

guidelines. "It is important to use the appropriate laser parameters for each material to achieve the best result," adds Stevens. "For example, engraving paper usually requires less power than engraving wood or engraver's plastic, and when engraving acrylic, you typically achieve the most uniform results when using lower power. It's also important to note that going too slow could result in a fire depending on the material, which is why using the appropriate settings is so important."

LASER ENGRAVING IMPROVEMENTS

Over the past few years, laser systems have seen a steady increase in size and the speeds of both engraving and cutting. "More user-friendly, web-based operational software has begun to offer more control and ease of use, improved material settings, and features like cameras and vision systems have expanded the ability and diversity of markets for laser engraving," says Stevens.

Laser systems started out small in size with little to no customizable features or options. "Most were difficult to use, slow, required skilled maintenance, and were extremely expensive," Stevens adds. Over the years, new accessories have been developed, and the sizes and wattages of the lasers have increased. Laser engravers today are much easier to maintain and can reach speeds 20 times faster than the original laser engravers that came on the market.

These are all capabilities to consider when deciding what to purchase. "Laser power is going to determine speed and processing capabilities. For basic and straightforward engraving applications, a lower wattage may be sufficient, but if you want to cut materials or do more advanced techniques, such as 3D engraving, it will be more beneficial to have a laser with more power," Stevens finishes. **GP**

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