

# The Reaper Beckons

by Kym Conis

Ghoulish ghosts haunt a decrepit abandoned house; a mummy screams treachery through the dark hollows of his eyes and the Grim Reaper tears life out of unsuspecting prey. These nail-biting scenarios serve as the basis for just three Halloween-themed folder promotions produced by Admore® each year.

Ten years ago, Admore (an Ennis Company), Macomb, MI, started a self-promotion campaign to inspire its customers to think outside of the 'litho' box and utilize print enhancements such as foil, embossing, diecutting and specialty coatings on their presentation folders. Wildly popular and eagerly anticipated by Admore customers, the campaign celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a Grim Reaper folder that produced chilling results amongst customers and industry peers alike.

Foil stamped in six passes, multi-level embossed in intricate detail, over printed and custom diecut, the cover's Grim Reaper draws the viewer into a world where boring folders and outdated printing processes are laid to rest. Creatively conceived and brought to 'life', the folder's inside pockets transform into a diecut cemetery with headstones that mark the names of the company's past promotions in memoriam. Creating a two-dimension feel, the inside background depicts a printed cemetery lined with headstones that skillfully *bury* outdated printing terms in such a manner that anyone well versed in the trade can't help but chuckle at the names on the headstones.

"Death to Boring Folders" – Admore's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary-themed title – successfully blends print enhancement processes, imaginative wit and marketing genius to produce a self-promotional folder that captivates and lures unsuspecting customers to a world beyond the printed piece.

## Promotions that haunt

The idea to create a Halloween promotion started in the fall of 2003 when Admore had an abundant inventory of black felt stock that needed to be moved. The company had never done a Halloween promotion before and the black stock would provide the perfect backdrop for a foil stamped haunted house with inserted ghosts peeking through diecut windows. The original promotion also included a "BOO-PON," a diecut coupon in the shape of a ghost. According to Lisa Goebel,

marketing manager at Admore, "Don't be Afraid to Sell Presentation Folders" (the first theme in the campaign) was an instant hit with customers.



Each year, the creative team of Goebel and Jaworowski (Jen Jaworowski, pre-press art designer), along with various others, works to create a piece that will demonstrate Admore's technical abilities. In the case of The Reaper, print over foil, sculpture embossing, tight foil registration and custom diecutting were highlighted to the company's distributor-based customers and prospects that include graphic designers, ad specialty dealers and print brokers, etc. "Our goal is to inspire creativity and get the customers excited about

# New Customers to Admore

folders," Goebel explained. "The piece needs to be memorable so when they think of folders, they think Admore."

## The devil is in the details

The process starts with a brainstorming session. In fact, brainstorming over past years has created a file from which ideas are snatched and replaced with new ones. "Sometimes an idea sits in the file for years before it finally gels," said Goebel.



She cited Admore's 2010 promotion "Secrets of the Mummy," which sat in the file for years because the team couldn't get the mummy art to look right. "Finally, Jen went to the medical supply store for gauze; dyed it with tea and hung it up to dry," said Goebel. "She wrapped it around a cardboard template and created the hollow, sunken black eyes with polyester plate material." Photoshop did the rest and in the end, Admore had a very believable

mummy folder with a custom diecut that allowed customers to unwrap the secret of their mummy and find their "Toutankoupon" inside. Goebel added that the real trick to the success of the campaign is tying the Halloween-themed concept to selling the folder.

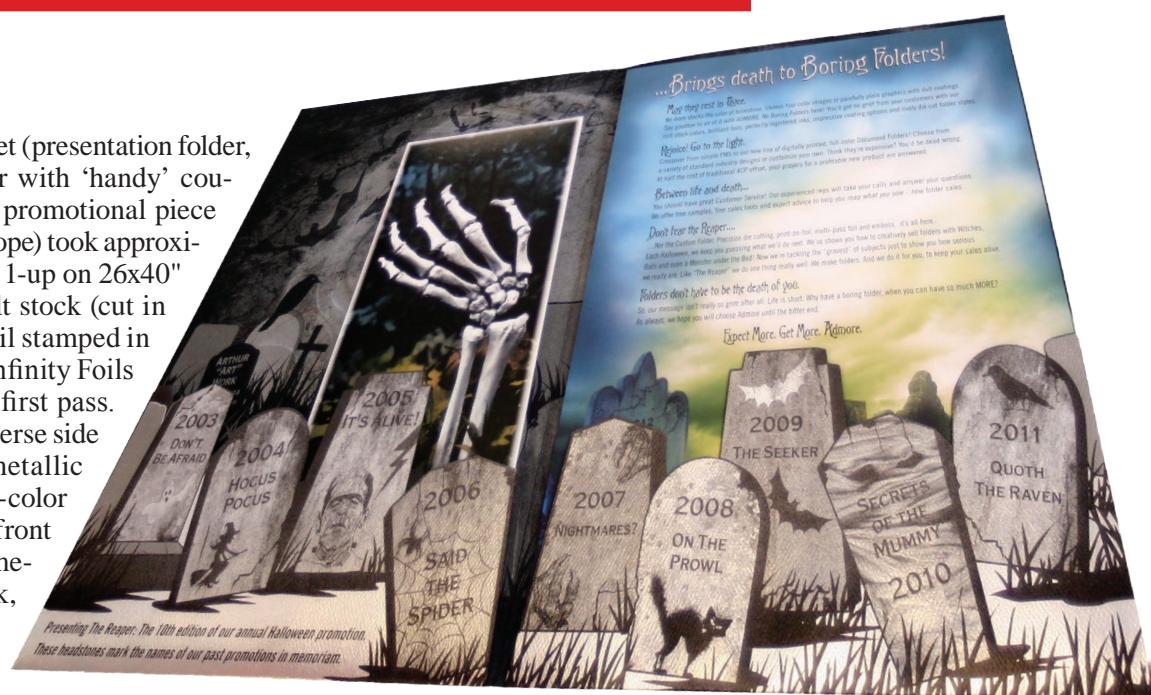
The concept, creation and design process is a collaborative effort that usually takes around four weeks from start to finish. Once a first draft mock-up is completed, concept and manufacturing plans are discussed in a production meeting. At this stage, the team starts to pull in paper, envelopes and other necessary materials. After adjustments are made and a final draft chosen, a detailed production outline for key staff and management is developed.

The foil stamped and embossed Grim Reaper on the cover depicts a strikingly cryptic image as it clutches a menacing scythe blade in its skeletal grip. Inside, custom diecut tombstones create the pockets and detail the company's nine previous promotions. "This year's challenge was to design a 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary Halloween promotion that not only included our new line of digital document folders, but also needed to commemorate the other promotions before it," said Goebel. "We accomplished this by using custom diecut tombstones on the pockets. Each tombstone features the name of the previous Halloween promotion that is *dead and buried*." The design on the digital print document folder (housed within the Reaper folder) became the hand reaching up from the grave.

The headstones on the printed background originally were left blank but according to Goebel, left the inside looking too stark. "We talked about all the funny headstones people put on their lawns for Halloween and decided we would *bury* outdated printing terms," Goebel explained. Some examples of the witty headstones include "Phil M. Stripper, Too Much Red Tape;" "Flo P. Disc, Couldn't Hold Her Data" and "Bea Hyndschedule, Revised to Death." Admore GM Bill Tignanelli, Production Manager Paul Brancaleone and IT Network Administrator Cindy Wronski all joined in the fun and came up with ideas. "We recognized that not everyone would get the joke, but we did it for all the printers out there," Goebel concluded.

## Bringing life to Grim

Production of the four-piece set (presentation folder, small digitally printed folder with 'handy' coupons, a 'how this was done' promotional piece and the custom mailing envelope) took approximately two weeks. Produced 1-up on 26x40" 80# Mohawk New Black Felt stock (cut in half), the 9x12" folder was foil stamped in metallic platinum foil from Infinity Foils on the inside pockets in the first pass. Next, Admore printed the reverse side of the sheet in PMS 877 metallic silver on a 40" Heidelberg 6-color press with UV and then the front of the sheet was printed in metallic silver and UV black ink, which printed on top of the platinum foil.



Next the custom steel rule die, produced by Michigan Laser Cut, was ordered from the actual press sheet supplied by Admore to ensure proper registration.

In pass four, the Reaper's robe was foil stamped in black gloss foil from Nakai, knocking out the fingers, and the mini

Reaper image was stamped on the back cover. The handle of the staff was stamped next with brown gloss foil from Crown Roll Leaf and the skull and hands (overstamping the brown) were foil stamped in gloss white foil from Spectrum. In the seventh pass, the Reaper's eyes were foil stamped with metallic red foil and then the scythe in metallic platinum foil, both from Infinity Foils. All flat stamp dies were made of copper by Universal Engraving, Inc.

The eighth pass consisted of multi-level embossing the entire Grim Reaper image, including the staff, scythe and front copy. In addition to the detail put into the hand-sculpted, multi-level embossing die (produced by Universal Engraving), Admore's design team also provided production notes on different levels of the die and various bevels to use, including sharp edges and raised-round type.

The folders were diecut in the ninth pass and were folded and glued on a Moll Sprint box pocket machine (pockets only) in the tenth pass. All foil stamping, embossing and diecutting was produced on a Bobst 102 press with an Eagle Systems foil unit.

Registration was critical on the piece, particularly with the skeletal hand where the last two digits of the fingers were knocked out of the black foil on the Reaper's robe, then stamped in white gloss foil in registration to maintain the opacity of the white foil. Registration of the overprinted foil and of the diecutting to the litho also was critical.

The promotional inserts were printed 4-up in 4-color process (on a Heidelberg) with a soft touch coating on the front and satin aqueous coating on the back. The mailing envelope and smaller document folder were digitally printed in 4-color process on a MGI DP60 press.

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### **May they rest in peace**

Founded in 1947, Admore, Inc. has become an industry leader in the presentation folder market. The company's product lines include the largest selections of standard and custom pocket folders, digital folders, recycled folders, pre-designed folders, portfolios, binders, hotel key and gift card holders, photo holders, tax, report and certificate covers and more.

Tackling the *gravest* of subjects, Admore set out to show just how serious it is about making folders stating, "No more stocks the color of brimstone, lifeless four-color images or painfully plain graphics with dull coatings. Say goodbye to all of it with Admore." And the Grim Reaper presentation folder lives up to every last word, skillfully laying boring folders to their final resting place.

"Customers have loved every one of the Halloween promotions," stated Goebel, "and many actually collect and display them." As a testament to the campaign's popularity and over-the-top quality, craftsmanship and creativity, the folder won a Gold Award in the Foil & Specialty Effects Association's 20<sup>th</sup> Annual Gold Leaf Awards competition. It also was a Grand Award Winner in the 2013 PEAK awards, which honors the work of print and marketing professionals.

"We have a bit of a cult following," Goebel concluded. "By the end of summer, customers start prodding our customer service reps to tell them what the next one will be." Whether foil stamped or embossed, soft-touch coated or film laminated, one thing is for certain, the next Admore Halloween folder promotion will continue to help customers *reap what they sow*... new folder sales with just the right finishing touch. ■



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