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Inside the High-Profile World of Pictographics

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LAS VEGAS, NEVADA, U.S.A. – Since opening Las Vegas-based Pictographics in 1994, Craig Miller has built a world-class business on a few basic principles: Deliver a better product, go where the competition isn't, and always remember that no one gets to the top alone.

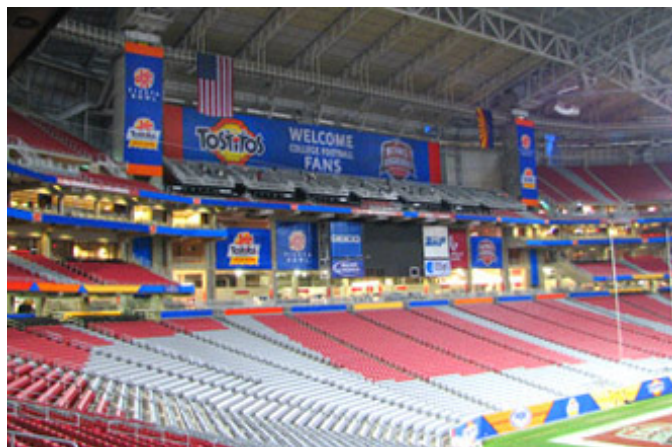
These strategies have catapulted what started as a home-based family business straight to the forefront of digital printing. The company has been recognized by the trade and business press alike, and has been the recipient of Las Vegas's Small Business of the Year and Wide-Format Imaging's Business Excellence awards.

Companies such as Intel, Microsoft, IBM, Ford, DaimlerChrysler, General Motors, LG Electronics, Nokia and others spend millions with Pictographics each year to build a better image – and they return time and again for one simple reason.

"We offer extremely large companies digital printing capabilities they simply can not find anywhere else," Miller said. "That has been our goal since the beginning and remains our goal today."

Miller's business model is this: apply digital imaging to virtually anything. Accordingly, Pictographics is a recognized pioneer in the field of dye sublimation with a state-of-the-art shop that includes Roland inkjets and a 3.3 meter roll-to-roll heat press, one of the industry's largest. The company has printed on virtually any available substrate, and even produces custom wall coverings for architects today including ACTM certifications for safety, durability and sheen. "We're very good at controlling sheen, a critical factor in the world of architecture as well as for televised events," Miller said.

Though Pictographics made its mark originally in the vehicle graphics and casino markets, half of the company's business today is derived from sporting and entertainment events – the bigger, the better. Producers of the Fiesta Bowl, BCS National Championships, the NFL Pro Bowl, NBA All Star Games, HBO's Comedy Specials and other large, televised events frequently call on Pictographics to



Pictographics provided 80,000 square feet of sublimated graphics for the 2006 Fiesta Bowl.

To produce the Fiesta Bowl graphics, Pictographics relied on a Roland 104-inch AdvancedJET AJ-1000 grand-format printer and two 74-inch Hi-Fi Express FP-740 sublimation printers – now the backbone of the company's sublimation production environment.

"The image quality of our dye sub is exceptional and that's why Flying Colors went with us," Miller said. "We were able to get that quality out of our Rolands. Roland printers generate absolutely beautiful sublimated textiles and are real workhorses. We ran them 24x7 leading up to the event."

In addition to the Fiesta Bowl, Roland printers have been used to produce some of the shop's largest projects including a gigantic fabric graphic that encircled a recent DaimlerChrysler trade show booth. The entire graphic was 520 feet long and 5 feet wide – and was printed as one continuous image.

Roland printers were also used to produce a series of 20 8-foot-tall banners for Ford, and they are the designated Pictographics printers for the Phoenix Custom Apparel racing uniforms – 24,000 square feet of them every month.

transform an arena or stage into a visual extravaganza.



Sublimated graphics included this expansive tunnel cover.

Similarly, Fortune 500 companies sporting mammoth trade show booths come to Pictographics to make sure they visually dominate their competition. But Pictographics offers more than just super-wide-format impact. The company truly specializes in "specializing." Which is why Phoenix Custom Apparel employs Pictographics to produce more than 1,000 racing uniforms each month for Indy Car racing as well as the NHRA and AHRA.

"We have one client that orders over 600,000 square feet of promotional point-of-sale graphics each year," Miller said. "These graphics go into 12,000 locations. This is where our business is focused. We are making a concerted effort to go after a select group of very large customers. At the end of 2006, we had 500 customers. Our goal is to get down to 50 this year – the top 50."

Top Pictographics customers increasingly come from the events industry and today include worldwide trade show and event companies such as George P. Johnson, Imagination and Flying Colors.

Representatives from Flying Colors originally came to Pictographics last fall looking for a printer capable of producing 80,000 square feet of sublimated graphics – just enough to virtually "wrap" the 2006 Fiesta Bowl, including the fronts of the end zones – with digitally dyed textiles.

Roland printers have played a role in NASCAR events as well, producing all the sublimated backdrops for recent televised press conferences held before and after races.

"We use dye sublimated textiles for these events because vinyl does not light very well," he said. "Dye sub was meant to be photographed and videotaped."

He continued, "What Roland has given us is the best of both worlds. On one hand, we get world-leading image quality. We also get real production speeds. And the printers are incredibly cost effective. It's pretty astounding. I have no pieces of equipment in my shop that offer the kind of ROI that the Rolands give."

All of which makes it easy to commit to new, even larger projects, Miller said, such as the upcoming redesign of the San Diego Padres Stadium in collaboration with Flying Colors.

"We like to get involved in projects early in the planning stages," Miller said. "It can be helpful for us to let our clients know about the latest technologies – like Roland digital printers – so they can enhance their vision."

"So our business philosophy is one of 'multi-level partnering,'" he continued. "We partner with our customers and look out for their needs - and they look out for ours. In symbiotic relationships, things go much better. And we partner with our manufacturers as well. Our relationship with Roland enabled us to grow the scope of the Fiesta Bowl job. I think of my business partners as friends as well as colleagues. I think that's why we can do extraordinary things – because of this teamwork."



Banners for event sponsor Tostitos were displayed throughout the stadium.