Flexible Veneer Installation

Necessary Tools:
- Brush, small sheepskin paint roller or spray equipment
- Solvent base contact cement
- Veneer smoothing blade
- Razor blade
- Kraft or wax paper
- Masonite separator strips
- Household iron
- Very fine sandpaper

General Considerations
Substrate and surface preparation:
Do not use veneer rollers or hammer blocks. A stable, smoothly sanded surface is essential for a successful installation. Sand veneer with a grit finer than 150 and with only one thickness of sandpaper. Never use a block for sanding veneer. The surface should be thoroughly cleaned and depressions filled. Contact adhesive and flexible veneer should be at room temperature, 65 degrees or above. Humidity level should not exceed 50%.

Do not apply Flexible Veneer over fir plywood. Hardwood plywood, cabinet grade particle board or fiber board are all suitable substrates on which to apply flexible veneer. Practice on a small test panel to develop a feeling for thin wood veneers before starting a major project.

Caution: Do not install flexible veneer over substrates that have been treated with a fire retardant agent. Delamination can occur.

Contact Cement Method:
Application: Clean the substrate thoroughly with denatured alcohol and allow to dry. With a paint roller or brush, apply a liberal, smooth coat of high quality solvent base contact adhesive to the substrate and let dry according to manufacturer's recommendations. Inspect for evenness of adhesive application. If coverage is not 100%, or if substrate is porous, apply a second coat to adhesive. Now apply adhesive to the back of the flexible veneer and let it dry. Generally, two coats are recommended for most applications. A thorough and even coverage is necessary to resist bubbling.

Place sheet of kraft or wax paper, or masonite separator strips between the substrate and veneer. Be sure the entire surface is covered. Once surfaces that are coated with contact cement touch each other, repositioning becomes impossible.

Where possible, it is best to begin the attachment on the centerline. You may find it advantageous to roll the flexible veneer as shown in the illustration.

If you have two large sheets of paper covering the surface, remove them by slowly pulling the edges exposing the center area. If you are using multiple strips of paper or masonite separator strips, remove the center strips first. At the exposed center area, smooth down the veneer using light hand pressure. Then, using a veneer smoothing blade or fiberboard knife, apply more pressure with the grain. Continue to expose more area and apply pressure, alternating on either side of the centerline. Now go over the entire surface applying heavy pressure in the direction of the grain. Use your body weight plus both hands. Trim off excess veneer with a razor blade or sharp hobby knife.

Note: Edges should be veneered before the main surface.

Inspection:
Inspect for air bubbles by shining a light across the grain. Bubbles may be eliminated by cutting in the direction of the grain with a razor and pressing toward the slit to remove trapped air. Press panel with scraper or smoothing blade. If bubbles persist, inject a small amount of contact cement into the bubble. Use a household iron set between wool and cotton to press veneer. Keep the iron face clean by using kraft paper to shield it from excess adhesive. The iron should be kept in motion at all times.

Finishing:
Do not apply any finish for at least 24 hours after application of veneer. With the exception of water based materials, practically any conventional finishing system may be used.

Oil based stains and oily finishes (tung oil, Danish oil types) have the potential to cause delamination problems when penetrating to the contact cement. There are two ways to minimize the amount of penetration.

1. Use finishing materials sparingly and wipe off immediately (or)
2. A coat of sanding sealer or shellac wash coat can be applied prior to staining or oil finishing with oil based products. This may slightly alter the intensity of the stain color, but not to a significant extent.

Hot Melt Glue Application:
Hot melt glue is not recommended for coverage over large areas, but it does work well on small surfaces. Proper temperature, amount of heat and time spent going over an area affect the adhering properties. The reheating of areas and the porosity of the substrate are other factors that should be considered. Too much heat on an area and reheating on porous materials can push too much glue into the substrate, a condition which tends to starve the joint of glue. This causes the veneer to separate from the substrate.

There are many important considerations: 1) setting the proper temperature, 2) proceeding at a slow pace, 3) pushing down hard with a smoothing blade, 4) and avoiding any repeat coverage of previously heated areas. Experiment with test pieces before attempting to do the finished product.

We make no guarantees regarding any finishing methods.