

THE BIG EASY

By Mick Orr
Applications Training Specialist

Anyone who has ever used capillary film knows how easy it is to use. In our video, "Screen Making with Magna/Cure[®]" we show four different methods of applying capillary film to a screen. Well, I've got a new one for you which has many advantages over the other methods now being used, particularly if you are working with large screens. That's why I call it the "big easy" or the Spray Gun Method.

It's All in the Gun

This method is done using a dry screen and requires a spray gun. The spray gun must be the type that is typically used to paint cars, and it can be either air or airless. These can also be either expensive or cheap. If you have lots of money, by all means buy an expensive one (\$75-300). If you're like me, get one at a discount store for around \$50. Hook the spray gun up to your air line, sending air pressure between 35 and 40 pounds, and fill the gun with water (preferably distilled).

Most spray guns come with a spray-width adjustment. Set it as wide as it will go. If it comes with a volume adjustment, open it up so that plenty of mist is created. Test the volume by holding your hand about two feet away from the nozzle and spraying it with the mist. It should get wet in a matter of seconds. If your hand doesn't get soaked, open up the volume adjustment more.

The Spraying Method

Step one: Purchase either Pro/Cap[®] or Magna/Cure[®] capillary film in either roll or cut-sheet form. If in a roll, cut the film to the size of your screen before starting the application.

Step two: With a dry, clean screen held in a near vertical position, spray the print side very quickly with a very light spray. I call this a "tack coat."

Step three: Place the film onto the print side of the screen. Smooth the film out with your hand. If you have a few wrinkles, pull the film away from the mesh and reattach it. As long as you applied a light tack spray, it is usually possible to reposition the film.

Step four: Turn the screen around, or if the screen is too large, walk around to the squeegee side. Grab that spray gun and proceed to re-spray the screen with a steady, even spray of water across the entire screen. You will be able to watch the film attach as you spray. Once the screen is covered with an even film of water, stop spraying.

Step five: Lightly squeegee off the excess water with a window squeegee. You will notice at this point that very little water is removed from the screen. If necessary, wipe excess water off the frame with a rag.

Step six: Dry the screen and process it as you normally would.

To Spray or Not To Spray

Why would anyone want to use this process to apply the film? Let me list a few advantages:

1. Because so little water is used to attach the film to the mesh, the stencil dries faster with the spray gun method than the roll-down method. Much of the drying of the



Looking for insight on the wonderful world of screen making? Consult the writings of Chromaline's Technical Guru, Mick Orr, Applications Training Specialist.

Mick has been in the screen printing industry since 1970 with printing experience in a wide range of applications from membrane switches, to textiles, specialty graphics to faceplates and more. His hands-on seminars have been appreciated by screen makers around the world.



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screen is in drying the frame.

2. It can be applied to the mesh away from the washout sink. This frees up the sink to do reclaiming and developing of stencils.

3. Positioning of the film on the mesh of screen frames is quick and easy. If you have ever tried to do the roll-down method on a very large screen, you know how difficult it is.

4. It is the most accurate way to apply capillary film. The reason that it is so accurate is because you can control the amount of water.

5. It virtually eliminates air bubbles between the film and the screen. The other methods can trap air between the film and the mesh. With this method, you smooth out the film onto the mesh right after the tack coat is applied. Also, as you apply the second spray of water, the water is actually forced through the mesh by the air pressure insuring perfect wetting of the film to the mesh.

6. This method can be learned in a matter of minutes. It's just as easy as the other methods of applying capillary film and it's clean and fast.

This has become my favorite method for applying capillary film. Try it and I'm sure it will become yours also.