

Central Michigan Graphics general manager Theresa Dunham and owner Kirk Squiers lean against one of their vehicle designs.



THAT'S A WRAP!

by Christine Caswell
Greater Lansing Business Monthly
November 2008

Why pay for a static billboard when you can turn your entire fleet into mobile advertising?

"I'm always saying [the wraps are] like giant, removable bumper stickers that peel right off after three to five years," explained Kirk Squiers, who co-owns Central Michigan Graphics (CMG) with General Manager Theresa Dunham.

Within the past two years, CMG added vehicle "wraps" as part of its printing business. The wraps cover entire vehicles with high-resolution graphics while protecting the original paint.

"This ultimately complements the printing, signs and banners, and all the other things we do," said Squiers. "Our theme is, 'If you think it... We ink it...'. This is a good venture for us to go into."

"This is really a great opportunity for us," added Dunham. "The quality of the material is just top notch."

"We use a high-tech printer called Vutek on 3M Controltac™ vinyl," Squiers noted. "That's important because there are other vinyls out there that will crack, peel and fade after a certain amount of years. This is the only kind we

use. We have one that has a three-year warranty and one that has a five-year warranty not to fade, crack or peel. We will laminate every piece we put on, and it protects the [wrap] against UV [rays] and things like that."

Squiers first heard about the wraps from a friend with a company fleet.

"I found out about this product in Florida two years ago," Squiers explained. "Jim Phillipich, who owns Meridian Plumbing, showed me a magazine and said, 'Kirk, I want to show you these things called vehicle wraps.' He put me in touch with a company called the SignZoo in Sarasota, Florida, that has been doing this for years. They are a 3M training facility, so I went

down there, met the owner and they put us through the training. This is big in California, Las Vegas and Florida, but I see it starting to come this way."

For this type of advertising, the vehicle is literally wrapped with strips of material that line up to form the graphic with special material that covers the windows so people can still see out.

"The big question I get is always, 'How much is it going to cost?'" Squiers noted. "I tell them it's going to cost between \$2,000 and \$3,000. If someone comes in and says, 'This is the design I want. Here it is,' it will probably only be a couple hundred dollars for the



CMU football equipment truck. Designed, printed and installed by Central Michigan Graphics.

set-up. If someone comes in and says, 'This is my concept, go for it,' it could be \$1,500 to \$2,000, depending on how long it takes just to come up with that specific design. The material prints for \$12 a square foot, there is the installation, and that's how it's priced. I sell to a number of car dealers and they [think] \$3,000 is a lot of money for a van. I say, 'How much do you pay for a billboard that sits in one location for six months on the freeway?' They say, '\$3,000 dollars.' So I reply, 'This will last three years for \$3,000,' and then they realize that's a pretty good idea."



Williams Auto World Courtesy Shuttle

Squiers said wraps are available for all types of vehicles.

There is software that can basically do every make and model," he stated. "So if someone says, 'I have a 1998 Chevy van,' Theresa puts it into the computer, the image comes up, we basically PhotoShop it and then we send a proof [to the client] by e-mail. They can see what they like, what changes they want, and when it's done, it comes out in four sections. There will be a line. We tell people it's not a paint job. But from a distance, because the colors are so vibrant, you can't tell."

"We design the concept here, then we send it down to Florida to have it printed. They ship it here and we install it," Dunham added.

"The main thing is to clear the surface properly before you put it on," said Squiers. "After you're done with it in three years, it peels right off. The paint is exactly the same as it was when you put the wrap on. So for people who lease vehicles, the paint is in the same condition as when they drove it off the lot."

One of CMG's biggest projects to date has been wrapping the equipment truck at Squier's alma mater, Central Michigan University (CMU). He refers to it as a "55-foot mobile recruiting billboard for CMU and its football program. CMU is the first NCAA Division One football program in Michigan to wrap its vehicle."



Even though CMG quadrupled its space when it moved two years ago, Squiers is already looking at purchasing more property so semi-trailers can be wrapped on site. But wraps don't just have to be on vehicles.

"They can go on just about anything," said Squiers. "They can go on walls. We can do a whole picture. We're doing that in our front lobby. A new product made by 3M will even allow us to put the same stuff on brick. Brick is porous, so when this material goes on, there's a different way to apply it. On a smooth surface, we apply it with a squeegee, but there is a special tool that actually pushes it into the brick." (You can have a picture on the side of a building. You can see through it on the windows.)

"This is also big with boats; we do a lot of boats," he continued. "Professional fishermen will have a sponsor's name on the boat, and then the next year they get a new sponsor. So we would take the old one off and put a new one on – and they're waterproof. The logos can go in salt water or fresh water. In Costa Rica, they're even putting wraps on airplanes. People will pay to do a whole airplane, including the wings. The applications are unlimited."

CMG is the only 3M-authorized wrap provider

within 100 miles of Lansing.

"That means our installers went to training through 3M on how to install and make sure the graphics are on properly so the warranty will apply," Squiers noted. "We are more expensive. People can get this done less expensively at other places, but ours is guaranteed to last."

With the onslaught of the Internet, Squiers and Dunham see this business as their means of keeping CMG viable as the need for traditional printing services decline.

"I foresee that this will be more than 50 percent of our business within a year," said Squiers. "At this point, we can't keep up with the demand because we're trying to make sure that we do a quality job on every vehicle."

"I'm just excited and I do see a light at the end of the tunnel for us," said Dunham.

"I have been in printing for 15 years and I'm rejuvenated and excited because we've got this new product," added Squiers. "I wake up in the morning and say, 'I'm going to show this product to more people, so they can benefit from it,' and I'm excited about coming to work every day."

Have you got SIZZLE

Mid Michigans **3M** Authorized Wrap Provider

800.486.1853
www.centralmichigangraphics.com

Why Fleet Wraps?

Cost per 1000 impressions

Medium	Cost per 1000 impressions
Newspaper	\$19.20
TV 30 sec (Phone)	\$16.25
Magazine (1/2 Page)	\$8.00
Radio (30 Sec)	\$6.00
Billboard	\$3.00
Fleet Wrap	\$0.70

Best Value