



SOULO

newsletter

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This month's feature:
A Focus On Signs

BEST PRACTICES FOR SIGNS

By the SOULO Signs Team

SOULO's amazing signs team has tackled a wide diversity of interesting and challenging signs projects over the years. Because of our knowledge and experience our customers have been able to reliably depend on our design, custom production, and installation expertise, no matter the complexity of the project or site.

We sat down with a few team members to talk about what makes a sign project run smoothly. Our shared goal is that every project is completed on-time and on-budget and our customers are delighted with the results.

Here are a few "Best Practices" we follow to ensure success:

We thoroughly understand the customer's needs and physical location requirements. Every sign is custom-designed to the customer's requirements so we first ask a lot of questions:

- "Is the location already decided or would you like us to recommend the site based on our design and communication knowledge?"

Featured Articles

Best Practices For Signs • • • • • pg. 1

Catching Up With Bob On Signs • • • pg. 4

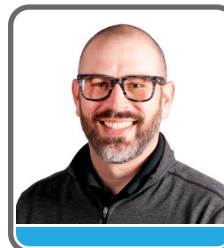
10 Tips For A Great Sign Project • • • pg. 8

Wanda Gets A New Sign! • • • • • pg. 8

- "What are the key communication goals: Navigation, Education, Inspiration?"
- "Do you need permits? We will pull the necessary permits for you in compliance with local regulations."
- "If illuminated, how close are the utilities located, and are local code permissions obtained?"
- "Who is your primary target audience?"
- "What is the key message and call-to-action?"
- "What is your budget?"
- "How long should the signs last?"



Our SOULO Sign Professionals



Thomas Polson
Account Manager



Taunya Tande
Customer Service Specialist



Theresa Backes
Project Manager

Not Pictured: *Paul Ott, Installer, Scott Moe, Sign Production Specialist.*

We design to reflect your company or brand's imagery, tone, and personality:

Your customers gain an instantaneous impression of your brand when they see your sign. That's why we pay significant attention to the key branding elements that have built your brand: Color palette, font, key messaging, key visuals. The sign structure or format will play a key role in how these elements are perceived, so we design with a 3-D mindset, with the goal of optimizing communication at different distances and sight-lines.

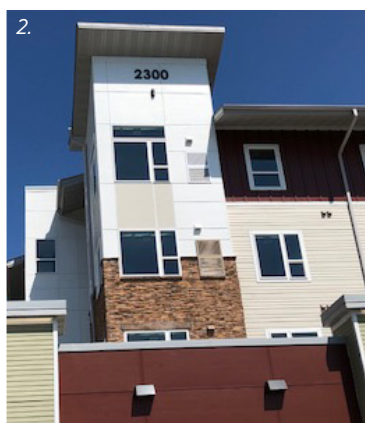
And if it's a sign that is attached to a building, we need to think through design compatibility in that context. We also often work on buildings or city areas that are designated "historical" which requires additional sensitivity.

We produce with mathematical precision for optimum quality and efficiency:

We understand the correct file setup for maximum efficiency and our QA team is vigilant about using the best high-resolution images for a crisp and compelling brand/message presentation. Our signs team is made up of graphic designers who have the eye of artists when it comes to color matching and fidelity to your brand visual assets. Our emphasis on lowest-possible waste is good for all.

PHOTO: Top left to lower right:

1. ADA way-finding signs inside buildings 2. Building address numbers 3. Entryway acrylic lettering and window vinyl 4. Monument sign 5. Front Desk acrylic lettering.



We are turnkey from design to installation:

Our installation staff excel at challenging sites and locations. We juggle due dates and delivery/install challenges to meet our customers' needs and on their timing. If it's an interior sign, our installers know if the surface is prepared correctly and ready for an install. Finally, we keep an eye on wear-and-tear for our sign installs to better recommend renewal and replacement. We also maintain inventory for many customers.

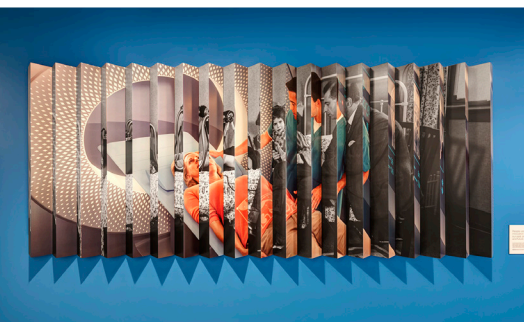
Our process emphasizes efficiency so we can offer the best possible value:

We know that signs often represent a significant investment in your marketing and we partner with you to drive the highest possible value from your money. Having a detailed process, staffed with experienced people, ensures the best possible value for you. And because we are an agile, vertically integrated communications company, the multi-functional team works together seamlessly to eliminate surprises and misunderstandings.

We are proud of our work and really proud of our talented team. Check out our signs capabilities and case histories on our website www.soulocom.com and give us a call if you'd like us to work on your next project.



*RUNWAY52 Building & Pylon Signs
St. Paul, MN*





Catching up with Bob

A Conversation About Signs & Large Format

By: SOULO Staff

Bob, a big part of SOULO's business is signs, from exterior monument signs and corporate headquarters signage to a wide range of interior signs including the all-important ADA way-finding signs. When did you first identify signs as a growth opportunity for the company?

In the last several years we realized that the experience and skill sets we brought to our core business of printing could be extended to large format, which is an umbrella term for items printed and manufactured on specialized equipment. It can include anything from a countertop sign, to a poster or vehicle wrap. At the same time many of our customers asked about our capabilities in signage. So we made the necessary and significant investment in the right equipment and training to be able to make any kind of sign that our customers wanted. And we acquired a large format company to be able to hit the ground running for our customers.

When one thinks about the wide diversity in signage, from relatively straight-forward "For Sale or Lease" real estate signs to attractive monuments meant to last for generations to Braille-enabled way-finding signs, where does one even begin?

Our customers often have an idea of their needs and expectations. We customize our work to every



Bob Molacek
Soulou Owner-Founder

customer so we begin with strategy and the principles of effective communication.

Our experienced large format team is well-versed in the engineering requirements of the site, but also focused on optimizing all communication elements to enhance a positive brand impression. We think of signs as often the first introduction a consumer or visitor has to a brand and it's a great opportunity to reinforce the brand's visual equities to make a great first impression.

What are some of the challenges in the large format business?

Of course, attention to detail is the cost-of-entry in the printing business but it's magnified dramatically in large format. Understanding the principles of visibility, notice-ability, readability and legibility is a critical discipline that we apply to every project. Really understanding the performance characteristics of different inks and substrates in different environments is key.

ADA way-finding signage presents its own challenges as one has to be very knowledgeable about the materials and the methods used to blend

those materials for the desired look and functionality. And we always try to bring an element of branding through logo use, shapes, colors and 3-D effects. Our ADA team is also deeply familiar with the local zoning rules and regulations so that all important Certificate of Occupancy can be quickly issued.

The large format signs business in the US is nearly \$9 billion in sales and is projected to grow 4% annually to over \$11 billion in 2025. Is large format driving the growth of the signs business?

It's the sheer diversity of applications to a wide range of business types that accounts for the strong growth. For example, we are a mobile society and vehicle wraps are great moving billboards for a business. In addition to permanent or semi-permanent signs, we see a lot of growth in promotional signs and window displays. Big retailers such as Walmart are heavy users of in-store and out of store displays, reflective of the growth in shopper marketing and the need to make one's store more of a brand experience.

Large format products, including signs are quite simply a very important part of the overall marketing mix for brands. Our signs business has grown dramatically over the years and we are pleased to be able to offer that service to our customers and share in their success.

Bob Molack



DESIGN & PLANNING



FABRICATION



INSTALL

More exciting work from our Sign Shop!

By the SOULO Team

When we consider the range of different purposes signs play in our daily lives, the variety of work it brings through our shop is endless and so are the capabilities SOULO can provide to our sign customers.

From ADA way-finding signs, real estate signs, store front signs, to retail brand experience, the SOULO team has the needs of our clients covered from start to finish. Consider for a moment a few of these recent projects. The store fronts for Mainstream Boutique and Wilson Law are a pair of distinctive back-lit signs that have recently been installed.

(continued on next page)

*WILSON LAW Exterior Signs
Minneapolis, MN*

*MAINSTREAM BOUTIQUE Exterior Sign
Berry Farms, TN*



And if you found yourself asking, what is brand experience? Look no further for an answer than some of the work we have done for Wings Financial Credit Union at their new and renovated branch locations in Maple Grove, Lakeville and Minneapolis. The assignment started with some traditional sign needs but quickly evolved into full branding packages that included custom illustration, murals, privacy vinyl on the offices and an assortment of signs inside each branch. The end result shows a very custom, cohesive and modern looking guest experience.

If you would like to learn more about our design and fabrication capabilities, give our team a shout. We love to be involved at the ground level of new projects!

WINGS FINANCIAL CREDIT UNION Brand Experience/Branded Interior Program

Maple Grove, MN

Photos L-R: 1. Video Teller Temporary Vinyl Ad Vignettes, 2. Custom Illustrated Office Canvas Art, 3. Poster Frames, 4. Distraction/Privacy Vinyl, 5. Custom Conference Room Mural, 6. Lower Exterior Window Modesty Vinyl, Not Shown: ADA Way-finding Signs, Entryway Vinyl, Outdoor ATM Wrap Art and Directional Signs.



Top 10 Tips for A Great Signs Project

A beautiful, attention-getting sign is often your customers first introduction to your brand. It's also a major investment for you. In our decades of experience we've found several actions that can make your project run smoothly.

There are three major phases to a great signs project and each has its own set of challenges:

1. Project Initiation & Information

2. Prepress

3. Installation

Here are some tips on how to make your sign project flow smoothly and give you the end result you seek:

Project Initiation & Information:

1. Give your agency clear direction:

- Longevity of the sign?
 - Describe the site location
 - Key objectives for the sign: branding, message awareness, navigation, education and/or inspiration?
2. Branding Considerations:
- Be clear about your branding requirements (fonts, colors, logos, icons)
 - Provide a Brand Standards
 - Provide examples: Other signs you've produced, and signs you like.
3. Exterior sign:
- Getting the proper permits: Is it a historical site? ADA compliant?
 - Will the sign need to be illuminated?
 - City code requirements
 - Will the sign require power?
4. Interior signs:
- What are the branding opportunities?
 - Is there a need for consistency to other signage within the building?
 - ADA requirements
 - Schedule install far enough after painting to allow for outgassing.

Pre-Press Process:

- 5. Are your files production ready?
- 6. Have you been clear about expectations
- 7. Optimize the materials usage
- 8. Color Matching: A good sign agency will understand how colors perform on different substrates and under different viewing conditions.

Installation:

- 9. Prep: Ensure the site is ready for install on the targeted date. Communicate hang-ups
- 10. Allow for weather delays in your schedule. This is truly outside of everyone's control!

SOULO has decades of experience in the design, creation, production, and installation of a wide range of signs. Our experienced team is ready to work on your sign project. Give us a call or email.

Wanda By Nicolas Gluesenkamp

Reach out to us at info@soulocom.com
or call us at 612.334.5679

