

White Paper: Print Directly to Magnet!

By Jim Cirigliano, Magnum Magnetics®

Printed magnets are a great specialty offering for print shops large and small, providing a source of profit and repeat business. Magnetic promotional items such as calendars and business cards often enjoy a long life on customers' refrigerators, and magnetic signage has taken off in recent years as a cost-effective way to make easily interchangeable signs for vehicles, in-store displays, and wide-format graphics.

As we talk to printers using flexible magnetic media to create printed magnets, we continue to hear the same story over and over again: Printers are still printing to vinyl and then overlaminating on top of magnetic media.

Our response when we hear this leaves many printers surprised: **Printing to vinyl and overlaminating on top of magnetic sheeting is a completely unnecessary step!**

Many printers don't realize that our "bread-and-butter" product, DigiMag® VINYL, is flexible magnetic sheeting that *includes* a white, direct-printable vinyl laminate. DigiMag VINYL can be safely fed through wide-format solvent, eco-solvent, UV, and latex inkjet printers much like any other semi-rigid substrate, allowing you to print directly to magnet in a single pass.

We know there are many printers who have done magnets the old-fashioned way for years. Although we certainly appreciate the adage "If it ain't broke, don't fix it", in this case there are some important reasons why printing directly to magnet is definitely the way to go. What's more, it's an easy transition to make that will save you time and money right away, without adding equipment or processes.

Advantages of Printing Directly to Magnet

#1: Cost savings

This is a big one. That vinyl you're buying to print on? Forget it. There's major cost savings in letting the magnet manufacturer apply printable vinyl to the magnetic sheeting at the factory, allowing you to simply print directly to the completed media.

Removing a step from your production process also reduces your labor costs. It may not seem like much, but when your employees have to spend their time laminating vinyl down to a media, there is a cost to you. Not only that, but the additional handling increases opportunities for a costly error to occur. If the lamination goes wrong, you may end up having to reprint your vinyl and doing it all over again—at additional cost to you that you can't very well bill to your customer.

Why not simply avoid all of that by printing directly to magnetic media with the laminate already in place?

#2: Fewer lamination problems

Sometimes strange things happen when you laminate vinyl over vinyl, especially when one or both of those vinyls is coated. Most often the issue is the vinyls don't bond well to each other, resulting in the top layer de-laminating post-production. At best this will cause the edges to fray and make your piece look bad; at worst the whole printed surface will peel off. Printing directly to magnet constructed at the factory with a single layer of means-tested vinyl affixed using a permanent adhesive designed for this application allows you to avoid this risk.

An additional, unnecessary layer of vinyl also creates an opportunity for the finished piece to curl. Because the magnetic sheet itself and any laminates applied to it may absorb heat or moisture differently, if one layer expands or contracts it can cause the finished product to curl. Adding an extra layer of your own vinyl that wasn't applied by the magnet manufacturer is begging for trouble. It creates an extra opportunity for a "mismatch" that will cause the finished product to curl, especially as it's exposed to the elements. Using vinyl-laminated magnet produced by the magnet manufacturer as a ready-to-print product gives you the benefit of materials that have been quality tested to withstand everyday conditions with less risk of curling.

#3: Better vehicle signs

Vehicle signs are one of the hottest trends in printed magnets, but they're also the application that demands the utmost performance from the finished product. Most fridge magnets, or even huge magnetic in-store display graphics, aren't subject to the punishment that magnet signs take slapped to the side of a vehicle—temperature changes, rain or snow, dirt and road salt, and rushing winds hitting them at highway speeds. Put plainly, your vehicle signs have to hold tight, or they'll disappear.

Part of the solution is using quality magnetic media to begin with, and ensuring you've chosen material that's outdoor rated and tested to perform well at highway speeds under the conditions mentioned above.

Assuming you've chosen the right media, printing directly to the magnet instead of overlaminating another layer of vinyl is especially critical for vehicle signs. As described above, heat and the elements will pull and shrink an extra layer of vinyl if you apply one, pulling the edges of the magnet up slightly. On a fridge this might not be a big deal, but on a vehicle, even a slight curl gives dirt, moisture, and rushing wind a place to get underneath the magnet, lifting the magnet slightly off of the vehicle's metal surface. As you might expect, once this happens, the force of the wind is sometimes enough to pull the magnet off of the vehicle. For this reason, we strongly recommend printing directly to magnet for vehicle signs, in order to ensure the vinyl is married to the magnet properly to prevent curling, which helps keeps your vehicle signs where they belong—on the customer's vehicle!

It's Easy to Print Magnets!

Given all the advantages listed above, it's a wonder more printers aren't printing directly to magnets, especially when you consider how easy it really is. In fact, there's never been a better time to print

magnets thanks to the growing variety of options and continued improvements in magnetic media technology and innovative printable surfaces.

Anymore many distributors carry an off-the-shelf solution that will work great with most solvent, eco-solvent, UV and latex inkjet printers, including narrow-web and wide-web material. There are also direct-printable options for other press types, including offset presses, screen printers, and sheet-fed digital printers.

If you're ready to give printing magnets a try, we'll be more than happy to help. Please call 1-800-258-0991 to speak to one of our account managers today, or visit www.magnummagnetics.com for more information and resources to help get you started.

Jim Cirigliano is marketing manager for Magnum Magnetics®, North America's largest manufacturer of high-quality flexible magnet products. Jim has been involved with marketing, publishing, and corporate branding in various industries since 2006.

This white paper is presented by Magnum Magnetics. It's Easy to Print Magnets!®