

Time-saving shortcuts for the Gerber Edge 2

A press of a button takes you back Home again

If you own a Gerber Edge 2, there's a feature built in to it that can save you money, materials, time and energy. It's not even hidden—it's the *Home* button, right there on the console. The *Home* command was built into the machine so you could locate a consistent beginning location in case you make a mistake, run out of materials during a run or have communication errors between your systems. When the *Home* command is pressed, the drum will return to that exact place every time. To make my life easier, I put a black, permanent marker stroke at the home set of pins on the drum.

When I begin a job on the Edge 2, I usually set the *Home* first and then load the vinyl. Normally, things go correctly and everything prints fine. On occasions, though, there's a problem—usually involving materials. For example, say I have to print 20 images using two or more foil colors on 20 feet of vinyl. After running about 18 feet of vinyl and foil, I realize I don't have enough vinyl. I have to stop the job near the end of the vinyl. I know

I have about 18 feet of vinyl and foil used, but still need to print another couple of foil colors.

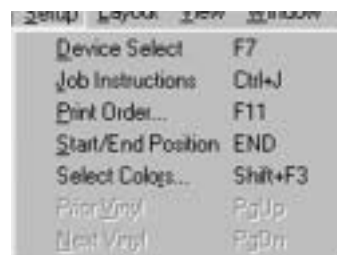
The *Home* command can save the day. I would delete all the jobs in the Plot Spooler, press the reset button on the Edge 2 console, then go back to the "repeats" box on the plot/print software. If I had originally put in 20 as the repeat number and I was only able to get 17 out of the vinyl, I'd change that back to 17. I press the *Home* key and it will bring the three alignment pins to the top so I can register the vinyl in the same place.

Okay—I have run the first color on the 17 useable prints, so I don't want to run that color over itself. Another powerful software feature in Graphix Advantage/Omega is the *Select Colors* command in the plot/print software. This command is found under Setup>Select Colors. It lets you turn off specific foils you don't want to use on the current job. In this case, I would turn off the first color already used by unselecting it.

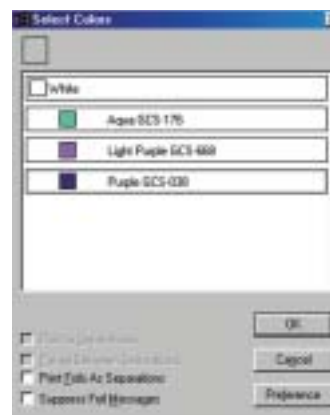
Now it's only a matter of hitting the *Print to Edge* command and the *Plot to Cutter*



Under the Setup pull-down menu is a command called *Start/End Positions*. This tells the printer and plotter where to end when the current job is printed or plotted. I changed my settings so that the printer starts and ends at the same place. This way, I can use the *Select Colors* command to send just one color to the current job if necessary.



You'll find the *Select Colors* box under the Setup Pull-down menu.



Here's the *Select Colors* box with all colors defaulted to print. Note that the box outlines are black.



After I clicked on the Aqua and Light Purple, their box outline disappears indicating that they won't print. I can now tell the Edge that I need to print on White vinyl with Purple foil.

commands again. The registration will be perfect for the current 17 repeats. Of course, I still need to run the three pieces that didn't print originally, but I won't have a big pile of unusable vinyl and printed foil.

Don't overlook the Select Colors command

Unlike the *Home* button that is right on the console, the *Select Colors* command is a little more hidden in the software. But, it is equally powerful once you understand what it does. It can be a timesaver on some day-to-day jobs where you create a single job that your customer wants in different colors. You could fool

the machine by simply putting in a different color cartridge than you originally specified, but Gerber [Gerber Scientific Products, Inc., 800-222-7446, www.gspinc.com] has matched print-head speed and foil colors on all their substrates and foils. In other words, they have optimized each foil for each type of material they sell. If you manually fool the printer, you might not be getting optimum print quality.

So, if you assign the single file with a variety of colors, you can select the color you will use from the *Select Colors* feature and run only that color. I usually make extra copies of the other desired colors on the main Composer/

Print a panel instead of worrying about traps or bleeds



1. This is a fictional job that uses only light blue vinyl and black foil. It will print in one pass up to 11.8 in. tall. Here's the basic layout with a combined outline and shadow on the main copy with light blue lines and dots.



2. I've added three shortcut boxes to the areas I want to be black. By using the box on the headline area, I don't have to worry about dead-on alignment of the printed image and final cut.



3. Next, I assigned black with no cuts to all three boxes. The blue lines and dots remain "no fill" so they simply cut from the blue vinyl. Finally, I assign a "Clear/No Cuts" to the *WaterWorks* lettering and bring it to front if necessary. The small copy and phone numbers are cut on the black printed panels. This eliminates the need for a "bleed"—saving time and resulting in a better job with no halos.



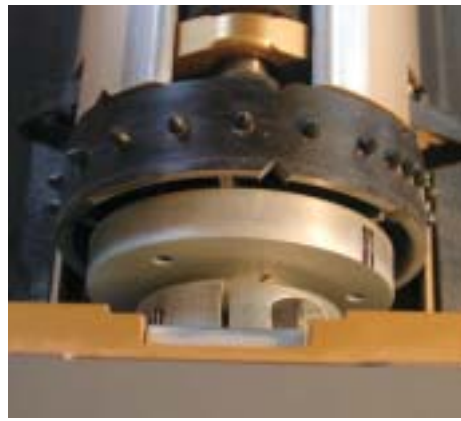
4. Once I think I have everything assigned, I hit F8 to *Show Filled* to preview the job prior to printing and cutting. It looks odd, but I can tell that I have the cuts turned on in the right places and the correct areas printed. I also usually pull down the "Select" menu to see if I have any "Cut/Print" elements in the job. Most often they will be the source of any unforeseen problems. If that option is grayed out, I know I don't have any on this job. If that option is available, I click on it to see what would be cut *and* printed, then fix the problem.



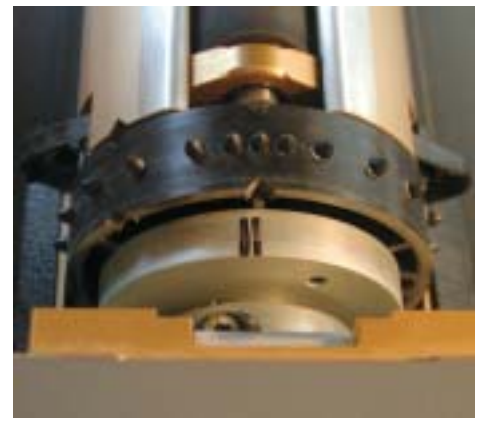
5. Once printed and cut, the job would look like this if it were applied on a white vehicle. This job would be simple and profitable with little wasted time or material. It could be applied to the truck in one piece in a few minutes.



The *Home* button is located on the front of an Edge 2. It's a new and powerful feature. When pressed, it rotates the drum counterclockwise until the home set of three pins aligns in the Home position.



Only one set of three pins is the Home group of pins. I marked that set with a permanent marker on my machine so I can slew around until the marks are just to the right of the Home position, then I press the *Home* button.



Once the machine rotates the drum to its Home position, it looks like this. If I start all my jobs at the Home position, I know I can start the job again in the exact place on the vinyl and it will match up perfectly.

Omega screen and print those as needed, but at least you could see how it could work.

Printing a box saves time and disk space If I had to choose one thing the Edge 2 does that makes life easier, it would be making outlines and shades on basic lines of text. On a set of boat-license letters, for example, we often outline them and sometimes include a shade in the same color. Instead of two layers of vinyl with the necessary registration issues, we print the outline and shade on the appropriate vinyl color. You can do it on the headline of a 4 by 8 or the main text on a truck door. It's something most sign shops do regularly and the Edge 2 makes it easy.

Besides the mechanical tolerances of the process, there is a human error factor to consider when printing and cutting. This can cause unsightly gaps between a print and the adjoining cut vinyl. This issue is also common to the printing and screening industry. There are a lot of ways to get around the issue in the Graphix Advantage/Omega software, including using *Strokes*, *Traps*, *Bleeds* and so forth. Some sound more complicated than they really are. Gerber includes a very simple *Bleed* command that lets you enter the amount of bleed. It then assigns the current color to the new bleed and turns off the fill on the original shape, leaving it as a cut line. But, for the quick jobs I "cheat" a little and save both time and disk space.

On the average boat-number job, we enter the text in the appropriate letter style and height and add a .15-in. outline in a contrasting color—often black. If you don't create a "bleed" of some sort, you must be very accurate when aligning the vinyl in the plotter.

The bleed prints beyond the edges of the cuts, giving you a little slop when making the final cuts. The commonly accepted way of creating a bleed is to add a small .03-in. outline around the cut-line edges. Fill to that line with the desired color, and then cut on the original outline with *None* assigned to those lines. The original numbers would be assigned *Clear/No Cuts*, which would let the vinyl color show through.

To simplify this process a little more, instead of creating the .03 outline, I make a box around the entire thing and assign it with the outline/shade color. The first outline/shade is then assigned a fill of *None*. This creates a *Cut Only* line. I assign *Clear/No Cuts* to the original numbers, which knocks out the black, letting the vinyl show through. This might not sound like a big savings, but it is. If you were outlining all the lettering on a menu, for example, not having to outline huge chunks of text saves processing time and file size.

Another way of creating the bleed would be to assign a thin "stroke" to the cut line in the same color as the outline/shade. Make sure that the outline/shade and the stroke have the same thermal attributes. In other words, the stroke may come in defaulted to *Overprint* and the original outline shade might have had the normal settings, causing the printer to run two passes when you only needed one. *SC



After over 23 years of running his own commercial shop, Mike Jackson and Darla, his wife, now operate Golden Era Studios in Jackson, Wyoming, and do a variety of sign-related projects. His Web site is www.goldenstudios.com. His E-mail address is golden@goldenstudios.com.