

CUSTOM-PRINTED
GRAPHIC SOLUTIONS
for *America's*
HARDEST WORKING COMPANIES



VISUAL
MARKING
SYSTEMS



Since 1962, Visual Marking Systems, Inc. has been a trusted leader in custom graphics, branding solutions, and industrial markings. VMS specializes in producing high-quality custom product identification for Original Equipment Manufacturers, Vehicle Graphics for corporate fleets and commercial vehicles, and Corporate Identity & Branding solutions and Decorated Apparel for businesses looking to promote brand recognition and enhance team visibility. As an ISO 9001-2015 certified company, VMS integrates advanced technology with expert craftsmanship to ensure the highest quality in every product. From concept to completion, VMS is committed to delivering results to make products that outlast, outshine, and outperform the competition.

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Dolf Kahle describes his experience as “the most incredible opportunity” when he and his father purchased a small screen-printing company with just one printing press. Since then, he has grown the business to include twenty printing presses and expanded its capabilities beyond screen printing. Visual Marking Systems (VMS) has evolved into a custom-printed graphics provider, offering high-quality product identification, overlays, and decals for industrial equipment manufacturers. VMS also leads in the design, print, installation, and removal of vehicle graphics, as well as window, wall, and floor graphics. Additionally, the company offers decorated apparel and promotional products, enhancing the branding of its customers’ products, vehicles, people, and buildings.

Dolf has had incredible success since becoming

CEO of the company in 2001 and credits those who have helped him along the way; including a highly experienced senior management team that is constantly working to improve efficiencies within the company.

The company’s annual strategic planning efforts have resulted in increased customer numbers, satisfied customers, and strategic partnerships with suppliers.

VMS now has capacity for screen, digital, narrow web, and wide-format printing, and operates a 50,000 sq. ft. production facility just outside of Cleveland, in Twinsburg, Ohio. To better serve its growing vehicle graphics division, VMS added an 8,000 sq. ft. vehicle wrap installation and removal facility in 2013. An additional 12,000 sq. ft. facility was added in 2018 to house the company’s apparel decorating division.

VMS serves four primary markets: it creates labels, decals, and overlays for original equipment manufacturers (OEMs), vehicle graphics for company fleets, branded apparel and promotional products, and corporate ID & branding such as signs, banners, and window and wall graphics for the retail, sports, and entertainment industries.

“The key to our success is that our products help improve our customers’ branding.”

“The key to our success is that our products help improve our customers’ branding,” explains Dolf. “We are in business to help companies gain a significant edge with innovative markings

and we consider excellent designs as those that visually convey quality, value, function, and beauty.”

VMS has earned the loyalty of its customers by delivering superior, quality products on time and on budget. The knowledgeable



A RICH



Eric Kahle (3rd Generation) and Dolf Kahle (2nd Generation)

Wrapped vehicles lined up inside the VMS installation facility

staff prides themselves in making parts that their customers can proudly display on their products for years to come. VMS manufactures ninety-eight percent of what it sells and works with quality suppliers to offer exceptional warranty programs, proving how firmly the company stands behind its products.

“When a customer comes to us, we should be able to take care of all their labeling and identification needs and offer ideas to improve their branding with cost-effective turnkey solutions,” added Dolf.

VMS has been able to continue growing at a steady pace since its inception by keeping current with evolving technology, therefore earning its reputation as a technological leader in the graphic imaging industry. The company’s leaders have been adamant about staying up to date on recent trends and innovative technologies that are available for printing and finishing. Finishing includes die cutting, laminating, adhesive transfer, digital cutting and routing,

“VMS strives to create a positive, professional atmosphere that fuels motivation and integrity.”

and inspection, among other processes. VMS is always looking for new ways to invest in technology to stay at the forefront of the industry, although it is not as interested in the riskier, bleeding-edge technology field.

The price of technology continues to increase as the field develops, which can be challenging for most print companies to keep up with. Dolf describes the advantage of continually investing in technology. “For example, in the great recession of 2008, we didn’t lose customers—we lost revenue because they weren’t buying—but we didn’t lose customers. We were able to maintain their pricing at lower quantities and come up with creative solutions because we had invested heavily in the digital format, which was a lower-cost alternative to traditional printing methods at that time.”

Part of the company’s mission statement states its belief in promoting a “fun and satisfying experience for all members of our team.” The word fun stands out as unusual to some, but

Dolf considers it one of the most crucial aspects of the company’s vision, as most employees spend about one-third of their lives at work. VMS strives to create a positive, professional atmosphere that fuels motivation and integrity through our core values; customer focus, education, empowerment, innovation, profitability, and urgency.

The company employs more than one hundred thirty staff members and offers its employees excellent benefits and health insurance. It covers eighty-five percent of employees’ costs for health insurance, provides the staff with a matching 401(k) program, and paid time off.

A widely respected member of the specialty printing industry, Dolf has served as Chairman of the Specialty Graphic Imaging Association, Chairman of the Board for the Leadership Conference, a network of print industry CEOs, Board Member for the National Association of Graphic and Product Identification Manufacturers, and the Digital Graphics Group International Board of Directors. He was honored as one of Smart Business Cleveland’s 50 Smartest People in 2014.

HISTORY

Built on Third Generation Family Values



A Lincoln Electric overlay standing up to a harsh environment



Fully-wrapped fuel truck showcasing the bold GetGo Café brand

The company's plans for the future entail continued growth through professional development and training for middle management, as well as looking towards the next generation by growing a younger workforce as its older employees reach retirement age.

In 2017, Dolf had the distinct pleasure of welcoming the third generation of Kahle's to the company. Dolf's son, Eric joined the team to spend the next decade learning every facet of the business so that he will be ready to take over when the time comes. Eric has spent time working in the accounting department, learning design for manufacturing, has served as master scheduler, has managed the operations of the apparel division, and currently oversees the Sales and Customer Relations teams as Chief Revenue Officer.

Eric has followed in his father's footsteps as an up-and-coming leader in the printing industry. He was recently appointed to the PRINTING United Alliance Board of Directors. As a director of the board, he also serves as a member of the PDAA (Professional Decal

Applicator's Association) Steering Committee and the Leadership Conference Steering Committee. His active participation allows him to play a vital role in shaping the future of the printing industry. "I've positioned myself to soak up everything I can, from both my co-workers and active industry participants outside of VMS," explains Eric. "I have a great network of resources that continues to help drive VMS to be the industry-leading manufacturer we are today and help us continue to expand in the future."

VMS is always looking to expand its product offerings and in 2018 ventured into the printed textile/garments market.

The company's management team researched the printed textile market and was impressed by data showing textiles to be the fastest-growing market in digital printing. Client discussions revealed that many VMS customers were already buying decorated apparel, creating a solid opportunity for VMS to extend its footprint. "We knew we weren't

going to be starting from scratch," Dolf recalled. "In the initial pass of our customer base, we figured we had one million in sales, and we could expand the current base further, so we decided to give it a shot."

In addition to providing a solid pool of prospects, Dolf believes that the discipline required in the core VMS business provided a significant advantage in the apparel operation. "We put together an incredibly systematic approach to business that's required for the industrial OEM side," he said. "Our clients demand inventory management practices, quality assurance programs, ISO certification, and sustainability. When they come into a factory, they want to see an operation that is clean, organized, and running well.

We knew we could take this model and use it in the garment industry."

VMS was one of the first companies in the printing industry to receive an ISO 9001 certification in the United States. Since becoming certified in 1998, VMS has been

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audited annually to ensure that its standards have not been compromised so its customers consistently receive high-quality products and services.

Visual Marking Systems partners with its customers to solve problems using innovation and creativity and follows a specific strategy to make sure that it stands out from its competition. It does not aspire to be the lowest-cost option. However, the company differentiates itself by aiming to create the highest quality products for the best price possible. Dolf concludes, "At the end of the day, VMS works closely with our customers to design parts, offer ongoing technical assistance, provide efficient ordering and production processes and on-time delivery to create value by lowering their total cost."

Add to that its goal of exceptional customer service from a highly dedicated team of employees, and products that outlast, outshine, and outperform its competition, making Visual Marking Systems an excellent choice for custom-printed graphic solutions for America's hardest working companies.

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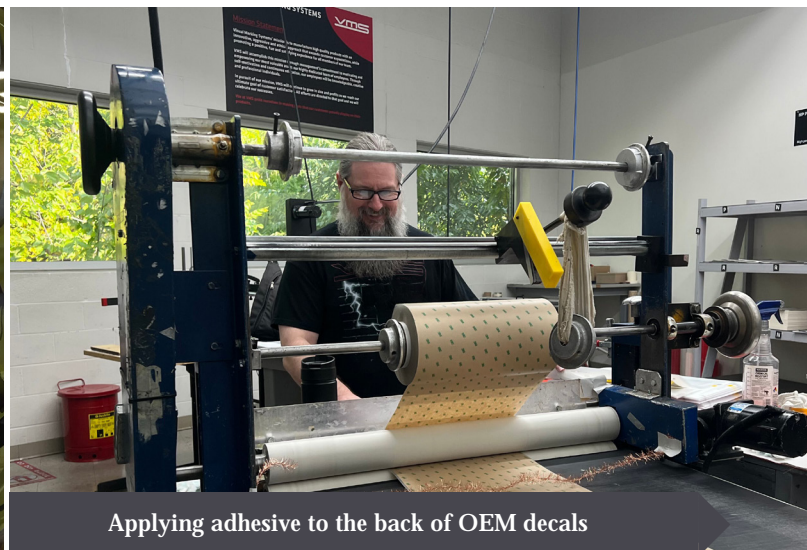
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