



Seneca Park Zoo Takes Signage Production In-House To Produce Durable, Weatherproof Full-Color Signs—Instantly

“Now we can have nice all-weather signs to put up for the day... And we can get it done instantaneously.”

—T.C. Pellett, Marketing and Corporate Relations Director for Seneca Park Zoo

Challenge

The Seneca Park Zoo, located in Rochester, NY, needed to do something about its undersized signage. For years, the outdoor year-round facility was creating one-off plastic laminate signs for the facility's more than 50 animal paddocks and multiple recycling receptacles. This process caused several challenges, including the laminate not being able to withstand the harsh conditions for more than a few months. It also couldn't be easily replaced or updated, and didn't mesh well with the zoo's environmentally-friendly mission. The Seneca Park Zoo needed a new, time and cost-effective way to create small signage that could survive summer and winter conditions, leaving little to no environmental impact and staying in-line with the zoo's public image.

As a non-profit, the Seneca Park Zoo Society did not have the funds for a dedicated in-house design staff to produce the small signage. They contracted with an outside company for their larger signs, but to keep costs down, created smaller signs on 8 1/2" x 11" paper which were then laminated. Turnaround time could be several days, so as a result, last-minute announcements such as, "Sea lions are unavailable today due to pool cleaning," typically were hand written and tacked up at the main gate.

And the plastic lamination? It didn't hold up in the extreme range of elements this outdoor facility saw year-round, and the signs were contrary to the zoo's mission of leaving little to no negative environmental impact.

"Those plastic signs definitely didn't support our goal of being stewards of the environment," said T.C. Pellett, Marketing and Corporate Relations Director for Seneca Park Zoo.

Solution

Toshiba Business Solutions-New York (TBS-NY) created a tailored, innovative and elegantly simple solution to meet the unique needs of the Seneca Park Zoo Society: pair the award-winning Toshiba e-STUDIO3510C

color multifunction product (MFP) with AquaAce paper. Relying on the Toshiba e-STUDIO3510c's accurate text and rich, vibrant color output, the zoo could now create environmentally-friendly and visually appealing signage on-site, responding quickly to its daily needs while still matching the existing corporate persona, colors and logo. AquaAce is a durable, waterproof paper that stands up to New York's extreme outdoor environment and better suits the active, youthful visitors of the Seneca Park Zoo. Because AquaAce supports the photo-quality printing of the e-STUDIO3510c MFP, the new signage is now more descriptive and interactive for the zoo's public. Additionally, the zoo found that the AquaAce signs lasted 80 percent longer than the plastic laminate, reducing the number of sign reprints required throughout the year and ultimately improving operational costs.



Background

At the Seneca Park Zoo, life never stands still. Throughout all four seasons, the zoo welcomes up to 330,000 visitors to its 15-acre facility, where nearly 250 species are on display at any given time.

"We're a small zoo," says Pellett, "but we're part of the global Species Survival Plan that helps to save many animals from extinction." As a result, new animals constantly arrive from zoos worldwide, while others depart—each time necessitating signage to communicate where the animal has gone and the reason for it.

Events, kids' camps, seminars and promotions change daily as well. And now, with a major expansion in the works, the Seneca Park Zoo will ultimately double in size. Additionally, the zoo has more than 25 separate recycling containers that require clear, easy to read and simple to understand signage.

Seneca Park Zoo is open year-round, so these changes occur in the public eye. Guests need to know, for example, if an exhibit is unavailable for the day or that a walkway is closed for construction. With each change in the life of the zoo comes the need for clear, consistent communication through signage. Until recently, this presented a series of nagging problems.

"We want our signage to look good in order to enhance the guest experience, and we want to support our corporate image with graphics that use our fonts, designs and logo—in color," says Pellett. "It's also important that we educate the public about the fact that we're a 'green' facility."

Pellett contacted Salley Thornton of Toshiba Business Solutions-New York (TBS-NY), to find a better solution to their signage woes. The TBS-NY solution: pairing an e-STUDIO3510c color multifunction product (MFP) with AquaAce paper. With this new solution in-house, the two-person Seneca Park Zoo marketing/public relations staff now has become its own signage production center, completely eliminating the need for an outside vendor to create small signs.

"There's money in the budget for the large, wide-format signs at the zoo," says Pellett. "But for signs on this small scale, the new system is perfect. For instance, we have a butterfly exhibit that's open spring through fall. In the

winter, when the butterflies go away, we turn it into a backyard bird habitat, so we create small signs to explain the change."

In addition, last-minute scheduling changes are no longer announced in black marker. Sea lions indisposed? The staff lets the public know with a professional-looking sign.

"We now can have nice all-weather signs to put up for the day featuring a photo of the sea lion in full color. And we can get it done instantaneously. It makes us look good, and seamlessly follows our marketing strategy with zoo images, fonts and logos," added Pellett.

The e-STUDIO3510c with AquaAce paper has found additional usage beyond signage as well. Now, the Seneca Park Zoo's daily schedule of special events also includes small-scale signage, durable activity worksheets and colorful, picture-laden zoo maps. For example, in celebration of the Year of the Frog, the zoo held a series of amphibian-themed events. As guests arrived, small-scale



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signs directed them to the "Frog Temporary Tattoo Station" and "Frog Jump" event on the lawn across from the FROGS! exhibit. For other youth-oriented events, such as scavenger hunts and summer camps, the staff finds the AquaAce paper indispensable for their promotional collateral materials. Pellett adds, "You can't tear it and you can pour water directly on it. It's kid-proof!"

Seneca Park Zoo also uses these long-lasting, weather-proof, kid-proof, small-scale signs to label their recycling bins and some animal paddocks, as well as to support marketing and fundraising activities. Overall, the system has dramatically reduced the cost of producing signs, while increasing the outdoor lifespan of the signs themselves. The printer solution has enabled quick turnaround times, which help the marketing/PR staff be more responsive to the needs of grounds keepers and animal handlers.

"Being 'green' and environmentally friendly is critical now more than ever," Pellett concludes. "As a zoo, we have a responsibility to be an educational resource as well as an advocate for animals. As such, we should not use products that will adversely affect animals' habitats. So by cutting down our paper use, reducing our waste and eliminating the use of plastic laminate, we demonstrate to the public that we 'walk the talk,' all while communicating the evolving circumstances of the zoo's offerings in a way that is consistent and colorful. Toshiba and AquaAce have provided the perfect solution for us."