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DIMENSIONAL WOOD, HDU & METAL SIGNS & PLAQUES



Reseller Marketing Handbook

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RETAIL SELLING OF CARVED AND DIMENSIONAL WOOD AND HDU SIGNS

This Handbook published by Art Sign Works, Inc,(ASW) provides a summary of information that may be useful to retailers and resellers who are considering selling our carved Dimensional Wood and High-Density-Urethane (HDU) signs. It is written for those sign shops who have little or no experience selling carved Dimensional wood and High-Density-Urethane (HDU) signs. Sign Shops who have years of experience selling these type of signs, particularly with Art Sign Works, may find this handbook a little too much like a primer. However, Sections 6, 8, 10 and 11 will prove useful even if you have been doing business with us for years.

Section 1 - What exactly are carved and Dimensional Wood & HDU Signs & Plaques?

These beautiful and interesting signs and plaques are at the high-end of small to medium residential and business signs and plaques. The most elaborate ones are works-of-art. We live in a three dimensional world, so Dimensional signs allow your customer's messages to "pop-out" of the signboard and attract attention, and intricate carving and painting adds interest and beauty. Dimensional signs can be designed in thousands of different styles, from elegant to commercial to rustic.

Dimensional signs have a long and distinguished history, going back to ancient Greece and Rome, whose artisans made hand-hewn V-carved engraving and bas-relief sculptures on signs carved in stone. Chiseled engraved wood signs have been hung over sidewalks



Fig 1 – Typical Signs & Plaques (see Catalog & Website)

In front of stores in the US and Europe since the seventeenth century. They are still prevalent today in “Old Towns” or historical commercial areas. Today, dimensional signs and plaques are bought by a wide variety of customers, including retail stores, other businesses, farms & ranches, military, the federal /state/local governments, professionals (e.g., attorneys, physicians, dentists, CPA, etc), apartments, and homeowners. These signs and plaques are usually made of wood or synthetic wood-like materials such as High-Density-Urethane, and are now usually carved by 3-D Computer-Numerically-Controlled (CNC) routers, rather than made by hand tools such as chisels and rasps, or hand-held routers. We use five large table routers, the largest being 5x12 ft, but we also hand carve our small areas of our signs with chisels and sandpaper occasionally.

Backgrounds can be smooth or sandblasted in a sandstone (roughened) or woodgrain (raised ridges) texture. The art and text can be carved in a 2.5-D (two to five elevation relief levels, all with a flat surface, often called flat relief) or 3-D (continuously varying curved top surfaces, often called bas-relief or sculptured relief).

3-D signs are more interesting and classic, but take longer to carve and are more expensive. They are usually made only when complex art looks more realistic in true 3-D (such as people, vehicles, flowers, etc.) and the viewer may be within a few feet of the sign. Often a 2.5-D sign uses a small 3-D applique mounted on it. We can also make multi-layer 2.5-D and 3-D signs, with text or art cut separately and affixed to a signboard. These signs are more dimensional.

These dimensional signs can have a variety of surface treatments. They can be hand-painted in full color, stained (if wood), or coated with real bronze, brass, copper, silver-nickel, aluminum, or stainless steel metal. Text and art can also be gilded with 24K gold, silver or copper leaf. Complex and detailed art (like a photograph) can be incorporated into the sign by making a digitally-printed color vinyl applique and attaching it to a flat, smooth area of the sign. All signs are given two clear coats for UV and graffiti protection. All our signs & plaques are designed for both indoor and outdoor use.

Section 2 - What are their advantages and disadvantages compared to flat signs?

Flat signs are two-dimensional. They have vinyl decals which are either solid colors, or multi-color digitally printed vinyl for complex art. Sometimes they are painted, usually with stencil, or direct-printed, using a large flat bed printer.

Typically, smaller flat signs are made from thin sheets (0.1 inch to 0.5 inch) of aluminum, acrylic or HDPE. Large flat signs are made of aluminum, steel, fiberglass, or MDO (medium-density-overlay, or smooth-faced hardwood plywood),

The advantages of carved HDU and wood signs over flat signs are appearance, attention-getting capability, and pride of ownership. People love their carved signs & plaques, which are often described by our customers as gorgeous, beautiful, elegant, etc. In addition to their appearance, HDU signs are waterproof and long-lasting. Like many synthetic materials and plastics, they will last decades without significant degradation, other than some fading of paint due to UV (this takes 7 years or more). Carved wood, especially when stained and clear-coated, has a rich, warm look that a flat sign can never achieve.

There are two disadvantages of a HDU sign compared to a flat aluminum sign, (1) vulnerability to impact forces and (2) higher prices. For signs not mounted on a wall (e.g., hanging sign or post-and-panel signs), we may put a steel frame and sometimes steel cross-beams and uprights behind single faced signs, and embedded and sandwiched between the signboards double-faced signs, for additional strength. HDU signs mounted on a wall are not vulnerable to large impact forces, but free-standing ones can be. We also use 20 lb/ft³ HDU, rather than 15 lb/ft³, to increase the strength of the HDU. We use 30 lb/ft³ HDU when even greater strength and robustness is required (e.g., golf tee signs).

The primary disadvantage of wood for an outside sign is increased maintenance and a more limited lifetime than HDU, aluminum, acrylic and HDPE. Outside stained and clear-coated wood signs which are unprotected from the weather must be clear-coated annually, especially in climates where there is snow, ice, abundant rainfall, a maritime environment, or strong direct UV radiation from the sun. Varnished wood boats prove this point. Natural wood (stained, not painted) signs do best indoors, where they will last decades with very little maintenance (similar to furniture).

If wood signs are painted with Matthews MAP and 1-Shot paints, they are resistant to the weather, but they must be repainted or clear-coated every few years and any tiny cracks or checks filled to prevent the ingress of water, which will cause rot and further cracking, especially where water freezes to ice. However, when painted they look just like HDU signs which hold up better outside, so we recommend that nearly all painted signs mounted outdoors be made of HDU.

We generally recommend HDU for painted outdoor and indoor signs, and we recommend wood only when a natural finish (clear-coat and stain) is desired. Naturally-finished wood should be avoided for outdoor locations unless there is annual maintenance.

maintenance, but it is very desirable for indoor locations. There is no sign as beautiful as a clear-coated, stained and polished Mahogany , Redwood, Maple, Oak or American Cherry sign or plaque.

Section 3 - Who are potential Customers? Virtually any customer you have for flat signs is a potential customer for dimensional signs. We sell to a very wide variety of business, residential, and government customers. Our enclosed Catalog lists 40 different customer groups, as listed below (the number in front indicates the page number in our Catalog). These groups also correspond to our Photo Galleries on our website (same order but different numbers)

11 Attorney & Law Office	31 Seashore Residence & Business
12 Courthouse	32 Nautical & Boat
13 Physician & Health Care	33 Mountain & Forest Cabin
14 Dentist & Orthodontist	34 Lake House & Cottage
15 Veterinarian & Animal Hospital	35 Farm & Ranch
16 Financial(CPA,Banks,Realty,Insurance)	36 Equestrian & Horse
17 Church	37 Restaurant
18 Country Club and Golf Course	38 Winery & Vineyard
19 City and Village Entrance & Wayfinding	39 Bar, Tavern & Pub
20 College & School Entrance & Wayfinding	40 Large Business Identity
21 National & State Park, Campgrounds	41 Retail Store Identity
22 Municipal Park & Garden	42 Small Business Identity
23 Swimming Pool & Tennis Court	43 Hotels, Inns & B&Bs
24 Cemetery & Memorial	44 Federal Government (wall plaques)
25 Street, Traffic and Parking	45 Military - DOD, Navy, Marine Corps
26 Residence Address	46 Military - Air Force, Army, Coast Guard
27 Apartment & Condo Entrance	47 State Government (wall plaques)
28 Apartment & Condo Building, No., etc.	48 County, City, Village (wall plaques)
29 Yard-of-the-Month	49 Police & Fire Dept. (wall plaques)
30 Beach House	50 College, Fraternity, School (wall plaques)

Fig 2 – Customer Groups

In our 15 years of experience, the customer groups that order the most carved dimensional signs are residence address (#26 above), retail store identity signs (#41), farm & ranch (#35), attorney & law (#11), beach house (#30), and military (#45, #46) customers. Our smaller orders range from \$150 to \$1000, and our larger orders (large signs and/or many signs) range from \$5,000 to \$100,000. The largest orders are for apartment complexes (#27 & 28), parks (#21 & 22), city/town identification and wayfinding (#19), colleges/schools (#20), restaurant or retail store chains (#37 and #41), and federal government (#44), because these customer groups may order tens to hundreds of similar signs or plaques.

Our Product Catalog and more specifically our websites www.ArtSignWorks.com and www.woodmetalplaques.com gives a good idea of the customer groups where our dimensional signs have been in most demand. For example, in the last 3 years we have had 700 orders for military signs, #45 & #46, (each order may consist of from 1 to 10 or more signs), but only about 50 orders for Winery & Vineyard Signs (#38). The best selling signs & plaques will depend on your location, your existing customer base, local competition, seasonal effects, and other factors. For example, you would not expect to sell many Beachhouse signs (#30, #31) in Minnesota in the winter. However, our wall plaques do sell very well in the winter, since most are mounted indoors.

Section 4 - How do we make our dimensional signs and plaques ?

We use a cost and labor efficient computer-aided-design and manufacturing (CADAM) approach that produces very high quality custom signs and plaques that are hand-crafted yet affordable. The current computer design software, along with numerically-controlled machine technology, has resulted in a large increase in productivity and quality, as well as a decrease in cost. We have taken full advantage of this technology by investing over \$350,000 in the latest computer and Computer-Numerically-Controlled (CNC) machines and software.



Fig 3 - Two of our five 10 ft x 5 ft CNC Routers



Fig 4a - Wood Sanding & Sandblasting Shop



Fig 4b – Spray Paint Shop

Despite this technology, making custom wood and HDU signs and plaques is still very labor-intensive and time-consuming, and requires experienced craftsmen who are expert in woodworking and precision painting, each using a different process, to make our custom signs. Each sign or plaque undergoes 18 to 22 separate operations during its manufacturing cycle. The minimum time to make a sign or plaque, from start to finish, is 15 work days, because we use up to 5 different powered machines, 4 or 5 CNC

router tool bits, and perform extensive hand-trimming, masking, and hand-sanding. It requires more than a week to dry the 6 to 8 coats of primer, background paint, trim and lettering paint, and clear-coats.

We use a paint spray booths to apply our primer, background color, clear, and metal coatings. However, all of the fine painting is done by hand with a micro-roller, airbrush, or artist brush, which takes many hours per sign. Applying 24K gold or silver leaf and burnishing takes 3 to 6 hours, even for a small applique. Our metal-coated plaques have to be polished by hand, which can take 4 to 6 hours, after they have had rough polishing done by a wheel.

Every custom sign is different. Each sign requires a specific custom design different from any other sign we have made, and machines used for automation must be very flexible to accommodate a very wide range of material types, sizes, shapes, colors, text fonts, carving relief, etc. Since labor and overhead costs are 2/3 of the cost of a sign, the other 1/4 being raw materials, it is important to be very efficient in the use of skilled labor and concentrate our labor and time on creative, rather than repetitive "no-brainer" tasks.

We use an optimum combination of computer-controlled and hand-crafted operations to produce our custom, one-of-kind signs and plaques. We use the very best premium materials, including HDU, Redwood, Cedar, Mahogany, paints, epoxy, and clear-coats. Our computer aided design and manufacturing (CADAM) approach works equally well with both HDU and wood signs of all sizes, on any custom design from simple text to large signs with elaborate and ornate 3D carved text and art. We rely on computer software and automation, but there are also many steps in the manufacturing process where hand-craftsmanship is required to produce a high-quality sign or plaque, using hand tools such as chisels, knives, sand-pads, micro-rollers, airbrushes and artist brushes, and burnishing and polishing tools.

More details on our manufacturing process is given on our website page http://www.artsignworks.com/resources/how_to_make_wood_signs.html

Section 5 - Why do dimensional carved signs cost more than flat signs?

Dimensional signs can cost 3 or 4 times as much as flat signs made of aluminum, and twice as much as HDO/MDO or Color-Core HDPE signs (we also make all of these, but we specialize in wood and HDU). The reasons for the higher prices are simple, materials and labor.

- (1) Material costs for wood or HDU signs are much higher. Raw 20 lb/ft³ HDU sheets 1.5 inches thick cost about \$15/ft² and wood costs about \$30/ft². Thinner (1/2 in to 3/4 in)

Acrylic, Color-Core HDPE , PVC and HDO materials alone (no labor) cost from \$3 to \$7 /ft². Our Matthews and 1-shot paints cost \$200/gallon, and our metal coatings cost \$800/gallon. 24K gold leaf costs \$1800/ounce.

(2) It takes 3 to 5 times as many labor hours for to make carved signs as flat signs. Dimensional carved signs require many hours of cutting, surface planing, edge and face gluing, routing, drilling, sandblasting (requires mask cutting, applying and weeding), machine and hand sanding, spray painting, fine roller and artist brush painting, gold and silver leaf gilding, burnishing, polishing, and packing and crating for shipping. If the sign has an iron frame or back support, metal cutting, welding, grinding and painting or powder coating is required. Nearly all of these are manual operations.

It is far easier, quicker and less expensive to print a vinyl decal, cut and weed it, and apply it to a smooth flat sign, than to make a dimensional sign. It takes 1 to 2 labor hours per square foot to manufacture a carved wood or HDU sign or plaque, depending on its complexity and detail, whereas it may take only an hour or two to fabricate a large 4 x 6 ft (24 ft²) printed vinyl applique flat sign.

Carved dimensional signs, although more expensive, are far more interesting, beautiful, and attention getting, and they make a statement that the owner has a highly successful business or residence.

Section 6 - What are the customer's design options?

The following are the major design options (see the "Sign & Plaque Designs" section of the Product Catalog for more detail):

- Type of Material (Wood species, HDU, Color-Core HDPE, HDO, PVC, Acrylic)
- Size (6 inches to 25 ft)
- Single vs Double-Faced
- Mounting type and location (defines sign structural design)
- 2.5-D, 3-D, Engraved, Mixed Relief(Galleries 1, 2 and 3 of our website www.ArtSignWorks.com) and p. 15 of the product Catalog
- Sandblasted (Sandstone, Wood Grain) Texture vs Smooth (pp 24,34 of Catalog)
- Shape (p. 14 Product Catalog)
- Color (p. 29 of Catalog)
- Font Type (p 17 of catalog)
- Finish (Paint, Stain, Printed Vinyl decal, Gold/Silver Leaf, Metal-Coat) p 18 of Catalog
- Layout
- Artwork

Our Customer Service Representatives, who also act as Project Managers of your project, will work with you to create a design that meets your customer's requirements and expectations.

These design parameters are required in order to definitize the design and prepare the proof (see the next section). They are also listed on the Order Form included at the end of the Catalog.

Section 7 - Can you help us with the design?

We have three full-time Customer Service Representatives / Project Managers, Christie, Regina, and Liz and three full-time sign designers, Derrick, Chris and Kevin, as well as two contract 3-D bas-relief designers. Your initial contact for an order will be phone (951-698-8484) or e-mail (info@artsignworks.com) with either Christie or Regina. Both of these have many years of experience at Art Sign Works and the sign industry, and will be very helpful in helping you establish your design. One of them will be your designated Representative and (nominally) be your single point of contact, and she will be your principal interface throughout the ordering, design, manufacturing, and shipping process.



Fig 5 – Christie



Fig 6- Regina

She will work with you and our designers to create the specific design you and your customer want, and then she works with our manufacturing team (lead is Kevin) to ensure your sign(s) are accurate and faithful to the approved proof, have high quality, and are delivered on schedule. She will know the status of your order and the expected shipping date, and will send you the UPS tracking number. For large or complex signs, she may send you photos of the sign during the manufacturing process for approval.

Our design process centers on iterative proofs, which we prepare and send to you for any changes you or your customer requests. These proofs will not have our name on them so you can share them with your customer. You can develop the design yourself, and we can build to print; or we can work with you to develop an initial proof based on a sketch, a photo of an existing sign. Pages 8 and 12 of the Catalog describe this. A typical proof for a plaque is shown on the next page. It contains all of the specific information required to manufacture the sign or plaque, as specified by you and as also established by our designer during the detailed design development. We may also include photos if we have made a very similar sign before. You may share this proof with your customer (our logo will be removed).

competitive contracts with our retail prices (which 30% to 35% higher than our wholesale prices) and generally are among the lowest of several bidders.

Section 9 - Aren't you competing with us with direct retail sales over the internet?

It is possible, but unlikely. We have taken great care not to allow our name or branding on any of our marketing materials, and we can drop ship blind, so your customers will not be aware that we make the signs and therefore might come to us directly through the internet. Even if they do, our price may not be much lower than yours if you have a moderate markup. We only market through the internet, and we only have one location, in Southern California. We have no retail stores; we are a manufacturer only, and do not even have a license to install signs.

Our retail prices are 30% higher than our wholesale prices so we might have roughly the same price in the unlikely event a customer would find our website on the internet. However, even if your prices are considerably higher than our retail prices, there is a large segment of buyers who prefer to have face-to-face contact with a company representative in a retail store, rather than ordering on the internet. That way, they know the seller, they can see sample products, and if there is any problem, they can resolve it with the person they have been dealing with. They often have more confidence and feel more comfortable seeing a company representative in person than dealing with manufacturer representatives through the internet, with emails and phone calls.

Section 10 - What is the business relationship between my company and Art SignWorks, Inc.?

We have little formality in documentation with our resellers. There is no contract, commitment, or obligation on your part. We have a standard buyer (you)-vendor (Art Sign Works) relationship. These are the principal features:

Proposed Business Relationship

1. You need make **no investment** nor do you have to carry any inventory.
2. We charge **no fees**; everything we supply to you is free (except our signs!).
3. You need make **no commitment as to minimum sales nor do you have to sign any contract**. You might sell zero signs, or 50 signs per year.

4. No special advertising is required; that is up to you.
 5. We do not require exclusivity; if you want to work with other wood or HDU sign manufacturers on a given order, that is OK with us. However, you cannot use Art Sign Work's designs on that order, nor may you provide that design to another manufacturer; all of our sign designs are the intellectual property of Art Sign Works, Inc. and many are copyrighted.
 6. **Every sign is a stand-alone deal.** Your commitment is our commitment if our standard designs are used. We honor our schedule commitments (typically 4 to 5 weeks plus shipping). You can terminate our relationship at any time for any reason by simply not ordering more signs.
 7. **Positive or Neutral cash flow.** 50% down payment on most signs (except for very large orders), and full payment is due upon delivery of our signs to you. We require a valid credit card be on file with us at the time of your first order so we can charge it the day we ship your sign(s). Presumably you will have the same payment plan with your customer so your cash flow will be positive or neutral. If your customer will not pay up front (government agencies may not pay until delivery plus 15 or 30 net), we will waive the up-front payment and our terms with you will be the same as you have with your customer.
 8. **Low marketing cost** in carrying our products ; no special equipment is required. Additional advertising is up to you but is generally not necessary; just add "sandblasted signs", "engraved wood signs", "carved wood signs", and/or "wrought iron scroll brackets and posts" onto your list of products in your normal advertising.
 9. **We guarantee our products.** If our products fall below professional standards in workmanship or we make an error, we of course will either fix the product, replace it, or refund your money. We have a 2 year warranty on our signs, including outdoor signs in adverse climates. This warranty does not cover vandalism, very high winds, accidental impact, or faulty installation.
- Improve Your Bottom-Line.** This is a opportunity for you to add hundreds of attractive, below market-priced products to your portfolio at no cost, no risk, positive cash flow, and minimal impact on your operations. Many of our retail partners sell one to four signs/month, with an average order sale price of \$750 to \$1000. For design studios and sign companies with larger signage contracts (e.g., hotels, apartment and condo complexes, community colleges, resorts, etc), we supply quotes on build-to-print basis the signs you want, and you might integrate and install the signage or component parts.

Section 11 - What kind of marketing aids does Art Sign Works provide to my company to help sell these signs?

We will provide you the following:; (1) This Handbook in both electronic and hard-copy form; (2) an unbranded 52 page Catalog of in high-resolution PDF format; (3) the Catalog in hard copy (see Fig 8 or attached download) ; (4) an HDU sign sample that shows various carving and sandblasted styles (see Fig 9) ; and (5) a desktop display advertising“Carved and "Dimensional Signs & Plaques" ,Fig 10); (6) our Wholesale price list.,(7) a 24x 18 inch unbranded wall poster(Fig 8) and (8) access to



Cover of Unbranded Catalog of Custom Dimensional Signs & Plaques



Wall Poster (Unbranded), 22 x 17 Inches

Fig 8 – Product Catalog and Poster

to our 15,000 photos of products on our two websites www.artsignworks.com and www.woodmetalplaques.com , and permission to use any of them when you are advertising our products. In addition to these free items, if you wish (it is not required), we will design and make an custom HDU or wood wall plaque with your company’s name and logo or brand advertising “ Carved Dimensional Signs & Plaques”, for a deeply discounted price. Your price for this attractive wall plaque is only \$90 for a 24 inch x 18 inch custom carved and sandblasted wall plaque, painted in colors of your choice. (example i Fig 9) Our retail price of this plaque would be \$250. Shipping is free. For repeat customers, we provide this sample for free.



Fig 9 - HDU Sample



Fig 10- Desktop display

For more information, or to receive our Marketing Package, which includes a hard copy of this Handbook, the wholesale price list, a hard copy of the Catalog, the HDU sign sample, and the desktop display, please call us at (951) 608-8484, and ask for Christie, Regina or Liz. You can also email us info@artsignworks.com. We look forward to hearing from you.

Downloading our Catalogs. You can download a low-resolution PDF version of our catalog (350 M) directly from our e-mail link, along with Wholesale Price List upon req. If you want

higher-resolution electronic images of the photos of our signs, you will need to download from our Dropbox. These files are quite large (330M) and may take 20 to 40 seconds to download:

https://www.artsignworks.com/file_download/e315ef97-e182-45f3-8646-08a994695285

The advantages of this hi-res version is you can zoom in on a photo and it will still look good. Our printed version of this Handbook also has higher resolution than the lower-resolution PDF version . Our website www.ArtSignWorks.com also has approximately 750 x 750 pixel resolution of most of the photos in the Catalog, but requires a little searching in the proper Gallery to find the proper photo. The Photo Galleries on the website are listed in the same order as Fig 2, page 6 of this Handbook, and their names are similar but their numbering is different. E.g., 15 examples of signs for Item 40 in Fig 2 above, “Large Business Identity” signs are also included in Gallery 28 “Business & Large Store Entrance & Monument Signs” on the website www.artsignworks.com, where Gallery 28 contains over 150 photos.

Section 12 - Design and Manufacturing Capability

This section describes in more detail our design and manufacturing process for your reference.

We will do the detailed production/shop design for any sign shape; edge routing; multiple borders; any fonts; engraved or raised letters; deep-cut CNC routing with a smooth or textured background; elaborate and detailed 3D carved appliques or insets from our library; multi-level sandblasting with some hand-carving of art if required; multi-color painting including sample matching .You do NOT have to supply machine-ready vector art in an AI or EPS file (although we prefer you do); we will produce it if necessary, whereas other wholesale sandblast sign suppliers may require you to supply production vector art. Our prices include CNC carving with our five 5x10 ft high-speed router tables, which can produce a much more dramatic 3D depth effect (1 to 1.5 in) and intricate carved letters and artwork, that sandblasting (0.25 to 0.5 inch depth) alone cannot achieve.

We provide custom quality 3D carved signs for only slightly higher prices that sandblast discount companies sell their "plain vanilla" signs for.

We produce high-quality sandblasted, engraved, and hand-carved wood and HDU signs in our state-of-the art design and manufacturing factory. Our design computer programs include Adobe Illustrator CS5, Photoshop, Aspire 2.5 3-D Modeling, a large library of Vector 3D clipart, and V-Carve Pro 3D software. We have very capable SOA woodworking and paint shops, with a high capacity sand blast booth and a paint spray and airbrush booth that can handle 15 ft long signs, five large-table (10 ft x 5 ft) CNC routers, several saws, a drill press, a large planer, a large belt sander, small powered tools, and hand carving and painting tools. We also have a complete wrought iron manufacturing capability (cutting, bending, drilling, welding, and coating) and make both steel and wood sign hangers and support structures. We have the capability of producing over 30 medium and large signs per week, or hundreds of small signs. We guarantee our signs for 2 years and guarantee your satisfaction on the delivered products (including shipping) - you have no risk as the retailer except for specification errors in the drawings or other info you send to us.