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C CONTENTS

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MAY 2014

v.28 n.4

FEATURES

Cover Story 48

State of the Industry 2014

In this four-part section, you'll find proven operations, marketing, sales and high-tech strategies to fast-track your shop to greater success and profitability in 2014. Plus, read highlights from *Stitches'* exclusive State of the Industry survey.

Regional Analysis 62

Here, we offer you an in-depth look into the industry trends going on just outside your shop's door. From regional sales forecasts and profit projections, to an analysis of which end-buyer markets are strongest in different parts of the country, *Stitches* delivers the localized insights you need to build a more successful business in 2014.

Top 25 Apparel Suppliers 66

The 2014 edition of *Stitches'* exclusive ranking of the suppliers with the most industry revenue last year.



DECORATING SOLUTIONS

5 Steps 33

Learn how to screen print a spot-color, retro-feel slogan on a T-shirt.

Decorating & Fabric Trends 34

Hot topics: Graphics Solutions Group's ThermoFlex Xtra cutter material; Dalco Athletic offers heat-applied pre-cut lettering; and Transfer Express (asi/91804) offers a new Decorating Apparel Calendar.

Saving 9 35

Quick tips: Read World Emblem International's (asi/98264) *The Daily Stitch* blog; add on a classic pennant to your next school or team sale with new sublimation pennants from Dalco Athletic; and more.

Punching Sense 37

Learn expert tips for digitizing on knit fabrics, along with our best stabilizer recommendations.

LOOK BOOK

New York Fashion Week 40

Embroidered garments from Carolina Herrera, Zang Toi, Naeem Khan and Vivienne Tam.

Trend Alerts 42

Runway trends to sell: athletic-inspired apparel and new hue canary yellow.

Showcase 44

Latest polo styles to decorate and sell.

Niche 45

The coolest personalized wedding accessories.

Inspiration 46

Embroidery artist Marta Brysha shows off her celestial scenes and fascinating geometric designs.

Coming Next Issue 75

What to look forward to in June *Stitches*.

Ask an Expert 76

An expert lists business apps to run your shop when you're on the go.

INTERACT

Stitches.com 20

Trending topics: How readers came up with their business names; what decorators can learn from graphic designers; and more.

Pinterest.com/stitchesmag 21

What's hot from our Screen-Printed Designs and Cool Embroidery Designs Boards.

Letters 22

Readers talk about building their businesses from home, and sharing the benefits of hard work and community.

Problem Solved 24

The Advisory Board advises a decorator on how to get started creating simple marketing videos to promote her shop.

Phil Stitch Answers 26

Phil finds Safari shirts, brand-name watches with embellishments, travel mugs and more.

NEWS

Industry 28

Long-time Barudan sales rep passes away; GroupeSTAHL announces partnership with Wild Side; and the industry reacts to BEL USA, Branders (asi/145021) deal.

World 29

Trending topics: A Lac Seul First Nation fabric artist in northwestern Ontario creates amazing work; the first International Summit for Cultural Heritages of Chinese Embroidery Craftwork showcased more than 150 pieces of embroidery in China; and more.

Strategy 30

A decorator uses social media to engage with clients as well as make big sales, and a shop owner taps into the lucrative Celtic cultural community over the Web.

About the Cover
Design: Hillary Glen
Decoration: A & P Master Images (asi/702505; circle 89 on Free Info Card).
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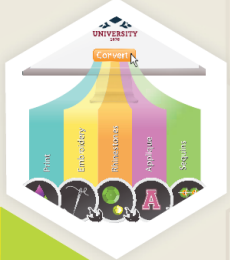
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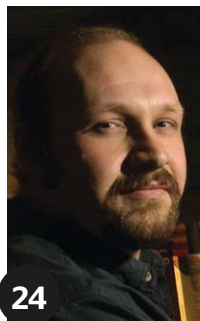
In this month's "Punching Sense" section of our "Decorating Solutions" department,

BONNIE LANDSBERGER, owner of Cannon Falls, MN-based Moonlight Design, offers tried-and-true tips on digitizing for knits, which can be challenging, since stitches sink into the wales of the knit, underlay pokes out of the sides of satin stitch columns, and so on. One key thing is choosing the right stabilizer: "My preference is a flexible, no-show, poly-mesh cutaway that keeps the embroidery comfortable to the skin, yet sturdy enough to do the job," Landsberger writes.

In this issue's "Ask an Expert," **KRISTINE SHREVE**, director of marketing for EnMart and Ensign Emblem, gives a shop owner who's always on the go 11 apps to run her business better from her smartphone or tablet. For example, one app you may not have heard of is LogMeIn, which is available for Android and iOS: "If you've ever forgotten an important file on your PC, this app may be the thing that saves your bacon," Shreve writes. "LogMeIn allows you to access your Mac or PC from your smartphone so you can obtain the information or documents you need quickly and easily." Check out 10 more apps that will make handling your company business from the road even easier.



76



24

In this month's "Problem Solved" section of our "Interact" department, **ERICH CAMPBELL**, e-commerce manager/digitizer for Albuquerque, NM-based Black Duck Inc., weighs in on a common embroiderer dilemma: "How should I get started with promo videos?" "You can have multiple levels of video usage: broad approaches aimed at your clients at large that show decorating methods, styles and new garments and their features; and a narrower focus targeting a specific class of customers with garments and accessories relevant to their particular needs," he writes. "For decorators who feel uncomfortable with blogging, but who do feel comfortable giving tours of their shop or talking to customers, video is an excellent medium for blog updates and building content."

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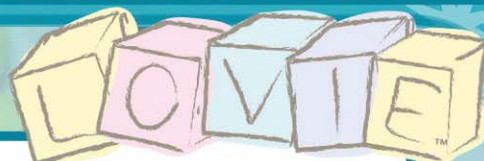


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When asked to rate the health of the decorated-apparel market on a scale of one to five (one is "ailing" and five is "robust"), decorators gave the market an average score of 3.53, the highest rating in the last six years. In addition, half of respondents gave the industry a health rating of four or five, up from 43% last year. Even better, nearly two-thirds of decorators increased their sales volume in 2013 compared to 2012, the highest number in five years – this is a 10-point increase over 2012 (53%), and a 26-point increase over 2009 (37%).

Starting on page 52, we've got 16 smart strategies to help decorating firms of all sizes foster growth at their companies. Divided into four sections – Operations, Sales, Marketing and High-Tech Strategies – the 2014 State of the Industry Business Growth Guide will spark new ways for you to fast track your business

toward unprecedented growth and success throughout the remainder of 2014 and into 2015. We've expanded our industry-wide survey to include a look at regional sales forecasts and profit projections, as well as top trends, such as which end-buyer markets are strongest in different parts of the country.

And, read about *Stitches'* Top 25 Apparel Suppliers, our exclusive ranking of the suppliers with the most industry revenue last year (with recent acquisitions, the list has been shaken up a little, plus we have newcomers).

Finally, I wanted to share some exciting news: *Stitches* was honored with a national Jesse H. Neal National Business Journalism Award for our 2013 State of the Industry issue in the "Best Single Issue" category. One judge described *Stitches* as "a refreshingly well-rounded trade magazine that serves its audience with an interesting and relevant mix of upfront news and, in this issue's feature, a smart and sensibly packaged State of the Industry." We've worked hard on this year's State of the Industry issue, and we're thrilled to be a part of your growth plans this year.

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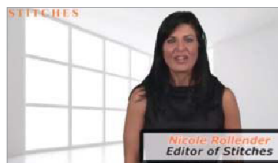
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Podcast: Social Media Smarts

Stitches Senior Staff Writer Theresa Hegel talks with social media expert Marki Lemons-Ryhal about ways to promote and protect your brand online. Listen on *Stitches.com*.

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SOCIAL FEEDS



Facebook Fans React We posted:

Our condolences go out to Barudan and Mr. Firman's family: Steve Firman, territory sales representative for Barudan America Inc., died Feb. 23, from a short illness. Firman, who began his embroidery career selling Meistergram monogram machines for Macpherson Meistergram, was a 24-year veteran of the embroidery industry.

YOU RESPONDED CHRIS NIPPER

When we were deciding on which machines to buy when we first started out, we met with Steve. We also saw him at many conventions. Very nice guy. This is very sad.

BEVERLY MIKEL

I purchased both of my Barudan machines through Steve, the last one only four weeks ago. He was so helpful and remembered me from purchasing my first one 13 years ago. He'll be sadly missed by all his customers. He was such a nice, helpful person.

WILD WEST DESIGNS

Horrible news. I purchased my machine through Steve just a year ago. Very nice man. Talked with him at the NNEP show when it was here in Nashville.

PEGGY ALEX MILLER

So sorry, and praying for his family!



@MASHABLE

Is Android overtaking iOS in the global tablet market? <http://on.mash.to/1jMuYEW>

@HOOTSUITE

Does writing and blogging take you forever? 5 easy ways to cut that time in half: <http://ow.ly/u4y1o>

@ILLUSTRATOR

The image says it all. Have a fantastic week everyone! Imagery from @ellijot: <http://bit.ly/1fOPNu pic.twitter.com/6P0kZ22rug>

@ASICENTRAL

Congrats to Cheryl Diamond, Diamond Stitchery and Promotions, for earning the BASI certification!

@ENMARTIAN

Thank you to everyone who visited EnMart at the DAX Show and attended my seminar. We appreciate it. #DAXSHOW

@RYONET

What did you think about our <http://ScreenPrinting.com> video? Which screen printer are you? <http://bit.ly/1dTNXZr>

@ADWEEK

You won't believe how big TV still is. Have a look at the numbers: <http://adweek.it/1bZriQ5 pic.twitter.com/rftgw92nQa>

@ASI_STITCHES

Ever heard of beardvertising? It's a wacky and creative marketing concept companies are using to get attention: <http://bit.ly/1pUjOgm>

@MASHABLE

3-D printing empowers fashion designers, but could it also make counterfeiting easier? <http://on.mash.to/1jMhfy7 pic.twitter.com/7h46xDa2e>

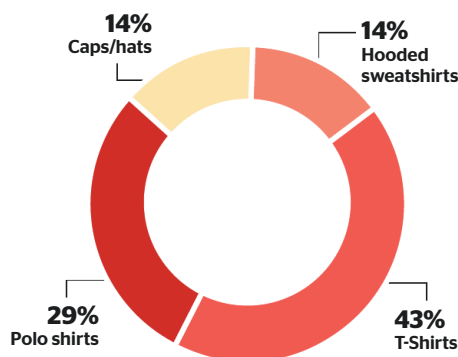
@HOOTSUITE

Social media takes over London Fashion Week: <http://ow.ly/u7khv>

INDUSTRY POLL

On *Asicentral.com*, we recently asked:

What apparel items do you make your strongest profits on?



BLOG EXCERPT

On Links and Needles Learning from Designers: The Design Brief



Though we aren't necessarily graphic designers, as decorators we do share common creative needs. Even when we don't determine the look of a design, we're still called upon to deliver a product based on an educated interpretation of the specifications set by our customer. This requires us to explore the nature of the customers' needs and wants, and to determine what's necessary, possible and advisable within the boundaries of our medium. Unlike designers, we're often called upon simply to reproduce existing designs without any significant reimagining; however, no matter the level of creative freedom we enjoy in any one project, decorators could benefit greatly by learning more about the way designers gather information and establish the direction of a given project.

Scan this code to read the entire blog entry by Erich Campbell, digitizer and e-commerce manager at Albuquerque, NM-based Black Duck Inc.



Pinterest

Check out the following designs that we pinned on Stitches' Pinterest page – from the *Screen-Printed Designs* and *Cool Embroidery Designs* Boards.

From the Board: Screen-Printed Designs



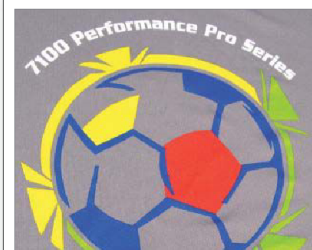
This T-shirt was designed by indie band The National and benefits the charity Safe Space, via The Yellow Bird Project.



This T-shirt by Oakland, CA-based Forward Printing combines water-soluble ink and foil applied with plastisol adhesive.



This T-shirt by Nashville-based Anderson Studio Inc. is screen printed using a simulated process to produce a photo-realistic print.



This T-shirt was created with International Coatings' 7100 Performance Pro series of fast-flashing ink designed for printing on polyester and synthetic blends, and is available from Ryonet Corp. (circle 102 on Free Info card).

From the Board: Cool Embroidery Designs



This full-back shirt design was created for staff of a local gaming store; decoration by Kevin Wylde, of Prince Rupert, BC-based Stuck on Designs; digitizing by Artwork Source.



Carolyn Cagle of Stacy, MN-based Strikke Knits stitched these Black Dala Horse Mittens for Forest Lake, MN-based Odin International, which sells them to its Scandinavian gift shops across the U.S.



This promotional cap by Columbus, OH-based Leaderpromos (asi/287087; circle 103 on Free Info card) celebrates the new employee-owned status of Farmers Home Furniture and features 3-D embroidery.



Jane Swanzy of Houston-based Swan Marketing LLC embroidered the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo Horticulture Committee logo on the back of this Blue Generation (asi/40653; circle 104 on Free Info card) twill shirt.

Visit Stitches' Pinterest page – and all of our great boards – at Pinterest.com/stitchesmag.

INTERACT

Letters

We received these three letters in response to the question: What niche market are you selling into successfully?



Look to the Skies

We run a clothing line called Jumper Sportswear, owned by US LOGO. We focus on T-shirt designs for skydivers. We sell mostly to the wholesale industry which then resells to the end-user or skydiver. We have over 40 designs in stock ready to ship

at any time. We like to play on the edge of being risky and have found that people really enjoy wearing designs that are funny or a little outrageous. Skydiving is not only a sport, but also a lifestyle for most people. We love working with our skydiver clients and love the skydiving niche. We're so fortunate to have a great graphics staff that can produce designs that are current and trendy.

Lisa Elledge
US LOGO, Wichita, KS



Ride On

We recently embroidered

awards pieces for the Mississippi Reining Horse Association. This particular piece is a heavyweight canvas workwear vest with gold and light blue thread.

Richard Cullen
RFC-Emb, Poplarville, MS

All that Glitters

I'm a reader of your magazine and could not agree more about decorators identifying new markets and new trends, and learning how to achieve healthier markups on their services. At Foxyware (asi/87605), we manufacture everything rhinestone – literally! We serve the promotional markets with many of our accessory items. Most importantly, the biggest part of our business is selling rhinestone transfers to decorators. This is a very underdeveloped market

in which decorators should invest more time and energy.

There are many unfulfilled markets for this category. We want to help decorators capture this lucrative market while always bringing them the best value and service. Bling has a very high perceived value which means better profits for decorators if they know how to do it correctly.

Wayne Cimperman
Foxyware Inc. (asi/87605)

Stitches readers sound off:

Family Ties

My 82-year-old mother and I love your magazine. I have a small sewing/embroidery business where my mother helps with picking thread colors and designs, and with trimming stitches, so we love to do work for the elderly, handicapped and young children.

Robin Burch
Robin Burch's Sewing Nest

Well-Rounded

We do graphic design, embroidery, sublimation and vinyl cutting, all from a small in-home business.

Steve Lopez
Victoria's Embroidery Etc.

VOILA!

The Best Piece I Ever Embroidered



I'm a seamstress with an embroidery habit. Two years ago, I was in the market for a new machine and while shopping for a Serger, I was introduced to the wonderful world of machine embroidery. When Urban Threads featured its Gothic Glam design, I matched EnMart's polyester thread colors to Joanne's Skull and Roses fabric and fashioned a biker bag, fully lined with black Kona cotton. It's large enough to hold an iPad and the wide strap makes it comfortable and secure to wear across my chest while riding my Harley.

My new love of being a sewist – someone who creates sewn works of art – has helped me start an in-home embroidery business called Rusty Stitches. Some of my projects are on [facebook.com/Rustystitch](https://www.facebook.com/Rustystitch). Check them out!

Submitted by Rusty Pullen, Rusty Stitches, Redding, CA

TALK TO US!

Tell us what challenges you're facing in your shop. React to a story you've just read in *Stitches* or on our Facebook page. E-mail us a shot of the latest and greatest embroidery design you've just run. We can't wait to hear from you, so send letters to the editor to nrollender@asicentral.com.



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asi/40788

INTERACT

Problem Solved

Q *With YouTube and easy-to-use video apps like Vine out there, I keep hearing that I should be using short videos in my social media and other marketing efforts, and even when I communicate with clients to show them a cool product or technique. How should I get started with using videos?*



Erich Campbell, Black Duck Inc.: A customer of ours, a high-end clothing boutique, has been using video brilliantly for some

time. They release a weekly YouTube video, cross-promoted with a newsletter, featuring the latest fashion trends. The advertising isn't overt, and it shows outfits and trends and displays the latest stock. They drive traffic to their websites, create an archive of useful videos and provide a great visual component for their promotional e-mails. In our industry, you can have multiple levels of video usage: broad approaches aimed at your clientele at large that show decorating methods, styles, and new garments and their features; a narrower focus targeting a specific class of customers with garments and accessories relevant to their particular needs; and the narrowest focus presenting specific options to a single customer in the way of a video consultation. It all depends on who you're trying to reach, and where/when you expect them to view the content. As always, keep your audience in mind! For all of those decorators who feel uncomfortable with blogging, but who do feel comfortable giving tours of their shop or talking to customers, video is an excellent medium for blog updates and building content.



Howard Potter, A&P Master Images (asi/702505): We do this already with our iPhone.

The picture and sound quality are great. Customers love to see what you do – just shoot a quick video and upload it to YouTube. Then you can share it on your website, Facebook and even Twitter by copying and pasting the link.

“For decorators who feel comfortable giving tours of their shop or talking to customers, video is an excellent medium for blog updates and building content.”

Erich Campbell, Black Duck Inc.



Deborah Jones, MyEmbroideryMentor.com: To get started doing videos, you have to just dive in. You don't need any fancy equipment – a consumer video camera is fine. What really matters are your set, lighting, sound and length. When you do your first one, you'll likely see what needs to be improved. After five or six are completed, you'll have made several improvements.

1. If your camera has an HDMI port, use it to connect to an external monitor so you can see more clearly what's being filmed.
 2. Your camera microphone will work fine as long as you aren't too far away.
 3. A work light from a home improvement store will work well for inexpensive lighting. For starters, try the kind that sells for \$3 and looks like a big round helmet with a clamp.
 4. It's easiest to do an introduction with your face on camera, but if you're demonstrating a technique, film the rest with just hands or equipment. This allows you to dub narration in later if needed.
 5. Use a simple home version of video-editing software at first to fade in and out, and add titles like your Web address.
- Many cameras have these functions, and that's OK, but it's similar to doing your embroidery editing at the machine instead of the computer.

The best way to get started is to just do it. You'll learn quickly what works and adapt your set, camera angles and other details. If you really get into creating videos, you can always upgrade your equipment and software after you see what you really need.



Jay Fishman, Wicked Stitch of the East: Either do it yourself or hire out. We did a combination of both here, but we

continue to work long hours with setup and maintenance. People in this industry believe they can do it all, from digitizing to websites. But there's a significant cost if things aren't done correctly. You need a total marketing plan for social networking and an understanding of how everything works together. Spending a lot of money isn't necessary, but you either have to make a huge investment in time to do the research and setup, or hire someone who can do it for you.

LEARN IT LIVE

In the hands-on session, "Videos From the Show Floor: Create Your Own 30-Second Masterpiece," you'll learn how to shoot videos from the ASI Show New Products Pavilion and on the trade show floor, and upload them immediately. You'll interact with suppliers, pick the latest products for specific clients, and learn how to create a top-notch video. Be sure to bring your camera or smartphone to this one-of-a-kind class at the ASI Show in Chicago on July 15, 1:30 p.m.-2:30 p.m.

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Phil Stitch Answers



Got a question for Phil?

If you can't find what you're looking for in the 2013 Sourcing Guide, write to: *Stitches*, Attn: Phil Stitch, 4800 Street Rd., Trevoze, PA 19053. Or fax your question to (215) 953-3107. For the quickest response, e-mail askphil@asicentral.com. For RN inquiries, visit www.stitches.com for the RN Database link.

P.S. If you join ASI with the brand-new *Stitches* Membership Package, you'll be able to immediately source imprintable products from every ASI supplier member with ASI's ESP Buyer's Guide. Plus, increase sales with your own e-commerce website full of T-shirts, blankets, caps, bags, plush toys and other embroidery-ready items. Call (877) 276-0292 or visit www.joinstitches.com to get started!

I'm looking for a moisture-wicking skirt that has a built-in short and side vents. Do you have a source for this? - Jill

In short, yes! Check out product 751 from Staton Corporate and Casual (asi/89380); (800) 950-6611; www.statononline.com. This Ladies' Poly/Spandex Team Skort features

V-notches at the sides, antimicrobial and wicking properties and a double-needle hemmed bottom. A girls' companion version (752) is available as well.

For women on the move, Branded Apparel Designs (asi/41560); (847) 564-3450; www.brandedapparel.com; carries the Tour-Tech Skort (1131B), a water- and stain-resistant, moisture-wicking garment with 19" outseam that's available in four colors.

I need a wholesale source for very comfy stadium seats with a thick cushion and an embroiderable back rest. Please help me! If I can find a good one it will mean big sales for my company. - Vickie

Get in the game with the Modern Stadium Seat (45758) from Norwood US (asi/74400); (800) 336-9198; www.norwood.com.

Five adjustable back positions allow for maximum comfort, not to mention a cozy cushion. Heat transfer is the method of decoration for this product, though.

You can also get comfy in the embroiderable Super Stadium Seat (SSPB) from Sourcing Dept - BRENTWOOD (asi/88245); (615) 370-0600; www.brentwoodline.com. This polyester seat features 1" dense foam padding for comfort and webbed carry handles for easy transporting.

Finally, settle into the Wedge Super Comfort seat (A-1386) from NEP Promotions (asi/72805); (800) 262-7328; www.nepromotions.com; this foam/polyester folding chair is perfect for game day promotions.

We have a medical company looking for Cherokee brand scrubs. Is there any place

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asi/78230

I can get them for wholesale pricing?

- Solomon

Scrub in and head to Rugged Outfitters (asi/84143); (888) 388-1453; *ruggedoutfitters.espnwebsite.com*; for scrub tops, pants, lab coats and more in the brand your client seeks! Alternately, your operation can benefit from Scrub Authority (asi/86018); (888) 216-0133; *www.scrubauthority.com*; and Bet-tencourt Manufacturing (asi/40361); (772) 202-9146; *info@trenduniforms.com*.

Hi Phil, I need a source for rain jackets in youth and adult sizes. Can you help?

- Herb

Stay dry with Charles River Apparel (asi/44620); (800) 225-0550; *www.charlesriverapparel.com*; the New Englander Rain Jacket is available in men's (9199), ladies' (5099), children's (7099) and toddlers'

(6099) sizes. In addition, the nylon water-repellent Thunder Jacket protects both adults (9173) and youth (8273).

You might also make a splash with Harriton Youth Essential Rainwear (M765Y) from alphabroder (asi/34063); (215) 291-6140; *www.alphabroder.com*; a supplier that carries Harriton Men's Essential Rainwear (M765) and Devon & Jones Ladies' Nylon Rip-Stop Rain Jacket (D756W).

We're looking for long- or short-sleeve work shirts in black or navy that have high-visibility traits, like the safety green/orange shirts by Red Kap. Any idea who may have them? - Cinamon

My first bright idea is the Classic Black Bottom T-Shirt (LUX-SSETPBK) from Occunomix International (asi/74830); (636) 625-1565; *www.occunomix.com*; it's an ANSI

Class 2 high-visibility T-shirt, half safety yellow and half black with 2" silver reflective tape.

Or, stand out with the Hi-Visibility Crewneck Fleece (3792) from AST Sportswear (asi/30244); (800) 379-9969; *www.usabayside.com*. This USA-made, poly/cotton shirt is available in six colors, including black, all with reflective tape across the front.

Finally, don't miss the navy/orange Enhanced Visibility Work Shirt (102BF) from Codet Newport Corp. (asi/45605); (800) 992-6338; *www.bigbill.com*. With a button-down front, two pockets and plenty of attention-grabbing stripes, this shirt is sure to keep end-users safe.

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ST1405

a GroupeSTAHL company

By Christopher Ruvo

Long-Time Barudan Sales Rep Passes Away

The embroidery industry lost a well-loved professional recently when Steve Firman, territory sales representative for Barudan America, died following a short illness. An industry veteran with 24 years experience, Firman began his career selling Meistergram monogram machines for Macpherson Meistergram. Since 1995, he was Barudan's Nashville-based South-Central sales representative.

Embroiderer Beverly Merkel echoed the sentiments of many when she expressed sadness at Firman's passing and praise of his

character in a post on *Stitches'* Facebook page. "I purchased both of my Barudan machines through Steve," Merkel wrote. "He was so helpful and remembered me from purchasing my first one 13 years ago. He will be sadly missed by all his customers. He was such a nice, helpful person."

Firman is survived by his wife Stephanie and son Tyler.



Steve Firman

GroupeSTAHL Announces Partnership With Wild Side

GroupeSTAHL has entered into a joint venture with The Wild Side, a stock and custom manufacturer of plastisol transfers. The international parent organization of more than 20 companies, GroupeSTAHL delivers heat-printing equipment, material and services. Wild Side has been a manufacturer of heat transfers and apparel art since 1979. The Los Angeles-based company keeps more than 10 million transfers in stock. "We believe the quality and selection of Wild Side transfers will give our customers another turnkey profit center," says GroupeSTAHL Executive Chairman Ted Stahl.

Industry Reacts to BEL USA, Branders Deal

The announcement of BEL USA's merger with promotional products distributor Branders.com (asi/145021) has generated a wide range of opinions among advertising specialty industry

executives, as companies consider what the deal means for the market. In the transaction, BEL USA, parent company to supplier BelPromo (asi/39552) and distributor DiscountMugs.com, added Branders.com to its group of companies.

While BEL will operate the companies as separate businesses, they'll be under one corporate umbrella, leading to questions about future market consolidation and the blurring of the traditional industry sales model.

"I have a huge problem with a supplier and distributor being owned by the same parent company," said Greg Muzzillo, founder of Proforma (asi/300094). "In my mind, the essential element that makes the distributor/supplier relationship work is trust. I think most distributors would struggle to maintain trust in a supplier that also was a distributor."

Others in the industry have a bit of a different take on the deal, like Steve Paradiso,

president of ePromos Promotional Products (asi/188515). "The people that were freaked out by Bel before are going to be freaked out now," he said. "I think this is a pretty exciting opportunity and there are some smart people involved in this. Remember, most big distributors have figured out how to do things direct for a while now, so in some ways this is just an extension of business as usual."

Small Businesses Investing More in Social Media

From large contract shops to home-based embroiderers, apparel decorators are increasingly using social media to attract and connect with clients. In so doing, decorators are part of a much broader trend: A recent study shows that small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs) are relying more on social media to drive growth and enhance awareness.

Commissioned by professional social network LinkedIn along with market research firm

Event Calendar

May 13-16
Raleigh, NC; Charlotte, NC;
Atlanta; Nashville
Advantages Roadshow
(800) 546-3300; www.advantagesroadshow.com

May 18-21
New York City
National Stationery Show
(800) 272-7469;
www.nationalstationeryshow.com

May 29-June 1
Las Vegas
Las Vegas Antique Jewelry & Watch Show
(239) 732-6642;
www.lasvegasantiquejewelryandwatchshow.com

June 2-5
Vancouver, BC; Calgary, AB; Edmonton, AB
Advantages Roadshow
(800) 546-3300;
www.advantagesroadshow.com

June 8-11
Marlboro, MA
New England Apparel Club Show
(781) 326-9223;
www.neacshow.com

TNS, the study found that 81% of SMBs use social media, with another 9% planning to use it for their business in the future. The report showed that social media is helping businesses in several areas. Over 60% find it useful in acquiring new customers, while nearly half use it as learning platform, particularly to get answers and recommendations for peers.

Lac Seul Fabric Art

Patricia Ningewance is known for her books on Ojibwe, an indigenous Algonquin language spoken by native peoples in parts of Canada. But the writer and linguist from the Lac Seul First Nation in northwestern Ontario has a talent for more than just words. She's also a brilliant fabric artist – a fact that was on display at the Thunder Bay Art Gallery in Ontario, where her cloth creations were featured in an exhibit earlier this year.

Full of color, life and movement, Ningewance's fabric art impressionistically depicts landscapes, animals, portraits, abstract designs, animals and spiritual themes central to the Anishinabe, an indigenous peoples' nation called Ojibwe in Canada and Chippewa in the U.S. "In my textile work," says Ningewance in a statement, "I use pieces of quilts or solid color fabric as the background and sew on smaller cut pieces. I add ribbons and buttons, and I finish with embroidery and beadwork. Sometimes, I use parts of actual



Fabric artist Patricia Ningewance incorporates embroidery in colorful creations that are inspired by everything from nature to traditional Anishinabe spirituality.

quilts as a starting point because I was inspired to create this artwork from my memories of quilts."

Recently, Ningewance told the *Wataway News* (www.watawaynews.ca) that her interest in fabric art was sparked during family trips around rural northwestern Ontario. While huddled in tents during rainy days during the travels, she keenly observed the different fabrics of her family's garments and quilts. "That's where my relationship with cloth began," she says.

Embroidered Book Covers

Bibliophile Anthony Tedeschi is on a mission to raise awareness about rare book collections in Australasia. In so doing, the deputy curator for special collections for the University of Melbourne in Australia has also shed light on works of embroidery from 17th century Europe.

In his blog *Antipodean Footnotes* (www.antipodeanfootnotes.blogspot.de), Tedeschi recently wrote about two rare books in Melbourne University's collection that feature textile bindings with embroidered decorations. One is *The Book of Common Prayer* (London, 1629), which measures just 11 centimeters tall. "The cover is made of white satin over blue silk, with birds and flowers embroidered with different colored

silk set within frames of gold thread, with gold thread borders on the spine and both sides," Tedeschi writes.

The other is a copy of *L'Office de la Vierge Marie pour tous les temps de l'annee* (Paris, 1636), bound with Pierre Coton's *Dévotes oraisons pour tous chrestiens et catholiques* (Paris, 1637). Featuring a green velvet binding, the book is elaborately embroidered with floral motifs in silver thread and sequins. "Textile bindings," Tedeschi writes, "were produced primarily by professional embroiderers, but were also made by individual female owners. They were very much in vogue in England during the first half of the 17th century, particularly as covers for devotional books."

Summit Spotlights China's Stitchwork Tradition

Embroidery aficionados from around the world recently flocked to China for a summit and exhibition of traditional stitchwork produced in the Asian nation. Held at the Guangdong Museum in Guangzhou, the first International Summit for Cultural Heritages of Chinese Embroidery Craftwork showcased more than 150 pieces of embroidery from all across China. The 28 different styles of stitchwork on display included Su embroidery from Jiangsu Province, Xiang embroidery from Hunan Province and Shu embroidery from Sichuan Province.

One of the biggest attention-grabbers at the show was an 11-meter-long embroidered version of a Qing Dynasty painting of Prosperous Suzhou, which was created in the Su style by 79-year-old embroidery master Zhang Yuying. "Embroidery represents the best of China's traditional arts and crafts," Jiang Mingqing, a cultural ministry official, told www.CRIEnglish.com. "We continue to attach great importance to the craft and have made remarkable achievements in this field."

67%

Percentage of business-to-business content marketers who consider event marketing the most effective strategy

source: Social Media Today

WEB

Selling Via Social Media

When it comes to using social media for business, the oft-repeated advice of experts is to eschew direct-sell pitches. You're instructed to provide content that interests, entertains, informs or



Sparkle Plenty Designs (asi/88442), a "bling" decorator of apparel and accessories, stirred sales of these Swarovski bracelets by posting about a special offer for them on Twitter and Facebook.

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even champions clients and prospects, and by so doing, raise awareness about your brand, thus influencing people to one day buy from you. While that approach is generally sound, many decorators who are successful with social media aren't afraid to additionally pepper their feeds with posts about deals, special offers and products. "You don't want to overdo it, because people will tune you out, but if you sprinkle in promotions once and a while you can get great results," says Lee Romano Sequeira, who boasts more than 5,100 Twitter followers.

The co-owner of Sparkle Plenty Designs (asi/88442), Sequeira helped generate strong sales of glittering bracelets recently by posting about a great deal being run by her Philadelphia-based company, which specializes in rhinestone and crystal decoration for apparel and accessories. "Sparkle Special! Buy 2 get 1 Free! Purchase any two Swarovski crystal stretch emerald-cut or tennis bracelets, we'll include 1 FREE," read tweets and posts on Sparkle Plenty's Facebook page, which has more than 1,800 followers. The online announcements contained links to a Web store where the bracelets could be bought. Through the store's back end, Sequeira was able to strategically track where the eager shoppers were coming from. As she found, the social media postings funneled in much of the traffic. "We blasted it out there," Sequeira says, "and we started getting orders."

In what was a business-building bonus, some people who initially connected with Sparkle Plenty about the bracelets decided to buy other merchandise, including bling-decorated shirts and decals for their automobiles. "Sometimes they see something on Twitter and call and that leads to conversations about other things we can do for them," Sequeira says.

A young girl with curly blonde hair, wearing a blue floral dress, stands on the left holding a bouquet of yellow wildflowers. A woman with long wavy brown hair, wearing a light blue denim shirt over a green t-shirt, sits on the right. A golden retriever sits between them, looking up at the woman. The background is a field of tall grass and wildflowers with a line of trees in the distance.

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DECORATING SOLUTIONS

Five Steps

By Tonia Kimbrough

Create a Screen-Printed Slogan

Chicago-based Culture Studio Custom Screen Printing & Embroidery (asi/700559) is printing lots of simple slogan T-shirts, a hot throw-back trend. “Slogan/text-style imprints are usually spot color, but that doesn’t mean they’re simple” to produce, says Nick Ernst, production manager. Here’s how to do it in five steps.

1

KNOW YOUR CLIENT’S EXPECTATIONS.

Many customers want a soft, smooth imprint, so to achieve that, choose the appropriate white base ink for your garment fabric to create a smooth underbase. One to try, according to Ernst: Rutland High Opacity ink.

2

CHECK YOUR SCREEN TENSION.

Ernst suggests using a tight screen to ensure that the ink will release properly from the screen and lay down as evenly as possible. Properly stretched screens need less pressure to release the ink from the screen. This is important because too much pressure can stretch the shirt and the design in the printing process, making it harder for the top colors to cover an underbase.

3

DETERMINE YOUR TECHNIQUE, BASED ON YOUR SHIRT COLOR AND FIBER.

If you’re printing on dark/black T-shirts, be sure to use the right white ink on the base screen; Ernst suggests that if you’re printing a polyester garment, try Rutland’s Super Poly White ink.

4

FLASH-CURE THE SHIRT.

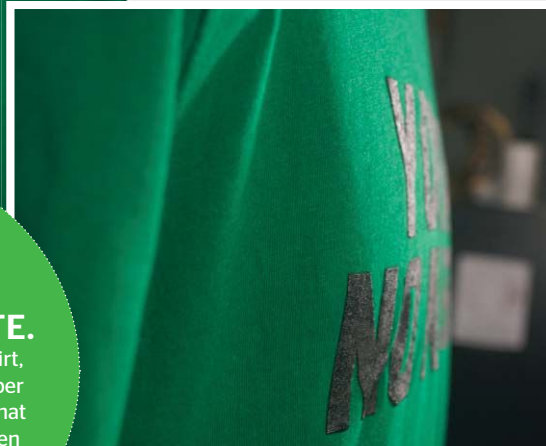
Note: Don’t over flash-cure the design or you’ll be left with rough text rather than leaving a smooth hand.

TIP: Use the right mesh. One to try: Ernst recommends Muramaki Smart Mesh LX150, LX180 or LX225, since it retains tension well and creates a consistent result.

5

USE A CRUSH PLATE.

After you’ve flash-cured the shirt, use a crush plate - that’s a rubber cylinder with a Teflon bottom that comes down on a regular screen and rolls over the imprint to help smooth and soften it.



Culture Studio (asi/700559; circle 76 on Free Info Card.)

DECORATING SOLUTIONS

Decorating & Fabric Trends



GRAPHIC SOLUTIONS GROUP, CIRCLE 77 ON FREE INFO CARD OR CALL (800) 366-1776.

Tricky Fabrics Need Special Treatment

Nylon rain ponchos and performance-poly fabrics are great for outdoor sports, but are sensitive materials that present special decorating challenges. Graphic Solutions Group takes on these tough jobs with two new materials.

ThermoFlex Xtra, offered by GSG, is a cutter material developed specifically for use on nylon, leather, rayon and other surfaces where heat is an issue. It features a thick, pressure-sensitive polyester carrier sheet and a low-tack carrier adhesive that allows for easy repositioning, cutting and weeding.

A durable, highly flexible polyurethane-based material, ThermoFlex Xtra is applied

at relatively low temperatures (310° to 315°), with a dwell time of three to five seconds, and then cold-peeled, covered with a Teflon sheet and re-pressed for 10 seconds. It also can be used on some silicon-coated materials with sufficient surface texture to permit the adhesive to adhere.

GSG Tech Weave Stabilizer addresses the stretch of performance fabrics that are engineered to be resilient. Tech Weave is made of 50% polyester/50% rayon, and when used on the bias, it stretches with the fabric to reduce the stress on stitching. It features low shrinkage, which decreases puckering and provides a stable foundation that keeps stitches looking sharp and in registration.

Stylish Lettering Made Easy

Pump up your lettering by adding contrast and sparkle. Dalco Athletic offers heat-applied precut lettering with a bit of jazz. The new Slice lettering option achieves a two-color look with Yikes font in contrasting colors on the top and bottom.

Customers can choose from two materials, Dal-Glitter or Dal-Sparkle, and two colors. Dal-Glitter is a sparkling material made of multicolor holographic particles. It comes in black, blue, gold, green, red and silver. Dal-Sparkle is holographic film that comes in blue, gold, green, red and silver.

Finished designs will measure approximately 3" x 10". The material can be heat-applied to cotton, polyester or cotton/poly blends. Your initial order must be 10 pieces and reorders must be five pieces or more.



DALCO ATHLETIC, CIRCLE 79 ON FREE INFO CARD OR CALL (800) 288-3252.



TRANSFER EXPRESS (ASI/91804); CIRCLE 78 ON FREE INFO CARD OR CALL (800) 622-2280.

All-Year-Round Holiday Sales

Throughout the year there are seasons, holidays and events that provide excellent opportunities for a decorated apparel shop to maximize sales. Transfer Express' (asi/91804) new Decorating Apparel Calendar provides marketing ideas 12 months of the year. By using this handy calendar, you can create and schedule solicitations via direct mail, website, social media or advertising to remind customers about upcoming events and how you can help them promote it.

In addition, on the Transfer Express website, you'll find sales flyer templates, posters, displays and samples to help you do this. You'll also find great ideas for targeting niche markets or seasonal activities. To view the calendar, go to www.transferexpress.com/decorating-calendar.

Need more inspiration? Transfer Express also offers a video presentation that explains how to design and order custom transfers for creating team uniforms, as well as other applications. The video showcases more than 5,000 custom layouts. East Prints transfers are organized by category, such as soccer, to simplify the process of finding the type of design needed. This video is uploaded to the Easy Prints YouTube channel page (www.youtube.com/transferexpress).

Reduce Needle Wobble by 60%



HIRSCH INTERNATIONAL
(ASI/14982, CIRCLE 80 ON FREE
INFO CARD) OR CALL (800)
394-4426.

New from Tajima is the TMAR-KC, a multihead automatic embroidery machine that is designed to make it easier to sew on a wide range of fabric types and thicknesses for challenging or specialty jobs. The digitally controlled presser foot adjusts to the fabric thickness, making it easier to sew on sheer fabrics (such as tulle) up to dense fabrics (such as canvas) with fewer thread breaks and tension issues.

A newly designed middle thread guide

allows for setting tension in half the time as could be done on the conventional thread guide. Needle wobble has been decreased by 60%, making it easier to do intricate embroidery with better results.

Thread tension can be adjusted on individual needle bars allowing for use of a wide range of thin and thick threads. A specialty thread attachment makes it easier to embroider using thick thread, and a new crank drive has made this machine more durable and requires less maintenance.

Product Pick

Stahls' ID Direct (asi/88984) released a new printable heat-transfer material – Stahls' CAD-COLOR SuperTEK Opaque. Designed for sportswear and performance apparel, this lightweight, stretchable material offers garment decorators the ability to create full-color digital images for light and dark garments.

The key technology in Stahls' SuperTEK Opaque is the STiX2 adhesive. Short for "sticks to anything," STiX2 adheres to a wide range of materials at a low temperature range of 250° to 300° for superior application to heat-sensitive fabrics. Additional benefits of the adhesive include improved cutting and weeding. SuperTEK Opaque has a quick dry time of 30 minutes or less.

Stahls' CAD-COLOR SuperTEK Opaque is available by the roll for use with print/cut systems. For more information, visit www.stahls.com/tek-opaque.



STAHL'S
ID DIRECT
(ASI/88984):
CIRCLE 81 ON
FREE INFO
CARD OR CALL
(800) 4-STAHLS.

Quick Tips

1

Read *The Daily Stitch* for inspiring ideas. The official World Emblem International (asi/98264) blog is part of its new company

website, www.worldemblem.com. The redesign offers a variety of content, including: a newly built "Career" section; an updated "Resources" section; customer testimonials; direct links to all World Emblem social media, including the official World Emblem blog, *The Daily Stitch*; and much more.



WORLD EMBLEM INTERNATIONAL (ASI/98264; CIRCLE 82 ON FREE INFO CARD).

2

Add on a classic pennant to your next school or team sale.

New dye-sublimation custom pennants from Dalco Athletic are made of heavy-weight felt and come in two sizes. They can be printed in a vertical or horizontal format. You choose the mascot and organization's name and the background color. An optional contrasting-color border also is available. Visit www.dalcoathletic.com.



DALCO ATHLETIC; CIRCLE 79 ON FREE INFO CARD.

3

Customize uniforms one at a time. InkSoft's Design Studio upgraded its name/number

feature. All you need to do is type in the name and number of each team member and select the shirt size it'll be printed on. Then as the font type, font size and color are selected, you can see what the shirt will look like as each feature is added. Visit www.inksoft.com.



INKSOFT; CIRCLE 83 ON FREE INFO CARD.

DECORATING SOLUTIONS

Machine & Software Updates

Easier Heat Printing

Minimize downtime with the Hotronix Fusion, which is designed to make heat printing more efficient, since the user can choose between swing-away or draw-style operation.

Designed with 360° open access to the lower platen, the Fusion features the ability to thread a garment onto the press by splitting the bottom of the shirt and sliding it on. This makes it easier to do front and back applications, and reduces the need for pillows and pads to avoid zippers and buttons. The Fusion's touch-screen display allows the user to set the time, temperature and pressure with the highest degree of accuracy. Additional functions include

dual time settings for two-step applications, preset programs, a production cycle counter, choice of fahrenheit or centigrade measurements, and an energy-saving sleep mode.

Quick-change platens available in a variety of sizes increase the versatility of the Fusion, allowing a wide range of products to be decorated. For example, the new Hotronix Fusion Sleeve/Leg Platen is a quick-change heat press accessory for decorating shirt sleeves and pant legs. Specially designed to fit a variety of youth to adult-sized apparel, this 6" x 20" platen makes it possible to quickly load and decorate a garment and swap platens tool-free. Learn more at www.hotronix.com.

Split Designs Simplified

Floriani Commercial released a new version of its Floriani Total Control Commercial embroidery software. This free update, version 7.25, has the ability to split designs. This feature splits a design in half and creates an alignment stitch to ensure the two design halves match up.

Another new feature is social network integration. This tool allows you to post images of designs directly to Facebook, Pinterest and Twitter. Added by user request, the new center origin tool allows you to automatically position your embroidery design at a 0,0 origin. Visit www.florianisoftware.com.

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Design, Decorating & Digitizing

By Bonnie Landsberger

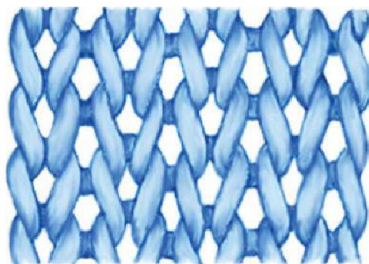
Punching Sense: Digitizing for Knits

Your first attempt at punching for knits can be frustrating. Stitches sink into the wales of the knit, underlay pokes out of the sides of satin stitch columns that are too long and thin, stitch coverage is sparse or too heavy and, even if all else goes well, it can result in fabric puckers around the design. Here are some tried-and-true basics of digitizing for knits.

1

GET TO KNOW THE SUBSTRATE.

The construction is of interlocking yarns literally machine-knitted to form a seemingly solid surface, but when magnified, its vulnerability is obvious. There are different types of knit fabric, but most often used for sportswear is jersey, which is weft-knitted, also referred



THIS IS A CLOSE-UP OF THE CONSTRUCTION OF A SMALL AREA OF KNIT FABRIC; THE "COURSE" IS A ROW THAT RUNS HORIZONTALLY AND THE "WALE" IS A COLUMN THAT RUNS VERTICALLY.

to as plain or single-knit, with very little lengthwise stretch and different degrees of crosswise stretch. Consider this stretch factor when you're about to set down stitches that will push or pull at the interlocking loops.

Plan your stitch types and angles, along with the sewing path, when you're mapping the artwork. Satin stitch columns appear best when sewn horizontally, as they

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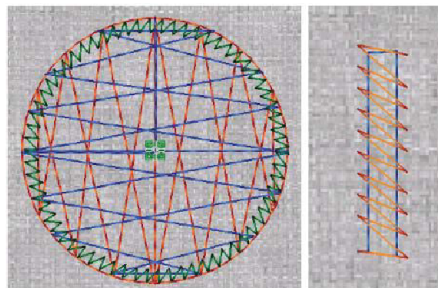
DECORATING SOLUTIONS

Design, Decorating & Digitizing

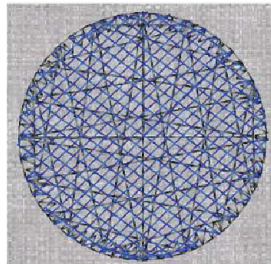
won't pull at or fall into the wale. Fill-stitch angles are best at acute and obtuse angles as they cross over the wale and course without falling into or stressing either wale or course. Naturally, you can't follow this train of thought as a strict rule, as it would be difficult to complete most designs, but there are tricks to ensure quality.

2

BUILD A STRONG FOUNDATION FOR FLEXIBLE COVERAGE. Digitize to sew from the center out whenever possible. If your largest element is at the center, such as a round filled background of a corporate logo, begin at the center point, setting down a layer of run stitches of an average length, about 3mm. Travel up and down in a zigzag to the right, and then work back to the center and continue to the left; then



HERE'S AN EXAMPLE OF A BASE FOUNDATION CREATED WITH MANUAL RUN STITCHES AND ZIGZAG STITCHES TO SUPPORT A FILLED ELEMENT; OBJECTS ARE SHOWN IN DIFFERENT COLORS FOR CLARIFICATION.



THE UNDERLAY FOR A LARGE FILLED ELEMENT, AT THE LEFT, IS MANUALLY PUNCHED IN CROSS-HATCHED LAYERS OF LIGHT DENSITY TO ASSURE FLEXIBILITY.

complete a run stitch around the perimeter near the inside edge. After you've stopped at the top, travel downward again in a zigzag path to the bottom and back to the center; and finally, continue to the top. Complete this base foundation with a zigzag stitch to the inside of the outer border, which will help stabilize the shape and offer coverage for any sparse areas at the edge of the fill section.

3

COMPENSATE FOR EXCESSIVE PUSH AND PULL. The stitches are going to pull inward more than usual, which also causes them to push out at the open ends, so punch the satin stitch columns wider than the elements of your artwork or set the automatic compensation at about 15% to 20% for pull. If the columns are narrow,

Circle 53 on Free Info Card or visit www.stitches.com/freeinfo

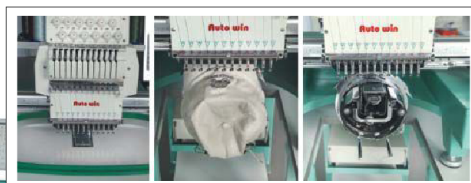
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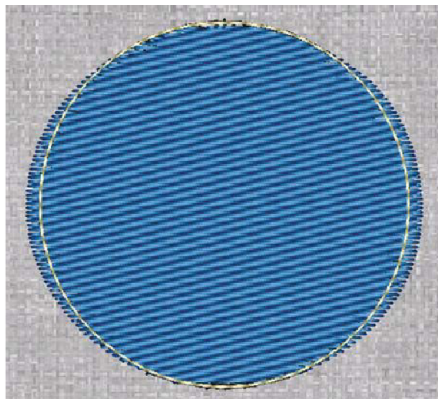
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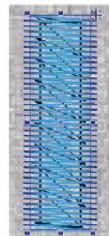
they'll push out more at the open ends, so punch for compensation by stopping short of the end of the column.

The extended sides of fill sections will pull inward to meet up where you want them to sew. If a line stitch is added for an outline, you should follow the actual border of the artwork, and if after a sew-out you find a gap or the edges of fill exceed where they should, adjust the fill section when editing because line stitches always sew where you have punched them.

Correct stabilizers help tame stretch to produce a clean registration of elements. You'll find a variety of opinions from different embroiderers about the type of stabilizer that works best for them, and those opinions are often determined by the number of garments that will be sewn. If



FOR THIS EXAMPLE AT THE LEFT, WE BROUGHT THE VIEW OF THE RUN STITCH BASE UNDERLINE, SHOWN IN YELLOW, TO THE TOP OF THE FILL SECTION TO DESIGNATE WHERE THE ACTUAL BORDER OF THE ELEMENT IS AND HOW THE SIDES OF THE FILL SECTION HAVE BEEN EXTENDED TO COMPENSATE FOR PULL. AT THE RIGHT, A VIEW OF THE OBJECT LINES SHOW COLUMN WIDTH IS SET FOR PULL COMPENSATION AT 20%.



it's a low-volume order, some will choose to use an adhesive stabilizer along with a sheet of 2-oz. tearaway for great results. But if it's a high-volume order, handling the adhesive type of stabilizer becomes tedious and time consuming, in which case, one sheet of cutaway may work well. My preference is a flexible, no-show, poly-mesh cutaway that keeps the embroidery comfortable to the skin, yet sturdy enough to do the job. If the design is stitch intensive, two layers of the mesh, along with a sheet of lightweight tearaway can improve results, and a topping of soluble stabilizer will hold small elements in place above the knit.

BONNIE LANDSBERGER is owner of Cannon Falls, MN-based Moonlight Design and is design support and service at EmbroideryDesigns.com. Contact: moonlightdesign@aol.com.

Performance Caps: /pər'fōrməns kəps/

noun

1 An effective advertising and stylish headwear combination.

2 Your logo on a cap performs for your brand, the cap performs for the wearer.

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Look Book

Runway Trends

By Mariana Leung, designer and publisher of Msfabulous.com
Photos by: Mariana and David Tak-Wai Leung

New York Fashion Week

New York Fashion Week's fall 2014 runways were a showcase of fur, texture and opulence. Embellishments were all about shine, whether it was metallic threads, sparkling jewels or glittering fringe. *Stitches* visited the runway to scope out several fashion collections that stood out for their stunning embroidery work this season.

CAROLINA HERRERA



TIP: You can create a highly effective embroidery design with oversized motifs. Sequins or beads that are long and reflective have visual impact, even when they're viewed from far away. The embroidery techniques in using these materials are quite simple. By placing the motifs around the neck or waist, you can create the look of statement jewelry, and this instantly makes the simplest silhouettes look luxe.

This iconic American designer created her fall 2014 collection as a study in proportions. Carolina Herrera designed this season's silhouettes using the classic slimming technique of emphasizing the shoulders to minimize the waist. Shoulders were draped, had embroidered straps, or were cocooned or bared.

Herrera used bright, solid colors like red, blue and ivory, mixed with geometric prints in the same colors, or black and pastel shades. The bold beaded motifs echoed the shapes found in the prints. Herrera cut flat, reflective materials to mirror the print shapes, and then topped the mirrored pieces with beads or jewels. Long, narrow paillettes and long bugle beads embellished the shapes for a graphic element on solid dresses or to elevate printed fabrics.

VIVIENNE TAM



The cave paintings of Dunhuang in Northwest China inspired designer Vivienne Tam's fall collection. Tam's embellishments and fabrics echoed the paintings' subdued colors and patterns. For example, her embroidered lace tops were further appliquéd with motifs cut from a similar fabric, but in different colors. Other dresses had necklines and hems with raised embroidery. The mountain-like patterns were simple, but the range of hues Tam used in the same color family gave the garments depth.

TIP: Using highly textured fabrics as an appliqué onto other fabrics is an economical way to make a garment look richly embellished. Having pre-existing materials do double-duty as trim saves money so you have less waste. Applying your fabrics also gives much more coverage than the labor it takes to embroider a fabric from scratch.

ZANG TOI



The opulent “Paris of the Orient” or 1930s Shanghai was the theme of Zang Toi’s runway collection, which was chock full of show-stopping evening looks centered around an emerald green and jet black color palette.

Toi cut elegant sheaths to dramatic ball gowns from silk satin and velvet, and he embroidered heavy Swarovski stones in metal settings onto the gowns in radiating patterns. Many of the embroideries resembled vintage royal necklaces, eliminating the need for the wearer to don jewelry. He accented the looks with fur stoles and striking capes to add to the collection’s luxe feel. Toi’s collection was deceptively simple: The dresses were executed in his classic silhouettes and all of the emphasis was on the rich frame of jewels.

TIP: Investing in high-quality stones in your embroideries gives a look of luxury to any garment. Both the wearer and observer instantly appreciate beautifully designed embroidery when it’s directed toward the wearer’s face. For a rich necklace effect, you can position just a few jewels with a lot of sparkle strategically like a pendant. Then, you can fill in the pattern with more affordable beads or sequins.

NAEEM KHAN



Naeem Khan’s muse for fall 2014 was cabaret. Influenced by the famous nightclub musical, he designed his contemporary interpretation of the scene.

He reimagined the fringe swinging on sassy dancing girl costumes to flatter the body in different ways. For example, some of his gowns were beaded in rows of bugle beads in body-contouring directions, giving the look of movement when the models walked though they were actually static to the dress.

One standout dress had two-tone metallic beads embroidered in a chevron pattern, one skirt had fringe made only in feathers, and one cocktail dress was sheer with beaded fringe diamonds strategically embroidered to cover the body. This collection shows how even the simplest embellishment – fringe – can be reworked in a number of effective ways.

TIP: An easy way to elevate your embellishments is to update a classic trim with something unexpected. Using unusual materials to embroider a basic pattern or using an all-over texture as an irregular motif can be a fresh look for any budget.

Look Book

Trend Alerts

By Alissa Tallman

APPAREL

Athletic Designs

Sporty apparel that integrates an athletic aesthetic with the latest in activewear fabric – think neoprene, latex and mesh – is hot for 2014. Designers like Tommy Hilfiger, Roland Mouret and Shiatzy Chen showcased numerous luxe pieces, from bodysuits to tracksuits, skirts and men's shorts in their collections.

Anne Hughes, director of sales for Sun Mountain Sports Inc. (asi/90139), offers an analytical take on this killer trend. "There's a real blending of style and function between athletic and everyday apparel," she says. "For example, women don't change into yoga pants when they get to class – they're wearing them when they walk in and when they leave. The same thing is happening with golf apparel."

Jeff Silcoc, marketing manager for Stormtech Performance Apparel Ltd. (asi/89864), says stylish athletic apparel appeals to a large client and end-user base. "These styles can cater to almost any market or climate," he says. You don't need to be an athlete or regular sport participant to experience the excellent technical features of sports apparel."



The slim-cut ladies' Alpine vest (G470010) from Sun Mountain Sports (asi/90139; circle 84 on Free Info Card) is made of a soft, windproof microfiber fabric with a DWR finish for water and stain resistance. It also includes lightweight quilting, storm flaps and a stand-up collar. Choose from four color combinations; decorated by Sun Mountain Sports.



This wicking performance T-shirt (CV263H) from Hanes/Champion (asi/59528; circle 85 on Free Info Card) is made of 100% polyester performance jersey and includes three-needle cover stitching, logo tape to reinforce the tag-free neck seam and snag resistance; decorated by World Emblem International (asi/98264; circle 82 on Free Info Card).



Bishop the Garment Co. (asi/40585; circle 87 on Free Info Card) carries the Tizzy tank (272) made of X-Treme stretch fabric that's wicking and antimicrobial. Choose from eight colors; decorated by Bishop the Garment Co.



Brandwear (asi/41545; circle 88 on Free Info Card) carries the Martina skort (016) made of 87% nylon supplex and 13% spandex jersey. Pair it with the matching Kari bra top (014) that features abrasion-resistant flat-lock stitching and comes in seven colors; decorated by A&P Master Images (asi/702505; circle 89 on Free Info Card).

◀ Apparel: Athletic Designs

At New York Fashion Week, Tommy Hilfiger's stunning sports-themed collection demonstrated the fact that sportswear isn't just for athletes. Making a major comeback in streetwear this season are tracksuits and team apparel.

PHOTO: VICTOR VIRGILE

COLOR

Canary Yellow

Brilliant and nearly fluorescent, canary yellow is a literal standout. The latest designs by Ralph Lauren and Prada give this super hue major kudos this season, and you'll definitely see it gracing accessories, too, such as watches and handbags.

"Canary yellow is on-trend this spring because it's so fresh and vibrant," says Monika Rene, customer service representative at Bishop the Garment Co. (asi/40585). Because it's such an optimistic and intrepid color, Rene says, this shade of yellow is ideal for promotional apparel. "It's perfect for making a bold and modern fashion statement," she says. "Yellow is the color of the sun – that's a powerful image."

"The yellow fashion obsession will continue," says Armine Karapetyan, writer for the popular fashion website Fashionisers.com. She says freesia, very similar to canary, will be another significant player this season. "The sizzling freesia yellow tone comes to brighten up wardrobes after winter months," she says. "This tropical, floral-inspired sunny hue looks so undeniably chic in combination with cayenne red, radiating strength and elegance to the max."



Intelligent Galaxy (asi/62731; circle 91 on Free Info Card) offers the Trickers Watch that includes a large 47mm dial, stainless steel case and adjustable bezel.



American Apparel (asi/35297; circle 92 on Free Info Card) carries this cotton spandex jersey crop tee (RSA8380) that includes a durable ribbed neckline and fitted, hemmed sleeves; decorated by Stahl's ID Direct (asi/88984; circle 81 on Free Info Card).



PHOTO: CATWALKING



Assertive Creativity (asi/37166; circle 90 on Free Info Card) offers this pair of ladies' solid capri leggings (ASYL-050013) made of 100% polyester; decorated by A&P Master Images (asi/702505; circle 89 on Free Info Card).

This soft cotton-blend tank top (4SMMJ234) from Blanks Plus (asi/40642; circle 93 on Free Info Card) is cut into a relaxed silhouette with a deep scoop neck and rounded hem; decorated by St. Louis Print Co. (circle 94 on Free Info card).



Blanks Plus (asi/40642; circle 93 on Free Info Card) offers this stretch T-shirt (CSJ684) with unfinished edges in 11 colors; decorated by St. Louis Print Co. (circle 94 on Free Info Card).

◀ Color: Canary Yellow

This delectable shade made a considerable splash during New York Fashion Week in Ralph Lauren's super high-contrast lineup. An instant attention-getter, this entrancing hue pairs superiorly with black or bright red accents, something to consider for logos or other apparel decoration.

Look Book

Showcase: Polo Shirts

The polo continues to be where it's at. "Polos have a great niche in the apparel world," says Heather Brunner, marketing manager at Charles River Apparel (asi/44620). "They're more upscale than T-shirts and less expensive than jackets. Plus, they're available in a huge spectrum of colors, designs and styles; are easy to decorate; and can convey a casual to dressy look."

While embroidery is the traditional go-to for polo embellishment, sublimation is getting hotter right now. "This year, we introduced sublimation onto more polos than we have in previous years," says Jason Neve, marketing/communications coordinator and graphic designer for Boardroom Custom Clothing (asi/40705). "Traditionally, sublimation has been reserved for base layers and layering jackets, but lately we've had many customers asking us to sublimate bright, dynamic artwork onto our polo. The result is a polo that really stands out and gets noticed."

As far as patterns, micro stripes are a new trend. "It breaks up the monotony of your solid polo," says Kevin Giron of Driving Impressions (asi/50864). "From a distance it looks like it's heathered or a lighter shade of the color you're wearing, but up close it has very fine striping that isn't unflattering the way broad stripes can be."

Vantage Apparel (asi/93390; circle 95 on Free Info Card) offers the wicking Omega sport block performance polo (2613) made of 100% polyester that's snag- and pill-resistant. It includes a rib-knit collar, tagless label and contrast front shoulder and side blocking; decorated by Vantage.

Charles River Apparel (asi/44620; circle 97 on Free Info Card) carries the ladies' Trinity zip polo (2426) that's made of 100% polyester pique knit. It includes TopShield moisture-wicking technology, antimicrobial treatment and a tri-color design with a ¼-zip collar. Choose from three color combinations; decorated by Charles River.

This lightweight, breathable polyester/bamboo charcoal polo (K498) from SanMar (asi/84863; circle 99 on Free Info Card) features UV resistance and moisture-wicking technology. It includes a three-button placket with tonal piping and contrast panel side vents; decorated by Ken's Custom Tees; circle 105 on Free Info card.

The Puremotion striped polo (Z82130) from Driving Impressions (asi/50864; circle 96 on Free Info Card) is made of 95% polyester and 5% Lycra and features a moisture-wicking finish. It includes a self-collar with full stand and piping on the placket, back panel and sleeve hem; decorated by Driving Impressions.

This women's Santa Fe polo (FA5525) from Fersten Worldwide (asi/53974; circle 98 on Free Info Card) is moisture-wicking and antibacterial, and features a contrasting underplacket and shoulder panels, as well as cap sleeves. It's made of 91% recycled polyester and 9% Lycra; decorated by Fersten.

Blogger

This jersey polo (437W) from alphabroder (asi/34063; circle 100 on Free Info Card) is made of 50/50 cotton/polyester and includes a seamless body with SpotShield stain-resistant treatment; decorated by Ken's Custom Tees; circle 105 on Free Info card.

Niche: Wedding App Accessories

For many decorators, personalized wedding apparel and accessories is a lucrative niche. From matching tanks for the bridal party to wear at the bachelorette party, to personalized wedding veils, to monogrammed table runners or cloth napkins to be used at the reception, there are endless possibilities to pitch.

For Carolyn Cagle, owner of Stacy, MN-based Strikke Knits LLC, personalized veils, especially heirloom ones, are a big seller. “Embroidering the edge of an heirloom veil with the wedding date of the original veil owner and then the new bride’s date is a favorite,” says Cagle, who notes that monogrammed veils can then be repurposed by the couple in their new home. “After the wedding, you can turn the veil into napkins, window treatments and table and bedroom adornments.”

Regina Cassidy, owner of Arlington, VA-based It Takes a Stitch Custom Embroidery (asi/604495), recommends pitching personalized bridal-party robes, hoodies or boyfriend shirts. “I’m also seeing grooms request similar items for the men in the wedding party now,” she says. Cassidy points to umbrellas as another add-on item. “Offer the bride a large umbrella in a color that matches her theme and/or invitations and then personalize it,” she says.



This full-zip hoodie (L265) from SanMar (asi/84863; circle 99 on Free Info Card) features left-chest embroidery in white thread surrounded by rhinestones. Submitted by Howard and Amanda Potter, A&P Master Images (asi/702505; circle 89 on Free Info Card).

This custom-embroidered sash is made of 4" grosgrain polka dot-pattern ribbon from Lion Ribbon and features 3" text in a satin stitch and a zigzag underlay. Submitted by Carolyn Cagle, Strikke Knits Embroidery.



This embroidered table runner was made with 5"-wide wired taffeta ribbon from Lion Ribbon, and was spray glued and tapped to a full sheet of tearaway in a 17" hoop. Submitted by Carolyn Cagle, Strikke Knits Embroidery.

These button-down shirts feature custom monograms on the chest pocket. The pocket on the bride's shirt includes a top layer with the maiden name initials; the married monogram on the actual shirt can be displayed after the wedding. Submitted by Regina Cassidy, It Takes a Stitch Custom Embroidery (asi/604495; circle 101 on Free Info Card). Photo by Katelyn James Photography.



The monogram on this wedding veil is stitched on separate tulle, trimmed and then stitched/tacked onto the veil itself. Submitted by Regina Cassidy, It Takes a Stitch Custom Embroidery (asi/604495; circle 101 on Free Info Card). Photo by Katelyn James Photography.



This screen-printed cotton/modal blend tank top (DM481) from the District Made line at SanMar (asi/84863; circle 99 on Free Info card) includes small rhinestones for extra bling. Submitted by Howard and Amanda Potter, A&P Master Images (asi/702505; circle 89 on Free Info Card).

Look Book

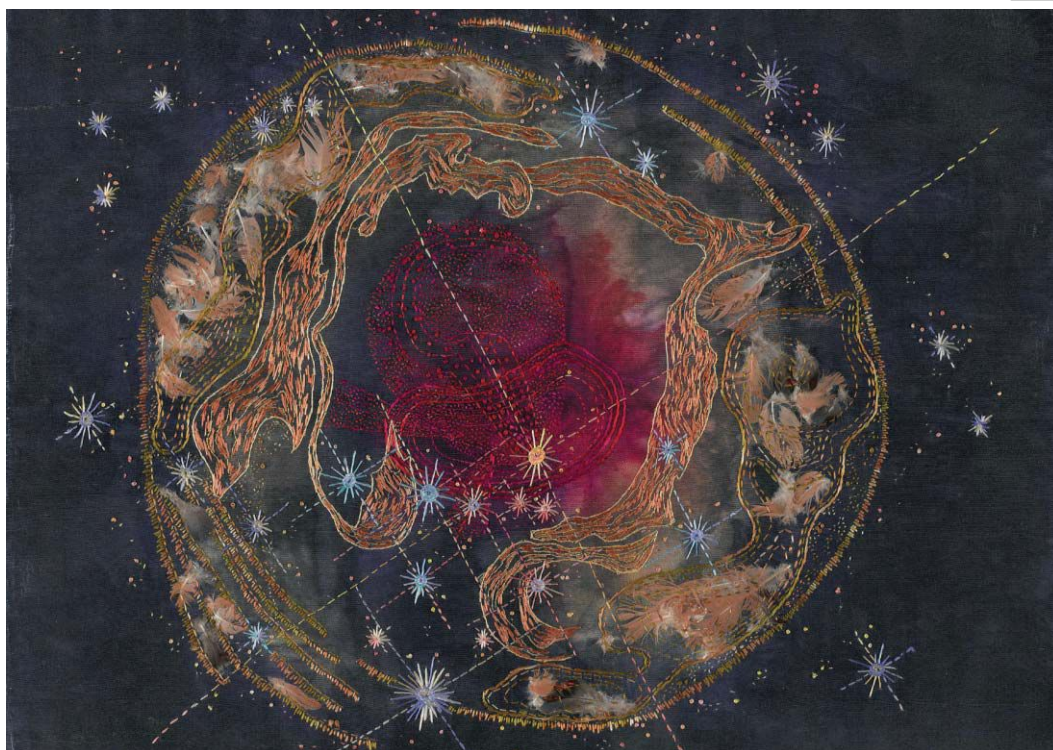
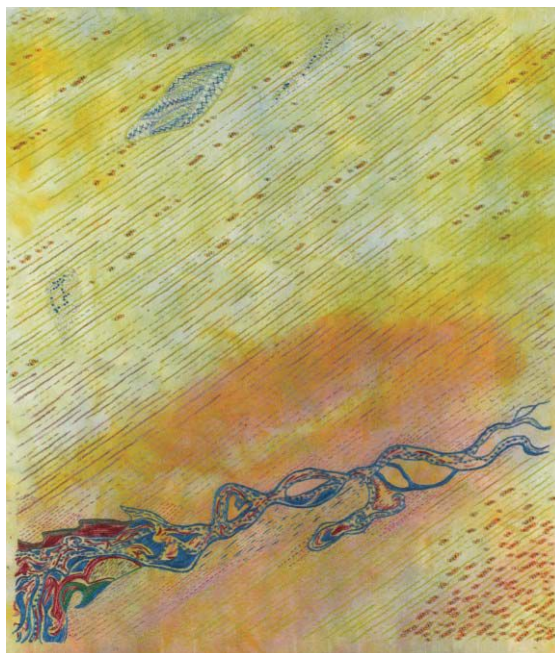
Inspiration: Marta Brysha

Marta Brysha first learned the craft of embroidery from her grandmother, who lived in the Croatian countryside. “She did the most exquisite hand embroideries,” Brysha says. “She never worked with a hoop; she just made perfect stitches holding the fabric over her hand.” After mastering the basics in her twenties, Brysha has gone on to create detailed and richly colored hand-embroidered artwork.

Brysha, who is based in Tasmania, says her embroidery technique has a voice all its own. “Over time, I’ve developed my own stitch language, or my individual way of creating and using stitches,” she says. Brysha prefers silk, despite its finicky temperament. “Silk is an embroiderer’s dream,” she says. “Although it’s difficult to work with once you learn its moods and idiosyncrasies, you fall in love. Nothing compares to the feel of silk thread pulling through silk fabric.”

Brysha describes her creative process when conceptualizing a new work. “I think about what kind of line or texture I want to create,” she says. “I troll through my stitch dictionaries for inspiration. Sometimes I’ll use variegated threads or combine several fine threads of different colors to add interest and complexity.”

Several of Brysha’s pieces will appear at the Arps Window Gallery in Amsterdam in October.



Marta Brysha creates remarkably detailed and richly colored hand-embroidered artwork, from captivating celestial scenes to fascinating geometric designs. Visit Martabrysha.com.

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FAST TRACK YOUR BUSINESS

State Indu

By Nicole Rollender, Christopher Ruvo, Theresa Hegel and Alex Palmer | Research by Larry Basinait

In this decorating shop growth guide, we present 15 proven strategies to guide your company to greater success in 2014. Plus, from *Stitches'* exclusive State of the Industry Report, get a wealth of data, insights, trend analysis and business tactics that are sure to set the future course of the decorated apparel market.

OF THE stry

Right now, the decorated-apparel market is all about success, growth and expansion. In fact, *Stitches*' 2014 State of the Industry survey shows that decorators are increasing their revenues, profits, order sizes, number of orders and marketing and social media efforts.

How are decorators of all sizes – from home-based shops to contract firms – making business work for them? We talked with top decorators and business experts to find out what tactics are working right now. From targeting new markets and creating a compelling social media presence to investing in new equipment and automating a shop's workflow, there are a lot of ways decorators can propel their businesses to greater growth today.

In this in-depth report, we reveal 15 strategies that decorators are using to be successful right now. There are stories about operational efficiency (how to buy a bigger building and lease new equipment), marketing tactics (optimize your decorated apparel images across all of your social media accounts), sales success (rock every sales presentation) and high-tech strategies (automate your shop's workflow for greater productivity).

With data pulled from the State of the Industry survey to bolster our strategies, what follows is a package of articles designed to help you fast track your business in the year ahead. Turn the page to get started.

INSIDE

Operations

50

Revamp Your Business Plan

50

Lease New Decorating Equipment

51

Retool Your Management Style

51

Buy a Bigger Building

52

By the Numbers: Operations

Marketing

53

Develop a Social Content Strategy

53

Optimize Images on Social Media

54

Hot Niches to Target

54

Fresh Ways to Engage Customers

55

By the Numbers: Marketing

Sales

56

Supercharge Your Sales Team

56

Three Ways to Grow Your Sales in 2014

57

Make Better Sales Presentations

57

Improve Long-Term Customer Retention

58

By the Numbers: Sales

High-Tech Strategies

59

Step-Up Your SEO Smarts

59

Automate Your Shop's Workflow

60

Invest in an Online Designer

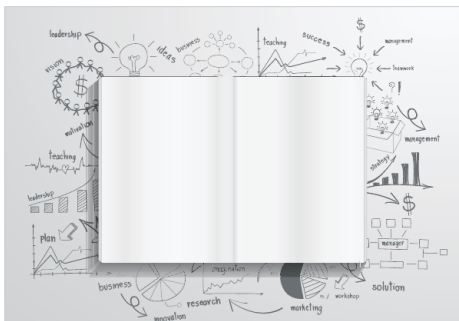
61

By the Numbers: High-Tech Strategies

operations



REVAMP YOUR BUSINESS PLAN



A good business plan is like a GPS: It establishes where your company is and where you want it to be, and lays out a path for getting there. While the routes and destination can change, starting with direction focuses and guides your business, increasing your chances for success. It makes good business sense to review your plan every six months or annually to ensure your processes are aligned with your goals. Here are four key elements to include in your plan.

COMPANY OVERVIEW: In this section, describe your business, including details like whether you're home-based or in a storefront, a retail decorator or a contract shop. Identify the demand in the marketplace that you seek to fill and explain how your apparel decorating services will meet that need. Crucially, says the U.S. Small Business Administration, list your competitive advantages – the distinguishing factors that uniquely position you to bring value to customers. Doing so will help guide how you market and sell your services.

MARKET ANALYSIS: Here, include information on the marketplace(s) you intend to serve. Detail the size of the market and the types of consumers, businesses and organizations that could become customers. “It’s very important to identify markets,”

says Donna Szakats, co-owner of Initial Impact, a Spring Lake, NJ-based apparel decorator. "The biggest mistake is trying to be everything to everyone." To complete the market analysis, the SBA says to break down your pricing and gross margin targets, look at how much market share you can gain and evaluate your competitors. It's a good idea to hone in on three markets you want to serve.

SALES AND MARKETING STRATEGY:

“Once you know your market, develop a plan for how you’re going to attract those customers to your business,” says Joyce Jagger, an industry consultant known as The Embroidery Coach. The specifics of the strategy will be unique to you, depending on everything from the markets you target to the degree of your growth ambitions. Whatever your approach, the strategy should contain actionable steps for turning desired prospects into customers. To develop the strategy, answer questions like: Will you use paid advertising? How will you incorporate social media? Will you join networking groups? Can you leverage your current connections to generate sales? Will you call on prospects and leave behind flyers, business cards or samples?

MISSION STATEMENT: This should go at the start of your plan, but write it after analyzing the other sections. The statement should succinctly encapsulate what your business is all about. It can be as concise as, “XYZ Embroidery is a strategic business partner that helps companies and schools in the greater Cleveland area achieve marketing objectives and other goals through the use of embroidered apparel.” In addition, promote your mission and unique selling points in your marketing and when you talk with prospects. – *Christopher Ruvo*

LEASE NEW DECORATING EQUIPMENT

Thinking about leasing apparel decorating equipment to expand your shop's offerings? Keep the following in mind.

► **The benefits:** With leasing, you don't have to lay out a hefty lump sum to buy equipment outright. Even if you're financing a purchase, the monthly payments with leasing are less expensive than if you're buying, says apparel decorating lease expert Mark Stephenson, director of marketing and sales at Coldesi Apparel Decorating Systems. With leasing, your cash flow is freed to spend on marketing and sales efforts. Not only does leasing help get you a profit-producing piece of equipment that you may not have been able to afford, but it also opens the door to tax advantages, since lease payments are deductible. Standard maintenance is included with many leases too.

► **Things to consider:** Be aware that a disadvantage to leasing is you're not building any equity in the machine. When the lease is up, you give it back, unless you've negotiated – and exercise – a purchasing option. Furthermore, failing to build equity can leave you in a tough situation: You may rely on the equipment, but not have the money to purchase it outright or afford the lease payments on a newer, pricier model.

► **The process:** Once you determine a machine is right for you, you'll fill out a leasing application and could be directed to work with a financing company partnered with the equipment provider. "The application is pretty in-depth," Stephenson says. In addition to banking information, you could be asked for credit references and you'll probably have to detail what type of legal entity your business is. You may also be asked to reveal any terms you have with vendors. If you have outstanding credit, your leasing application can often be approved in a couple days for an especially low monthly rate, Stephenson says. If your credit is choppy, approval can take longer and your monthly payment will likely be more. — CR



RETOOL YOUR MANAGEMENT STYLE

Poor management can drown a decorating shop, so improve your managerial execution by doing the following:

1. HIRE WISELY. Without the right employees, the best managing techniques will fall flat. Bring aboard people with good attitudes whose values match those of your shop. Experience is naturally a plus, but an unexperienced person with the right skill set can make a stellar fit. Referrals from excellent employees are one cost-free way to connect with quality candidates.

2. COMMUNICATE. It's essential to convey instructions and expectations in clear, unequivocal terms. This includes everything from pinpoint objectives on a given order – “We need 200 shirts for this client embroidered and packaged today” – to broader job expectations and individual

and company goals. “You can't assume people think like you, so you have to be very specific in your expectations,” says Anna Johnson, owner of Phoenix-based Super Embroidery and Screen Printing (asi/700101).

3. SHOW APPRECIATION. Nothing motivates staffers like rewarding them for a job well done. Cash bonuses, cookouts, gift certificates, free decorated apparel and public acknowledgement in front of staff members – all are ways to say thanks. Often, a face-to-face thank you and a kind word about an employee's strong performance is the best praise. “Feeling like a valuable member of the team,” Johnson says, “is more important than anything else.” On a related point: Treat all employees equitably, especially if you employ family members or friends. Undeserved preferential treatment

can curtail a shop's performance.

4. CROSS-TRAIN AND DELEGATE. Train your employees to do multiple jobs. That way, when one is out, another can step into the role, keeping efficiency high. With trustworthy, well-trained employees, you can delegate certain tasks. This helps prevent you from getting bogged down in smaller details, which frees you up to tackle bigger issues. “You can't do everything, so delegating to the right people is a must,” Johnson says.

5. GET ORGANIZED. Ensure the physical layout of your shop is arranged to maximize the speed with which orders can be produced. But don't stop there – make sure your system for receiving, processing and shipping jobs is airtight. Business management software can be a boon for sorting out the backend. – CR



BUY A BIGGER BUILDING

The seams on your booming home-based business are about to burst. Or, the commercial space you're currently occupying can't accommodate your growth. Which-ever the scenario, it's time to lease a new space. Here's how to do so successfully.

1. Determine your space requirements. Start by measuring your equipment and current work area. Then, project how much additional room you'll need to accommodate that – and allocate separate space for an office and a showroom. Also consider your company's expansion plans three to five years out. “You don't want to have to move again in a year,” says Howard Potter, owner of Utica, NY-based A&P Master Images (asi/702505).

2. Decide whether you need a storefront or industrial space. If you sell direct to end-buyers, a storefront in a high-traffic area like a mall or downtown could be ideal. “In our first space, we had 25,000 cars going by every day,” Potter says. “It was great exposure.” If you're a contract shop, visibility may be less important and an industrial space, which tends to

cost less than a storefront, could meet your needs.

3. Shop around. To find a suitable location, some decorators use a realtor. Still, you can go it alone with success. A simple Internet search that includes “commercial rental” and the town you're looking to lease in will turn up results. “You can even drive around and see what's available,” says Potter, adding local business contacts as well as family and friends could have worthwhile suggestions. As you proceed, ensure spaces you give serious consideration to can accommodate deliveries, handle current and projected utility needs and meet building code mandates. Crucially, make sure that local zoning laws allow your business to operate at the location.

4. Negotiate and analyze. The U.S. Small Business Administration advises that you negotiate

a one- to two-year lease with the option to renew. Beyond working for a great price within your budget, negotiate for add-on clauses, including the flexibility to sub-lease space and an exclusivity clause that prevents the landlord from renting to a competitor on the same property. As you negotiate, know that the increased overhead you're taking on is more than just rent. Electrical, insurance, phone and Internet costs can be heavier. Plus, you could get hit with a double or triple net – the monthly amounts you pay for the space's real estate taxes, building insurance and, with a triple net, maintenance. Know all these costs and analyze them against your current revenue and expenses and projected sales gains. Before signing, consider reviewing everything with a real-estate attorney. – CR

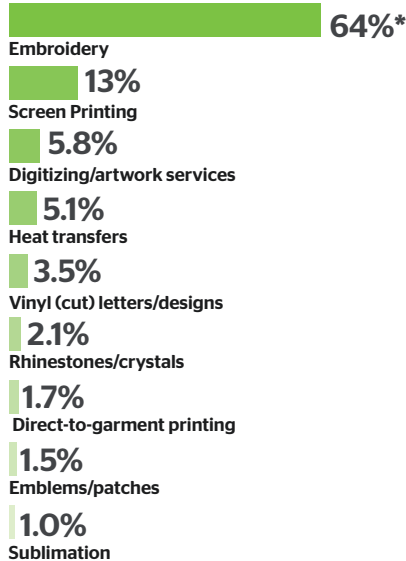
operations

BY THE NUMBERS



DECORATION IN DEMAND

In 2013, embroidery was the decorating service that generated the most revenue among survey respondents. Overall, the results were similar to those of the last five years, suggesting stability in the industry.



*Denotes percentage of revenue

17%
increase staff

76%
remain the same

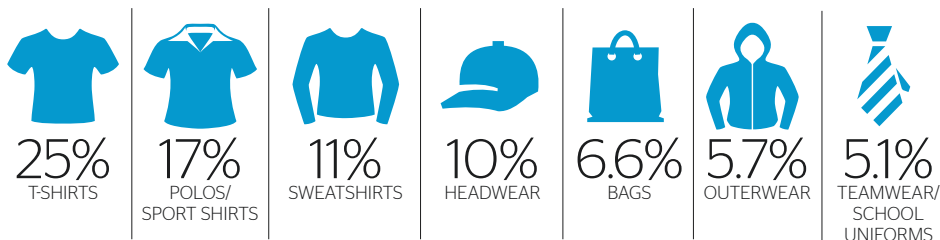
1.9%
decrease staff

17% of shops plan to add staff members in 2014, while only 1.9% expect to cut personnel. The majority (76%) plan to maintain 2013 staff levels.



THE TEE IS KEY

T-shirts were the biggest-selling apparel category for shops last year, comprising just over 25% of revenue. Polos/sport shirts were second at 17%, while sweatshirts just edged headwear in total revenue percentage. Next came bags, outerwear and teamwear/school uniforms.



12%

The percentage of shops that increased staff levels in 2013.

Over three-quarters (80%) of decorators reported that employee numbers remained the same last year as in 2012. Over the last five years, growth in personnel, average compensation and commission gains have been modest.



HOLDING STEADY

15%

While 15% of decorators said that average compensation for employees rose last year,

75%

a majority (75%) reported that pay remained the same.

59%

The percentage of industry decorators who have been in business for at least six years.

On average, shops have been in business 10 years and employ five people.



SHOW US THE MONEY



Nine out of 10 decorators say they collected receivables within 30 days, with a majority (63%) reporting collection was achieved in 15 days or fewer. The percentage of receivables collected in 90 days or more fell from 6.8% in 2010 to less than 1% again in 2013.

1,027

The average number of orders decorators processed in 2013



DEVELOP A SOCIAL CONTENT STRATEGY



Offering strong social media content is not just about quantity (posting consistently) or quality (posting relevant content to your various platforms), though both are important. The best social media content strategy is one focused on balance of these two – offering a blend of original content, shared material and, of course, the occasional self-promotion.

Andrew Davis, marketing expert and author of *Brandscaping: Unleashing the Power of Partnerships*, summarizes this balance as Social 4-1-1: That is, a ratio of four pieces of relevant information for your audience, for every one piece of promotional messaging and one shared item. “For embroiders, that may mean finding companies creating or using interesting promotional apparel, and then sharing these examples,” Davis says. “After you’ve earned the right to showcase yourself as a resource on this subject to your followers, you can send out something

promotional – that’s the currency you work toward.”

Scott Mickelson, marketing director of Milton, WA-based Northwest Embroidery, has found this to be true of his company’s social media efforts. “Some companies post for the sake of posting, but we don’t inundate people with promotional stuff,” he says. Though still fairly new to Twitter (with almost 600 followers, despite less than 100 tweets), Northwest has a strong Facebook presence, with nearly 2,000 likes.

For purely promotional posts, the Northwest’s followers tend to respond to specials or limited-time offers. Mickelson, however, prefers posts that could have more general value to those interested in decorated apparel. For example, he likes before-and-after photos where he can show off a rough design suggested by a client, alongside a final project completed by his firm.

Posts related to current events are also good for driving traffic. During the Super Bowl, the company helped cheer local favorite Seattle Seahawks with a newly designed “Bronco Buster” shirt. It showed the rival team’s mascot with a circle and slash through it. So many “people were buying the shirt that some customers took pictures of themselves wearing them in Times Square or Disneyland and we posted those to our social media pages,” Mickelson says.

The final piece in Davis’ 4-1-1 is re-sharing. “If you’re on Twitter, retweet someone’s post you think others will find helpful,” Davis says. “If you do this religiously, you’ll end up with a daily content routine that doesn’t take up a lot of time.” – *Alex Palmer*

OPTIMIZE IMAGES ON SOCIAL MEDIA

It’s easier than ever for decorators to photograph and share visuals of their work. The easy-to-use camera technology built into smartphones along with the explosion of image-sharing sites like Instagram, Pinterest, Tumblr and Facebook makes it convenient for decorators to spread high-quality images of their samples. But even though the technology is getting simpler, there are some considerations if you want to get the most out of your decorated apparel photos via social media.

First of all, professional photography still has an edge when you’re taking product photos where detail, lighting or other concerns are at play. You can definitely use your smartphone for on-the-fly or more frequent posting. “I grab my smartphone for a quick post, but if I post to Pinterest or Twitter or our blog, I want it to be the best possible quality,” says Serena Raymond, the social media and customer service associate for Flemington, NJ-based Ambro Manufacturing (asi/35201), who uses a Panasonic GH2 DSLR camera to take many of the images she uploads to the company’s social media pages.

To get the most out of your photos, post the images as far and wide as possible. “I believe in a simple concept called C.O.P.E. – Create-Once, Post Everywhere,” says Marki Lemons Ryhal, a social media expert and owner of consultancy Marki Lemons Unlimited. “Instagram has become my mobile tool of choice for sharing photos because I have the ability to share instantly with Twitter, Facebook, Flickr, Four-square and Tumblr. Then, I pin the photo from my photo gallery to Pinterest.”

If the photo relates to a specific promotion or there’s some other point a decorator wants to make with it, add text to the photo itself as a call to action, which can easily be done with the app Textgram for Instagram. To add a visual flair, the app PicsArt allows users to create photo collages.

When posting a photo to social media, there are four main ways to increase the chance it’ll appear toward the top of a Google image search. The first and second are by giving it a relevant file name and alt text, with a term that someone is likely to search for, such as “embroidered-scarf-snowflake-pattern.” Third: Ensure the image isn’t too large – search engines take load times into account when reporting results. Finally, if you’re posting to a blog, Tumblr, or wherever else it’s possible, include descriptive captions. – *AP*

marketing



HOT NICHES TO TARGET

As the economy continues to mend, a handful of markets present burgeoning opportunities for decorators. Here are three to target.

CHARTER SCHOOLS: These educational institutions have seen a steady growth over the past decade, accelerating especially in the past couple of years. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, enrollment in charter schools has grown from 448,000 for the 2000-2001 school year, to 1.8 million for the 2010-2011 year. And decorators are reaping the benefits of this burgeoning market – if they know how to meet the schools' needs.

“Charter school clientele is very concerned about keeping costs down for their parents so they usually like to use entry-level polos and fleeces,” says Larry Nardi, president of San Jose, CA-based King’s

Embroidery, who says the company has moved aggressively into this market and “has seen great results.”

AUTO PLANTS: Thanks to the U.S. supply of affordable labor and favorable foreign exchange rates, many foreign manufacturers including Toyota, Honda and Nissan, have begun to expand their capacity in the U.S., or put in brand-new plants. This presents new opportunities for decorators.

For example, Jim Kendrick, owner of All-Star Embroidery Inc. (asi/118865) based in Chattanooga, TN, has been getting lots of business from the city’s Volkswagen plant. “The plant got into full production the last couple years, and we’ve been doing embroidered shirts, hats and safety vests for them,” Kendrick says. “In Alabama, there’s another Volkswagen plant and a KIA as well – there are a lot of foreign

plants in the South and more coming.”

ONLINE AND E-COMMERCE: When it comes to industry growth, no one’s growing faster than online services. Every single entry on *IBISWorld’s* 2013 roundup of the 10 fastest-growing industries – from e-book publishing to online shoe sales to fantasy sports services – was digitally based.

The explosive growth of online markets means there are plenty of startups sprouting up for decorators to reach, but also new departments in established online giants. For example, Ken Campbell, owner of Silicon Valley-based Chris’s Stitches Custom Embroidery, has done a fair amount of work for digital companies, including shirts for a Google Kids fundraiser on behalf of the local Lucile Packard Children’s Hospital. “It had a skeleton illustration on it that said, ‘We get all the breaks,’ ” Campbell says. “It turned out really cool.” – AP



FRESH WAYS TO ENGAGE CUSTOMERS

As the online landscape grows more crowded, decorators need to get more creative and effective to really engage their prospects and customers. Here are four ways to catch a Web browser’s attention.

1. Get group-oriented. Engaging people online begins with properly targeting your messages. Joining appropriate groups through social media on LinkedIn, Facebook and elsewhere is one of the swiftest ways to see that your information is getting in front of those with an interest in your message. That’s the approach Glen Messick, president of Los Angeles-based Komet Creations, takes. “Some embroidery groups have up to 5,000 members and if you post on their page, you’ll get comments from members saying, ‘Where can we get this?’ ” Messick says.

2. Appeal to influencers. Beyond targeting online groups, more sophisticated social media marketing involves reaching out to indi-

viduals who have an impact on the online conversation. For example, Komet recently introduced a customizable pillow shaped like a cheerleader megaphone. “We connected with cheerleaders and monogrammers on Instagram and we gave a couple of the products out to those who’ll give it exposure,” Messick says.

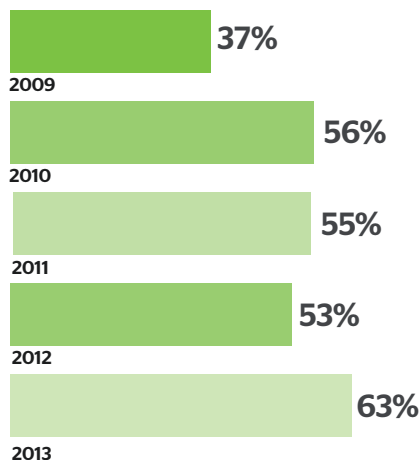
3. Make content shareable. Instead of maintaining numerous social media profiles, decorators can instead focus on making it easy for their photos, blogs and content to be shared. “You don’t need an active presence on Pinterest or Instagram to leverage those platforms,” says Scott Stratten, president of social marketing consultancy UnMarketing. “You have

to allow your products and visuals to be easily shared on those sites.” That means ensuring any content you post includes Pin, Tweet and Like buttons – and that these are updated with new share buttons should a new platform take off.

4. Spotlight customers. Finding ways to spotlight clients’ success stories helps strengthen long-term loyalty, and gives prospects a sense of what you offer. Milton, WA-based Northwest Embroidery includes client profiles on its blog and promotes these through social media. “We interview a client and how they used our product and what others can learn from this example,” says Scott Mickelson, marketing director. –AP

marketing BY THE NUMBERS

Nearly two-thirds of respondents report that their decorated apparel **sales volume increased** in 2013 compared to 2012. This is the highest amount in five years.



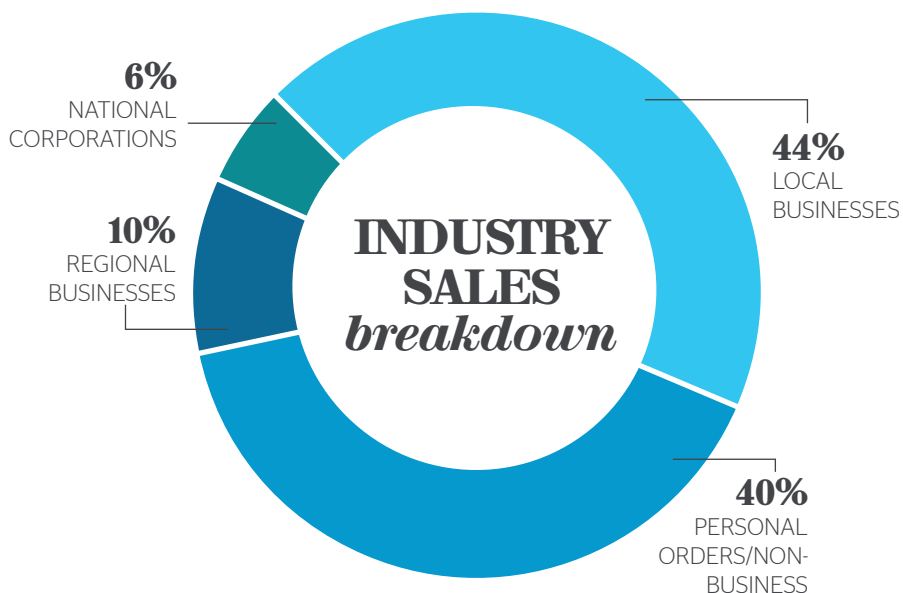
▶ LEVEL ON MARKETING



While **34%** of shops plan to increase their marketing budgets, a majority (**62%**) plan to spend the same amount in 2014 as last year.

WHO'S BUYING?

This graph offers an **industry sales breakdown** by account type. In 2013, apparel decorators generated the greatest percentage of their sales from local businesses. The percentage of personal orders/non-business rose again to 40%; 2013 was the third consecutive rise in the percentage of personal orders done.



MARKET ANALYSIS

Top markets for selling decorated apparel in 2013:



*of total sales

67%
increase sales

29%
remain the same

67% of embroiderers and printers anticipate that sales will increase in 2014 - that's up from 63% last year. About **29%** expect sales to stay the same.

\$ PROFIT POWER

Over half (54%) of decorators reported that **profits increased last year**, nearly four times as many as those reporting a decrease.

fifty-four percent

sales



SUPERCARGE YOUR SALES TEAM



As you're building your sales team, it's important to provide new hires with proper training and to continue to support them over time. "Taking a systematic approach to training will position the rep to succeed, which makes your company more successful," says David Blaise, owner of Blaise Drake & Co., an industry consultancy. Here are some training tips to give your salespeople a jump-start beyond just a list of contacts and a phone.

1. OFFER INDUSTRY-SPECIFIC EDUCATION. Giving reps that are new to the world of decorated apparel and promotional products a strong educational foundation in the industry's workings is essential. At Northbrook, IL-based Added Incentives, in-house training focuses on an array of areas, from learning about key suppliers to dealing with e-mail proofs and the process of placing an order.

Other business owners believe a broad base of product knowledge proves pivotal in winning sales. So, New Berlin, WI-based CSE (asi/155807) has reps from supplier partners meet with new hires to review their offerings and get advice. "They learn about garment fabrics and get great tips on how to sell them," says Mark Ziskind, chief operating officer.

2. PROVIDE SALES PROCESS

INSTRUCTION. Whether reps are new to the industry or to sales altogether, many firms educate them about the sales processes of the imprinted products business. At Added Incentives, reps receive intensive practical training. "We go over every step of the sales process, from prospecting and pitching to client management," says Vice President Danny Friedman. Sales situation role-playing helps bring real-world scenarios to life, enabling reps to better learn and think on their feet.

Even if a new associate has industry experience, sales process training can help sharpen skills. While CSE acknowledges that each rep must use a style that suits them, the firm wants its associates to operate within the framework of a consultative selling approach that seeks to invigorate clients' brands while inspiring those customers' employees and/or customers.

3. DELIVER REAL-WORLD MENTORING.

When it comes time to start pounding the pavement, Friedman doesn't send new associates onto the streets alone. He'll often accompany them on in-person presentations, serving as a safety net if they run in to trouble and observing their performance so he can afterward provide pointers for improvement. Friedman also has reps attend his meetings with prospects and clients so they can see how an experienced industry salesperson handles situations. "You can't help but learn a few things that will be helpful," he says.

4. KEEP THE LEARNING GOING. The key to successful sales training is that it shouldn't be a one-time event; reinforce sales training consistently throughout a salesperson's employment at your company. — CR

THREE WAYS TO GROW YOUR SALES IN 2014

Try one of these tips to ramp up your sales this year.

1. Diversify. Ask your current customers: "What else are you doing?" Then, offer them services to help with that. It's a strategy that's worked well for Charlotte T-Shirt, leading the North Carolina-based company to get into embroidery, direct-to-garment printing and much more. "It's easier to do more business with a client you already have than to go find a new one," says owner Keith Abrams. For the last decade, Charlotte T-Shirt has grown at least 20% a year thanks to that philosophy. "Every year, I say this has got to be it," Abrams says, but the company shows no signs of slowing. March saw the shop's biggest revenues since opening in 2002.

2. Market, market, market. You should reserve time every day to get your shop noticed. It could be something as simple as posting to your company's Facebook page or leaving comments on a blog. You could put together a newsletter to send out to your audience. Or pick up the phone and work on building your relationship with customers, new and old. "There are just so many things you can do," says Joyce Jagger, who runs the consulting business The Embroidery Coach.

3. Increase your profit margins. Make it a habit to periodically review your pricing, and make increases where appropriate. "A few percentage points won't destroy a customer relationship," says Chris Vanderzyden, sales consultant and author of *7 Steps to Entrepreneurial Victory*. You should also review your vendor lists and ensure you're getting "preferred pricing" whenever possible, she says. — Theresa Hegel



MAKE BETTER SALES PRESENTATIONS

Power your sales presentations to new heights of success with these business-building tips.

1. UNDERSTAND YOUR PROSPECT. A great presentation begins before you step into the conference room. Before presenting, Steve Bove, a promotional consultant with NJ-based Active Imprints, learns a client's needs through phone or in-person conversations, where he asks about the prospect's intended message, target audience and apparel they want to buy. "Once I have that information," Bove says, "I build my presentation around it."

2. ESTABLISH A GOAL. While understanding a prospect's needs is critical, it's equally important to have your own specific presentation goal. For example, your aim may be to secure a sale on the spot, with a backup goal of advancing the process toward closing the deal by setting up a date for you to present more product options to the decision-maker. "Be in control of the next step," says Ryan Moor, CEO of Vancouver, WA-based Ryonet (asi/528500).

3. PRESENT SOLUTIONS FOR A SPECIFIC NEED. Use what you learn about your prospects to create presentations that demonstrate you're uniquely capable of making their objectives a reality. "The presentation is a tailored and interactive conversa-

tion about all the ways you can meet their needs, solve their problems and alleviate their pain," says Barry Maher, a nationally renowned sales trainer and author. "Anticipate common objections – the presentation should be structured to answer those objections before they're asked."

4. START STRONG. Snap prospects into focus with a powerful opening that's immediately relevant to them. Maybe you're presenting apparel options to a school booster club that's interested in selling logoed wearables to raise funds for the football team. Begin with a word about how you understand that to be the club's main aim and have selected products that will appeal especially to likely buyers, such as students and parents.

5. SHOW SAMPLES AND USE VISUAL AIDS. When Phil Stumpf, sales representative for Glenwood, MN-based American Solutions for Business (asi/120075), makes presentations for large apparel orders, he showcases samples decorated with the prospect's logo. Steaming and pressing the garments beforehand, Stumpf displays the wearables on table-top mannequins that he sets up in prospects' conference rooms. To maximize the sale, Stumpf exhibits items that complement the main product(s) he's pitching. "If I'm presenting to a company

with a largely female workforce, I show ladies-cut apparel decorated with rhinestones," he says. Stumpf has earned many orders this way.

6. TELL POWERFUL STORIES AND SHOWCASE TESTIMONIALS. Some presentation pros relate tales of how they've helped clients in businesses similar to the prospect they're courting. As Florida-based Cotton King (asi/169201) grows sales in the yachting industry, owner Weston Cotton speaks to prospects about how Cotton King has met the decorated apparel needs of well-known yacht crews. The tactic strikes the correct chord with buyers. "It's an asset if you can show your proven track record in the industry," Cotton says.

7. GO FOR THE GOAL. If your objective is to clinch a sale, ask for it. You can ease into this by recapping how the solutions you're proposing will benefit the buyer. From there, choose the wording you're most comfortable with and ask directly for the business. If you've addressed all the objections you can and still the prospect isn't ready to sign, set up the next phase of the sales process. Regardless of whether your presentation ends with a sale, always leave something behind. In addition to catalogs and brochures, give a branded gift or two. – CR

IMPROVE LONG-TERM CUSTOMER RETENTION

Just because you're hot on the trail of your next big client doesn't mean you can afford to let current customers fall by the wayside. Here are some quick tips to help keep your regulars happy.

Be consistent. Pricing alone doesn't make a repeat customer. Instead, a shop needs to offer the right mix of customer service, quality work and prompt turn time, and

it needs to be able to do all of that reliably. "We don't set out to try to do a single order excellently," says Andy Shuman, general manager of Topton, PA-based Rockland Embroidery Inc. (asi/734150). "We set out to grow a client with strong, consistent service."

Anticipate needs. Working on multiple jobs for a customer gives you the opportunity to discover

ongoing needs and potential problems. Offer solutions before your customer thinks to ask. Shuman calls it a matter of "working with customers."

Nurture relationships. Don't forget about a customer once you've made a sale. Keep in contact, and show you care even when you're not in the middle of a transaction. – TH

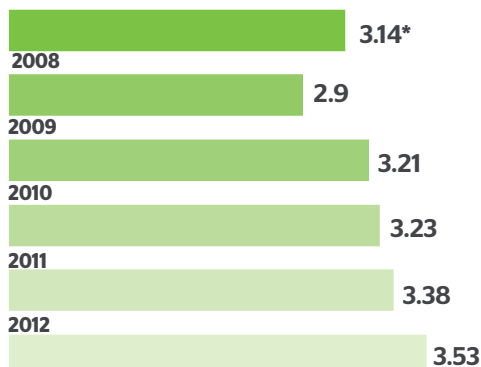
sales

BY THE NUMBERS

FEELING ROBUST

On a scale of one to five (one is "ailing" and five is "robust"), **embroiderers and screen printers gave the decorated apparel market an average score of 3.53, the highest rating since *Stitches* has been conducting the survey.**

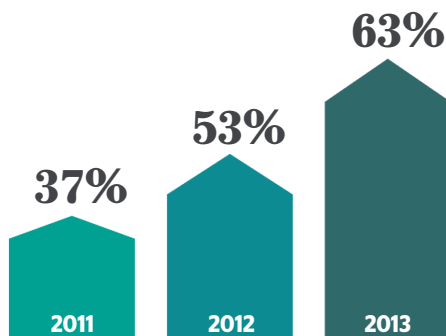
Even better, half of respondents rated industry health a 4 or 5, up from 2012, when just 43% considered the industry healthy.



*Denotes average industry health rating according to apparel decorators

REVENUE RAMP-UP

Nearly two-thirds (63%) of apparel decorators said their sales volume increased in 2013 when compared to 2012. This is a 10-point increase over 2012 (53%), and a 26-point increase over 2009 (37%).

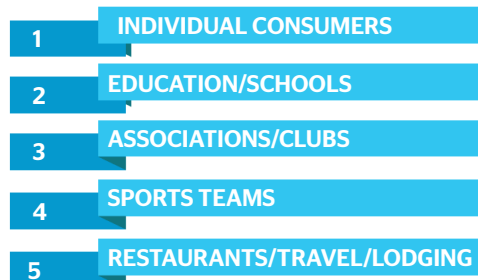


COMPETITIVE CRUNCH

The number-one source of competition was tied between **websites offering decorating services** and other **local decorators**, each at **22%**.

TARGET MARKETS

Decorators say the **top markets they'll target** in 2014 are:



223

That's the average number of client accounts industry decorators serviced in 2013. The number has climbed each year since 2008.

twenty-eight percent

The percentage of embroiderers and printers who say adding **new decorating methods** will help drive growth in 2014

"THE TOP REASON CLIENTS BUY FROM MY SHOP IS..."



REVVED-UP REFERRALS

82% of shops say they connect with new customers through referrals, making referrals the largest source of new business. Social networking significantly increased, cited by **26%** of respondents, up 6 percentage points over 2012.

Decorators' websites, organization networks and cold calls were other commonly cited sources of new business.



GOING UP!

Average order size hit **\$408** in 2013, up over each of the last four years.



80%

80% of decorators say **finding new customers** will be among the most impactful steps they take to increase sales this year. Building up business with current customers (71%) and entering new markets (40%) are other leading strategies.

61% of decorators **track clients' purchasing frequency**, while 54% monitor purchase amount per client. Still, this means at least four out of 10 decorators don't perform the most basic customer analysis.



STEP UP YOUR SEO SMARTS

A whopping 97% of consumers search for local businesses online, according to Google. Given that reality, the importance of ranking high in online searches that relate to your business is paramount. So how can you power to the top of results? Improve your search engine optimization, or SEO, today and more prospects will find you online tomorrow.

1. LIST YOUR BUSINESS. Improved SEO starts with ensuring your business is listed on all of the major search engines – Google, Yahoo, Bing and so on. “Whether you have a website or not (and you should), you can still be found online with a simple listing,” says Jennifer Cox, president of Kent, OH-based National Network of Embroidery Professionals. Ensure your company is listed exactly the same way on each search tool, as inconsistency can hurt your ranking.

2. BUILD LINKS. Links with other sites remain the single most important factor in search engine rankings, but you have to be careful how you acquire them. “Paid links can actually hurt your rankings with Google,” says Jason DeMers, CEO of AudienceBloom, a Seattle-based online mar-

keting firm. Good link acquisition tactics include getting satisfied customers to link to your site, being in local media’s online stories and videos and, most importantly, creating great content on your site and other sites connected to the apparel decorating industry, which encourages people to share.

3. CRAFT QUALITY CONTENT. Search engines give priority to business sites that provide information that’s helpful to audiences searching for the type of services the business provides. Populate your site with copy, images and videos that detail everything from how decorated apparel can help promote a business and customer success stories, to technical aspects of decorating and apparel care tips. It’s critical, Cox says, to frequently update this content and a blog can provide a great vehicle for doing so. Blog updates can be as simple as an image of a shirt you embellished with a couple brief explanatory sentences or a short captioned video.

The *Stitches* Decorator Membership Package from ASI offers embroiderers a Company Store powered by ESP Websites – you get an online website that’s easy to customize, update and manage and sell products for special events, holidays or niche

audiences. Visit www.joinstitches.com.

4. BE SOCIAL. Having an active presence on social media channels like Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram, LinkedIn and Google+ has become an important component of SEO. “Active” means interacting with others on social platforms and routinely posting content – pulled from your website when possible – that’s of interest to the market you serve. “Social media interaction creates social ‘signals’ that search engines use in the ranking algorithm,” DeMers says. “More social media interaction leads to better rankings in search engines.”

5. OPTIMIZE YOUR WEBSITE FOR MOBILE. With the rollout of Google’s Hummingbird algorithm, having a website that’s optimized to display properly on smartphones and tablets has become an influential factor in search result ranking. “Hummingbird prioritizes websites in search results that display well across mobile devices,” DeMers says. Consider engaging a tech pro who can construct your site with responsive Web design, a way of crafting a website that gives visitors the best viewing experience across a wide range of devices with minimal resizing, panning and scrolling. – CR



AUTOMATE YOUR SHOP'S WORKFLOW

The more streamlined your shop’s operation is, the more efficient, productive and potentially profitable you can be. Arranging your shop’s physical layout to optimize the speed with which an apparel shipment can be received, decorated and sent out is essential. To further ramp up efficiency, decorators can leverage technology tools to better automate operations.

Eliminate disks. If you send

embroidery designs to your machines by disk, you’re bogging down your production process, says Ed Levy, director of software technologies for Hirsch International (asi/14982). Shops that deal with an average of 20 designs per day could be losing as much as 1.5 hours daily because of the time it takes to transmit designs this way. To turn those fruitless minutes into productive ones, send designs

straight to machines in seconds through a direct connection or over a network. Tech offerings that can help you accomplish this include adaptable and expandable networking solutions from Pulse Microsystems, which require no proprietary networking hardware and are compatible with another automation helper – Tajima Librarian, a computer-based design management system.

continued on page 60

high-tech strategies**INVEST IN AN ONLINE DESIGNER**

Growing ever more popular, online apparel design tools empower clients to create stitchable and imprintable logos and graphics on a decorator's website – and to then order the wearables on the Web. Is an online designer right for you? To find out, do the following:

1. CONSIDER THE BENEFITS. An online designer enables you to capture sales you may otherwise not get. Some shoppers prefer a Web-based ordering experience, and if your shop doesn't offer it, they may go to a competitor that does. With a new generation of Internet-era buyers coming of age, the interest in online ordering is only likely to increase – something backed up by a Forrester Research Inc. report that reveals e-commerce spending in the U.S. will reach \$370 billion by 2017, a 10% compound annual growth rate from 2012. Beyond helping to equip you for this buying reality, an online designer can reduce the time and cost you spend taking an order, says Brenden Prazner, product manager for DecoNetwork, an e-commerce solution that includes an online designer.

2. ANALYZE YOUR SITUATION. While

the macro trend toward e-commerce is clear, you still have to determine if a Web-based designer is a good fit given your current and desired clientele. Start by asking clients if they'd use the tool. J.P. Hunt, marketing director at Inksoft – which offers an online designer solution – suggests that you also ask yourself questions like: What are the costs associated with investing in a design tool, and what's the break-even point? How are companies using online designers successfully? How will the designer be promoted and deployed? What opportunities would be missed without the tool? "If your analysis shows that time and cost savings are reduced to a level where an online designer is paying for itself, then it would be a smart investment," Hunt says.

3. SHOP SMARTLY. Trying to develop an online designer in-house or paying a software company that's not specifically focused on the apparel-decorating industry to develop one for you can cost lots of time and money that ends in frustration. Instead, consider selecting a quality tool supported by a customer-friendly e-commerce platform that's provided by a reliable software maker focused on this

industry. Prazner says to look for a tool that allows for design in multiple mediums – embroidery, screen printing, direct-to-garment printing and so on – and that isn't Flash-based. "With more mobile devices not supporting Flash, traditional Flash-based design tools aren't effective," he says. When analyzing designer options, Hunt says to "be sure to review what art is included and what costs are associated with adding art. Also, be aware of transaction fees."

4. MARKET. If you invest in an online designer, you have to market the capability to generate business. Start by telling existing customers and prospects about the new tool. "Promote it on your business cards, flyers and e-mail signature," Prazner says. Get information out on your social media channels, too; if the online designer supports social sharing, encourage your customers to use the capability to share their personalized designs with their social networks. Additionally, utilize online pay-per-click advertising, says Hunt, who further advises creating T-shirt design competitions involving customers and the design tool. – CR

continued from page 59

Get business management software. The right business management software can help you standardize and automate the complex components of production and shop management. "There are good software options out there that can streamline order entry, especially on re-orders," says Jay Malanga, president of Shop-

Works, which makes business management software OnSite. "Another benefit is order status: You'll know what's going on with an order by clicking a button." Invest in software tailored for the industry. Beyond order entry and job tracking, such solutions aid in clearly communicating job requirements, accounting, purchasing, pricing,

and shipping/receiving. **Use design automation tools.** Software makers have built smart functions into their systems to make the design and fulfillment process more automated. For instance, EmbroideryStudio Team Names from Wilcom Embroidery Software empowers you to take a single design and then personalize it

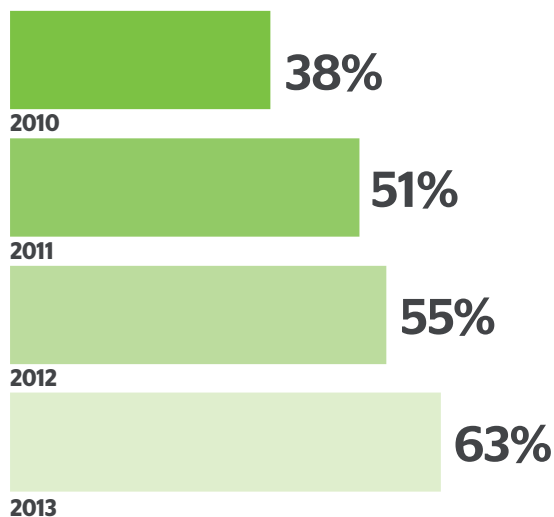
with names from a list. The system pairs a logo from one file with the names from another file, readying everything for stitching while speeding up the personalization process. Meanwhile, Wilcom's Auto Fabric applies suitable underlay, pull compensation and stitch density settings for different fabrics. – CR

high-tech strategies BY THE NUMBERS



EMBRACING THE SOCIAL SPHERE

The percentage of embroiderers and screen printers who have **incorporated online social networking** into their customer acquisition strategy has steadily increased.



21% of embroiderers and screen printers say their website serves as a crucial tool for gaining new business.



QR CODES ON HIATUS?

Only 1.5% of apparel decorators say QR codes will help their shops expand business in 2014. **That's down half from 3% the year before.**

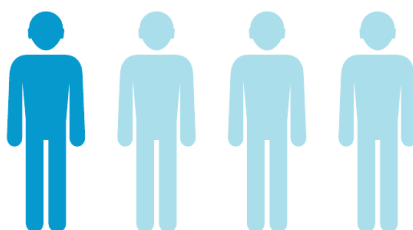


18%

Percentage of survey respondents who say **Internet search engines** are among the top three ways new customers find them



65% - The percentage of apparel decorators who say that Facebook was the social media platform that was most successful in helping them gain new prospects and customers in 2013. Relatively new to social networking, Etsy was cited by **7.3%** as most successful, more than Pinterest (**4.5%**), Instagram (**2.3%**) and Twitter (**1.5%**).



26%

of apparel decorators list **online social networking** as one of the top three ways they gain new customers.



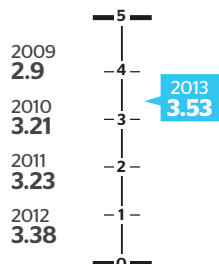
E-COMMERCE INTEREST

fifteen percent

of decorators say that adding an e-commerce option will help spur growth in 2014.

REGIONAL ANALYSIS

In this section, you'll find important information that will help you better understand and capitalize on trends in your geographic area. From sales forecasts to social media, here are current localized insights you can use to build your business.



On a scale of one (ailing) to five (robust), decorators across America ranked the relative health of the industry at 3.53, the best showing in the last five years.

The Governor Albert D. Rosellini Bridge at Evergreen Point in **Washington** is the longest floating bridge in the world. It connects Seattle and Medina, WA across Lake Washington.

Montana boasts the largest migratory elk herd in America.

WEST

Decorators in the West have had more success in using LinkedIn to find new prospects and customers than any other region.

49%
of shops reported a profit rise last year, down from 52% in 2012.

59%
of decorators anticipate a sales increase in 2014, down from 65% last year.

San Bernardino County in **California** is the largest county in the contiguous U.S.

Arizona has the largest stand of ponderosa pines in the world, stretching from near Flagstaff along the Mogollon Rim to the White Mountains region.

Due to the numerous government and private research facilities in **New Mexico**, the state has more Ph.Ds per capita than any other state in America.

PACIFIC

64%

of shops expect a sales jump in 2014; that's 1.4 percentage points less than 2013.

65%

of decorators indicated that profits rose last year, up from 55% in 2012.

73%

of shops here reported an overall increase in sales in 2013, more than any other region.

Alaska is home to Mount McKinley, the highest mountain in the U.S.

The average life expectancy in **Hawaii** is the highest in the U.S. at nearly 81.5 years.

Iolani Palace in **Honolulu** was the only royal palace in the U.S. It now serves as a museum.

SOUTHWEST

Decorators in the Southwest rank the industry's health at 3.61, above the national average of 3.53.

70%

of decorators predict a sales rise in 2014, the same percentage as last year.

51%

of shops experienced profit gains last year, down only a half percent from 2012.

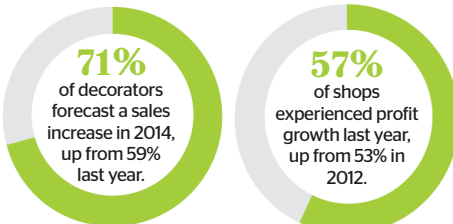
nearly two-thirds

(63.2%) of apparel decorators indicated their sales volume increased in 2013 vs. 2012 – the biggest amount in five years. Excitingly, a greater percentage of shops in each region experienced sales gains last year over the prior year. Check out our regional breakdown on page 64.

Salem, NH is home to "America's Stonehenge," a prehistoric archaeological site consisting of large rocks and stone structures.

NORTHEAST

Associations/clubs is the top market decorators in this region plan to target in 2014.



The Mall of America in **Bloomington, MN** is the largest mall in the U.S.

The world's first practical typewriter was invented in **Milwaukee, WI** in the 19th century by Christopher Latham Sholes.

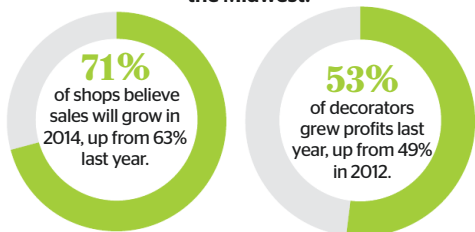
The first U.S. Blood Bank was created in **Chicago** in 1937.

Philadelphia is the birthplace of America's first-ever successful daily newspaper, *The Philadelphia Packet and Daily Advertiser*.

New York state was the principal battleground of the Revolutionary War. Approximately one-third of the skirmishes and engagements of the war were fought on New York soil.

MIDWEST

When it comes to using Pinterest to drum up business, no region has had as much success as the Midwest.



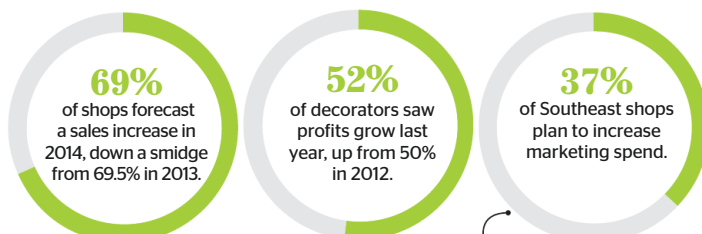
Louisiana was named after King Louis XIV of France who reigned from 1643 to 1715.

College football teams from the **Southeastern Conference** have won seven of the last eight national championships.



The **Okefenokee Swamp** on the Florida-Georgia line encompasses about 438,000 acres of canals, moss-draped Cypress trees and lily pad prairies that provide sanctuaries for hundreds of species.

SOUTHEAST



That's more than any other region but the Pacific (also 37%).

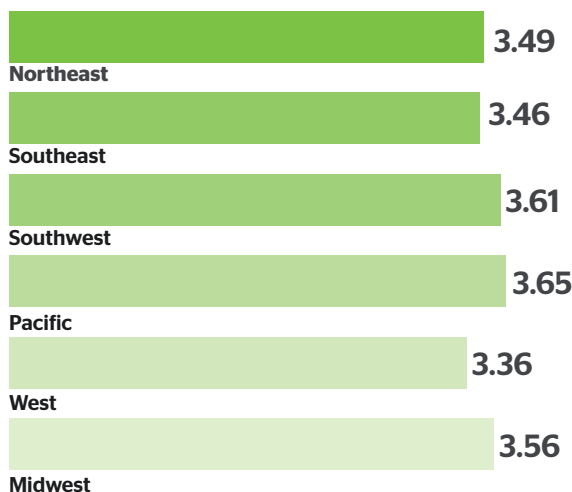


Austin, TX is often referred to as the "Live Music Capital of the World."



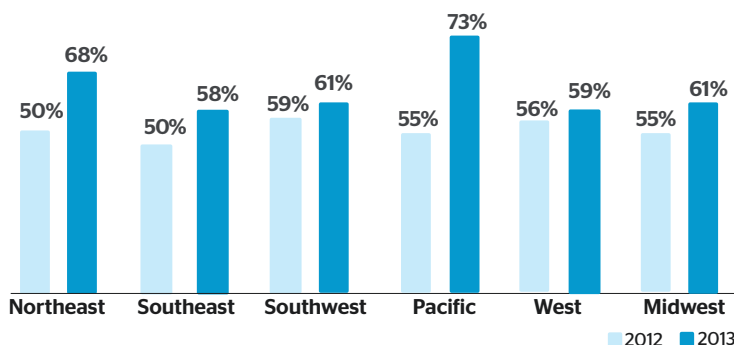
HEALTH CHECK

Decorators across the U.S. believe the apparel decorating industry is getting stronger. Asked to rate the health of the industry on a scale of one (ailing) to five (robust), no region returned a reading lower than 3.36.



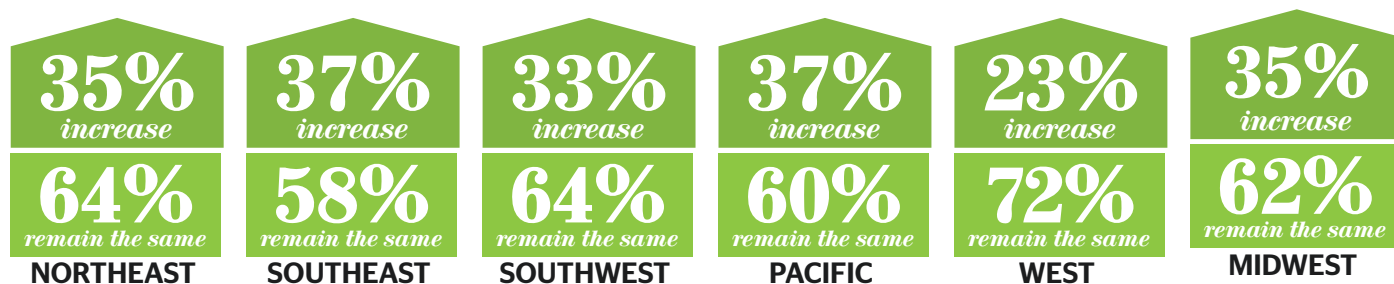
SALES SURGE

More shops in every region drove revenue rises in 2013 than in 2012 – an exciting trend industry firms aim to build on this year. “Our sales were up about 15%,” says Jeff Taxdahl, CEO of Jordan, MN-based Thread Logic. In part, Taxdahl attributes the revenue increase to an improvement in the general economy and, more particularly, to housing industry businesses like contractors and realtors upping their investment in logoed apparel. “It was a good year,” says Taxdahl, “and we’re on track for another.” **Here’s a regional breakdown of the percentage of shops that reported a sales increase in each of the prior two years.**



MARKETING BUDGET BREAKDOWN

Shops in the Pacific and Southeast regions plan to increase spending on marketing more than any other regions in 2014. As this graphic shows, the overwhelming majority of decorators expect to up their marketing budgets or keep them the same this year – a sign that there’s deep belief in growth potential. “We’re definitely going to invest more in marketing,” says Darren Amato, vice president of sales at Flemington, NJ-based Ambro Manufacturing (asi/35201). That investment includes hiring new personnel specifically to handle marketing tasks.



34%

Percentage of Southeastern decorators who say online social networking is one of top three ways they get customers. That’s more than any other region: Northeast (28%), West (28%), Southwest (24%), Midwest (22%) and Pacific (20%).



SOCIAL SUCCESS

With more than 2,400 "likes," Super Embroidery and Screen Printing's (asi/700101) Facebook page has helped the Phoenix-based shop connect with new customers and expand sales with existing clients. "Facebook has been very useful for us," says owner Anna Johnson.

Super Embroidery's experience with Facebook is representative of a broader industry trend: **Facebook is the social media forum decorators have had the most success in using to build business.**

When it comes to the efficacy of other social sites, however, there's significant variation from region to region. As the data here shows, decorators in general don't find Twitter to be very effective. And while Instagram has little penetration nationally, it's being used with comparative success by Pacific region shops.



Facebook



LinkedIn



Etsy



Pinterest



Twitter



Instagram

	Facebook	LinkedIn	Etsy	Pinterest	Twitter	Instagram
NORTHEAST	72%	10%	13%	2.6%	2.6%	0%
SOUTHEAST	76%	5%	10%	6.3%	0%	3%
SOUTH-WEST	73%	10%	7.5%	5%	0%	2.5%
PACIFIC	65%	1.4%	8%	5.4%	2.7%	8%
WEST	76%	14%	4.8%	4.8%	1%	0.5%
MIDWEST	71%	14%	4%	7.4%	3%	1%

*Denotes percentage of respondents indicating this was the social network that proved most effective in helping them obtain new prospects and customers last year.



PRICE CONSCIOUS

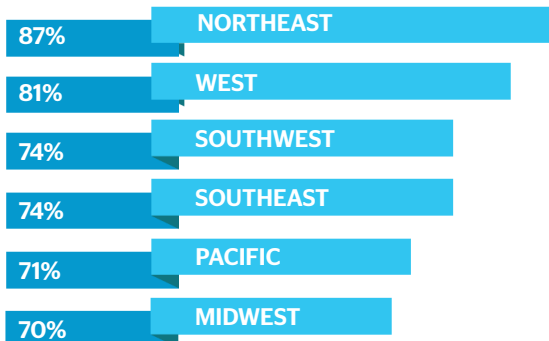
nearly 78%

of shops in the Southwest cite competitive price as a top reason customers buy from them. That's more than any other region.



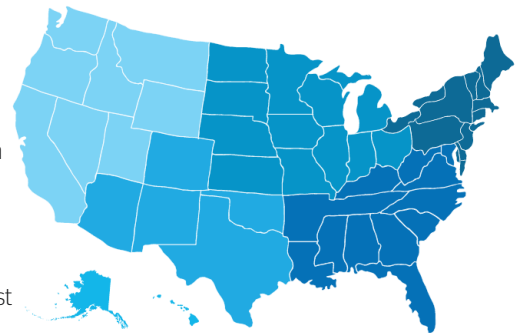
SERVICE STARS

No matter where you are, providing great service is important, but it appears to be especially so in the Northeast and West. Shops in those two regions were the most likely to list service as a top reason for why customers buy from them.



TARGET MARKETS

Individual consumers, associations/clubs and education are the leading markets decorators are targeting this year, with sports teams creeping into the top three in the Pacific and Northeast. The market that takes first place locally varies from region to region, as shown by the data here.



NORTHEAST

- 1 Associations/clubs
- 2 Individual consumers
- 3 Education and sports teams (tie)



MIDWEST

- 1 Associations/clubs
- 2 Individual consumers
- 3 Education



WEST

- 1 Individual consumers
- 2 Associations/clubs
- 3 Education



SOUTHEAST

- 1 Education
- 2 Individual consumers
- 3 Associations/clubs



SOUTHWEST

- 1 Individual consumers
- 2 Education
- 3 Associations/clubs



PACIFIC

- 1 Individual consumers
- 2 Education
- 3 Sports teams

top 25 APPAREL SUPPLIERS

The 2014 edition of *Stitches*' exclusive ranking of the suppliers with the most industry revenue last year.

Nicole Rollender, Christopher Ruvo, Alex Palmer and Shane Dale;
research and additional reporting: Karen Akers and Sara Lavenduski, ASI,
and Larry Basinaït



**\$2.96
billion**

Total revenue of 2014 Top 25 Apparel Suppliers, up from \$2.75 billion in 2012

For the fourth time, *Stitches* has ranked the Top 25 Apparel Suppliers in the decorated-apparel industry. Leaders in the garment-selling space, these are the suppliers that apparel decorators and ad specialty distributors rely on for everything from performance wear shirts and high-end outerwear to trend insights, marketing advice and more.

This 2014 list features a number of notable differences from last year's ranking. For instance, 2013's top finisher, the former Broder Bros. Co., rebranded as alphabroder (asi/34063) and acquired last year's sixth-ranked supplier, Ash City (asi/37127). The one-time competitors now form an apparel powerhouse that posted combined revenue of nearly \$700 million in 2013. Additionally, S&S Activewear (asi/84358), ranked fifth last year, acquired the

former Eva Tees, which was 21st in 2013. Eva Tees was rebranded Eva Sportswear (asi/52834) and the companies tallied combined revenue of \$195 million last year. While both Eva and Ash City weren't part of their acquiring firms in 2013, we're including their numbers under the banner of the acquisitive suppliers to give the most accurate picture of the firms' current revenue power.

There are also new arrivals to the Top 25 list: Charles River Apparel (asi/44620) debuted in style thanks to a 2013 in which revenue increased 18% to \$34.5 million; Dunbrooke (asi/50930) debuted with 2013 revenue of \$20 million; and Perry Ellis International (asi/77715) joined the ranking with 2013 revenue of \$16 million.

Beyond ranking suppliers by revenue, *Stitches* surveyed their opinions on everything

from product safety and the possibility of price increases to top markets decorators can target in 2014. Read on to check out the ranking, stats and supplier stories.

1 alphabroder: THE TOTAL SOLUTION

A lot of businesses talk about being a total solution for clients – alphabroder (asi/34063) has been busy transforming itself into such an entity.

The Trevoze, PA-based company, formerly known as Broder Bros. Co., was already the largest supplier by revenue in the imprinted apparel industry when it announced in January that it had acquired Ash City (asi/37127). The deal united two of the industry's 10 largest apparel suppliers and came on the tailwind of Broder's rebranding as alphabroder. Both the acquisition and the name change were intended to send a clear message: alphabroder is an invigorated, energetic supplier on the rise that's ready to meet all the apparel needs of decorators and advertising specialty distributors. "Our goal is to give our customers a seamless offering," CEO Norman Hullinger says.

To achieve that end, alphabroder is staying hungry. Future acquisitions are in the cards – acquisitions that could help the supplier build the most comprehensive apparel portfolio possible and an unparalleled distribution network for lightning-quick service. "We'll have the exact right product assortment and the very best distribution," Hullinger says. While acquisitive, alphabroder's expansion plans stop short of delving into the complexities of in-house apparel decorating. "We're focused on being a one-call for promotional apparel – on having the best selection of basics, mid-price points and high-end products," Hullinger says.

While acquisitions are helping to bolster alphabroder's bottom line, the supplier's organic sales have been on an upward trajectory, too.

A crackerjack executive team that's sharpened sales and marketing initiatives, combined with strengthened relationships with vendors, helped push alphabroder's 2013 revenue tally to \$697.2 million, a 33% rise over the prior year.

As part of fueling further gains, alphabroder is focused on helping customers capitalize on trends, such as end-buyers' intensifying appetite for outerwear. "When someone gets a nice piece of outerwear, they wear it for years, which makes it an amazing branding opportunity," says Hullinger, noting the margins decorators and distributors earn on outerwear can be especially strong because of the category's high perceived value. Meanwhile, the call for performance fabrics is likely to only get louder. "Buyers are learning about the benefits of antimicrobial and wicking, and they want them," Hullinger says, adding that lighter-weight fitted T-shirts are gaining steam because of their appeal to the trendier tastes of youth. "We're bullish on 2014 – for our company and the industry as a whole." – *Christopher Ruvo*







5 S&S ACTIVEWEAR: MASTERING SELECTION AND SERVICE

S&S Activewear (asi/84358) is an apparel supplier with its foot on the accelerator. From 2010 through last year, the Bolingbrook, IL-based company powered forward with 28% revenue growth and acquired two other suppliers, one in California (Americana Sportswear (asi/35722) in 2010) and the other in New Jersey (Eva Sportswear (asi/52834) in 2013). With this coast-to-coast presence, S&S is better poised than ever to serve clients around the country. That's important, for service has been – and will continue to be – a determining driver of S&S's sales ascent. "We have a very broad product line and a deep inventory to back it up," says Jeff Adams, co-owner.

Heading into this year, S&S's product portfolio already included household names that range from Canvas and Calvin Klein to Anvil

BIGGEST GROWTH SUPPLIERS

Newcomer to the list Perry Ellis International (asi/77715) changed its business model selling through wholesalers to selling direct, and it's been working hard on getting its revenues up – and it shows, with growth of 45% year-over-year. In 2013, number-one Top 25 supplier alphabroder (asi/34063) acquired last year's sixth-ranked supplier, Ash City (asi/37127). The one-time competitors now form an apparel powerhouse that posted combined revenue of nearly \$700 million in 2013. S&S Activewear (asi/84358), ranked fifth last year, acquired the former Eva Tees, rebranded Eva Sportswear (asi/52834); the companies tallied combined revenue of \$195 million last year. **Suppliers that reported the strongest growth in 2013 were:**

	45%
Perry Ellis International	
	33%
alphabroder	
	28%
S&S Activewear (Eva Sportswear)	
	18%
Charles River Apparel (asi/44620)	
	12%
Bodek and Rhodes (asi/40788)	
	8.9%
Profill Holdings (TSC Apparel and WearMagic) (asi/90518)	

“We’re focused on being a one-call for promotional apparel – on having the best selection of basics, mid-price points and high-end products.”

Norman Hullinger, alphabroder (asi/34063)

Top 25 Apparel Suppliers

COMPANY	2012 RANK	2011 (MILLION)	2012 (MILLION)	2013 (MILLION)	2012-2013 % CHANGE	TOP OFFICER	# OF DISTRIBUTOR CUSTOMERS	NUMBER OF WAREHOUSES	SUPPLIER PERFORMANCE RATING †
1. alphabroder (Ash City) *	1	\$483.4	\$524	\$697.2	33% ↑	Norman Hullinger	74,000	17	4.9
2. SanMar (E) **	2	\$350	\$475	\$500	5.2% ↑	Marty Lott and Jeremy Lott	D	7	5.0
3. Bodek and Rhodes	4	\$188	\$210	\$235.2	12% ↑	Michael Rhodes	15,000	5	4.8
4. Ennis (Alstyle Apparel)	3	N/A	\$239	\$198.8	-16.8% ↓	Irshad Ahmad and Keith Walters	D	7	5
5. S&S Activewear (Eva Sportswear)	5	\$140.4	\$152.6	\$195	27.8% ↑	Jeff Adams and Paul Rohr	D	3	4.8
6. Staton Corporate and Casual	7	\$122.6	\$118	\$118	Flat	Billie Staton	17,225	3	4.7
7. Heritage & Virginia T's	8	\$58.9	\$107	\$108	0.9% ↑	Jay Frink	21,000	4	5
8. Profill Holdings (TSC Apparel and WearMagic)	11	\$92	\$96.4	\$105	8.9% ↑	Rick Mouty	5,000+	7	4.9
9. American Apparel	10	\$90.2	\$96.8	\$99.2	2.5% ↑	Dov Charney	15,000	1	4.6
10. River's End Trading Co.	9	\$94.6	\$97.4	\$97.4	Flat	John Maher	D	2	4.9
11. Tri-Mountain	12	\$70.2	\$71	\$70.6	-0.6% ↓	Daniel Tsai	D	1	4.9
12. MV Sport/Weatherproof (E)	13	\$61.8	\$65	\$60	-7.7% ↓	Josh Peyser	500+	N/A	4.8
13. Edwards Garment Co.	15	\$55.2	\$56.9	\$58.6	3% ↑	Gary Schultz	8,000+	1	4.2
14. Blue Generation	14	\$55	\$57	\$58	1.8% ↑	Eric Rubin	13,500	1	4.5
15. Sierra Pacific (Hilton Apparel Group) (E)	16	\$53.3	\$55	\$56.7	3% ↑	David Finkelman	12 wholesalers	2	No rating available
16. Cutter & Buck	17	\$58	\$55	\$56.5	2.7% ↑	Joel Freet	4,000	2	5
17. Vantage Apparel	18	\$52.5	\$53	\$48.5	-8.5% ↓	Ira Neaman	8,250	3	4.6
18. Charles River Apparel	New ††	N/A	\$29.2	\$34.5	18.1% ↑	Barry Lipsett	12,000	1	4.8
19. TSF Apparel (E)	19	\$30	\$32.9	\$33.9	3% ↑	John Feinberg	D	N/A	5
20. Otto International	22	\$26	\$27	\$28.5	5.5% ↑	Razgo Lee	30,000+	3	4.7
21. Next Level Apparel (E)	23	\$25.8	\$26.6	\$27.4	3% ↑	Alon Shafigi	D	N/A	5
22. Hartwell Classic Apparel (E)	24	\$23.7	\$24.4	\$25.1	3% ↑	Allen Darwin	D	N/A	5
23. Dunbrooke	New ††	N/A	\$21	\$20	-4.8% ↓	Larry Ramirez	D	2	4.9
24. Perry Ellis International	New ††	N/A	\$11	\$16	45% ↑	George Feldenkreis and Oscar Feldenkreis	4,000	1	5
25. H T T Apparel & Headwear	25	\$18.5	\$13.9	\$13.6	-2.1 ↓	Gary Decker	3,773	2	4.6

E = Estimate

D = Declined to provide information

* All yearly sales numbers are based on North American revenues.

** Estimated increase based on ASI research

† Decorators and distributors rate suppliers on a five-star scale. There are six categories to rate suppliers on, and decorators and distributors can go to www.asicentral.com or ESP to rate their interactions with suppliers. Scores were calculated on March 24, 2014.

† † New suppliers provided numbers for 2013 and 2012.

“We’ve made a lot of innovations in our decorating capability, which is very important to our customers.”

Josh Peyser, MV Sport/Weatherproof (asi/68318)

(asi/36350), Alternative Apparel (asi/34850) and Champion (asi/59528). But that selection was strengthened with the addition of items from the hip young men’s line Burnside and caps, duffels, polos and backpacks from sports lifestyle brand Oakley. “We do new brand introductions every year so we can continually offer more to our clients,” Adams says.

The service edge S&S provides is sharpened by tech offerings too, including an online design studio that enables clients to upload or create logos/graphics on the supplier’s website and then place them on virtual product samples that can be e-mailed to clients. Additionally, S&S ships each order from a single location. This reduces the chances for error that come with multi-location shipping of one order, and allows clients to receive a single, simple invoice. “Decorators get the whole order the same day, which makes scheduling production easier,” Adams says.

To ensure it provides the apparel and accessories decorators and distributors need to meet marketplace demand, the S&S team keeps a keen eye on trends. For the foreseeable future, Adams says, performance fabrics will reign popular; moisture-wicking polyester and poly blends will be among the most sought-after selections. Meanwhile, the industry will continue to experience style infusions from the fashion world, with softer, lighter-weight formulations composing T-shirts cut to a trendier fit. As for decoration, Adams says embroidery and screen printing will dominate, but expect sublimation printing to come on strong. “With sublimation, you can make a shirt look like an art mural,” says Adams, explaining the medium’s appeal.

As trends evolve, one thing will remain a constant at S&S. “We’re always focused on providing our clients the products they need to be successful,” Adams says. — CR

12 MV SPORT/WEATHERPROOF: KEEPING CUSTOMERS HAPPY

For MV Sport/Weatherproof (asi/68318), the math was simple: new product offerings plus an enhanced website and an eco-friendly approach equaled a big boost in sales. “We added a full range of new products – about 40 new styles in 2013 – which our customers really responded to,” says MV Sport President Josh Peyser. “We’ve made a lot of innovations in our decorating capability, which is very important to our customers, and we continually invest in customer service.”

MV Sport, which offers screen printing, embroidery, etching, appliqué and laser-cutting capabilities, saw its sales increase by more than 15% from 2012 to last year – in part because Peyser recognizes that great products mean nothing if customers don’t know about them, which is why MV Sport invested in an enhanced online presence last year.

“We made our website easier to use with more imagery of representations of every style and every color, lots of different ways to navigate the site and online, up-to-date inventory,” Peyser says. “We’re going to be adding online ordering as well. Our customers responded to the ease in finding good, high-quality imagery of our products that they can see and pass on to their customers as needed, and we added pages dedicated to our corporate responsibility program, which we think drove business.”

That corporate responsibility includes MV Sport’s solar-powered facility – a massive investment, but one that Peyser says is already beginning to pay off. “You really need to believe in the concept because it’s a big upfront investment and then a payback over many years,” he says. Peyser notes that because solar power is clean, renewable and lessens dependence on foreign energy sources, “we find a lot of our customers reacting very well because

TOP 25 METHODOLOGY

To determine eligibility for Top 25 ranking, *Stitches* uses a multi-level approach. Only those firms that have been ASI members for a minimum of one year can participate. All firms then considered viable candidates are requested to submit their gross promotional product sales for calendar/fiscal year 2013. Only North American sales (U.S., Canada, Mexico and Central America) are used to build the rankings. For companies with a common parent firm, sales are reported in aggregate, unless they operate completely independently of one another. (For apparel suppliers that operate as mills, a separate ranking was created based on global sales that included sales to the promotional products and retail markets.)

Suppliers are also required to provide only promotional product sales revenue, defined as “any product you’ve sold, with or without imprints or personalization, provided that you sold it to and/or through recognized traditional promotional products or premium distributors/resellers,” such as apparel decorators. This eliminates pure retail, pure premium sales, direct-sales figures and sales to buyers or retailers in other industries.

Once contending companies have submitted acceptable figures, the determination process begins. It involves research on each firm, including financial reports, year-end reports and personal interviews conducted by *Stitches* staff. When a firm’s sales figures are proprietary, the same criteria and resources are used to develop as accurate an estimate as possible.

Top 25 Apparel Suppliers

they like to do business with people who have a strong commitment to social responsibility.” – *Shane Dale*

16 CUTTER & BUCK: FOCUSED ON QUALITY

Under the leadership of a new CEO, Cutter & Buck's (asi/47965) mission remains the same: continue to be recognized as an innovator and industry leader in the golf and fashion market, as well as the corporate market through its Clique collection.

Of course, maintaining market share in the decorated apparel industry entails looking for and capitalizing on new embellishment methods. Joel Freet, a 15-year company veteran who took the reins as CEO on April 1, says Cutter & Buck's new heat-seal applications are a small but growing part of its operations. “The variety of transfers and appliques that can be used are really appealing for the imaginative customer, and the impact of clear branding is great for some super-lightweight tech fabrics,” he says. “Our largest success has in fact come from using our heat-seal process to apply very small, detailed woven appliques that lend a very classy, branded appearance and are quite small and can be placed nearly anywhere.”

Freet says one of his new favorite products for 2014 is Cutter & Buck's Northgate Polo, which he calls a very modern classic ideal for golf outings or other athletic outdoor company events. “It's taking the polo to a very modern place,” he says.

In terms of demographics, Freet says women will continue to be a primary focus for Cutter & Buck under his leadership. “We're really happy to be focusing on women end-users, as we have such a strong retail business with our golf essentials and the Ladies Cutter & Buck Team Collection for fans of professional and collegiate sports,” he says. – *SD*

RESPONSIBILITY REIGNS

Corporate social responsibility is on the rise among industry mills.

COMPANY	TOP OFFICER	2011 (BILLION)	2012 (BILLION)	2013 (BILLION)	2012-2013% CHANGE
HanesBrands Inc. (Champion)	Rich Noll	\$4.44	\$4.53	\$4.63	2.20% ↑
Gildan (Anvil Knitwear)	Glenn Chamandy	\$1.7	\$1.95	\$2.18	12% ↑
Fruit of the Loom (E)	Rick Medlin	\$107.8	\$116	\$119	3% ↑

The major mills of the decorated apparel industry have moved quickly to address concerns about environmental sustainability, labor issues and other social and environmental concerns. Last year saw these companies rapidly increasing these efforts, moving from simply keeping up with the Joneses to leading the charge for more responsible manufacturing.

FRUIT OF THE LOOM

In February, Fruit of the Loom (asi/84257) was named a winner of the EPA Climate Leadership Award, which recognizes organizations that publicly report, verify and set goals to reduce corporate greenhouse gas (GHG) inventories. “Our company has a long-standing commitment to conduct business in an ethical manner,” says Rick Medlin, president and CEO of FOTL.

But he emphasizes that while the company's “heritage of helping others” isn't new, recently the mill has invested more effort into setting concrete goals, and putting action plans in place to reach specific benchmarks. “Today, we have two corporate social responsibility pillars: people and the planet,” Medlin says. “Environmentally, we're setting aggressive goals to reduce electricity-related GHG emissions by 40% in 2015. In Fruit of the Loom communities, we're always striving to ensure that our employees live and work in healthy and happy communities.”

Though headquartered in Bowling

Green, KY, FOTL is a global company that takes an expansive approach to ensuring it has a positive impact on the communities in which it works. For example, in Honduras, where it's one of the country's largest private employers, FOTL has forged a collective bargaining agreement with its workers that was viewed as exceptional for the region and now serves as a model for Central America. The mill has also provided more than 10,000 health screenings for people in local communities.

All of these efforts earned the company the Secretary of State's Award for Corporate Excellence last year for its groundbreaking manufacturing facility in Honduras. In 2013, FOTL also became a member of both the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh and the Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety.

HANESBRANDS

Because of the scale of HanesBrands' operations, the company has focused on reducing its environmental impact by managing raw materials, recycling waste and marketing eco-friendly products. The Winston Salem, NC-based company's aggressive energy-management program has resulted in a 22% reduction in energy used per pound of apparel manufactured. The mill is now in the process of establishing a new five-year goal for the years ahead.

“By installing a state-of-the-art biomass boiler in our Dominican Republic fabric production plant – and with plans underway

THE SUPPLIER SURVEY

Stitches asked leading apparel suppliers about a range of **pressing issues from potential price increases and their top challenges**, to what strategy will be most important to their growth this year.

What will make industry suppliers in general more successful in 2014? Top 25 suppliers cited these top three answers.

1. **ENHANCED CUSTOMER SERVICE**
2. **OFFERING STAND-OUT NEW PRODUCTS**
3. **IMPROVED TURNAROUND TIMES**

PRICE POWER

38%

we'll struggle to raise prices

46%

we have no plans to raise prices

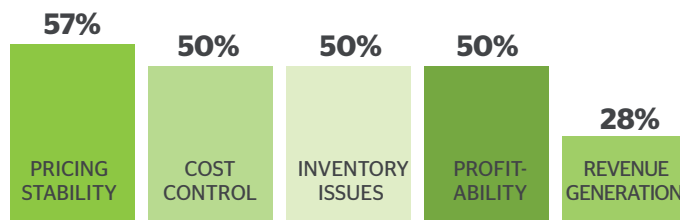
15%

we'll be able to raise prices relatively easily

Stitches asked Top 25 suppliers how they gauge their ability to raise prices in 2014 and 2015. As you can see, **nearly half said they're not planning to increase pricing.**

THE YEAR'S CHALLENGES

Nearly 60% of Top 25 suppliers reported that **pricing stability would be among the biggest challenges they face in 2014.** Here's the percentage of Top 25 suppliers who say they'll contend with the following issues this year.



more than 300

That's how many **new products S&S Activewear** (asi/84358) **introduced to its offerings last year** – more than any other Top 25 supplier, according to survey responses. SanMar (asi/84863) was second, introducing more than 270.

SUCCESS STOKERS

31%

of Top 25 suppliers say **electronic advertising** will be among the most important factors in their company's success this year.



100% of American Apparel's (asi/35297) products are **made in the USA.**



Percentage of Top 25 suppliers who say that **price is the single most important factor** in their customers' buying decisions.

MARKET HOT SPOTS

Suppliers say the following markets will provide the **best opportunity for decorated apparel sales** in 2014:

1. **EDUCATION/SCHOOLS**
2. **RESTAURANTS/TRAVEL/ LODGING**
3. **RETAIL, FINANCIAL/ INSURANCE AND HEALTH CARE** (a three-way tie for the third spot)
4. **MANUFACTURING**
5. **TECHNOLOGY**

EIGHTY-FOUR PERCENT

Percentage of Top 25 apparel suppliers who say **blank (unimprinted) products** constitute more than 51% of their sales.

98%

The average percentage of **apparel orders delivered on time** by Top 25 apparel suppliers.

“Online product configuration and ordering will be key to our success.”

Rick Mouty, CEO, Profill Holdings

95%

of Top 25 apparel suppliers say they have **formal testing and inspection procedures in place** to ensure product safety.

nearly half

of Top 25 suppliers report offering some form of **in-house decoration.** Of those, 90% provide embroidery.

Top 25 Apparel Suppliers

to install another in our El Salvador fabric production operations – we’ve ensured that the vast majority of energy used to make our T-shirts and underwear in the Western Hemisphere will be renewable,” says Scott Somerville, general manager of Hanes Branded Printwear (asi/59528). These efforts earned Hanes the Sustained Excellence awards from the U.S. EPA Energy Star program for both 2012 and 2013.

Hanes has also taken steps to make sure the products themselves are environmentally friendly, using recycled yarn for all cotton in its black socks. The mill is expanding its use of flax as a partial substitute for cotton. “We know that the key to making responsible T-shirts is having control over the process,” Somerville says. “We make more than 90% of the apparel we sell in the U.S. in our company-owned or -controlled facilities.”

GILDAN

Sustainable practices are nothing new for Gildan. Back in 2003, the Montreal-based company adopted a comprehensive Environmental Code of Practice for all of its own facilities and those of third-party manufacturers. But recently it has aggressively expanded these efforts, transitioning the majority of its steam-generation plants from fossil fuels to renewable biomass energy. Last year, 52% of the energy Gildan consumed came from biomass.

“This change has been instrumental in reducing our greenhouse gas emissions intensity by 32% since 2010,” says Peter Iliopoulos, senior vice president, public and corporate affairs, for Gildan. “Over the past few years, we’ve begun the process of updating our EMS (environmental management system) to assure compliance with the ISO14001 standard in Honduras, and we’re working toward getting the

certification in the near future.”

The wastewater treatment system, Gildan Biotop, has also helped to virtually eliminate dyes and chemicals in the wastewater of the company’s textile facilities in Honduras and the Dominican Republic.

Last year saw Gildan boost its employee wellness efforts as well, with on-site medical clinics in Central America and the Dominican Republic handling more than 50,000 health incidents, and 43,900 in Bangladesh. It also continues to improve the facilities used by workers. “We’re convinced that these corporate social responsibility-related initiatives offer Gildan a competitive advantage by attracting talented workers who also believe in being part of a responsible company,” Iliopoulos says, pointing to Gildan’s induction into the Dow Jones Sustainability World Index in the Textiles, Apparel and Luxury Goods sector in September 2013.

— Alex Palmer

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ADVERTISER INDEX

ADVERTISERS/SUPPLIERS	RS#	PG#	Gunold USA Inc.....	41	73
A-B Emblem asi/ 30102.....	3	74	Hanes/Champion asi/59528.....	10	8
American Apparel asi/35297.....	4	1	Hanes/Champion asi/59528.....	11	31
American and Efrid.....	30	23	Hanes/Champion asi/59528.....	9	CV2
AnaJet Inc asi/16000.....	1	12	Jerzees.....	17	CV4
Bc Supply Co.....	35	73	Komet Creations LLC.....	44	18
Bito.....	36	73	L A T Sportswear asi/65948.....	12	10
Blazers R Us.....	43	73	Next Level Apparel asi/73867.....	13	17
Blue Generation asi/40653.....	5	4, 5	O&K Reach.....	47	32
Bodek and Rhodes asi/40788.....	6	23	Outdoor Cap Co asi/75420.....	14	39
Change! Inc. asi/44568.....	7	19	Pacific Sportswear & Emblems.....	39	73
Chl Inc.....	45	74	Pantograms.....	38	15
Coldesi Inc.....	27	6	Pizzazz asi/78230.....	15	26
Coldesi Inc.....	28	16	Pizzazz asi/78230.....	16	74
Coldesi Inc.....	29	36	Ricoma International Corp. asi/18200.....	2	37
Coldesi Inc.....	30	72	S & S Activewear asi/84358.....	19	7
Continental Mktg Svc Inc asi/46420.....	8	25	SanMar asi/84863.....	20	11
Djs Labels Inc.....	49	73	Shamrock Design.....	37	73
Express Digitizing.com asi/700145.....	32	73	Stahls' ID Direct asi/88984.....	21	27
Express Digitizing.com asi/700145.....	33	73	Stouse Inc asi/89910.....	22	74
Fawn Embroidery Services Inc asi/702575.....	34	74	Stouse Inc asi/89910.....	25	74
Foshan Autowin Computerized Machinery Co., Ltd SGR/4015.....	53	38	Sunstar Usa, Inc.....	46	CV3
Freehand Graphics Inc.....	31	73	The Sewphisticated Stitcher & Discount Emb Blanks asi/323872.....	24	2
Fruit of the Loom.....	42	3	Transfer Express asi/91804.....	26	14
Gunold USA Inc.....	40	73	Wilcom America.....	48	13

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STITCHES READER SERVICE NUMBERS

COMPANY	RSN	PAGE#
A&P Master Images (asi/702505)	89	Cover, 42, 43, 45
alphabroder (asi/34063)	100	44
American Apparel (asi/35297)	92	43
Assertive Creative (asi/37166)	90	43
Bishop The Garment Co. (asi/40585)	87	42
Blanks Plus (asi/40642)	93	43
Blue Generation (asi/40653)	104	21
Brandwear (asi/41545)	88	42
Charles River Apparel (asi/44620)	97	44
Culture Studios (asi/70059)	76	33
Dalco Athletic	79	34, 35
Driving Impressions (asi/50864)	96	44
Fersten Worldwide (asi/53974)	98	44
Graphics Solutions	77	34
Hanes/Champion (asi/59528)	85	42
Hirsch International (asi/14982)	80	35
Inksoft	83	35
Intelligent Galaxy (asi/62731)	91	43
It Takes A Stitch Custom Embroidery (asi/604495)	101	45
Ken's Custom Tees	105	44
Leaderpromos (asi/287087)	103	21
Ryonet Corp.	102	21
SanMar (asi/84863)	99	44, 45
St. Louis Print Co.	94	43
Stahl's ID Direct (asi/88984)	81	35, 43
Sun Mountain Sports (asi/90139)	84	42
Transfer Express (asi/91804)	78	34
Vantage Apparel (asi/93390)	95	44
World Emblem International (asi/98264)	82	35, 42

COMING NEXT ISSUE

What's coming up in June *Stitches*

by Nicole Rollender

Back From the Brink

Like any other business, decorators encounter grave challenges such as the death of a key executive or possible bankruptcy. You'll learn how to handle situations that are potentially life-threatening to your firm – and how other decorators have bounced back from almost having to close their doors. Plus, why you need a succession plan for your company.



Top Motivators

What's the best – and most economical – way to keep your team motivated? Well, it depends on your employees' personalities. An industry expert will offer some ways to motivate and recognize staffers to ensure they love working at your shop – and keep doing their best work every day.



Plus:

• Along with your annual *Sourcing Guide*, we've got "Ask Phil" and "Decorating Solutions" with great suggestions on how to boost your business this year with new products.

• And much, much more!

needle watch

Needle Patrol

Our friend Slick (an embroidery machine needle) has hidden himself somewhere in this issue. He might be in an editorial photo, graphic or text – he's not in an advertisement. If you find the needle, send us a note that says, "I found the May needle on page XX," along with your name, company, address and phone number (or e-mail address) so we can contact you if you're the winner. Mail or fax it to us at *Stitches*, Attn: Needle Patrol, 4800 Street Rd., Trevoise, PA 19053; fax: (215) 953-3107. Also, tell us a little about your business. No phone calls please; you must respond in writing. Hurry! Responses for the May needle are due by May 30, 2014. From the correct responses, we'll randomly select one winner who'll receive a \$100 gift certificate, courtesy of Madeira USA, Laconia, NH. Please submit only one entry per drawing. We'll announce the winner in the July issue.



Slick Loves Multi-Heads

In the February issue, Slick hid in "The Machine Guide" right underneath an image of the SWF K-1504 Four-Head by ColDesi Inc. on page 48. Patti Bentley of Magalia, CA-based *Serendipity* was chosen at random from a grand total of 45 responses. As this issue's winner, Patti will receive Madeira USA's gift certificate. Keep your eyes peeled for the industry's favorite game of hide and seek!

ASK AN EXPERT

By Kristine Shreve

LOOKING FORWARD

In the next issue, you'll learn how to motivate and reward your employees. See you next issue!

Q *My staff and I find ourselves on the road more these days – whether we're visiting clients or at a trade show. We just invested in smartphones and tablets for our staff, and want to know what apps we should be downloading to keep business moving forward.*

Doing business from the road is more and more common these days, and the right applications for your phone or tablet can make this process much easier. Here are a few free application options that can make taking your business out of the office simpler and more efficient.

General

These apps are great for staying in touch while you're on the go, especially if you need to share documents, images or data.

Evernote: Evernote is essentially a note-taking app, so you can capture ideas on the go. You can take notes, store video clips, record audio notes and then share them among devices and with other people. That means any staff not in the office can all weigh in on your questions, orders and other shop questions in one central online location. Available for Android and iOS.

LogMeIn: If you've ever forgotten an important file on your PC, this app may be the thing that saves your bacon. LogMeIn allows you to access your Mac or PC from your smartphone so you can obtain the information or documents you need quickly and easily. Available for Android and iOS.

Skype: Skype is great for video and audio chatting. It can

also be used for instant messaging and texting. It works on computers and tablets and smartphones. Works internationally too. Available for Blackberry, Android, iOS and Windows Phone.

Cisco WebEx Meetings:

If you're on the road and need to conduct a meeting where you share documents or data, this app is for you. WebEx also allows for two-way video conferencing. Available for Blackberry, Android and iOS.

Social Media and Marketing

You should always maintain your social media presence, especially if you're traveling or at trade shows. These apps will make it easy for you to update your social media feeds.

HootSuite: If you're managing social media for your business, and you should be, HootSuite is a mobile app that will let you manage all your accounts in one place. It can manage Facebook, Twitter, Foursquare, and more. Instead of having multiple apps to manage the different profiles, use one app and see all your feeds in one place. Available for Android and iOS.

WordPress: If you blog, being able to blog from anywhere is key, especially from a trade show. You can write posts, upload photos and manage

comments. Available for Blackberry, Android and iOS.

Business Travel

If you travel frequently, these apps will help you keep all of your trip details organized.

TripIt: Remembering all the details of a business trip can get complicated. Hotel reservations, flight times, scheduled meetings and where to pick up the rental car – all these small details can get lost in the shuffle. This app organizes all the details for you and presents you with an easy-to-follow agenda. Available for Blackberry, Android, iOS and Windows Phone.

AwardWallet: If you travel a lot, you probably belong to a lot of different rewards programs. AwardWallet consolidates all the information from these different programs in one place, ensuring you'll never miss a reward you should receive. Available for Android and iOS.

Finance

These apps are great for taking payments on-the-go, and to manage financials and accounting.

Square Register: Square is a well-known app that allows you to take credit cards and payments on your phone or tablet. Square Register allows

you to collect signatures, sending receipts and issue refunds all from your mobile device. If you visit clients and close deals or exhibit at trade shows where you sell products, this program is definitely for you. Available for Android and iOS.

Mint.com: Tracking what's going out and what's coming in can be complicated and it's more complicated when you're traveling. *Mint.com* allows you to track account balances and more. Available for Android, iOS and Windows Phone.

FreshBooks Cloud

Accounting: This app provides accounting solutions in the cloud. It's accounting and financial management solution, allowing business owners to track expenses, bill customers and monitor cash flows. Available for Android and iOS.

KRISTINE SHREVE is director of marketing for EnMart and Ensign Emblem, and regularly writes about embroidery, sublimation, decoration, social media and business. Besides her DecQuorum blog on *Stitches.com*, she also writes for the EmbroideryTalk Blog at <http://blog.mymenart.com> and the SubliStuff blog at www.sublistuff.com. Contact: kristine.shreve@mymenart.com.

GOT A DECORATOR DILEMMA?

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