



## "TruckSide Advertising Spawns New Industry"

Transport Topics -- May 28, 2001

**"With outdoor advertising space at a premium, TruckSides serve as readily available, highly affordable mobile billboard."**

Fleet trucks are no longer simply delivering products- they're delivering advertising messages as well. And the popularity of the medium appears to be spawning a cottage industry dedicated to its success.

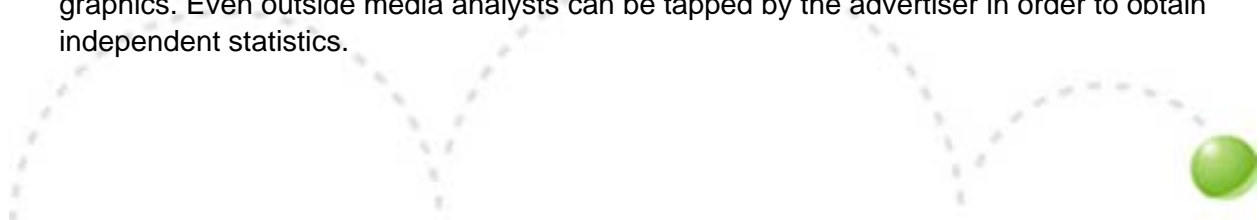
For Fleet owners, TruckSide advertising offers a new revenue stream to help offset rising fuel and operating costs. For a minimal investment, both private fleet trucks and common-carrier fleets can tap into this emerging marketing tool. A carrier may engage in either a fixed fee or profit-sharing arrangement with the advertiser, typically with a media company brokering the deal. Either way, the carrier is able to generate additional income, as long as the advertising message is not a conflict of interest with its mission or that of its clients.

So what is the catalyst fueling this mobile advertising revolution? It is a combination of advances in graphics technology and a new generation of media brokers. The state-of-the art large format digital graphics capabilities that have emerged in recent years are leading the way for media companies that recognize the possibilities that TruckSide advertising represents. These third-party brokers specialize in TruckSide advertising, handling a full slate of duties from market analysis and message development, to graphic design and print production, to installation and removal.

One broker assists clients with everything from planning their advertising campaign to producing the graphics. Vaughn Anderson, Roadmark's operations manager, describes his company's mission: "We act as liaison between client and fleet operators, managing every detail from start to finish".

With carriers and advertisers busy running their day-to-day business, these companies serve as the go between that keep TruckSide advertising rolling.

In some cases, additional players are involved in the process, providing further separation between the advertiser and the carrier. For example, a company may engage its advertising agency for concept and graphic design. The media broker may also choose to rely on outside printers or output bureaus to help generate the printed graphics. Even outside media analysts can be tapped by the advertiser in order to obtain independent statistics.





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Whether a third party has all the necessary in-house resources to execute the campaign or elects to involve other vendors, one thing is clear, they are sure to capitalize on advances in printing technology that have made it possible to put clean, crisp, durable graphics onto vehicles within reasonable time frames and budgets.

Currently, there are two techniques being used to create TruckSide advertising - self-adhesive graphics and vinyl graphics combined with a framing system.

Traditionally, the most common technology for fleet graphics has been an adhesive technology typically used for longer commitments. This self adhesive vinyl "wrap" is a single-graphic image that can remain on the vehicle for up to 5 years, the king of longevity sought by business partners agreeing upon a long-term relationship. It is the preferred solution for messages that are likely to remain static over time.

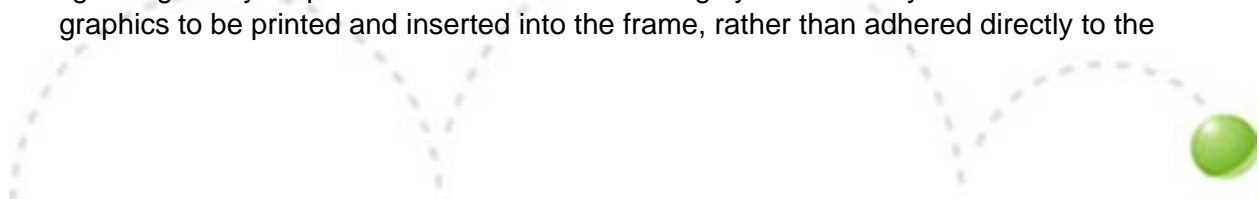
The main source of these advanced adhesive technologies is 3M CORP., which has developed top quality products that cover trucks with wear resistant, high resolution graphics. 3M's Scotchprint Matched Component System utilizes the company's exclusive, specially formulation materials to deliver vibrant colors with high durability.

The Graphics Division of Avery Dennison Corp. is another technology provider for self-adhesive graphics products, offering pressure-sensitive cast-vinyl films that are designed specifically for vehicle applications.

Also known as "mural graphics," these wraps can be produced both digitally and via screen printing, depending upon the quantities required. Printers simply take the clients' artwork and output a full sheet reproduction on vehicle vinyls and apply the graphics to the entire surface of the vehicle -sides, rear, windows and moldings.

Vendors abound for the production of self-adhesive fleet graphics. California fleet graphics provider Y3K Decal Graphix, which specializes in digitally produces high-resolution large-format printing, is a prototypical example. With clients ranging from small business to Fortune 500 companies around the country, Y3K can ship these vehicle wraps to a nationwide network of certified installers to expedite installation. Y3K uses a 300-600 dots-per-inch HP INK JET for short-term projects and a SOLVENT INK JET for long-term graphics expected to last five years or more. Both printers produce up to a 54-inches-wide, large format output.

Adhesive graphics are now being challenged by a newer solution consisting of a lightweight vinyl tarpaulin combined with a framing system. This system allows full-color graphics to be printed and inserted into the frame, rather than adhered directly to the





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truck. Also known as flex-face vinyl, this slide-in slide-out system is generally used for short-term engagements - one main distinction from self-adhesive graphics.

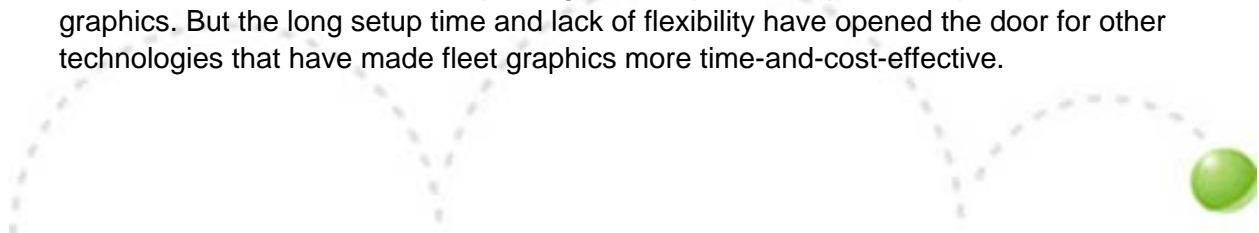
"By drastically reducing printing production costs, and requiring an installation or removal time of only 30 minutes, Side Track allows simple graphic change-outs for seasonal or time-sensitive messages." MediaVehicles CEO Keith Rinzler says "it was designed to be the lightest weight, lowest cost system available".

Transport Bulletins also offers a banner framing system that allows the installation of changeable signs. These hardware kits are designed to fit nearly every straight truck and semi-trailer manufactured. The company works with brokers, imaging companies and directly with advertisers to outfit trucks with this durable framing system. With a proliferation of large format printers operating in markets around the country, advertisers can obtain printing independently and utilize the Transport Bulletins system to frame the vinyl output.

Framing has become a viable option because it requires less fleet downtime than do adhesive technologies and allows the graphics to be reused. Transport Bulletins points out several other advantages afforded by the framing system. Installation is quick, requiring approximately two labor hours to complete. In addition to reduced downtime, framing systems offer easy installation in any weather, and the ability to make changeovers while the vehicle is being loaded or unloaded. Furthermore, the framing system protects the vehicle body as well as the underlying decals of institutional fleet graphics. The image covers the entire vehicle from side to top, creating more surface area for advertising.

NUR AMERICA offers a solution know as Nurfleet, which combines large format digital inkjet imaging with specially developed pigment inks, vinyl and two-component clear coating to create aesthetically pleasing, long lasting fleet graphics. Recently NUR began partnering with Sign Now to produce its national media program, which makes available a nation wide inventory of 10,000 trucks and buses to advertisers. Geva Barash, vice president of sales for NUR America, calls the arrangement an opportunity to capitalize on the "large and untapped market for fleet graphics." NUR also offers a self-adhesive version of Nurfleet.

Whether the output media are a vinyl banner for use in a framing system or a self-adhesive product applied directly to the vehicle, there is more than one printing option available. The traditional screen printing method provides up to 300 dpi full-color graphics. But the long setup time and lack of flexibility have opened the door for other technologies that have made fleet graphics more time-and-cost-effective.





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As mentioned earlier, the most important advance in recent years is large format digital printing, which is essentially the use of a giant ink jet printer. Achieving high resolution at expanded sizes was a breakthrough that has had enormous impact on the fleet graphics industry. Consequently, it is the dominant printing technology in use.

Another emerging option for generating fleet graphics is thermal transfer printing, a process that delivers affordable, durable outdoor graphics without the need for lamination. This technology - a process of transferring ink from a coated ribbon to a substrate using thermal print head - is used in lieu of screen printing for short run applications because of its quickness, flexibility and ease of use. Thermal transfer offers minimal setup time, speed of output (up to 900 sq. ft. per hour), exceptional durability, low cost per image and media flexibility.

No matter the technique, no matter the technology, advertisers and carriers engaging in TruckSide advertising relationships are clearly on the road to mutual profits.

The advantages of this alternative marketing medium are many, for both advertisers and carriers. With outdoor advertising space at a premium, TruckSides serve as readily available, highly affordable mobile billboard. Companies of all shapes and sizes benefit from the high number of consumer impressions this medium creates. Flexible time commitments, high visual impact, and precise repeatability are among the many benefits that have drawn advertisers to TruckSides. On top of all this, companies can pinpoint their target audiences by aligning their demographics with the carrier's modes of operation - whether local, regional or national.

