

Reade Signs adopts HP Latex Printing Technologies for vehicle graphics with 3M™ Performance Guarantee



At a glance

Industry: Sign & Display

Business name: Reade Signs

Headquarters: Aldershot, UK

Website: readesigns.com



Challenge

- Produce durable, striking vehicle graphics while eliminating eco-solvent ink from production processes.
- Offer high quality vehicle graphics with a comprehensive product warranty that customers expect.
- Increase productivity with greater colour consistency and reliability to meet ever tighter turnarounds.
- Reduce the impact of printing on the environment and eliminate harmful gases from work processes.²

Solution

- HP Designjet L26500 Printer with HP Latex Inks and 3M™ media for wraps by 3M™ Authorised Vehicle Wrapper Partner.

Results

- HP Latex Inks print durable high image-quality vehicle graphics with flat, uniform colours.
- As an approved component of the 3M system, the HP Designjet L26500 Printer using HP Latex Inks and combined with 3M media, allow Reade Signs to offer customers a comprehensive 3M Performance Guarantee that gives them greater peace of mind.
- The use of HP Latex Inks in the work environment requires no special ventilation¹, simplifying work processes and contributes to Reade Signs respecting their ISO14001 commitments.
- Productivity is increased as prints using HP Latex Inks are dry off the printer and do not require degassing so they can be sealed and finished in hours rather than days.

“HP Latex Inks bond perfectly onto the surface of the 3M media we use, offering durable, high-quality vehicle graphics that customers find really striking.”

– Mick Chalkley, operations manager, Reade Signs



Reade Signs has grown to become one of the major players in the sign printing industry. Based in Aldershot in the UK, the company offers a complete portfolio of signage products to large scale national building developers and vehicle wrapping and graphics to private and commercial customers.

Mick Chalkley, operations manager at Reade Signs explains, “We offer quality and flexibility. We are able to produce and install quality products within extremely tight deadlines. Customers recognise the depth of expertise, knowledge and the experience found within our workforce.”

Vehicle graphics has been identified as a potential, high growth sector by Reade Signs. When 3M introduced the 3M™ Performance Guarantee for finished graphics using a system of matched components that have been designed and tested for optimum compatibility and performance, they decided to acquire the HP Designjet L26500 Printer that uses HP Latex Inks. Staff were trained in accordance with, and to the level of the 3M standards. The company is now an Authorised Vehicle Wrapping partner qualified to offer 3M™ Performance Guarantee. The 3M™ Performance Guarantee allows certified print businesses to offer a guarantee on all 3M materials used for the graphics.

Industry-leading performance ensures customer satisfaction

Chalkley highlights that customers have greater confidence in a manufacturer warranty from industry-leading suppliers that covers all the components in a job. “We have always guaranteed our workmanship but unfortunately have had issues in the past getting comprehensive supplier guarantees. A warranted product gives a sense of the supplier believing in the quality of their own product and also gives us peace of mind.” The HP Latex Printing Technology is one of the approved compatible components that form the basis of the 3M™ Performance Guarantee.

Customers return again and again

“Vehicle leases normally last two years. One of our customers has a fleet of 70 vehicles and since we started printing their vehicle graphics on the HP Designjet L26500 Printer on 3M™ media almost seven months ago we have wrapped about 20 of their vehicles – that’s three a month from a single customer,” Chalkley confirms. “Although the economic climate has been very tough, Reade Signs has seen steady growth with an increase in productivity and staffing levels.”

Vehicle graphics that stand out

Reade Signs know that HP Latex Inks on 3M media deliver greater image quality that customers notice. “Colours on the HP Designjet L26500 Printer are flatter and more even. There is none of the banding that could occur on our eco-solvent printer. Images have a much nicer lustre with a gloss finish. The proof is the feedback from our clients, which is fantastic.

“The eco-solvent ink on our previous printer would eat into the vinyl and this would make it too soft and it would become sticky to handle, making it difficult to apply to the vehicle. HP Latex Inks bond perfectly onto the surface of the 3M media we use, offering durable, high-quality vehicle graphics that customers find really striking. The quality of the ink and media combined simplify application of the wrap when post-heating to 100°C,” Chalkley emphasises.

For vehicle graphics Reade Signs uses 3M™ Controltac™ Graphic Film IJ180 as their everyday media and 3M™ Controltac™ Wrap Film IJ380 for deep channels or concave areas.

Back to business in hours with HP Latex Printing Technologies productivity

HP Latex Inks with the HP Designjet L26500 Printer offer vehicle graphics that can be laminated and applied to the vehicle immediately as they are dry-to-touch off the printer. Chalkley compares this to their eco-solvent ink printer output. “On our eco-solvent printer output had to dry and de-gas for 72 hours before sealing with lamination. Workflow issues arose if reprinting was required due to damage or application problems. The reprinted vinyl required an additional 72 hours to de-gas which would push back the completion time. Using HP Latex Inks we can reprint a strip in half an hour, seal it and an hour later it’s already applied to the vehicle. No degassing is required and the work environment doesn’t require special ventilation.¹ The HP Designjet L26500 Printer is easy to use and reliable in operation,” Chalkley says.

Environmental credentials complete the picture

Reducing the impact of printing on the environment was a key reason for Reade Signs acquiring the HP Designjet L26500 Printer, as they intended to eliminate eco-solvent ink printing processes. “Reade Signs is placing growing emphasis on environmentally friendly production methods and products as we work towards ‘zero to landfill’ as part of our ISO14001 commitments,” Chalkley confirms. Water-based HP Latex Inks have no hazard warning labels, no HAPs,² and are non-flammable and non-combustible.

Printing partners for a bright future

“HP Latex Printing Technologies has a proven track record for quality, reliability and cost-effectiveness within the industry and renders our eco-solvent ink printer redundant. Our vision for the future is for steady growth and for Reade Signs to become a leader in the sign industry. The back bone of a sign company is the reliability of its production equipment – our HP equipment has always served us well. We see HP and 3M playing a major role in our business development strategy,” Chalkley concludes.

1) Special ventilation is not required to meet US OSHA requirements on occupational exposure to VOCs from HP Latex Inks. Special ventilation equipment installation is at the discretion of the customer—no specific HP recommendation is intended. Customers should consult state and local requirements and regulations.

2) The inks were tested for Hazardous Air Pollutants per U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Method 311 (testing conducted in 2008) and none were detected. HAPs are air pollutants which are not covered by ambient air quality standards but which, as defined in the Clean Air Act, may present a threat of adverse human health effects or adverse environmental effects.

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