

# No Longer Lost in Translation

Micro Format Inc. creates a better product for an international client

**S**tephen Singer, CFC, a document security specialist at Micro Format Inc., says the distributorship's trademarked UltraSafe Safety Paper is "virtually impossible to duplicate" thanks to nearly a dozen security features. Though Micro Format now offers it as a stock item, the document was originally created for a client based far from the distributorship's Wheeling, Ill. offices.

"It began in the Middle East," Singer explains. He says he received an email out of the blue one day from a company in Kuwait that sells security products to clients in that region.

"They had been working with a manufacturer in the United Kingdom and they weren't happy," Singer says. So over the course of three months or more, Micro Format completed one or two security products for them "that worked but weren't 100 percent what they wanted. I realized what the problem was. 'It wasn't that the other company was no good,' I told them. 'They didn't understand you and you didn't understand them.'"

The language barrier created problems for the Kuwaiti company and its international vendors, including Micro Format. "You see, they spoke formal English well but they weren't very good at the technical language of document security. I finally told them that I'd be honored to meet with them so we could talk in person."

Singer flew to Rome to meet the company reps, and for three days he explained how security documents are made.

"I taught them the basics about security paper, who manufactures it and what it does," he says. "I taught them how holograms are made and how they are stamped."

Singer believes that the education session helped his clients to better understand what they were *really* asking for when they sent product specifications. He also says it helped the parties create a better product the next time around. "We came up with mutually agreed upon terms. Instead of using words like 'thermochromatic ink' or 'VOID pantograph,' I would call it a 'secure rub' or 'hidden message technology.' Using phrases like that helps to not only lock you into a client since you're the only person who understands what they mean, but it also helps you to really understand each other."

With the UltraSafe Safety Paper, Singer knew that "because it was important that an original document had to be easily identified from a copy, we had to create a document that contained many layers of security features," he says. "In addition, the paper had to be manufactured to the international size A4."

So they decided to start with a Boise green basket weave check protect paper. "This paper is filled with security features including an artificial watermark, chemical reactivity and hidden fibers that are visible only under black light," Singer explains. Micro Format then added a VOID pantograph and thermochromatic ink. "We knocked out the background behind the thermochromatic ink, creating this special feature using the word 'Genuine' in an oval. The secure hologram oval opposite the 'Genuine' oval added yet another level of security. This unique paper met all of their requirements," Singer says. "It was used as a base stock to print secure contracts, certificates and numerous other documents."

Micro Format has since converted it to the American standard size of 8½ inches x 11 inches and it is currently used by printers throughout the United States for similar applications. "It's very expensive," he says. "We don't sell a lot of them but it's a very valuable product because it's almost impossible to duplicate."

Singer believes that UltraSafe Safety Paper was successful because he was willing to educate the customer. "It was business and good sales technique but it's always about education," he says. "I don't sell a product. I sell a solution. And if that product isn't the solution the customer is looking for, you shouldn't sell it."

—LaShell Stratton



Micro Format Inc. demonstrates the "hidden message technology" of the UltraSafe Safety Paper. The product was originally designed for a Kuwaiti client but the company now offers a standardized version to all its customers.