

July 2013

MARKING INDUSTRY

magazine



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MARKING INDUSTRY magazine

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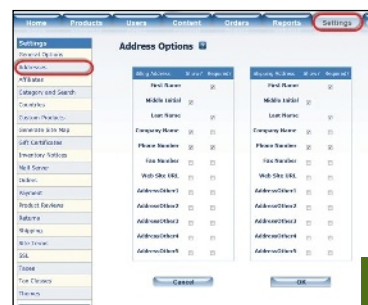
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2013 Bronze Manufacturer of the Year Eagle Stamp & Engraving, Inc.

Mesa, Arizona

Eagle Stamp & Engraving, Inc. has been named the 2013 Bronze Manufacturer of the Year by Marking Industry Magazine, an award presented to the stamp business that had the highest percentage of sales growth in 2012 in the \$10,000–\$250,000 annual sales category. Publisher David Hachmeister met with owners Katie Mulry and Michael Burford to discuss their 24-percent growth last year and learn more about their operation.



David Hachmeister: Congratulations to you both for having a fabulous year in what has been a tough economy. How long have you been in business, Katie?

Katie Mulry: Since 1983, so 30 years.

DH: So you've seen a lot of ups and downs over the course of time.

KM: Yes, things have changed tremendously over the last 30 years.

DH: What factors led to the growth you experienced last year?

KM: I think probably the biggest thing would be the increased presence of a couple of accounts. They had very good years last year, so it is one way of seeing that the economy is coming back because both of them are "want"

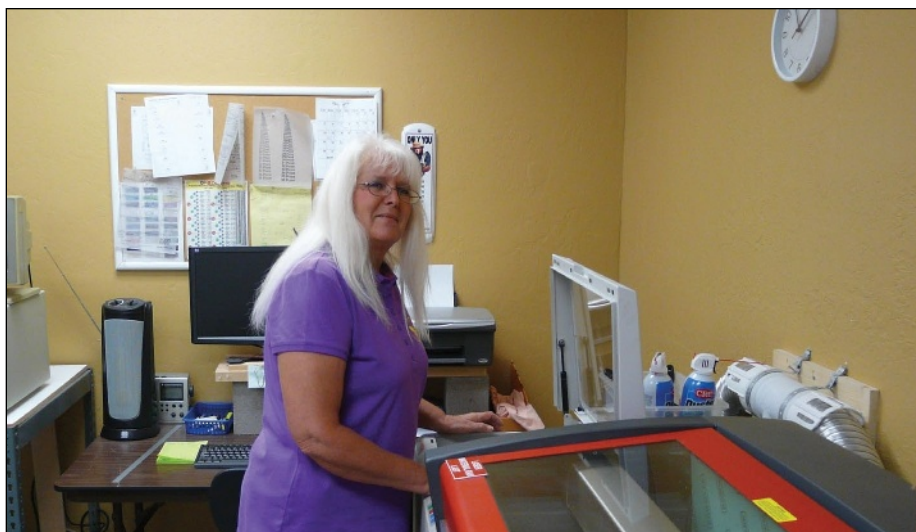
businesses and not "need" businesses; they're both recreational.

DH: That says something very positive about the economy in general. Michael, what about your background? I know you're actually relatively new to this.

Michael Burford: Yes, I was in the electronics business for 30 plus years. I was a printed circuit board designer and later became a chip designer. I worked for a major manufacturing company. I retired after 30 years; I had had enough. I was semi-retired; I started another business that was just getting started and Katie said, "You look bored. Why don't you come on board?" So, I've been with her since 2009.

Above: A look at Eagle Stamp's entrance and production area.

*Katie Mulry operates the Universal 25-watt C200 laser.
The laser to the right is a Universal 35-watt Versa.*



KM: Michael started the website in 2009—and then in 2010, it clicked, so he had to come to work for real.

DH: So it was actually driven by more customers.

KM: Yes, it was. The website made such a big difference. Then we ended up acquiring a couple of wholesale accounts that we didn't solicit, and that was very, very nice. With the combination of those things, I couldn't do it by myself anymore, so guess what?

MB: On top of that, I told Katie when I came on board that we're going to do this very aggressively. I don't want to nickel and dime it. We're going to be very proactive and very aggressive, and we were. When we moved into our new building at the end of May 2010, the business just took off.

KM: We've been here three years next week. We moved in Memorial Day weekend.

DH: Did you have an online presence before 2009?

KM: No, not at all.

DH: And now what percentage of your business comes from the Internet?

KM: 37 percent.

DH: That's impressive.

KM: We're very pleased, and we hope that that will continue to grow. What is so nice is that we're the only one in this area that has a website. And especially with mobile phones now, they pick up the local businesses. So we come out on top, and we haven't spent a dime. That's very nice.

DH: You must have been using some optimization tools to get on top or something.

KM: Somehow it's working.

MB: We're blessed, let's put it that way.

DH: Tell me a little about your background. Was this the first business that you owned?

KM: It was. I had worked for other people for many years. I grew up with my mom having an at-home secretarial service. From there, I was in the business forms industry working for a salesman who had his own company. I started off doing the accounting. One day, he put me over to the customer service side of it. It increased from there, and then I did my engraving thing part-time.

We had a boat years ago. Some of our friends wanted little engraved plates, so the first machine I bought was a New Hermes Industrial for \$1,500 in 1983. We started making these little plaques

for people's boats. We found that the Industrial was way too slow, so we bought the New Hermes 810 in 1985. That machine still runs every day today.

DH: So you have rotary engravers and laser engravers.

KM: Yes. We've pretty much eliminated the rotary, except for the New Hermes 810 because we do a lot of badges and that machine works really well for that. As far as the Meistergram 912, we still use that if it's a repeat order for a customer we've had for a number of years because the layouts are all in there. That way, I know it matches anything, especially if it's a plaque or a nameplate that they have in their facility.

MB: We like to convert everything over to the laser because it's so much faster for us.

KM: Anything new, we put on the laser. We have the C200 that we bought in 2002. Then we bought a used Versa laser early last year, and that's just been a dream. They both work a lot of hours every day and make our lives real simple now.

DH: What do you make on each of those?

KM: We do everything on laserable rubber. We sold our polymer machine a year ago because it just wasn't being utilized. We found another reason that we like making all of our dies out of rubber is that it takes the error out of the customer using the wrong ink on a stamp, which still happens. The Versa is used for all of our engraving of plastic and brass.

DH: Is most of your business then stamps and signs?

KM: Yes. We do some full-color sublimated badges for a number of customers. At first, we did some other things with sublimation. We did some mugs and t-shirts, but we don't have a retail location. We found that that just

wasn't where we wanted to focus our efforts.

MB: It wasn't our niche.

DH: What is the ratio of stamps to signs and badges?

KM: It used to be pretty equal, but now it's changed just a little bit. It's about 60 percent stamps and 40 percent engraving.

DH: Do you think the growth in stamps is because of the Internet?

KM: Yes, most definitely.

DH: I noticed you also make flash. What percentage of your stamps are flash?

KM: Probably 10 percent between the I-stamps and the Ecomark. Both are excellent stamps. The Ecomarks are great for notary stamps, and the I-stamps are great because there are so many different sizes. They're competitively priced compared to Xstamper. We can make the I-stamps in-house, as opposed to having someone else make the Xstamper for us, so that really gets the customer a good quality stamp at a fair price with good turnaround.

DH: When you get Internet orders, do you find that people compose their orders online? Or do you get an email after they've looked online?

KM: It's kind of both.

MB: We still get it online, but we have to proof it. One thing, with Katie and me, is that we think we have excellent quality. Nothing goes out of here wrong. Our quality control is really up to standards. Things are double, triple, and quadruple checked before they're packaged or go out the door. Katie mostly takes care of that on her end because she can back check it. She can call the customer. I'm on the manufacturing end; manufacturing, assembly, shipping, etc. Basically, it comes through her first.

KM: That's been my background—customer service for so many years. In addition to working full-time, I started my engraving business in 1983. By 1991, it was getting to the point where I couldn't do it just part-time, but I didn't have enough to do it full-time. One Sunday, I was looking in the newspaper and there it was: rubber stamp shop for sale. Three weeks later I owned it. The previous owner stayed with me for 30 days. Then he went away and I ran it by myself for about five years.

It grew to the point where I couldn't run it by myself anymore. My husband at the time was just retiring, so he worked with me part-time and then full-time until he passed away in 2006. That was quite an experience. I had never seen a rubber stamp being made in my life, and then I was doing it. I had two Ludlows and a room of type about the size of our office, which is probably 10 by 10 feet. Things have changed.

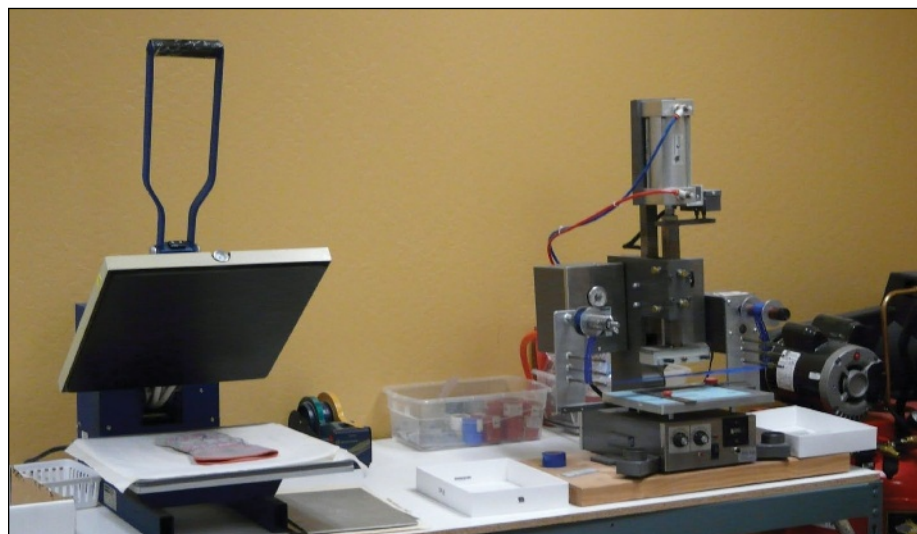
We were making a lot of stamps with the Ludlows and the engraving equipment that I brought into the new shop. It worked out very well for a while, but those Ludlows... a repair guy taught me how to clean them. I could do everything I needed to do with it, and

it was great. But when the Ludlows decided to have a problem, I couldn't fix them immediately. So we decided it's time. We parked those and started using the polymer a lot more—in fact, almost every day.

Then, Merle from Marlboro Mats took away all my Ludlow machines, type and type cases. He really didn't want the Ludlows. He wanted the brass type and the type cases. We had a lot of them, so it was a good trade. What was so funny is between the Ludlows and all the type and the type cases, I bought an HP printer so that I could make the transparencies easier for the polymer stamps. It was \$800 back then. Things have changed.

DH: I noticed you have some wood mount strips. Are you involved in the art stamp market at all?

KM: No, we have some customers who still like the old traditional handle stamps. We desperately try to convince them that they should use the self-inker, but there are certain situations where we still have to do them. We are quite involved with the aerospace industry where they still are stamping parts with rubber stamps and using permanent marking inks, so the only thing they can



Eagle Stamp's production equipment includes a 15" x 15" Clam Shell Mighty Press heat press (left) and a Jackson Marking Products Phase 2 Model 307 digital hot stamping machine.

use is a hand stamp. We do a lot of those.

MB: I bet we probably do over 100 a week. They're not one of my favorite things to do, but I'm not allowed to cut the wood.

KM: No, he's not allowed to touch the saw.

MB: But yes, we probably do over 100 a week. That business is still there.

KM: I wish they would go back to the plastic mounts instead of the wood mounts. I know they are better for the environment, but I like the plastic a lot better. The wood does smell good when you're cutting it, though.

DH: I just never thought that this would be the case this many years along, but as you said, there's obviously still a business application for traditional rubber stamps.

MB: What was funny is we had lunch with some friends this past weekend, and one of our friends said, "You know what? My husband and I still can't figure out how you kids make a living doing stamps." I said, "You know, some days we don't know either, but we do." You look at the numbers at the end of the year—last year, we met our goal for

2012. So this year we set our goal a little bit higher. It's like we told them, we do. I don't know how, but we do.

DH: What sort of obstacles have you faced as a business, in terms of manufacturing and marketing?

MB: I think sometimes it's lack of knowledge. It's people who don't really know what they want. You sit with them and they say, "That looks pretty good... oh, wait. I want to make a change." That's why we don't have retail, because it becomes too expensive. A person comes in and may spend an hour of your time and says, "Oh, that looks good, but why don't we do this?" I think it's really people not knowing what they want.

KM: Sometimes it's difficult because they don't know what they want. As long as you know the right questions to ask, it actually works out pretty well. One time, a customer was going to be stamping plastic bags, and she wanted a self-inking stamp so she could get them done real quickly. Well, not all inks dry really quick on a plastic bag, so that didn't work. Then she was going to put food in that plastic bag, so we had to be real careful as to what kind of ink she used so that it didn't get any people sick.

Overall, I think there has just been a learning curve.

MB: Also, new technologies. We do OK, but we're not like the young kids today who are computer savvy. She asks me a lot of questions about the computer, and I have to fumble about it because I'm not up to the new technology. Technology changes every week, it seems like. Because we're old-timers, we're always playing catch-up and that gets frustrating sometimes.

DH: I feel your pain.

MB: Before we got our new computers on the new system in here, Katie had an old 40 gigabyte computer. Every day before she started to work, I had to go to her station and get her more space. I would play and play and fumble this and fumble that, and there would be times I'd say, "Alright, I got you four megabytes." It got to the point where I said, "You only got a couple kilobytes." And then one morning, I got in here and I couldn't do it anymore, I couldn't get more space. I said, "That's it. I quit."

DH: Space is so cheap now, too.

KM: What do we have, two terabytes now?

MB: Two terabytes. We also switched the office around. For a long time, we walked around with thumb drives from station to station. It got to the point where I said it was too much time, too much handling, too much converting. I finally convinced her to have everything converted so that everything talks. My computer talks to hers, hers talks to mine and we can send things. Then, I used to back the system up, but now we've got a company that backs it up for us, and it's offsite. We're proud of that and it's real good for us.

DH: Big savior for me the other day. I accidentally wiped out the entire database.



MB: She did a whole day's worth, no, a month...

KM: I had a whole month that I had lost. I didn't realize it until a customer re-ordered a stamp. When I went back and looked, I saw that month was missing. I called our computer guy and he grabbed it out of space somewhere and put it back on again. They always say it's not *if* a computer is going to die, it's *when*. Those computers were getting real close. It took a lot of the stress away from worrying about the computers.

MB: There are times when she doesn't have time to do her billing because we're so swamped. It's nice that she can go home, do all the paperwork and billing and send it back here. It's all here, it's all processed and she can move on.

KM: About the worst thing I have to do at that point is print invoices. But in our new electronic world, I've got so many customers that we email the invoices to and they EFT the money into our account. We're printing out less and less invoices. I mean, they swore that we'd be a paperless society and it's later than sooner, but it is starting to happen.

DH: Do you use QuickBooks for your accounting?

KM: Yes, in fact, I have to upgrade that by the end of the month because they won't let me email invoices after June 1st. So that's on my list of things to do in the next few weeks.

DH: And then for composition?

KM: We use Corel X4 at this point. I started off with Corel 3, years ago. We upgraded to 6, then Corel 10, X3 and now X4.

DH: Do you have any particular inspirations in your careers? Was there something that was a big help?

KM: For me, it was because I didn't want to work for anybody anymore.

DH: That's a great motivator.

KM: It was. They say that if you're happy working for someone else, stay there, but if you're not, go do it yourself. I had worked for other people for years and actually had run their businesses. I had a number of employees that I was responsible for, and I just decided I didn't want to do that anymore. It's hard enough to be responsible for yourself, but this has worked out very, very well.

I'm actually kind of surprised in one way because you just never know when you step off the curb whether it's going to work or not. I've been very fortunate. In fact, last week I talked to the man who I bought my rubber stamp business from. I said, "Jerry, what were you doing 21 years ago this week?" He said, "I was showing you how to make stamps." He remembered. He was retired from the telephone company when he was making stamps. Another 21 years later, he is very happily retired, and he and his wife are enjoying life.

DH: Do you find yourself doing much in the way of outside sales, or is everything you do within the walls of the office here?

MB: We went out and tried that at first, and it just didn't work. It was more of a headache than getting anything back in return.

DH: Now, as far as selling on the Internet, what do you use? Adwords or just organic?

KM: It's terrible to say, but we've been so busy that we haven't had to do any marketing this past year. It's just that most of our growth came from our customers growing. We concentrated so much on just their needs and wants, and that filled up most of our time.

We're probably going to have to do a little bit of something. We're talking to a couple of people, and maybe we'll be doing something with Constant Contact, Salesforce or something like

that. We've kind of been overwhelmed by how much we did grow last year. I don't want it to get to the point where we can't handle it ourselves because we like working it ourselves—just the two of us.


MB: We could hire a part-time person, but she and I have got such a flow. We come in to work and it just flows. We've also been blessed. People come into this facility here and say, "I didn't know that there was a rubber stamp shop in here." That's probably been just two or three percent of our traffic since we aren't in a retail location.

KM: Like I said, we have people who are so mobile with their phones now. They want to look up something, our name pops up, and they come in the door. We're always here to help. But if someone calls on the phone and asks where we are, we say, "How can we help you?" and try to save them the time of driving around and finding us. Plus, in most cases, they know what they want, so we tell them to either go to our website or email or fax us.

If none of that works, you're welcome to come down here. Given that we don't have a retail store, the only thing we can pretty much show them is an unfinished stamp.

DH: Well, congratulations to you both. I look forward to letting our readers know more about you. I appreciate your time.

KM: Thank you.

MB: Well, we're very blessed. A lot of hard work, but we're just blessed—thank you. 

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STAMP SHOP WEB™: *Step by Step*

How to change settings in your website—Part 1

by Becky Skelley

Did you know that as a Stamp Shop Web customer you are given full control over your site? The Settings Tab contains a vast collection of settings that give you complete control over your Stamp Shop Web site.

For instance, would you like your customers to be charged for gift wrapping items? There's a setting for that. Would you like to set up a link for your wholesale customers so they can sell your merchandise under a disguise of their website? There's a setting called *Affiliates*, and it's built right into your Stamp Shop Web site. We're about to walk through the *Settings Tab* and all it has to offer, and believe me, there's a lot.

Steps to Follow

In order to view the *Settings Tab*, you must first be signed into the admin area of your Stamp Shop Web site. Once you are logged in, click the *Settings Tab* where you will see the *General Options* (see Picture 1), a grand list of miscellaneous items.

General Options

Home Country: In the drop down menu, select the country in which your

store resides. As with all changes made within the admin section of your site, be sure to click the *Save Changes/OK* button before you move off the page you are working on.

Default Home Page: Type in the address of your homepage (if you want something other than the default).

Server Time Offset: If you reside in a time zone other than Eastern Standard Time, you may adjust the time in which

Picture 1: General Options Screen under the Settings Tab

The screenshot shows the 'General Options' screen under the 'Settings' tab. The left sidebar lists various settings categories, with 'General Options' highlighted. The main content area displays the following settings:

- Home Country: United States - \$123,456.78
- Default Home Page: http://demo.stampshopweb.com/id
- Server Time Offset: 0
- Current Server Time: 6/4/2013 4:20:56 PM
- Your Local Time with offset: 6/4/2013 4:20:56 PM
- Show Product Image in Cart: ☒
- Show Sign Image in Cart: ☐ (Note: Setting this option will cause the sign image to stay in color with the background. You will have to re-typeset to send to your engraver)
- Small Product Image Size: 110 w 110 h
- Medium Product Image Size: 175 w 175 h
- Tiny Product Image Size: 64 w 64 h
- Force Image Product Sizes: ☐
- Show Powered By icon in footer: ☐
- Show Cart Totals in Header: ☒
- Site Cookie Name: StampShopWebSiteCookie
- Allow Personalized Themes: ☐
- Allow Affiliate Themes: ☐
- Show Wish List on Cart Page: ☒
- Allow Gift Wrapping in Cart: ☐
- Gift Wrap Charge Per Item: 0.00
- Charge Tax on Gift Wrapping: ☐
- Charge Tax on Non-Shipping Items: ☐
- Remember Carts for Anonymous Users: ☐
- Disable Product Caching: ☐
- Force Upper-Case for Addresses: ☐
- Force Login: ☐
- Allow New Customers: ☒
- Use Metric: ☐
- Use Voucher System: ☐
- Allow user to change tax exemption status: ☐
- Allow Remote Login (DO NOT CHECK UNLESS INSTRUCTED BY CONNECTWEB): ☐

Buttons for 'Cancel' and 'OK' are at the bottom.

your orders are placed on your site. Refer to the Current Server Time and adjust the difference in the number of hours by selecting + or -.

Show Product Image in Cart: Select this option if you would like to display a small image of the product in the shopping cart before the customer checks out.

Show Sign Image in Cart: Check this box to display the sign preview image in the shopping cart. Please note Sign preview images are often wide.

Small Product Image Size: Set the dimensions of the small image here. This image is displayed when the product is assigned to a category that displays in a list/grid format.

Medium Product Image Size: Set the dimensions of the medium image here, which will be displayed on the product detail page.

Tiny Product Image Size: This refers to the size of the image that displays in the shopping cart.

Force Image Product Sizes: If you place differently sized images for various products, the system will automatically display them all at the same size for a more uniform look.

Show Powered By Icon in Footer: When this box is selected, the *Powered by Stamp Shop Web* logo will appear at the bottom of your site. Uncheck this box to remove it.

Show Cart Totals in Header: Click on this choice if you would like to display the shopping cart totals in the top area of your site.

Site Cookie Name: This is a behind-the-scenes computer transaction which helps your site track what users place in their shopping carts. There is no need to change this, but if you do, you cannot use any spaces in your new cookie name.

Allow Personalized Themes: Choose this option to allow personalized themes for customers. When checked, customers will have the option of viewing a different theme (in other words, look and feel) for your site once they have signed in to your site with their usernames. Customers can choose these themes under their *Account Settings*. The theme choices are the same as those in the admin of your website.

Allow Affiliate Themes: Check this box to allow affiliates of your store to have their own theme (look and feel).

Show Wish List on Cart Page: If you would like to display the customer's wish list items on the shopping cart page, select this box.

Allow Gift Wrapping in Cart: Click on this box if you want to give customers the option to choose gift wrapping per product within their cart.

Gift Wrap Charge Per Item: Enter the dollar amount that you want to charge the customer for gift wrapping. Next you must edit each product that you will allow to be gift wrapped; to do so, head over to the *Products Tab* and edit the product. Once inside the *General Info* area, expand the *Advanced* section. Check the box next to *Gift Wrap Allowed*, and click *Save Changes*.

Charge Tax on Non-Shipping Items: Check this box if you want to charge tax on products that you have set as

STAMP SHOP WEB™: Step by Step

“non-shipping” items. To set a product as a “non-shipping” item, you must edit the product within the Products Tab. Click to expand the Shipping section to check the Non-Shipping Item box. An example of a non-shipping item would be a downloadable product.

Remember Carts for Anonymous

Users: Select this box if you want your store to remember the shopping carts for anonymous users who have shopped on your site and have items in their carts but have not signed in to your store or proceeded to the checkout yet.

Disable Product Caching: This option forces a re-read from the database for product display (*not recommended*).

Force Uppercase for Addresses: If you want addresses entered on your site to always be in uppercase type, select this box.

Force Login: Check this box if you want your site to force customers to sign in first before they can view your site. This is ideal for Stamp Shop Web website owners who have dealer sites or specific sites for organizations that give their customers discounts. Users (site customers) do not see their discounts unless they sign in before placing items into their shopping cart.

Allow New Customers: Choose this option if you would like to accept new customers to your site.

Use Metric: Select this if you would like to change the measurements on your site to the metric system.

Use Voucher System: Check this box if you would like to allow vouchers to be accepted on your site during checkout. Pre-assigned codes are linked with stamp mount products (sold without a die plate) to be then made customizable on your site. Since the mount would have already been purchased elsewhere,

the voucher system allows customization and checkout without additional payment. By allowing vouchers, all other forms of payment (credit cards, PayPal, phone, fax, etc.) will not be accepted. This is an all or nothing setting.

Allow user to change tax exemption

status: When you choose this option, a new customer may check a box that reads: “I am tax exempt” when creating a new user account on your site.

Allow Remote Login: Check this box only if you have been advised to do so by Connectweb Technologies, Inc.

When this is activated, customers who are using an intranet to connect to your site may pass over the sign-in process, making it transparent.

Addresses

The *Addresses* link provides you with control over the requirements for your customers’ billing and shipping addresses (see Picture 2).

Billing Address: This box indicates the requirements for your customers’ billing address collected during the checkout process. The middle column within the *Billing Address* box allows you to decide if the option will be shown to your customer. If you want to display it, click the box in the “show?” column. The last column within the *Billing Address* box lets you choose if the option will be required. To make it required, select the required column checkbox. To change an option from *required* to *not required*, uncheck the box.

Shipping Address: This box indicates the requirements for the shipping address. The middle column within the *Shipping Address* box lets you decide if the option will be shown to the customer. To make it visible, click the box in the “show?” column. The last column within the *Shipping Address* box determines if the option will be required.

Billing Address			Shipping Address		
	Show?	Required?		Show?	Required?
First Name	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	First Name	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Middle Initial	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Middle Initial	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Last Name	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Last Name	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Company Name	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Company Name	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Phone Number	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Phone Number	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Fax Number	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fax Number	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Web Site URL	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Web Site URL	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
AddressOther1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	AddressOther1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
AddressOther2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	AddressOther2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
AddressOther3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	AddressOther3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
AddressOther4	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	AddressOther4	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
AddressOther5	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	AddressOther5	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Picture 2: Address Options/Settings Screen

To make it required, click the required column checkbox. To change an option from *required* to *not required*, uncheck the box. When you have chosen the options that will be visible and required, click the *OK* button to save changes.

Affiliates

The Affiliate program is a free tool that we've set up for you to use. With it, you're able to offer a link to your resellers that can be placed on their websites which will then link them to your website. We've also arranged for you to allow a different theme to appear when they enter your site through that particular link. In this

way, when their customers shop from the original reseller site, they don't even realize that they have left the original site. Here are some details regarding the affiliate settings that will help you to control how the affiliate program works on your site: (see Picture 3).

Enable Sign-Up Form: Check this box if you would like to make the sign-up form available to all of your customers. By making this choice, you are allowing the form to appear within the *Customer Service/Contact Us* link on your site. This allows one to become an affiliate.

Affiliate Commission Type: Within this drop down menu, you can decide

which type of commission will be assigned to affiliates of your site.

Percentage of Sale: By selecting this option from the drop down menu, you set the commission of all the affiliates on your site as a percentage type.

Flat Rate Commission: By choosing this option from the drop down menu, you set the commission of all the affiliates on your site as a flat rate (or fixed dollar amount) commission type.

Your Affiliate Commission: This field sets the commission amount, based on the field above (either a percentage or a dollar amount).

Affiliate Referral Days: Set the amount of days you would like the referral for your affiliates to be valid. This refers to the number of days that your site will

Continued on page 18

Picture 3: Affiliates Options/Settings Screen

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STAMP SHOP WEB™: Step by Step

Continued from page 15

remember that an end-user belongs to an affiliate, even if the user returns directly to your site.

Affiliate Conflict Resolution: If an end user comes to your site first from one affiliate and then later from another, this option indicates the affiliate to which the customer belongs—the original (old) or the later (new).

Affiliate ID Query String Name: This refers to the element included in the special link generated for the affiliate to place on his or her site.

Affiliate Introduction Text: If you choose to allow affiliates to sign themselves up, then this text will be

displayed on the page that explains why they should become your affiliate.

Affiliate Terms: This refers to the terms (rules or conditions) of your affiliate program.

Send Order to Affiliate only: Check this box if you want the orders sent directly to the affiliate, instead of coming first to you.

Stick around—we've only just grazed the surface of the *Settings Tab* and all that it has to offer. Next month, we'll discuss further options within the *Settings Tab*, so stay tuned! Mm

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: *Becky Skelley is a member of the Connectweb Technologies, Inc. family, a software*

development and Web hosting company that specializes in software for the marking devices industry. Skelley is a graduate of Northeastern University in Boston, Massachusetts with a Bachelors of Science in Graphic Design. She got her start in design at a marketing and communications company. She joined the Connectweb family as a designer in early 2010, focusing her talents on creating custom-designed websites for the Stamp Shop Web system. In addition to design, she also trains and assists customers on the vast product line Connectweb offers. She is a new mom who enjoys photography, oil painting and reading when she finds time. For further help, call Becky at 800/556-9932 or email her at becky@cwebtechnologies.com.

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Making money with CorelDRAW®

Sandblasting—The resources

by Judy and John McDaniel, contributing writers



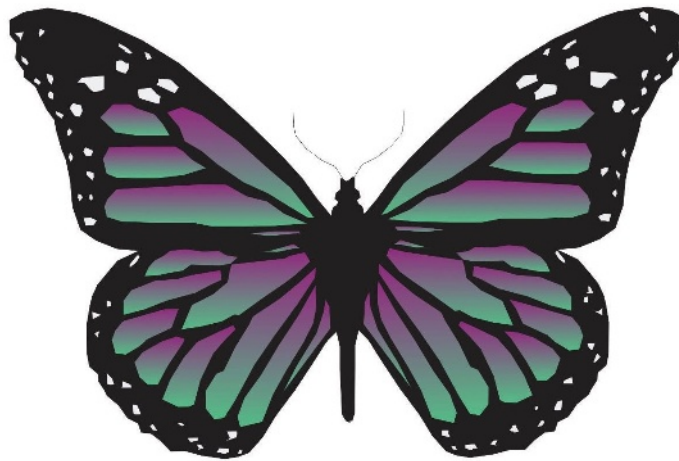
In the last two installments of Decorative Sandblasting, we looked at the products you can produce, along with the required equipment and its cost. This time, we'll look at the training and other resources available to help you get started.

Creating the artwork

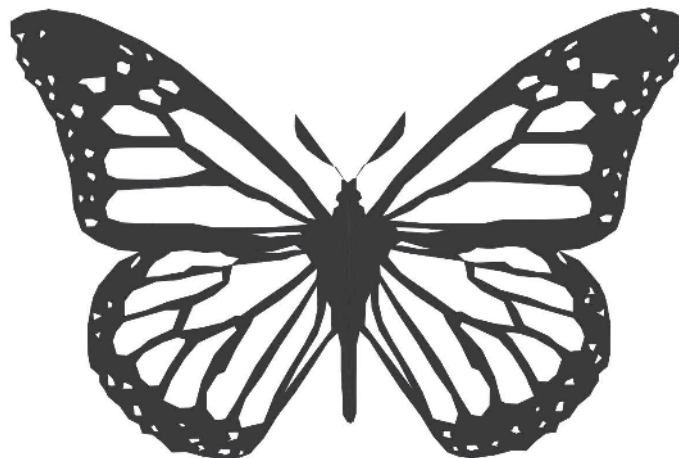
Almost all the artwork necessary for decorative sandblasting is silhouette—in other words, pure black and white. Even photographic image sandblasting is accomplished using halftones, which are black dots on a white background.

But before we dismiss artwork creation for sandblasting as simple, we must remember that in some ways having a pure black and white palette to work with (etch and no-etch) can be both a blessing and a challenge. Sandblasting symbol art and lettering is quite simple. However, many company logos (as well as a lot of other commercial artwork and clipart) are created in full-color where color variations define different areas in the object.

The challenge can be converting full-color artwork to silhouette (see Pictures 1 and 2.) Sometimes, it's as simple as the butterfly illustration where we just made the color areas white.

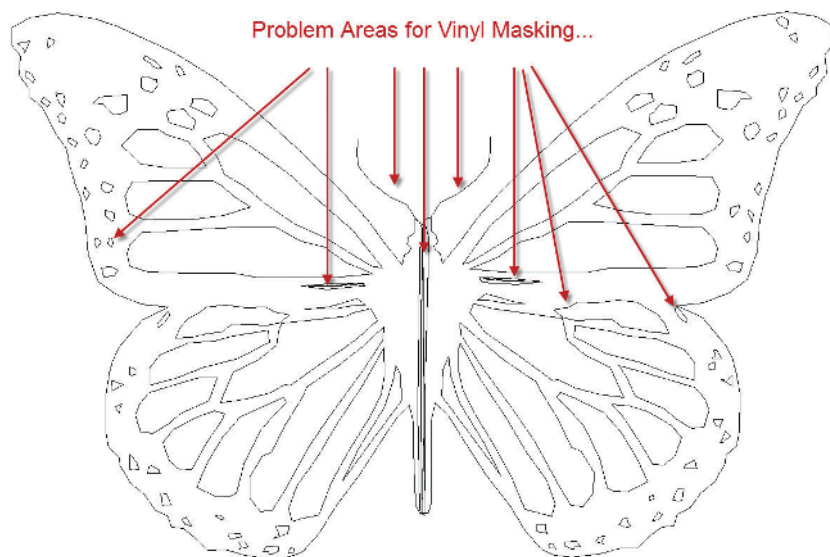


Picture 1: When converting full-color artwork to silhouette, the antenna on the butterfly may be too thin to blast.



Picture 2: Here we have changed the artwork on the antenna to make it easier to blast properly.

Picture 3: This shows some of the issues with the butterfly graphic for vinyl cutting.



Other times, it requires white or black outlines to define different areas in the illustration.

Another consideration with sandblast artwork is that the weight of lines in the object can be a problem. For example, the antenna on the butterfly shown in Picture 1 (page 19) may be too thin to blast. The change shown in Picture 2 (page 19) will make it easier to blast properly. With a little practice, you will be able to look at a piece of artwork or a company logo and see what changes may be required for success in blasting the image.

The impact of masking on artwork

The masking method you choose for your sandblast projects will also have an impact on the artwork. If you choose to use photo-masking or laser-masking, then any image that will print is suitable. You can use bitmap, vector or mixed artwork—as long as the image lines are heavy enough for the project. When sandblasting line art, keep in mind that you can only blast a line as deep as it is

wide. Often very thin lines will not blast properly.

If you choose to vinyl-cut masks, then the demands on the artwork are much greater. First, vinyl cutters require clean vector art. Bitmaps will not work unless the cutter's driver automatically converts bitmaps to vectors.

Clean vector art means that the artwork should not have any hidden lines. A good way to check the art is to set *View* to *Wireframe* or *Simple Wireframe*. Picture 3 shows some of the issues with the butterfly graphic for vinyl cutting.

In addition, since vinyl cutting requires weeding (removing the areas to be blasted), the size of objects to be cut out is a consideration. Finally, sharp corners are also a problem for vinyl cutters, especially with heavy mask materials. Cutters drag a sharp knife through the material. Ideally, corners will have some radius to them. This is a situation where the *Fillet* operation in CorelDRAW can be very useful.

Take a class

Our next recommendation is to take a class! This may seem somewhat self-serving since we teach sandblasting classes; however, you don't need to take one of our classes. There are a number of classes available. Furthermore, we make this recommendation for any new process you are considering.

Sandblasting is not difficult to learn; most people really enjoy doing it, and the products you produce have a high perceived value. But it is primarily a manual process. Once you have the artwork completed and the mask created, the rest of the process—applying the mask, blasting the product and cleaning up—is manual.

In all the years we have taught sandblasting, there have been very few people who didn't move forward into the process. By first taking a class, those who chose to move forward had a head start. Those who chose not to continue with it saved the cost of the equipment and the time finding out they didn't want to do it.

Resources for equipment, supplies and training

The following companies provide sandblast cabinets:

- Econoline, Grand Haven, Michigan—800/253-9968, www.sandblasting.com
- Glastar, Chatsworth, California—800/423-5635, www.glastar.com
- IKONICS Imaging, Duluth, Minnesota—800/643-1037, <https://ikonicsimaging.com/wp/>
- Rayzist Photomask, Inc., Vista, California—800/729-9478, www.rayzist.com

Some of the above also have sandblast masking supplies and provide sandblast classes.

The following are companies that manufacture industrial quality air compressors. Generally, you have to purchase one through a local dealer or distributor.

- Champion—www.championpneumatic.com
- Ingersoll Rand—www.ingersollrandproducts.com
- Quincy—www.quincycompressor.com

The next group of companies provides equipment for creating sandblast masks:

Laser masks

These companies offer laser engravers:

- Epilog Laser Corp., Golden, Colorado—888/437-4564, www.epiloglaser.com
- Gravograph USA, Duluth, Georgia—800/843-7637, www.gravograph.us
- Hurricane Lasers, Las Vegas, Nevada—855/552-7377, <http://hurricanelasers.com>
- Trotec Laser USA, Canton, Michigan—866/226-8505, www.troteclaser.com
- Trotec Canada, Mississauga, Ontario—866/987-6328, www.troteclaser.com
- Universal Laser Systems Inc., Scottsdale, Arizona—800/859-7033, www.ulsinc.com

Photo mask equipment and supplies

Laser mask supplies

- IKONICS Imaging, Duluth, Minnesota—800/643-1037, <https://ikonicsimaging.com/wp/>
- Rayzist Photomask, Inc., Vista, California—800/729-9478, www.rayzist.com

Vinyl masks

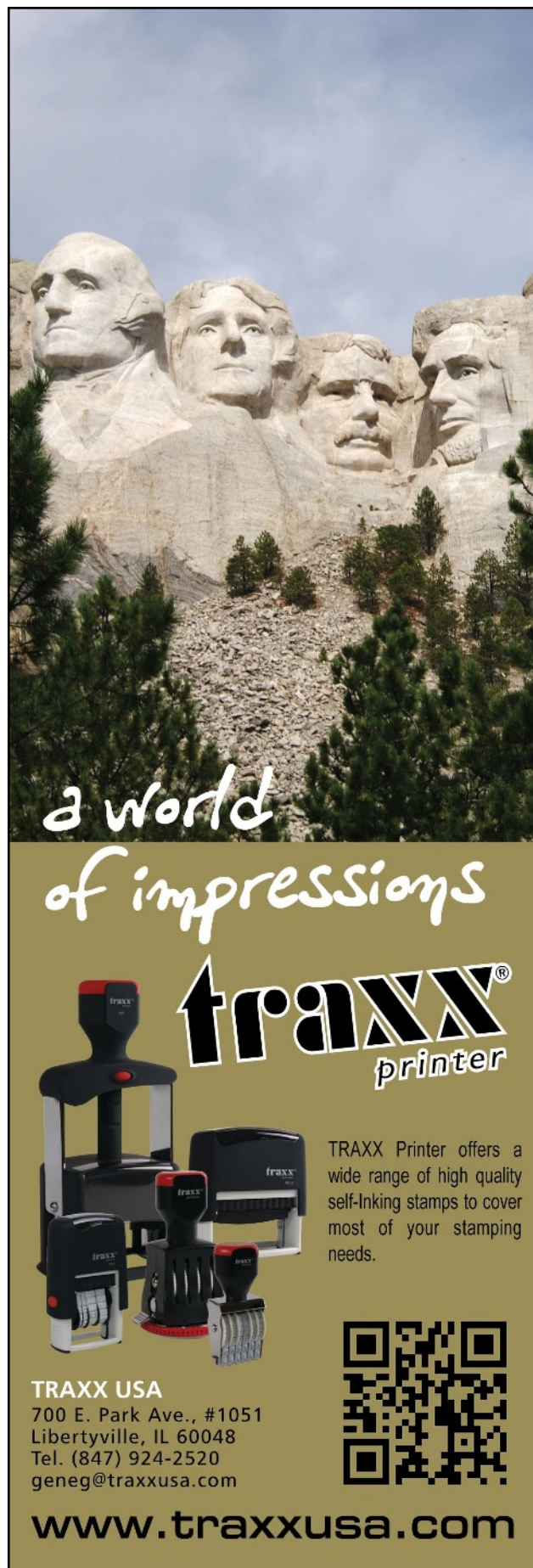
These companies offer vinyl cutters and supplies:

- Imprintables Warehouse, Carmichaels, Pennsylvania—800/347-0068, www.imprintables.com
- Stahls ID Direct, St. Clair Shores, Michigan—800/478-2457, www.stahls.com

Blanks

These companies offer blank products suitable for sandblasting:

- ID Plates, Mesquite, Texas—800/395-2570, www.idplates.com (various metal blanks)
- LaserSketch, Romeoville, Illinois—630/243-6360, www.lasersketch.com (stone and marble, leather and more)




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- Topmost World, Inc., Montclair, California—909/590-0668, www.topmost.com (glass and crystal awards)

Conclusion

The resources listed above are a sample of what is available. For information

on additional companies that provide blank products, equipment, supplies and training services to the industry, check out the Graphic Products Guide (GPG) maintained by the Association of CorelDRAW® Professionals (ACDRP) at <http://www.acdrp.org/quicksources.asp>. 

ABOUT THE AUTHORS: John and Judy McDaniel are owners of CorelDRAW® Help, Inc. For information on training services and video lessons available, visit www.CorelDRAWhelp.com. You may contact them via email at mail@CorelDRAWhelp.com.

Get over being afraid to give feedback

by Jane Perdue

“Tell me why you never talked to Josh about the problems with his job performance.”

“I didn’t want to hurt his feelings.”

This dialogue happened during legal discovery as part of an unlawful-termination lawsuit. Fed up with an employee’s ongoing failure to meet job requirements, the supervisor had fired him. The employee believed he had been fired because he was older and more tenured than the rest of his department and hence earned more money.

If you supervise people, speaking to them candidly and with care about their job-performance deficiencies is a must-have skill.

I’ll never forget the first time I had to tell one of my employees his job performance was missing the mark. I’d postponed the discussion a dozen times. The time lag only made me more and more uncomfortable and dashed my secret hopes that he would read my mind and miraculously start doing a better job.

As the possibility of that miracle receded, I talked to a respected colleague. He asked me what I was afraid of.

“I’m afraid of hurting his feelings.”

“What will happen if his performance doesn’t improve?”

“I’ll have to let him go.”

“What about his feelings then?”

Ooh!

My colleague reminded me that effective leaders have a vested interest in improving the skills of their employees. As such, they speak frankly and frequently about performance with them. He emphasized that those discussions originate in caring rather than being a forced obligation because some form is due to the HR department. As leaders, we own developing our people just we own production or sales numbers or whatever other metric is used as the yardstick to assess work output.

Make it a habit. Give direct reports consistent and ongoing coaching and feedback about how they’re doing, both good and bad. Seize the moment. There’s no need to wait for review time.

Be specific. Generalities may be easier to deliver but offer insufficient data to help an individual know what to start, stop or continue. Research done by Angelo S. DeNisi and Avraham N. Kluger showed that **38% of feedback** discussions had a negative effect on performance.

“You need to be nicer to customers” is open to lots of interpretation. Say instead:


“Smile and make eye contact when you greet customers.”

“Your voice is friendly so use it to your advantage when you ask them how you can help.”

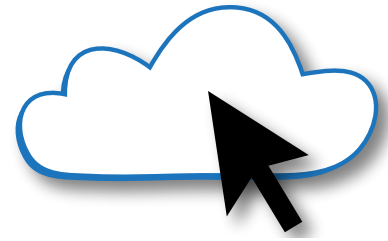
That feedback paints a much clearer picture of what performance is expected.

Saying “Good job!” is worthy recognition yet doesn’t give the necessary specificity to help develop particular skills and/or behaviors. Say instead, “Great job on that presentation to the boss! You had all the facts and had analyzed them well. Plus, you had anticipated her objections so you were able to deflect her push-back with facts and did so with appropriate humor—well done!”

Build a culture in which employees give feedback to one another. There’s nothing that says that feedback can only come from the boss! Remember, it’s not about you. If constructive feedback is offered with empathy, conflict is unnecessary.

As for that employee who was my first “feedback guinea pig,” he thanked me for being upfront with him and went on to become a star performer. 

Jane Perdue is a leadership-development speaker, writer and founder of Braithwaite Innovation Group. She is the co-author of two books on leadership and blogs at “Lead Big”—<http://braithwaiteinnovationgroup.com/leadbig/>



Cloud computing—Part 1

The next computer revolution

by John McDaniel, contributing writer

Cloud computing is the next big ongoing movement within the computer revolution. What we'll explore in this article series is how that will impact our lives, with a focus on how we communicate and do business in this changing environment. We'll also suggest some of the potential benefits and the concerns.

A definition

“Cloud computing—correctly: a computing cloud—is a colloquial expression used to describe a variety of different computing concepts that involve a large number of computers that are connected through a real-time communication network (typically the Internet). Cloud computing is a jargon term without a commonly accepted non-ambiguous scientific or technical definition.

“In science, cloud computing is a synonym for distributed computing over a network and means the ability to run a program on many connected computers at the same time. The popularity of the term ‘cloud computing’ can be attributed to its use in marketing to sell hosted services in the sense of Application Service Provisioning that run client server software on a remote location.”*

What's new?

Cloud computing—in other words, distributed computing—is not a new concept. It has been in use from the very

beginning of the computer age. It is computer power distributed via a network.

The first computers were large mainframes installed at universities and government agencies. Typically, they were accessed by a number of “dumb terminals,” essentially devices that did not have much, if any, computing power. Programs ran on the mainframe and served many clients.

Since the start of the computer revolution, there has been an ongoing discussion of expanding the concept of distributed computer processing into a utility service. In other words, computing power would be delivered to homes and businesses in much the same way that electricity is delivered via the power grid.

What is new is that technology and the networking infrastructure now makes the “computer utility” concept possible. It's evolving into a reality. In fact, it has been moving forward toward this goal for some time.

The evolution of a computer utility is being fueled by several converging forces: the Internet, ground-based distribution networks, satellite communications, the cellular phone network, electronic hardware, the availability of content, and people's desire to be connected. All of these factors, and perhaps more, have played a role in making this possible.

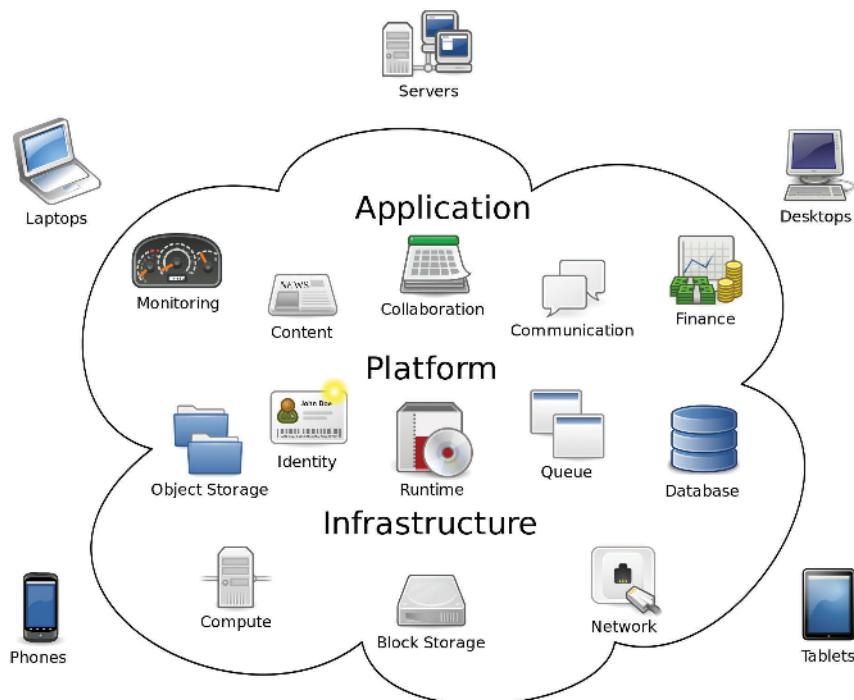
First—the Internet

Over the past several years as the Internet has grown, it has had a dramatic effect on our daily lives. It's impacted communications, shopping (buying and selling), financial services, the availability of information, entertainment and social networking, to name just a few areas.

Communications

For example, in communications, everyone has seen the impact the Internet has had on the U.S. postal service. Most written communication is now handled by email and may be

*Source: Wikipedia. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cloud_computing for more information.



Cloud Computing

Created by Sam Johnston using OmniGroup's OmniGraffle and Inkscape (includes Computer.svg by Sasa Stefanovic)

moving to instant messaging. Snail mail (conventional mail) is dying.

Email and the Internet are also causing fax machines to pass into the same realm as the mechanical typewriter. Perhaps it hasn't totally eliminated them yet, but very soon.

Periodicals, books, magazines, newsletters and newspapers are all going digital. More bad news for printers and the postal service! As the cost of printing and distributing these products rises, there are enormous pressures to provide this content digitally.

We are in a transition period where some of these publications are available in both forms, printed and digital. But, more are converting to total digital offerings. Digital publications can be searched, cataloged easily and take very little space to store.

Ecommerce—buying and selling

Shopping trends have changed dramatically from just a few years ago.

More and more, people are turning to the Internet to at least research, if not purchase, products. Many customers are also willing to provide product feedback and will share their experiences regarding products they have purchased and the businesses that sold them. Some online companies also seek out product feedback and provide that as a service. As a result, many consumers will research price, availability and product ratings online before making a purchase decision, even if they ultimately choose to purchase from a local store.

Selling items that you no longer need or want has also changed. Sites like eBay and Craigslist are replacing newspaper classified ads as a way to sell your stuff. In many cases, you don't have to pay for the ad—it's free.

Buying and selling products online has increased substantially in the last few years. This is forcing delivery services like UPS and FedEx to expand. In fact, parcel delivery is one area in which the U.S. postal service is growing.

Financial services

Financial services, such as bill paying, are also moving to the Internet. Banks and credit card companies would prefer that you never write a check again and encourage you to simply pay all your bills online. They don't want the cost of handling physical documents. They also encourage you to "go paperless" in other ways; for example, receiving your statements and other notices electronically.

Banks would also prefer that you receive money electronically via direct deposit. When direct deposit isn't available, some banks permit you to take a picture of any physical checks you might receive. You send the images of the checks to the bank. The bank will then deposit the funds into your account electronically. They really don't want to handle the paper. Of course, all of this is bad news for companies that print checks.

Information

Information is exploding on the Internet. Not only will you find product pricing and rating information, but also company ratings, restaurant menus, movie schedules (remember when you had to call the theater to find out what was playing and the times?) and the list continues. Just about anything you want to know is available. (Except the winning Lotto numbers for the upcoming drawing. I keep looking for that. Past winners are, of course, listed.) The Internet has essentially replaced the Yellow Pages.

Entertainment

As communication speeds have increased, entertainment offerings have become a major part of what's available on the Internet, including streaming video and Internet radio.

Netflix was one of the first companies to provide entertainment via the

Internet. Initially, their service was comprised primarily of DVD rentals via the mail with video streaming offered as a free bonus. As Internet speeds have increased, video streaming has become a large part of their offerings. Today, the widespread availability of high-speed Internet has given rise to a number of competitors; including Amazon Instant Video, Hulu and Blockbuster @Home which is now part of Dish network.

Last, but certainly not least, are amateur, professional and semi-professional videos available on sites like YouTube. On YouTube, you can find sales videos, instructional videos and amateur videos that are simply entertaining.

Social networking

The Internet has made a profound impact in the way in which we connect socially. We have personal networks, such as Facebook and Twitter, along with business-oriented sites like LinkedIn. Through the Internet, we can keep in contact with friends, family and business associates, no matter where they might be in the world.

Conclusion

In short, the Internet continues to change the way we communicate with one another and do business. It's amazing to realize the impact it has had in such a short period of time. Remember that in its present form, the Internet is still a teenager.

In the next installment in this series, we'll examine the communication forces that are making "The Computer Utility" a reality today.

John McDaniel, along with his wife Judy, are owners of CorelDRAW® Help, Inc. They started in the personalization business in 1989 with CorelDRAW version 1.0. They've used it with mechanical and laser

engravers to produce awards, gifts, and industrial products. They've also used it with all types of printers and vinyl cutters for creating sublimation and other image transfers and for making sandblast masks, screen-printing screens, pad-printing plates, signs, banners, sales literature and flyers. In essence, they have over 20 years' experience in applying CorelDRAW.

They have written hundreds of articles and tips, lectured across the country and have been teaching CorelDRAW since 1991. For information on training services and video lessons available, visit www.CorelDRAWhelp.com. You may contact them via email at mail@CorelDRAWhelp.com.



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CorelDRAWHelp Association announces two new websites



The Association of CorelDRAW® Professionals (ACDRP), publisher of *CorelDRAWHelp* magazine, announces the development of two new websites. The new magazine site, built with Corel Website Creator, is located at www.CorelDRAWHelp.com. It offers a free subscription to the magazine, as well as a range of valuable information for many different graphic processes (image transfer, signs, heat transfers, laser engraving, sandblasting and more). Visitors can see slide shows of graphic product ideas that they can use to make money with their graphics skills.

The second site, ACDRP.com, is the new resource site for members and subscribers, featuring a wide range of content and training. Those who have a free subscription to the magazine have access to articles on making money with CorelDRAW via different processes, as well as the bookstore. ACDRP members have access to the bookstore, archives of past issues of the magazine, archives of past tips and more than 70 videos offering training on CorelDRAW and various production processes.

ACDRP is the only professional membership association for CorelDRAW users. Annual membership is available at three levels, currently at special reduced prices: Basic for \$60 a year; Video for \$120 a year and Premium for \$180 a year. Full details are available at www.acdrp.com.

The Association of CorelDRAW Professionals was founded in 2006 to provide CorelDRAW users with help in creating graphics and help in making money with graphics.

For more information, visit www.acdrp.com and www.CorelDRAWHelp.com.

JDS introduces new design for Luminary acrylic awards



JDS Industries, Inc. introduces the newest design in its Luminary line of acrylic awards, the Luminary Portrait Acrylics. These elegant awards are simple yet beautiful! They are one-inch thick, self-standing acrylic pieces that have been beveled on the back to create an oval engraving area framed by the beveling which reflects light, resulting in a dramatic award when completed. The engraving area comes in clear, black or blue, and each color is available in three sizes: 4 inches x 5 inches, 4-1/2 inches x 6 inches and 5 inches x 7 inches. The Luminary Portrait Acrylic awards can be used either vertically or horizontally. A sample set is available, and they are stocked in all 14 JDS warehouse locations nationwide.

For more information on these new products or to get showroom samples, call JDS at 800/843-8853; Fax: 605/339-1467; Email: sales@jdsindustries.com or visit www.jdsindustries.com.



Dog Tag Silencer from LaserBits

Made from durable silicone rubber, the Dog Tag Silencer is made to fit standard size dog tags. The black silencer

stretches over the metal tag and eliminates jangle noise that the metal tags make. The Silencer works with either anodized aluminum or stainless steel tags.

For more information, visit www.laserbits.com.



LaserBits Offers Anodized Knife

This folding pocket-sized knife is ideal to use as a keychain or to keep in a glove box or any other handy place. The rugged blade design locks into place securely

when fully open. A thumb actuated release makes for easy closing of the stainless steel blade. The contoured grip design comes in jet black and bright red anodized aluminum.

Visit www.laserbits.com for more details.



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Trodat USA is now on Facebook! In the future, look for:

- **Product information and updates**—learn about Trodat products, new offerings and important news from Trodat.
- **Marketing tips**—see how Trodat's newest marketing materials, ideas and downloads can help stamp makers make the most of their stamp businesses.
- **Deals and special offers**—look for occasional deals and special offers from Trodat and the Regional Sales Managers.

For more information, contact Trodat USA, 48 Heller Park Lane, Somerset, NJ 08873; 800/TRODAT1; Web: www.trodatusa.com.



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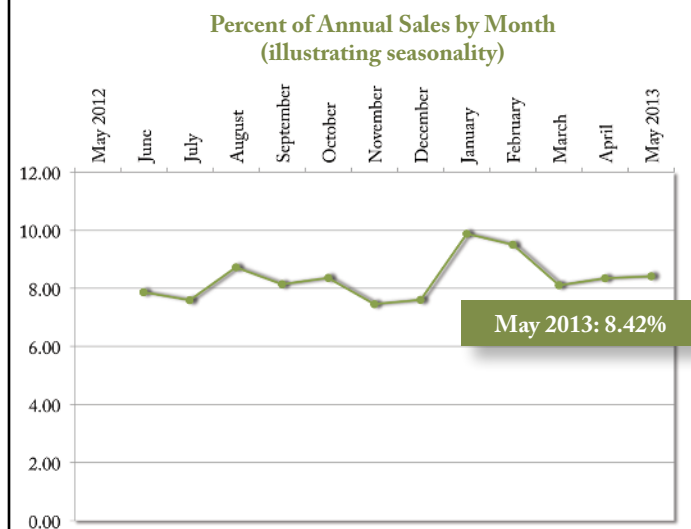
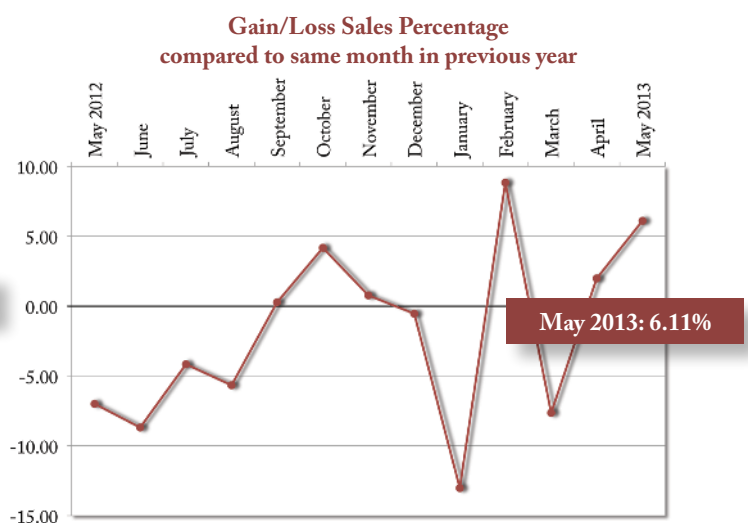
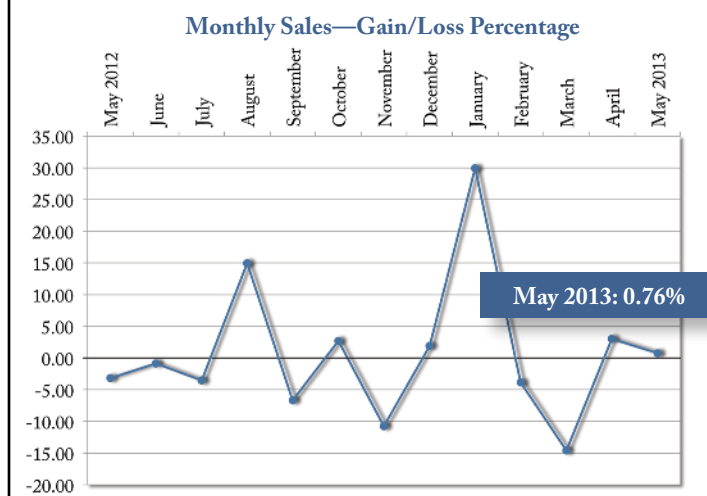
by Timothy Hachmeister

Plenty of good news

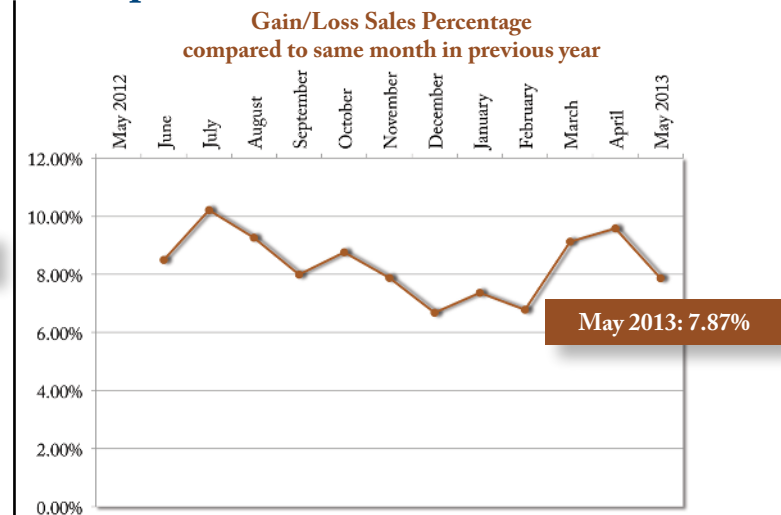
While total monthly sales were down 11.57% from April, there was plenty of good news in the month of May. Monthly stamp sales increased .76% and total monthly sales for small shops increased by 3.58%. Unlike the industry as a whole, both monthly stamp sales and monthly sales of other products were up for small shops by 2.48% and 4.68%, respectively.

Compared with May of 2012, total monthly sales rose 7.31%, monthly stamp sales rose 6.11% and monthly sales of other products increased by 8.07%. Total monthly sales are still up from the beginning of the year by 14.92%. Similarly, monthly stamp sales are up 10.71% during the same period. May of 2013 accounted for 8.42% of the previous 12 months sales of stamps. *M*

Stamps only



Other products



Visit www.markingdevices.com today for the latest news and industry statistics!

INDUSTRY IMPRESSIONS

by David Hachmeister



www.markingdevices.com

You too can be famous in the stamp industry!

We are very excited about this year's "Manufacturer of the Year" winners. After a decline in stamps for several years, we are finally starting to see some sales growth, and these are the leaders. They have something in common. We'll let you read about the Bronze winner in this issue and the others in upcoming issues to see if you can pick out the common theme.

The Manufacturer of the Year is strictly by the numbers. The highest percentage growth in the relevant size category wins. Over the years, there have been many different types of personalities who have won. This has given us the great opportunity to visit different shops and people all around the country (more than 40 states!) and a few outside the U.S.A. We have had the pleasure of meeting you in your place of business. We feel a little guilty that so few of you have been here. Consider this an open invitation to visit us anytime. We know great places nearby to grab a sandwich and get to know you better.

We solicit everybody for news about their companies; some take full advantage, others market in different ways. You don't have to win the contest to be mentioned. Your peers are curious, and you have a story to tell. Those who work with us have the advantage of being favorably mentioned in the industry trade magazine and can use that to promote their companies to their customers and the local press. You can post a copy of the article and share links with us to build website traffic. Like most ventures, just getting started is the hardest part. We know our editor Anne Shadis would be glad to help you put something together. The point is we can't do more than make the invitation... frequently. Just remember, you too can be famous in the stamp industry and beyond!

If you know us, you know that we hold at least two core beliefs. One is that everybody deserves an opportunity—that means *everybody*. The other is our desire for everyone to work and play together in a way that would make a kindergarten teacher proud. It is amazing how when everyone feels they

have a chance, the second part seems to fall into place.

Starting two digital magazines and having numerous other changes in the office over the last few months has put us into a much better position to communicate with you more comprehensively. While taking advantage of digital communication has been about as easy for us as managing a Kardashian wedding, we are very pleased with the results so far.

We were told that, for publishers, the average email open rate is about 18 percent. Our *MIM International* readers opened our emails at about twice that rate. We are very thankful. Please be sure to check with your IT person so that your computer will accept Constant Contact emails. Just adding us to your safe-senders list may not be enough.

Now that we are more fully joining the digital age, we are curious about your impressions of the first digital edition of *Marking Industry Magazine*. We expect a few adjustments along the way. Your ideas and guidance would be greatly appreciated. Tell your friends! MIM

We need your help to get the best data on the stamp industry!

To provide the Industry Indicator to you each month, we depend upon the kind participation and reporting of stamp businesses of all sizes from around the United States. We are always looking to improve the industry performance data that we deliver to you. Consider becoming a member of the Industry Indicator team!

It's a simple process—you provide two sales figures each month: stamp sales and sales of other products. The figures are included and reported as a part of a group; your individual company information is never published and is kept in strict confidence. The other participants aren't even aware of who is involved in the reporting! MIM

To join, contact
David Hachmeister at
david@markingdevices.com,
and something sweet
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