



Rapt on wrap

Using your vehicle as marketing collateral

Treat your wrapped vehicle as a rolling billboard, not as transportation. That's the strategy Ken LeBlanc, president and CEO of PropertyGuys.com, expects his 108 franchisees at 120 locations to use to maximize brand awareness and exposure across Canada.

"Our franchisees' vehicles function primarily as mobile billboards with transportation as the supplementary purpose," says LeBlanc, of Moncton, New Brunswick, whose private sale program has been connecting real estate buyers and sellers since 1998. "Our franchisees' firsthand experience with wrapped vehicles supports market research that for our type of business, the wrapped vehicles' return on investment is second only to storefronts, and well ahead of websites and traditional media such as radio, print and television ads."

In fact, PropertyGuys.com's belief in vehicle wrapping's ability to promote the brand, while suggesting a level of professionalism and permanence is such that franchisees must fully cover a two-box vehicle (practically any vehicle except a sedan) in the PropertyGuys.com's corporate wrap within six months of becoming franchisees. They typically spend an average of \$2,000, with the cost ranging from \$1,500 to \$3,000 depending on the size of the vehicle, which range from Hummers to Volkswagen Beetles or Mini Coopers. In most cases, the car or SUV needs to attract just a few listings to pay for the vinyl wrap and application.

"Statistics show that in any urban centre, a

wrapped vehicle gets 8.4 million impressions annually, although in a smaller city, the same person may see it three to five times versus once in a larger metropolitan area," says Chris Duncan, owner of Sign A Rama in Kingston, Ontario, whose two fully wrapped vehicles have attracted up to \$70,000 in sales so far this year.

At Sign A Rama, vehicle signage accounts for about 40 percent of sales, the bulk of which is wraps, although the company also offers vinyl decals and magnetic signs. While contractors, including electricians, plumbers, carpet and flooring installers, do the most wrapping, Sign A Rama has also wrapped for delivery/courier and automotive aftermarket (car stereos, custom exhaust) firms as well as realtors, foodservice operators, doctors and after-hours health clinics.

Wrapping is more cost-effective, easily removed and just as visible as a paint job, which simply isn't an option for those who lease or trade in their owned vehicles. Decals and magnetic signs aren't as visible and don't suggest the same degree of permanence, but Duncan also points out that unless the back of a magnetic sign is completely free of debris, even the smallest particle can scratch the clear coat.

To truly maximize the impact of their mobile billboards, franchisees such as PropertyGuys.com's Bryan Spear, who operates in Ontario's Kingston area, can travel different routes to regular destinations such as a grocery store or school.

"A wrapped vehicle is a wonderful ice break-

er," says Spear, who has had great conversations with future customers at the gas pump, the grocery store and even at a traffic light.

Franchisees also use their wrapped vehicles as "floats" in the town's parade, and park their wrapped vehicles near the main entrance of a local shopping mall during the height of the Christmas or back-to-school shopping season. Wrapped vehicles may also be positioned close to the key entry points to the hockey arena or baseball pitch so that players, their families and friends see them as they arrive and depart. One PropertyGuys.com franchisee took it to a new level by wrapping a Zamboni that enjoys a captive audience of 10,000 on a busy hockey night, and gives kids rides on special occasions.

The heightened visibility does provide a measurable return on the investment in the vehicle wrap, but it also means the drivers, whether an owner, manager or employee, must pay particular attention to the vehicle and their own behaviour when in and around it.

The vehicle should be clean and well-maintained at all times and drivers must respect the rules of the road, whether it's adhering to speed limits, using their turn indicators or coming to a full and complete stop at a stop sign. Likewise, giving in to road rage is simply not an option when you're representing your brand and the business that is your livelihood.

"You have to drive like everyone can see you because you're no longer anonymous," says Duncan.