



Unlimited Signs Finds Unlimited Uses for Plotter

Product Spotlight:
Gerber product name(s)
Unlimited Signs
Stratford, CT

If you peeked inside the 750-square foot barn situated in the southern Connecticut town of Stratford, you probably wouldn't expect the business located therein to be christened "Unlimited Signs". Yet despite the apparently limited space, Paula Murphy's shop easily lives up to its name. Housed within this modest workspace is technology that has paid off big for well over a decade – equipment from Gerber Scientific Products.



Not long after establishing Unlimited Signs in 1984, Murphy bought a Gerber Signmaker® IVB console-based automated lettering system in order to stay competitive with other sign shops.

"I wasn't an extremely proficient hand letterer at the time," she confessed.

"I would have buried myself if I didn't automate. Everyone had plotters. It's even worse now; the competition is brutal! When I first started this company, there must have been eight sign companies listed in the phone book, and mine was the only one run by a woman. Now, there are about two pages of listings."

Eventually, her business outgrew the Signmaker IVB.

Murphy stated, "I only traded in the Signmaker to finance a Gerber GS15™ 15-inch sprocket plotter. I've never seen such reliable equipment. We've had the new plotter for about three years, and there haven't been any problems at all. I was going to keep both machines, but the new plotter is faster so I didn't need the old one."

The open architecture of the GS15plus™ allowed her to continue using the design software she was accustomed to, CorelDRAW®. She found that the plotter cut cleanly and was easy-to-use and compact.

Most of all, it was fast enough for her to provide service to some customers while they waited. For example, she could generate vinyl lettering for the back of a customer's boat in only fifteen minutes.

As with any sign shop, some jobs require quantity as well as quality. The City of Bridgeport (Conn.) uses an intricate logo of a tree with stars for leaves. Murphy cuts the logos which are



then applied to every vehicle in the Department of Public Works including trucks, cars, garbage or recycling trucks, and street sweepers.

"The GS15 cuts vinyl so reliably that I can start the job late in the day and let it run while I do other things, or even all night. Then I'll weed and tape it all the next morning and call it a day," she said.

Murphy estimated that she has worked with the City of Bridgeport for at least three years. "Steady repeat business is uncommon in sign making, so you're always happy to have those kinds of accounts."

Yet she also makes a consistent effort to find time to do creative projects that are not business-related, and some of her ideas have helped her community. She has used cut vinyl scraps to make collages that look almost like impressionist paintings by Monet.



Murphy also donates her scrap vinyl and empty cardboard rolls to local public school art departments. These materials are enthusiastically received by students and teachers alike, in part because they don't make a mess, and because they're safe. The children can stick vinyl pieces on magnetic material and then put their magnet right on Mom's refrigerator.

"I use Gerber vinyls and believe them to be the best vinyls on the market," Murphy asserted.

"Vinyl is a phenomenal material – the best thing ever created, if you ask me. It even helps children with special needs to do crafts. I work a lot with kids, and it reduces their frustration level because they don't have to maneuver a brush."

Although Murphy credits most of her \$120,000 in annual sales to vinyl signs, she loves creating dimensional signs.

In addition to cutting vinyl, she uses her GS15 to cut rubber stencils for sandblasting. She recently completed a sandblasted, double face, hanging sign for the outside of an antiques store on the main street of picturesque Clinton, Conn. The ornate, antiques design employed gold leaf on signfoam and colors to match the building.



Murphy was pleased with the result and enjoyed working on the project. She recounted the strong reaction from her customer.

"She couldn't have loved it more. She wrote me a letter, called, and invited me to her open house. She was happy, and that's really my only goal."

The client even asked Unlimited Signs to design ads for their store, proving once again that the possibilities of a Gerber plotter are unlimited.

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