

Helping a Growing Sign Shop Create Digital Magic

Overview

Name: Steve Thomas Greer

Company: Abracadabra Signs and Designs

Location: Ontario, Canada

Industry: Signmaking, Graphic design, Illustration

Product: CorelDRAW[®] Graphics Suite and Corel Painter

*“Using Corel’s products, we’ve been able to grow our business by more than 200 percent since implementing the technology a year ago.” – Steve Thomas Greer
Owner of Abracadabra Signs*

Abracadabra is Known for its Artistic Flair

Dubbed the “Cartoon Saloon”, Abracadabra Signs and Designs built its reputation designing unique and memorable cartoon characters as part of its signature eye-catching murals and signs. For more than 12 years, the company has specialized in hand-illustrated images that add a special appeal to its clients’ storefronts, restaurants, and businesses.

Steve Thomas Greer, owner of Abracadabra Signs, is an artist and cartoonist who has been hand-painting murals for more than 12 years. For most of the company’s history, Steve and the four other artists who work for Abracadabra did things the traditional sign-making way – with paint, brushes, and sometimes cut vinyl, and of course, loads of talent and imagination.

“Our jobs were all hand done. Many were completely hand-painted, while other times we would cut simple vinyl designs, hang them up, and work on top with paintbrushes and airbrushes to add the desired effects,” said Steve.

After many years of running a small, successful sign business, Steve wanted his company to grow. Clients were requesting more and more projects, but his hand-painted workflow was time consuming and Abracadabra simply couldn’t keep up with the demand. He knew that digital printing would enable the company to speed its processes and take on more jobs. But he also felt strongly that he couldn’t take the risk of changing from traditional to digital processes if it meant jeopardizing the trademark look of his company’s hand-crafted character art.

Then Steve was introduced to Corel[®] Painter™ and CorelDRAW[®] Graphics Suite. Things at Abracadabra were about to change.



Digital Printing Drives Growth at Abracadabra

The first time Steve saw Corel Painter, it became immediately clear that this software was the first step he needed to go digital. Corel Painter offers highly realistic brushes, papers, and effects that look like traditional media. For the first time, he and his artists had a tool that would enable them to maintain the look of their hand-crafted artwork in a digital workflow. “Without Corel, we’d still be in the dark ages of design.”



Using Corel Painter in conjunction with a 9x12 Wacom[®] Intuos[®]3 tablet, Abracadabra’s cartoonists are able to create their hand-crafted work in the look of virtually any art media that you’d find in an art supply store – ranging from markers to crayons, watercolor to acrylics – all without the high costs associated with keeping all of these supplies in stock. With Corel Painter, Abracadabra’s artists enjoy all of the benefits of working digitally, including the ability to work faster than ever before and the tremendous power of the ‘undo’ feature.

Once the artwork has been created in Corel Painter, the artist then brings the image into CorelDRAW Graphics Suite. Using Corel[®] PowerTRACE™, the new bitmap-to-vector conversion tool in CorelDRAW Graphics Suite, the Corel Painter images are turned into vector files which can be easily scaled and manipulated in CorelDRAW. Once the images are converted to vector, it’s easy to re-purpose artwork and quickly implement client changes without having to start again from scratch.



"With Corel, we're growing faster than we thought possible, all the while maintaining the same high-quality work that established us in the first place," said Steve.

The team completes the layout for their signs and murals in CorelDRAW Graphics Suite, and then prepares the files for output. Abracadabra has invested in two Roland SOLJET large-format printers that the staff keeps running 8 to 10 hours a day. "By sending our final vector designs from CorelDRAW Graphics Suite to our Roland printer, we're able to quickly output banners, murals, and other large format signage with ease," said Steve. "Even more impressive – by doing all of our digital printing in house, we've seen an immediate return on our investment by dramatically slashing the time it takes to complete each job and reducing our overall outsourcing costs. Client jobs that once took four days to complete are now delivered in six hours."

A New Digital Enterprise Emerges

Since leaving its paint brushes and cans behind and adopting Corel Painter and CorelDRAW Graphics Suite, Abracadabra has enjoyed the benefits of a digital workflow while maintaining the trademark, hand-crafted look that makes the company's art distinct. Corel software offers Abracadabra's artists ease of use, flexibility, and broad range of creative tools that meet the demands of even the most challenging jobs.

But Steve says the biggest advantage that Abracadabra has realized since going digital has been the speed at which the company is now able to deliver the final product to its customers. Amazingly, client jobs that once took 4 days to complete are now delivered in 6 hours.

One of Abracadabra's biggest clients is a restaurant chain that has been growing so quickly that the sign shop would never have been able to keep up using traditional methods. But now, Abracadabra has been able to quickly deck out all of the client's restaurants with murals and images featuring the unique characters that are the client's corporate standard. Thanks to



Corel Painter and CorelDRAW Graphics Suite, Abracadabra has been able to meet the restaurant chain's needs head-on, and dramatically grow its own business in the process.

"When you combine the time and money we save using Corel's products, we've been able to grow our business by more than 200 percent since implementing the technology a year ago," Greer states. "But in addition to our phenomenal growth, personally, I think the best part of the process has been getting home in the evenings in time to have dinner with my kids!"

To learn more about CorelDRAW Graphics Suite, visit www.corel.com/coreldraw

