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A Cut Above

The magic of diecuts without the cost

T *Their take.* When presented with a “magic of innovation” theme, Earl Gee, principal of Gee + Chung Design, knew the firm’s invitation for a technical seminar couldn’t be ordinary. The client, Applied Materials, is the world’s leading manufacturer of semiconductor equipment (a statement in the invitation reads: “We make the systems that make the chips that make the products that change the world”). Gee explains, “There needed to be a ‘how did they do that?’ factor to the design that reinforces who the company is.”

Capitalizing on the imagination theme, Gee + Chung chose to illustrate the idea from the perspective of a child, encouraging potential seminar attendees to think back to what first captivated them about science. This is reinforced by a translucent cover that opens to reveal a quote hidden behind the face of a child: “Imagination is more important than knowledge,” by Albert Einstein. “We wanted people to experience the piece,” Gee says, “and to participate in a visual interaction. The quote also conveys depth, especially important for technical seminars.”

Each spread in the piece focuses on a single word to support the theme—*imagine, envision, innovate, discover, explore*—with the first word appearing as a diecut on the cover. “We wanted to show a child looking through and beyond something,” Gee says, “like the process of imagination.” That led to the idea for translucent material, in this case plastic (the invitation served as a reference throughout the seminar, so it had to be durable). The plastic required a special laser diecut—expensive, but appropriate for the solution.

“Some clients may have difficulty accepting a technically challenging solution,” Gee says. “Applied was very supportive; they wanted to push the envelope of technology to achieve something unique.”



Other twists. There's a multitude of creative cut ideas:

- Use paper punches in specialized shapes to reveal a few letters of a word printed on the inside of a card. For instance, a flag punch could reveal the word *hero*; when the card is opened, the word is actually part of the honored guest's last name.
- Use oval or circle cuts to create a telescope, binoculars, or camera that narrows in on the word *Focus*. The theme is all-encompassing, from business to hobbies to education.
- Create cool stationery and invitations by cutting corners ... literally. You can also create small cuts in the edges of one sheet and fit a second, smaller sheet's corners into the cuts for a no-glue-necessary solution. This is a good technique for displaying photos.

Our spins. Diecuts beckon viewers to take notice and interact with a design piece. Even small cuts can translate into a lot of interest because they aren't seen every day—which, of course, is the problem. Diecuts (especially laser-cut) are relatively unusual because they are expensive. But if they aren't in your budget, don't fret. The same principles that make the Applied Materials seminar invitation so intriguing can be adapted on a smaller scale.

Business cards get noticed with colored envelopes and revealing cuts. We used a circle paper punch to create a sneak-a-peek effect (top, opposite page). You can also experiment with other shapes and sizes. The appeal is in the single word, *simple*, which not only reinforces the design style, but also clearly states the philosophy of a fictional furniture company. Even the back of the card gets a multicolored treatment so the diecut works on both sides (it's all in the details!). Pair the cards with 2½ x 3¾-inch envelopes that open at the side (you can even cut off the envelope flap for a sharper look).

Don't stop with just one cut. The overlapping circles card (opposite page) is appropriate for everything from a university's astronomy department invitation to a creative promotion for a seminar on getting your personal and professional life organized (“Align your worlds”). Using a circle cutter, we varied the shapes and colors (if you're extra adventurous, try different colored papers). Check out www.dynamicgraphics.com/dgm for a template that shows how to fold the piece for the final look. ⑤



Wanna punch?

Use decorative punches, available in all shapes and sizes at craft stores and online, to give corners a flourish or stationery intriguing details.



Folded up

Try using translucent envelopes (available at www.jampaper.com) to further pique interest in what's inside.



On target

Overlapping cut circles can become a bullseye revealing the word *target*. Use the concept for a donation thank-you card ("We're on target—we've raised more than \$5,000 toward our goal") or as a promo for straight-shooting services ("Stay on target").



Making the cut

We used a Fiskars Circle Cutter (www.fiskars.com), but you can also experiment with an oval cutter or specialty scissors.

