



A San Antonio Sign Shop Opens Its Doors with Just One Great Flatbed Printer—the Gerber Solara ion™

Chris Jackson of Cold Fire Signs in San Antonio, Texas is a pioneer who is combining new UV flatbed technology with his extensive experience in the sign making industry to revolutionize the sign shop concept. Jackson started working at a shop when he was fifteen years old and from then on he's been in the sign industry. One of the drawbacks to making the sign business profitable became evident from Jackson's first days on the job, "I took out all the trash from a young age and we were filling up two dumpsters a week with scrap vinyl. I thought, 'we have to do something different—there must be a better way,' but there wasn't. That always stuck in my mind and twenty years later when the Gerber Solara ion™ flatbed printer came out and provided the ability to print directly on the substrate, I realized this was the technology that would help us clean up this business."

The breakthrough technology of the Gerber Solara ion solved the problem of excess waste with a combination of vibrant, flexible GerberCAT™ inks and the patent-pending Cold Fire Cure™ process. Cold Fire Cure uses long-lasting UV lamps that cure the inks at nearly room temperature, allowing the Gerber Solara ion to print on substrates that are heat sensitive, like corrugated plastic and paper-based substrates. It works perfectly with the GerberCAT inks to provide flexible, abrasion-resistant ink that lasts.



Jackson reveals, "I was at a point when I was ready to go out on my own, and when I saw the Gerber Solara ion debuted at SGIA in 2007 I thought, 'This is it'. Other similar UV flatbed printers either had a good price point and the technology wasn't good enough or they had decent technology and the price was out of reach. The Solara ion fit all my needs because of its unique characteristics. It was a true flatbed that employed a gantry that moved over the substrate instead of pulling the substrate through, it had a vacuum table to hold the substrate in place and the technology of the inks was just what I was looking for. The Cold Fire Cure technology intrigued me so much; I named my company after it."

Jackson decided the breakthrough technology of the Solara ion was the perfect launch pad for starting his own business. Jackson says, "As a startup, I didn't have a lot of capital for

investments, so the reasonable price of the Solara ion was perfect. A startup has minimal capital for staff, and the Solara ion allowed me to eliminate a lot of material costs and labor. I was able to run my business with just the Solara ion for six months, and after six months we broke even. Now we are making a profit, even in this slow economy.”

The Solara ion has lived up to Jackson’s expectation. He explains, “Because of the versatility of the Solara ion’s technology, we do a wide variety of unique projects.

Yesterday we did a job on brushed silver aluminum composite panels. It’s a company’s history printed on the panels so they can display them on an interior wall of their business. The objective was to create a museum-like look, but a look outside of the traditional acrylic of a museum. Using the metal as a substrate allowed us to create a great industrial look. The Solara ion also prints great on canvas. Solvent prints on canvas look washed out because the canvas absorbs the solvent ink, and the same thing happens with water-based ink. Our canvas printed with the ion looked better because the GerberCAT ink sits on the surface of the canvas and looks more vibrant.”



The Gerber Solara ion was the flatbed printer that allowed Jackson to create the business niche he always hoped for. Jackson notes, “We like to position ourselves to do unusual jobs, and there



is such a large variety of things the ion allows us to produce. Customers approach us and ask, ‘Can you do this unusual job?’ and we say, ‘We’ve never done it before, but why not try it?’ This gives us a niche no one else is filling.

Jackson’s experience with the Gerber Solara ion demonstrates its ability to

allow businesses to complete jobs no other business can. Expanding your share of the sign market with a reasonable investment and very little labor is within reach, no matter your business size. To learn more about the Gerber Solara ion’s features or to see a demonstration, contact your local distributor by visiting Gerber Scientific Products website at www.gspinc.com/ion .