



University of Connecticut

Rexam Keeps Rotating Signage Rolling The explosion of sports marketing and corporate sponsorship over the last decade has made signage within athletic facilities and event venues a necessary component of running a profitable event. In addition to producing a valuable revenue stream for an organization, the images that are presented to those who are watching the event live or on television can make or break a reputation.

No one knows that better than Paul Pendergast, assistant director of athletics for marketing and corporate relations at the University of Connecticut, home of the 2000 Women's and 1999 Men's NCAA Basketball Champions. This season alone, the men's and women's teams' schedules included a combined 31 televised games, and both teams routinely played to full arenas.

To be certain that he showcases both the university and his corporate partners in a positive manner that does justice to the reputations of both parties, Pendergast uses rotating signage to display advertisements at UConn's home contests.

But for all its advantages, rotating signage is not as simple as traditional, wall-mounted advertisements. Bill Yates, art director at SignCo, the Nebraska-based manufacturer which supplied UConn with its unit, explained that the challenge of rotating signage is not the technology that makes the ads revolve, but the quest for a material that allows the technology to "work."

UConn's rotating signage system consists of four three-by-eight-foot cabinet-shaped tables that serve a dual purpose. The outside of the device is utilized as a courtside scorers table, while the inside houses a pair of spindles that roll and unroll to display different ads which rotate inside the table on a pre-determined time schedule.

"Most materials are designed for static or backlit, flat box signs," said Yates. "But to be used for rotating signage, materials must be able to roll and move through the machine without folding or bending around corners. Then after all that, the material must be flat when it comes out."

SignCo places several other requirements on the material that it uses for the ad panels. In addition to durability, its substrates must be thin, dimensionally stable, resistant to water

and scratches, but at the same time, receptive to adhesive and coatings. Yates often finds that a particular material will meet some, but not all, the criteria and thus cannot be used.

The process that SignCo uses to produce its signage is not unlike other digital printing jobs. After the advertisers supply SignCo's Graphic Design department with the concept and approve the designs, ads are produced using a ColorSpan Displaymaker Series XII printer. Printed on Rexam Image Products' DMTB9 Tyvek banner in a continuous roll that results in approximately 75,000-80,000 linear feet, the ads are then cut to an exact size using a template, taped into scrolls and attached to one another with tape. The post-design process takes less than three hours to complete.

"Rexam's DMTB9 is the only material that meet all our criteria for non-backlit signage," said Yates. "We tried a number of other materials, including scrim vinyl, polyester films and coated materials from other major distributors, but all were insufficient in one way or another. For example, scrim vinyl will wrinkle and stretch at different rates as it runs through the rollers and the polyester films are not water-proof."

"Before Rexam, the maximum number of ads that we could link together inside a unit was 18, because the thickness would build up on the roll," said Yates. "Now the material is thin enough to fit 24 ads on a roll, which results in a big economic gain for the owners of the signs."

"Rexam's DMTB9 is also receptive to adhesive, which is important because we use tape to attach the ads together. In addition, we attach a sensor stripe to each panel that identifies the ad and communicates with the computer that controls the timing of the rotation."

Rexam's DMTB9 media can be printed with dye-based or pigment-based inks. SignCo chose the dye-based option. UConn needed photographic-quality images for the signs that would appear vibrant from any perspective, and the dye-based ink was the best option for color matching, bright colors, and an overall better color gamut.

"The ads on our rotating signage help to present a clean and professional look to our arena," Pendergast said. "They are of the highest quality in terms of image clarity and colors, plus they add to the 'big-time event' atmosphere that surrounds our games."