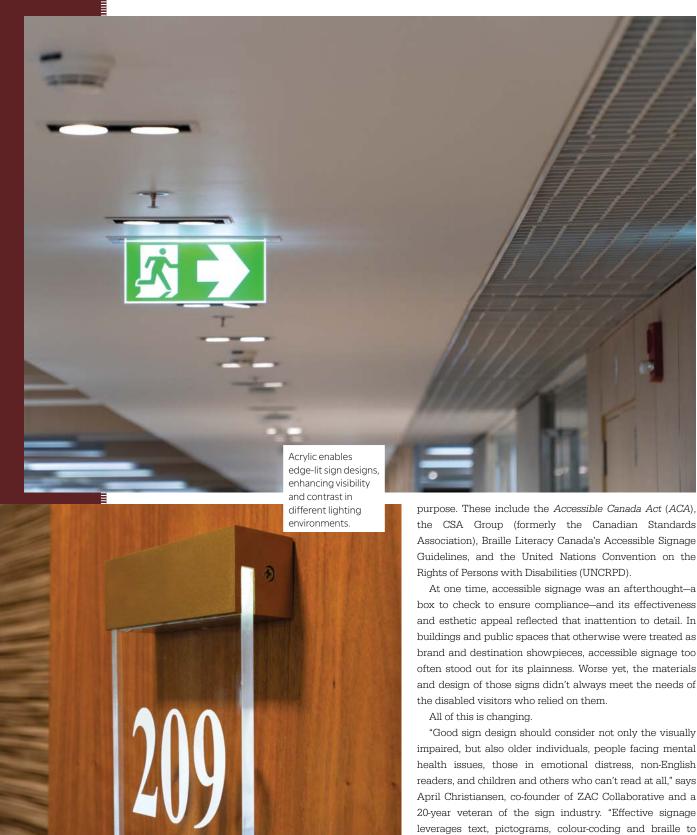
Photos courtesy PLASKOLITE

hen entering a large building for the first time—say, a hospital or office complex—most of us first search for signs leading us to our destination. We search for directions to a specific floor, department, office, or maybe a restroom or bank of elevators. We take these signs for granted—perhaps not noticing them on subsequent visits—but their presence is critical to navigating a new space.

Such signs are a lifeline for those with impaired vision or severe anxiety. Whether braille signage is used for those with a complete lack of sight or high-contrast, or low-glare signs to accommodate others with visual impairments such as colour-blindness, wayfinding signs that comply with national guidelines are essential in almost any public space.

There is no single national standard for accessible signage in Canada, but guidelines and laws serve this

While vinyl lettering is a traditional method to meet accessibility requirements, it adds steps and cost compared to direct printing to acrylic.



the CSA Group (formerly the Canadian Standards Association), Braille Literacy Canada's Accessible Signage Guidelines, and the United Nations Convention on the

box to check to ensure compliance-and its effectiveness and esthetic appeal reflected that inattention to detail. In buildings and public spaces that otherwise were treated as brand and destination showpieces, accessible signage too often stood out for its plainness. Worse yet, the materials and design of those signs didn't always meet the needs of

"Good sign design should consider not only the visually impaired, but also older individuals, people facing mental health issues, those in emotional distress, non-English readers, and children and others who can't read at all," says April Christiansen, co-founder of ZAC Collaborative and a 20-year veteran of the sign industry. "Effective signage leverages text, pictograms, colour-coding and braille to meet the needs of all visitors."

Today, more thoughtful regulations, greater awareness of the physical and emotional challenges many people face, increased focus on brand presentation and extensions, and innovations in signage and sign materials are driving new, creative approaches to accessible signage.



Acrylic is ultraviolet (UV)-stable and weatherable outdoors, making it a long-lasting material for compliant tactile letters, icons, and decorations.



more affordable, and easier than drilling and setting braille letters.

Printing directly onto acrylic offers other advantages. It opens the whole spectrum of colours, meaning organizations can create signs with Pantone-specific colours matching their brand palette or introduce other visual effects, such as fades, gradients, textures, and faux finishes such as

ADA compliance requires tactile Braille signs for permanent rooms. Since department store changing rooms are permanent, they must follow ADA quidelines.

Innovations corten
Innovations in materials and printing processes are making expension more creative, effective, and accessible signage possible.

This includes tactile or 3D printing, which allows sign manufacturers to print braille lettering directly onto acrylic Directly onto acrylic manufacturers.

sheets. In the past, the raised dots that make up braille

letters had to be applied separately, but 3D printing is faster,

corten or wood grain. Using real wood or metal can be expensive, so organizations are increasingly trying to value-engineer their signage to create the look of wood, rusted metal, or steel without the same price tag.

Direct printing also enables first-surface printing, meaning text and shapes can be printed on the back of the acrylic sheet—the side facing the wall on wall-mounted





First-surface printing creates depth and can maintain contrast and non-glare compliance when applied to the proper surface.

signs. This protects the text from exposure, breakage, or defacement. Advances in the acrylic itself also make this possible. In the past, standard acrylic was so smooth that ink would not bite into the substrate and would chip off when the sheet was cut. New direct-to-print or digital acrylic holds the ink to prevent chipping and peeling.

Compliance

Specifically, the CSA Group's Standard B651-18, Accessible design for the built environment, in Sections 4.5.1 and 4.5.2, states signage should be "positioned to avoid shadow areas and glare" and "have a glare-free surface." Adding a nonglare finish to a traditional sheet can haze and dull the sheet, making the text on the back side difficult to see. New models of digital acrylic sheets offer inherent non-glare properties, preventing hazing and clearly displaying first surface printing to comply with national standards.

This standard addresses the contrast between characters and background, stating an accessible sign must be colour-contrasted with its background, with the characters on the sign colour-contrasted by at least 70 per cent with their background. This is consistent with the industry's best

practices. Contrast is critical to readability for individuals with diminished eyesight, especially many forms of colourblindness. Maintaining contrast and non-glare compliance has been a significant challenge for accessible signage manufacturers, but these innovations in signage materials make it possible.

"Because all of this is possible, we're starting to see real interest in using accessible signage to create a special feeling about the sign and the building," Christiansen says. "It used to be simple, plain, even unattractive, and treated as if it didn't matter. More and more, people see these signs as a way to extend their brand and make them part of the experience while also being more inclusive."

The bottom line

New materials and printing processes have opened a new universe of possibilities for accessible signage, and designers and brands are learning how to take advantage. More versatile forms of acrylic sheets, paired with 3D printing, enable creative combinations of colours and finishes on these signs while enhancing their readability and effectiveness for the primary audiences.

 $\textbf{Scott Walton} \ is \ the \ national \ sales \ manager \ of \ sign \ \& \ graphics \ at \ PLASKOLITE.$

16 April 2025 • SIGN MEDIA CANADA www.signmedia.ca



A guide to using encapsulated acrylic channel letters as a versatile sign solution

By Clayton Letourneau

Photos courtesy Custom Sign Lab

eveloping versatile in-house solutions becomes paramount as sign businesses evolve to serve large-scope projects and build immersive environments. By leveraging existing equipment, businesses can introduce a product that meets the demands of modern design while keeping production in-house. This

reduces reliance on outsourcing, enabling a swift response to client needs and market changes.

Encapsulated acrylic channel lettering is one of the latest products to take this approach. It enhances the ability to deliver customized solutions and focuses on creating unique and impactful experiences. Custom Sign

and match lighting and edge finishes for encapsulated acrylic channel letters offers a unique and customizable option that meets a wide range of design preferences and functional requirements.



providing a starty roundation.

Lab adopted encapsulated acrylic channel letters for this reason—driven by the need to maintain control over production pathways while expanding its capabilities.

What are they?

Encapsulated acrylic channel letters are a computer-numerical control-(CNC)-machined two-piece solid acrylic channel letter system with precision flat cuts. This product consists of two components: the face, referred to as Side A, and the backer, known as Side B. Side A can be machined from acrylic of any thickness starting from 19 mm (0.74 in.), allowing for a variety of overall final letter thicknesses. Meanwhile, Side B is typically machined from acrylic with a thickness of 10-12 mm (0.39-0.47 in.), providing a sturdy foundation. Side B may also be substituted with emulsion polyvinyl chloride (EPVC) for added versatility and lower cost if this section is not halo-lit.

With a CNC router table, a soldering iron, and a basic understanding of low-voltage lighting, one can achieve the same level of versatility and control in the production processes. This setup helps create a product that is a creative substitute for conventional channel lettering without

spending a dime on new equipment or forgoing floor space for the footprint of bulky benders.

How do you set it up?

The machining setup for these files is straightforward, allowing for sharp outside corners and minimal design limitations. After finalizing the design, duplicate the outlines to create two file sets.

For file set "B," when machining from 12 mm (0.47 in.) material, duplicate your shape(s) and offset the out-cut line by +6.4mm (0.25 in.). Note: As explained in the next section, this is 0.4 mm (0.015 in.) more than the cut for Side A. Then, program your cut file to follow the outside edge of this new line at a 6 mm (0.23 in.) depth, rounding corners to match your cutting bit's radius (we often use 6 mm endmills, so our radius is 6 mm). Set the original out-cut line to a full depth of 12 mm (0.47 in.) or your machine's through-cut depth.

Once complete, you will have a shape with a 6-mm finished edge and a 6-mm \times 6.5-mm in-cut flange that aligns with Side A. If adding mounting points for screws, studs, or wire feeds, incorporate them in advance and cut to full depth. Side B can mount directly to the sign face or be studded for a standoff effect (for example, for shadow or halo glow). This method ensures a functional and esthetically flexible design for various installations.

For Side A (the face), we use 24-mm (0.94-in.) acrylic (as shown) and machine the letters in reverse. First, flip the vector shape before setting the cut paths.

As with Side B, duplicate the shape and inset it to match Side B's cut. Since we have already accounted for a small tolerance (+0.5mm or +0.019 in.) for easy fitment, use a 6-mm (0.23-in.) inset instead. You may need to adjust this based on your equipment. Ensure the inner cut edge uses the same radius as your tooling, just like with Side B.





For Side A, remove all material inside the new cut line, maintaining a minimum of 4.5 mm (0.17 in.) letter face (6 mm is the recommended size). With 24-mm (0.94-in.) acrylic, this means removing 18 mm (0.70 in.) of material. This process can be slow with a smaller bit, so use large tooling when possible, switching to smaller bits only when needed. Always match the radius of your cutting tool.

Cut to the full material depth for the out-cut and run a cleaning pass for a smooth edge.

Production tip: On larger shapes, we sometimes add 6–10-mm (0.23-0.39-in.) stabilizing posts in the centre of Side A, with a corresponding divot in Side B (no more than 3 mm deep). To calculate post height, subtract the divot depth from the corresponding cut on Side A for a snug fit. These posts help stabilize the shape's centre.

How do you finish?

Now that you have your two fabricated sections, it is time to move on to finishing. There are numerous factors to consider, but here are the three main elements.

You have several choices for Side A, which has an exposed face and sides, depending on whether or not to illuminate. The face can be illuminated in white or a single colour. For white illumination, applying a backlit white vinyl on the surface is advisable to conceal machining marks. Alternatively, you can cover the face with a printed backlit vinyl image or conceal the light with an opaque vinyl, paint, or an additional layer of cut acrylic or a substrate you choose.

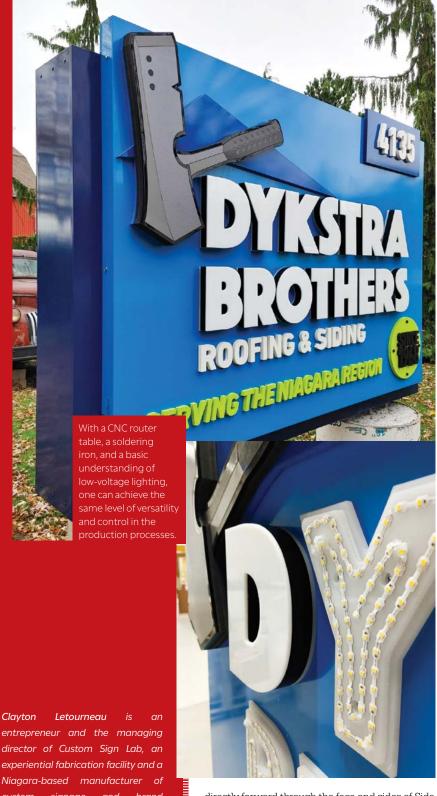
For the sides of Side A, you can block out the light with high-quality vinyl (ensure to heat treat) or paint. Alternatively, if the letter is illuminated, this edge can provide a dramatic glow, adding an extra dimension to the design.

On Side B, only the 6 mm (0.23 in.) exposed edge is visible, which can either glow or be concealed. Depending on your material choice, you can achieve a rear halo effect using suitable translucent white acrylic.

What about lighting?

These letters can be easily illuminated and wired, making them versatile for various applications. At Custom Sign Lab, we use Hanley (Principal Sloane) Hellbender strip lighting, which is applied to the surface of the Side B component. This setup allows the lights to shine





experiential fabrication facility and a Niagara-based manufacturer of custom signage and brand activations. Letourneau oversees daily operations and ensures the their smooth functionina of customized manufacturina process. reauires understanding of materials, precise proiect manaaement. and commitment to delivering high-

quality products that meet their

clients' unique needs.

directly forward through the face and sides of Side A, creating a vibrant and eye-catching display. Additionally, the lighting reflects onto Side B, producing a stunning halo effect that enhances the overall visual impact.

Using red-green-blue (RGB) and programmable RGB flexible strip lighting opens a world of possibilities for dynamic lighting effects. With RGB lighting, you can achieve a broad spectrum of colours, allowing for bright, customizable displays that can change to suit different themes

or branding requirements. Programmable RGB lighting takes this a step further, enabling you to create sequences and animations that add movement and interest to the signage. This flexibility makes encapsulated acrylic channel letters an attractive option for businesses looking to make a bold statement with their signage.

What about standards and safety?

Experimenting with the lighting volume based on the letter's size and installing what is best for your application is essential. Once you have finalized the lighting setup, solder the leads or use quick-connects, then run them through the wire lead hole into Side B. This ensures a clean and efficient wiring process. Guaranteeing the lighting components meet relevant safety and quality standards is crucial, especially if the signage will be used in commercial or public spaces. We have had no issues having these letters Electrical Safety Authority-(ESA)-certified through a special inspection. Upon final assembly, you can seal the edges from water using a sparing amount of silicone, giving these an approximated Ingress Protection (IP)-65 rating. Always check with your region for specific electrical and certification requirements.

How do you install them?

Whether these letters are stud- or flush-mounted, you can apply your preferred installation method as you would for flat cut or channel lettering. It is crucial to ensure a safe and secure fitment to whatever surface you apply them to. First, install Side B, ensuring it is properly aligned and secured. Then, push Side A onto Side B. For a semi-permanent installation, use a thin bead of silicone. If you prefer a non-removable face, opt for your preferred permanent acrylic adhesive.

What else should you consider?

Encapsulated acrylic channel letters enable you to integrate the fabrication of versatile and reconfigurable channel letters into your production pathway without adding any additional machines to your facility. These letters can be marketed as a premium solution for both interior and exterior channel lettering. The ability to mix and match lighting and edge finishes makes them desirable to most clients, offering a unique and customizable option that meets a wide range of design preferences and functional requirements. At Custom Sign Lab, these truly are minimal equipment, maximum versatility products that clients love.



Safely lifting the sign industry

By Kenn Leech

Photos courtesy Kenn Leech

ranes and boom lifts have revolutionized the sign industry, making it safer, more efficient, and capable of handling increasingly complex projects. As businesses demand larger signs in more challenging areas, these machines provide the reach, stability, and precision required to get the job done right.

From hoisting massive, illuminated channel letters onto highrises to servicing towering pylon signs, cranes and lifts are the backbone of modern sign installation and maintenance.

Beyond their practicality, these machines are essential for job site safety. Traditional scaffolding and ladders have inherent risks, but boom lifts offer a stable, controlled

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Establishing a secure perimeter keeps both workers and the public out of harm's way. Safety isn't just about the lift itself; it's about maintaining control over the entire job site.







platform with designated safety harness attachment points, reducing the chance of falls. Cranes, meanwhile, take on the heavy lifting, preventing injuries caused by manual handling of oversized sign components. Combined with skilled operators, the result is a smooth installation process that meets the highest industry standards.

As the demand for bigger and bolder signage grows, cranes and boom lifts will remain indispensable tools. However, because these machines operate at heights and in challenging conditions, regular inspection, maintenance, and compliance with safety standards are essential. Safety protocols go beyond just ensuring the equipment functions properly—they also ensure that sign installers using them are trained, certified, and compliant with industry regulations. Adhering to prescribed Canadian safety standards, workplace safety codes, and mandatory training programs helps minimize risks, protect workers, and maintain smooth project execution.

Planning

Before any crane or lift goes into action, safety comes first—every time.

This begins with ensuring all operators receive comprehensive training, covering everything from hands-on equipment use to emergency procedures and risk assessment. Skilled, knowledgeable operators are essential for safe job execution.

Operator training is just the starting point. Sign installation involves layers of protection at every stage to keep everyone and every piece of equipment safe throughout the process. Protecting workers, the public, and the signage itself requires careful planning. Workers must be trained in fall protection, certified in boom lifts, scissor lifts, and crane operations where required, and have hands-on experience in hazard assessment and mitigation. Every factor must be assessed, including ground stability, overhead hazards, lifting radius, and traffic interference. In Ontario, sign installers must complete Chief Prevention

Officer (CPO)-approved "working at heights" training when using fall protection systems. Under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (OHSA), this training is mandatory for those using travel restraint systems, fall arrest systems, safety nets, and work belts. Certification is valid for three years through an approved provider.

Additionally, obtaining the necessary permits and adhering to regional standards is critical to the planning process. An example is the Canadian Electrical Code (CEC), which mandates that electrical contractors (or others responsible for the work) must obtain a permit from the inspection department before installing, modifying, repairing, or extending any electrical equipment used in signs.

Inspecting

Keeping equipment in top shape is a necessity. Boom lifts, cranes, and their integral components require thorough annual inspections. Daily inspections before use and checks after any extended downtime are essential for catching potential issues before they become hazards.

Installation inspections don't stop there. During installations, inspectors verify proper mounting, structural integrity, and electrical connections, where applicable. For inground signs, a pre-pour inspection may be required to assess the support structure before concrete is poured. After installation, a final inspection confirms compliance with approved plans.

Documenting

If it's not documented, did it happen?

Every inspection must be properly recorded and easily accessible. In the sign world, documentation isn't just paperwork; it is proof. Every step must be recorded, whether a basic harness and lanyard inspection, detailed work instructions, emergency procedures, hazard assessments, or a full lift plan. Just like your math teacher always told you to "show your work," breaking down each step and explaining the process behind your solution is essential.

Proper documentation is also about accountability, preparedness, and ensuring every team member knows the plan. When workers have access to clear protocols and job reviews, they understand exactly what to expect and how to proceed safely. A well-informed crew leads to reduced risks, improved proficiency, and smoother project execution. Safety isn't merely a checkbox on a list—it is an ongoing commitment, and thorough documentation is the essential tool that ensures it remains a top priority in every aspect of the work.

Zoning

Create a clearly defined work zone.

Establishing a secure perimeter keeps both workers and the public out of harm's way, preventing accidents before they happen. Safety isn't just about the lift itself; it's about maintaining control over the entire job site.







Keep your eyes on the sky as the weather can change in an instant, turning a routine lift into a high-risk situation. Strong winds don't just shift loads; they can make them feel heavier and harder to control. Lightning in the area is a clear sign to reassess whether it is safe to continue. Rain can quickly turn stable footing into an unpredictable hazard. Adaptability is key because, in this industry, the safest lift is the one that takes every element into account.

Future proofing

Crane technology has advanced rapidly, allowing us to monitor job sites remotely, track equipment performance, and even detect if weight capacities or range limits have been exceeded in real-time. These innovations are making the sign industry smarter and safer than ever before. Sign installers must understand these advancements and operate these machines easily and well.

The sign installation industry is evolving with several key innovations. These include electric and alternative fuel vehicles, greater cellular data connectivity, which will enhance real-time data and improved communication to boost efficiency and co-ordination, and artificial intelligence (AI), which will further expand automated tasks in the realm of installation, helping businesses make data-driven decisions. Understanding and adopting these technologies will elevate safety, productivity, and sustainability in the industry.

The future of sign installation is evolving fast, and these innovations will transform the industry. One thing is certain: the next big breakthrough is just around the corner, and it will elevate safety and productivity in the industry to new heights.

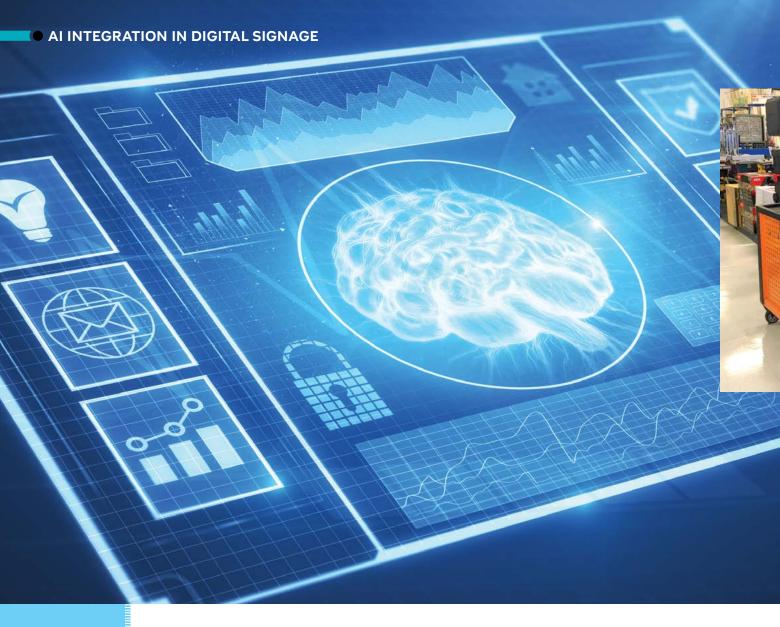
Every step of the installation must be recorded, whether a basic harness and lanyard inspection, detailed work instructions, emergency procedures, hazard assessments, or a full lift plan.

Regular inspection, maintenance, and compliance with safety standards are essential because these machines operate at heights and in challenging conditions.



Kenn Leech is a senior sign technician/health, safety, and environment (HSE) representative for Tops Lighting Sign Installation & Services, working out of Ottawa, Ont. Leech is also the traffic manager for Tops Traffic Control, Canada's first sign industry dedicated traffic services company.





How best can sign companies use Al?

By Carl Breau

Photo © Daniil Peshkov/Dreamstime.com

he modest purpose of this article is to give a short update on recent artificial intelligence (AI) progress, focusing on providing practical advice to sign company managers on how to use some of these tools to improve their processes and products.

First, if you have not done so already, develop the habit of using large language model AI assistants such as ChatGPT or Galaxy AI. You can use conversation modes and see how natural and helpful these tools have become. By interacting often, your prompts will become more relevant, and you will be better able to assess the strengths and limitations of these tools. You will also see in what areas the information is valuable and relevant and in what cases it is not.

At least one member of your team should become an AI champion. For most companies, who that person should be is obvious, such as the IT technician or a technology-driven



employee. Once you choose that person, their first mandate should be to understand the AI capabilities of some software tools your company currently uses, such as Microsoft Copilot, or the many modules available to graphic designers and engineers in standard software such as Adobe or SolidWorks. Those generally constitute low-lying fruits that can quickly bring tangible results and improve efficiency in your business. Your AI champion can then explore other tools that could be useful for your business, potentially with the help of some of the following ideas.

If you are a business manager struggling with long task lists, you should try AI-driven task management assistants such as Motion AI, which automatically access your calendars and insert tasks considering importance, deadlines, and other appointments, and reassign them if a task is not finished in time. It is Motion AI that found the time in my schedule and automatically placed the task of writing this article on my agenda!

AI can significantly enhance the operations, efficiency, and creativity of a company manufacturing signage. Here are a few ways AI can be integrated into the business. Let's look at some of the practical tools that can be used. First, we will look at tools useful for static sign manufacturers and then for sign manufacturers incorporating digital signage.

Static sign manufacturers:

Static sign manufacturers should look into these AI-driven tools to improve their processes and product offerings:

 Design assistance: AI-powered tools can help create innovative, customized signage designs. AI-driven design software can inspire by generating multiple signage design concepts based on input criteria such as the preliminary concepts, the brand's identity, the location of the sign, and the target audience.
 For example, it can quickly develop different colour schemes and layout ideas and consider factors like visibility from different distances and angles and local building regulations.





- Customer interaction: AI chatbots can be used on the company's website to interact with customers, answer queries, provide quotes, and take orders 24/7 without human intervention.
- Quality control: For batch production projects, machine learning algorithms can be trained to inspect and detect defects in signage products during manufacturing, ensuring high quality and reducing waste.
- Customer relationship management (CRM): Most CRM software uses AI. If your team is disciplined in populating your CRM with customer and order information, AIpowered tools can help you manage your leads and maximize your sales.

Digital sign manufacturers:

AI can be particularly transformative for digital signage manufacturers and integrators, taking advantage of dynamic content and cloud connectivity:

- Content creation and management:
 - Automated content generation: AI tools like generative AI (for example, GPT, DALL-E) can create dynamic, engaging content for digital signage, such as text, images, and videos, tailored to specific audiences or locations.
 - Real-time content personalization: AI can analyze audience demographics (via cameras or sensors) and adjust content in real-time to match viewer preferences, increasing engagement.
 - Scheduling optimization: AI can optimize content scheduling based on factors like foot traffic, the time of day, or events, ensuring the right message is displayed at the right time.
- Predictive maintenance
 - Hardware monitoring: AI can monitor the health of digital signage hardware (e.g., screens, media players) and predict failures before they occur, reducing downtime and maintenance costs.
 - Remote diagnostics: AI-powered systems can diagnose issues remotely and provide solutions or automatically dispatch technicians when needed. For



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Al can transform digital signage manufacturers and integrators, leveraging dynamic content and cloud connectivity. Photos courtesy Nummax

example, live camera feeds can be failures detected processed and automatically. Very soon, we will see closed-loop repairs, where an AI detects a problem with the screen and automatically repairs it remotely, especially for screens incorporating redundant electronics.

• Dynamic advertising

- O Programmatic advertising: AI can automate ad placements on digital signage networks, targeting specific audiences based on realtime data and maximizing ad revenue.
- Enhanced interactivity
 - O Voice and gesture recognition: AI can enable interactive digital signage that responds to voice commands or gestures, creating immersive user experiences.
 - O Chatbots and virtual assistants: AI-powered chatbots can be integrated into digital

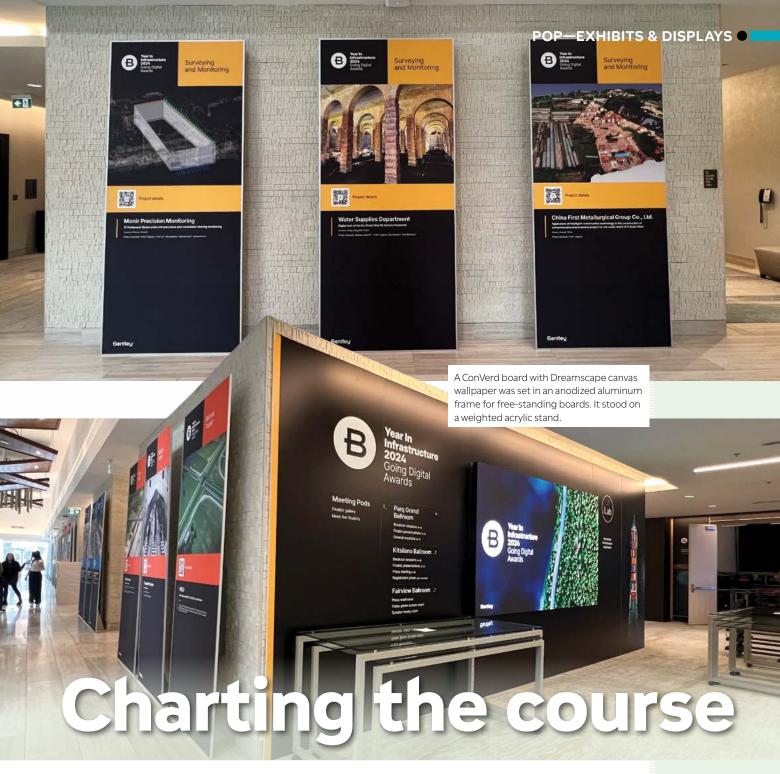
questions, or guide customers in real-time. This has started in some applications, such as AI-driven, fully autonomous drive-thru kiosks, which are already being deployed in some quick-service restaurant (QSR)

As of April 2025, most people would agree that the next big thing will be AI agents, which are gradually finding their way into different products and applications.

An AI agent is a software program or system designed to perform tasks autonomously by perceiving its environment, making decisions, and taking actions to achieve specific goals. These agents leverage AI technologies, such as machine learning (ML), natural language processing (NLP), computer vision, and robotics, to operate intelligently and adaptively.

A good example of recent developments in AI agents is Lindies, an agent you can program fairly easily to act autonomously to manage simple administrative work. I have started using a Lindy AI agent assistant, my "morning Lindy," which goes through my calendar, tasks, and emails and summarizes my day and tasks on my way to work in the morning. Like large language models such as ChatGPT, agents will become very useful, and we expect them to play a vital role in the near future.

Carl Breau is CEO of Nummax, and business mentor with NextAl since 2021, supporting Canadian Al startups.



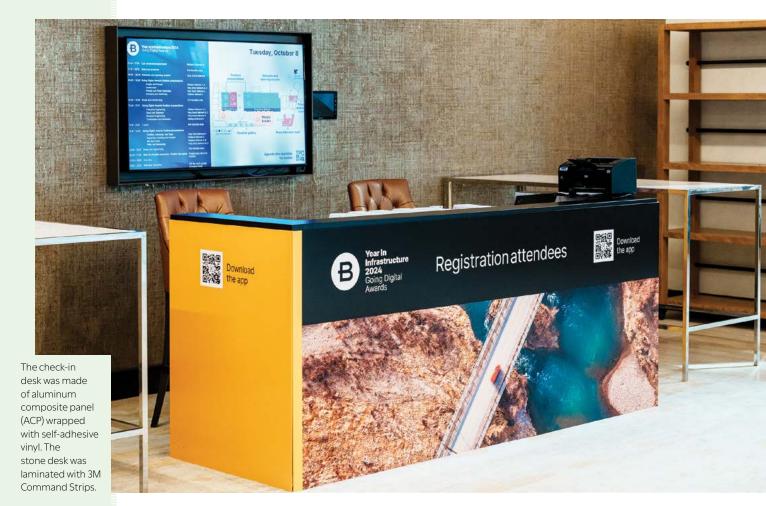
Using graphics to guide, inform, and engage

By Miguel Cuenca and Analhi Sanchez

n the bustling heart of Vancouver, Bentley Systems, an Amsterdam-headquartered company, held a major event, the Year in Infrastructure 2024: Going Digital Awards. The event needed clear and effective communication, and the company tasked Multigraphics Ltd. with providing a variety of point-of-purchase (POP) displays, wayfinding, and informational systems to help the participants navigate.

From freestanding boards to intricate vinyl wraps, the Multigraphics team was charged with creating a cohesive visual experience to guide, inform, and engage participants throughout the venue.

The project scope covered a variety of graphic displays, including 36 freestanding boards to showcase contestant projects, six column wraps, and nine sets of vinyl door





graphics. Additionally, large-scale printed window film was applied, and various fabricated elements were included. These included freestanding wall graphics, backdrops, floor graphics, elevator graphics, and several types of POP displays.

Timeline and execution

The tender was announced in June 2024, with Multigraphics awarded the project the following month. The next step involved an on-site meeting to refine the project details and assess potential marketing



The graphics on the railing were also printed with spot white ink and CMYK on clear self-adhesive vinyl.

The free-standing walls were made of ConVerd boards with Dreamscape canvas wallpaper and anodized aluminum frames, supported by weighted acrylic stands.



opportunities. Following the meeting, prototypes were developed, and templates for the client's artwork were created. The production team was prepared to handle any last-minute design adjustments in-house.

Fabrication began at the end of September, with a 10-day turnaround required to complete the production of all materials. This included both printing and cutting elements to fit the event's specifications. Installation was completed in a three-day window, strategically planned to accommodate other ongoing events at the venue.

Multigraphics co-ordinated with other vendors and trades to ensure the installation proceeded smoothly without disruptions. Multiple installation crews were deployed, each focusing on different project components, allowing the work to proceed in parallel to meet the tight deadline.

Various materials were selected to balance durability, esthetics, and functionality to achieve the desired outcome. The freestanding boards, backdrops, and wall graphics were produced using Falcon Board with textured Dreamscape digitally printed wallpaper, chosen for its high-





The columns were wrapped with Bodhi Lite Stretch Fabric, while dye-sublimation print was used.



quality print finish and sturdy nature. Bodhi Lite Stretch Fabric was used for the column wraps, providing a flexible, seamless appearance. Transparent film was applied for the large-scale window graphics, ensuring clarity and visibility. Structural elements such as ConVerd Board and Gatorboard were utilized for additional support, while custom acrylic bases were crafted for the freestanding boards and assembled on-site.

Challenges and solutions

One of the significant challenges Multigraphics encountered was the logistics of transporting and installing large materials in a limited timeframe. To address this, the project team developed custom moveable pallets, allowing for efficient transportation of materials from their facility to the



venue and easy handling on-site. These pallets helped ensure the graphics were delivered and set up as needed without delays.

Another challenge was co-ordinating with other vendors working at the venue during the same period. Multigraphics addressed this by deploying multiple installation teams, each focusing on specific tasks. This helped streamline the installation process and ensured all graphics were completed within three days. This approach improved efficiency and allowed adjustments to be made quickly without affecting the overall schedule.

Bentley Systems was impressed with the work, praising Multigraphics for their efforts in executing the project and the company's ability to provide quality print and signage work. The event manager was particularly pleased that Multigraphics sent print samples to their house for inspection, allowing them to choose the perfect materials for each installation. The event manager also applauded the company for its timely assembly and dismantling of the boards.

Analhi Sanchez and Miguel Cuenca drive Multigraphics' success through marketing and project management. With more than 15 years in printing, Cuenca co-ordinates offline marketing production from start to finish. Sanchez leads marketing initiatives, enhancing the company's visibility. Together, their collaboration keeps the company at the industry's forefront, delivering exceptional projects and strong marketing efforts.



Industry insights on installations

ign installation is more than just mounting a structure—it's a balancing act of precision, compliance, and quick problem-solving. But what's the biggest challenge installers face today? Sign Media Canada turned to industry leaders and hands-on professionals to find out. Their answers reveal a labyrinth of complexities that installers face.

Here, experts share their top concerns.

'The unknown'

Despite careful planning, installations don't always go as expected. Unforeseen obstacles can complicate all kinds of jobs. This is what the Montreal, Que.-based installer for Access Signs, Jeremie Ouellet, sees as the greatest obstacle on the job. "Our biggest challenge is the unknown. Despite

detailed surveys and planning, installation day is always a variable—harsh weather, hidden obstructions, cars parked in inopportune places. You need to be resilient and resourceful. (Notre plus grand défi est l'inconnu. Malgré des sites surveys et une planification détaillée, le jour d'installation est toujours une variable. Temps rigoureux, obstacles cachés, voitures garées dans des endroits inopportuns. Il faut être résilient et inventif.)," he says.

The weather

No matter where you are in Canada, winters can often be rough. Heavy snowfall, icy roads, frigid temperatures, and shorter days create constant challenges. While sign installations come with obstacles year-round, 25-year industry veteran Mike LeBlanc sees one factor as the most



significant challenge: the winter weather. LeBlanc, partner and head of installations at LED Solutions in Hamilton, Ont., explains, "The elements that are out of your control pose the most significant challenges. This held especially true this past January and February, when Southern Ontario experienced a great deal of extreme weather, leading to a big topic of conversation at the office." He adds, "Outside of the obvious things, such as poor driving conditions to the site, cold temperatures, and high winds, we have been facing record snowfall with massive snowbanks that impeded our access to set the boom and reach our signs. Recently, we were at a Cineplex and couldn't find the hidden trap door to access power supplies buried under feet of snow on a large canopy."

These kinds of obstructions can complicate and even delay installations. "The side effects of weather can be costly—multiple trips, rearranging schedules, and moving equipment," LeBlanc adds. Terence Davis, owner of Elevated Signs in Brantford, Ont., echoes this concern. "Signage installation often faces challenges due to unpredictable weather conditions. High winds, rain, or extreme temperatures can delay projects, impact safety, and require additional precautions to ensure secure and efficient installation," he says.

LeBlanc concludes positively, observing that "the good thing about winter is knowing that spring is around the corner."

Pricing

Pricing installation jobs accurately is an ongoing challenge in the Canadian signage industry. While printing and fabrication can be relatively straightforward, installation costs can be tricky. Carl Weger, president and CEO of Sleek Signs, affirmed this when he said, "Price, price, price... Printing and fabrication are the easy parts; installation costs

are the real challenge. How do you price scoping, quoting, orientations, safety checks, or project management—all before even winning the job? Then, add in schedule changes, obstacles, weather, time constraints, and risk. Sustainable or competitive... choose one."

Logistics

Co-ordinating permits, equipment, and installation teams is no small feat. "One of our biggest challenges with sign installation is managing unpredictable site conditions, permits, and logistics while ensuring precision and safety—all within tight deadlines to meet client expectations," says vice-president of sales and marketing at Steel Art Signs, Boris Kaminsky.

Labour

In installations and beyond, a key concern in the field today is attracting and retaining passionate employees. "The biggest challenge in the sign industry," Robert Ascenzi Jr. points out, "is finding qualified employees. You need to find that drive. I find too many candidates out there looking for the money first instead of the knowledge that comes with making signs. This is especially true for installers—everyone wants to make top money but not learn how the job is supposed to be done." The chief operating officer of Spectra Advertising suggests that flexibility is crucial: "One of the things we do to help find good people is flexing our hours to accommodate different schedules. Not everyone can work 9-to-5 or 7-to-3." By offering more accommodating schedules, companies may be able to tap into a wider pool of talent, including skilled installers.

Sign installers today face an evolving set of challenges. But as these industry professionals demonstrate, it is resilience, adaptability, and creative problem-solving that keep projects moving—one sign at a time.



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From prep to protection

A step-by-step guide to wrapping a car with PPF

By Matthew Lavery

Photos courtesy Wraptors HQ

Overview

Wraptors HO in Mississauga, Ont., recently worked with Sean Tullo, owner of Tullo Electronic Services and Repairs, on a full paint protection film (PPF) package for his fully loaded 2024 BMW X3.

Proiect

The power of online reviews played a crucial role in landing this project. Tullo, who prioritizes thorough research before choosing a service provider, explored multiple options in the area before selecting Wraptors HO. He expressed that

he relies heavily on honest customer feedback, and the strong reputation of Wraptors Toronto on Google Reviews influenced his decision.

Timeline

The complete PPF installation process was completed between January 15 and January 18, 2025.

Scope

The project involved wrapping a black-on-black 2024 BMW X3 with PPF using 16.4 m (18 yards) of material. Since the shop's expert installer preferred a custom-fit approach, no pre-cut panels were used. Instead, the entire process was executed in-house, with the film being cut and applied specifically to the vehicle's contours.

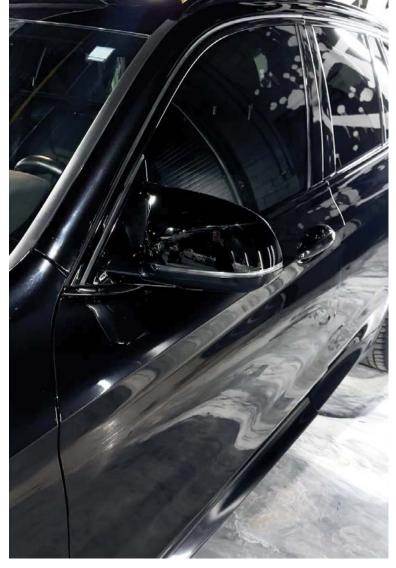
Preparation

One of the major challenges of working on vehicles during Canadian winters is ensuring a clean and properly prepped surface. Salty winter roads can make it difficult for PPF to be prepped and adhere properly. To combat this, the preparation phase required extensive cleaning, clay bar treatment, and wiping and drying before the car could be wrapped. This extra step extends the overall project timeline in the winter months but is crucial to achieving a flawless finish.





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Materials and tools

To ensure the highest quality installation, the following materials and tools were used:

- Soapy water (filled with our "magic solution")
- · Steamer with distilled water
- Knives and blades
- · Special squeegees
- 16.4 m (18 yards) of Xpel Gloss PPF

Steps

- Thorough wash: Using Wraptors No.9 car shampoo with a foam cannon and pressure washer
- Clay bar treatment: Ensuring the exterior body panels are free from contaminants
- Second rinse and wash: To remove any remaining residue
- Drying and surface preparation: Using clean microfibre cloths and alcohol
- Custom panel cutting: Measuring and cutting PPF by hand for a precise fit
- The application process included:
 - O Spraying soapy water onto the surface
 - O Applying the PPF vinyl
 - Using a steamer to soften and shape the film around corners and edges while allowing the material to relax
 - \circ Squeegeeing out excess water for a perfect seal
 - O Trimming edges and corners with a knife for a uniform finish
- Final touches:
 - A light post-heating treatment for added durability can be done once the project is completed
 - O Full vehicle wipe-down
 - O Installing a Wraptors license plate frame and air freshener to give it a personal touch

Mostafa (MOMO) Darabi, a PPF specialist at Wraptors HQ, carried out the installation.

Conclusion

This project illustrates Wraptors HO's expertise in high-end vehicle protection. By leveraging detailed prep work, premium materials, and precision installation techniques, the team ensured Sean Tullo's 2024 BMW X3 remains protected against the Canadian elements while maintaining its sleek, showroom-quality appearance. The combination of meticulous attention to detail and the use of top-tier products safeguards the vehicle and enhances its appeal. As a result, Tullo can enjoy peace of mind knowing his investment is well-protected. •

Matthew Lavery, a brand representative at Wraptors Inc. Toronto, brings 19 years of experience to the sign industry. His extensive expertise and influential presence have made him a respected authority in the field. Wraptors is a global brand with 16 locations worldwide, specializing in vehicle wrapping, PPF, ceramic coating, window tinting, and custom automotive services.

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Canon Canada Inc.	5312
Color - Dec North America	5052
Connecting for Results	5668
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Data Design Services Ltd. (Accura MIS)	



DCM	
(Data Communications Management)	5459
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DFS	5660
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Insource Corp.	5618
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EXHIBITOR NAME	воотн
Laird Plastics	5518
Landa Digital Printing Inc.	5040
Lombardi	5265
Mediatech AP Inc.	5028
Miip Vision	5057
Mimaki	5152, 5252
Nimbus Interface Solutions Inc.	5049
Nova-Glue	5220
OMET Americas Inc.	5164
OneVision, Inc.	5605
OPIA	5674
Packsize International	5039
Pack-Smart Inc.	5140
Page DNA	5506
Pineberry Manufacturing Inc.	5636
PRG (Promotional Resource Group) 5037A
Print Action	5662
Print Digital Solutions	5222
Printer's Parts & Equipment	5146
PrintIQ	5620A
Procolored Technology Inc.	5056
Racad Tech	5602
Radian Laser Systems	5645
Rhin-O-Tuff	5552
Ricoh Canada Inc.	5300
RM Machinery Canada Inc.	5212
Robatech Canada Inc.	5468
Robert E. Thistle Ltd.	5167
Rochester Software Associates	5601
Roland DGA Canada	5034
Rollem International	5132
Rotatek	5265
Ronik Inc.	5412

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EXHIBITOR NAME	BOOTH
Royal Sovereign	544
Rubenstein RB Digital Inc.	536
Sabre Limited	505
Sign Media Magazine	555
Significans Automation Inc.	501
SinaLite	571
Skandacor	514
SNZ Trading Inc.	562
Southwest Business Products	551
Spicers Canada	533
Strategic Printing Solution	526
Supercolor Group Limited /	
Supercolor Ink Ltd.	53522
swissOprint Americas Inc.	534
Sydney R. Stone & Co Ltd	540
	555

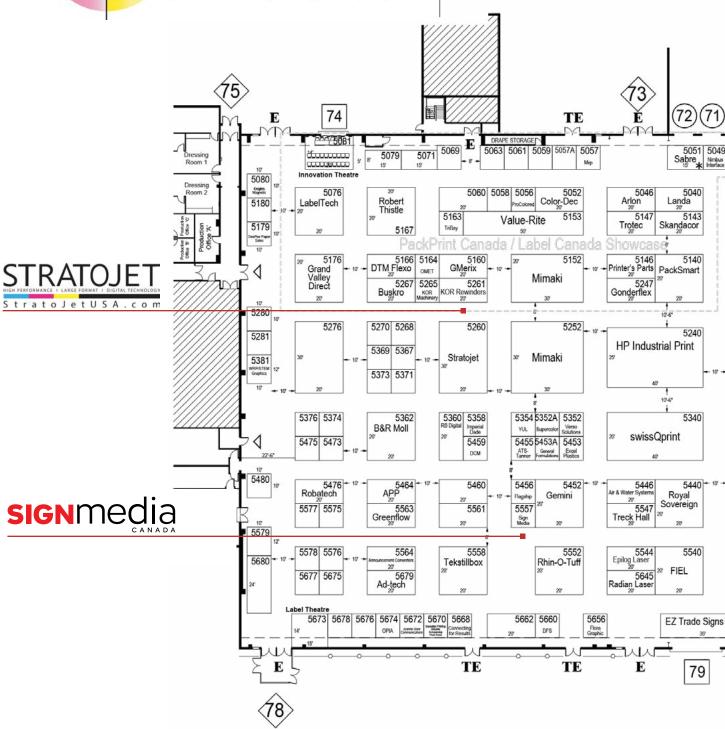
EXHIBITOR NAME	воотн
The Drafting Clinic	5604
TMAX Images	5600
Total Solutions Technologies	5621
Treck Hall Wide Format	5547
TriBay Enterprise	5163
Trotec Laser	5147
Ultimate Tech	5041
Ultraflex Systems Inc.	5017
Value-Rite Business Products Inc.	5153
Vanguard Digital Printing	
Systems -Durst Group	5528
Verso Solutions Corp.	5352
VGPL International Limited	5015
WRP / STEM Graphics	5381
Xerox Canada Ltd.	5322
YUL Technologies Inc.	5354



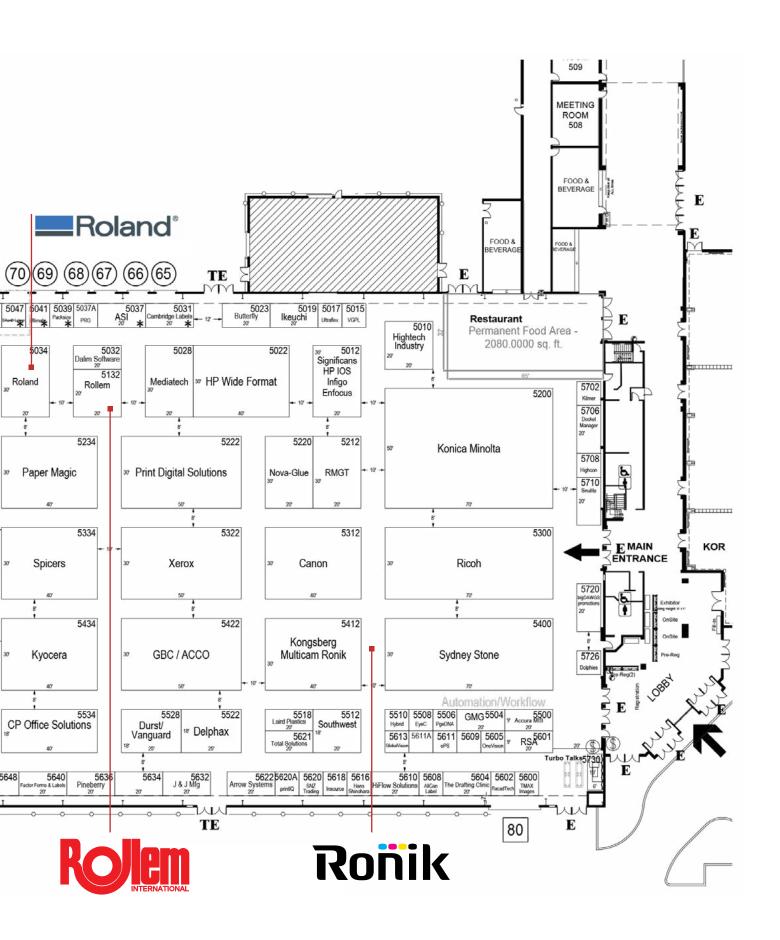
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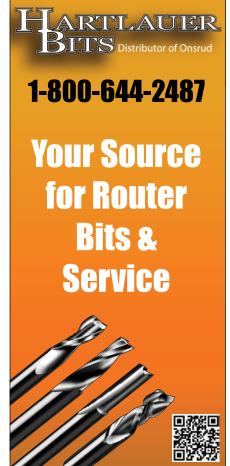


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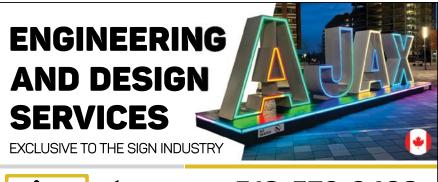








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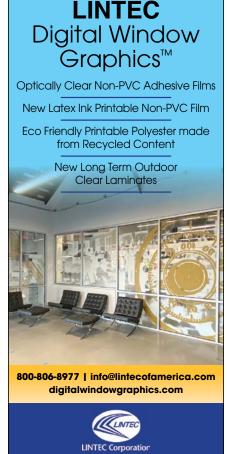
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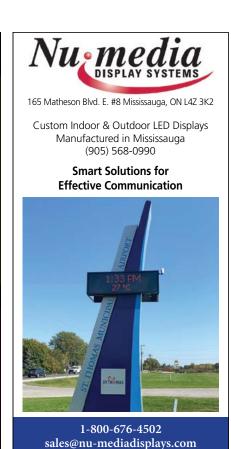
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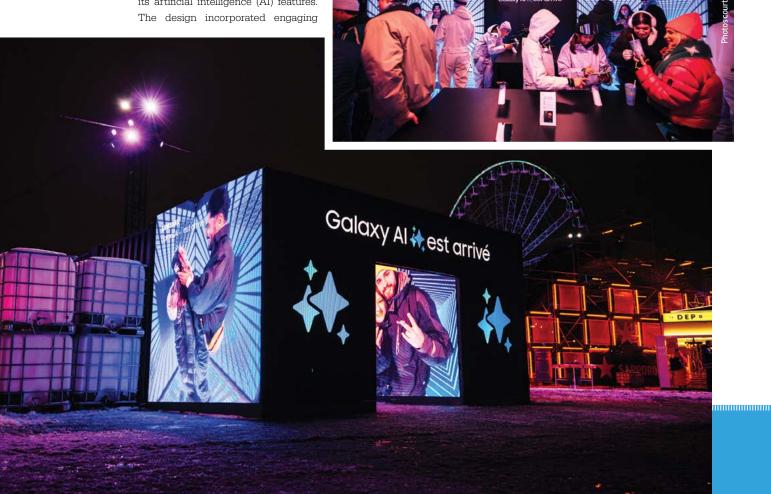
n 2024, iGotcha Media partnered with Mosaic Sales Solutions to support Samsung's Galaxy S24 launch at Igloofest in Montreal, Que. This Best of Canada's Sign Industry Awards (BOCSI) 2024 entry is an activation featuring a branded pop-up display emphasizing the "Galaxy AI is here" theme. Central to the setup were four custom LED screens, each measuring 2.03 x 2.54 m (80 x 100 in.), arranged to create an enclosed digital environment for an interactive photo experience. The display also incorporated Lenovo M910Q R desktops with 8GB double data rate 4 (DDR4) RAM and 128GB solid-state drive (SSD), ensuring content delivery and user interaction.

Mosaic Sales Solutions collaborated with iGotcha Media, the technology partner, to launch Samsung's new Galaxy S24 smartphone and showcase its artificial intelligence (AI) features. The design incorporated engaging

content that wrapped the booth in giant LED screens, an archway, and a tunnel. Samsung's celestial theme featured galaxy-inspired visuals paired with a colour palette to reflect the après ski atmosphere of Igloofest. Inside was a photo experience where visitors stepped onto a digital stage with an LED floor and two video walls displaying shifting digital landscapes.

The activation demonstrated digital signage integration within an experiential marketing strategy for a temporary event, showcasing how digital technology can enhance short-term brand activations.

~ Marika Gabriel •



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