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On the road: **California Marking Device, Inc.**

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A rewarding journey to help in Haiti

by Anne Shadis

In October, Bryan Croft, owner of Holmes Stamp & Sign in Jacksonville, Florida, traveled to Haiti on a mission to support the efforts of Haiti180. This Connecticut-based group strives to help alleviate the suffering of the people of Haiti and turn around the impoverished Caribbean nation. It has been active in the Haitian community for more than 10 years, beginning with the construction of an orphanage in 2004, followed by a Catholic church, school and a medical facility. The organization coordinates mission trips primarily in the summer and fall, and is currently focusing on building a home for elderly people in the area.

It was the second time Bryan had participated in a mission trip like this, and the experience was just as rewarding. "I get much more out of it than I put into it," he notes. "It feels good to go help the people of Haiti. It's sad to me that it is only a 45-minute flight from the USA. The people are terribly poor and have experienced decades of corrupt government, natural disasters and just plain bad luck. My experience with the people of Haiti is amazing—simple lives, smiles in every conversation and so much optimism that [life is] getting better (it is)!"

He was joined on the trip by Daniel Kellogg, who works in Holmes' IT department. Daniel made a similar trip in 2008 and, having heard about Bryan's plans, asked if he could come along. Aware of the many basic needs of the villagers in the region they'd be visiting, Bryan spread the word: "I sent some emails to friends, customers, vendors and neighbors, explaining what I was

doing. Checks and donations started pouring in. As for the Holmes Stamp family, everyone kicked in something for our trip."

Landing in Port-au-Prince, one of the areas hardest hit by the 2010 earthquake, Bryan, Daniel and others in their group found it shocking that they had been in Miami less than two hours earlier. They collected their four suitcases loaded with 202 pounds of donations (including over 250 diapers, 50 pairs of shoes, more than 30 packages of medicine, school supplies, toys and candy) and met the local man who took them on the six-hour drive to the orphanage. As Bryan describes, "That was the hardest part. The two-hour drive out of the city of Port-au-Prince was bad—we saw trash everywhere and lots of poverty. Then we got out of the

city into the mountain villages, and we began to see the beauty of the island."

They started Day 2 with "amazing" Haitian coffee and then headed to the land where the home for the elderly is being constructed. The building (a 10-minute walk from the orphanage) will have four simple rooms to house 10–12 people. Its foundation and walls were already in place, while the tin roof would come later. Bryan and Daniel's group was assigned to work on the floors, filling in the existing dirt with rocks— first large ones, then smaller ones—and pouring limestone in preparation for the final concrete surface. It was a methodical process, states Bryan. "We spent about an hour-and-a-half gathering rocks into probably nine piles, then loading the piles into this motorcycle/mini dump truck, driving 300 yards to the structure and

will do the concrete sometime in the weeks ahead. That is a challenge because water and mix is needed, and the mix is very scarce there. We're now praying for some rain to pack our rocks, dirt and limestone even better for them."

On that same day, they trekked from the orphanage into the village to make home visits, bringing along the donations from Florida. As they walked for an hour to the home of an elderly woman, they witnessed the very poor conditions of the villagers and passed hundreds of kids with no shoes, and some with no shirt or pants. Remembering the experience of distributing the supplies there, Bryan recalls, "The best memory I brought back about the kids in Haiti happened during that walk. We came across a group, and I gave a handful of Tootsie Rolls to one of the boys, expecting him to run off into the woods with his stash. Instead, he took one or two and passed out the other 30 or so to his friends in the group. That was refreshing—that with the level of poverty there, they themselves share."

On the fourth day, they hiked through the mountainous island terrain to pay a visit to the school which the children of the orphanage attend. During a tour there, they saw the classrooms where 150 kids in kindergarten through third grade study, sat in on an English lesson and learned about the school's current challenges and future plans. Once the tour was finished, there was time to play a little soccer with the kids and hand out candy before getting down to the task of unloading the donations for the school and stocking the storeroom shelves.

During breaks from their exhausting work days, they swam in the local river, listened to Creole songs and enjoyed the company of the staff and students. Throughout the trip, the demeanor of the locals impressed Bryan: "It's amazing to watch the kids smile and try to speak

unloading," he explains. "We did this on repeat for about four hours, then broke for lunch at the orphanage and returned that afternoon for more rocks and floor work."

On Day 3, they resumed their efforts by stabilizing the rocks with many loads of dirt, followed by a layer of limestone. According to Bryan, the next step is in the hands of the locals: "The villagers

English to say thank you. They want to smile, swim, play and just be kids. The difference that I see is that, unlike some of the youth here in our own back yard, they are not entitled. They work very hard—I had a 10-year-old moving rocks at four times my pace!"

In a final stop, they met with Mono, the local director of Haiti180, who has lived in the village his entire life. Atop Mono's house, they discussed how to bring about more improvements. Bryan explains, "He took us up on the roof to see the beauty of the island, and we all brainstormed ideas for giving the village tools to create their own economy with trade and products. Missionary trips, donations and grants can help, but an economy will pull them out of this poverty."

Now back in Jacksonville, Bryan is busy with a few follow-up projects, noting, "The staff would like some signs for their school. I'm a stamp and sign guy, so I'm working on getting those to them. I'm also working with a few local Jacksonville companies that have cargo ships which travel to Haiti. I think

I'm close to getting them to donate a container to us so we can fill it up with supplies."

He plans to return in 12–18 months, perhaps with other members of the Holmes Stamp & Sign team: "It's taken on a life of its own because now Daniel and I have come back with our stories, and other people are saying, 'Hey, I'd like to do that!' We will see how this all evolves. Who knows what the next trip will hold!"

For more information on Haiti180, visit ***www.haiti180.com.*** M𝕞

On the last day, the crew went to the beach to take in the beauty of the island.

Volunteers Tricia Duff and Daniel Kellogg with two of the village children

How to use Customer Chat,™ Part 3

by Amanda Katon

Let's continue our look at the **Chat** *tab by walking through the process of setting up and managing canned responses. Canned responses are useful when your representatives are handling multiple chat requests simultaneously, as they save time and promote excellent customer service.*
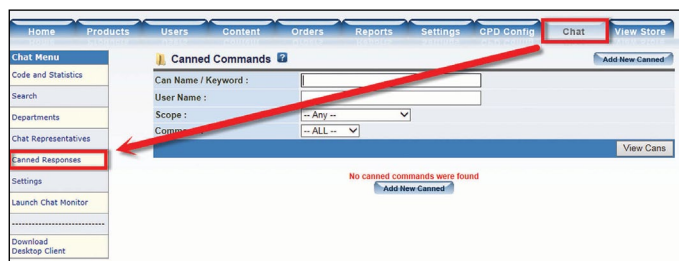
Picture 1: Chat *tab with link to Canned Responses screen*

As you may recall, the Customer Chat™ system enables you to provide real-time customer assistance to customers shopping on your website. (Please note that Customer Chat™ is a service that must be turned on in order to be utilized. Contact Connectweb Technologies, Inc. for more information).

Canned Responses

To begin, first sign in to the admin area of your Stamp Shop Web™ site. Once you are logged in, click the *Chat* tab. Next, click the *Canned Responses* link from the *Chat* menu on the left of your screen (see Picture 1).

Canned Responses is one of the most powerful features of the Customer Chat™ system. By using *Canned Responses*, you can set predefined actions for better and faster interaction with your customers. You can also set up *Quick Words*, which acts as a shortcut to trigger your canned responses and automated replies. There are six types of canned responses you can create: *Reply, Push, Image, URL, Email* and a *Quick Link*.

Reply: A predefined message or reply; for example, "How may I assist you?"

Push: Used to push files or URLs to a customer. A *Push* command will open a file or window to the customer during a session.

Image: Displays an image to the customer.

URL: Displays a URL to a customer. However, unlike a *Push* response, it does not open a window to display the URL.

Email: Displays an email address to a customer.

Quick Link: This provides URL bookmarks for the representative. Use *Quick Links* to give your representative quick access to your web pages, knowledge base, FAQs and applications.

Canned Responses can also have a *Scope*. The scope defines which representatives and departments will have access to the response. You can set it to be available to each user independently, to the entire department or to all the representatives available on the system.

Add a New Canned Response

To create a new *Canned Response*, click on the *Add New Canned* button from the *Canned Responses* screen (see Picture 2). You will then provide the following information:

Name: Enter the identification name of the canned command. It should be something that easily reminds you of the command's purpose; for example, "Send Re-Inking Instructions (Pre-Inked Stamps)" for pushing a document with instructions on re-inking pre-inked stamps.

Command Type: Select the type of command and enter the URL, link or message to be used in the command. Some examples include: "May I help you with anything else?" or "Please refer to www.mystampcompany.com/reinkinginstructions.html."

Quick Word: A *Quick Word* is a shortcut, somewhat like a magic word, that once entered by the representative, will trigger the canned command. For example, if you have defined an approval message to approve an order, you can set the *Quick Word* to "Approve." Then if the representative
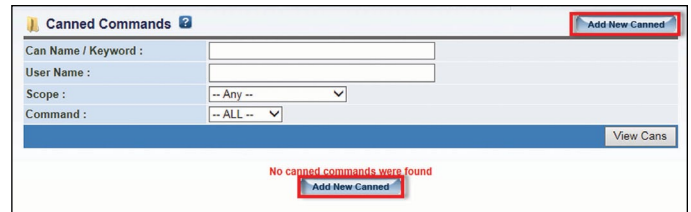
Picture 2: Canned Commands *main screen with* Add New Canned *button*
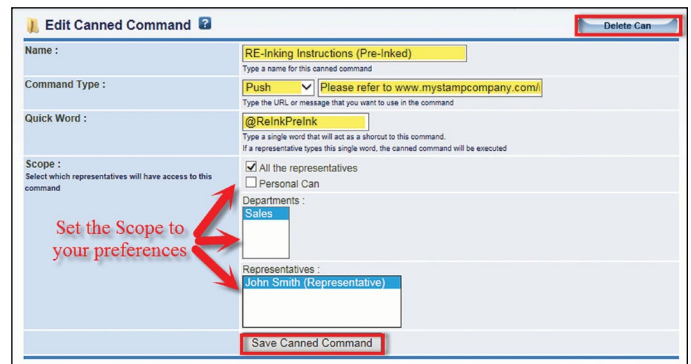
Picture 3: Add New Canned Command *setup screen (also the* Edit Canned Command *screen)*

conducting the chat session types the single word "Approve" and clicks *Send*, the canned command will be triggered and the full approval message will be displayed to that customer.

Scope: Select the scope of the canned command. As previously mentioned, the scope ties a certain canned command to a particular representative or department. Scopes can also be handy in allowing each representative to have his or her own canned commands, if needed. If you would like the command available to specific representatives and departments, be sure that their names are highlighted in blue (see Picture 3).

HELPFUL TIP: A *Quick Word* will only trigger the canned command if it is the only word typed by a representative. In the example mentioned above, if the representative types "Approve" and clicks Enter, the full approval canned command will be displayed. However, if the rep types "Here's the Approve," the canned command will not be triggered. It's also advisable to set a prefix for your *Quick Word*. Adding the @ symbol before any *Quick Word* (i.e., @Approve) is a good way to prevent commands from being triggered unintentionally, as in those cases when these words might be used in a different context within a customer response.

The screen you are on when *Adding a New Canned Command* is also the same one you see when *Editing a Canned Command* (see Picture 3). From this screen, you can

also *Delete* canned responses. Once you have finished setting all the criteria for your *Canned Command*, or when you have completed making any changes, click the *Save Canned Command* button.

View, Edit and Delete Canned Response

To view existing canned responses, use the search area (see Picture 4) to enter in criteria in any or all of the provided fields. Then click the *View Cans* button to see the results that match your criteria. You can search by the following: *Can Name/Keyword, User Name, Scope* and *Command*.

Can Name/Keyword: Lists Canned Commands containing the selected keyword.

User Name: Displays canned commands assigned to a specific representative or department.

Scope: This drop-down menu includes the possible representatives or departments within the scope of the searched canned response.

Command: Indicates the type of command set for the canned response (i.e., *Reply, Push, Image, URL, Email* or *Quick Link*).

Once your search results are displayed, click the Name or View (magnify glass icon) button to view or edit a specific canned command. To delete a canned command here, click the Delete or X symbol next to that particular entry (see Picture 4).

This concludes Part 3 of working within the *Chat* tab! Setting up *Canned Commands/Canned Responses* will save you and your representatives time in answering customer questions through the Customer Chat™ system. We'll continue our exploration of the *Chat* tab in the next issue with a look at various chat Settings. If you have any questions regarding your website(s) or would like the chat feature turned on for your site(s), please contact Technical Support at 800-556-9932 or **support@cwebtechnologies.com**. MI*m*

Picture 4: *Search criteria screen for locating* Canned Responses

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Amanda Katon 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. Katon is a graduate of Mount Ida College in Newton, Massachusetts, with a Bachelor of Science in Graphic Design. Upon graduating in May 2010, she started out working for a marketing company. After eight months, she went back to school at North Shore Community College in Beverly, Massachusetts where she earned her certificate in Web design. She joined the Connectweb family in June 2011, focusing her skills on designing custom websites for Stamp Shop Web customers. As part of Connectweb, Katon enjoys helping customers and building lasting relationships with them by implementing one-on-one customer service. Outside of work, Katon enjoys outdoor activities and doing crafts. For further help, contact Amanda Katon at 800-556-9932; Email: amanda@cwebtechnologies.com.

Understanding the basics of vector graphics

by Foster D. Coburn III

This month, we'll cover the basic techniques to create and edit vector graphics. Much of this knowledge revolves around the node.

In the world of graphics, there are two major categories. Bitmap or raster graphics are what you get from a scanner or camera, and they're made up of millions of individual dots (pixels) of color. Note that the "BMP" file format is one of many bitmap file formats and not one of the best ones. These graphics are often edited with Corel PHOTO-PAINT or Adobe Photoshop.

A vector graphic stores data points with lines between those points described by a mathematical equation. CorelDRAW (and Adobe Illustrator) are primarily designed for creating and editing vector graphics. While CorelDRAW mainly works with vector graphics, it does allow you to import bitmap artwork and make a few minor modifications to it. It is best to modify bitmaps in Corel PHOTO-PAINT or Adobe Photoshop before importing them into CorelDRAW.

While it sounds complicated, it means the artwork can be resized from tiny to enormous, and the quality is only limited by the output device. This scalability makes it easy to use the same artwork for business cards, billboards and everything in between. Vector graphics often mean smaller files, since you don't have to save millions of pixels—just the mathematical equations for the various shapes involved.

Did you sleep through your high school geometry and trigonometry classes? All of that stuff about radii, sines, cosines and the other confusing material most of us forgot long ago is part of vector graphics. While you don't have to do that math, just know that it is happening behind the scenes.
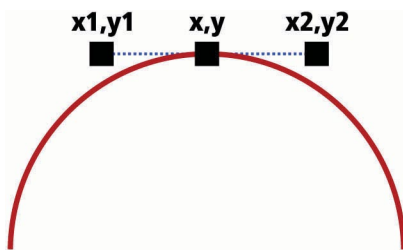
x1,y1   x,y   x2,y2

Figure 1: In this illustration, you'll see a node on the line with two "handles" coming out of the node.

This month, we'll cover the basic techniques you need to understand to create and edit vector graphics in CorelDRAW. Much of this knowledge revolves around the node.

What is a node?

A node is simply a fancy name for a point on a line, such as in Figure 1. The theory of vector graphics says there is a mathematical equation to draw a line between any two data points or nodes. In CorelDRAW, a node will have two handles coming out of it that allow you to adjust the lines entering and exiting the node.

The line between any two nodes can either be a straight line (Figure 2) or a curve (Figure 3). You can switch between these by clicking the appropriate buttons on the Property Bar when a node is selected. Even if you click the curve icon, the line can still be straight if you don't adjust the handles to curve the line.

There are also three types of node: cusp (Figure 4), smooth (Figure 5) and symmetrical (Figure 6). With a cusp, the handles on either side of the node are completely independent. Smooth nodes will have the handles in alignment, though each side can be a different distance from the node. With symmetrical nodes, the handles are in perfect symmetry. I find that the majority of nodes in my artwork are smooth. While I choose smooth most often, it is important that you understand the differences and use the appropriate type for each node because your artwork may use other types of nodes.

How do I edit nodes?

Some of you may say you don't want to edit nodes. It isn't always the most entertaining aspect of creating artwork, but it is a very important skill. Learn to do it well, and your projects will take less time and the quality will be better. You'll do node editing using the Shape tool (Figure 7) in CorelDRAW.

It is possible that your icon will look slightly different, but it has been the same icon, more or less, since the very first version of CorelDRAW. Select a wavy line as a starting point. Then click the Shape tool (or press **F10** to select it), and you can click on any of the nodes along the wavy line. If this is a new skill for you, just play with the nodes and handles until you have a better understanding of how they work.
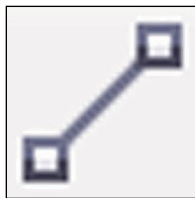
Figure 2: Icon for a straight line segment
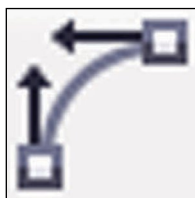
Figure 5: Icon for a smooth node
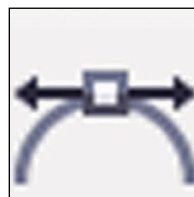
Figure 3: Icon for a curved line segment

Figure 6: Icon for a symmetrical node
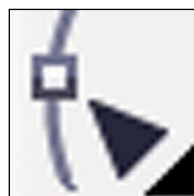
Figure 4: Icon for a cusp node
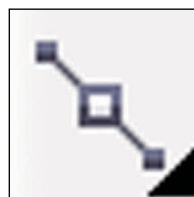
Figure 7: Icon for CorelDRAW's Shape tool

Figure 8: Icon for CorelDRAW's Bézier tool

Make sure to convert segments from lines to curves and back. Adjust the handles at each step along the way. Also convert nodes to each of the three node types and adjust the handles to see how they interact.

As nodes are the backbone of all vector graphics, it is important for you to understand how they work. The only way to truly learn is to just play, as I've described above. Each user will catch on at a different pace, so please plan to spend 30–60 minutes on this exercise.

Drawing with nodes

One way to limit the amount of editing with nodes is simply to draw by directly placing nodes and shaping the curve as you draw. For this, we are going to use the Bézier tool (Figure 8) in CorelDRAW.

Many years ago, an artist told me he only used the Bézier tool for drawing his artwork. I gave it a try and thought he must be completely nuts. It just didn't seem that easy. Now I rely heavily on the tool when I need to draw a shape. It truly is the best choice, though you must first become comfortable with it. Again, I'll suggest you spend half an hour or so just playing with the Bézier. By the end of that time, the light bulb should be coming on for you.

With the Bézier tool selected, left-click in your drawing and a node will be placed. Since you can't have a line without at least two nodes, you'll then need to left-click where you want the next node to be placed, and a line will appear between the two. If you simply click, you'll get a straight line between the two nodes. Now left-click and drag where you want to place the next node. Keep dragging your cursor in different directions and notice how this motion is adjusting the handles on the fly.

The first time you click and drag to shape a line, the results may be quite wild. Drawing with nodes is a skill that you will quickly improve with some practice, and that's why I suggest you spend time playing with the Bézier tool. Pick a shape you want to draw, even something as simple as a dog. Now try to draw it with the Bézier tool. Now try drawing it again. The second time it should get a bit easier. Repeat a few more times, and you'll really get the hang of it.

Sometimes users get frustrated if they don't achieve the perfect shape when drawing with the Bézier tool. Remember that you can always edit the curve/nodes with the Shape tool after drawing. With more practice, the shapes will be closer to what you want the first time and require less editing.

One common task where the Bézier tool is very useful is converting a bitmap logo into vector. We'll go through this process in detail next month, so make sure you practice the techniques described here so you'll be ready for logo conversion.

In closing

While math is a huge part of vector artwork, you don't have to be a trigonometry expert to create and edit vector graphics. That is the job of the software engineers who convert our mouse motions and clicks into those equations. It is your job to understand the workings of nodes, handles and curves so that you can get the exact shapes you desire with a minimal number of nodes.

This is a skill best learned by trial and error, and that's why I've recommended you set aside some time to play with these tools. The concept can feel very foreign at first, but it will quickly become second nature with a little bit of practice. **M**|m

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Foster D. Coburn III is the author of 13 books on CorelDRAW,® including the latest, CorelDRAW® X6 Unleashed. *He also writes the free Graphics Unleashed Blog and provides fonts, artwork and add-ons of interest to designers through the Graphics Unleashed website at www.unleash.com. Connect with Graphics Unleashed on Facebook at www.facebook.com/graphicsunleashed and follow Foster on Twitter @fostercoburn. Email your project questions to foster@unleash.com.*
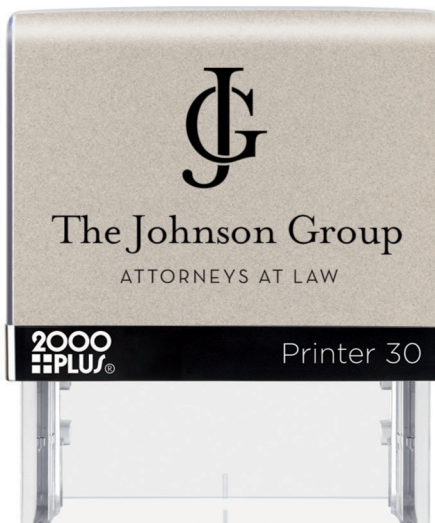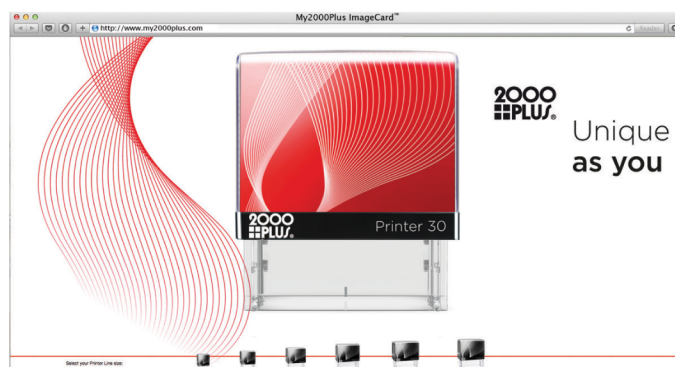
NOW SHIPPING

P20

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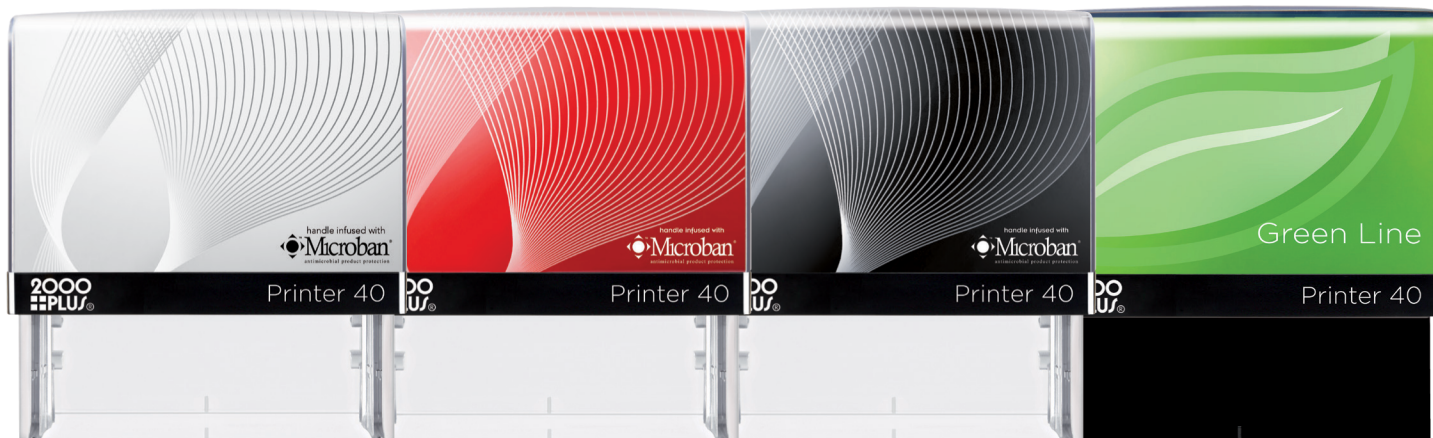
RUBBER STAMPS

CALIFORNIA MARKING DEVICE

CALIFORNIA MARKING DEVICE

RUBBER STAMPS
ENGRAVED SIGNS

SAME DAY SERVICE AVAILABLE

MAGNETIC
SIGNS
BADGES

650

Push

Push

CALIFORNIA
MARKING
DEVICE

CALIFORNIA MARKING DEVICE

RUBBER STAMPS

DATERS

NOTARY STAMPS

SELF-INKING STAMPS

STAMP PADS

INSPECTION STAMPS

NUMBERING MACHINES

ENGRAV

NAME

MAGNET

AWARD

VINYL

EMBOSSIN

On the road:
California Marking Device, Inc.
Hermosa Beach, California

by David Hachmeister

A fixture along the Pacific Coast Highway for more than 40 years, California Marking Device is a trip through time, filled with nostalgic memories and a humorous take on life in the stamp business. Publisher David Hachmeister stopped by to chat with owner Jim Beckwith.

David Hachmeister: This is such a gorgeous place to be. You're about four blocks from the beach?

Jim Beckwith: Yes, four blocks, facing the ocean, so I get the ocean breeze. I just open my window, and that's my air conditioning.

DH: How long have you guys been here?

JB: Almost 43 years at this location.

DH: Where were you before then?

JB: Let's see, who did I leave to come here? I left Ideal Rubber Stamp Co. at Sixth and Main in downtown Los Angeles. I worked for him for three years. Before that, I worked for Consolidated, Cosco. Don Krebs hired me, remember him?

DH: That's a name I remember.

JB: I had just left Valley Rubber Stamp Co. in Burbank, and they're still around.

Engraved signs from years past decorate the shop walls.

That's my association with companies out here. But I originally started working for Western Marking Devices in Lubbock, Texas, in 1964. I worked for him for three years.

DH: How did you come across that?

JB: I was going to school at Texas Tech, so I needed a part-time job. He sold the business to Acme Rubber Stamp Co. and I worked for them for six months. Then, in 1968, I came out to California.

I found jobs here in the rubber stamp industry. I loved it. It was so interesting.

DH: What attracted you to it?

JB: I think every single job was different. And they are. I'll never make another stamp like this (*gestures to a stamp*) or like this. I'll never make another stamp with two lines and that text. It's just so cool that you're not putting in the same headlight of an automobile. Every single thing you do is different. That's what is

interesting about it—that's what keeps me going.

DH: With the big bank jobs and all those accounts gone, that's probably even more the case now. Everything is custom.

JB: Pretty much so. It's so interesting what people will design for a rubber stamp. And signs are different, too. You can print on namebadges and ADA signs. A lot of different trophies, like that surfboard up there. You add a plaque to a surfboard foundation.

DH: Nice! From the display, it looks like you do a lot of signage, as well as stamps.

JB: I do about half and half.

DH: Has it been that way for a while?

JB: Yes, quite a while. And of course, we also do embossers. We engrave our embossers, which means that we can engrave them to a depth that can go through, say, 130 pound paper. A lot of people will do it by laser, but they can only go in so deep. So they are really limited on some of the embossers that they can make, whereas we can engrave directly into the brass to get the depth that we want. We are selling them all across the country—New York, Texas, Oklahoma and Utah. Everywhere, it seems.

DH: I notice you have a really nice website. Did you develop that yourself?

JB: Billy, who works in the back, does that. He is the computer guy and does the optimization as well.

DH: You came up pretty quickly when I searched, so I figured you must be doing something right in the optimization part.

JB: I guess we're just lucky. I'm the front man, I'm the pitch man, I sell the Coca-Cola, but Billy makes it. (*laughs*). He does all the website stuff, along with the engraving and typesetting. That's the way it runs. We don't step on each

Jim Beckwith has been in the stamp business since 1964.

other's feet, and it works just perfect. That's why he has been here such a long time—38 years.

DH: Is it just the two of you now?

JB: Well, my wife fills in for me when we are busier than normal. She will put everything together with the stamps. So it's just the three of us. In the heydays, in the '80s and '90s, we had four or five in here. Everyone's shop was much busier in the '80s and '90s than it is now. But we're still surviving alright. We are still making enough to keep everything going.

DH: How do you compose your stamps? Do you use photopolymer?

JB: Yes, but I have two Ludlows sitting back there also.

DH: Oh my goodness.

JB: I have a model L and a model M. I have two cabinets full of mats too. You cannot replace that, as far as manufacturing a rubber stamp. I don't care who says what—the best rubber stamp is still made from a Ludlow. Make them of mold and rubber, I don't care. I'll get stamps back in here that are over 20 years old. People want a new pad for their self-inker. That stamp is still good today—better than the photopolymers. It holds up, and it transfers the ink. Absolutely amazing.

DH: Less chemically sensitive.

JB: I'm an old time guy and just going through the procedures until I don't want to do it anymore. So whatever is out there, I'll do. I'm not always happy with it, but it's OK.

DH: What's your ratio of rubber to polymer?

JB: Probably 90 percent polymer nowadays. That's because you have more of a variety of type fonts, layouts, and that type of stuff when you do oval or circle stamps. On the Ludlow, you have to hand-set them, put them in brass and on the dies, make molds and all that stuff. It's a lot

A collection of old rubber stamps on display

easier to typeset on a computer to make a negative than it is on a Ludlow. But I can tell the difference. If someone stamps two stamps side by side, I can tell which one is rubber and which one is polymer. I mean, after 50 years, I can tell everything.

DH: It's tough to slip one by.

JB: There is a definite difference in the qualities. But then, when you are trying to make a notary stamp, you couldn't possibly make one that looks that good

on a Ludlow as you could in a polymer. So there are pros and cons to both. People today don't know the difference between the two. Do you remember a long time ago, if you had artwork like this, you would have to get a zinc engraving done, then you'd have to make a mold and do it in rubber? Here, you can just go straight to a negative, have it done the same day and cut the cost probably in half because a zinc engraving of that size would probably cost $30 or

Billy Shank at the engraving machine

more. You can go straight from the artwork to the rubber stamp, and that's kind of cool.

DH: What is your market area? Who comes to you?

JB: Everybody's local; probably within a three to five mile radius. Not a perimeter, because there is nobody that way (*laughs, pointing to the ocean*). You catch me, David? I go all the way to Los Angeles, Santa Monica, all around that direction, but that's as far as I really go. I don't market anything over the Web nationwide because I don't believe in ruining the market by slashing the prices of stamps, like some of these companies have done.

When the old fellas from Custom Rubber Stamp and LA Rubber Stamp used to make rubber stamps, they would set the prices of a one-line rubber stamp. They would get together—there were three of them who did it—they are no longer alive. Everybody else in the rubber stamp industry in Southern California wanted to get ahold of their price sheet, and they would match it. They were waiting for that price to go

up, so everybody sold everything at the same price. You didn't ever have to worry about it.

Today, it's completely different. I'm not telling you anything that you don't already know, but I dislike that the most; where these people are getting online, slashing the prices and selling them for nothing. It's kind of taking away from the old-timers who have set up a brick-and-mortar place and have employees and overhead. I'm probably not the only one who thinks that. People who have been around for 20 to 50 years probably think the same thing. They want to get a fair price for their product. You hear it all the time from people coming in the front door: "Well, I can get this online for $4.95," and then they walk out. And I just say, "Well, good luck with that." (*laughs*)

DH: When there's a mistake, then there's a problem…

JB: …and you've got shipping, you've got to wait three weeks for it, and then it's not what you want. I always ask them, "Don't you want to come in and kick the tire?" Would you order a

wedding ring over the Internet? That's custom made—that's something you really want. You want to see what you're getting. You want to actually look at it and feel the product: 'I want one this size…in that print.' You don't see that on the Internet. Here, you get to choose anything you want in any color or style. It's right here for you to look at. You can actually see if it's what you want.

DH: You're right about the custom product on the Internet.

JB: Clothes, hand lotion—it's all the same from Neutrogena—you know what that already is. But this is a custom item. It's going to be a particular size… with a particular logo. Everything is just right. You want to actually see it. As soon as I say that, they all agree with me and say, "Yeah, I guess I want to come in and see the people who make this stuff before I buy it."

So you're losing that contact with people, when they just sit at home and order it over the Internet and wait for it to be delivered. Then they get it and say, "Oh no, I guess I'll live with it." Or—seriously, I've had this happen a bunch of times—people have ordered something over the Internet and then brought it in to us and said, "This is what I got, but it's not what I want. Can you make it right?" Then I throw it right in the trash, and they order what they wanted all along from me at my price. It takes a while for people to figure out that to get what they really want, it's best to deal directly with the people who know what they're doing. I think it's very important.

DH: Which lines do you carry?

JB: I sell whatever I feel like carrying. I carried Ideal for a while. Now I carry Trodat, then I carry Shiny. I have 2000 Pluses. It seems like right now I have a lot of Trodats, and they seem to be

The storefront area of the shop

working pretty well, so that's what I'm stocking. I'm not really married to any particular one—whatever stamps the best. I like quality. I want it to go out stamping pretty good. If a notary stamp stamps better on a Trodat than a Shiny or a 2000 Plus, I'll put it on that particular one because you want it to stamp right. I think that's why I carry different ones. I have all three of them back there.

DH: Well, if you're not the cheapest, you've got to be good.

JB: I don't really worry about the price too much. I mean, what are we talking about? Nickels and dimes? All of them are within five to 20 cents of each other. If you are charging $30 for this, you want to give the customer one that works right. I don't care about 15 cents. There is a lot of profit to be made in a $30 stamp—when you can buy this for $2.24, $2.38 or $2.90—as long as it works well. That's what I'm looking for. You don't want the customers to come back and say, "What is this?"

DH: Do you get much walk-in traffic?

JB: Yes, I get quite a bit of walk-ins. Some days are better than others. The economy is just all mixed up right now. I've been at this place for 43 years, and it's a waffle. You have a good days and low days, or you have a low day and then three good days. But being here for such a long period of time on Pacific Coast Highway, I've had quite a bit of walk-ins.

DH: You have huge street visibility. It's such a busy street.

JB: And the traffic is slower on this part of Pacific Coast Highway than on that part up there coming out of the airport or further south. You have street parking and a lot of red lights, so traffic seems to go a little bit slower along here. That helps, and also being here in this old building. What's this building—90 years old? Look at the front door: the doors are

Friday at the end of business, Jim kicks back.

actually protruding in, and then they open inward. Every once in a while, when it gets hot in here, I have to put the air conditioner on (*opens window, laughing*). We're real high-tech here. This has worked for 43 years—it still works.

DH: Do you have any advice for young people in the business?

JB: Yeah, don't get in it! Don't get into this business. When your business closes down, get out and go do something else. And young people do not get in this business.

DH: Yes, it's pretty tough.

JB: If you weren't born into this thing, and you didn't work in one of these places, and you didn't have a love for it, you just don't go into this business because you want to go in business. It does not work for everybody.

And today, the way this business is, there is not enough going around for everybody. You might come across a dozen people in your magazine that you've interviewed, but these people might have 15–30 employees down in Florida, back east or in the Midwest. Those are very rare. You have to be big

time or inherit it from your father, and there are two or three generations of people. But to go out and start one yourself, and on your own—that would be really tough. Especially when you don't know anything about it…you don't even know if you love it. You've got to work in one place first.

DH: That's what you did.

JB: I learned everything I could learn from everybody I worked for and took all that information and put it into my business.

DH: I appreciate your time, Jim. Thanks! M|*m*

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Remembering Bruce Hale

by David Hachmeister

Bruce Hale owned Granite State Stamps in Manchester, New Hampshire, and passed away in April 2014. He also worked for many years supporting the efforts of the Marking Device Association International (the former name of the IMIA), including a term as president in 1993. I always loved talking to Bruce at the shows. In a recent conversation I had with Lynn Hale, his widow and business partner, she shared her memories of his involvement with the association. Here is an excerpt:

"Bruce just really took to the industry and started going to conventions and getting involved. The first one I can recall was 36 years ago when he went to Hershey, Pennsylvania. The next one I remember was at the Marriott Long Wharf in Boston, where he met Ned Gibbons and Kathy and Terry Davis. He and Gary Werwa worked together to rewrite the bylaws. Then the opportunity presented itself, and he took over a district. Later, he held various chairperson positions and eventually became president in 1993.

He thoroughly lived to go to those conventions. He enjoyed the people, and he enjoyed the products. He enjoyed hobnobbing with anybody and everybody. I swear there wasn't a soul on the planet he wouldn't talk to. It just meant so much to him. He really found his calling with that. During his time as president, he was as proud as a peacock about the success of the International Convention & Trade Show in Chicago, which had over 900 attendees from the stamp industry.

When Bruce started with Granite State Stamps, it was just a two person operation—a husband and wife in a barn up in Hopkinton, New Hampshire.

At that time, Bob Payne, the original owner of Granite State, asked Bruce to come work for him. He knew of Bruce because Bruce had bought a little stamp making machine and put it at a friend's print shop near our house. He said to his friend, "Why don't you sell stamps and I'll make them?" So he made stamps there. Then Bruce called Avery Dennison and wanted to know if he could buy pads from them, and they said, "No, you're too small of an entity, but you can buy them from Granite State Stamps." That began the partnership with Bob Payne and then the eventual acquisition of the company.

Bruce stayed active in the business right up until the very end. I could hear him any day that he would come in. He would have talked to someone on the phone who was in the industry, whether it was a supplier or vendor. He always kept in touch. Consequently, he made an awful lot of very good friends: Mike Mauro, Jeff Tice, Gary and Sandra Werwa, Fred and Toby Mankuta and Janet and Sal Canizzarro.

To me, the stamp business really was his career. He went to college to be a teacher and did that for five or six years. He also worked as a police officer.

But the stamp conventions and the people—it's something he truly enjoyed. I don't think he had a better time in his life. It really defined him. We went to all of them—we might have missed one or two regional ones but never a national one. He loved to chew the fat at the shows with friends like Eddie Sobota and Dave Hendricks. The people there saw the very best side of him.

As far as the day-to-day business, he liked the product research. He ran his company with an iron fist, almost to the point that nobody could get into his inner sanctum, including his daughter, Kelly. I might add that she's taken over the company now. I work part-time here now.

She's done an amazingly great job at the areas that he kept close to the vest, and she's figured them out on her own. We're also lucky that we have a really good, top drawer staff. We're doing a lot of things here. We hired a marketing company and have a new logo with a covered bridge in honor of Bruce. That was one of Bruce's passions—he photographed every covered bridge in New Hampshire." MI*m*

Rounding up the family

The Printy 4642 is the latest entry into the New Printy lineup and features a full 1-5/8 inch (42mm) impression area. This will replace the outgoing 46040 product (40mm) and provide a slightly larger die plate for a little breathing room around the edges. Like the rest of the New Printy products, the 4642 is a climate neutral product.

The 4642 offers some innovative features to set it apart from the competition. With its unique closing cap, the Printy 4642 can be carried without worrying about creating a mess. Two special grip zones allow pad changes without touching the ink reservoir and thus guarantee clean fingers. Soft-touch elements ensure a stamp which is easy to use with a secure grip.

The Printy 4642 has an open positioning window, allowing for a clear view for easy placement of the impression. The 4642 has the faceplate that is equipped with innovative IMD technology, making it resistant to scratches and fingerprints.

For more information, contact Trodat USA at 1-800-TRODAT1 or online at www.trodatusa.com.

Stamp Shop Manager™ is now Custom Vantage Office™

Connectweb Technologies, Inc. is pleased to announce Stamp Shop Manager™ will become Custom Vantage Office™ in early 2015 to better reflect the program's capabilities. The same great product with a new name and new features to come!

Please contact Connectweb with questions or for more information at 800-556-9932 or visit www.CustomVantageOffice.com.

Trodat: Investing in the future of the stamp industry

In the past year, Trodat has opened two leading-edge facilities, both of which benefit stamp makers all around the world. To take advantage of the worldwide growth opportunities in the stamp industry, Trodat continues to invest in infrastructure dedicated to the development of both stamp products and the methods that stamp makers use to customize these products.

Trotec opens new corporate headquarters

In October 2013, Trotec, the technology leader in laser engraving for rubber stamp makers, opened its new headquarters in Austria. Trotec utilized the same high set of standards that goes into the development of the lasers when designing its new corporate headquarters. The basic concept and the building's shape were designed according to the teachings of Feng Shui in order to provide the best work environment for the 100 employees who call this building home. The headquarters is also designed to be expandable, so that Trotec will have room to expand as the company's sales and production demands grow.

The building itself was designed with the protection of the environment in mind, and Europe's Green Building Programme ranked Trotec in the Top 5 of all construction projects submitted. From the traditional Speedy series of flatbed lasers to the high-powered stamp making Laserati Drum, Trotec lasers are designed with the rubber stamp maker in mind and should be the first choice of stamp makers when looking for a laser engraver.

Trodat opens new facility for its subsidiary (TMX) in China

In 2012, the year of Trodat's 100th anniversary, the decision was made to build a new modern, private building in China, as the old building was simply not capable of handling the expected growth and development of TMX.

Opened officially in August 2014, TMX's new headquarters is a defining statement that Trodat believes there are opportunities to grow the stamp business. This facility better positions Trodat to take advantage of both local growth opportunities in China and the Far East, as well as expand its production capabilities to meet demand for certain products here in the U.S. market.

For more information on Trodat products and services, visit www.trodatusa.com or call 1-800 TRODAT1.

Brother™ introduces first P-touch® label maker with full-color LCD display

The P-touch PT-D600 offers incredibly intuitive and accurate label creation, thanks to its easy-type keyboard, backlit color display and automatic tape color detection.

Brother International Corporation, a multibillion dollar leader in technology for offices of all sizes, introduces the PT-D600, the newest PC-connectable desktop model in its popular P-touch label maker line, and the first with a full-color LCD display.

The versatile PT-D600 is designed squarely for the higher-volume business user in mind. Its full-color LCD display provides a true WYSIWYG image of the label being created, shows edits in real time and even automatically detects and displays the color of the labeling tape installed in the machine.

The large QWERTY keyboard rests at an angle for comfortable, accurate typing. Convenient formatting keys and the LCD display work in conjunction to help make creating professional labels easy and intuitive.

The PT-D600 connects to Windows® and Mac® computers with the included USB cable to be used with the free P-touch Editor Label Design software[1]. With this software, users can create high-resolution labels, choose from an expansive library of label templates and create custom labels using the fonts, symbols and graphics already stored on their computers.

"With the introduction of the new PT-D600, Brother has made label creation a more intuitive process than ever before," says Linda Sanford, Director of P-touch Product Marketing. "By combining the standalone features of the full-color display and easy-type keyboard with the ability to connect to virtually any computer, we're giving businesses the flexibility they need to quickly create the long-lasting, easy-to-read labels they need to help keep their workspaces organized and efficient."

P-touch PT-D600 additional key features:

- Works with over 60 TZe tape cartridges in a variety of colors and sizes, as well as specialty tapes, to address virtually any labeling requirement
- Print customized labels up to 24mm (approximately 1 inch) wide with up to seven lines of text
- Includes a library of ready-to-print business labels, as well as customizable pre-formatted templates
- Pre-programmed with 14 fonts, 11 styles, 99 frames and over 600 symbols
- Stores up to 99 labels in internal memory for easy reprinting of most commonly used labels
- Create high-resolution barcodes[2] and labels with information stored in an Excel® or Access® database[3] on your computer
- Super-fast print speeds up to 30mm per second[4] and an automatic tape cutter help save time
- Powered by included AC power adapter or 6 AA batteries (not included)
- Convenient, top-loading tape design for simple tape changes
- Prints on durable, TZe laminated tapes to create long-lasting indoor/outdoor labels
- 2-year limited warranty and free phone support for the life of the product
- Contact Brother for pricing

The PT-D600 is being introduced with the PT-D450, which offers the same connectivity and label creation functionality, with a monochrome backlit display, and maximum tape width of 18mm. These machines join the PT-D400, which was introduced in retail locations in October.

For more information on any of these models, visit www.brother.com.

1. Compatible with Windows Vista®, Windows 7, Windows 8/8.1, Windows Server 2008/2008 R2, Microsoft Windows Server 2012/2012 R2, and Mac OSX v10.7.5, 10.8x, 10.9x. All design software and drivers available for free download at **support.brother.com**.

2. Requires installation of full version of P-touch Editor software and connection to a computer. Windows/Mac software and drivers available as a free download.

3. Windows only.

4. Using AC power adapter.

Latte LazerMugs™ from JDS

JDS Industries, Inc. introduces the newest style of LazerMugs™, the 14-oz.

ceramic Latte LazerMugs™. This new sleek design in the LazerMug™ line is available in six

colors: black, red, blue, green, orange and pink. All of the mugs laser engrave to white. There are silicone lids available in either white or black, which are sold separately, or the mugs can be used without a lid as well. All of JDS's laserable ceramic products are available in all 14 nationwide warehouses. With 14 fully stocked warehouses, JDS reaches over 82 percent of the USA in one day and over 99 percent in two days via ground shipping!

To get samples of any of these or JDS's other numerous promotional and gift items, or for more information, contact JDS Industries, Inc. by phone at 800-843-8853; Fax: 605-339-1467; Email: sales@jdsindustries.com; or visit the website at www.jdsindustries.com today.

Jacksonville's Holmes Stamp & Sign completes acquisition of Savannah Stamp & Stencil

Holmes Stamp & Sign continues its growth strategy through strategic acquisitions.

Holmes Stamp & Sign Company (HSC) is proud to announce the acquisition of Savannah Stamp & Stencil. Savannah Stamp & Stencil is a 140-year-old company with a history of providing quality rubber stamps, stencils, engraved nameplates and badges. HSC, based in Jacksonville, Florida, serves its customers with similar products, but also offers a wider range of products and services.

Owner of Savannah Stamp & Stencil Rich Reinhardt is retiring after assuming the helm of Savannah Stamp & Stencil in 1999. As he faced retirement, he was confronted with the dilemma of transitioning the company to an owner he could entrust to deliver on the legacy of Savannah Stamp & Stencil. He found just the right fit with HSC, a third generation business with a proven track record that has supported steady growth when most of the industry has been downsizing. "Holmes Stamp and Sign is the perfect solution. I am confident Bryan will not only uphold the great reputation of this 140-year-old company, he also brings much needed technology to the mix that will increase value to customers," says Mr. Reinhardt.

The acquisition of Savannah Stamp & Stencil further improves HSC's position in the industry. HSC plans to draw on its online ordering, next day shipping and expanded product lines to serve the customers of Savannah Stamp & Stencil through a seamless transition and beyond.

For more information, visit www.HolmesStamp.com or call toll-free 1-888-465-6373 or locally at 904-396-2291.

Consolidated Marking releases new 2000 Plus® Printer 20, 30 and 40 models, launches my2000plus.com website

Consolidated Marking is excited to announce that the new 2000 Plus® Printer 20, 30 and 40 models are in stock and readily available in both the Standard and Green Line series.

As they continue to ramp up inventory to meet current and new customer demand, they will continue to support the old models until the end of 2015 on all six sizes (P10-P60).

As advertised, the new models will contain the ImageCard™ design to allow for unique personalization. Stamp manufacturers will be able to utilize the ImageCard™ feature to advertise their company, promote their customers' brands, or offer it as an additional feature for the end consumer to easily create their own designs.
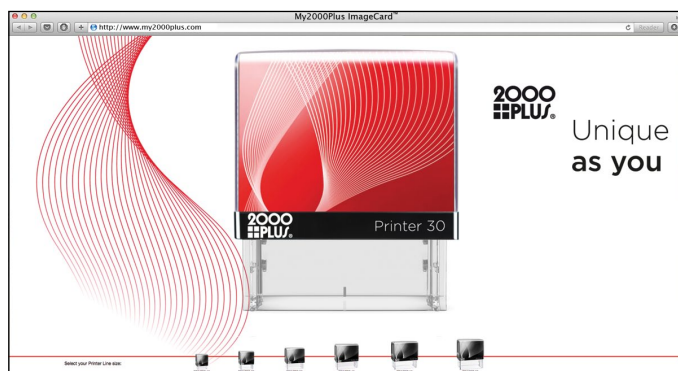
In conjunction with the new product release is the launch of the my2000plus.com website. **my2000plus.com** is a product information site which provides end users access to the ImageCard™ designer suite, links to educational videos and general information on other products throughout the 2000 Plus® family. Users will be able to use the ImageCard™ designer tool to upload their own pictures or utilize stunning preset designs and images to create a look all their own. Once the design is complete, a print-ready PDF file is generated, allowing the user to print from the convenience of a home or office printer.

For additional information, please contact Consolidated Marking at 1-800-323-0253 or at sales@consolidatedmarking.com. M|m

INDUSTRY INDICATOR
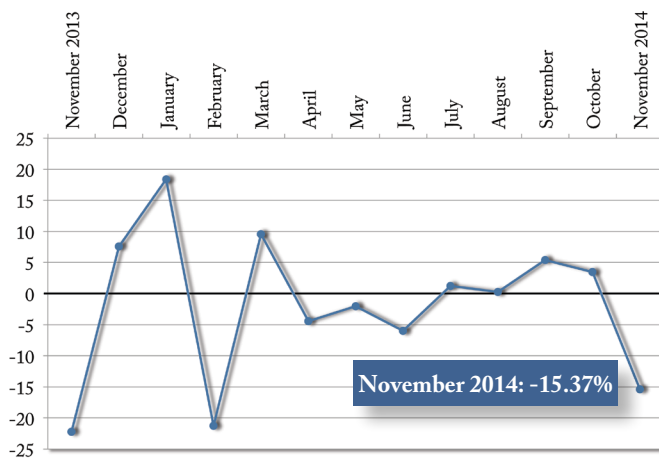
by David Hachmeister

Too much turkey

We have seen worse numbers, but they were generally related to the Chicago Cubs' winning streaks. Stamp sales for November fell from the previous November by 9.33 percent. That was the good news. They fell 15.37 percent against October. Even the Other Products category fell by more than 10 percent, dropping 11.32 percent against the previous-like month.
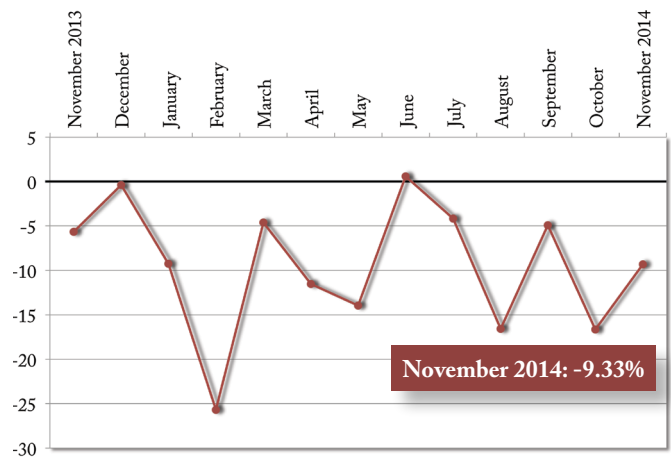
Having said all this, we remind you that the sample is very small. We take an extra-large grain of salt with all of these results…or maybe we started celebrating the holidays a little early. MI*m*

Stamps only

Monthly Sales—Gain/Loss Percentage

November 2014: -15.37%

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

November 2014: -9.33%

**Percent of Annual Sales by Month
(illustrating seasonality)**

November 2014: 6.78%
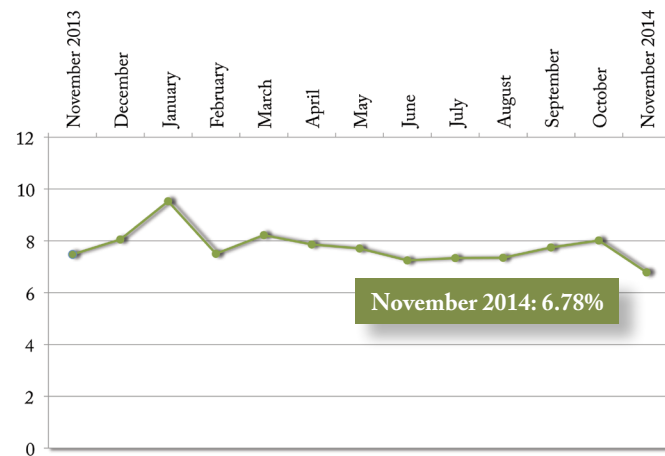
Other products

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

November 2014: -11.32%
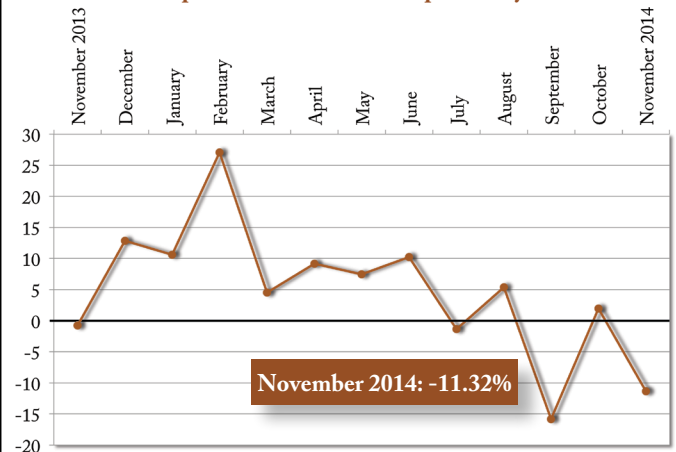
Visit **www.markingdevices.com** today for the latest news and industry statistics!

INDUSTRY IMPRESSIONS

by David Hachmeister

They threw away the script!

Years ago, after a few decades of very predictable growth and general well-being in the industry, we came to realize that the script has been tossed aside. In the 1980s and 1990s, we at Marking Devices used to be able to predict our annual sales on existing products for the next year within a few percentage points. By adding projects, we almost tripled in size in just a few years. It seemed like people who didn't even want to work were easily able to find jobs. In light of where we are today, it is ironic that many in the industry had already been griping about business conditions for many years. It truly was the best of times.

For Marking Devices Publishing, 9/11 immediately changed all that. In the time after, many people wouldn't fly, numerous trade shows disintegrated, and the idea of using the Internet as more than a toy really started to take hold. The art stamp market was a very early mover to the Internet, and the stores in our readership and at our trade shows disappeared. We know the craft is still around, but the nexus has moved to chatrooms.

The business stamp market started a precipitous decline shortly after the panic of 2008. Our November 2008 Industry Indicator recorded its largest decline to date. The panic caused many organizations to rethink how they did business. Few included rubber stamps as a big part of their future plans.

The other impact of the Internet has been to make everybody a competitor. We have discussed this in the past, but the outcome has been less comity within the industry. We hope that some of the ensuing bunker mentality can ease. Just because your competitor is on the Internet doesn't mean that all your customers are going to your competitor's site. You must be more competitive to survive, but hopefully your abilities mesh well with your customers' needs so you have little to fear.

If you think we know where it goes from here, look at the title of this column! We do know that not the strong, but the adaptable survive. Redouble efforts to find new niches and new applications. Go outside the industry to learn. Even if you don't like the advice you may get, there still may be a germ of a really good idea in just about everything you can take in. Figure out why you pay attention to some ads and not others. By the time you reach our age, you literally will have seen about 7,000,000 commercial messages. Use that almost intuitive knowledge you have acquired. You have the ability and experience, whether you realize it or not, to apply ideas you see elsewhere to your business, and ad lib your way to success! **MI***m*

www.markingdevices.com

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