

April 2014

MARKING INDUSTRY

magazine



Digital spring cleaning

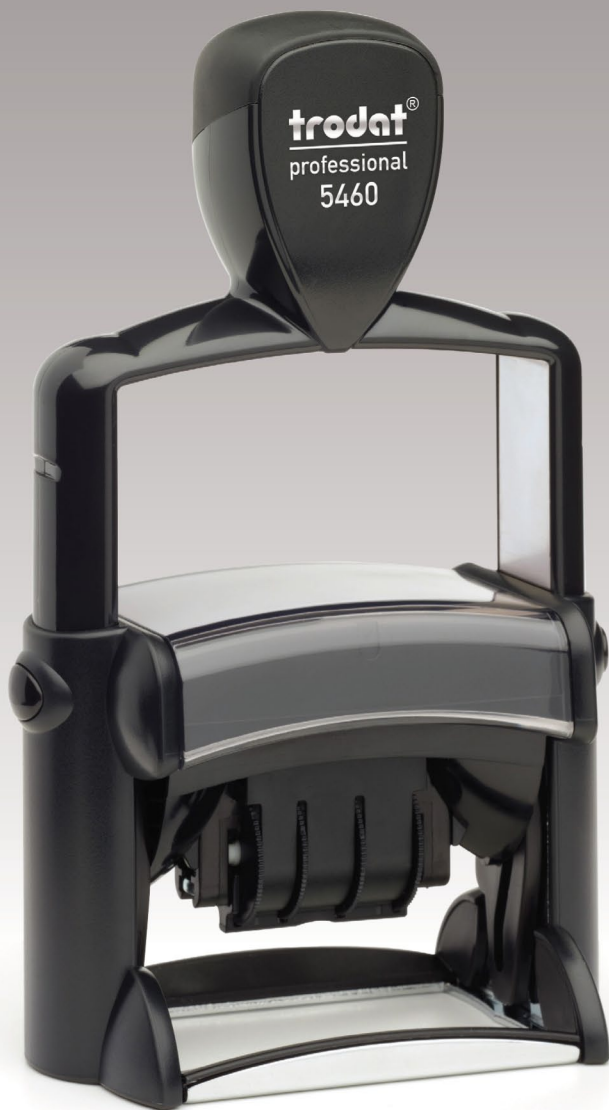


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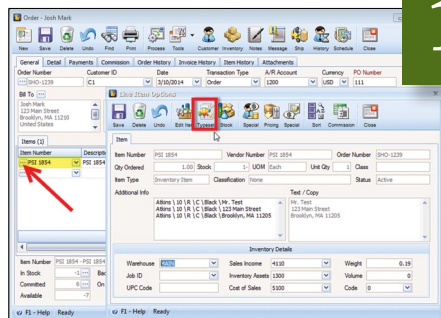


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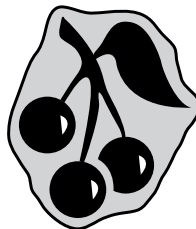


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Les Miller is co-owner of Alberta Stamp, a family-owned company that has been in business in Edmonton, Canada for more than six decades.

Photo credit: Edmonton Journal/John Lucas

Technology has yet to stamp out the stamp

by Ray Turchansky, Edmonton Journal

Even in a digital age of all things virtual, there's still a need for the physical rubber stamp.

While typewriters, rotary phones and film projectors have fallen victim to digital advancements, the low-tech rubber stamp has somehow held its ground.

And that's quite a surprise to some of the people Les Miller meets.

"It is what we call a sunset industry, because computers are taking over everything," said Miller, co-owner of Alberta Stamp and Marking, a 61-year-old Edmonton company that has defied the odds. "But there still is some demand for it. You've got the government, new stamps for commissioner for oaths are a constant, and banks are probably our biggest customers, they need teller stamps."

Edmonton is also home to Royal Rubber Stamp & Sign Co., which has roots dating back to 1957, and King Sign, which acquired King Stamps in 1964 and still does some rubber stamp business.

Richard Miller took over Alberta Stamp and Marking in 1958 and was joined by brothers Ernie in 1960 and Arthur in 1964. Arthur and wife Bev sold the company to sons Rick, Les and Don in 1991. Arthur, 80, still comes to the store to start the coffee at 7 a.m. Don is company manager, Les secretary-treasurer. Rick, who left the business and was elected Liberal MLA for Edmonton-Rutherford in 2004 but lost his seat in 2008, died of cancer in October 2013.

"Uncle and dad bought this place, and that made it a lot easier for us to get through the hard times," Les said. "We did expand what we do to bring in more business. Aside from the rubber stamps, we retail a lot of office product, and we got into the shipping industry, providing corrugated wrap, stretch wrap and poly buckles."

Miller said the introduction of the Goods and Services Tax in the early 1990s was the best time to be in the stamp business.

"Every business suddenly had to have a GST number on their invoices and receipts, so we made an awful lot of GST stamps. Area code changes were pretty good for our business. And we like it any time they change postal codes."

But the staff numbers just five now, down from 14 in its heydays.

Royal Rubber Stamp & Sign started in 1957 when Ray Hopkins noticed only one rubber stamp company in the phone book and placed an order in Popular Science magazine to start a competitor. In 1984 his company purchased Edmonton Rubber Stamp, which had been in business since 1906. Royal diversified into architectural signage, and in 1991 moved its downtown location to a 15,000 square foot building. The company has been owned by Hopkins' daughter Lynn Gustafson since 1999.

"Rubber stamps are still our bread and butter, and it's amazing how much demand there is today for stamps," says Donna Hannah, customer service manager, who has been with the firm for 34 years. "The banks, the government and the city are all large contracts with us. At the courthouse, they're still stamping all kinds of documents and sealing them. Individuals starting new businesses require banking stamps, return address stamps, corporate seals.

And there are art stamps, like for wedding invitations."

Remembered for its old Volkswagen beetle with a huge rubber stamp attached to the roof, the company grew to 25 employees, with a shift to online sales through a website allowing customers to typeset their own stamps.

"One thing that's never changed is that everyone's in a rush, it doesn't matter if it's a client who wants one rubber stamp or it's an entire building that needs signs," said Hannah.

King Sign began in the 1950s, when John Eitzen started making display boards. In 1964 he acquired King Stamps, which was right next door, and formed King Stamps and Sign. The firm got into the flag business before Canada's 1967 Centennial celebrations.

In 2010, Jill Langevin and husband Randall Flaman became the fifth owners of King Sign, dropping Stamps from the name and flags from the business.

"It moved more into moulded plastic lettering, evolved into routed lettering and all kinds of signs," said Langevin. "Stamps changed from being manufactured with rubber moulds to photographic polymer technology, and now you make up a file in Corel and send it to a laser printer."

Rubber stamps are less than 10 percent of their income.

"Now most of our revenue comes from architectural signs, and wayfinding signs are huge. We're doing 12 schools this year and did 20 a couple of years ago, we also do work for Alberta Health Services, and we're bidding for the new arena wayfinding signs." *Mlm*

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STAMP SHOP MANAGER™: Step by Step

How to work with sales/order entry

by Becky Skelley

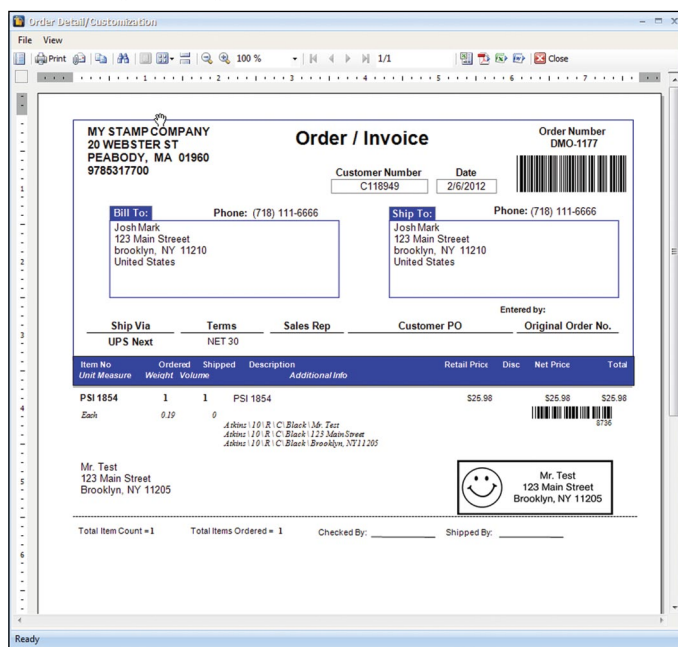
Welcome back to our exploration of Stamp Shop Manager. In our last article, we walked through importing orders from your website. This month, we'll dive into the auto typeset feature within imported orders. Then we'll show how easy it is to manually enter orders coming in via fax, mail, phone and even email.

Steps to follow

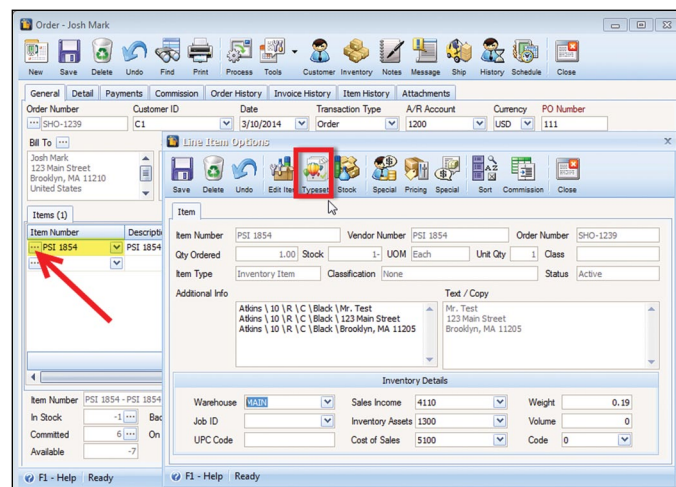
First, you must start Stamp Shop Manager. The easiest way would be to double click the desktop icon or single click the pinned icon on your task bar. Next, sign in to your company with your *User Name* and *Password*. Picking up from where we left off last month, once

you have imported orders from your website, what's next? Here's the exciting news: the imported orders contain the information that allows Manager to typeset the product(s) automatically in CorelDRAW. This means you'll save the time and energy usually spent manually typesetting each web order.

Picture 1: A printed imported web order



Picture 2: An opened order with line item (ellipsis) and the Line Item Options window with highlighted Typeset button



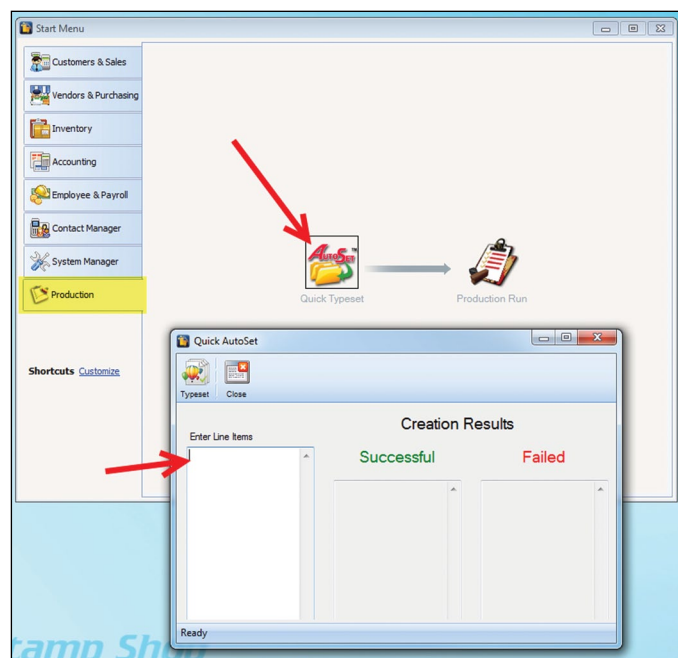
In Picture 1, the printed web order displays the custom designed product, just as the customer designed it on your website. Once you have imported web orders and printed them, you can proceed in two different ways. The first would be to open each order and click the *Typeset* button for each line item (see Picture 2).

The second—and most typical—method would be to simply scan or manually enter the line item or item number(s) into the *Quick AutoSet* screen (see Picture 3). To view the *Quick AutoSet* screen, click the *Production* tab within the *Start Menu*, and then click the *Quick Typeset* button (see Picture 3). By entering the line items, you will be able to typeset them all at once. For this example, though, we'll do them one at a time.

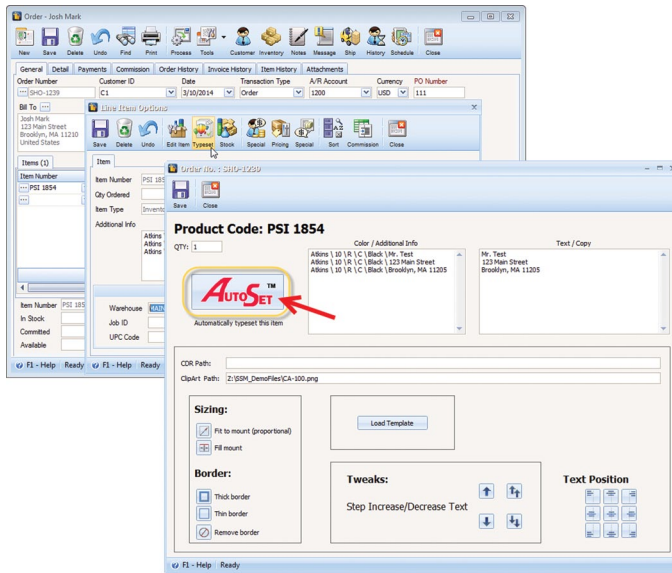
Once you have an imported order open, click on the ellipsis (...) button next to the line item that you want to typeset automatically. You'll then be able to view the details of that line item. When you click on the *Typeset* button (the one with hot air balloons), you will see the typeset screen (see Picture 4). Next, click the *AutoSet* button, and CorelDRAW automatically opens. You may complete the typesetting and save the file, which will now be associated with the order. As you can see, the process of importing and automatic typesetting is quick, boosting your production rate and easing your mind about typesetting errors.

The process of manually entering an order coming in via the phone, mail or fax often begins with the creation of a new customer record. (Manager can also automatically monitor and create orders from emails, a topic that we'll cover in a future article.) You can locate existing customers by clicking the Customers button on the Start Menu and searching with just

Picture 3: The Quick Autoset screen with custom information shown



Picture 4: Typeset window with formatting tools and highlighted AutoSet button



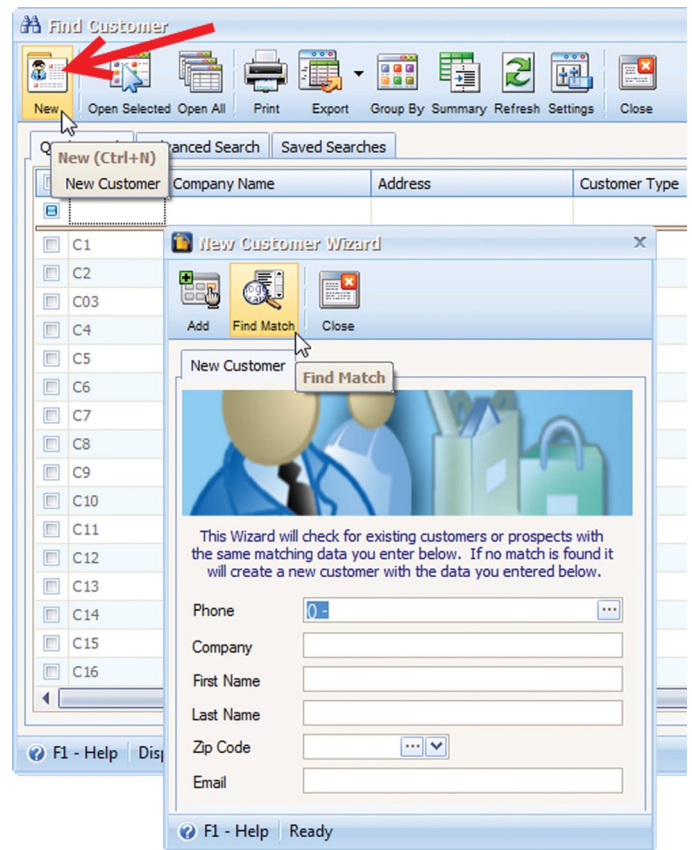
about any information: phone or fax number, address, contact, company name and so on.

When creating a new customer record, our recommendation is that you use the *New Customer Wizard*. To use it, click the *Customers* button on the *Start Menu* and then select *New* (see Picture 5). If you have your User Preferences settings configured to add new customers with the *New Customer Wizard*, it will begin to run. (User Preferences will be discussed in a future installment.) With the *New Customer Wizard*, you can enter a phone number, customer name or company name and then click the *Find Match* button to confirm that the customer does not already exist (see Picture 5). It's a helpful step to avoid creating duplicate customer records for a company that may have multiple people ordering from your business. If the customer does not already exist, click on the *Add* button to create the new customer (see Picture 5). Then enter the new customer's street address and ZIP/postal code.

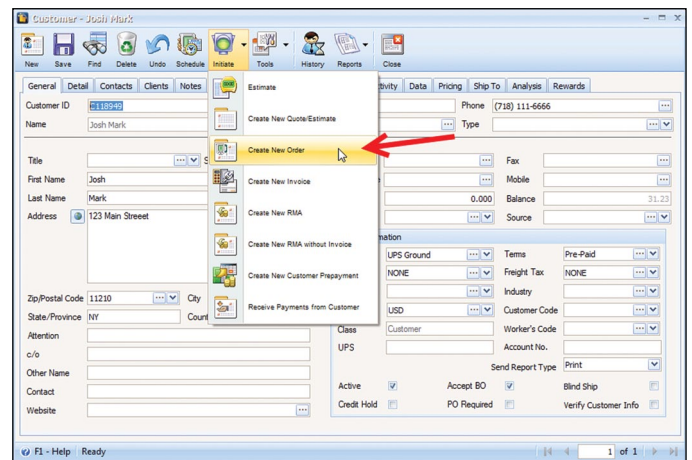
HELPFUL TIP: Manager comes with over 80,000 U.S. ZIP codes and over 800,000 Canadian Post Codes. Enter the customer's street address and ZIP/postal code, and the city and state will be added automatically.

Set the customer's terms, as well as default tax rates for sales and freight (if applicable). Add any other customer information that you desire. The *Customer Record* feature contains numerous time-saving features, such as the ability to set a reseller's account to drop ship automatically to the end user or to bill freight automatically to a customer's UPS or

Picture 5: New Customer Wizard window



Picture 6: Customer screen with highlighted Initiate button and Create New Order

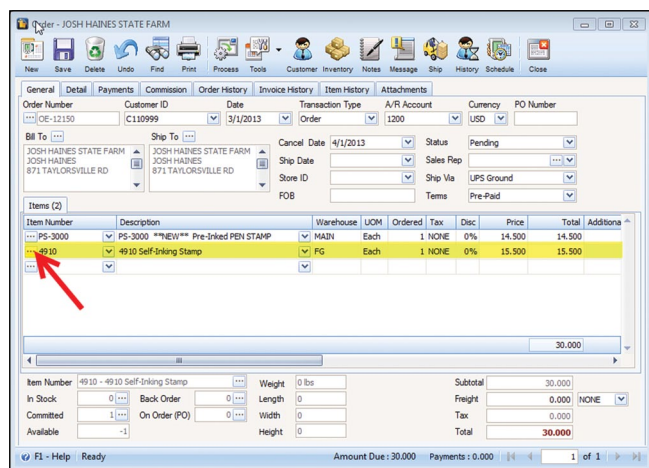


FedEx account. There are many to discuss, so we'll save them for future articles—stay tuned!

Once the customer is created, click on the *Initiate* button and the *Create New Order* link (see Picture 6). A new order has been created, and now you're ready to enter the line items requested by the customer.

STAMP SHOP MANAGER™: Step by Step

Picture 7: Order with highlighted ellipsis button on the line item



You may need to enter a customer PO number for your client. If so, enter it in the PO number field. The terms, taxes and shipping methods all originate from the defaults set up in the customer record when the customer was created.

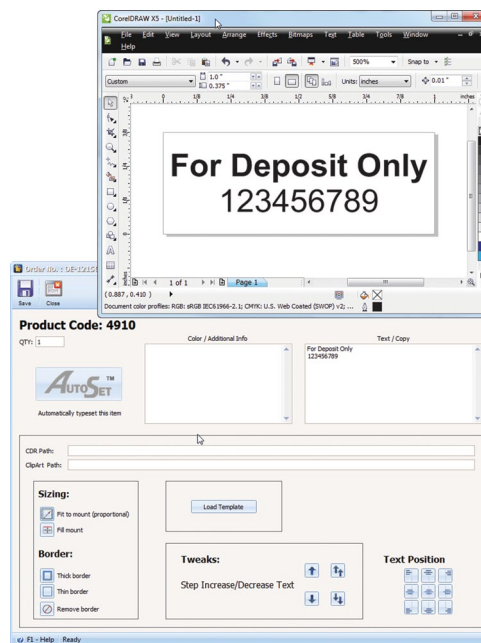
If the customer was not set up with any “ship to” addresses, the shipping information defaults to the billing information. Manager allows you to store as many “ship to” addresses per customer as you need. If there are multiple “ship to” addresses available for a customer, you will be prompted to choose the appropriate one from the available list. You can also decide to not use a stored “ship to” address, even if “ship to” addresses exist for that customer.

Now you can enter the line items for this particular order. If you know the item’s SKU (Item Code), type it in and hit the Enter key on your keyboard. If you don’t know it or have only a partial SKU, you can search for the product by its description, vendor or beginning part of the SKU.

If the item is a customizable product, such as a stamp or a sign, you can enter the custom information by clicking the ellipsis button (see Picture 7). Select the *Typeset* button, and CorelDRAW will open with a page pre-defined in the size of the stamp mount or sign (see Picture 8). Since this is a manually entered item, the AutoSet button will not be displayed.

For this example, we will use a stamp. Enter the text information for the stamp into the CorelDRAW window. Simple formatting is possible with the tools built into Manager (see bottom of Picture 8). You can size the text to automatically fill the mount proportionally, either horizontally or vertically. You could completely fill the mount in both directions, add a border or make simple size and position tweaks. Of course, you can also use your typesetting

Picture 8: Example of a manually typeset stamp with the use of CorelDRAW through Manager.



knowledge and the CorelDRAW features to make any necessary changes directly in CorelDRAW.

When you have finished entering your custom copy, return to the Manager screen and click *Save*. Then select *Close* to leave the typesetting screen in Manager, and your CorelDRAW file will close simultaneously. Manager will associate the custom information with the order for you.

Congratulations! You have now successfully imported customized orders and automatically typeset these details, as well as entered new customers and created manual order entries. In future articles, we will follow orders through the daily workflow processes. *Mmm*

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.*



Six digital spring cleaning strategies

by Allison Howen, Associate Editor, Website Magazine

After a rough winter across much of the U.S., spring has finally sprung. It's the perfect time for a "virtual cleanup" of your digital devices!

The days are starting to get longer and most of the U.S. is beginning to thaw out from a very rough winter, which can only mean one thing—spring is (finally) on its way! It is the perfect time for Web professionals to undertake one or more “spring cleaning” projects. Get a head start on your “virtual” cleanup with these six digital spring cleaning strategies.

1 Refresh social

Most brands use social media on a daily basis, but even though their status updates are constantly changing, the rest of their presence tends to stay the same. It is a good idea

to take some time to update your social profiles. First and foremost, take a look at your profile information to make sure information like category, description, address and website are correct. In doing so, your social pages may be easier to find in the search results (discussed more below) and, at the very least, your prospective customers will have accurate details about your business.

In addition to updating your brand's profile information, it may also be time to rejuvenate design aspects like avatars and cover photos. For assistance with the design process, check out a browser-based tool like PicMonkey or Photoshop plugin Social Kit, which provides users with customizable templates for creating cover images, profile pictures and ad banners for social networks like Facebook, Google+, Twitter and YouTube.

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2 Organize your inbox

Improve your overall productivity by organizing both your professional and personal inboxes. Start by deleting the spam and creating folders that will take the hassle out of finding important messages. Coincidentally, Google has also slashed its prices for storage on Google Drive, so there is no better time to start filing away documents into the cloud.

3 Clean up business listings

Many consumers leverage their mobile devices to conduct searches while on the go. To capitalize on this trend, it is vital for brands with brick-and-mortar locations to show up in the search results, both in the search engines and in local discovery platforms.

This spring, revisit and update listings on popular location-based platforms like Yelp, Foursquare and Google Places. In addition to updating information like address and telephone number, try adding descriptive business descriptions and photos to listings when possible. Moreover, you can leverage a tool like Yext or GoDaddy's GetFound to save some time, as these platforms update all listings (which could be upward of 200-plus) from a single interface.

4 Sweep up the subscriber list

Web professionals are typically focused on growing their email lists; however, subscribers who frequently delete or ignore messages can actually damage a brand's sender reputation. To begin the cleaning process, sift through data and consider removing contacts whose emails have bounced back or haven't shown up in recent opening reports. That said, you can also implement a campaign to win back your unresponsive subscribers before removing them from your list altogether. This type of campaign can send incentives to the subscriber or simply ask the subscriber to take an action (such as click here to renew) if they would like to continue to receive emails from your brand.

5 Update passwords

No person or brand is immune to security hacks in today's digital world, which is why it is important to change passwords for things like social media, email and other admin accounts on a regular basis. Although some people change their passwords as frequently as every three months, the minimum should be every six months.

Consider leveraging two-step verification for your accounts where it is possible, like Twitter and Google. This feature provides an extra layer of security by requiring users to enter additional information, such as a verification code, before they can login. It is also important to note that any updated passwords should be recorded in a safe place and shared with anyone else (like colleagues) who may need access to the service where the password has been changed.

6 Consolidate forms

Last but certainly not least, take the weekend to look over the forms on your website. Whether the form is required to download a whitepaper or sign up for an email list, make sure that it is not only easy to read, but that it only requires your site visitors to enter the necessary information. This is because forms that appear long or ask for too much personal data are often ignored and abandoned. Before revamping your forms, however, check out *Website Magazine's* article "Brainy Tips for Improving Online Forms" on [websitemagazine.com](http://www.websitemagazine.com). *MIM*

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Making money with CorelDRAW®

Mechanical engraving—The investment

by Judy and John McDaniel, contributing writers

*Determine your market and define your products,
and that process will narrow your equipment choices.*

A little review

For the purpose of our discussion, we are considering any device or tool which marks a material through physical contact as a mechanical engraver. By this definition then, mechanical engraving includes hand tools, as well as machine-controlled engraving tools.

However, since we are focused on creating the artwork in CorelDRAW and then applying it to a material, we have considered what can be achieved using machine-controlled mechanical engravers. We also looked at some hand engraving techniques that use printed designs adhered to a material surface as templates.

Making money with mechanical engraving—The investment

As is the case with any process, the very first question you need to resolve is: What products do you intend to create? Essentially, you need to determine your market. What products will your potential customers want? Do they have interest in plaques, large engraved signs, small signs, architectural signs, injection molds or all of the above?

In addition, try to assess the potential business each of these product types might generate. For example, if you only have one customer who is interested in large engraved signs, then it might not be something you will want to tackle initially. You might want to farm out that job until your business grows. Then you can always expand to include additional capabilities.

Once you have determined your product mix, you will have the answer to the following question: What is the largest piece of material you need your new machine to handle? This information will help narrow your equipment choices. If everything you intend to engrave will be small, then perhaps all you need is a tabletop machine. On the other hand, if you intend to engrave large signs, then you may need a gantry system with a large table.

Determining product mix should also help answer another basic question: How much material will you be removing during the engraving process? If you will primarily be scratching the surface, then the ruggedness of the machine may not be a concern. However, if you intend to create 3-D engravings, signs or molds, then the ruggedness of the

machine and its strength will be a determining factor in what you choose. This will also have an impact on its cost.

Another consideration is machine accuracy. Most machines built today are at least accurate to one-thousandth of an inch. Is that sufficient for your needs? How dimensionally accurate do your engravings need to be? This question should also be answered by the product mix. Tolerances for injection molds and some manufactured parts may require greater than standard machine accuracies.

Then there is z-axis travel. All machines move horizontally—that is, left and right across the table's surface, which is referred to as x-axis movement. They also move vertically or up and down across the surface of the table, known as the y-axis movement. The z-axis is the third dimension. It determines the depth of cut or, in other words, how deep the cutting tool plunges into the material.

Once again, product mix will determine your needs. If you're only scratching the surface, z-axis travel is not a concern. The machine only needs sufficient travel to accommodate the thickest piece you intend to engrave. If you will be doing deep engraving, though, you'll need a machine with programmable z-axis control. This requirement will affect the cost.

In short, determine your market and define your products, and that process will narrow your equipment choices. It will also help you to assess how much floor space you will need and what your equipment budget should be. Mechanical engravers range in price from a couple of thousand dollars to tens of thousands, depending on what you need the equipment to do.

Training

As you might have surmised by now, the more complicated your products are, the more extensive your training will need to be. Understanding the ins and outs of mechanical engraving can be very simple if your projects are simple. Some complex projects require an understanding of the interaction of tools and materials, such as knowing the correct machine feeds and speeds. Very complex projects can require a machinist's knowledge to execute them properly and safely.

That said, many equipment manufacturers provide basic training. Some even provide software and templates, which are essentially foolproof. Once again, it depends on the items you wish to produce.

Speaking of software, some systems will interface directly with CorelDRAW, while others will not. However, almost every mechanical-engraving machine will come with a



jetStamp MP series. Easily prints on most plastic, glass & metal surfaces.

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software driver that has the ability to import HPGL (Hewlett-Packard graphic language) or .PLT files. Any machine that is compatible with HPGL is also compatible with CorelDRAW. CorelDRAW has the ability to export HPGL, also known as plot files.

You may intend to create your layouts in CorelDRAW and export them as HPGL plot files. To use those files with your mechanical engraver, you will have to set the HPGL export variables in CorelDRAW to match your machine's requirements. The most important of these variables is steps per inch. The machine's manufacturer should be able to help you with this task.

Resources

Here is a short list of companies that manufacture engraving equipment:

Gravograph/New Hermes

<http://www.gravograph.com/>

Newing-Hall

<http://www.newing-hall.com/>

Roland

<http://www.rolanddga.com/products/engravers/>

Vision Engraving

<http://www.visionengravers.com/>

Xenotech

<http://xenotech.com/>

The following companies offer a range of engraving blanks and supplies:

Johnson Plastics

<http://www.johnsonplastics.com/>

RB Fabrication

<http://www.rbfabrication.com/>

Rowmark

<http://www.rowmarkllc.com/>

Conclusion

In recent years, mechanical engraving has been surpassed by laser engraving as the number one engraving method in use. That said, there are some materials better suited for mechanical engraving and some products that require a mechanical engraver to produce. For any business that's involved with engraving, offering customers both laser and mechanical engraving rounds out that company's services. **M**

ABOUT THE AUTHORS: John and Judy McDaniel are owners of CorelDRAW® Help, Inc. They started in the personalization business in 1989 with CorelDRAW version 1.0. John's background is in computers; Judy's is in art and retail. In their businesses, they apply CorelDRAW. 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; for making sandblast masks, screen-printing screens, pad-printing plates, signs and banners; and creating sales literature and flyers. With the release of CorelDRAW Premium Suite, they are adding website design to their use of CorelDRAW. In essence, they have more than 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.

Chop, chop, chop: Exploring the options for stamp die cutting

by Tom Jackson

Callused thumbs, blistered fingers, aching wrists, cramped hands. All stamp makers have faced these maladies on the road to perfecting their die-cutting technique. The methods used in each stamp shop vary, but the goal is always the same: Trim the die closely, efficiently and with minimum strain on the human being.

With the advent of flash stamp production and laser engraving machines that trim dies automatically, die cutting is not as central to stamp making as it was a few years ago. But many shops still mold rubber and expose polymer, making this topic still relevant to today's stamp producer.

There is a natural progression in stamp die-cutting methods. In the early stages of a stamp-making enterprise, every cut is made manually. Before long, a search for a more automated method begins. Here we will define a "proper trim" and explore the pros and cons of some of the more popular die-cutting methods.

What is a proper trim?

A properly trimmed stamp die is square to the printing characters and close enough to avoid "overprinting."

Figure 1 shows what an undercut die looks like. Because the die in Figure 1 is cut on an angle, the edges of the stamp image are not supported and may not print properly. This is most likely to occur when manually trimming with scissors or a knife. To avoid undercutting, the cutting tool must be at a 90° angle in relation to the printing characters. Figure 2 is a cross section of a squarely trimmed stamp die.

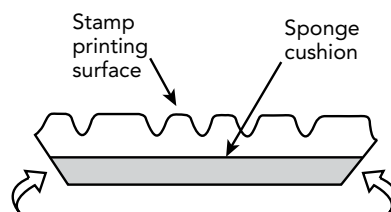


Figure 1: Side view of incorrectly trimmed die. Characters on the far left and right will not be supported because they are "undercut."

Proper proximity

The stamp die should be trimmed closely enough to avoid "overprinting." An overprint is when the edges of the stamp die print along with the stamp image. Overprinting is more likely to be a problem when "standard etch" stamps are produced. Seldom is overprinting a problem with "deep etch" stamps. Dies that are not trimmed closely enough not

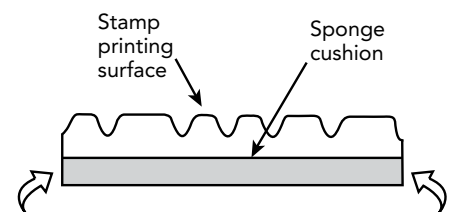


Figure 2: Side view of correctly trimmed die. Entire stamp printing surface is supported.

Chop, chop, chop: Exploring the options for stamp die cutting

Figure 3: Die is not trimmed closely enough. Will have a tendency to “overprint.”

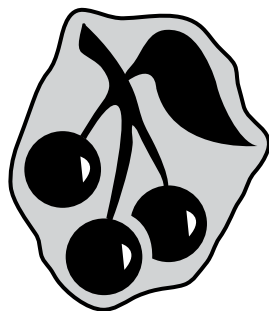


Figure 4: Die is trimmed closer than required for good print.

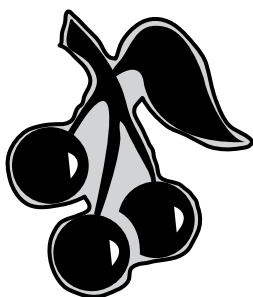
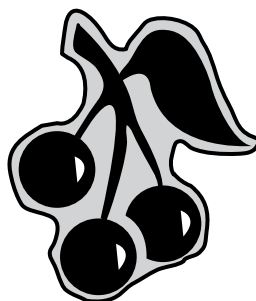


Figure 5: Adequately trimmed die. Close enough to avoid “overprint.”



only have a tendency to overprint but look sloppy as well (Figure 3).

It is easy to spend more time and effort than is required to adequately trim a stamp die. The elevation of the stamp printing surface will naturally prevent many areas from stamping, so trimming in those areas is unnecessary. Figure 4 shows an image that is trimmed closer than needed, particularly between the cherries on the left and between the stem and leaf on the right. Also, as trimming gets closer to the edge of the stamp image, the likelihood of cutting into the image increases.

Figure 5 is an adequately trimmed die—not too close, but not too far from the image. The customer will get a stamp that prints well while the manufacturer does not waste time and effort in the trimming process.

Scissors and knives

These items represent the cheapest and simplest way to begin trimming stamps. Everyone has a pair of scissors and an X-acto or Stanley knife in the junk drawer in the den, so everyone begins trimming dies with these handy little tools. This is a perfectly acceptable method until the volume of trimming exceeds the patience and threshold for discomfort of the person doing the trimming.

Manual straight blade cutters

These machines are very popular for cutting images that are set-up in a “grid” formation and for “rough cutting” slabs of stamps. Machines with 6-inch, 10-inch and 12-inch cutting blade lengths are commonly available. The slab with cushion attached is positioned under the steel cutting blade while the operator pulls a lever that brings the blade down and through the slab.

Stamp sets that are mounted on “dense cell cushion” (thick, hard cushion that becomes the mount) are commonly “perforated” with a machine like this. The steel cutting blade is notched so that little pieces of rubber remain connected after cutting. The stamp buyer then can pull the images apart like ripping a check out of a checkbook.

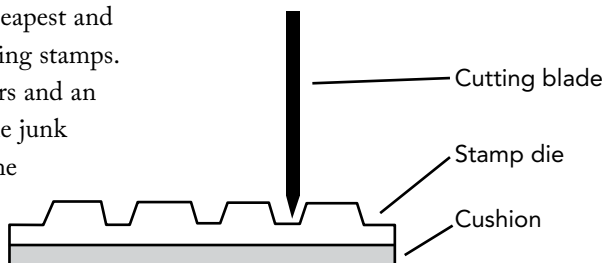


Figure 6: Pneumatic die cutter blade in its resting position. Notice how the cutting edge of the blade is below the level of the stamp printing surface.

Pneumatic straight blade cutters

The down-and-up action of the steel cutting blade is extremely fast—as fast as the operator can tap a foot pedal. Because the blade is positioned so that it cannot cut into the stamp printing surface (Figure 6), both of the operator’s hands are free to position the die. Simply slide the die against the blade to make a cut. There is no need to visually align the blade against the image.

Scroll saw

This machine is very popular among makers of art stamps. Its designed purpose is to cut decorative wood or metal items, but it will also cut rubber. A thin reciprocating blade cuts the stamp die as the operator pushes it past. Stamps that have been trimmed by a scroll saw have a distinctive rough edge because the blade has teeth that scrape the edge of the die as it passes by.

Custom contour cutters (CCCs)

These steel rule cutting tools are the answer to everyone’s die cutting dilemma. But the question is, how much are you willing to spend?

A CCC is made from razor sharp steel cutting rule that is bent in the shape of the stamp image. The steel rule is embedded in a clear acrylic base. When looking through the acrylic, an outline of the stamp design can be seen (Figure 7). The CCC is nestled over the image on the rubber die (Figure 8). Downward pressure is applied to the CCC, forcing the steel rule through the die and cushion (Figure 9).

In just seconds, a perfectly trimmed stamp die is ready for mounting, with no undercutting, no overprinting, no stress and no strain—except maybe on the pocketbook. CCC cutters usually cost a minimum of \$80 each and can go as high as \$100+ per design. For an art

stamp company with hundreds of stamp images, CCCs for all of the images represent a huge investment. For that reason, most stamp makers will use CCC cutters to trim only their most popular images.

An 80/20 rule generally applies when determining which images are candidates for CCC trimming. Twenty percent of most firms' designs can account for up to 80 percent of the sales. If only 20 percent of the images are converted into CCC form, but the result is 80 percent of the total stamp die trimming accomplished by the CCC method, the economics begin to make sense. There is an upfront initial investment in the CCC cutters, but it is offset by efficiency in the workplace and quality in every trimmed stamp.

Steel rule cutting grids

Consider these to be CCCs on steroids. They are huge, capable of cutting an entire 12 inch x 12 inch slab of molded rubber in just seconds.

The principle is the same as CCC cutters. Steel rule is embedded into an acrylic base (Figure 10). By looking through the acrylic, the steel rule is aligned with the stamp images (Figure 11). Hydraulic pressure is applied to force the steel rule through the rubber and cushion.

There are other methods for trimming stamp printing dies—probably as many variations as there are stamp makers in the industry. The goal is to produce a die that is not undercut and does not overprint. These are simply suggestions on how to achieve the goal. ■■■

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Tom Jackson is the general manager of Jackson Marking Products Co., Inc., a major manufacturer of rubber stamps, as well as an industry supplier for raw materials and a highly respected fabricator of equipment for

Figure 7: Top view of a CCC. The shape of the stamp image can be seen as you look through the acrylic base. The hole in the center allows you to poke the stamp die out with a pencil if it sticks inside after cutting.

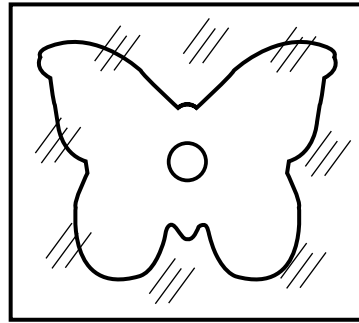


Figure 8: The CCC is placed directly over one stamp image on the group of stamp designs. It is easy to locate since the cutting blade will nestle over the raised image.

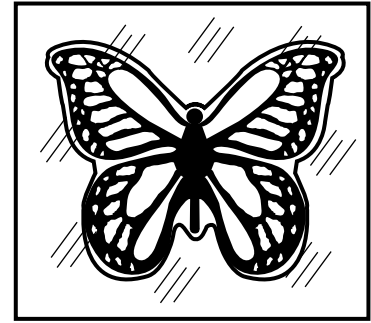


Figure 9

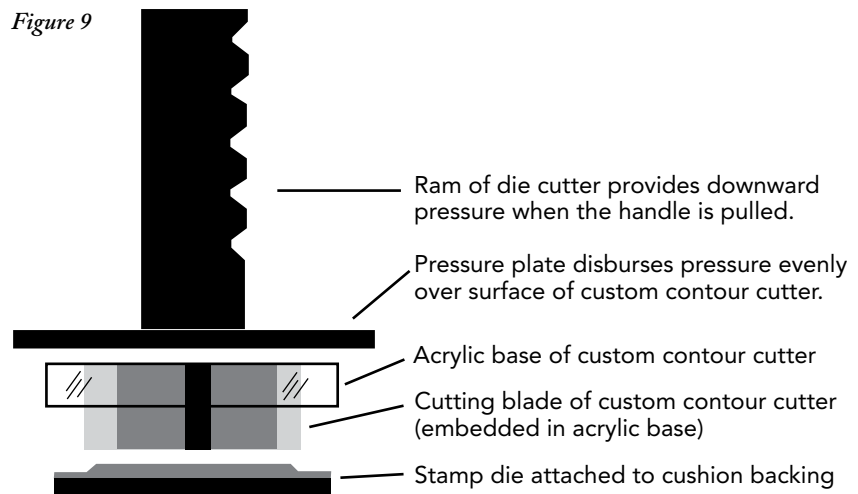


Figure 10: Looking down into a steel rule cutting grid. Straight lines and geometric shapes are possible.

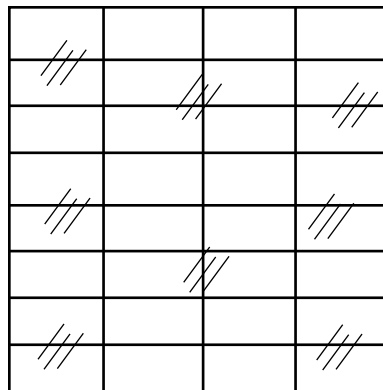
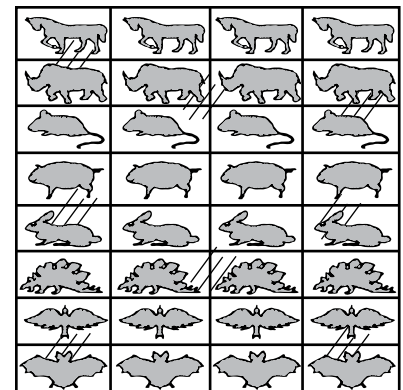


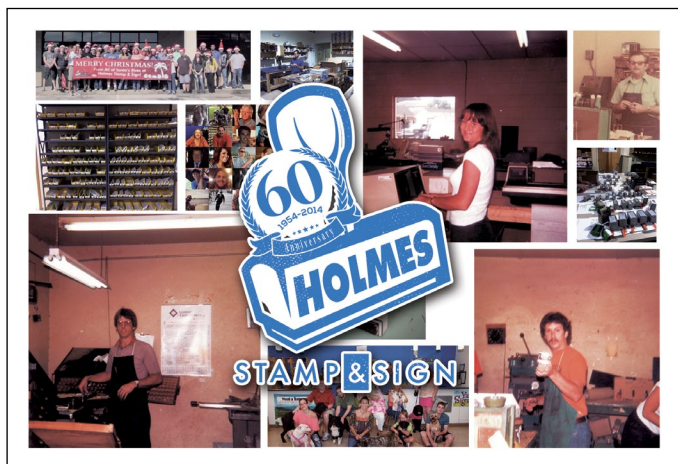
Figure 11: The grid is placed over the molded rubber slab before hydraulic pressure is applied.



customers worldwide. Email Tom Jackson at tom@rubber-stamp.com. Jackson Marking Products Co., Inc., 9105 N. Rainbow Lane, Mt. Vernon, Illinois 62864; 800-782-6722 (U.S. and Canada);

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While the founder of Holmes Stamp & Sign has long since retired, current owner Bryan Croft now sits at the helm of our company after succeeding his father Bob Croft in 2009. Since then, Mr. Croft has worked tirelessly to steer Holmes Stamp & Sign into the deeper waters of the competitive Internet marketplace, which has enabled Holmes Stamp & Sign to serve not only its local Jacksonville clientele, but the entire country as well!

April 19, 2014 will mark our company's 60th anniversary—60 years that Holmes Stamp & Sign has been serving the city of Jacksonville, and now the entire United States! We've come a long way since our founding in 1954—what started as a one man shop with just Mr. Owen Holmes has expanded to well over 50 employees. What started out in a garage has since expanded to occupy a massive two-building space just outside of historic downtown Jacksonville, filled with thousands of dollars in equipment and multitudes of orders coming in—and shipping out—daily. Everyone who works at Holmes Stamp & Sign is dedicated to the same task: making sure every product that we ship out is of the utmost quality guaranteed!

For decades, Holmes Stamp & Sign has taken pride in our excellent customer service, as well as our quality products. As we celebrate 60 years and look toward another 60 years, we have rededicated ourselves to efficiently and

expertly serving our customers with great products, cutting-edge technology and competitive pricing. Join us in celebrating our past 60 years and keep your eye on Holmes Stamp & Sign as it embraces the next 60 years, and beyond!

For more information, visit www.holmesstamp.com.

Consolidated Marking opens new distribution center

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Consolidated Marking is excited to announce a new addition to its supply chain with the opening of a distribution center located in Waynesboro, Pennsylvania. This new 120,000 square-foot operating facility will provide speedy delivery of stock products to the East Coast, reducing transit times to one to two days across the Eastern states.

For more information, contact Consolidated Marking at 800-323-0253 or by email at sales@consolidatedmarking.com.

JDS Industries 2014 Component Catalog now available

JDS Industries, Inc. now has the 2014 Components Catalog available. In the new catalog, JDS introduces over 1,400 new products. With the new 2014 JDS Components Catalog, JDS announces that they are now a Premier Distributor for UniSub™ and a member of the Get Sublimation Network. In addition, JDS is now distributing Ikonics Imaging® products and equipment for sandcarving. Along with all of the new and existing JDS products, the comprehensive catalog outlines and explains the many retailer-oriented programs JDS offers to maximize dealer profitability, including the Advantage Pricing Program, Free Freight Program, Display Sample Program, JDS Loyalty Bucks Program, JDS's numerous retail tools (retail catalogs, websites, etc.) and JDS's sublimation website and instructional videos. The new catalog is being sent to current JDS customers now.

Dealers who are not yet JDS customers but would like to receive the catalog can contact JDS Industries, Inc. by phone at 800-843-8853; Fax: 605-339-1467; Email: sales@jdsindustries.com or by visiting www.jdsindustries.com.



Kris Tennyson joins Trotec Laser, Inc. as National Sales Manager



Trotec Laser, Inc. announces the addition of Kris Tennyson as National Sales Manager, based in the Canton, Michigan headquarters. "We are excited about adding Kris to our team," says Warren Knipple, President of Trotec Laser, Inc. "With his extensive sales leadership background, he will ensure that we continue our aggressive growth in the sales department and the overall company."

Kris was previously in the financial equipment industry and comes to Trotec with over 20 years' experience in sales management. In his off time, he enjoys being outdoors boating and fishing. He also coaches his son's basketball and baseball teams and actively volunteers with the ASCEND Foundation and the Coats for Kids Program. Please join us in extending him a warm welcome to the Trotec family.

For more information, contact Trotec Laser, Inc., 7610 Market Drive, Canton, MI 48187; 734-927-6304; Fax: 734-927-6323; Web: www.troteclaser.com.

Brady launches MetalPhoto® anodized aluminum tags



High-performance material offers permanent identification and asset tracking solution

Brady, a global leader in industrial and safety printing systems and

solutions, announces the release of its MetalPhoto™ anodized aluminum tags. Made of photosensitive anodized aluminum, these reliable custom tags and labels are designed to work with asset tracking systems and remain readable in extreme environments.

"Brady's MetalPhoto tags are exceptionally durable, long-lasting and always readable. The high performance material has been tested and proven to maintain its appearance and functionality for more than 30 years outdoors," says Justin Bergholz, product marketing specialist for Brady. "As the leading material for your asset-tracking needs, our MetalPhoto tags are used for barcode labels, asset ID tags, long-term asset tags, indoor and outdoor signage, equipment labels and more."

MetalPhoto labels and tags have high-resolution, high-contrast graphics made of metallic particles that are sealed with an anodic layer. This protection, combined with the rigid aluminum base, ensures that the labels have exceptional resistance to abrasion, intense temperatures up to 650°F, UV exposure, chemicals and solvents. The protected image is more precise and permanent compared to engraved or printed labels.

Available in rigid tag form or backed with pressure-sensitive adhesive, MetalPhoto tags can be made in a wide range of sizes and customized to include barcodes, QR codes and company logos. Using MetalPhoto for automated data collection improves accuracy by eliminating the errors caused by manual collection.

Brady's MetalPhoto tags meet an array of commercial, government and military specifications, including GGP-445B, CSA 111331, File 7921, MIL-STD-130N, MIL-A-8625F and MIL-DTL-15024F.

To learn more about MetalPhoto labels and tags or to request a free sample, visit BradyID.com/MetalPhoto. For Brady's complete product offering, visit BradyID.com. In Canada, visit BradyCanada.ca.

Griffin-Rutgers moves to a new location

After 25 years in its Ronkonkoma facility, Griffin-Rutgers announces its move to a beautiful new facility in Holbrook, New York. The new contact information is:

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Web: www.griffin-rutgers.com

Email: custserv@griffin-rutgers.com

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INDUSTRY INDICATOR

by David Hachmeister

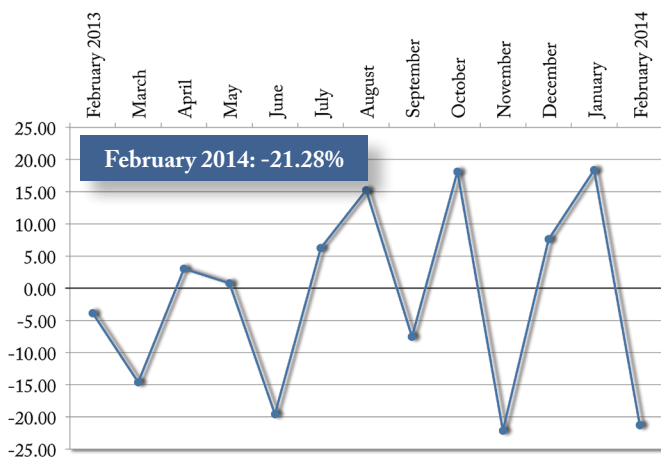
February freeze

As we mention in our editorial, it was a very tough winter for many of us. Stamps certainly took their share of punishment, as sales fell 21.28% from January. It is very common for sales to fall in February, with January typically the best sales month of the year and February the shortest month, but this was a major drop. The fall (25.68%) was even greater than from the previous February.

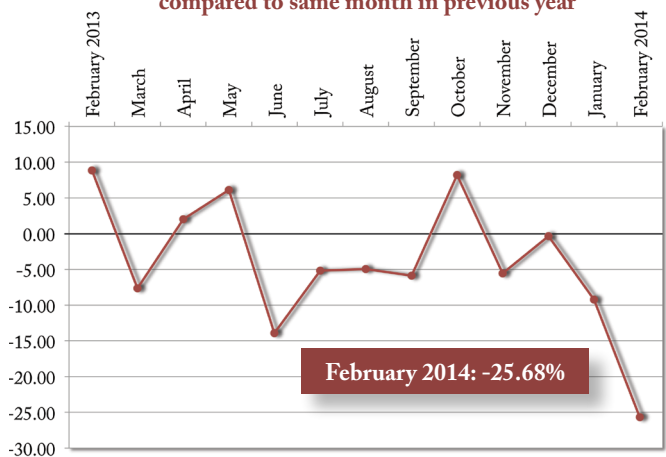
Other products actually grew very rapidly at 26.43%, as one large manufacturer accounted for more than the entire gain by itself. The rest were actually down for the month. This is the problem with such a small sample. Please contact us if you would like to help us broaden the sample. We only need two numbers once a month! *M*

Stamps only

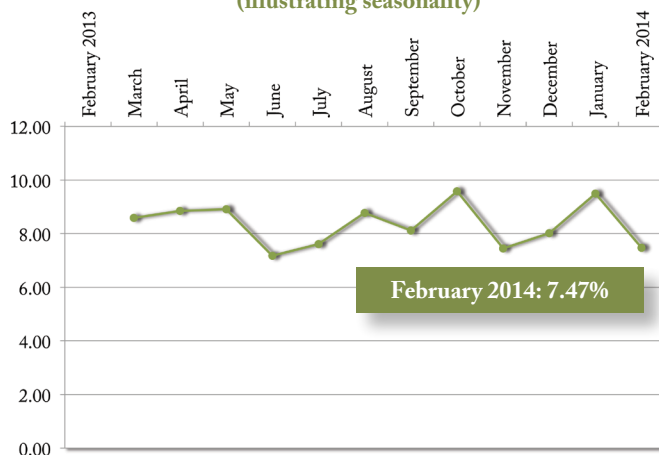
Monthly Sales—Gain/Loss Percentage



Gain/Loss Sales Percentage compared to same month in previous year

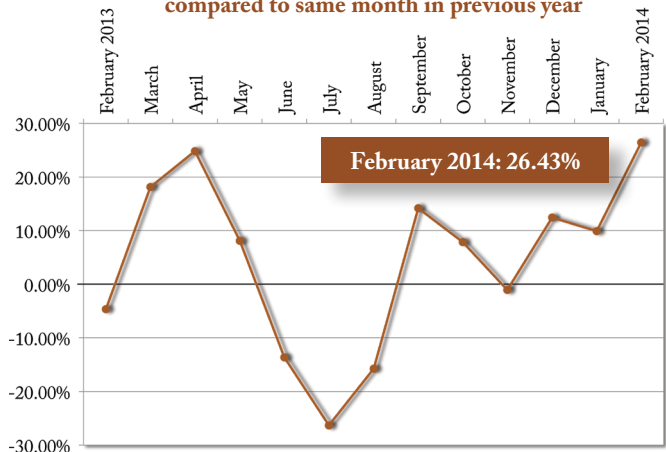


Percent of Annual Sales by Month (illustrating seasonality)



Other products

Gain/Loss Sales Percentage compared to same month in previous year



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INDUSTRY IMPRESSIONS

by David Hachmeister

Spring cleaning

If you live in one of the many areas that were so hard-hit by this winter, spring could hardly be more welcome. We hope you used some of that time when things may have been a little slow to do some spring cleaning just a little early. Now that things are clearing up, your time is probably better served by going out to meet customers and potential customers. Neither griping about competition nor passive waiting is an effective marketing strategy.

One of the prices of owning a small, independent business is that you have to do just about everything yourself, even the stuff you may not enjoy very much—like marketing. If you need an extra prod to get out there, realize that if you do not, the aspects of your business that you really enjoy won't be around either. As Milton Friedman said, "There is no free lunch."

Yes, there is far more national competition than years ago, but there also is far less local competition. With markets now nationalized more than ever, the personal touch of a visit may be that little extra that keeps a local customer as yours and not someone else's.

In light of the market conditions, we have to ask if you are experiencing so much demand for your stamps that you have a backlog of several months, or whether you get up to \$100 for a single traditional wood-mounted stamp, just a few inches square? If not, you may want to get online and see what some very creative folks are doing. We seldom mention individual companies or websites, but this is a great opportunity to show how a little creativity can do wonders. The website www.stampyoface.com is a simple one with a great premise: get a custom drawn image of yourself on a rubber stamp. This is the type of ingenuity that gives us some optimism for the industry's ability to find areas of growth. We know stamp people tend to be tinkerers, so tinker a little with some ideas you may have that can make your business bloom this spring!

We are very excited about having several new companies in the *2014–2015 Marking Products & Equipment Buyers' Guide*. A copy should be in your hands in the next few weeks. Remember that we also produce a digital version of this guide, our monthly *MIM* and our bimonthly *MIM International*. *MIM*



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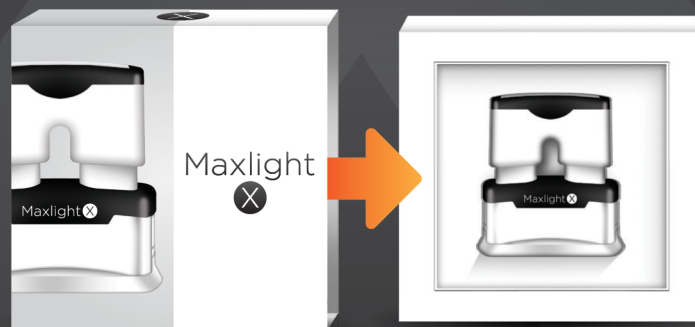
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