

WrapQuest'08 Recap

WrapQuest'08 was held in Atlanta in October, during SGIA'08. The event was put on by the PDAA, Inc., an association of professional graphic and wrap installers.

The PDAA worked with five vinyl manufacturers and SGIA to provide a unique educational experience. Each film manufacturer provided finished graphics for a complete Ford Mustang featuring their products as well as demonstration and tryout graphics for participant installation. Forty-two PDAA Members came at their own expense and volunteered their time. They demonstrated vehicle



wrap techniques and shared tips and tricks with WrapQuest participants, providing hands-on instruction and answering questions. There were five demonstration / hands-on slots each day, lasting one hour and fifteen minutes each with an average crowd of sixty people. Participants found the hands-on portion most valuable. Installing different vinyls on the vehicles allowed them to experience the similarities and the differences between the various products. Many were new to vehicle wraps. The time spent with seasoned veterans showing them how to apply the vinyl over difficult vehicle contours was their favorite part of WrapQuest. Specifically, they learned techniques for going over door handles, working the vinyl over complex curves, and how to use heat properly to aid in the process.

Three different seminars were also put on as part of the WrapQuest experience: *Managing Projects and Working with Graphic Installers*, *Designing Vehicle Wraps that Work!* and *New Trends in Vinyl Graphic Applications*. Attendance varied between fifty to ninety at the classes.

The *Managing Projects and Working with Graphic Installers* class focused on the keys to successful completion of graphic projects involving multiple locations and installers. Crucial aspects discussed included record keeping and job tracking, proper material and installer selection, placement schematics and tips on how to package and prepare graphic kits for shipment. The instructor, Kim Magraw is currently the national sales manager of Supergraphics, a Seattle based graphics firm. Kim has thirty years experience in all facets of the industry including installation, sales, production, and project management.

Designing Vehicle Wraps that Work! Was taught by Rob Ivers, another thirty year veteran. The main emphasis was how to create accurate design templates to ensure the finished wrap lived up to expectations - the graphics fitting as they were intended. The challenge is designing and producing graphics in 2D - to fit a 3D vehicle. Ivers showed how to properly photograph the vehicle to avoid or reduce distortion and key measurements that are vital. And finally how to combine and compare that information with existing templates. Throw in a little common sense and the result is a customized vehicle template - one that gives you the best chance for success.

New Trends in Vinyl Graphic Applications was a panel discussion and open forum moderated by Kim Magraw with panelists Greg Ford and Nathan Franzblau (both from PDAA), Jeff Burton (SGIA), and Mike Wozny (efi Vutek). The purpose was to bring everyone up to speed on new developments in our industry. Topics explored were Installation Techniques and Tools, Printer and Ink Technologies, new Applications for graphics, and Market Trends. After a brief review of the history and evolution of vinyl graphics, the panelists shared the latest developments in their particular expertise. Questions were taken from the audience and enthusiastic discussions ensued.

The most common questions from attendees centered on which equipment to purchase and which vinyl products to use. And the answer - you have to decide that for yourself - but you came to the right place. SGIA combined with WrapQuest provided the opportunity to see and experience it all in one place.

The most common issue brought up was pricing. Every aspect of our industry is rapidly expanding. New printers and inks and new applications (vehicle wraps, building wraps, concrete and brick applications, even graphics that light up electronically) open new doors. We see a greater demand among advertisers, all hungry for new ways to get noticed. But we are also seeing hundreds, no thousands of newly formed graphic companies. And with those new companies comes a mixture of pricing, some quite low. Not having years of experience to base their pricing on - and hungry for a piece of the pie, some tend to price aggressively. The result is a market with prices all over the board - some high some low. We have seen vehicle wrap pricing vary from \$999 to \$4,995 - for the same vehicle and graphics. This makes questions about pricing difficult to answer. Best advice is to factor in ALL expenses including direct costs, overhead, time, and TAXES. Also consider both real and perceived value to the customer. Then and only then, will you be able to arrive at pricing that is fair to both you and your clients.

And last, but not least, several of the PDAA demonstrators competed in the WrapQuest Speed Championships. Two man teams installed one large graphic to wrap the entire side of A Ford Edge. They were timed to see which teams were fastest, but then the judges critiqued their quality as well. The Speed

Championships, believe it or not, were the most well attended of all the WrapQuest events. Well over a hundred people attended each round. The winners were Chad Martin and Shannon Sehlke of AB Installations in Baltimore, ND. Second place went to yours truly and Greg Ford of Decal Applicators in San Francisco, CA.

Overall it was an awesome event. All reports are that everyone had a good time and learned a lot. There was a great sense of camaraderie and brotherhood between all of the graphic installers involved. Regardless of their level of expertise, their age, or where they were from - for four days we all interacted with each other in a positive way - sharing and caring - and doing what we love most, installing graphics.

This was the second annual WrapQuest. In 2007, it was held in Pompano Beach, FL, with just over one hundred attending. This year, in addition to PDAA staff, over 300 people came and enjoyed WrapQuest events.

In 2009, the event will be held at SGIA in New Orleans, that much is for sure. Planning is underway to develop a format that will be primarily market focused and combines the best of past events with some fresh new twists to keep it interesting. If the past two are any indication, you may want to mark your calendar now - New Orleans, October 7-9, 2009.

Rob Ivers