



*The Hopkins Lowrider is designed with space-saving features*

## SPACE IS THE PLACE

### Riley Hopkins looks at ingenious yet common-sense methods of creating additional working areas

**Space is one of the biggest considerations for any screen-printing company. It's expensive, it's often hard to get and, if you have to move to get more of it, you are at the mercy of every building inspector and fire marshall known to man.**

Therefore, I think it is best to use what space you have to the maximum, for as long as you possibly can. I was fortunate enough to grow up in Japan as a kid, and therefore tend to think cubically instead of just square feet of floor space. If you mentally look at the cubic footprint of your shop, you will suddenly see things in a completely different light.

There are many nooks and crannies that become attractive places to use. Bearing in mind that the shop should be set up in a 'U' (garments in, garments printed, garments packaged and shipped out) all the space overhead, underneath, and around is fair game for use. I designed our very popular Lowrider triple belt conveyor dryer with space saving in

mind. Instead of taking up separate room on its own, the Lowrider sits underneath the printer, thereby freeing up the space the dryer would normally live in for other things. And, to top it off, the Lowrider system is on wheels.

Obviously, having garments on carts is good, as you can roll the cart full of shirts to the press, and collect the shirts after they have been printed and cured... and roll the cart over to the folding, packaging, shipping area of the shop. The same thing holds true for having all the screens for the next job librated on a cart, with squeegees, inks, and the film positives ready and waiting for the press to be freed up. (Of course, the used screens, ink, and squeegees go on another cart to be cleaned up and stored in its own area). I call carts 'mobile space'.

Screen storage is another big space waster. I went to visit a company in London that was thinking of moving because they were 'out of space'. I looked around at all the

screens stacked up on the floor in various areas of the shop, and realised they would have a ton of space ... if they just used a fairly simple screen storage system. I sketched out some screen support units that bolted into the wall, then expanded them to go all the way around three walls in the shop about eight feet off the ground. For less than £500, all the support units were built and installed. And, as if by magic, suddenly there was free space on the shop floor. There was enough room for a couple more presses, a couple of long conveyor dryers and, most importantly, the company didn't have to move to another facility!

I don't mean to sound like I don't like the idea of moving, but my experience has taught me that whatever you have budgeted – triple it. And whatever time you have allocated for the move – double it if you are lucky, and way more than that if a building inspector or fire marshall decides to give you a hard time. Generally, if you contemplate a move, you will at some time find yourself with most of your shop being moved, and your business on hold until you can move in and start work. Any interruptions in your plans by unforeseen events have the potential to put you out of business. Hence my advocacy of using what you have to the most, for the longest. When you think you have to move, consider a second shift. You are paying for the place 24/7, so why not use it more than eight hours a day? Again, use what you have to the maximum, for as long as you possibly can.

Space is the place! ■

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