

'Switch' and Coke: The Wrap that Refreshes



Coca-Cola Bottling Company, Kokomo, is an independent, third-generation bottler serving 12 counties across North Central Indiana. Approaching its 120th year in business, the company sells roughly two million physical cases annually from facilities in Kokomo and Plymouth, Indiana, and employs about 90 people.

Introduction

Brandon Bishop noticed the problem the way most customers would have from the driver's seat of his own car, driving behind one of his company's trucks.

"I noticed one of our trucks still had a faded graphic for a brand we no longer carried," said Bishop, General Manager of Coca-Cola Bottling Company, Kokomo. "That truck is on the road six days a week, representing our company throughout the territory."

The brand in question hadn't been in the portfolio for nearly a decade. But the truck kept rolling and promoting it anyway, through a dozen counties of North Central Indiana, past grocery stores, hospitals and office parks, advertising something they didn't sell.

For a company that has spent more than a century building its identity in the physical world, that was hard to unsee. "It's all about the brand here," Bishop said.

What followed was a rethinking, not just of what goes on the back of a truck, but of what a fleet like his is actually for.

The Challenge



Coca-Cola Kokomo runs a different kind of fleet than much of the industry. While many bottlers are converted to beverage-body semi-trailers, Kokomo has stuck with Class B trucks, the shorter, side-bay vehicles with roll-up doors that have served its routes for decades. Between box trucks and beverage bodies, the company has more than 40 vehicles on the road every day.

Those vehicles worked hard but said very little. The beverage bodies carried the familiar red-and-script treatment. The box trucks carried almost nothing.

"Our box trucks had a Coca-Cola logo on the door, but otherwise they were essentially blank," Bishop said. "I saw that as a missed opportunity. These trucks are traveling throughout our territory every day, and they should be working just as hard for our brand as they are delivering our products."

What he was looking for eventually had a name: Vomela "Switch," a changeable fleet banner system designed for exactly that gap. Rather than replacing a long-term wrap, Switch layers over the side of a vehicle and swaps out in a fraction of the time a rewrap takes, letting a fleet carry a new message as often as the calendar calls for one without pulling trucks off their routes.

Coca-Cola Kokomo's territory looks very different from a major metropolitan market. Its routes stretch across North Central Indiana, connecting rural communities, small towns and cities along state highways. The population, advertising landscape, and available marketing assets don't match major metro areas like Chicago, Indianapolis, or Cincinnati, but Bishop doesn't believe that should change how the Coca-Cola brand shows up in the market.

"Our communities may be smaller, but the expectation for how our brand presents itself shouldn't be," Bishop said. "Whether you see a Coca-Cola truck in downtown Chicago or traveling through a small town in North Central Indiana, it should look sharp, current and representative of the brand. Switch gives us another way to create that kind of presence throughout our territory."

What Bishop wanted wasn't just fresher graphics. It was the ability to keep his fleet's messaging current and relevant. Coca-Cola's America 250 campaign helped spark that vision. The patriotic creative demonstrated how powerful the fleet could be as a moving extension of the brand, while the American flag imagery also showed the potential for messaging with relevance well beyond a single campaign. He also saw room to spotlight the community relationships Kokomo has built over a century, including local schools, hospitals, veterans' groups



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and other local and regional partnerships. Those are the kinds of relationships a static red-and-white truck cannot reflect.

Traditional outdoor advertising offered neither flexibility nor the economics to make that happen. A billboard at a highway corner cost roughly \$2,000 a month, rotated quarterly, and reached exactly one intersection across Bishop's entire territory. He knew what that spend bought: not much.

"We've seen tremendous engagement when we feature iconic Coca-Cola imagery like the polar bears or Santa on our outdoor billboards," Bishop said. "The opportunity with Switch is that we can take that same kind of seasonal messaging and put it on trucks throughout our territory. Instead of Santa being at one intersection during the holidays, that creative can travel through our communities during the holiday season."

Updating the trucks themselves wasn't a quick fix either. A traditional fleet wrap can mean days in a shop, and a vehicle pulled out of rotation. That is part of why an outdated brand can end up riding around for years before anyone gets to it.

So, Bishop asked himself: How can I get the reach I need from 20 of the vehicles traveling around my whole territory for that entire time?

The Solution

Bishop's introduction to Switch came with a healthy dose of skepticism. He was shown a sample and walked through the specifications of the TRC-approved system, including wind and water ratings, but remained unconvinced.

"Initially, I was skeptical about putting a banner system on a truck traveling at highway speeds," he said. "But once I saw it installed and watched how the system performed on the road, that concern went away."

Once he saw that for himself, he was ready to give Switch a try.

Vomela measured a truck and produced a single banner so Bishop could see the system on his own equipment. Inspired in part by the patriotic creative from Coca-Cola's America 250 campaign, Bishop saw an opportunity to use American flag imagery as an evergreen application for the fleet.

"The America 250 creative really sparked my interest," Bishop said. "It showed me how impactful that kind of imagery could be on our fleet and got me thinking about creative that could stay relevant well beyond a single campaign."

What sold him operationally wasn't installation, which Vomela's install network handles. It was how easily the creative itself could change.

"We roll it up, put it in a PVC pipe, set it in a corner and get it back out when we need it," he said. "I love the simplicity."

A new banner is a phone call away, not a new production cycle.



The Result

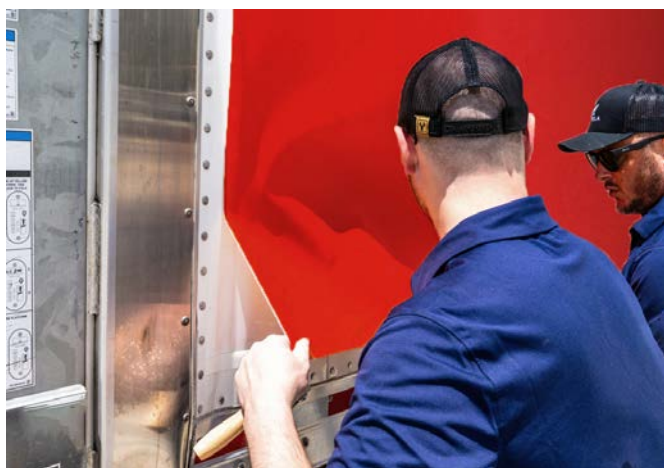
The most immediate return showed up where Bishop's fleet actually lives: in traffic, in parking lots and on Facebook.

One of the newly branded trucks runs a route through Kokomo's busiest commercial corridor, with a large Kroger, nearby hospitals, office parks and fast-food restaurants on every corner. The truck often parks at the front edge of the lot.

"That same truck I see every morning going to work and pulling into Kroger isn't a plain white truck anymore," Bishop said. "Now it's carrying a large American flag, and it catches your attention."

The reaction was unsolicited and public. Bishop began seeing pictures of the trucks shared on Facebook, along with comments from people noticing the change.

And that's what matters to him. As he quickly admits, a clean attribution model doesn't exist here. The return isn't as simple as connecting a truck graphic to a specific number of additional cases sold.



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"ROI on something like this isn't always measured in cases sold," Bishop said. "I look at the smiles, social media posts, conversations and even employee pride. When someone has driven a plain white truck for five years, and suddenly, he's driving the Cadillac of the fleet, there's value in that."

For Bishop, that broader return matters. The trucks create impressions throughout the territory, generating community engagement and giving employees something they are proud to drive, all while using an asset the company already owns.

The larger shift was budgetary. Outdoor advertising at Kokomo used to mean billboards. Now it means assets the company already owns. Switch's flexibility has reset Bishop's marketing and advertising spend. Polar bears and Santa Claus on multiple trucks are now a firm holiday commitment, not an aspiration.

Community partnerships are next in line. Bishop sees opportunities to use the fleet to highlight local and regional organizations, schools and community partnerships Coca-Cola Kokomo has supported throughout its territory.

"The real opportunity is making our messaging local," Bishop said. "The same trucks tend to serve the same communities every week, so we can tailor the creative to the schools, organizations and events that matter in those areas."

Across roughly 25 North Central Indiana high schools, that means southern routes can highlight southern schools and northern routes can highlight northern ones, giving the whole territory local, current messaging without a single generic campaign covering it all.

The rollout is scaling to match. Three trucks are on the road today. By the end of August, Bishop expects five box trucks and a 53-foot semi-trailer running Switch. By year's end, roughly 15 truck backs could join them.

"Switch turns our fleet into a flexible outdoor advertising network," Bishop said. "We can change the message quickly, keep the creative relevant and take our brand directly into the communities we serve."

Every route is now an opportunity to deliver more than product. It is an opportunity to deliver the brand.

Ready to make your brand impossible to ignore? Talk to Vomela.
vomela.com/lets-talk