

Brochure Sparks New UV Markets

By Kym Conis

Drops of dew fall from the page, a pan of gold shimmers in the sun and a washed-to-shore starfish glistens against a sandy beach backdrop. These are just a few of the images that come alive in Trade Print Finishing's award-winning brochure "UV Coating Design Tools". In this distinctively crafted capabilities brochure, the beauty of nature is intensified through the utilization of various UV coatings on aqueous coated and uncoated stocks.

With each turn of the page, gloss and matte UV coating and specialty glitter and profile (high-rise) UV transform the printed image – orchestrating bold contrasts and striking effects. The brochure also features Trade Print Finishing's newest advances in UV coating on uncoated stock. In side-by-side comparisons, the book demonstrates the unique advantages that UV coating can have over plain printing and its traditional aqueous coating. What's more, "UV Coating Design Tools" offers decorative tools that can enhance the impact of any graphic design on a printed or unprinted sheet, sparking new markets for UV coating and a world of shining possibilities.

A Distinct Focus

When Trade Print Finishing, Salt Lake City, Utah, decided to create the elaborate capabilities brochure, the goal was to get its name in front of prospective customers, promote an image of top quality, extravagant work and help differentiate the company from its competitors. According to President Brad Van Leeuwen, "The other reason was because we had invested a significant amount of time and effort in crossing the learning curve in using these newer coatings in the market created for uncoated stocks. We wanted to generate excitement amongst graphic designers."

Primarily designed to appeal to graphic designers, the piece also was created to provide a tool for print sales people to utilize in presenting new and innovative ideas to their customers. Seeking an independent graphic designer who could work with these newer applications and come up with designs that would not create a production nightmare, Trade Print Finishing looked to Mark Summers of Revolver Design (Salt Lake City) to help realize its vision.

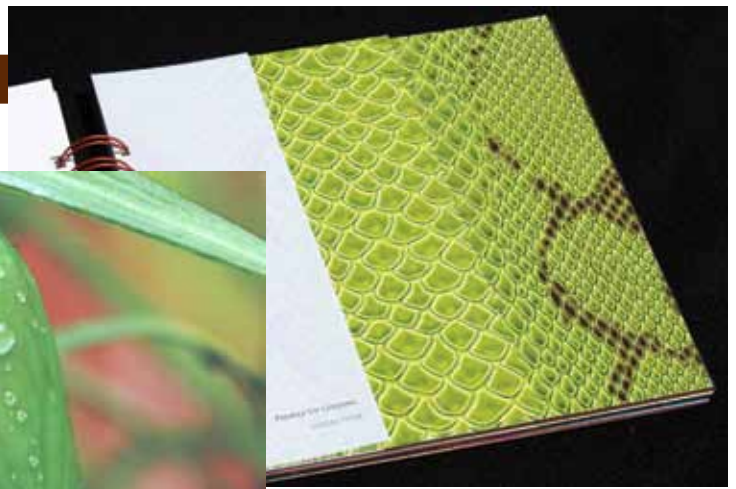
The first step was to narrow down a design that would help bring the project together and create a cohesive look. "I

decided to go with a nature theme, which allowed enough diversity to showcase all the UV coating processes and techniques," said Summers. He also noted that the project was produced in a down economy so the budget was tight. This provided even greater opportunity to demonstrate what amazing effects can be achieved while staying within a budget – a challenge that can get out of hand when creating an intricate piece.



The point was to show designers how UV coating can be used as a tool. "The imagery, mostly from iStock, and overall design just needed to be good enough that people in the design community would give it a look," said Summers. Staying away from other finishing processes, the goal was to keep the focus on the UV coatings. "I think the print finishing industry tends to fall into a trap of trying to include everything they are capable of in their marketing pieces and those pieces end up jumbled and overdone," said Summers. "Marketing to designers is a tricky business and focus is very important."

The idea in UV coating the photographs was to profile all the types of UV on coated and uncoated paper. The cover is a prime example of blind UV on an uncoated stock. The illustration by John Woodcock fit perfectly with the project's nature theme and showcased both thick and very thin, intricate lines.



A great deal of time was spent in choosing the right images that would display the coatings best: gloss, matte, satin, glitter and profile (high-rise). According to Summers, using a split page for a “before and after” effect was the best way to truly show people how UV coating changes the printed piece. “We experimented with an idea that Troy Summers (Trade Print Finishing’s production manager) had, blending matte with gloss. The two frog pages and the cocoon page are good examples of this, although this concept was used on many of the pages,” said Summers.

Mark Summers continued, “If you create your plates using just vector paths, you will end up with a hard edge where the matte stops and the gloss begins. You also have to trap it to avoid a gap between them and that trap with UV would end up double thick and look strange.” To solve the problem, Summers created the various areas to be coated using vector paths and then blurred them in Photoshop according to each photo and its depth of field.

Because this piece would be going to designers, Summers targeted images that would be very difficult to do without drawing a path. The snake skin is a good example of this where contrast and color variation were not significant enough to utilize a tool like the magic wand or even a masking program to get a good plate for the UV-coated area. Therefore, a path had to be drawn. “The path for that page took me well over 10 hours to create,” said Summers. “I divided the page into a 3x3” grid and did one of the nine squares a day for nine days. It was tedious work but I knew the end result would be impressive to anyone who understood what had to be done.”

One surprise that surfaced throughout all the experimentation and testing conducted prior to production was how well the blind UV coating worked with light-colored stocks. “Going into this we knew that dark uncoated stock worked well with blind UV,” said Summers, “but we had no idea, until testing, of the wonderful effects that could be produced on lighter stocks – both subtle and bold.” The cherry blossoms page is a good example of the UV coating’s more subtle side. Slight movement of the page makes the blossoms disappear and re-appear as the light hits the spot UV coating, creating a “flowing in the breeze” effect that is truly magical.

The drops of dew on the cocoon and the snakeskin scales are perfectly suited to highlight the three-dimensional effect of profile UV coating.

In the Driver’s Seat

Printing on the project was very basic: 4-color process with an aqueous flood coat on standard coated sheets. The idea was to show how UV coating can liven up even the most basic printing. The purpose wasn’t to show off specialty print but to show how different UV coatings can make plain printing special.

“This was a rare case where we were in the driver’s seat: the finisher dictating how the printer would print the project,” said Troy Summers. “First, we were in constant contact with the designer to make sure he chose designs that would work best to accentuate the various types of UV coating and still keep within the realm of production possibilities.” For example, on the two images showing raised profile UV coating (the cocoon and the snake skin), images were sought that would have raised UV areas that were no wider than about 1/2 inch in diameter. “At that point,” Summers explained, “the raised coating begins to sag in the middle and you lose some of the three-dimensional effect.”

All the process printing was done on the same basic coated sheet, Topkote C1S. For the project, the UV coating needed to be the variable component, not the coated paper stock. That way, the effect that the UV coatings have on the sheet is much more apparent.

Sundance Felt was used for the white uncoated sheets where 4-color process was overprinted and then UV coated to show how the coating draws the brightness of the colors back out of the uncoated sheet. On the colored uncoated sheets, Wausau, Domtar and Fox River were utilized in different colors and finishes. “With the uncoated papers, we wanted to show the designer how UV on uncoated looked on a variety of textures and colors,” said Summers. Trade Print Finishing even used plain chip board – something a printer would not want to run through its press. Black Pegasus and black Astrobrite were litho-laminated to form the front cover.

All of the off-line UV coating was produced on two Sakurai screen coaters. Utilizing a screen press allows the capability of choosing a variety of screen meshes to lay down maximum (and minimum) amounts of coating – a greater flexibility than can be achieved with an anilox roller. “Some of the biggest challenges we had were working with the UV coatings for uncoated stocks,” said Summers. “We typically took coatings that weren’t particularly made for our industry and went through a lot of trial and error to see what would and would not work.”

Summers further explained that even just a few years ago, coating on uncoated sheets was not possible because the UV-curable varnish applied to an uncoated sheet would absorb into the sheet before it could be permanently cured by the UV lamps. Today, the coatings have advanced, making it possible to ‘hold out’ long enough to reach the UV curing section of the press. Also, the equipment and curing units have become more efficient, thereby making curing these coatings possible.

Another challenge was navigating the multiple passes necessary to produce many of the pages, at times as many as six or seven, in perfect registration. “We had to be able to cure the coatings each time enough to cure but not too much so as to become brittle,” Summers cautioned. “We did a lot of testing and spoke with coating manufacturers to determine baseline cure rates. We also spent a lot of upfront time on layout with the printer to determine the most efficient layouts to minimize passes through the press.”

Market Expansion

UV coating on uncoated stocks is something that designers are not accustomed to seeing. Profile UV coating has been out on the market longer. “We produced some single-sheet marketing samples of profile coating a few years back that were visually stunning, but did not achieve the results we expected,” said Van Leeuwen. “That may be because just the right design needs to be utilized when showcasing profile coating. The UV on uncoated stocks seems to be generating more immediate response, perhaps because it has more practical applications.”

In the end, Trade Print Finishing produced approximately 1,000 copies of the book and has been distributing them

Three UV coatings combine to produce striking contrasts: matte UV on the background, satin UV over the orange areas and glitter UV on the outer black areas of the butterfly wings.

personally to area printers and designers throughout its regional area. “Due to the significant cost involved in producing these booklets, we have chosen to distribute them on a one-on-one basis and only after we have had the opportunity to give a short explanation of the book and its contents,” Van Leeuwen explained. “We don’t just want people to take it, file it away and forget about it.” A recent gold winner in the Foil & Specialty Effects Association’s Gold Leaf Awards competition, the brochure is far from forgettable!

In large part, much of the project’s success is due to the fact that the company, and particularly its production manager and team, are willing to try new things. “Many of our competitors are not as open,” said Van Leeuwen. “We have built a reputation of bringing new processes to our regional market and have done this successfully because we spend the time testing and making sure the process is perfect and can be done with consistency before going out and selling it.” This is exactly what has been accomplished with Trade Print Finishing’s “UV Coating Design Tools” – the perfect example of what can be accomplished through collaboration, creativity and a willingness to develop new opportunities in untapped markets. ■

