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The Sign of a Success

By Kathy Hunt

You're driving down an unfamiliar street, scanning the buildings and storefronts on either side with no success, when your GPS announces that you have arrived at your destination. You look around, stumped. Technology must have failed you for you don't see any indication of the sought-after dentist's office, hair stylist, or hardware store. Or perhaps you've agreed to meet friends at the only funnel cake stand at an outdoor festival. Weaving through the crowds, you pass tent after tent advertising fries, cotton candy, and other carnival specialties. Yet you can't spot the one vendor who doles out that powdered sugar-dusted treat.

In both scenarios bad directions are not to blame. Instead, it's the absence of clear, eye-catching signage that has led you astray. Chances are, you aren't the first who has struggled to locate that office, store, or food purveyor.

Located at 70 Buckwalter Road Suite 407, Signarama Limerick makes it easy for customers to find your business and for you to promote your services to them. Franchise owner Phil White and his team have helped area businesses small and large to connect with consumers since November 2004.

"We're very hands on and work closely with customers to help them grow their business," White said.

LOCAL EXPERTISE WITH GLOBAL SUPPORT

Prior to opening his Signarama shop, White worked in retail, specifically "big box retail," for several years. He was inspired to follow a similar career path by a friend who owned a sign business.

"I have a passion for signs, the uniqueness of every sign, and for helping businesses get off the ground and grow. So, I researched sign companies, found that the Signarama franchise was the way for me to go, and have loved it ever since. It's never the same job twice.



Every job is custom so you get to work very closely with customers, learn what they need, and help them expand their businesses with the advertising that we design. It's very hands on," he said.

"We take the time to understand your business before creating the right sign for your space."

White, who resides in Colleagueville, chose to open his franchise in Limerick. By the end of 2005, he had more than doubled the first year's sales plan. Due to the company's rapid growth, he has moved the business within Limerick three times — from locations on 10th Avenue and Ridge Pike to its current site in the Limerick Square Shopping Center on Buckwalter Road. Signarama moved to its newest location in May 2022. Each time, the company has relocated to a larger facility.

With over 35 years of experience and locations all around the globe, Signarama the franchisor is the world's leading signs and graphics franchise. It is among the Starpoint Brands constellation of trusted companies, which collectively serves millions of customers in 60+ countries with over 1,600 locations.

The Florida-based franchisor is recognized for its extensive array of advertising products and its commitment to seeing a project through from concept to installation. Signarama encourages a collaborative environment, not only between clients and franchise staff but also among its franchises. Should a designer or other team member need guidance on a project or problem, help is just a call or keystroke away.

To ensure that franchises stay on top of the latest trends and advances, Signarama holds ongoing training sessions for all its franchisees and quarterly meetings to keep everyone up to date on vendors, materials, and processes. In addition to these company-sponsored events, White attends sign conferences in various cities including Las Vegas, Orlando, and Atlanta to learn about the newest and best materials and processes that can benefit his customers. This includes Signarama's own annual convention, SARCON, occurring annually in partnership with the International Sign Association's annual convention.

Along with providing a supportive and educational buying experience to its clients, Signarama advocates giving back to the communities in which its franchises work. An example of its philanthropic spirit is its "Signs of Support" program, which awards local nonprofits with grants to create or replace branded signs and other advertising materials.

In 2021, White was recognized by Signarama corporate offices for his charitable work in the Limerick region and for donating approximately \$10,000 annually to Montgomery County food banks, toy drives and other nonprofit organizations and events. That same year, in his role as co-chair of Limerick Uncorked, he helped to raise \$20,000 for local charities.

White also currently serves on Signarama's Franchise Advisory Council, which is made up of ten franchise owners from across the U.S. The group helps with strategic planning and innovation for the brand, providing the corporate team with feedback from other franchise owners on various brand initiatives.

CREATING THE PERFECT SIGN FOR YOUR BUSINESS

Whether you're just starting your business or looking to refresh your brand, the prospect of crafting a sign to hang on your building or inside your business may seem daunting. What best represents the essence of your business? What will customers find both eye-catching and appealing? What materials will stand up to unpredictable weather and seasons? Fortunately, the team at Signarama Limerick can help answer those questions and more.

"Prior to coming to us, many companies already have their concept or logo, but we do offer logo creation," White said. "For the sign designs themselves, we layout 90 percent of the signs. Layout is a free service that we offer with the purchase of signs."

White has a dedicated in-house designer, Dane Dewees, who collaborates with each customer to ensure their needs are met in the end-product.

"Dane is also our shop manager and he's an integral part of our organization. He started with us when he was still in college and has been doing graphic design here for 17 years," White said. He added that the company recently hired a full-time designer to assist Dewees.

Prior to the design phase, a member of the Signarama team reviews the customer's budget and what type of advertising best suits their business. Then, they look at the proposed location of the sign in relation to the street and automobile and foot traffic. After that, they consider how much information should appear on the sign. White pointed out that, if a sign has too many details on it, no one will bother to read it or be able to see it from a distance.

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COVER STORY

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From there, the conversation moves on to color, size, and material for the sign. “The material depends on the end use of the sign, but, if it’s for a building, we tend to use metal or aluminum,” White said.

Yet another consideration is the type of sign permitted by the building’s landlord or surrounding community. White noted that some landlords only allow channel lettering, which are three-dimensional, illuminated letters. He added that Signarama fees are based upon the sign’s square footage and not by the number of letters. Additionally, the company offers free site surveys and job estimates.

“We have a lot of capabilities, everything from business cards to general lettering on the outside of a building, and we can advise and educate our customers when it comes to getting the right sign,” said Nicholas Diamond, business advisor for Signarama’s northeast region. “It’s not just selling the sign. It’s helping customers through the process. Phil [White] has set up a beautiful showroom here where we can put our hands on the materials and customers can see and feel the difference between them. With all our capabilities, this is where we beat the competition.”

White added that during the past 12 to 18 months, his business has upgraded its equipment to include a flat-bed printer capable of direct-to-substrate printing and a climate-controlled garage.

ADVERTISING ON BUILDINGS, AUTOMOBILES, BOATS, AND MORE

Signarama’s products don’t begin and end with indoor/outdoor signs. White and his team design and create decals, stickers, labels, posters, floor graphics, flags, banners, trade show displays, vinyl vehicle wraps, and graphics for boats, buses, trucks, and other vehicles. Presently, the most requested type of sign is vehicle graphics. As the company’s website states, “From a single vehicle to an entire fleet, vehicle signs are an extremely cost-effective way to be seen. With a one-off investment lasting up to five years, it makes sense to turn your vehicle into a mobile billboard, spreading your message 24/7.”

Signarama offers several options for vehicle signs. Customers can choose vinyl graphics or a complete vehicle wrap, which, as the name suggests, consists of printed vinyl that wraps around your car or truck. An ultraviolet laminate protects the digitally printed graphic from UV rays, weather, and other elements. Within vinyl graphics, customers have the option of standard or reflective. The latter possesses a shiny, metallic base that reflects light and is quite vibrant. Vinyl graphics can be applied to boats as well as land vehicles.

Full color, self-adhesive, one-way vision graphics are yet another possibility. Applied to car and truck windows, they allow passersby to view the business’s information while still permitting the driver to see clearly. A lower cost alternative to graphics and wraps are digitally printed, vinyl car magnets.

The majority of Signarama’s products are made on site, White said. However, a Signarama facility in Philadelphia fabricates its large signs and channel letters.

Among the local businesses utilizing Signarama Limerick’s services are Oehlert Bros., Lewis Environmental,



Gorski Engineering, Phoenixville Federal Bank, First Colonial Bank, Christ’s Church of the Valley, Pope John Paul II High School, Corropelese Bakery, and the fire companies in Limerick and Linfield.

“With Oehlert Brothers, we were able to help them rebrand their entire fleet with graphics — about 30 to 35 vehicles — over the last several years, and we work with Lewis Environmental, which is a staple in Royersford, to develop signage in the community. Rick Lewis is working on a project called “Riverfront at Royersford” with shops, offices, trails, and restaurants — we will be working on the signage for that project as well,” White said.

FORGING COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

A percentage of Signarama’s patronage comes as a result of White’s close ties to Limerick and the surrounding area. From 2006 to 2020, he was a member of the Spring-Ford Rotary Club and continues to work closely with the service organization. He counts Rick Lewis of Lewis Environmental as one of the connections made during his time as a Rotarian. Currently, White belongs to the Royersford Business Association and Spring City Business Association and is a board member of the Perkiomen Valley Chamber of Commerce.



In addition to his membership in these professional groups, White participates in Limerick Uncorked, the town's annual fall wine and beer festival and fundraiser. Held at Limerick Community Park, the Saturday afternoon event features local wine, beer, spirits, and food purveyors as well as artists, craftspeople and other vendors. Proceeds from the event benefit the Limerick Parks and Recreation department and community charities.

In September 2023, White will mark his fifth year of co-running the festival on behalf of the Spring-Ford Rotary and Limerick Parks and Rec. Limerick Signarama is also a sponsor of Limerick Uncorked and creates the signs for this event.

The good works don't end with this event. White and his team donate to food pantries — Daily Bread Community Food Pantry in Collegeville and Open Door in Royersford — and participate in Pottstown's Operation 143. The nonprofit provides backpacks filled with shelf-stable food to children experiencing food insecurity in the Pottstown area, Norristown, Spring-Ford, Boyertown, and Upper Perkiomen Valley. Additionally, White contributes to fundraisers and other events that benefit local first responders.

White's commitment to community extends to his Signarama staff. "We know everyone's spouses and children and we go out for family dinners and events (like corn hole tournaments). This summer we have a trip planned to a Reading Phillies game and we tell our employees to bring their children, bring their spouses, and bring whoever else. We are very proud of the family atmosphere here and that we get along as a family," White said.



For White, Signarama embraces family in the literal sense. His wife, Mary, is the office manager and his partner in the business. "She has been my support system since we started planning this business back in 2001," he said.

At Signarama, White maintains an open-door policy. Customers don't need to schedule an appointment to see the showroom or speak to a member of his team.

He encourages prospective and existing clients to stop by Monday through Thursday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and on Friday from 9 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. They can phone Signarama at 484.961.8802 or email info@signarama-limerick.com. They can also visit the company website at

Signarama-Limerick.com