

Floored

Experiential marketers find a solution in a patent-pending “graphic floor.”

By Kristin Quinn

In 2003, Mark Gross, president of Image Matters, Fort Lauderdale, Fla., received requests for photo-quality, high-resolution printing on floor mats. “At the time we were selling carpet mats and had a digital dye process,” Gross says. “But when the medium is carpet piles, the image is naturally pixilated.” So, the staff at Image Matters set out to create a new solution. The result was a process called ImageMat, which is now patent pending.

“ImageMat is a recipe that you have to get just right or it won’t taste good,” Gross says. The ImageMat recipe con-

sists of three “ingredients” laminated into one mat. The first is a vinyl backing which “is what really makes it flooring,” Gross says. The next step is a printing substrate imaged using the ColorSpan 72UVR, a digital, wide-format press from Hewlett Packard. The third component is a clear, textured, slip-resistant vinyl over-laminate. At first, Image Matters received lots of orders for small, point-of-purchase mats. Then, calls started pouring in for large, trade show floors. Image Matters can print up to 48 inches wide, then panel sections together to create floors up to 20 x 30 feet. “Basically, we’re able

to do a billboard-size graphic on the floor,” Gross says.

Recently, Image Matters has seen more variation in its customers. “I’m finding that the growth is mostly in the event and experiential marketing facet,” Gross says. Two years ago, Dan Backer, creative director at marketing firm CPC Experiential in Eagan, Minn., was tasked to find stage flooring that wasn’t heavy and took very little time to set up and tear down. CPC was hired to create and stage an event for Vitamin Water, owned by Coca-Cola Co., for “Disney Grad Night,” where high school seniors are invited to Disney World and Disneyland for an after-hours party to celebrate their graduation. Coca-Cola sponsored a karaoke activity called “Vitamin Water Live.”

CPC faced several challenges for this project. The flooring needed to be used multiple times and transported from Disney World in Florida to Disneyland in California. CPC had exactly one hour to set up before each “Vitamin Water Live” event, including sound equipment and instruments. Additionally, the flooring would have to be durable, safe and visually appealing. Backer says CPC was researching branded flooring when his team discovered Image Matters. “We could roll up this product like carpet, but it wasn’t heavy,” Backer says. “Plus, we got the vibrant colors that we couldn’t get with printing on an actual rug.”



Image Matters produced this graphic floor for the karaoke stage at Disney Grad Night.

In addition to solving CPC's main concern of transporting the flooring cross-country, Backer says the company was very pleased with the vibrant colors that stood out when people were standing on it. "You could definitely see the flooring in pictures," Backer says. "No matter where the picture was taken, the flooring was in the picture so that branding was always there." Backer adds that CPC never used this type of product before and would definitely work with Image Matters again.

Gross says Image Matters sells through multiple channels, including to the trade. In the future, he is considering licensing the ImageMat process to print shops instead of doing all of the work in-house. Right now, one of Gross' biggest challenges is branding his own products as customers aren't sure what to call them or how they work. Image Matters has

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**Mark Gross, President
Image Matters, Fort Lauderdale, Fla.**



coined the terms "graphic floor mat" for smaller, point-of-purchase mats, usually ordered in bulk, and "graphic floor" for the large, billboard-sized mats usually ordered individually. "We tend to call things what they are," Gross laughs. "Nothing fancy."

Gross says prospects often confuse graphic floors with products you can peel and stick onto the floor. "This floor is not like a decal," Gross says. "It can be moved around the country,

rolled out, set up, put back in its case and re-used." Gross says customers find Image Matters when they don't have the ability to display signs and need a way to get graphics on the ground. "That's right on the money," Gross says. "We're providing a solution."

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Kristin Quinn is managing editor of *Print Solutions Magazine*. Email comments to kquinn@psda.org.

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