



Serra Design Finds a Sure Bet at Casino

Gerber Plotter Keeps Canadian Sign Maker "In the Money"

Product Spotlight:

GERBER EDGE®
HS15plus™

**Serra Design
Orillia, Ontario, Canada**

Serra Design, in Orillia, Ontario, Canada, put its money on the Gerber HS15plus™ Sprocket-Feed Plotter and won big. Orillia, located one hour north of Toronto, is known as "Ontario's cottage country". With its many small lakes and wide open country, it is a year-round draw for tourists. Orillia is also home to Casino Rama, the first Indian reservation casino in Canada.



These four-color process signs were used on change carts in Casino Rama, Canada's first Indian reservation casino. Each sign has three panels which were precision cut using the Gerber HS15plus Sprocket-Feed Plotter.

The casino has a steady need for interior signage, ordering seven-to-ten new signs every week. Ten jobs a week was about as much as this two-man commercial graphics supplier could handle prior to purchasing the new plotter from Gerber Scientific Products. Now they average 20 to 25 jobs per week with an impressive \$175,000 Canadian in annual sales. Serra Design owner/designer Grant Serra says, "The casino is making us run the machine day and night! It's paid for itself three or four times already." The signs are located throughout the casino, in T-stand frames and on change carts, to inform visitors about events, promotions, or directions.

Serra uses the compact, tabletop plotter to cut the panels which comprise these four-color process signs. The designs are full of gradients and blends which demand accurate panel cutting so that the panels will line up for a seamless appearance, even when the signs are being read at close range. The plotter's pounce wheel simplifies large-scale alignment.

Speed and Ease Mean Less Stress

A good plotter offers speed as well as accuracy, and according to Serra, the HS15plus™ has speed to spare. "We're doing twice as much as we used to. It's 110% improvement. Now we spend more time on the creativity rather than the actual output and application, which only take up a quarter of our time. Creativity is what I want to focus my business around because anybody can punch out letters; it's a matter of how the overall sign looks."

Serra Design used to use a friction-fed plotter, but they haven't as much as turned it on since installing their Gerber plotter, which is designed for unattended operation. "I don't have to wait for the plotter to cut anymore, and the stress level is a lot less. You don't have to worry about the plotter jamming when it's cutting something really long. When something was 20 feet long, we used to have to panel it ten feet long because we could never trust that the plotter would

stay on track. When it flowed through the machine, it would always shift. And now we can cut 100 feet of decals; I can walk away from the machine and go into the shop and not worry about it jamming or anything," says Serra. "Getting rid of that aggravation goes toward benefiting your creativity because the less stress you're under, the more creative you can be."

At 20 inches per second, the new plotter is four times as fast as their old one. Jobs that used to take a half hour now take only ten minutes to complete, leaving more time for design work. Serra says, "While we're designing on the computer, we know the equipment is going to do the work for us. I mean as far as output time, we don't have to worry about that because we know it's going to be minimal. It gave us the ability to do stuff the same day that would normally take a day or two."

Getting More Competitive

Serra describes his first contact with Gerber. "I was impressed with the Gerber equipment I saw demonstrated at a Toronto trade show a few years ago. I also had a chance to talk to people from other sign shops about their own Gerber equipment, and that was the deciding factor for me. I liked the fact that I could get everything from Gerber for design, printing, and final output. To me, that meant that it would be easier to get my service needs met and keep track of accounts."

Having Gerber equipment has made Serra Design very competitive. They use the GERBER EDGE® digital color printing system and Gerber software along with the plotter. In addition to their work for the casino, they supply a major police headquarters. Serra says, "We wouldn't have been able to land two such big contracts without the new machinery. The work that we do for other sign shops all over Ontario and in the U.S. provides a steady source of profits, too."

He says, "I've had zero problems with the plotter. It's been running like a dream. That's another reason I bought Gerber equipment, because I knew it was reliable and durable. It's a lot heavier than most equipment which obviously says there's got to be a lot more to it." If there were to be a problem, his distributor provides guaranteed service which includes a loaner delivered the same day to keep him up and running.

Serra hasn't had much need for technical support, but whenever a question did come up, the support was prompt and helpful. "I've never been left with an unanswered question. They've always stayed on the phone with me until the problem was figured out. I've always been greeted well, dealt with well, and there's always been a return phone call at a later date to make sure I wasn't having any problems anymore with the specific inquiry that I had," he says.

Return on Investment

Serra says, "We got our return on investment within six months! We had jobs lined up for the new equipment before we even got it. Then, on the day it was delivered, we started running stuff. So the day it came in the door, we were already making money with it."

He continues, "If somebody comes in during the morning with artwork and wants the final product the same day, we can do it. That's happened on numerous occasions, and for that we get a premium because we can deliver a lot faster. There's no one else really that can compete with us. The HS15plusT plotter has high-end features which help make it faster and easier. Weeding is easier because of the swivel blade; it cuts all the corners right through so decals

don't accidentally get pulled up."

So has there been any buyer's remorse at all? Not in this sign shop. According to Serra, "The equipment's been great! I wouldn't have bought anything else. I still wouldn't buy anything else. I always trust anything that Gerber comes out with. I never have to question it."

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