

Step-by-step: Creating special effects for digital printing

by Dan Antonelli

Today's digital printers, with the increased outdoor lifespan of their output, are great tools that sign makers can utilize to showcase some terrific special effects. With four color sign printing, you aren't limited to the solid colors of your vinyl supply—you have the free-

dom to add as many colors to your designs as needed.

The digital printer is certainly a good tool to reproduce photography, but don't overlook its effectiveness in producing interesting lettering effects. And when you add these special effects, it's easier

to upsell your work and get some extra money for it.

With printers such as the Gerber Edge and Roland ColorCMM, it's easy to add effects such as chrome lettering, beveled edges, and prismatic effects. Although I was never a great airbrush artist, the computer and digital printer allow me the freedom to utilize airbrush techniques.

For this step-by-step, I worked in Freehand 8.0 on Macintosh. The features in this software mirror software packages such as CorelDraw, Adobe Illustrator, and much of the popular sign-making software.

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His book, Logo Design for Small Business, is available from SignCraft. To order, use the order form bound into this issue, or send \$25 plus \$6 shipping and handling to SignCraft, PO Box 60031, Ft. Myers, FL 33906.



Imagine how long it would take to do this design in paint! The gold lettering effects on "Happy Holidays" takes about three minutes in an illustration program.



It's very easy to create powerful graphics like this with digital printers. It saves production time, and the high selling price should make it a good profit center.

There's more on www.signcraft.com

Click on Features to read Dan's article, Step-by-step: Creating Prismatic Vinyl Lettering from the July/August 1998 issue of SignCraft.

This is the design we'll create in our step-by-step. Note the chrome effect, and the white inlay into the lettering, that helps create a highlight.



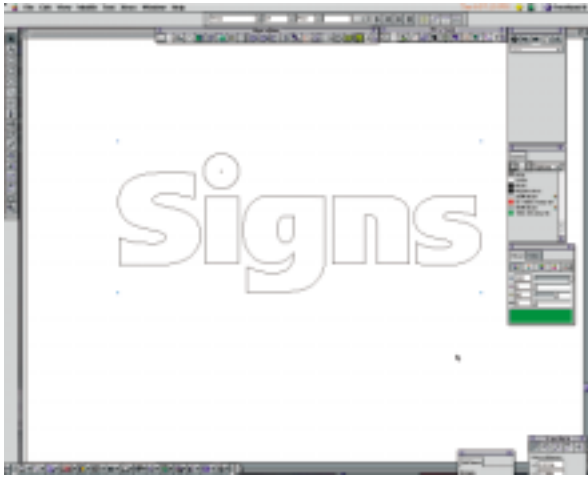


Figure 1. First, enter your text. I started with Fruitger Ultra Black, and altered the fonts to create these final letters. Make two additional copies: one copy will be used later, and the second copy will be used as an outline.

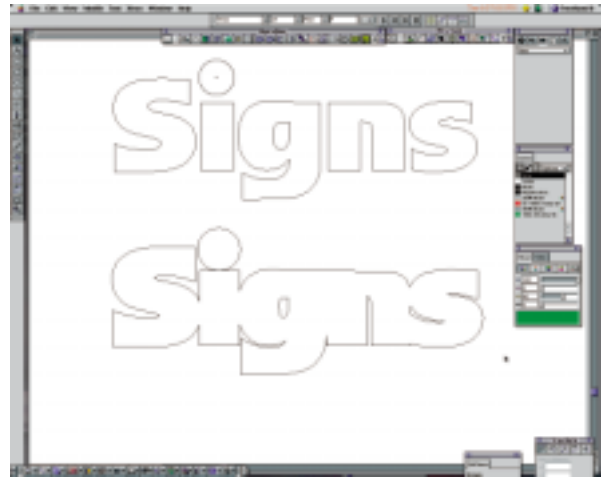


Figure 2. Using one of the duplicate "Signs", expand the original outline to create a second, larger outline that will be colored black. (I later expanded the outline even further when I placed the two layers over each other.)



Figure 3. Create a color that is 100% cyan, 0% magenta, 60% yellow, 0% black, and apply that color to a gradient fill—teal to white.



Figure 4. Now, using your free-form or freehand drawing tool, draw a squiggly line through the middle of the letters. This will serve as your horizon line.



Here's a closeup of the horizon line path fill.

Figure 5. To create the horizon line, apply a multi-gradient fill that starts with black, then goes to teal, then to white. Keep the path selected, and using your cut and paste tools, cut it.



Figure 6. Next, select the grouping of letters and select "Paste Inside." This will put our horizon line into the centers of the letters.

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Figure 7. Now grab your black outline layer, and place it centered under your lettering. I decided to expand the black outline after I placed it under the lettering. Use your alignment tools, and center vertically and horizontally for exact placement.

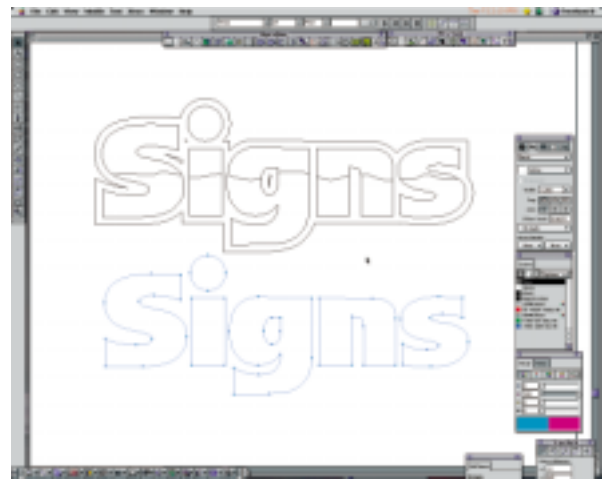


Figure 8. I switched to the keyline mode to see what I was doing. Find that extra copy of the original lettering, select it, and apply a "None" fill to it. Then make the outlines of the letter a 1.285 thick white rule. Switch back to "Preview" mode and keep these letters selected....

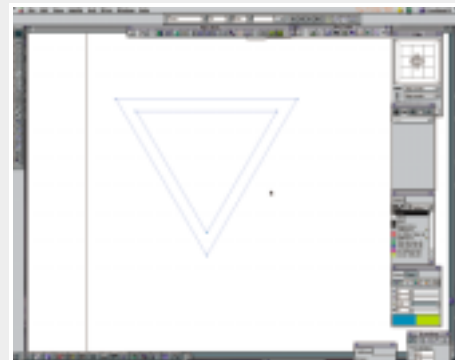


Figure 9. ...and move it on top of the other lettering, down and to the right of the red outline. Then, using your cut and paste tools, cut it.



Figure 10. Now select the original lettering and select "Paste Inside." Voila! You're done! You can replace the teal fills with any other color to create other metallized effects in gold, copper, or whatever. □

Create beveled panels with this easy trick



Create two paths, and fill with gradient blends going in opposite directions. Here I used 100% cyan, blended to 100% black.



Presto! A raised triangle! This effect works with circles, ovals, boxes, etc. Experiment with all sorts of color combinations! □