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## SPECIAL TYRRELLTECH EDITORIAL

### Third Party Ink- The Real World Story

There is a reason why we have expressions like, "if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is," and "the grass is always greener on the other side of the fence."

Most of you have seen in catalogs, e-mails, shows or have been approached by a reseller about using third party ink or using cartridges that have been refilled in your Roland printer you purchased from TyrrellTech. So that you know where we are coming from, I should tell you; we've been approached to sell third party inks as well. We've weighed the pros and cons many times. We, as a reseller, have done our homework to bring this information to you. We have to decipher the same issues that you do.

Although the lure of saving hundreds of dollars has a very strong appeal, before you jump in, look long and hard. It could end up costing you a small fortune.

I have taken on the challenge of explaining all of the "real world issues" that most people leave out when they are enticing you to use third party ink.

I believe most people know by now it's crazy to use 3PI (Third Party Ink) when your machine is under the factory warranty, however I will address all scenarios of warranties, extended service plan, manufacturer policy, TyrrellTech policy, and the pay as you go plan. First I will address the warranties as stated.

**Roland's Official Warranty the first year** is; One year on site, all parts and labor. If a customer uses 3PI under the factory warranty, they will then void the warranty on all parts in the ink delivery system: about \$4,800 in parts and approximately another \$2,000 in labor, totaling \$6,800. This doesn't include any of the circuit boards or other parts.

**Roland's Official Warranty Second Year** is this; if you register your machine within 60 days of installation and continues using Roland Eco Sol Max ink in your printer; Roland will extend your warranty to a second year on site, all parts and labor thus giving you a two year warranty. If you switch during to 3PI during the second year you will then void the warranty on all parts in the ink delivery system.

**Roland/TyrrellTech Extended Service Plan for Third, Fourth, and Fifth Year** etc.; If you continue using Roland Eco Sol Max ink in your printer, TyrrellTech will offer you an Extended Service Plan that covers on site, all parts and labor for a one year period. During this time, should anyone switch over to 3PI, they will then void the warranty on all parts in the ink delivery system. Roland and TyrrellTech will not offer Extended Service Plans for customers using 3PI.

**Pay as you go;** this option is for anyone not covered by a factory warranty or an Extended service plan. People under this option are the biggest target for 3PI resellers; this is where it gets a bit dicey.

The 3PI resellers will tell you they will cover the warranty on the ink delivery system, print heads and other parts when in fact they don't- it is a third party company that handles the warranty claim and here is how that claim is handled. Let's look at the entire process.

Now the "real world" kicks in. Here you are, running your business, trying to make money, and you have noticed that you have an issue with your printer. This is where the run-around starts.

You are first **required** to call the 3PI reseller. If you can't get them on the phone, you can then call the main ink supplier. **"Failure to notify them prior to any service work can result in delayed or denied claims."** After they determine where the problem is, you will then be instructed to contact a, in this case, Roland certified service dealer. So now you have been bounced back to us, your authorized dealer (TyrrellTech), and we determine we must log a service call. TyrrellTech gives top priority to loyal ink and media customers with factory warranties and extended service plans, so this may delay our response time a few days. When TyrrellTech arrives to do your repair, assuming the repair involves parts in the ink delivery system, even if you have an extended service plan, you will pay in full for the repair (parts and labor). Then you (the customer) will be responsible to send in your parts with a copy of the invoice to the "warranty people." They will determine if the 3PI was the reason for the failure. If they say the 3PI didn't cause the problem, this will result in the warranty claim being denied. By the way, make sure to remember to include an example of the printing issue before the service and a sample of how it was after the service. This is often missed and again, **"failure to do this can result in delayed or denied claims."**

Get real. This, to me, is like the mail-in rebates you get when purchase products from companies like Best Buy or Verizon. It has been my personal experience that these rebate companies look for any loophole in the system to reject your rebate. I have been denied rebates and I know I made the purchase, but it wasn't about getting the sale price for making the purchase. It was about following their protocol if I wanted the sale price. I bet it has happened to you as well.

Just FYI, because of this exact issue, several years ago I called Best Buy customer service, not to get satisfaction but to take my time to let them know what I thought about their rebate scam. I told them I would never purchase another product from them if I didn't get the rebate at the register because of the companies they hire to run their rebate scams and yes it is a scam when that company has an incentive not to issue rebates based on what they deem worthy. **GOOD NEWS:** Recently, this year, it was announced on the radio that Best Buy, Office Depot and many other major manufacturers have announced they are doing away with mail in rebates by the end of the year and the customers will get the sale at the register where it belongs!

Now you may wonder why I even mention this situation. The reason why is the same as the title of this editorial, "The Real World Story." The difference between all of the manufacturer's claims and what is supposed to take place versus the events and how they play out in the real world.

Each one of these third party ink suppliers has a very detailed list of procedures that must be followed to the T in order for you to get your warranty reimbursement. It has been my experience when I see the term, **"Failure to do so can result in denied claims,"** is nothing more than another way to say, "We will look for any reason or blame anyone or anything we can so we don't have to pay your claim."

That's right, now you have paid for the repair prior to the parts evaluation and you may not get reimbursed because you didn't dot all of the I's or cross all T's.

### **Important FAQ's you need to know; if you think you have nothing to lose....**

If you use Third party ink...

3PI Ink warranty: 2 years against fading (you have lost one year of outdoor durability)

Roland ink: 3 years of outdoor durability from testing based on 4 years.

Here is the 3PI **color liability**; "Warranty" says **"they shall not be liable for labor cost associated with graphic production, graphic application, equipment downtime or any other consequential damages related to a claim under their warranty."** Everyone knows the labor is usually the biggest expense in a job and if you should have an issue with color, labor is not going to be covered.

If you use 3PI, you will most likely experience up to several additional days in delays of service because of top priority service being given to loyal customers that purchase their ink and media from their servicing dealer. You must consider what the additional downtime is going to cost you.

ALL equipment manufacturers' warranties are based on the OEM ink chemistry and how it affects the parts that have been tested and proven to work within certain parameters.

ALL media manufacturer's warranties on vinyl and lamination against fading are based on the OEM (Original Equipment Manufacturer's) inks included with your machine. Using 3PI will void those warranties. For example, Oracal will no longer warranty the additional protection against color fading if you use 3PI on their vinyl or lamination.

The 3PI provider that claims to pick up the warranty but they will only replace ink and media, again, their liability is, **"they shall not be liable for labor cost associated with graphic production, graphic application, equipment downtime or any other consequential damages related to a claim under their warranty."**

If you use 3PI, Roland and TyrrellTech will no longer offer free telephone technical support, newsletters, or Customer Rewards Program.

### **Is it worth it?**

A single printhead repair can cost approximately \$900.00 parts and labor; some of Roland's printers have 6 of these printheads. If one printhead isn't covered, you will probably lose more than you thought you would gain.

Looking at the cost difference between the OEM ink and the 3PI, although it may sound good to hear you can save money, this is realistically how your ink cost breaks down in a 4' x 8' sign depending which manufacturer average cost of ink you want to believe (I am trying to be unbiased).

4' x 8' sign with an average cost savings of 6 to 8 cents per Sq. Ft. times the 32 Sq. Ft. in a 4 x 8 = between \$1.92 to \$2.56.

On a 24" x 24" the cost savings is between 24 cents to 32 cents.

Is this really affecting the selling price of any sign? Again I must ask, is it worth it? Don't be penny wise and a pound foolish. As I said at the beginning of this scenario "Here you are running your business trying to make money" you don't need a second job calling multiple people, attempting to get your printer serviced then wasting more time chasing down your warranty rebate/claim. You have a business to run.

At this time, the basic facts are;

**The equipment manufacturers do not support it.**

**The vinyl and lamination manufacturers do not support it.**

**TyrrellTech does not support it.**

Even in a tough economy, the best business advice I can give you is to spend your time prospecting for jobs that, in the course of a year, will equal thousands of dollars. Spend your time doing that rather than trying to shave a few measly dollars off of a job. History has shown that, in a tough economy, the companies that continue moving forward by prospecting for jobs now and planting seeds for the future end up reaping the benefits of their work and emerge much stronger when the economy recovers. Their counterparts hunker down, stop spending, and try to wait it out, and when the economy recovers, these guys basically start all over again... if they survive at all.

Craig E. Tyrrell

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