



# THE FLEET MANAGERS GUIDE TO **FLEET** **GRAPHICS**



BY RANDY CLARK

## Where Do You Start?

Fleet graphics are an important part of a fleet or marketing manager's job. Choosing graphics that represent the brand, look great, and will last— isn't easy. And it doesn't stop there; in most cases, graphics will be on a fleet for years to come. With that in mind, we've tried to cover as many of the challenges, options, pitfalls, and suggestions any fleet manager may need—from designing to maintaining and repairing vehicle graphics.

This short guide wasn't intended to be read from start to finish, but referred to as needed. If you need to learn more about graphic warranties or finding installers start there. We hope this guide helps, but if you have further questions feel free to [contact](#) us (1-888-544-8051) Enjoy.

<b>Chapter</b>	<b>Page</b>
1 <a href="#">Why Your Fleet Needs Graphics</a> .....	4
2 <a href="#">How to Make Choosing Vehicle Graphics Easy</a> .....	7
3 <a href="#">What Are My Vehicle Graphics Coverage Options?</a> .....	9
4 <a href="#">What Info Should My Vehicle Wrap Include?</a> .....	11
5 <a href="#">Who Should Design Your Vehicle Wrap?</a> .....	13
6 <a href="#">How to Make Your Wrap Pop!</a> .....	15
7 <a href="#">What Vehicle Information does the Graphic Provider Need?</a> .....	17
8 <a href="#">How to Find the Best Vehicle Graphics Installers</a> .....	19
9 <a href="#">How Long Will it Take?</a> .....	21
10 <a href="#">How Much Does a Vehicle Wrap Cost?</a> .....	24
11 <a href="#">How Accepting the Lowest Bid Can Hurt You in the Long Run</a> .....	26
12 <a href="#">Case Study: How to Keep Your Fleet Working During a Graphics Installation</a> ....	28
13 <a href="#">What is the Warranty on a Vehicle Wrap?</a> .....	30
14 <a href="#">How to Care for Vinyl Vehicle Graphics</a> .....	32
15 <a href="#">Using the Right Adhesive Vinyl for the Job</a> .....	34
16 <a href="#">What Are the Biggest Vehicle Graphics Mistakes?</a> .....	36
17 <a href="#">How Long Will a Vehicle Wrap Last?</a> .....	38
18 <a href="#">Will Vehicle Graphics Removal Damage Paint?</a> .....	40
19 <a href="#">Can Damaged Vehicle Graphics be Partially Replaced?</a> .....	42
<a href="#">A Few Last Words</a> .....	45

# WHY YOUR FLEET NEEDS GRAPHICS





# Why Your Fleet Needs Graphics

So... why haven't you wrapped your company vehicles? You know you should every time you see a competitor's wrapped vehicle on the road. And how often is that? I'm going to end this with stats to get you out of your car or truck and wrap it, (skip ahead if that floats your boat). First, let's address the most common reasons I hear companies have not wrapped their vehicles.

## **We are too small – we only have two cars**

Digital printing has made it cost-effective for everyone to wrap vehicles. If you have any advertising budget, why wouldn't you put your dollars where they are most effective?

## **It costs too much**

A Yellow Page bold-line ad can run \$100/month — and up to \$4000/month for a full-page (I've bought both). Billboards can run \$700 to \$2500 per month. A vehicle wrap can run \$1500 to \$4000, and last two to seven years. Do the math.

## **We only have small cars — they are not big enough for wraps**

Digital technology has changed things. No vehicle is too small to wrap. We have effectively wrapped smart cars, boats, golf carts, and motorcycles.

## **We've used the same company lettering for years, and that's all we need**

You may have a point; however, think of how much better your message could be conveyed with a wrap? If you own ABC Plumbing, your logo on your truck becomes a whole different message with an image of a clean, uniformed all-American plumber standing at a sparkling, clean sink.

## **We cannot afford the time to have our vehicles off the road to get them wrapped**

In many cases, downtime can be limited. The graphics provider may be able to install during your off-times.

## **Vinyl doesn't last, it looks shoddy, and paint is better**

These statements were true at one time — and can be true today, if cheap, shoddy materials, and poor workmanship are used. With today's adhesive vinyl materials, provided by 3M and Avery, almost anything can be wrapped better than it can be painted.

## **We can't use wraps because we frequently change our products**

I wish more businesses knew they could easily change products on their wraps. By using a changeable film on the product section of the wrap, it can be changed as often as you like.

## Just The Facts, Please

The benefits of a vehicle wrap hit home when you compare the Cost-Per-Thousand Impressions (CPM) of other forms of advertising ([Statistics courtesy of the Outdoor Advertising Association of America](#)):

- **A 30-second prime-time spot in the top 100 television markets costs \$17.78 per thousand impressions**
- **A 60-second drive-time ad in the top 100 radio markets costs \$8.61 per thousand impressions**
- **A one-third b/w page ad in the top 100 newspaper markets costs \$22.95 per thousand impressions**
- **A four-color one-page ad in the top 23 magazine publications costs \$9.35 per thousand impressions**
- **The average for all forms of billboard ads costs \$2.18 per thousand impressions**
- **Vehicle wraps cost \$.77 per thousand impressions**

According to Driving Revenues, a vehicle advertising firm in Washington, a \$20,000 advertising investment buys:

- **Radio attracts 900,000 listeners in six weeks with ten to twelve 30-second spots**
- **Value Pak offers reach 600,000 with 100,000 addresses per drop, and your client is just one of many advertisers included in the packet**
- **Billboards receive 700,000 impressions per month**
- **Direct mail reaches 20,000 names with one postcard mailer**

Let's compare the advertising above to wraps. If you spend \$3000 on a wrap, and keep the vehicle for five years:

- **A vehicle receives 30,000 – 70,000 [impressions per day \(pdf\)](#)**
- **Five years = 1825 days**
- **30,000 impressions per day (low-end) = 54,750,000 views**
- **If you wrapped six vehicles for a cost of \$18,000**
- **This is over 328 MILLION views over the span of five years**

So...why haven't you [wrapped your company vehicles](#)?

[BACK TO THE TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

# HOW TO MAKE CHOOSING VEHICLE GRAPHICS EASY



# How to Make Choosing Vehicle Graphics Easy

Most vehicle graphics providers use checklists for designing, fabricating, and installing vehicle graphics. Checklists are essential to maintaining efficient high quality products. They can be used to educate and inform a customer throughout the process, but what can a fleet manager use? How do you know where to start? If you're considering vehicle graphics—this checklist is for you.

## A Vehicle Graphics Checklist for Fleet Managers

**What is the year, make, model, and color of the vehicle?** Having the information available to providers will speed the process.

**What's the purpose of the wrap?** Is it a call to action, advertising your company, identification, or replacing existing graphics?

**What artwork do you need?** If you're not a graphic artist familiar with 3 dimensional applications, the best route is to work with a designer who is.

**Do you need a full wrap, partial, or decals?** Consider, which option may best meet the purpose and fit the vehicle. Here's a few ideas, [Vehicle Graphics Coverage Options](#).

**How long do you need it?** There are hundreds of materials available to fit your needs. Applying a seven year warrantied adhesive vinyl on a one year lease is overkill.

**Who will install it?** The difference between a professionally trained installer familiar with the specific application, and someone less experienced, can make all the difference in the final product. This might help, [How to Find the Best Vehicle Graphics Installers](#).

**What's your budget?** Having a budget will help a provider offer the most suitable options.

Knowing what you have, want, and need at the beginning of the process will help you avoid disappointment with your vehicle graphic choices. By organizing your ideas, purposes, and information before contacting a vehicle graphics provider you can create a clearer vision of the finished product.

[BACK TO THE TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

# WHAT ARE YOUR VEHICLE GRAPHICS COVERAGE OPTIONS?





# What Are Your Vehicle Graphics Coverage Options?

There are several options depending on your needs and budget. The term, “wrap,” is liberally used to define adhesive vinyl graphics, but a wrap is only one of the options available. Knowing the options helps you determine what’s best for your needs.

**Full Wrap** – Covers the entire vehicle with vinyl. This may or may not include covering all or part of the glass. Full wraps range in design from covering a car in one material, such as a matte finish, to a fully covered 53’ semi-trailer.

**Partial Wrap** – Covers a substantial part of the vehicle, usually 1/3 to 1/2. A partial wrap can be as effective as a full wrap, especially if the color of the vehicle blends into the background of the wrap.

**Decal** – Covers one area, usually a flat surface, such as a door or hood. Decals include company logos, emergency vehicle symbols, and other identification.

**Cut Letters** – Lettering used for branding, call to actions, or identification.

**Magnetics** – Can be used in place of decals or cut letters for removable or temporary applications.

**Window Film** – May be included in a wrap, but can be used independently to cover all or any part of a vehicle’s glass.

When you understand the options available, rather than categorizing all adhesive vinyl vehicle graphics as “wraps,” it opens up creative avenues. These six options can be combined in many ways or used independently to achieve your vehicle graphics goals.

[BACK TO THE TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

# WHAT INFO SHOULD MY VEHICLE WRAP INCLUDE?



# What Info Should My Vehicle Wrap Include?

## What Successful Vehicle Wraps for Business Share

**Organization Name and Logo** — This may sound like a no-brainer, but it needs to stand out. It should usually be a larger font than any other text on the wrap, and in contrast to the background. The logo should be the same logo for [all advertising](#) — print, media, or TV. **FAIL** — Not long ago, I saw a black vehicle with a dark blue logo. It was hard to see standing next to it, let alone, driving down the highway.

**Phone Number and Web Address** — Again, the first consideration should be how easy they are to read, not how pretty they are. Stick with standard readable fonts and colors that are easy to see against the background. **FAIL** — I've seen several web addresses using a script font; now was that an "A" or an "O"?

**Products and Services** — Stick with your primary products or new services you're promoting. Don't overdo it. At most, list two or three services. **FAIL** — I saw a heating and air service van listing what must have been every service they offered. At best, it was confusing.

**Social Media Icons** — If you're on social media, let the public know. More and more prospects use social media to search for products and services. **FAIL** — While it's often advisable to place social media handles or usernames on mediums like print or web, they're typically too small to be usable on vehicles usually moving past prospects, and they make the design more cluttered. It's best to use social media icons only, and definitely don't display full urls.

**Design, Artwork, and Background** — The purpose is to enhance the branding and call to action, not compete with or detract from it. [In an effective vehicle wrap](#) the message shouldn't be overwhelmed by the artwork. The priority for a business is to share the message. This is advertising. It's not a personal vehicle where artwork and design come first. **FAIL** — Everyday, everywhere I go, I see company vehicles where the message is lost in the design.

**Slogans** — Your company's slogan is good and probably should be used if they're a part of your advertising campaign, but be careful. The slogan shouldn't be the focus. Think about it — what do you want the prospect to retain — your name and contact information, or your slogan only? **FAIL** — I've seen wraps with the slogan as the predominate feature. Let's hope prospects remember whose slogan it is.

The key to a successful company vehicle wrap is for the message to be the focal point of the design. Whether it's a call to action or branding — the company name, logo, and contact information should be the primary focus.

[BACK TO THE TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

# WHO SHOULD DESIGN YOUR VEHICLE WRAP?





# Who Should Design Your Vehicle Wrap?

Last year, TKO Graphix wrapped or decaled nearly 25,000 vehicles. We didn't design all of those wraps. Some of the designs submitted were outstanding examples of the best in vehicle graphic layout, and some were...not so great. Vehicle graphics not only should be eye catching, but must deliver the message. Designs that are too busy, distracting, or poorly considered may detract from the message.

## **So...who should design your vehicle graphics?**

A professional designer with experience in translating design concepts to a dimensional application; a design may look perfect on a two-dimensional screen, but must conform to 3-dimensions – your vehicle.

## **Should you do it yourself?**

If you have the design experience, and the time — why not? If not, you have 3 options:

- Work directly with a design team to implement your ideas
- Hire a design agency
- Contract the graphic provider to design your graphic

At TKO, we're happy to work with your design, work with your agency, or create designs to your satisfaction.

[BACK TO THE TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)



# HOW TO MAKE YOUR WRAP POP!



# How to Make Your Wrap Pop!

We all want our brand and vehicle graphics to stand out, grabbing the attention of every potential customer possible. While that's great to strive for, how is this actually done? Is it with overly flashy graphics, all of your services listed, or funky colors? Not necessarily — or not even likely. A car is perceived very differently in motion. What may be attractive when parked may be less so when the car is moving. A design that looks OK sitting still may be too busy when it's on the road, colors can blend together, and details may be lost. To design an effective car wrap, consider how it will look in the garage and when driven.

If it's a commercial vehicle or uses text — limit the words. The best headline may be a short catchphrase and the organization's name and contact information. Any more than this and your message may be lost. Increase your company's exposure by limiting what prospects have to look at.

Choose the right color — [color affects meaning](#), and the wrong color can change the message. An easy example would be a muscle car wrapped in pink. The color makes it a feminine car, which is OK if it's for Susan G. Komen, or if the vehicle is driven by a woman, but probably not the best color for Bubba to take to the local drag strip on Saturday night. Another example — gray, a conservative color, would probably not be the best fit for cars promoting entertainers. Be sure the color fits the purpose and the eye.

Not every part of the car can be or should be wrapped. Chrome bumpers, window trim, and other equipment probably should not be covered, and some materials, such as a few plastics, are difficult to cover. More importantly, less can often be more. KISS — “keep it simple stupid”. With the advent of digital printers, modern vinyl adhesives, and state of the art inks, there's a tendency to overdo it. Just because it *can* be done doesn't mean it *should* be.

Think outside the box. While basic design patterns are good for usability and provide a good starting point, don't copy what everyone else is doing. Have fun with it. When planning and designing a car wrap, ask yourself if it expresses who you are? Is it memorable? What message does it convey?

[BACK TO THE TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

# WHAT VEHICLE INFORMATION DOES THE WRAP PROVIDER NEED?



# What Vehicle Information does the Graphic Provider Need?

There's a lot to know about a vehicle before designing graphics for it. The size, shape, and color of a vehicle will affect the design. The more information you can share about your vehicle, the better any graphics provider can serve you.

For example, to say I have a 2010 Ford 150 is insufficient information. The F150 is available in ten different packages from the XL to the Platinum. They come in regular cab, extended cab, 2 door, 4 door, and with special accessories. One design will not fit all. SUV's may vary by extended and high roof models, cars can be 2 or 4 door, and pickup trucks can be short or long bed. Once the make, model, style, year, and color are established, there are questions to be answered that may affect the design. For example, is it a full wrap or plotter cut decals, or is [window film](#) a consideration?

Here are a few of the basics:

- Make, model, and year
- Color
- Style (2 or 4 door, extended cab etc.)
- Serial number

The best answer to this question is to work directly with a vehicle graphics consultant who'll ask the right questions about your vehicle. It's easy to create an ineffective vehicle graphic due to incomplete or inaccurate information about the vehicle.

[BACK TO THE TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)



# HOW TO FIND THE BEST VEHICLE GRAPHICS INSTALLERS





# How to Find the Best Vehicle Graphics Installers

You want to wrap your six company vehicles. The last thing you need is a bad wrap that reflects poorly on you. And who wants the hassle of delays, missed appointments, and do-over's. You really don't have time to watch somebody else do their work to be sure they're doing it right. You just want someone to do the job right the first time and on-time.

There is no 100% fool-proof method for determining the ability, expertise, and reliability of a vehicle graphics installer, but by following a few steps, you can be pretty darn certain.

## Are They Certified?

There are two primary vehicle graphics installation certification programs. [PDAA \(Professional Decal Application Alliance\)](#), which is administered by SGIA (Specialty Graphics Imaging Association), and [UASG \(United Application Standards Group\)](#), through 3M. Both require extensive training and testing, and there are different levels of certification. For example, PDAA offers both basic and master certification. According to PDAA, "Basic certification accommodates companies that have absolutely no interest in doing vehicle wraps with complex curves." So be sure you have an application team certified for the type of installation required.

## Have You Seen Their Work?

There's no substitute for reviewing the end product. If the provider is in your vicinity, do they have a facility you can visit? If not, do they have examples of their work in your area, or have they worked with companies familiar to you? You might also ask to see examples of their work online or in a portfolio.

## How Experienced Are They?

Not only how long the company has been installing vehicle and fleet graphics, but how long have the individual installers been applying vinyl graphics. A new member or trainee on a crew isn't a bad thing, as long as there is an experienced team leader.

The difference between a professional installation, versus a poorly applied vehicle wrap, or a vehicle out of service for four days when you were told it would take about a day or so, can be disheartening and expensive.

[BACK TO THE TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

# HOW LONG SHOULD IT TAKE TO INSTALL GRAPHICS?



# How Long Should It Take to Install Graphics?

## How Long Does It Take To Do It Right?

It's normally two or three weeks to produce custom graphics; however, it depends on the order, size, quantity, detail, and production method. All these factors affect the process. Time is money, but poor quality can cause losses. A "rush" is not always the best procedure. I've too often seen graphics on the road such as vehicle wraps, signs, and billboards, that looked rushed. How do you want your organization represented? On my way home from work, there is a bench by a bus stop with advertising. The call to action lists the phone number, and it's one digit short — it looks rushed. I once saw a yard sign for a home remodeling company with about a one-inch high font. It couldn't be read from ten feet away, let alone, while driving. Was it rushed? As I look out my window onto Stafford Road, I see vehicles over and over again, and I have no idea what their message is. Should you rush something you will be looking at for several years? How long does it take to do it right?

## What Variables Affect The Time Needed?

- **Raw materials** — procurement can slow the process; however, if a specific material or ink will do a better job, or is more cost effective, is it worth the wait?
- **Artwork** — how many processes will it go through to produce it right?
- **Size matters** — 800 van sets, with one week to get materials, allows for five working days, which is not enough time to do it right.

## What Slows Down The Process?

- Missing information, such as measurements, logos, and installation requirements, delay the project.
- Order changes will slow or halt the process.
- Unsuitable artwork — using inferior artwork may speed up the turnaround, but cleaning it up can take MORE time.

## What Can Customers Do To Shorten The Time Needed?

- Do your homework and have a design or message in mind before the process begins. Multiple design changes, while acceptable, may add cost and time to the job.
- Provide as much information as you can up front.

## Why Should You Take The Time To Do It Right?

**Denny Smith, Chief Operating Officer at TKO Graphix**

“We process 800-1000 orders per month, and all of them are custom (produced), and none of them can be used for another. Our sales people try to communicate what is realistic, and not what they think the customer wants to hear. Telling someone what they want to hear, and not the truth, only leads to empty promises and damaged relationships every time.”

**Chris Hurley, VP of Business Administration at TKO Graphix**

“Unrealistic expectations diminish TKO’s reputation. We should always give (the most accurate) estimate for the time required to do it right, not what the customer wants to hear.”

Instead of RUSH jobs, let’s all try for RIGHT jobs.

[BACK TO THE TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)



# HOW MUCH DOES A VEHICLE WRAP COST?





# How Much Does a Vehicle Wrap Cost?

A vehicle wrap can range from \$1500 to \$4000, but there are many variables, including the following:

## **Do you need a wrap or decals?**

The difference in cost between a wrap and applying plotter-cut decals can be substantial.

## **What size is your vehicle, and is it new, used or damaged?**

A compact car will be less than a box truck, and a full wrap on a 53-foot trailer will be more. Also, a damaged vehicle can incur more cost.

## **How many vehicles are you wrapping?**

Wrapping one trailer will more than likely cost more per trailer than wrapping 50 with the same design.

## **Do you have print-ready art, or do you need a design?**

Although TKO Graphix offers very competitive art fees, providing art, compared to contracting our team to design graphics from scratch, will make a difference in cost.

[BACK TO THE TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

# HOW ACCEPTING THE LOWEST BID CAN HURT YOU IN THE LONG RUN



# How Accepting the Lowest Bid Can Hurt You in the Long Run

I was talking with Gary Meunier, one of our national account managers, about a bid we made to remove graphics from a fleet of vehicles, which a company was preparing to return at the end of a lease agreement. We didn't install the graphics, but we're one of the few companies trained and prepared to properly remove the "bargain price" decals they had purchased. The company was surprised it would cost as much to remove the decals as what they paid to have them installed, because a cheaper material with a permanent adhesive had been used. It's difficult, labor intensive, and time consuming to remove such materials. The company didn't know, at the time of purchase, the decals would need to be removed chemically or sanded off. These methods can cause so much surface damage that repainting is necessary; otherwise, the vehicle's end-of-lease value is compromised.

My point is take your time and do your research. The lowest bid is not necessarily the best. Here are some additional points to consider:

- How will this vehicle be used?
- Is it for promotional purposes?
- Is it for daily use?
- Is it part of a fleet?
- Is the vehicle owned or leased?
- What is the lease agreement/obligations at the end of the lease?
- How much time is the graphic needed for?
- What will happen to the vehicles at the end of this time?

Hopefully, these points will help in getting the best value out of your latest projects and ventures.

[BACK TO THE TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

# HOW TO KEEP YOUR FLEET WORKING DURING A GRAPHICS INSTALLATION



# Case Study: How to Keep Your Fleet Working During a Graphics Installation

## **Challenge — Re-brand Work Vehicles with Zero Vehicle Downtime**

A national company wanted to de-identify and re-brand over 4,000 vehicles without losing work time. The vehicles were used from 6am to 6pm daily, except Sunday. Adding to the challenge, the vehicles were in over 200 cities throughout North America.

## **Solution — Schedule De-ID and Installation On-Site After Hours**

The company contracted TKO Graphix to manufacture, de-identify, and install new graphics. Through TKO's online fulfillment program, the decal manufacturing, shipping, delivery, and installation to all 200 + locations was coordinated. The process was divided into four phases with five installation crews traveling North America. Individual company branch locations were able to access status information at any time. The fulfillment program integrated all phases of the process with TKO Graphix and the customer.

## **Result — A Fresh Message, Seen by Millions, and No Lost Time**

The company now has over 4,000 re-branded work vehicles on the street. The work was all completed after work hours, with zero time lost. A potential multi-thousand dollar loss, due to interrupted work, was avoided.

[BACK TO THE TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

## **What is the Warranty on a Vehicle Wrap?**



# WHAT IS THE WARRANTY ON A VEHICLE WRAP



## What is the warranty on a vehicle wrap?

The short answer — it depends on the material, but usually 3 to 7 years. We work with several manufactures of adhesive vinyl who offer hundreds of material choices. One of the more common materials is [3M's 180 \(PDF\)](#), but the warranty on this material may vary. The warranty on 180 is 6 or 7 years, depending on the following:

- 1. Color** — some colors, such as reds and yellows, may fade faster, shortening the warranty.
- 2. 3M Authorized** — we're an [Authorized Scotchprint Manufacturer](#), which means we've passed on-site inspections; not all providers are authorized by 3M, which may limit their warranties.
- 3. MCS (Match Component System)** — this means all materials and inks are approved and qualify for the warranties. For instance, using an inferior or unapproved ink on a quality vinyl could nullify the warranty. We implement MCS to ensure the warranty of your vehicle wrap.

Consideration should be given to the length of service on your vehicle. A vehicle with a three year lease may not need a 7 year warranty. The bottom line is, an established, reputable, and experienced large-format graphics provider can advise for the best material for the application.

[BACK TO THE TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

# HOW TO CARE FOR VINYL VEHICLE GRAPHICS



# How to Care for Vinyl Vehicle Graphics

Vehicle graphics have become an important part of [advertising and branding](#). The condition of the graphics and, how they look to potential customers, says a lot about a company or non-profit. Vinyls and adhesives have come a long way in the last few years, but the [following precautions \(pdf\)](#) from one of our graphics providers, 3M, should be taken to protect your investment.

**Do not wash your vehicle in an automated brush vehicle wash.** The brushes may peel the edges, scratch the surface, or otherwise damage the graphics.

**Do wash regularly** as contaminants including acidic residue in larger metropolitan areas, salt, and chemicals used to clear roads may damage the material.

**It's OK to use a pressure wash** but it should be below 2000 PSI, and under 180F. Never hold the nozzle at an angle to the decal where it may loosen the edges, and always spray at a 90-degree angle.

**Remove hard to clean matter** such as tree sap or bird droppings by soaking the area in warm soapy water. Never use abrasive cleaners on the area. If the stain is difficult to remove, try either isopropyl alcohol or a citrus-based cleaner.

**Always clean fuel spills immediately** as they can damage vinyl or adhesives.

**Most polish and waxes are okay**, but it's important to test a small area first.

Vinyl graphics are an investment in the company. They advertise and help brand the company, but keep in mind, the condition of your graphics ALSO [reflects on your company](#). With a small amount of care and preventive maintenance, quality vinyl vehicle graphics will stay fresh for years to come.

[BACK TO THE TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)



# USING THE RIGHT ADHESIVE VINYL FOR THE JOB



# Using the Right Adhesive Vinyl for the Job

If you've decided on vehicle graphics to promote your brand, using the recommended adhesive vinyl for your application may be the difference between an attractive graphic that lasts for years... or a disappointment.

Last week, TKO Graphix National Account Manager, [Glenn Burris](#), received an inquiry about installing full wraps on a fleet of vehicles. The graphics had already been produced by another printer, not by TKO. The company wanted certified experienced installers who would stand by their work. We offer this, but there was a problem. There are [hundreds of materials](#) available for vehicle graphics. The material on which the graphics were printed wasn't recommended for a full wrap. It was non-conformable, which means it's not designed to stretch around complex curves. When the producer of the graphics was questioned about the choice of vinyl, they said they've done hundreds of law enforcement decals without a problem, and the material was less expensive than compliant vinyls. The material they chose was designed for decals, like a police shield, which lay flat on the surface of a vehicle, but was never intended to be stretched around a curve. This material, if used on the complex contoured areas of the wrap, would almost certainly lead to lifting, come loose, bubble, and peel away. We recommended reprinting on a 2ml cast-compliant vinyl, as [endorsed in this 3M video](#).

If you'd like to avoid this scenario, we recommend working with established certified vehicle graphics providers that offer expertise and warranty, such as the [3M MCS Warranty \(PDF\)](#). Remember, the lowest price isn't always the least expensive in the long run.

[BACK TO THE TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

# WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST VEHICLE GRAPHICS MISTAKES?



# What Are the Biggest Vehicle Graphics Mistakes?

The biggest mistake is [not having ANY graphics on your organization's vehicles](#). But, once you've decided to brand your vehicles with graphics, there are a few mistakes which are easily avoided.

## TMI — Too Much Information

This is the number one mistake made when designing vehicle graphics. For example, multiple logos — you probably don't need the logo for every product you offer on your vehicle. You're probably not Nascar, and they aren't likely paying you to advertise. More importantly, your logo — which should quickly identify your brand — can be easily lost in the confusion.

Another mistake is listing too many services. Vehicles aren't suitable for bullet points. Remember, this is a car or truck, not a brochure, and you only have seconds to capture your prospect's attention.

Too many images or concepts is another branding killer, such as a heating and cooling company wanting fire & ice images, then adding, "Oh, by the way, we do plumbing, so could we add a sink and a pipe wrench?" As well, using multiple slogans may seem like a good idea, but the most probable outcome is a muddled message — it's usually best to stick with one slogan.

## Unified Branding

Your vehicle should be [part of your marketing plan](#), not a stand-alone. [Companies like Red Gold](#) understand this; their 53-foot semi-trailers reflect their product branding. There's no mistaking who they are or their message.

## Colors and Fonts

I recently mentioned several [common mistakes made with signs](#), and the same holds true with vehicle graphics. Hard to read fonts *like a script* or Comic Sans diminishes readability, and are typically unprofessional looking. More than two different fonts (three at most) clutter and confuse your message. Also, the wrong color can destroy your message. For example, **yellow letters** on a white truck or **dark blue on black** will be difficult, if not impossible, to read.

When branding your vehicles with graphics, the best thing you can do is...

Keep it simple.

[BACK TO THE TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)



# HOW LONG WILL A VEHICLE WRAP LAST?



# How Long Will a Vehicle Wrap Last?

I've seen wraps that should've been replaced after a couple years, and others that looked good after ten years on the road. So what's the difference?

**Materials** — Like most things, you can purchase many levels of quality in adhesive vinyls. Warranties may range from two to seven years. Choosing the best material for your application is key. Using a cheaper material for short term use is fine, but cutting cost by using a lower grade material that was never intended for extended use may cause problems.

**Installation** — Last week, a local franchise of a national restaurant chain brought their vehicle in for an estimate. Areas of the existing wrap were peeling because it hadn't been installed properly around rivets. Potential customers judge your organization by the face it presents, whether it's your storefront, interior signage, or vehicle graphics. It's critical to [find a quality graphics installer](#) for your vehicle graphics.

**Climate** — Motoring through the deserts of Nevada or New Mexico is going to affect graphics more than driving in Tennessee or Virginia. Ask your preferred graphics provider how your climate may affect printed adhesive vinyls.

**Care and Maintenance** — Using [recommended cleaning methods](#) will extend the life of your vehicle graphics.

**Color** — Colors, such as red, may be more adversely affected by sunlight than other colors. Before deciding, check the warranty for exceptions by color.

By choosing the right material and competent installers, fitting the design to your needs and climate, and performing proper maintenance, a vehicle wrap will give you years of positive advertising.

[BACK TO THE TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

# **WILL VEHICLE GRAPHICS REMOVAL DAMAGE PAINT?**



# Will Vehicle Graphics Removal Damage Paint?

It's possible, but not likely. In the past, when compliant adhesive vinyl's weren't available, it was more likely the surface could be damaged during removal. Done properly, it's much less likely with today's standards, and here's what you should consider:

**How long will it be on the vehicle?** The longer the wrap remains on the vehicle, the more chance of paint or substrate damage. If it's left on longer than recommended by the manufacturer, it may be difficult to remove, which could lead to surface damage.

**How is it being removed?** There's a right way and a wrong way to remove vehicle graphics. Here's [the right way](#).

**What's the substrate?** Vehicles aren't all steel. They're made of plastic, fiberglass, aluminum, and glass, and each surface may react differently to adhesive vinyls. The condition of the surface and paint should also be considered. If there are doubts about their condition, a snap test is recommended. According to [3M](#), "This test can be used to help determine if a substrate appears to have sufficient integrity to remain intact during eventual graphic removal."

**What type of paint is on the vehicle?** Paint applied at the factory is seldom a problem, unless it's older, faded, and worn, but aftermarket paint may be a different story. The paint can be tested by applying a small piece of adhesive vinyl to an unexposed area and removing it after a few days.

**Is it a full wrap or partial?** After a few years, the exposed areas of a partial wrap may fade, no longer matching the paint covered by the graphics.

If the paint and surface are in good condition, and the right material and proper removal techniques are used, the surface will be undamaged at removal and it will have been protected.

[BACK TO THE TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)



# CAN DAMAGED VEHICLE GRAPHICS BE PARTIALLY REPLACED?



# Can Damaged Vehicle Graphics be Partially Replaced?

Yes, they can, but there are a few conditions that need to be met. Replacing a damaged section of vehicle graphics can be less time consuming and expensive than replacing an entire wrap. It's often unnecessary to replace an entire graphic to fix one damaged area. For example, if a vehicle has been involved in an accident and damage was confined to a quarter panel or rear deck, it may be possible to repair and replace only those sections.

## Where to Start

- **First complete the repair work**

Before graphics can be replaced, all repairs must be completed. Graphics will not cover damage—it will show through. Body work and paint should be left to cure or dry according to manufacturers recommendations before applying adhesive graphics.

- **How much should be replaced?**

Determine the best start and stop points on the vehicle. For example, it would be difficult to replace graphics on part of a door—in most cases, the entire door should be rewrapped.

## Where to Go

- **Replacing OEM (Original Equipment Manufacturer) graphics**

Many body shops offer adhesive vinyl applications. If the damaged vehicle had manufacturer applied graphics, a licensed and reputable body repair shop should be able to acquire the OEM replacement graphics. Contracting a body shop, experienced in vehicle graphics application, to complete the repairs may eliminate going to multiple providers.

- **Replacing aftermarket graphics**

It's difficult, if not impossible, to partially replace damaged aftermarket graphics by anyone other than the original graphics provider. The large format provider who designed, manufactured, and installed the original graphics is best suited to matching the repair. To begin with, they should have the original artwork and formatting to work from, and they have the printers and systems used on the original—increasing the possibility of matching existing work. [Color calibration](#) can vary from printer to printer and by provider.

## Other Considerations

- **How old are the graphics?**

If the graphics are 2 to 3 years old or older it will be hard to match the existing graphics due to fading. Weathering a new decal to match a faded one is hard to accomplish, more often than not attempting to match faded graphics will create a “patched” look.

- **What overall condition are the graphics?**

Regardless of fade, what shape is the wrap? Is it scratched, peeling, or ripped? Are any edges loose; are there bubbles or stretch marks? If the existing wrap is worn—it may be time to replace the entire wrap.

Vehicle wraps and decals that have been damaged through collisions, vandalism, or abuse CAN be partially repaired—under the right circumstances. Before committing to a partial replacement be certain it's in the best interest of all.

[BACK TO THE TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

## A Few Last Words

There's a lot to procuring and maintaining fleet graphics. Making poor choices that don't fit the needs of the fleet, company, and maintenance crews can make the process a headache as well as a time suck. Following a few guidelines, and finding an experienced graphics provider to help you through procedure will make the installation a smooth operation and your life a heck of a lot easier. If you have any questions or would like to learn more please [contact](#) us or call at 1-888-544-8051.

Thank You.

[BACK TO THE TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)





## About the Author

Randy Clark is Director of Communications at TKO Graphix, where he blogs for TKO Brandwire. Randy is passionate about social media, leadership development, and networking. He's the proud father of two educators, four amazing grandchildren, and a public speaking wife who puts up with him.

He resides in Speedway, IN and on weekends he can be found performing Rock & Roll with the Under the Radar band, running a 5K, flower gardening, or sharing an IPA.