

Five Myths About Laser Markable Metals

By Sam Wainer and Andy Marvin

More and more laser engravers are turning to laser markable metals to grow their businesses. Laser markable metals are used because of their durability and perceived value, both of which can lead to greater profits. With the usage of laser markable metals on the rise and new products entering the market each year, it is not surprising that a handful of myths have come up. Here we take a look at five of the biggest myths and wade through the rumor mill to get to the truth.

MYTH #1:
LASER MARKABLE METALS ARE EXTREMELY EXPENSIVE

Ten years ago, laser markable metals were almost twice as expensive as plastic; however, that relationship has changed. Today, many laser markable metals cost the same or even less than engravable plastics. When you consider the higher perceived value of metals, it becomes clear that laser markable metals are not only cost competitive, they can also generate more profit for your shop. Check out your dealer's prices; you might be surprised by what you find.

MYTH #2:
LASER MARKABLE METALS ARE DIFFICULT TO ENGRAVE

Over the years, some laser markable metals have gotten a bad rap for being difficult to mark. In some cases, manufacturers have improved their products to make them easier to use. Some manufacturers publish "Laser Settings Guidelines" on their websites to help users image the material with a CO₂ laser.

MYTH #3:
LASER MARKABLE METALS ARE ALL REAL METAL

The most common misconception about laser markable metals is that they are all real metal. In fact, several of the so-called "laser markable metals" are not metal at all, but extruded plastic. Both real metal and metal-looking plastic have their place in various applications; however, it is good to know that a metalized plastic may not look and feel like real metal, a characteristic that many customers expect.

MYTH #4:
ALL LASER MARKABLE METALS ARE DURABLE

We are conditioned to think that metal is durable. Some of us assume that all laser markable metals are durable products when we know that simply isn't the case. Many laser markable metals are not outdoor durable. Even anodized aluminum, long thought to be a highly durable product, has been shown to fade outdoors and be susceptible to abrasion. When picking a durable laser markable metal, be sure you find one that is certified for outdoor usage. If you plan to work with industrial or military suppliers, find a laser markable metal that is specified to important military specifications like A-A-50271 and MIL-STD-15024E, Type L.

MYTH #5:
LASER MARKABLE METALS ARE DIFFICULT TO CUT & FABRICATE

Some engravers shy away from laser markable metals because they think the material is difficult to fabricate. Although engravable plastics do have the advantage of being both engraved and cut on a laser, it is very easy to cut laser markable metals. If a shear isn't in your budget, consider purchasing pre-fabricated blanks.

Laser markable metals are the profitable backbone of many engraving shops. Metals carry a higher perceived value and are often more durable—both of which lead to higher margins, greater profits and a unique point of differentiation from the competition. Over time, several myths have cropped up about laser markable metals, some of which were dispelled in this article. As you quote jobs, be sure to ask yourself: Could I garner a greater price by using real laser markable metal? Does my project require the durability of a military specified laser markable metal? If you consider these factors, you will be more likely to pick the right material for your application. **A&E**



Wainer



Marvin

Sam Wainer and Andy Marvin are Product Managers for AlumaMark® and DuraBlack®. With a combined 20 years of business experience, Sam and Andy are responsible for product development, marketing, technical support and manufacturing of AlumaMark and DuraBlack. Sam holds an MBA in marketing from UC Davis and Andy has a Bachelor's Degree in Industrial Design from The Ohio State University. For more information about DuraBlack or AlumaMark please email info@horizonsisg.com, call 800-482-7758 or visit <http://www.horizonsisg.com/>.

Comments? Respond to aefeedback@nbm.com.



Metals are used because of their durability and perceived value – both of which lead to greater profits.



