CorelDRAW® allows a non-designer to create professional signs

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>
> **Richard Parrish**
> **owner Vinyl Creations**

Richard Parrish is the owner and founder of Vinyl Creations, a small sign-making shop located in Port Orange, Florida. Richard Parrish hasn't taken any formal training in graphic design, but the software he uses to create his vinyl signs, banners and decals is so user-friendly he can create professional-looking designs in a matter of minutes. "Many of my clients bring me in a logo on a piece of paper and ask me if I can create a banner or a sign based on that logo. Thanks to CorelDRAW Graphics Suite I can say 'no problem' with confidence. It really is that good."

Vinyl Creations is a 3-person operation, and like in most small businesses, all employees have to be prepared to do a bit of everything. Richard creates most of the signs, such as professional office signs, storefronts, magnetic signs as well as decals for sports or dance teams etc. His wife, Lisbeth, is the president of the company and handles the books.

"I guess you could say she's in charge," says Richard on the phone from the office in Florida.

Richard Parrish worked for 7 years as a police officer in the Daytona area, but after being injured on the job in 2001, he decided to make a career change. Despite the fact that he had no previous experience with graphics or printing, he founded Parrish Enterprises and Vinyl Creations. The company is growing and Richard attributes a big part of the success to the software package that makes it all come together – CorelDRAW Graphics Suite.

"We work exclusively in CorelDRAW," says Richard Parrish. "But we also rely heavily on an add-on product designed for CorelDRAW, called Smart Designer.

Smart Designer is a program developed specifically for the imprinting industry by a company called Smart Designs. The template-driven program enables the user to attach an additional graphics programs to CorelDRAW, and instantly access both of them using split

screen technology. Smart Designer makes it possible for anyone, regardless of skill level, to produce high quality custom graphics in an efficient manner. With CorelDRAW as its engine, Smart Designer, has become the leading design application for imprinters.

"It has become a real life-saver here at Vinyl Creations," explains Richard Parrish. "We've been able to establish an extremely efficient system that allows us to show our clients what we can do in a matter of minutes."

If a client is interested in creating a school team basketball banner for instance, it couldn't be easier to browse the basketball category, pick a design with some default text wrapped around a basketball, enter the new name in a text box and click OK. The program updates the design with the new name automatically.

"A lot of my clients think I'm some kind of design genius," says Richard Parrish and laughs.

Studies show that people who produce graphics themselves can cut their art production time by 50 to 90 percent by using CorelDRAW and Smart Designer.

"We work quite a bit with International Speedway Corp. and Americrown, and we regularly get rush orders on new signs or banners for NASCAR events," says Richard.

Another benefit of using CorelDRAW at Vinyl Creations is the fact that the designers can export the files directly to their plotters and other machines from within the application.

"It's happened on more than one occasion that they call us on Friday afternoon and need something for an event or a race on Saturday morning. Then you can't spend a lot of time adjusting every detail of your design. You just need to get it done as quickly as possible. CorelDRAW has come through for us every time and the best part is that the final product still looks very professional."

When you're designing and manufacturing large-scale vinyl signs, you occasionally have to create magic out of thin air.

Says Richard Parrish: "A while back we had a woman come in with an old business card she'd carried around in her purse for years. Naturally, it was a bit banged up and wrinkled. She wanted us to create a 35-foot banner based on the tiny logo on the card. Impossible, right? Well, I scanned the business card with the highest resolution and saved it as a pretty large bitmap file. I imported the image into CorelTRACE and traced the outline of the logo using the Advanced Outline setting".

CorelTRACE, included in the CorelDRAW Graphics Suite, is an application that analyzes pixel patterns in a bitmap image and recreates the image as a vector file. The program's Advanced Outline setting produces a vector graphic that closely resembles the original bitmap, and it allows you to set advanced trace options such as Noise Filter, Complexity and Node Reduction levels.

The benefit of using a vector file is that it is resolution independent. You can enlarge it virtually indefinitely without losing quality. A bitmap on the other hand quickly displays jagged edges if it is enlarged beyond its original size.

"The resulting logo needed only a modest amount of tweaking in CorelDRAW, such as adjusting a few nodes and straightening the odd line here and there. But having a high-quality vector file of the logo allowed us to create the banner for the client."

Another benefit of using CorelDRAW at Vinyl Creations is the fact that the designers can export the files directly to their plotters and other machines from within the application. There's no need to create workaround solutions.

"It's very important when you're pressed for time. CorelDRAW just fits extremely well into our workflow," concludes Richard Parrish.