

1 Things that make you go hmmmm...

A sampling of Seattle Bindery's unusual jobs

Editor's note: We were intrigued by the unusual postpress applications Seattle Bindery exec Milt Vine described in his e-mail newsletter. We asked him to share some stories with our readers.



Round and round we go

The problem: Eyeletting triple-deck, laminated spinning wheels.

The details: Seattle Bindery produced 2,600 triple-deck laminated spinning wheels. The top and bottom circles of the wheel have die cut windows through which information on both sides of the center circle is revealed. The job arrived on 12 x 25-inch sheets, with the three eight-inch circles printed on each sheet. Turnaround time was three days.

The solution: First, sheets were trimmed to separate the circles for laminating. The center circle of the spinning wheel would be laminated on both sides, while laminate would be applied to only one side of the top and bottom circles. After laminating, the job went to letterpress, cutting out the three circles as well as the die cut windows on the top and bottom circles.

After punching holes in the center of all the circles, the three pieces were collated, and the stacked circles were sent to the eyelet setting machine where quarter-inch brass-base eyelets were applied.



Laminating for longshoremen

The problem: Binding laminated, oversized sheets with smaller, untrimmed sections.

The details: The 16-page booklet had to be turned around in seven days or less. The booklet, for an international port management company, included a company overview, a letter from the president and a listing of the company's equipment for loading and unloading cargo.

The book used two different stocks and sheet sizes, the larger of which was 9.5 x 13.5 inches and required letterpress scoring and full-coverage matte lamination. The smaller 70-lb. sheet accommodated the letter from the president and company overview.

The solution: Both sections required folding and stitching. The combination of the four-color crossover sections with the smaller interior sheets made for a striking visual effect. To ensure that the lamination would be sealed tightly when bound, Seattle Bindery broke the book into four four-page sections—two large and two small—a solution that cut delivery time of the 2,500 books.



One word: plastics

The problem: Spiral binding one-inch-thick books with a 14-inch spine and lots of tabs.

The details: The standard 1.25-inch wire is extremely difficult to close on automated equipment with books of this size. It was impossible to guarantee that back covers would not come off during the process.

The solution: In a recent peer group meeting, we discovered the availability of an oval die designed for thicker books with plastic spiral binding. We located and obtained the die and the Seattle Bindery team put together a mock-up for the customer, demonstrating how the new shape and spacing of the holes could solve the client's concerns.

The typical pitch (the number of holes per inch) for spiral binding of thicker books is 4:1. By reducing the number of holes to 2.5 holes per inch and then punching oval instead of round holes, the team was able to spin the plastic spiral coil elements by machine. In addition to automated insertion, the oval holes also allow the pages to turn more easily.

Seattle Bindery produced a few sample books with various coil diameters, and then showed the client, who chose to make the change from Wire-O to plastic spiral on the next run.

A series of fortunate events

April 15 used to be a pivotal date for Milt Vine, president of Seattle Bindery. Before he purchased the company in 1991, Vine, a CPA, spent 15 years with a national accounting firm. Although being laid off rarely is a positive event, Vine found his downsizing wasn't entirely detrimental. His severance package included time with an industrial psychologist who administered a series of surveys similar to the Myers-Briggs personality test. The results indicated Vine had characteristics consistent with traits present in successful small business owners. "That was an 'Aha!' moment for me," he says. "I would never have thought about [running a small business]. I would have just gotten another [CPA] job. Had I not been laid off, and had I not gone through the industrial psychology exercise, I never would have given it a second thought."

From balancing the books to manufacturing them

Vine evaluated Seattle Bindery along with 15 different businesses—everything from a nursery, a machine shop and a used equipment rental place. Part of Seattle Bindery's appeal was the economics involved in the trade portion of the industry. "I picked it because I'm a finance guy," Vine notes. "My approach was, 'All I have to do is not screw this up.'" Vine spoke to several people who made the same corporate-to-small-business switch, as well as a friend in the graphic arts. "It was a giant networking exercise," he says.

Vine is a self-described "numbers guy," an attribute that has both helped and hindered him in his new business. Being financially oriented has given him a unique outlook on production. "I think the numbers tell you what the business is doing," he says. Conversely, Vine also admits to suffering from "analysis paralysis." He says, "Sometimes, it's like, 'Good God, man, make a decision!' There is a natural tendency to want more data, more study."

Peer power

Vine also is a member of an independent peer group brought about by a chance meeting at a BIA conference. Lunch groups were broken out according to business type. After a lively discussion that almost led to missed conference sessions, one of the other participants asked Vine if he'd like to continue the discussion with the others from the group.

The peer group consists of five members spread across the country. For the past six years, they have met quarterly for a day and a half to talk bindery. They have no bylaws, no written documents and no sponsors, and they report to no one but themselves.

—Carrie Cleaveland, assistant editor



Hot POPs

The problem: Applying Kleenstick to large point-of-purchase (POP) displays.

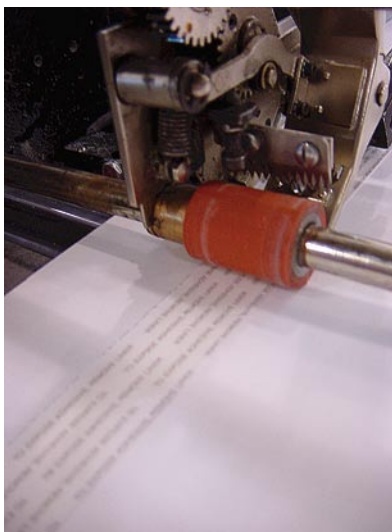
The details: The Kleenstick would be applied to 1,300 each of four different versions of the displays. Each poster was on 24-pt. board and later would be die cut, scored and folded to achieve a double thickness.

The customer, a large screen printer, delivered the first batch of the 5,200 printed sheets on a Wednesday afternoon. The job was due back to the customer on Friday.

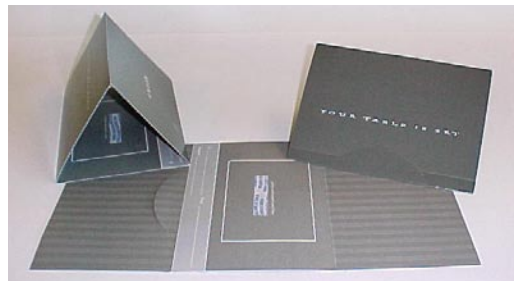
The solution: Unless we figured out a way to increase throughput, the deadline would be difficult to meet. We brainstormed how best to configure the equipment for maximum

efficiency. We hit on the idea of combining two machines that weren't designed to run together and it worked like a charm.

When the remaining posters came in Thursday afternoon, production was in full swing. The Seattle Bindery team applied two strips of Kleenstick on either side of the 34-inch sheet, stopping in the middle of the sheet. The customer picked up the job in batches as they came off the equipment to perform the final production processes.



Kleenstick application is a Seattle Bindery specialty. The company operates a standard, hand-fed machine from Stik-It that can run anything from two sheets on up.



Time waits for no bindery

The problem: Die cut, score, fold and apply Kleenstick to 240,000 coated coverstock cards on a tight deadline.

The details: Seattle Bindery had to finish seven full-size skids of holiday gift certificate cards in three days to begin delivering 35,000 of the more than 240,000 finished pieces. That was just the first shipment.

The schedule was off track from the start: Artwork for the project had been delivered late to the printer, and the printer had concerns about color quality. Meeting the customer's deadline now rested with the Seattle Bindery team.

The solution: The full-size parent sheets were die cut, scored and trimmed. The Kleenstick tape then was applied and the pieces were completed on the bindery's MBO folders. Bill Davey, bindery manager, says, "Our customer was so pleased with our fast turnaround that he asked us to finish another 150,000 cards before the holidays. We fine-tuned the process so well, this run should be a piece of cake."

Milt Vine is president of Seattle Bindery. Contact him at miltvine@seattlebindery.com.

About Seattle Bindery

Seattle Bindery existed long before Milt Vine took the reins in 1991. It started in 1960 as a trade bindery and expanded into the company it is today.

Vine added a tabbing operation to the company's gather, stitch, trim and perfect binding capabilities in 1994. In 1997, foil stamping, embossing and die cutting was added with the purchase of Blake Letterpress. In 2004, it added film laminating. Last year, Seattle Bindery bought Sterling Letterpress.

Seattle Bindery's equipment includes two Scott 10000 tabbers, a Bobst autoplaten die cutter and three MBO folders: an MBO Perfection Folder, 26 x 40-inch continuous feed with knife folding attachment, set up 6/4/4 for more map folding options; and two MBO B Model Folders, one 30 x 50-inch continuous feed with knife folding attachment and one 26 x 40-inch continuous feed with gate and knife folding attachment. The company also operates both single- and double-sided film laminating machines, with a second double-sided machine arriving soon.

See www.seattlebindery.com.

—Carrie Cleaveland, assistant editor