



Gloss is the New Gray

Making Your Interface Products Pop - Part 1 of 5

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Helping Lead You to Great Product Solutions.

A Trend Towards 'Glossy'

In the world of interface devices, a new trend towards integrating glossy surfaces is starting to gain momentum. Whereby designers used to place a higher premium on utilizing textured, anti-glare surfaces, more and more product developers are bucking this trend in favor of the sleekness that higher gloss materials offer.

This may be yet another area that has been influenced by the prevalence of smart phones. More and more users are getting used to the idea of engaging with touch screens and the smooth first surfaces that they employ. While at one time designers used to be more concerned with issues such as fingerprints, it is more and more becoming an acceptable tradeoff with these products.

Does Glossy Mean Less Durable?

Manufacturers of thin films used for membrane switches, nameplates and touch screens continue to improve the durability of the hardcoats that are available on their materials. While textured materials used to be the "go-to" material to gain a scratch resistant surface, this feature can now be achieved by a very thin, clear, glossy first-surface coating.

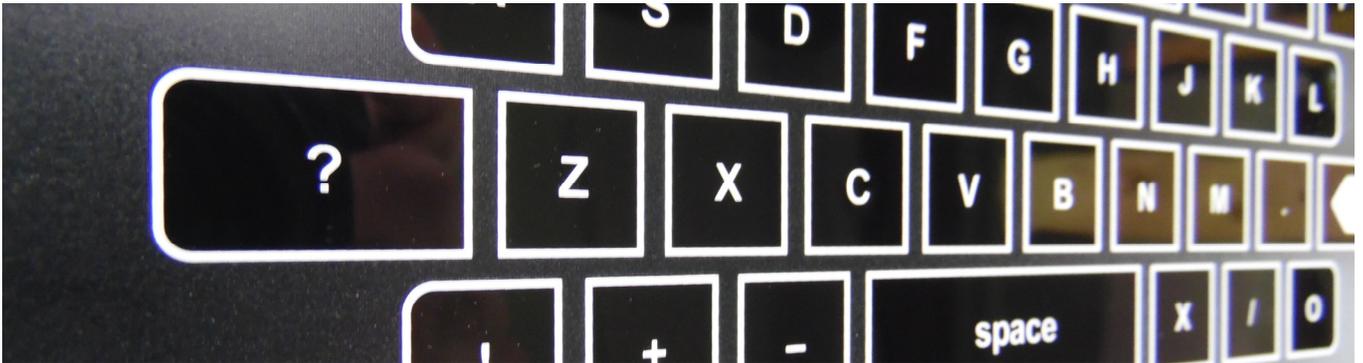


Moreover, these glossy coatings also offer chemical resistance adding to the robustness of these films. Finally, product developers in industries where sanitation is an important consideration, find that glossy first surfaces are much easier to clean in the field. Below are links to find more specifics on the performance characteristics of these coated films:

- <http://www.tekra.com/products/films/hardcoat-polyester-polycarbonate-films>
- <http://www.macdermidautotype.com/categories/6-industrial-film-systems>

Selective Texturing for Added 'Pop'

An alternative to making the entire surface area of your user interface glossy, is to have glossy surfaces on only select portions of the keypad. The contrast between the matte areas and the glossy areas provides a unique look to the input device. This technique was first used as a way to highlight logos and certain icons. Lately, however, designers have been integrating this feature into the keypad area by leaving buttons gloss and leaving the surrounding areas matte or textured. Because of SSI's ability to precisely apply texture selectively, the options for utilizing this simple but unique technique to enhance the look of your product are nearly endless.



Nothing in Life is Free?

Manufacturing interface devices and specifically membrane switches can be described as an additive process. In other words, our manufacturing processes are used to add inks and coatings to various materials. Providing high gloss surfaces is often more about utilizing the material directly from the film manufacture instead of processors like SSI adding additional printed layers. In essence, this allows us to provide a first surface glossy surface on our membrane switch keypads at no charge...proving that some things in life are indeed free.

...From the Desk of a Designer

I have been designing interface products for healthcare devices for over 12 years. On the latest batch of products that we have been developing, our team decided to utilize high gloss surfaces on the face of our membrane switches. We did this because of the strong visual impact that it gave to our products, communicating a higher level of sophistication and attention to the human interface areas. High gloss reinforces the important nature of these areas and strengthens our brand image of quality and customer focused design.



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