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If it wasn't for several collisions, and many bent and damaged panels, then Matthew Adams may never have entered the sign industry, let alone started bespoke vehicle signage specialist 'Tradie Wraps'. From a desktop to a dedicated factory, Matthew and the team at Tradie Wraps have carved out an enviable reputation within a very loyal segment of the vehicle applications market. It's a clever strategy, one that has helped see this business grow and build a considerable list of clientele. What makes it especially good, is that Matthew is self-taught, learning the trade by getting hands-on.

Matthew's entry into the business is anything but normal. A long-time car enthusiast, Matthew was writing for an automotive publication when a close friend decided to buy a V8 Supercar and race it.

"Back in 2004, a friend of mine bought a V8 Supercar," says Matthew Adams, Owner, Tradie Graphics. "They had all kinds of graphics on the car, sponsors logos, etc, which were all computer-cut vinyl... this was back in the day. Between races, they would get the signwriter out to redo the work that had been damaged or had to be replaced. This process would happen again and again, was costly, and time consuming. So, I said, "Why don't you buy a sticker cutting machine and do the work yourself?" He said to me, "Why don't you buy the machine, and I'll pay you to do it!" So, that's how I got started."

At the time, Matt was working as a writer and editor. The work for the magazine would eventually take a back seat as more people would contact him to make signage for their vehicles, and for other applications.

"Back then, there were no YouTube tutorial videos, so I was very much self-taught," says Matt. "We owned a couple of race cars when I was younger, and I would buy vinyl or get scraps from a local supplier. I would practice on those pieces, using them to make stickers, and learning how to apply them properly. As the business started to move forward, I also taught myself to use Adobe Illustrator, and I have since attended a couple of vinyl application courses, including the 3M and Avery courses."

Matt formed 'MotoSign' in 2005, moving into a premises with his brother, who ran a graphic design business.

"When I moved into the shop, they didn't have any signage," says Matt. "So, we put up a sign and work just sort of started flowing in. I did have a few contacts, but they only go so far. We grew by word of

mouth. People saw us there and they were happy with the work we did. We had a good pool of customers and so did not need to advertise to get work. The only promotional work we did do, was Australia Post letter drops to all the businesses in the area. They cost \$1000 but you would get about \$5000 to \$6000 worth of work. We've been very fortunate along the way too, as we've had a few big contracts that lead to other work."

The work that MotoSign was doing was not limited to motor vehicles. They



quickly branched into multiple areas of signage and display.

"One time, we had to cover the outside of an RSPCA building using artificial grass as part of their signage," says Matt. "We produced a lot of prints, wayfinding signage, installation work... everything that came our way. We still do some jobs today that are not strictly vehicle graphics applications."

The challenge that Matt faced was the long delays and outlays required, between being awarded a job then getting paid upon completion. By comparison, vehicle wraps had a quick turn-around time, had low-overheads, and outlays were minimal.

"We decided to focus on vehicles," says Matt. "That area of the industry was working well, and we could make a name for ourselves as a specialist in that market. The work was much more manageable, flowed continually, and we could really perfect our art. It was a better path forward for us."

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To help create the number of graphics they would need, Matt invested in two HP 560 Latex printers, running alongside his trusty Roland XC-540 printer cutter.

"Most of the graphics we print are done on the HP printers, we use the Roland predominantly for cutting," says Matt. "This set-up really meets our needs; it is working well. At this stage we have no plans to purchase a new printer in the immediate future."

The move from MotoSign to Tradie Wraps is a recent development. The decision to specialise being a smart move as it puts the company centre stage in a niche market with a lot of potential customers that have single, and multiple vehicles, of all shapes and sizes.

"Most of our clients are small business owners or single operators, and we love working with these types of clients," says Matt. "We get to work closely with them, create their branding and, when they see the result, the look on their face is priceless. It's an incredibly rewarding experience to be able to help promote their businesses and give them a great sense of pride in what they do. The graphics also help to promote their businesses and bring in work. As one client stated, "A huge portion of my work comes directly from the wrap. It gives me so much exposure, and direct into the areas I work in. Some days I multiply



my income just going from one house to the next in the same street."

For Matt and the team, the focus of their work is firmly on vehicle wraps, specialising in services to trades people and businesses. There's no desire to expand beyond that, or return to the days of larger, more varied jobs.

"We have a great working culture at Tradie Wraps, says Matt. "My focus is maintaining that culture, building our relationships, and handling the day-to-day operations. We have a great team, people that have been with the company for many years."

Matt's team, their reputation, and their ability to get the job done, are some of the reasons why customers choose

them, and why they are booked solidly.

"Our capacity means that we can work quickly," says Matt. "A lot of our clients can't afford to have their vehicles off the road for any considerable amount of time, so we work quickly to make sure everything goes smoothly. Our clients appreciate the pace and quality of work we deliver."

With the work flowing in, a great team, and a clever approach to business, Tradie Wraps looks set to grow and continue to help tradies promote their businesses and create a great sense of pride about what they do.

>> For more information about Tradie Wraps, you can visit www.tradiewraps.com.au

