

What's it cost to produce this fascia sign?

A funky sign can wake up a traditional building

By Gary Johnson

My website developer, Ridge Marketing (www.ridgemarketing.com), purchased a building just steps away from my own. When the owner, Rob Quincy, approached me for a sign I was hoping he would be open to something other than off-the-shelf plastic letters. His building looks like a small barn—a structure that did not scream the kind of cutting-edge design that Ridge Marketing normally produces. So I suggested his sign should be over-the-top to compensate.

I felt metal was the way to go, so I sent him photos of some edgy-looking metal signs. Rob really took to the rusted examples. He felt the rusted look bridged the gap between the rustic look of the barn and the modern look of the sign with its curve and almost neon-green logo.

By coincidence, I had just returned from the 2013 Indiana Sign Workshop hosted by Rob Jones. One of the instructors was Peter Poanessa of Keene Signworx, New Hampshire. If you are familiar with Peter's work, you know he incorporates a lot of curves into his designs and sometimes uses rust as a background texture, so I have to give some credit to him for the inspiration.

After working out a rough design on paper, I created a scale model for the owner to see. He was instantly sold on the concept. The hemispherical logo is carved from 30-lb. 2-in.

Precision Board HDU using Enroute 4 software on a Gerber Dimension 200 Router. I finished it with Benjamin Moore Exterior Latex paint, using a Critter Gun.

The curved panel is 1/16-in.-thick sheet steel over a framework of 1-by-1-in. square steel tube. It has a 12-in. arch over its 9-ft. span. I welded supports between the curved rods at the ends of the panel, plus one in the center for good measure. One-eighth-in.-thick steel plate was welded at each end for mounting plates.

Rather than rusting the metal while it was flat, I chose to do it after curving the metal, which created that awesome-looking variegated effect. The effect was created using common table salt dissolved in water and applied with an inexpensive hand pump sprayer.

I kept the sign wet in the shade for a few days and like magic, tiger stripe rust appeared. The curve allowed the salt water solution to drain. The water tended to drain off using the same paths every time, which caused the tiger stripe variegation.

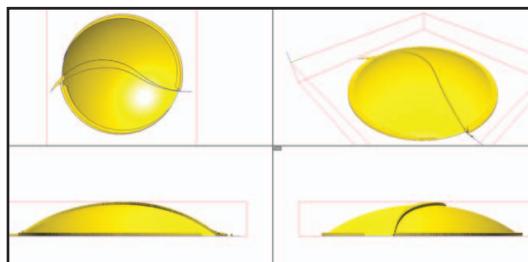
I had the customer look at it from time to time. When we were both happy with the effect I halted the rusting with a baking soda and water solution that I sprayed on and let dry. I then drilled the holes to accommodate the stud-mounted 1-in.-thick PVC letters.

Materials:

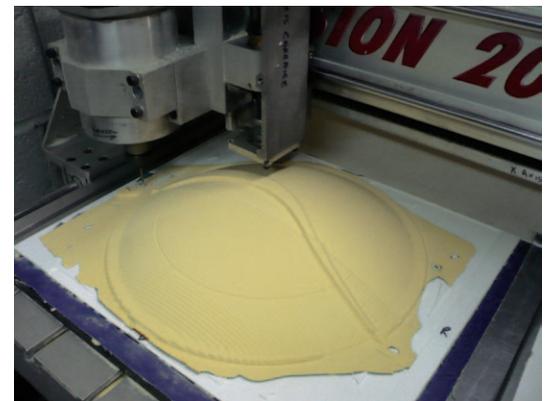
Steel.....	\$125
Steel bending	\$130
Paint	\$121
30lb. Precision Board HDU for circle logo.....	\$85
30mm PVC board for lettering, circle logo backer and french cleats.....	\$126
Stand offs and nuts	\$18
Total materials.....	\$605

Labor:

Approval drawings.....	3 hours
Scale model.....	2 hours
Cut and bend steel	3 hours
Welding	3 hours
Sand and wire brush sheet steel.....	1 hour
Spray on salt water to activate rust then soda solution to stabilize.....	2 hours
Cut, paint, mount letters..	6 hours
Route, paint circle logo.....	8 hours
Assemble and install	3 hours
Total time	31 hours



1. Route and finish circle logo: 8 hours The 22-in. diameter logo layout was routed from 2-in. thick HDU board.





2. Fabricate steel panel: 7 hours I subbed the bending out to my steel supplier then did the assembly.



3. Rust the panel: 2 hours Table salt dissolved in water was used to expedite the rusting of the steel. Once the effect was right, I neutralized it with a solution of baking soda and water.



4. Cut, paint and mount letters: 6 hours The letters were cut from PVC board on the CNC router, finished, then mounted on standoffs.



5. Assemble and install: 3 hours The logo was installed using a french cleat so that there were no visible fasteners, then the sign was bolted to the wall.



The customer is thrilled with the project. He's received a lot of compliments on the bold design from customers and neighbors alike. We rushed to get the sign ready for their opening but would like to add LED lighting behind the lettering and logo to produce a halo of light against the background in the future.

This sign was awarded 1st place honors in the United States Sign Council's Annual Sign Design Competition for 2013 for non-illuminated building sign. **SC**



Gary Johnson's shop, The Great American Sign Co., is in Basking Ridge, New Jersey.

