



## Wide Format Digital Printing Grows a Successful Sign Shop

**Product Spotlight:**  
Gerber SOLARA™ UV2

**Sign-A-Rama®**  
**Bloomington, IL**

Do you need a name tag, vehicle graphics, political yard signs, or large format prints? Sign-A-Rama can handle graphics of all kinds. Since 1999 Barb and John Mincy have owned and operated a successful Bloomington, IL Sign-A-Rama franchise. Sign-A-Rama is a full-service provider which offers cut vinyl, full-color printed graphics, vehicle graphics, banners, three-dimensional routed signs and lighted signage. Most signage is produced in the Mincy's four-person shop, but until very recently wide format digital graphics, banners and high-volume signs were outsourced.



In the summer of 2006 the Mincys began investigating large format digital printers. "Adding a flatbed ink jet printer to our business was a strategic decision," says owner John Mincy. "We decided to add capacity to our shop by bringing leading edge technology in-house and grow into it over time. The funny thing is, after just two months we feel we already have grown into it."

John and Barb Mincy began their analysis of wide format digital printers at the Sign-A-Rama meeting in August of 2006. After researching the Mimaki®, Roland®, MacDermid ColorSpan® and Gerber Solara™ UV2, they chose the Gerber Solara. "Its combination of cost, user-friendly operation, UV inks, and roll and flatbed capabilities won us over," said Barb Mincy. "The Gerber Solara UV2 could print on up to 1/2" (13 mm) thick material at an affordable price point. Other printers with the same thickness capability were more expensive."

The Solara UV2 is also touted in the sign making industry as extremely easy to use. "Now that we have the Solara in-house, I can say that the most important feature is its user-friendly operation," comments Barb Mincy. "After just two months, three of us in the shop are very confident in running the printer. It replaces a person in the shop who would normally be producing cut vinyl jobs - plotting, weeding, masking, and applying the cut vinyl. Now we just print directly onto the sign material at about one quarter the cost of a typical vinyl sign."

Material setup takes less than a minute on the Gerber Solara, even when switching from 1/2" thick stock to banner material, and the Gerber Solara UV2's hands-free operation permits the Mincys to do other things. "I know they say you cannot truly multitask, but with the Gerber Solara, multitasking is a reality," observes John. "I load the sign material, send the job to the Solara, and go do something else. This way I can actually work on two jobs at one time."

The additional productivity is not even considered in the 70% gross profitability of Gerber Solara UV2 output. "The man-hours needed to produce a sign are less so we can charge the same amount, but our bottom line is better," adds Mincy. These lower production costs and the reduction of outsourced jobs have allowed Sign-A-Rama to compete better in the Bloomington, IL marketplace. "We have been able to pass those savings onto our customers which in turn has resulted in increased business for us," says Barb Mincy.

The Gerber Solara UV2 has allowed the Sign-A-Rama to bring in-house about 80% of what they used to outsource including wide format digital prints, banners, and Coroplast™ signage such as double-sided yard signs. "We now have complete control over quality, timing, material, and cost," John explains. "And we have eliminated product damage due to shipping. In the past we may have been forced to accept less than ideal goods to meet a customer deadline. Now we treat our customers better with higher quality, shorter turnaround times, and lower prices."

"We also take advantage of Gerber Solara UV2's two- or three-pass feature which keeps the digital printing costs down while generating product of very good quality," adds John. "Of course, we can print in six-pass mode if required for artist-quality prints. And Solara's addition of green and violet ink to the four-color process really makes the colors vibrant."

"We have had the Gerber Solara UV2 for just a few months, but it is already profitable," says John Mincy. "It has allowed us to grow our business by producing higher quality output in a shorter time. And with the Gerber Solara UV2 currently operating about 50% of the time, we have plenty of capacity for additional business."

For more information on the capabilities and features of the Gerber Solara UV2, call Gerber Scientific Products at 800-222-7446 or visit [www.gspinc.com](http://www.gspinc.com). Contact your Gerber distributor to see a demonstration of the Gerber Solara UV2 in action.

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