

Automotive Grade Coatings: The Magic Bullet for Sign Manufacturers



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Signs serve as a tangible symbol of a valued brand, and can provide cues as to the quality of the product or service being offered by that brand. To this end, sign manufacturers must pay close attention to their products' color and durability.



COLOR »»»

DURABILITY »»»

PROCESS OPTIMIZATION »»»

Customers look to the sign as an indication of service and quality, so a sign manufacturer must deliver on time and on budget, placing additional emphasis on optimizing the finishing process.

As it happens, color, durability and process optimization are also the three value pillars that automotive coatings were built upon. Let's examine why you might choose automotive coatings for your sign manufacturing line.

COLOR

An effective sign is eye-catching, often rendered using a very specific color that is an integral part of a registered trademark and brand image. Now consider the cars you encounter on the road each day, and the subtle variations between hues and metallic effects used by each manufacturer for each model. Long gone are the days of Henry Ford and "You can have any color, as long as it's black." Today, cars are finished in thousands of exact colors that are measured not with the eye, but with scientific devices like a spectrophotometer. This device assigns a value to all components of a color – its hue, its chroma (or saturation) and its lightness, making it possible to digitally ensure color consistency across substrates and production processes. In addition to opening up for consideration the broadest color spectrum that could be imagined, automotive coatings are created with highly stable chemistries and pigments that won't fade or shift prematurely.

DURABILITY

Once a sign is installed, the goal is to leave it alone as long as possible, but not just owing to color stability. Sign coatings must withstand exposure to wind, sun, rain and salt. Automotive grade coatings are formulated specifically to endure environmental exposures and over-the-road abuse. In fact, automotive coatings pass some of the most stringent durability requirements that OEM manufacturers can devise. This includes performance in standard South Florida QUV testing, conducted in a locale where the effects of one year of sunshine, plus heat and humidity, equals several years of weathering exposures anywhere else.

PROCESS OPTIMIZATION

Although the end uses are different, both sign and automotive manufacturers bend, weld and assemble metal, then prime and topcoat that metal. In each instance, optimizing the metal finishing process can reduce materials cost, labor and energy consumption. A custom site survey by an automotive coating supplier can show you what improvements can be made to:

- Reduce the number of coats you need,
- Curtail VOC emissions,
- Apply coats faster, and
- More rapidly cure them.

With gains like these, a slightly more expensive gallon of paint is a bargain. Dealing with less solvent, achieving ease of application, and reducing or eliminating the bake cycle all lead to greatly diminished total installed costs.

IN CONCLUSION

When does paint become a strategic component of a sign, not just a commodity? Whether it be for a sign or a motor vehicle, the color of the finished product – accurately matched and long lasting – is a powerful customer draw. When your supplier can also help you gain visibility into optimizing your finishing process, that's when the paint selection carries significance well beyond the cost of the individual bucket.

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