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River Products offers Mid-South new sign system

By David Flaum

Contact

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The mainstays of David Buring's enterprise have always been industrial chemicals and janitorial supplies, although he has dabbled recently in the sign business.

First, he owned rotating billboards on trucks.

Now, Buring and his River Products are the Tennessee distributor for a new type of lighted sign, one that is lightweight, flexible and has sharper graphics than most illuminated displays.

"This is going to change the way people look at signage, the way people use signage," Buring said. "I haven't been this excited about something in a long time. This has such potential."

Using new technology, sign makers put photos, drawings and graphics on transparent vinyl, then mount it on what Buring called a flexible light bulb.

The device comes from CeeLite, a Lansdale, Pa., company that manufactures and markets the light-emitting backdrops. The largest is 4 by 8 feet, but bigger ones are under development, said Gabrielle

Santulli, marketing director.

The firm picked Buring as Tennessee distributor, she said, because it "seeks distributors who share our entrepreneurial spirit, have long-standing relationships in their territory and a strong background in the signage and advertising industries. We recognized all these talents in David Buring, a fifth-generation Tennessean, who has successfully owned and built several companies, including Double J Outdoor Advertising that was recently sold to Clear Channel Communications."

Buring has his own explanation for his entrepreneurial streak.

"I get bored selling the same old thing. I like to do new things," he said.

And the backlit signs are new.

They can be hung in a window with nothing more than double-sided tape and the design possibilities are much greater than with standard lighted signs, Buring said.



Dave Darnell/The
Commercial Appeal

David Buring holds a "CeeLite," a flat, flexible light source used in advertising, such as the backlit signs behind him. He is president of River Products, Inc.

"It's fully lit, it has no black spots, it's easy to move around and change," said Joyce Lower, owner of Joyce Signs, which has an alliance with Buring to produce signs. "It's a way of getting an image you can't do the traditional way.

Lower said she's had interest in such signs from property management firms.

"Paper signs run together and people don't even see them," Lower said. "(CeeLite signs) draw the eye more than all the glass plastered with for rent, for rent, for rent (signs)."

The technology also has a great potential for producing company logos that couldn't be made before, she said.

"Whoever starts using it first, they are going to have an edge," Lower said.

One of the first in Memphis is Corky's Bar-B-Q.

Corky's downtown restaurant has a CeeLite sign of a pitmaster cooking a rack of ribs.

"It's being enough where when you're walking down the street or driving you can see it there," said Barry Pelts, Corky's president.

Such signs also will help the restaurant chain in cities where it's not well known, he said.

For example, the company is opening a store in the Fort Lauderdale, Fla., airport.

"They might like barbecue, but they don't know Corky's," Pelts said. "You can only do that (create interest) with pictures."

And, the signs are less expensive, more mobile and less cumbersome than traditional backlit signs, he said.

Those are factors Buring is counting on to spur business, especially for signs inside stores -- on counters or near displays.

"They can fade in and out, they can flash," he said. "If you can catch someone's eye, you're doing a huge promotion of the product."

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Top person: David Buring, president.

New product: CeeLite backlit advertising and display signs.

Employees: 2

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