

# Panther Graphics laps the vehicle-wrapping competition with HP Latex technology



## At a glance

**Industry:** Sign & Display  
**Business name:** Panther Graphics  
**Headquarters:** Indianapolis, Indiana, USA  
**Website:** panthergraphics.com



## Challenge

- Panther Graphics, a sister company to motorsports company Panther Racing, needed a printing solution to help the team wrap vehicles quicker, save money, and deliver high-resolution, durable graphics.
- The company was looking to expand its offerings and break into new markets, which required a high-quality, in-house printer that could run a variety of substrates.

## Solutions

- Panther Graphics purchased the HP Latex 260 Printer, moving from solvent-based inks to latex ink technology.
- Panther Graphics also counts on HP Latex Inks to provide clear details and accurate colors on a variety of signs and other applications.

## Results

- The elimination of the 24- to 48-hour outgassing period, along with the versatility of the HP Latex 260 Printer, enables Panther Graphics to streamline production and cut costs.
- Panther Graphics is able to stay ahead of the competition by providing a high-quality vehicle wrap in just 2 days, instead of the traditional week with eco-solvent printing.

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—Tony Kendrick, Lead Installer, Panther Graphics

As a successful IndyCar series team for 14 years, Indianapolis, Indiana-based Panther Racing knows a thing or two about speed. In fact, the only thing remotely slow about Panther Racing used to be its vehicle-wrapping process. That is until 2012, when the team opened its own in-house graphics company and forever changed its pace.

“For three years, we outsourced our vehicle wrapping,” says Nic Baumann, president of Panther Racing. “In 2012, we decided to bring them in-house and launch Panther Graphics. The move not only made vehicle wrapping more efficient, but allowed us to tap into what seemed like a natural extension of our business: signage.” The first item on the newly formed company’s agenda? Selecting a printer. The team, led by lead installer Tony Kendrick, went for a latex ink-based solution with the HP Latex 260 Printer.

### A time and money saver

Before moving to Panther Graphics, Kendrick operated an eco-solvent printer, which posed a serious time challenge because of the lengthy outgassing process. “Race teams spend money on turnaround time,” says Baumann. The less time the vehicle is out of commission while being wrapped, the more time the mechanic has with the car.

By switching to HP Latex Printing Technologies, the Panther Graphics team was able to cut vehicle wrap time in half, streamlining productivity. “We don’t have time for the 24- to 48-hour outgassing period,” says Kendrick. “With HP Latex Inks, jobs get completed faster, and we’re able to meet the demands of the race team. Unlike the drying time required with solvent printing, HP Latex prints come out completely dry, and we can start laminating the car the minute it rolls off the printer.”

The team’s increased efficiency quickly led to increased business. The company wraps not only its own cars, but trailers, golf carts, tanks, helicopters, and vehicles for other companies. It also prints merchandise and signage. This boost in business prompted Panther Graphics to purchase a second HP Latex 260 Printer—just 45 days after purchasing the first.

### Supreme photographic quality

Graphics are a big part of the motorsports industry; a team sponsor likes its logos looking sharp. Using the HP Latex 260 Printer, Panther Graphics is able to deliver pristine, high-resolution print quality. “Everyone always loves the look and the design,” explains Baumann. “The sky is the limit. We can do camouflage, a carbon-fiber scheme—I can’t think of a design we wouldn’t be able to print beautifully.”

During one racing event, the team needed to wrap a race car to temporarily look like a football with a fine, pebbled texture and laces. The last-minute idea, part of a partnership with the San Francisco 49ers (whose head coach, Jim Harbaugh, is a founding partner and co-owner of Panther Racing), required the Panther Graphics team to take a Wednesday-morning concept and deliver a wrapped and ready-to-go race car by Thursday afternoon. “It was designed and wrapped in a day, which would have been impossible to do with an eco-solvent printer. And the quality was outstanding,” says Kendrick.



The quality of printing lies in the HP Latex 260 Printer, as well as the water-based HP Latex Inks. “With eco-solvent inks, we’d sometimes cheat the outgassing process to save time—so we would run into problems with colors,” says Baumann. “Our blacks would look green, because air got trapped in there. With the HP Latex printer, whatever color we tell it to print, we’re going to get.”

In fact, the quality of the HP Latex 260 Printer has opened the doors to a wider clientele. An art consultant in central Indiana recently hired the company to print photographs on poster paper to frame as part of his hotel design scheme. The variety of substrates available for quality printing is important. “This past year, we printed up to 73,000 square feet of material. Canvas, banners, poster paper—you name it,” says Baumann. “We’ve even experimented with some stuff, like pearl white ORACAL vinyl. People thought we had painted it on the car, it looked so nice.”

### Superior durability

Before wrapping its cars in vinyl, Panther Racing invested in intricate, expensive, and time-consuming paint jobs. “Within three or four events, the car would need to be stripped and painted again,” says Baumann. “Now, we use vinyl with a clear coating—so if the coating gets nicked, we can simply recoat it. One wrap can last an entire season on the track.” Kendrick agrees, adding, “We cut down on the cost of maintaining the look of the car, which translates into a considerable cost savings for the team.”

Kendrick is also pleased with the superior performance of the HP Latex 260 Printer, compared with solvent machines. “The HP Latex 260 basically maintains itself,” he says. “With a solvent printer, you have to clean the printhead after every job.”

### A bright future

Panther Graphics has quickly made a name for itself as a premier printer – in just over a year, they’ve built a diverse portfolio of almost 40 clients. These days, Panther Graphics can deliver quality wraps and multiple other applications quickly, thanks to HP Latex Printing Technologies. And in the motorsports industry, flexible speed definitely gives Panther Graphics a competitive edge.

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