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## Finding a Niche in POP

### Transforming In-Store Space for Leading Retailers

By Amber E. Watson

Part 2 of 2

In-store promotional signage presents an ever-changing, yet steady form of business for print service providers (PSPs). Retail spaces require many forms of output including signs, displays, and packaging to call attention to special promotions and products.

If printing in-store signage is a main portion of one's business, it helps to have an understanding of the industry and first-hand experience. That is part of what makes GSP a reputable and successful print provider and business management company for well-known retailers around the country.

In operation since 1978, GSP helps improve retail spaces for over 55 retailers, including Circle K, Giant Eagle, Kroger, Pantry and Stripes, Sheetz, and Thornton's. The shop employs over 300 full-time employees across the U.S. The management team, consisting of leaders in the point of purchase (POP), as well as veterans of retailers such as CKE, Macy's, and Starbucks, understand the elements of retail signage firsthand.

GSP maintains an 80,000 square foot production facility in Clearwater, FL and a 60,000 square foot facility in Provo, UT, in addition to the corporate office, which houses the technology, marketing, and design teams. GSP also maintains account management staff in over 20 cities throughout the country.

### Honing in on POP

The company started business as a jack-of-all-trades printer, producing everything from political signage to bumper stickers. In the mid 1980s, GSP began to focus on producing POP for convenience stores and developed a proprietary software system that enabled guaranteed delivery of the right sign to the right store on time. That system, POPManager, is now regarded as a sophisticated tool for eliminating overage from retail POP orders, minimizing total POP costs by as much as 30 percent.

GSP offers a complete set of services within this niche. "Our on-site intelligence software optimizes planning and enables store-specific retail execution," says Elaine Scrima, director of operations, GSP. "In addition, survey services ensure retailers know the details of every store to improve capital expenditure decisions and store support. Our design team provides graphic and industrial design solutions tailor made for retail results, and our POP management team leverages expertise in design, production, fulfillment, and data management to maximize return on in-store marketing efforts."

GSP also earned a G7 Master Printer designation for both the FL and UT operations. "G7 is a method for calibrating imaging devices to ensure consistency across multiple production runs for the highest quality POP regardless of print method or production facility," explains Scrima.

"The most challenging aspect of this business is to take multiple stores and brand all of the POP to create a unified message to the customer, and ultimately create an amazing in-store experience," shares Scrima. "We begin the process by visiting the locations selected for the rebrand and photographed/take measurements of each space." The design team then gets to work on a cohesive look that flows from one area of the store to another.

### Flexible Services

Current customers are typically based in the convenience retailing industry but this is changing for GSP as it expands service offerings into grocery and QSR channels. The company markets to retailers through email and online marketing, advertisements in industry publications, as well as industry trade shows and events. Still, its most successful method is word of mouth.

PSPs catering to the retail market are challenged to be flexible and diligent at all times. "Customers expect tight turnaround times, and may need to make changes up to the last minute," says Scrima. "We frequently change promotional price points due to price increases from suppliers and distribution changes that may increase or decrease print counts."

To help manage projects, the shop classifies production jobs into four categories. Monthly jobs are regular, recurring orders where all, or a majority of the promotional signage changes. GSP asks for a ten day turnaround time, but typically averages seven or eight. Non-monthly jobs tend to be smaller orders where there are additional signage needs that occur outside of the monthly promotional needs. Here, they ask for a ten day turn time, but typically average five to seven. Hot rush jobs vary in size and occur for a variety of reasons and average zero to three days. Lastly, project/permanent jobs are not tied to promotions as much as they are to areas and are typically not printed with prices. "In order to meet each client's needs, we move jobs up or down the production schedule based on ship dates and due in store dates," shares Scrima.

### Tools for the Job

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GSP relies on an Océ North America Arizona 550 GT press for higher detail quality and small font. An EFI VUTEK GS3200 is used for high throughput, longer run jobs, while an EFI VUTEK PV200 is utilized for higher quality, medium-sized font. A Hewlett-Packard (HP) Scitex XL1500 is used for larger scale signage with a viewing distance of 30 feet or greater. OEM UV inks are used specific to the device.

While GSP can accept files in a variety of formats, its account designers primarily create production files in Adobe Systems Incorporated's CS6.

The shop prints on a variety of substrates including styrene and coroplast for durability, varying thickness, and ability to withstand the elements outdoors. It also prints on rigid vinyl for its flexible nature and ideal indoor application. Clear or white static is used on windows and doors because it creates the illusion of die-cut pieces without the expense of building a die. Paper is also a common material because it is cost effective, offers varying thickness, and is good for short-term promotions of up to 60 days.

#### **Convenient POP**

GSP recently entered into an agreement with Mid-Atlantic Convenience Stores (MACS) to provide POP management services to all of the company's locations. Services and solutions include POP engineering, print, fabrication and fulfillment, local account support, logistics and budget management, and store-specific POP placement guides.

For this job, GSP used a combination of materials including coroplast, styrene, and static and rigid vinyl, which all varied in thickness. The project took three and a half weeks from the initial discussion to installation.

Install was performed by GSP representatives on site using three- and six-foot T-channels, standoffs, Velcro hook and loops, a sidewalk sign base, and four-foot pole ties. A few elements, such as the menu board system, required common tools such as a drill, levels, tape measure, and ladder.

MACS had a general idea on the overall theme and worked with GSP's creative team to design both graphic and industrial elements to achieve the final in-store look. According to Scrima the biggest challenge associated with this project was turnaround time. "We were given a short amount of time to make a large impact in the locations," she says.

#### **Room to Grow**

For many PSPs in the POP space, business begins on a small scale. With many retailers looking for help with printing needs, the potential to grow is there. GSP is proof that with an experienced team, proper equipment, and a focus on POP, small shops have the potential to expand.

*Click here to read part one of this exclusive online series, [Innovative In-Store Signage](#).*



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